



CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS

1st International Research Symposium On Sustainable Business (IRSSB – 2023)

15 September 2023

ECU Sri Lanka Campus

Message from the Conference Chair



Dear Conference Participants and Esteemed Authors,

As the Conference Chair, it gives me immense pleasure to extend our warmest greetings and best wishes to all of you. This conference is a momentous occasion for Edith Cowan University (ECU) Sri Lanka Campus, marking the official launch of our campus in Colombo, Sri Lanka. It is also a significant milestone for us as we embark on a journey to foster a high-quality research culture within the ECU Sri Lanka community.

I am delighted to inform you that the response to our call for submissions has been overwhelming. The dedication and enthusiasm of all the authors who submitted their work are truly commendable. In the spirit of nurturing a vibrant research culture, we have placed special emphasis on prioritizing student contributions, recognizing the importance of encouraging emerging scholars. After careful deliberation and rigorous evaluation, a selection of outstanding submissions has been chosen to be part of the conference proceedings. We believe that these contributions represent the cutting edge of research in the field of Sustainable Business, and we are excited to provide a platform for these ideas to be shared and discussed.

This conference is not just an event; it is a catalyst for positive change. It marks the beginning of a journey towards creating a lasting impact on sustainable business practices, not only in Sri Lanka but across the globe. We envision this event as a steppingstone to fostering collaboration, innovation, and a deeper understanding of the challenges and opportunities in the realm of sustainability. To all our authors, we extend our heartfelt congratulations on your achievements in the field of research. Your dedication and hard work have brought us to this moment, and we are eager to witness the discussions and insights that will emerge from your work during the conference.

As we approach the ECU Sri Lanka Sustainable Business Conference 2023, we look forward to the vibrant exchange of ideas, the forging of new partnerships, and the collective pursuit of knowledge. Together, we can make a difference in the world of sustainable business.

We wish each and every one of you the best of luck as you present your research and engage in the stimulating conversations that lie ahead. May this conference be the beginning of an exciting journey into a future filled with groundbreaking research and positive change.

Warm regards,
Dr Sajani Dias

Message from the Co-Chair



Dear Conference Participants and Distinguished Colleagues,

Welcome to the inaugural International Research Symposium of Sustainable Business 2023. As Co-Chair, I'm honored to share in this landmark moment with Edith Cowan University's Sri Lanka Campus and each one of you, the pioneers of sustainable business.

The centrality of sustainability in today's business panorama cannot be overstated. This symposium emerges as an encouragement for researchers, scholars, and practitioners to dive deep, deliberate, and pave the way for actionable solutions in sustainability. The overwhelming response to our call for submissions stands as a testament to the global passion and determination towards a sustainable future.

As Co-Chairs, our mission transcends the routine proceedings of a conference. We aim to knit together a tapestry of diverse thoughts, innovations, and experiences. The papers showcased herein traverse critical domains of Digital Transformation, Organizational Behaviour and the Modern Workplace, and International Business Collaboration. They promise not just to illuminate, but also to inspire.

To all contributing authors, your paper isn't merely a submission; it's a clarion call for sustainable action. Through rigorous research and collaboration, you are shaping the core of tomorrow's sustainable businesses. Your endeavors exemplify the synthesis of innovation and responsibility. This symposium is not an end; it's a beginning. Beyond the presentations and scholarly discussions, it's an invitation to form alliances, mold the future, and spark transformative changes. As we delve into the discourse, let us remember: our collective mission is to nurture businesses that are not just profitable, but also purposeful.

Our vision? A world where businesses thrive in harmony with the environment, society, and economy. This conference is but a stepping stone towards that grand tapestry.

Thank you for choosing to be a part of the ECU Sri Lanka Sustainable Business Conference 2023. As we embark on this enlightening expedition, we eagerly await the insightful exchanges and the paths we'll pave together for a brighter, sustainable tomorrow.

Best regards,
Dr Anushka Siriwardana

Message from the Co-Chair



Dear Esteemed Participants and Valued Contributors,

As Co-Chair of the ECU Sri Lanka Sustainable Business Conference 2023, I am honored and delighted to extend my warmest greetings to all of you. This conference signifies a pivotal moment in the academic landscape of sustainable business, and your presence and contributions make it all the more meaningful. I am humbled by the overwhelming response to our call for submissions and the caliber of research that we have received.

Our goal as Co-Chairs is to foster an environment where knowledge flows freely, ideas are nurtured, and collaborations are born. The selected papers and presentations in these proceedings represent a culmination of rigorous research, innovative thinking, and a deep commitment to sustainable practices.

Sustainability is not just a buzzword; it's a commitment to creating a better world for current and future generations. Your research plays a crucial role in shaping sustainable business strategies and policies that can address the most pressing global challenges.

I would like to extend my heartfelt appreciation to all the authors, reviewers, and organizers who have worked tirelessly to make this conference a reality. Your dedication and passion for sustainable business are inspiring.

During this conference, I encourage you to engage actively in discussions, share your insights, and explore new avenues of collaboration. Let's leverage the collective wisdom gathered here to drive positive change in the way we approach business and sustainability.

Together, we can chart a course towards a more sustainable future, one where businesses thrive while prioritizing environmental responsibility and social well-being.

Once again, thank you for being part of this transformative event. We look forward to meaningful interactions, shared discoveries, and the lasting impact that will emerge from the ECU Sri Lanka Sustainable Business Conference 2023.

Best regards,
Dr Madura Thivanka Pathirana

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FULL PAPERS

IRSSB18

Emergence of Online Shopping Platforms in Sri Lanka after COVID-19 and Younger Generation Getting Addicted to It

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Abstract

The full abstract looks on how internet purchasing platforms appeared in Sri Lanka during the COVID-19 outbreak and examines how young people have been addicted to this new trend. The study digs into the history and scope of the problem, talking about the rise of internet shopping and the change in customer behaviour. The paper offers important insights on the influence of the pandemic on the retail sector and the subsequent rise in e-commerce activities by drawing on reliable sources and research. The goal is to comprehend how this trend may affect the purchasing behaviours of the younger generation and any concerns connected to an addiction to internet shopping. The results demonstrate the popularity of online shopping venues, their practicality, and the difficulties experienced by conventional brick-and-mortar retailers. The study also emphasises how obsessive online buying is among younger people, which could have negative socioeconomic effects. The study finishes with suggestions on how to deal with the problem of online shopping addiction and promote responsible consumer behaviour for businesses, legislators, and parents.

Keywords: Online shopping, Sri Lanka, COVID-19, younger generation, addiction.

Introduction

The COVID-19 epidemic has had a profound impact on a number of facets of daily life, including consumer behaviour and purchasing patterns. Customers flocked to online shopping platforms as a safer and more practical substitute for conventional brick-and-mortar stores while countries throughout the world adopted lockdowns and social seclusion measures to stop the spread of the virus (Patowary, 2023). Like many other countries, Sri Lanka had an increase in e-commerce activity during the epidemic, which caused a paradigm shift in the retail environment (De Silva et al, 2020). Due to the importance of physical establishments in Sri Lanka's retail sector and the importance of lively markets and shopping centers to the vibrant culture of the nation. However, the COVID-19 outbreak compelled businesses to quickly adjust to the new situation, requiring the quick adoption of digital solutions to meet changing consumer demands (Seetharaman, 2020). Online shopping sites have seen a spectacular rise in popularity, changing how Sri Lankans purchase (De Silva et al, 2023).

The Rise of E-Commerce in Sri Lanka

Although internet purchasing platforms started to appear in Sri Lanka in the early 2000s, it wasn't until the pandemic that e-commerce really came into its own (Jayasiri, and Kariyawasam, 2016). Consumers needed a safer way to buy products and services due to limits on transportation and worries about virus transmission; e-commerce offered the perfect answer (Monuwé et al, 2004). Consumers are flocking to online marketplaces because of the ease of purchasing from the comfort of their homes and the large variety of goods that are offered (Monuwé et al, 2004).

Leading online retailers in Sri Lanka, like Daraz, Kapruka, and Wow.lk, have seen an increase in demand for a variety of goods, from food and household goods to electronics and clothing (Niranjika and Samarasinghe, 2019). The demand for contactless transactions, the availability of home delivery services, and the convenience of exploring and comparing products electronically are just a few of the reasons behind the tremendous expansion of online shopping (Shah et al, 2021).

Impact on Traditional Retail Businesses

As e-commerce gained momentum, traditional retail businesses faced significant challenges (Aryani et al, 2021). Many brick-and-mortar stores experienced a decline in footfall as consumers shifted their shopping habits to the online realm. Small and medium-sized retailers struggled to compete with the extensive product offerings and aggressive discounts offered by online platforms (Tănase, 2021).

The pandemic accelerated the digitization of businesses, and those that were able to quickly adapt and establish an online presence fared better (Amankwah-Amoah et al, 2021). However, the transition to e-commerce was not without obstacles. Some businesses lacked the technical know-how and resources to set up online stores, resulting in a digital divide that further exacerbated the impact of the pandemic on certain sectors (Amankwah-Amoah et al, 2021).

The Addictive Nature of Online Shopping among the Younger Generation

Millennials and Gen Z members of the younger age showed a pronounced preference for internet purchasing sites during the pandemic (Ali Taha et al, 2021). E-commerce appeals to many young Sri Lankans because it is convenient, offers exclusive bargains, and enables them to shop online from the comfort of their cell phones (Govinnage and Sachitra, 2019).

Online shopping's addictive tendency is an increasing worry, especially for the younger generation (Alam et al, 2008). Impulsive purchasing has increased in popularity as a result of easy access to a wide variety of goods and the allure of one-click purchases (Müller et al, 2022). Additionally, online retailers use a variety of tactics to engender a sense of urgency that may result in compulsive purchasing patterns, such as flash discounts and limited time offers (Müller et al, 2022).

Social media websites also significantly contributed to the addiction to online buying. Young consumers were enticed to make impulsive purchases by the abundance of influencers and sponsored content on timelines (Pahlevan Sharif et al, 2022). Online shopping has an addictive

charm due to the ongoing exposure to adverts and personalised material catered to individual preferences (Pahlevan Sharif et al, 2022).

Credible References Supporting the Relevance of the Study

The COVID-19 pandemic's effects on consumer behaviour and the global expansion of e-commerce have been the subject of numerous research and reports (Fedushko and Ustyianovych, 2022). The movement in customer preferences towards online shopping platforms in the Sri Lankan context has been recorded by research done by prestigious institutions like the Central Bank of Sri Lanka and market research businesses (Jayakoy et al., 2023).

For instance, a poll by the Central Bank of Sri Lanka found a considerable rise in online purchases during the lockdown period, demonstrating a rising level of customer acceptability of e-commerce in Sri Lanka (Jayakody et al, 2023). The rapid development of e-commerce in Sri Lanka and its repercussions for the retail sector have also been noted in market research reports from foreign organisations, like Statista and Euromonitor (De Silva et al., 2023).

After the COVID-19 pandemic, internet purchasing platforms started to appear in Sri Lanka, which had a profoundly transformational effect on consumer behaviour and traditional retail establishments. E-commerce has drawn an increasing number of customers, especially the younger generation, with its convenience and safety (Siriwardana and HRAT, 2023). However, the youth's addiction to online buying presents issues that need cautious consideration.

Striking a balance between encouraging the rise of e-commerce and tackling any negative implications, such as online shopping addiction, is crucial as the nation navigates the post-pandemic era (Ramadan et al, 2023). To maximise the advantages of digital commerce while fostering ethical purchasing practises and defending the interests of conventional retail sectors, policymakers, entrepreneurs, and consumers must work together (Ramadan et al., 2023).

Objectives

1. To analyze the emergence and growth of online shopping platforms in Sri Lanka post-COVID-19.
2. To understand the factors contributing to the addictive nature of online shopping among the younger generation.
3. To explore the potential socio-economic consequences of online shopping addiction among youth.

Hypothesis

1. H1: The COVID-19 pandemic has led to a significant increase in the adoption of online shopping platforms in Sri Lanka.
2. H2: The younger generation is more susceptible to developing addiction to online shopping.
3. H3: Online shopping addiction among the younger population may have adverse effects on their financial well-being and overall lifestyle.

Research Methodology

1. Populations and Sample

The population of Sri Lankan customers, in particular the younger generation between the ages of 18 and 30, is the focus of this study. Due to their greater affinity for digital technologies and active participation in online activities, such as online shopping, this age group is of interest. To get thorough insights on the rise of online shopping platforms and their addictive character among the younger generation, a mixed-approaches approach will be used, incorporating both quantitative and qualitative research methods.

A sample of 500 participants was chosen at random from the target population for the quantitative component. To ensure nationwide representation, the participants will be chosen from a variety of socioeconomic and geographic backgrounds. The sample size is chosen to maximize the generalizability of the results to a larger population while achieving a sufficient level of statistical significance.

Additionally, 50 young customers will be interviewed in-depth for the qualitative study component. Participants with varied degrees of online shopping addiction will be chosen using the purposive sampling technique. A thorough investigation of the underlying elements influencing compulsive online buying behaviors will be possible thanks to the inclusion of a wide group of interviewees.

2. Research Tools

The quantitative research will use structured questionnaires to gather data. Demographic data, online shopping habits, frequency of online purchases, variables influencing buy decisions, and experiences with online shopping addiction will all be captured via the surveys. To collect both quantitative and qualitative data, the questionnaire will include Likert scale questions, multiple-choice questions, and open-ended questions.

Interviews that are semi-structured will be used for qualitative research. The interview guide will be created using the preliminary results from the quantitative phase and knowledge gained from previous research on the addiction to internet shopping. The interviews elicit information from participants on their attitudes, motivations, and perceptions about internet purchasing. Their experiences with addiction, coping strategies, and perceived effects on their life will also be investigated.

3. Data Collection

A combination of online questionnaires and in-person interviews will be used to obtain the data. The electronic distribution of the online surveys will take place through email invites and social media channels. The survey will provide participants with the choice to complete it whenever it is most convenient for them, ensuring a better response rate. In accordance with ethical standards and regional health norms, proper preparations will be established for the face-to-face interviews to guarantee the participants' security and comfort.

4. Data Analysis

Statistical software like SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) would be utilized for the quantitative data analysis. To encapsulate the quantitative data, descriptive statistics like frequencies, means, and standard deviations will be computed. Regression analysis and other inferential statistical methods will be used to study the factors influencing online shopping addiction and uncover correlations between variables.

The qualitative information gleaned from the interviews will be coded, thematically analyzed, and then transcribed. The data will be categorized and arranged into topics and sub-themes using a coding method. This will make it easier to spot patterns, trends, and insights relating to young people's addiction to online buying. The findings will be enhanced with quotes from the interviews, which will also serve as contextualized proof.

Conclusion and Discussion

1. Conclusion

The study set out to look at how online shopping platforms started to appear in Sri Lanka following the COVID-19 pandemic and to analyse how addictive internet shopping is among the younger, 18 to 30-year-old demographic. The study used a mixed-methods approach to gather information about consumer behaviour, the causes of online shopping addiction, and its effects on society and the economy. It combined quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews.

The COVID-19 epidemic caused a considerable shift in consumer behaviour towards online buying, according to quantitative findings. Over 90% of the younger age polled claimed to have increased their online shopping during the pandemic compared to pre-pandemic levels. This increase in online purchases was attributed primarily to the ease of online shopping, the accessibility of a large variety of goods, and contactless payments.

The study also found elements that contribute to the younger generation's internet shopping's addictive tendency. Online shopping addiction was found to be significantly fueled by the need for rapid gratification, social media impact, and targeted marketing tactics. Insane buying behaviour that gave rise to addictive tendencies was also influenced by the appeal of flash sales, discounts, and time-limited offers.

The results also showed that addiction to internet shopping was strongly influenced by emotional aspects. During the online purchasing process, participants reported feeling euphoric and satisfied, which temporarily relieved stress and anxiety. But for compulsive internet shoppers, financial hardship and post-purchase regret were regular outcomes.

The interviews provided qualitative insights that shed light on the psychological and social elements of internet shopping addiction. Participants described how they have lost track of time while visiting online shopping portals, which has resulted in neglecting other obligations and activities. The fact that many participants acknowledged feeling powerless over their online buying behaviours only served to highlight how addictive the practice is.

The study also looked at the effects of internet shopping addiction on the financial security and mental health of the younger generation. The results showed a worrying trend of rising debts

and financial stress among compulsive online consumers. Addictive online shopping has been linked to overspending on unneeded things and credit card debt accumulation.

Additionally, due to their inability to rein in their buying behaviours, addicted internet shoppers displayed symptoms of worry, remorse, and low self-esteem. A cycle of tension and emotional instability was brought on by the persistent want to buy things and the worry that one would lose out on good deals.

Addiction to online shopping had effects on Sri Lankan conventional retail establishments in addition to people's personal wellbeing. As consumers migrated to internet purchasing platforms, brick-and-mortar retailers experienced a decline in foot traffic. Small and medium-sized stores found it difficult to compete with the e-commerce behemoths, which resulted in employment losses and economic difficulties for the retail industry.

In conclusion, the study showed how COVID-19 had a major impact on consumer behaviour, with a noticeable rise in online buying among Sri Lanka's younger population. Online shopping's addictive qualities were clear from impulsive buying patterns, emotional triggers, and a lack of self-control. The study emphasized the need for education and interventions to address young people's addiction to internet shopping to protect their financial security and mental well-being.

Based on the study's findings, suggestions can be made to encourage responsible online shopping behaviours, such as establishing spending caps, running campaigns to raise awareness of the risks associated with online shopping addiction, and offering financial literacy programmes to help consumers make better decisions. A balanced retail environment in Sri Lanka can also be produced by assisting conventional retail firms through digital transformation and legislative measures.

Overall, the study offers insightful information about the development of online shopping platforms and the difficulties faced by young people in Sri Lanka's addiction to online buying. Policymakers, companies, and the public may collaborate to create a sustainable and ethical online buying environment in the future by proactively addressing these concerns.

2. Discussion

The study's findings provided insight into how online shopping platforms started to appear in Sri Lanka during the COVID-19 pandemic and how addicting it is for the younger, 18–30-year-old population. These results are consistent with the study's goals, which were to analyse the shift in consumer behaviour towards online purchasing and investigate the causes of online shopping addiction. Below, the findings are explained in relation to the goals, and pertinent research theories are added to provide the phenomenon with a clearer understanding.

Objective 1: To investigate the emergence of online shopping platforms in Sri Lanka after the COVID-19 pandemic.

After the COVID-19 epidemic, the study found a considerable shift in consumer behaviour towards internet shopping. Online transactions significantly increased throughout the lockdowns and limitations due to the comfort and security provided by these platforms. This pattern is in line with Rogers' (1962) Theory of Diffusion of Innovations, which describes how

people in a society embrace modern technology. Online shopping sites can be viewed in this situation as an innovation that was quickly adopted because of its apparent benefits during the pandemic.

Objective 2: To examine the addictive nature of online shopping among the younger generation.

The study discovered that the younger generation has a propensity for online shopping addiction. Impulsive purchasing behaviours were influenced by rapid gratification, social media influence, and targeted marketing tactics. This is consistent with Brehm's (1966) psychological reaction theory, which postulates that people may act impulsively in response to perceived limitations on their freedom. When shopping online, the frequent exposure to pushy marketing tactics and time-sensitive deals may cause psychological reactions that result in addictive behaviours as a means of reclaiming a sense of autonomy.

The study also discovered emotional elements, such as feelings of euphoria and satisfaction from purchasing, that contributed to an addiction to internet shopping. Hirschman and Holbrook's (1982) theory of mood management, which contends that consumers engage in consumption behaviours to control their moods and emotions, can be connected to this occurrence. For compulsive internet shoppers, purchasing purchases offers a momentary escape from unpleasant feelings and stress, which feeds the addictive cycle.

Objective 3: To explore the impact of online shopping addiction on society and the economy.

The study emphasised the detrimental effects of internet shopping addiction on people's well-being as well as traditional retail establishments in Sri Lanka. Online addicts went through financial hardship, racked up debt, and felt guilty after making purchases. These results are consistent with the compulsive buying theory put forth by O'Guinn and Faber in 1989, which defines compulsive behaviour as excessive and uncontrollable consumption that has a detrimental impact on both one's finances and emotions.

Additionally, the habit-forming aspect of online buying had repercussions for conventional retail establishments. Small and medium-sized retailers had difficulties in surviving as consumers migrated to online platforms and foot traffic to brick-and-mortar stores decreased. This finding is consistent with the Displacement Effect theory put forth by Pitta, Franzak, and Fowler (2005), which contends that the rise of online shopping may have an adverse effect on traditional retail.

In conclusion, the research findings are in line with the study's goals and offer insightful information about the development of online shopping platforms in Sri Lanka following the COVID-19 pandemic and the young generation's propensity for compulsive online buying. We can better comprehend the phenomena and its ramifications for people, businesses, and society by applying pertinent research theories, such as the Theory of Diffusion of Innovations, Psychological Reactance, Mood Management, Compulsive Buying, and Displacement Effect. Policymakers and businesses can create targeted interventions and strategies to promote responsible online shopping practices and provide a balanced retail environment for sustainable economic growth by recognizing the addictive potential of online shopping and its impact.

Research recommendations

Future studies on the relationship between addiction and online shopping platforms among Sri Lanka's younger population may shed light on this new problem and help us better understand and treat it.

Conducting longitudinal research can help researchers better grasp the long-term repercussions of young people's addiction to internet shopping. Researchers can spot trends, changes, and potential escalation of addictive tendencies by monitoring individuals' online shopping behaviours over a long period of time. The elements that contribute to the emergence and maintenance of an addiction to online shopping will be uncovered by longitudinal studies, enabling the development of focused therapeutic solutions.

Impact on Mental Health: Future studies should examine the link between internet shopping addiction and young people's mental health outcomes. The psychological health, stress levels, and emotional control of addicted online shoppers can all be investigated in order to learn more about the relationship between online shopping and mental health. Mental health professionals can create effective interventions to support people who are battling with internet shopping addiction by understanding these links.

Interventions and preventive Strategies: It is crucial to create efficient interventions and preventive plans to deal with the addiction to internet shopping. The effectiveness of various intervention strategies, including cognitive-behavioral therapy, online support groups, and mindfulness-based therapies, should be evaluated in future studies. To reduce the risks of addiction, further preventive strategies that focus on both people and the e-commerce sector should be investigated. Implementing ethical marketing techniques, fostering financial literacy, and improving digital literacy among younger consumers may all be part of this.

It is also important to investigate how social media influencers and platforms contribute to an addiction to online purchasing. Examining the ways in which social media material affects consumer behaviour and precipitates impulsive purchases might help marketers and policymakers implement moral business practises that safeguard vulnerable consumers.

To ensure the generalizability of future study findings, varied samples from various socioeconomic backgrounds must be included. Additionally, contrasting internet shopping addiction in Sri Lanka with that in other nations can shed light on cross-cultural differences and point to potential cultural influences on addictive behaviours.

Future studies can improve our comprehension of the addiction to internet shopping among Sri Lanka's younger population by addressing these issues. Evidence-based policies, interventions, and preventive initiatives will be founded on the knowledge gathered from such studies in order to encourage responsible online buying behaviours and protect consumers' wellbeing in the digital age.

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IRSSB08 Sustainable Transport System for Food Market

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Abstract

Sri Lanka is the country that is most suitable for agriculture. Sri Lanka had a good agricultural system in the past. However, in present-day Sri Lanka, 40% of the harvest, which is sufficient for 50% of the Sri Lankan people, is wasted because of the improper transportation of goods. Our objective is to make the railway transport method more efficient than the present method. Thus, goods can be transported according to a proper scientific way. As the government can access the transportation system, people can receive subsidies from the government for transportation. Previously published papers were used because they have sufficient data and a survey to calculate post-harvest loss. Websites were used to analyze the cost of transportation and conduct a questionnaire interview. To sustain the transport method, temperature, and humidity controllers. Thus, the quality and freshness of harvest can be maintained during transportation. Thus, the export market will be increased, and the post-harvest loss can be decreased.

Keywords - Post-harvest loss, Transportation, Railway, Agriculture

Introduction

Sri Lanka is the 66th position in the global hunger indicator, with a score of 17.1, indicating moderate hunger. Sri Lanka produces approximately 710 000 MT of vegetables and 540 000 MT of fruits annually. According to the data, 40% of them are wasted because of post-harvest loss. According to the agricultural department, 19% of vegetables, 21% of fruits, approximately 221 955 MT vegetables and 290 151 MT fruits are wasted annually during transportation. It has been revealed that 40% of waste in 2021 is sufficient for the daily consumption of 10 million people. Improper storage and transportation of goods without using any temperature control cooling system are the main reasons for this waste. This reveals the most appropriate and sustainable method to minimize the wastage of goods during transport.

Objectives

We are currently attempting to achieve the most sustainable and appropriate mode of transporting goods in Sri Lanka. We can minimize food wastage during transportation if we use the railway system in Sri Lanka. Currently, in Sri Lanka, nearly 97% of the people use trucks and land vehicles for the transportation of goods, and 1% of the people use railway systems. In the 18th century, railway systems were introduced to transport tea and coffee from hilly areas. Nowadays, however, most people use railways only for passenger services, although they have access to the entire country. Therefore, our research objective is to adapt the transport system to a railway transport system.

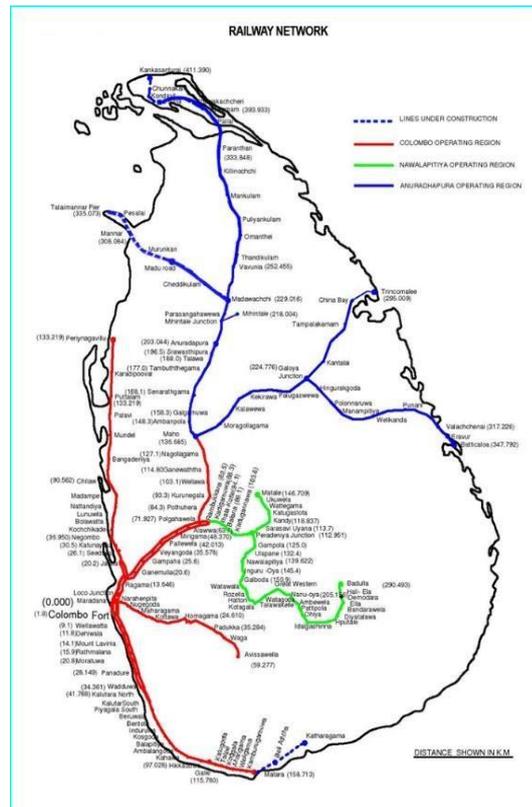


Figure 1. Railway map of Sri Lanka

Literature Review

According to (Bandara, 2021), the railways are the very first good transportation system since 1864. Sri Lanka is also in the 66th position in the global hunger chart (U.N). As mentioned, Sri Lanka has plenty of literature on food losses. The main informer is the Department of Census and station which are owned by the Sri Lankan government.

Research Methodology

Our research focuses on pre-existing research papers because there are sufficient research papers on post-harvest loss and insufficient transport systems. The study has been referred to the Central Bank Report 2019, the Department of Census and Statistics, the Department of Agriculture website, and the Association of American Railroad website. Then the questionnaire was used with the former regional manager (Central province) Mr. Dharmabandu Atapattu. (BA.hons., commerce, MPhil).

Transport Method

According to our research food waste occurs during transportation. Vendors always try to carry more load than the maximum amount that the lorry can hold. Therefore, a large quantity of vegetables is unfit for use because of improper storage of vegetables. During transportation, people sit on goods that are being transported. It also travels for two or three days in an open body truck. Therefore, they can cause severe damage to the harvest. Because Sri Lanka is a tropical country, its temperature and humidity levels are high. Perishable foods are starting to deteriorate rapidly because of it. After harvesting, the humidity and temperature can be controlled during transportation. Thus, buyers can obtain fresh food from sellers. If vegetables and fruits are stored at 3-13 C and 80%- 100% humidity during transportation, they can save

vegetables and fruits without deteriorating for approximately two weeks. In fact, the USA uses cooling freight train cars. In that system, it can control the environmental conditions. In addition, it reduces the cost of the 300 trucks used to transport goods. Moreover, it reduces carbon emission and saves time. In addition, this saves money. This is a major advantage for the trading sector. They can compare the cost of an open-body truck and railway system to transport goods as follows: For comparison, they consider that the open-body truck travels 10 km per L, and the cost for 1L gasoline is Rs.308. In addition, they consider the charge for reserving a bulk goods wagon to be Rs.2500, and the rate for transportation of bulk goods to be Rs.6.

Table 2. Comparison of cost for transportation

	Distance	Cost for open bodytruck	Cost for Railway
Anuradhapura-Trincomalee	108 km	Rs.3326.4+Driver cost	Rs.3148
Jaffna – Anuradhapura	196 km	Rs.6036.8+Driver cost	Rs.3676
Galle – Hambantota	129 km	Rs.3973.2+Driver cost	Rs.3274
Anuradhapura – Colombo	201 km	Rs.6190.8+Driver cost	Rs.3706

Conclusion and Discussion

Most of the poor farmers are unable to transport their goods without any loss. They do not have enough money to transport them using cooling lorries. In any case, this research completes that gap. According to these objectives, the present operation is limited to the export sector and some poor farmers. In any case, this method can fully fulfill every farmer's hope, which is to transport their goods in good quality. The above railway map (*Figure 1*) shows that the railway system is widespread throughout the country. Therefore, it is easy to transport goods across two provinces within a minimum time. It also helps to maintain goods without perishing during transportation. Currently, this method is used by the USA to transport food within their country. Thus, they keep their harvest as long as they can, without perishing, using this method. Minimizing post-harvest losses and maintaining an efficient transport system within the country can also be done.

Research recommendations

1. Research on collectors and sellers.
2. Research about railway stations and railway
3. Research on sustaining the railway.
4. Research to adapt dairy products to this system.

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IRSSB21

The Impact of Customer Engagement with Brands in the Social Media on Purchase Intention: Mediating Role of Brand Love

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Abstract

Consumer engagement through social media platforms has become more influential and prominent in the business and marketing aspects and this has been one of the major aspects that marketers used to focus on in attracting customers. This study was carried out to investigate the impact of customer engagement with brands on purchase intention with the mediation of brand love. To evaluate this, the researchers developed three independent variables in the COBRA model; consumption, contribution, and creation, one mediating variable namely brand love and one dependent variable; purchase intention. The quantitative research method has been employed in this study. Convenience sampling was used to collect responses, and 244 respondents made up the sample size. Using multiple regression analysis, the data gathered was examined. The results showed that the variables of brand love and creation have a strong influence on purchase intention. Brand love mediates the association between the independent variables and purchase intention, according to the results of the mediation study using the Sobel test. Moreover, study provides implications to the practice.

Keywords: COBRA, Consumption, Contribution, Creation, Brand Love, Purchase Intention

Introduction

The most significant and crucial element of digital marketing today is social media marketing which provides an incredible advantage to millions of customers across the world. Social media has grown to be a significant platform for product promotion and advertising on social media such as Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, Google Mail, WhatsApp, and others. Consequently, social media marketing has an immense impact on how customers engage with brands (Yadav & Sabhavat, 2021).

Social media marketing is a market in which websites and social media are utilized to advertise firms' goods and services. Marketers and merchants are using social media sites to reach out to customers and give them a new way to shop. The development of advanced search engines, innovative mobile devices and interfaces and online social networks has improved marketers' ability to reach customers via new channels (Shankar et al., 2011). Customers can use social media to engage in a variety of behaviors such as writing reviews, expressing their opinions, and sharing their experiences and interactions with other customers. Customers have two options when using social media: they may be active participants by rating the quality of the services they get, providing comments and materials, or they may be repeating the comments and materials of others (Pagani et al., 2011).

When customers are happy with a product or service, they leave positive reviews and spread the word about it. (Hippel, 2007). Fournier and Avery, (2011) stated that online users have transformed into ardent brand critics and judges, offering businesses and brands authoritative opinions. Customers have been encouraged to communicate, discuss, participate, and develop through social media platforms, fundamentally changing and advancing market strategy. (Hanna et al., 2011). Customers may express their support by clicking the "Like" button on Facebook. People remark on blogs, news, Facebook updates, and product reviews on other social media platforms. People interact with, support, and contribute to the thoughts and opinions of others, as result, social media have changed how consumers behave online (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010), which has important implications for businesses, goods, and brands. Consumers are becoming more influential about the brands they are engaging in as they rely less and less on businesses for information and more on one another (Muñiz & Schau, 2007). Additionally, their contacts with and opinions of businesses have a significantly greater influence on customer behavior than conventional marketing and advertising methods (Villanueva et al., 2008).

According to Gottfried and Shearer, (2016), the majority of companies are now investing more in digital platforms than in traditional media. Since businesses view that their customers' attractiveness and increased utilization would help them increase the volumes of business and profits, the use of traditional media has reduced significantly due to the multiple benefits provided by social media as a great marketing tool. Moreover, Gunawardane et al. (2022) stated in their findings that using social media for advertising and organizations' awareness of customer perspectives towards social media would help enhance business performance. Hence, the organizations should be aware of customers' activities on social media platforms rather than being passive. Social media platforms have been grabbed to create profit by connecting existing consumers and new customers, as well as understanding the personal wants and perceptions of users. Therefore, this paper aims to give more comprehensive knowledge of how to increase customer engagement through social media content.

Various theories are used to explain the consumers' brand-related activities. The present study is based on the COBRA model. When considering consumer involvement on social media platforms linked to brand-related content, the COBRA behavioral construct is employed as a unifying framework (Rahman et al., 2020). COBRA is defined as "Consumer's Online Brand Related Activities" which differs in the extent of how interactively consumer consumes social media; (Shao, 2009) introduced it first, and later (Muntinga et al., 2011) expanded on it. The COBRA framework is a conceptual and behavioral structure that encompasses consumer social media actions tied to brand-related content (Muntinga et al., 2011). Proposed three parameters for COBRAs: consumption, contribution, and creation, which correspond to a deliberate method for engaging with brand-related content via social media (Schivinski et al., 2021).

Consumption refers to consuming brand-related content while not playing an active role or contributing (Shao, 2009), with the bare minimum of involvement (Muntinga et al., 2011). Watching, listening, viewing, and reading brand-related information from posts, comments and review sections are examples (Trunfio & Rossi, 2021). The most used dimension among the consumers of COBRAs is consumption (Muntinga et al., 2011). Contribution refers to the moderate level of online brand-level involvement. Actively contributing by liking, commenting, and sharing posts and information-related content among peers (Shao, 2009). The second most used dimension among the consumers of COBRAs is contribution (Muntinga et al., 2011). Creation refers to the strongest and the ultimate level of online brand involvement (Muntinga et al., 2011). It occurs when customers participate in rapidly customizing customer experiences such as posting brand-related content, publishing videos, pictures, and audio, or writing articles about brands and their opinions (Piehler et al., 2019). It refers to actively creating and releasing brand-related content for others to consume and contribute to.

Purchasing intention is a consumer's expectation of acquiring a specific product formed by the interaction of consumer's demands, opinions, perspectives, and brand image (Beneke et al., 2016). Purchase intention is the consumer's willingness to purchase a particular good (Ariffin et al., 2018). Online reviews have an impact on consumer perception of brand equity, which in turn has an impact on consumer purchase intention. (Carr & Hayes, 2015). Few researchers define brand love as "the most intensely emotional relationship among customers with the brands (Schmid & Huber, 2019). The love toward a brand is such a solid relationship which is powerful and long-lasting that the lovable brand cannot be replaced by another in the market (Albert & Merunka, 2013). Several researchers have claimed that a customer's purchase intention is positively based on trust, which is a crucial antecedent of brand love (Albert & Merunka, 2013). Consequently, the goal of this paper is to examine the effects of consumer connection with brands on purchase intention.

Brand love has evolved into a critical construct for the relationship between the brand and the consumer. The love towards a brand is such a solid relationship which is powerful and long-lasting that the lovable brand cannot be replaced by another in the market (Albert & Merunka, 2013). Some researchers hypothesized that brand love has a variety of foundations, such as identity as a hedonic brand, such as those whose main rewards are enjoyment, delight, or fulfillment, or as a self-expressive brand, such as those that enhance personality or reveal the true self (Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006), brand personality, and brand image (Bergkvist & Bech-Larsen, 2010). Also, it can significantly influence customer loyalty towards a brand and positive electronic word of mouth which will be a huge supporting system eventually for a company (Rodrigues & Brandão, 2021). Further, Previous research has shown that consumer interaction has an impact on brand love (Bergkvist & Bech-Larsen, 2010). Several researchers have claimed that a customer's purchase intention is positively based on trust, which is a crucial

antecedent of brand love (Albert & Merunka, 2013). Customers who are happy with a product are more likely to continue using it, showing greater brand loyalty. In other words, what starts as a good purpose turns into a certain level of connection, emotional resonance, and loyalty when a product satisfies the customers. Academics assert that such fervor and positive associations are genuine signs of brand love. (Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006; Mody & Hanks, 2020).

Objectives

Main Objective: To investigate the effects of customer engagement in social media with brands on purchase intention.

Specific Objectives:

1. To examine the impact of the factors related to consumers' online brand related activities on purchase intention.
2. To identify the relationship between brand love and purchase intention
3. To examine how brand love mediates the relationship between consumers online brand related activities and purchase intention.

Hypothesis

The study tests the following hypotheses.

H1: Consumption has an impact on purchase intention.

H2: Contribution has an impact on purchase intention.

H3: Creation has an impact on purchase intention.

H4: Brand Love impacts purchase intention.

H5: Brand love mediates the impact of consumption on purchase intention.

H6: Brand love mediates the impact of contribution on purchase intention.

H7: Brand love mediates the impact of creation on purchase intention.

Research Methodology

1. Population and Sample

Social media users in Sri Lanka were selected as the population of the study. The sample for this research is obtained via convenient sampling and initially the questionnaires were distributed among 300 respondents who were engaging on social media platforms concerning brand-related activities. The non-probability, convenient sampling was used due to the unavailability of customer databases.

2. Research Tools

Primary data were used by the researchers for the data collection. As a result, the respondents were given a structured questionnaire to complete to gather primary data. To, contribution, and creation, the mediating variable of brand love, and the evaluate the independent variables of consumption dependent variable of purchase intention, the questionnaire comprised five-point Likert Scale questions ranging from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree.

3. Data Collection

Primary data will be collected through online surveys and questionnaires from the identified sample. The questionnaires were forwarded to respondents via an online survey platform such as Google forms. Out of the 300 surveys that were sent, 259 completed replies were obtained. After eliminating outliers and missing data, the final sample size was derived as 244 respondents.

4. Data Analysis

The data from the generated questionnaire was assessed utilizing quantitative techniques. The SPSS software package was used to help with the study and descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyze the data.

Conclusion and Discussion

1. Discussion

The primary objective of the current study was to investigate the effects of customer engagement in social media with brands on purchase intention. Accordingly, the study was carried out in a Sri Lankan context based on COBRA. Data was gathered by questionnaire too and figured by studying respective articles of literature. SPSS 28.0 was applied for statistical analysis including descriptive analysis, parametric assumption testing and analysis of correlation and regression. Sobel Test was used to illustrate the mediation effect. Based on the data acquired, the researchers assessed the reliability of each hypothesis and confirmed that the measurements consistently represented the measured structure since variables denoted above 0.6 (Table 1) (Hair, et al., 2009).

Table 1: Reliability Statistics

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	No. of items
Consumption	0.685	6
Contribution	0.832	6
Creation	0.889	6
Brand Love	0.659	6
Purchase Intension	0.642	5

Source: Authors based on survey results

The validity test was carried out using Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) test. Accordingly, both components' KMO tests are over 0.7; the KMO of Purchase intention is 0.708, and the KMO of Brand love is 0.737 ensuring the satisfactory level of validity measures. Further, the multi-collinearity test was carried out and confirmed that there is no multi-collinearity.

After ensuring parametric assumptions, data were proceeded for multiple regression analysis to test the hypotheses of the study. The R squared and adjusted R squared were 0.376 and 0.366 respectively confirming consumption, contribution, creation, and brand love explain 37 % of the variations in customers' purchase intention. The regression model was significant at 5% (0.000) significant level. The regression results pertaining to the study are depicted in Table 2.

Table 2: Regression Analysis Results

Model	Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficient	t	Sig
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	1.408	0.272		5.184	<0.001
CMP → PCI	-0.001	0.072	-0.001	-0.017	0.986
CNT → PCI	-0.112	0.059	-0.141	-1.905	0.058
CRE → PCI	0.109	0.041	0.180	2.677	0.008
BNL → PCI	0.655	0.061	0.597	10.734	<0.001
Indirect effect					
CMP → BNL	0.232	0.076	0.242	3.062	0.002
CNT → BNL	0.108	0.062	0.149	1.1732	0.085
CMP → BNL	0.018	0.044	0.033	0.420	0.675

Source: Authors based on survey results

Consumption and contribution show insignificant impact on purchase intention, where the significant value is greater than 5%. However, creation and brand love show significant positive impact on purchase intention. The relationships pertaining to both variables are significant at 5% significance level ($p < 0.05$). Accordingly, H1 and H2 are rejected whereas H3 and H4 are accepted.

The Sobel test was used to evaluate the impact of Independent Variables (Consumption, Contribution, and Creation) on the Dependent Variable (Purchase Intention) via the Mediating Variable (Brand Love). This study revealed that the mediating effects of all three factors are significant at $P = 0.05$. The mediation analysis between the variables is shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Mediation Analysis

Variables	Sobel test	Sig. (Two-tailed)
CMP, BNL and PCI	5.11651878	0.00000031
CNT, BNL and PCI	4.77942765	0.00000176
CRE, BNL and PCI	3.72014348	0.00019911

Source: Authors based on survey results

According to the findings, brand love impacted mediating the association between consumption and purchase intention, contribution and purchase intention, and creation and purchase intention. Accordingly, H5, H6 and H7 are accepted.

Table 4 Represents the summary of the tested hypotheses.

Table 4: Mediation Analysis

H	Predicted Effect	Decision
H1	Consumption has an impact on purchase intention	Not accepted
H2	Contribution has an impact on purchase intention	Not accepted
H3	Creation has an impact on purchase intention	Accepted
H4	Brand Love impacts on purchase intention	Accepted
H5	Brand love mediates the impact of consumption on purchase intention	Accepted

H6	Brand love mediates the impact of contribution on purchase intention	Accepted
H7	Brand love mediates the impact of creation on purchase intention	Accepted

Source: Authors based on survey result

2. Conclusion

The primary objective of this research is to investigate the impact of customer engagement in social media on purchase intention through brand love in the Sri Lankan context. To explain the variables that affect purchase intention through brand love, the researchers used COBRA model variables. Consumption, Contribution, and Creation were the factors that were considered as independent variables during this study, and the researchers confirmed that some of these characteristics have a considerable influence while others have a minor impact on consumers' purchase intentions. The findings of the research confirmed that consumption and contribution have insignificant impact on the purchase intention. It was identified that consuming social media platforms does not make the intention to purchase brands. But the mediating effect of brand love, the relationship between consumption and purchase intention and the relationship between contribution and purchase intention are at acceptable levels. Therefore, Marketers can use these results to improve their customers' intention to purchase brands or the products. Today, people spend most of their time on social media platforms such as Facebook, YouTube, and Instagram. Due to this, salespeople create more advertisements for social media than they show advertisements on Television. Thus, consumers prefer to purchase goods online because they are familiar with it and consumers' purchase intention is increasing rapidly. In conclusion, the relationship between social media marketing, brand love, and purchase intention has been successfully identified by this study.

Research recommendations

This study offers some novel recommendations. Accordingly, it was underlined how much the various aspects of customer engagement affect the consumers' purchase intention through brand love. Furthermore, from the findings, it can be identified that only from the factors of consumer engagement the purchase intention cannot be changed, whereas brand love has a significant impact. Hence it is important for marketers to take measures in order to enhance the brand love of customers and thereby enhance customer engagement.

As for the limitations of the study, it only focused on the social media consumers in Sri Lanka. Future studies could be undertaken in various settings using various social media networks in various nations, such as Facebook or Instagram in Western nations. To improve the generalizability of the research model, future research might use a longitudinal approach to investigate the causes and consequences of COBRAs. Furthermore, demographic characteristics such as specifying into different ranges should be examined further to detect the impact of these parameters on purchase intention. Furthermore, to maintain simplicity, only quantitative data is used in the current study. It does not mention acquiring qualitative data. It would be more successful if qualitative data were used as well.

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IRSSB23
The Study on the Factors Associate with Online Purchase Intention of Grocery Retailing Customers in Sri Lanka

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Abstract

The study on the factors associates with online purchase intention of groceryretailing customers in Sri Lanka.

The online purchasing culture in Sri Lanka was initially commenced in a few years of age and due to various factors consumers do not prefer purchasing grocery products through the online medium they prefer to purchase grocery products through the offline mediums. Hence, the study's objective is to recognize and evaluate the factors associated with the online purchase intention of retail consumers. The study was based on both primary and secondary data. The primary data were collected from a sample of 250 retail consumers from western provinces. The questionnaire was designed to obtain information about factors associated with online purchasing intention of retail consumers for grocery products with reference to influential factors identified through previous studies. In this study five influential factors were identified namely perceived ease of use, perceived risk, trust, web security and internet self- efficacy. In addition, this study also identified and evaluated the mediate effect of consumers' attitudes towards the relationship between influential factors stated above and online purchase intention of retail consumers. The secondary data were collected from published sources. Descriptive statistics, correlation, simple and multiple linear regression were used in identifying the relationship between the influential factors and online purchase intentionof retail consumers for grocery products. The results illustrated that there is a positiverelationship between each influential dimension and the online purchase intention of retail consumers for grocery products. The identified most associated factors towards online purchaseintention of retail consumers for grocery products were perceived ease of use, Web security and Internet self- efficacy. Thus, it is recommended that online retailers focus more on the strategies that will make an impact on the above-stated influential factors in order to attract retail consumers to purchase grocery products online.

Key Words: Retail consumers, Online purchase intention, Associate factors

Introduction

The retail industry is a rapidly growing industry in Sri Lanka that has been generating over 15% contribution to Sri Lanka's GDP. Modern grocery retailers will benefit in the long term from the slow but gradual take up of online retail in the country. This has taken place due to the changes in lifestyles of the retail customers and due to the new social circle of the wealthy people in the outstation areas (Wanninayake and Randiwela, 2007).

Recent studies predict a global increase in online shoppers to over 2 billion by 2019, compared to 1.46 billion in 2015. However, only 20% of global consumers are considered online shoppers, and the remaining 80% are not engaged in online shopping. This 80% may fall into online-non-shoppers. In Sri Lanka, there are limited online shoppers, with most consumers preferring to act as online non-shoppers due to factors influencing their online purchase intention. Despite increased internet connection, mobile usage, and social media usage, Sri Lankan customers are still reluctant to purchase products online (Withanagamage & Wattegama, 2018).

The Sri Lankan consumers have problems in buying grocery products online which is why at least half of the website visitors are not willing to buy through the site. SriLankan retail sector believes modern grocery retailers will benefit from online sales (Piumali, 2021) because the established operators have the necessary infrastructure, such as extensive warehousing and transportation facilities, to cater to this market.

This study aims to identify the most influential factors influencing online purchase intention in online grocery retailing. By analyzing the relationship between these factors, e-commerce organizations can attract potential online shoppers and create favorable online purchase intentions. The study also aims to understand the importance of online retailing and the advantages of buying groceries online rather than offline. It will provide reasons why shoppers search for information rather than purchasing products online and suggest effective online retail methods. The findings will benefit future researchers in online shopping, economics education, and those benefiting from e-commerce.

In the Western province population, customers aged 20-25 and 2630 have the highest number of online non-shoppers, while 35-44 and 18-24 age groups show high interest in online shopping. Increases in credit cards and cash on delivery systems indicate a growing demand for Sri Lankans to use the Internet to purchase goods online. With limited retail space in Colombo, more retailers are looking for online sales. However, previous studies show a limited number of online shoppers in Sri Lanka, emphasizing that even though customers have an interest in online shopping, some factors lead them to hesitate to purchase online. Retailers must identify the factors affecting consumers' online shopping intentions, as they are crucial in the competitive grocery retail market. This study aims to focus on the factors associated with online purchase intention of grocery retail customers in Sri Lanka.

Objectives

1. To identify the factors associated with online purchase intention of grocery retailing customers.
2. To identify the how consumers' attitudes, mediate the association between associated factors and online purchase intention for grocery products.

Hypothesis

H1 – There is a relationship between perceived ease of use and online purchase intention of grocery retailing customers.

H2 – There is a relationship between perceived risk and online purchase of grocery retailing customers.

H3 – There is a relationship between trust and online purchase intention of grocery

H4 – There is a relationship between web security and online purchase intention of H5 – There is a relationship between internet self-efficacy and online purchase intention

H6 – Consumer Attitudes are mediating the relationship between associate factors and online purchase intention.

Populations and Sample

1. Sample element

The sample element for this study is defined as a person within the above research population between the ages of 18 to 50 who lives in the western province of Sri Lanka.

2. Sample

Since not all the areas can be accessed due to restriction of time duration and cost constraints, a sample of 250 retail shoppers are taken from the Western province as the sample for this study.

3. Sampling technique

To conduct a more effective study, the sample will be drawn based on systematic sampling technique. This research will focus on four main supper market outlets in order to collect data and based on their market share and customer retention within an hour, the sample technique will be conducted

Research Methodology.

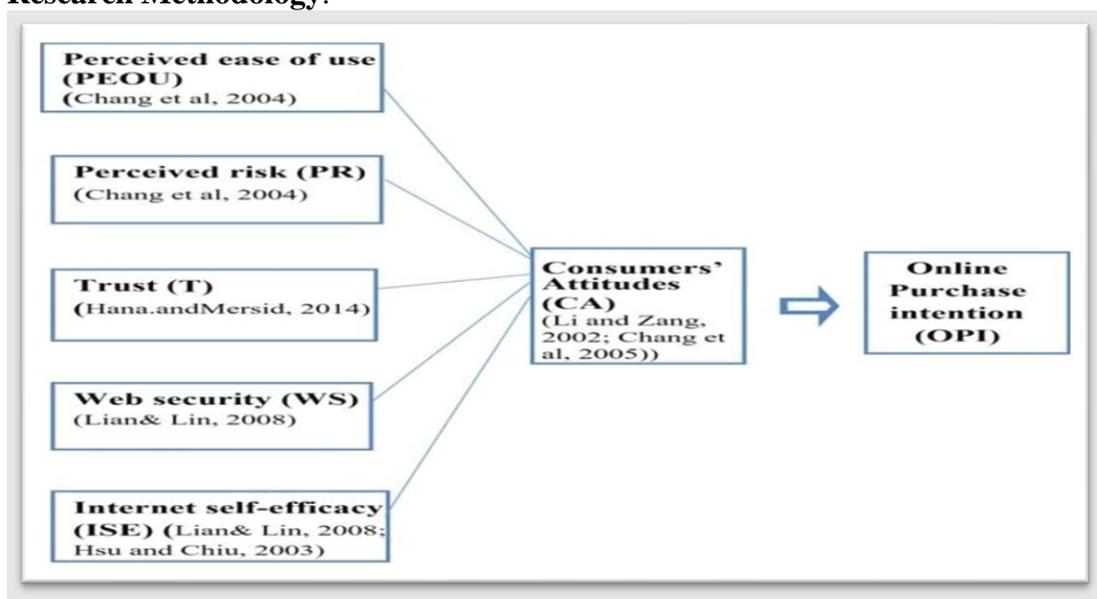


Figure 1 - Relationship between Independent, Mediator and dependent Variable Source: Author's Work

Table 1: Description of the components

Concept	Definition	Source
Perceived ease of use (PEOU)	Perceived ease of use is identified as a determinant towards the acceptance of individual to technology within the Technological Acceptance Model	Davis et al., 1989 Raafat and Bouchab, 2003
Perceived risk (PR)	Perceived risk acts as a major barrier for the acceptance of e-services. The perceived risk is also defined as 'a combination of uncertainty plus seriousness of outcome involved.	Featherman and Pavlou, 2003
Trust (T)	Trust defined as 'tendency of one party that is willing to accept the actions by the other party even though the first party is not being protected by the second party and fail to control the actions of the second party	Lee and Turban, 2001 Kim et al, 2001
Web security (WS)	Internet self-efficacy defined as 'individual judgment of self-efficacy of using web-based application software or services in a general internet environment'	Ranganathan and Ganapathy, 2002
Internet self-efficacy (ISE)	Web security referred to the 'encryption of transactions to prevent third party fraud or theft'	Cited in Meng and Chao, 2003
Consumers' attitudes (CA)	Attitudes are defined as 'an overall persistent evaluation towards people, thing, or goods'	Resenberg and Fishbein, cited in Mahmood et al, 2011
Online purchase intention (OPI)	Consumers' intention to build an online relationship and have transactions with a web retailer.'	Moon and Kim, 2001

Source: Author's Work

Research Tools

A quantitative approach was used in this study and survey methods were used to collect the primary data from the respondent through the self-administrative questionnaire. Both descriptive and inferential statistics were used in analyzing the data. Frequency counts, mean, percentages and standard deviation were used as descriptive tool and structural equation model was used to identify the relationship between associate factors and online purchase intention when having a mediating affect from consumer's attitudes.

Data Collection

3.1 Primary data collection

Primary data were collected through a self-administered questionnaire from 250 respondents selected from five areas of Western province. The sample was distributed in Colombo, Kaluthara, Gampaha, Dehiwala and Negombo. Data pertaining to this study have been collected from customers by using field investigators through personally filled questionnaire since any rejected questionnaire was found.

3.2 Secondary data collection

Secondary data was gathered from sources such as the Central Bank Report of Sri Lanka, Department of Census and Statistics, published journal articles, business magazines, business articles, and related books. The secondary sources referred to within this study are included in the reference section of this report.

Data Analysis

With the purpose of verify the latent constructs convergence validity Cronbach Alpha, AVE (Average Variance) and CR (Construct Reliability), were examined and it was indicated that Cronbach Alpha > 0,8, AVE > 0,5, CR > 0,8 (Hair, 2009) and all the latent variables can be justified.

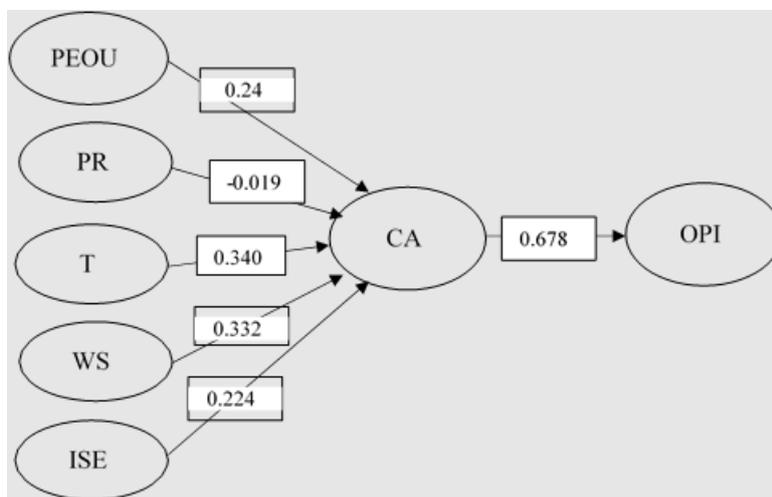


Figure 3 - SmartPLS Bootstrapping analysis Source: SmartPLS 4 output

According to the standardized path coefficients path analysis, indicated that all direct effects and the moderator effect are statistically significant at a 95% confidence level and there were positive except for the variable Perceived risk (PR) and it is evident that there is a positive relationship between the four independent variables: Perceived ease of use (PEOU), Trust (T), Web security (WS) and Internet self-efficacy (ISE) towards Online purchase intention (OPI) of retail consumers for grocery products. Although trust (T) has a greater effect ($\beta=0.340$) on online purchase intention.

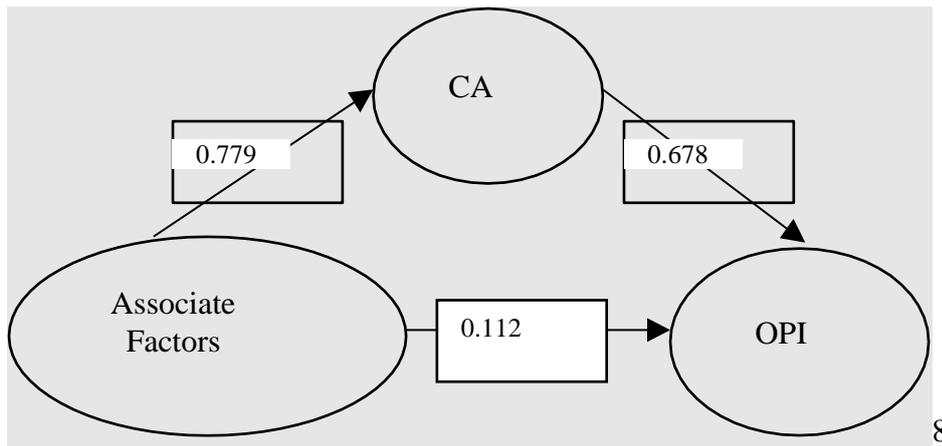


Figure 4 - SmartPLS mediating analysis Source: SmartPLS 4 output

The indirect effect is equal to 0.135 with a 95% bootstrap confidence interval of 0.1650 (lower limit) to 0.3430 (upper limit). Noticed that “zero” does not fall within the 95% confidence interval, we will reject the null hypothesis hence, it is proved that Consumers’ attitudes (CA) are creating a significant influence on the relationship between the independent variables and Online purchase intention (OPI) on retail consumers for grocery products.

Conclusion and Discussion

1. Discussion

In this study, five independent variables were selected with reference to the previous research, and they were namely Perceived ease of use (PEOU), Perceived risk (PR), Trust (T), Web security (WS) and Internet self-efficacy (ISE). However, according to the analysis of information done Perceive risk reported negative relationship with online purchasing intention and (Katta & Patro) also indicated that Perceive risk reduces the intention to purchase goods but it plays a significant role in deterrent consumers’ online shopping behavior and predict consumers’ intention.

There are empirical evidence supporting the positive relationship between PEOU and trust in online purchase intention in Sri Lanka. (Baraghani, 2007 as cited by Rajapakse, 2017; Damghanian et al., 2016; Nayanajith et al., 2021e). Therefore, the findings of the present research study confirm the previous findings of the respective context.

Theory of Planned Behavior discussed self-efficacy as a variable to deal with perceived behavioral control. Accordingly, the study also stated that online shopping as a service to be referred to e-services and purchase intention. (Cited in Meng and Chao, 2003) Therefore, the present study also indicated a positive influence on online purchasing intention when consumers are efficient on the internet.

The word attitude symbolizes the overall level of favorability or un favorability towards external stimuli. It simply indicates individuals’ likes and dislikes. Further, the study identified that consumer attitudes are affected towards online purchase intention (Ajzen and Fishbein cited in Mahmood et al, 2011) since as per the present study consumer attitudes play a mediation role between independent variables and Online purchase intention.

The study examined the demographics of retail customers, their involvement and preferences in online grocery shopping, the variables influencing online purchase intentions, and the mediating role that customers' attitudes played in these variables. Males between the ages of 27 and 33 who were well-educated and employed in the private sector made up most retail consumers. The bulk of consumers earned more money each month, with 38% having monthly salaries between Rs. 50,000 and Rs. 100,000. Only 4% of consumers constantly relied on online grocery shopping, while 46% occasionally used it and only 19% actively engaged in the activity. The most popular online purchases were personal care products, while frozen food, dairy, fruits, and vegetables were not favored. The most popular payment option for online grocery consumers was credit cards. The primary reasons for not using online grocery retailing were lack of awareness (78% of the total sample) and difficulties in product search on web pages (24%). Additionally, 25% of retail consumers cited a lack of proper interaction as a reason for not using online grocery retailing.

In conclusion, the study reveals the demographic characteristics of retail consumers, their engagement and preferences in online grocery retailing, the factors influencing online purchase intentions, and the mediating effect of consumers' attitudes on these factors.

Recommendations Areas for Future Research

The study highlights the managerial implications of online grocery retailing, particularly for retailers targeting this market. It recommends that online grocery retailing should be more convenient, as consumers perceive ease of use as highly affecting their online purchasing intention. However, traditional purchasing methods may not be as convenient due to the risk of not delivering products as promised. To improve delivery experiences, online retailers should focus on improving their delivery systems.

Retailers should also prioritize web security for their online purchases, ensuring a secure process for monetary transactions and addressing financial risk and performance risks associated with grocery products during online purchases. They should provide genuine products of better quality, like those displayed on the website. Additionally, some retail consumers may find internet efficacy difficult, especially for those over 40. To improve internet efficiency, online retailers should provide an easy navigation system and an online purchasing method that is understandable to all individuals.

This study illustrates that the online purchase intention of retail consumers is influenced by the perceived ease of use, perceived risk, trust, web security and internet self-efficacy however certain factors such as product involvement, online merchants' attitudes and behavior and consumer characteristics are not considered therefore more studies are required to examine the impact of the above areas. Furthermore, this study was conducted only for 250 retail consumers, and it is suggested to increase the sample size of the study above 250 level to obtain more analyzed information.

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CASE STUDIES

IRSSB01

Towards Sustainability: A Case Study of Transforming the Sri Lankan Apparel Industry

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Abstract

This case study explores the transformation journey of the Sri Lankan apparel industry towards sustainability amidst the worst economic crisis in 70 years. Despite facing challenges due to economic instability, the industry has defied predictions and exhibited remarkable resilience. The study assesses the industry's response to the crisis, evaluates the impact on workers' well-being, and proposes strategies for achieving sustainable growth. The research highlights the paradoxical effects of the crisis on the industry, where growth and worker precarity coexist. Key aspects analyzed include government concessions, access to fuel, and currency depreciation that supported the industry's performance. The study underscores the importance of adopting eco-friendly practices, ethical labor standards, and responsible sourcing to promote long-term sustainability. Insights from this case study can inform policymakers, investors, and stakeholders in building a socially responsible and environmentally sustainable apparel industry in Sri Lanka.

Keywords: Sustainability, Apparel Industry, Economic Crisis, Resilience.

Overview

Transforming Sri Lankan Apparel: A Journey to Sustainability

Summary

This case study explores the prospects of sustainability in the Sri Lankan apparel industry. The study highlights the value and interest in promoting sustainability to ensure the industry's long-term success in a positive business environment.

Background

The Sri Lankan apparel industry is a crucial contributor to the country's economy, but it has faced various challenges concerning its environmental and social impact (Weerasinghe et al, 2023). As global concerns for sustainability grow, it becomes imperative for industry to adapt to eco-friendly practices (Wickramasingha and Coe, 2022). The worst economic crisis to hit Sri Lanka in 70 years is currently paradoxically having a contradictory impact on the garment business (Withanaarachchi and Silva, 2023). After defaulting on international loans totaling over \$55 billion due to the country's economic instability, which started in March 2022, the nation filed for bankruptcy (Sardar, 2022). The country has been seriously affected by this crisis, and its people are now struggling to meet necessities including those for gasoline, power, gas, medicines, and food. Due to problems with the supply of fertilizer, which result in crop loss and sluggish growth, the nation also has difficulties with food security, which is aggravating the crisis (Sardar, 2022).

In the midst of the current economic crisis, the garment industry, a crucial pillar of Sri Lanka's economy, faces an unclear future (Withanaarachchi and Silva, 2023). The success of the sector,

which accounts for more than 45% of the nation's export revenues, has been a top concern for the media, researchers, and industry stakeholders (Withanaarachchi and Silva, 2023). To avoid any delays, manufacturers and merchants started to relocate their sourcing orders to neighboring nations where there was a reliable supply of fuel and energy.

Despite these initial worries, the garment sector has amazingly defied predictions and displayed incredible toughness throughout the prolonged crisis (Wickramasingha and Coe, 2022). Contrary to expectations, the industry has performed exceptionally well, and it is taking advantage of special benefits that local businesses are not able to obtain. Export processing zones and garment manufacturers have received concessions and exemptions from the government, ensuring that they may continue to operate despite lengthy power outages and fuel shortages (Wickramasingha and Coe, 2022). The sector gained from the Sri Lankan rupee's fall versus the US dollar, which increased export revenue (Tripathi et al, 2022).

Additionally, investors' interest in the industry has remained strong, with large investments and expansions expected in 2022 (Withanaarachchi and Silva, 2023). In June 2022, the sector's export revenue reached a record high, growing by an astounding 39.45% (Withanaarachchi and Silva, 2023). Revenue from garment exports reached \$5.6 billion at the end of December 2022, up 5.6% from the pre-pandemic period in 2019 and 10% from the prior year (Withanaarachchi and Silva, 2023).

In conclusion, while Sri Lanka has faced difficulties because of the economic crisis, the garment industry has defied predictions and thrived during this time. This expansion, nevertheless, has not been without consequences. As the sector grows, it is important to consider how it affects the workers and whether their circumstances are consistent with the sector's success. This case study aims to explore ways to make the industry more sustainable while delving into the crisis mode in Sri Lanka's garment sector and analyzing the repercussions for businesses and workers.

The case study aims to achieve the following objectives:

1. Assess the Resilience of the Sri Lankan Apparel Industry During the Economic Crisis.
2. Evaluate the Impact of the Crisis on Workers in the Apparel Industry.
3. Propose Strategies for Achieving Sustainable Growth in the Apparel Industry

Studying the crisis mode in the Sri Lankan apparel industry is of utmost importance for several compelling reasons. Firstly, the garment sector holds significant economic significance in Sri Lanka, contributing to export revenue and providing numerous jobs. Evaluating the industry's response to a severe economic crisis is vital to gauge its resilience and potential for sustainable growth (Thuseethan, 2015).

Secondly, the industry's ability to thrive during a crisis while concurrently subjecting workers to precarity raises critical concerns about the distribution of advantages and vulnerabilities within the sector. Examining this paradox can reveal potential power imbalances and economic disparities, shedding light on the need for equitable practices. Moreover, understanding the implications for workers as the industry expands amidst the crisis is essential. Assessing their working conditions, pay, and job security can uncover potential issues related to labour rights and social sustainability (Ranasinghe & Dharmadasa, 2013).

Additionally, the study aims to address sustainability concerns within the garment sector. Given its substantial environmental impact and reliance on imported resources, promoting eco-

friendly practices is vital for long-term economic and environmental sustainability. The study's findings can be valuable for policymakers, investors, and other industry stakeholders. They can gain insights into fostering social responsibility and sustainable growth in the apparel industry, guiding policy changes and investment priorities to create a robust and socially just sector (Cooray, 2016).

Furthermore, learning from the industry's crisis response, can provide valuable lessons for other sectors and countries facing similar difficulties. Understanding the factors that support the sector's growth during adversity can enhance economic resilience and crisis management. Despite the sector's significance, there might be a research gap concerning the specific effects of the ongoing crisis on businesses and workers. This case study aims to bridge this gap and offer a comprehensive understanding of the industry's dynamics amid the current economic environment (Singh & Sonnenburg, 2018).

Data Collection

Data for this study was collected through primary interviews with industry experts, policymakers, and representatives from apparel companies. Additionally, extensive secondary research was conducted, involving scholarly articles, reports, and case studies from similar sectors globally.

Conclusion and Discussion

Conclusion

In conclusion, given the economic importance of the Sri Lankan garment industry as a significant source of employment and export money, research into the crisis mode in the sector is essential. The fact that the industry has survived the economic downturn while workers experience precarity raises significant questions about power dynamics and equity. Promoting social sustainability requires assessing the effects on the rights and well-being of workers.

Furthermore, addressing sustainability issues is crucial for the industry's long-term viability in terms of both the economy and the environment. The study's conclusions can help promote social responsibility and responsible growth for policymakers, investors, and stakeholders.

Additionally, by improving general economic resilience, other sectors, and nations can benefit from lessons learned from the industry's crisis response. This case study fills a research gap and provides a thorough grasp of the dynamics of the apparel industry amid the current crisis. Overall, looking at the crisis mode with the stated goals offers a blueprint for creating a strong and socially conscious garment industry in Sri Lanka, assuring its sustainable growth and favorable effects on both businesses and employees.

Discussion

The first goal must be accomplished by conducting a thorough investigation of the Sri Lankan garment industry's resiliency during the severe economic crisis. The study emphasizes the paradoxical consequences of the crisis on the garment sector through a careful review of industry performance statistics, expert interviews, and pertinent news. Despite the unfavorable economic circumstances, industry managed to thrive and made a substantial contribution to the nation's export revenues. The study explores the crucial elements that supported the industry's

resiliency. It demonstrates how the government's concessions and advantages in international commerce supported the sector's operations during the crisis. Power outages were avoided in export processing zones and garment factories, ensuring uninterrupted output, which was essential to the industry's success. Additionally, consistent fuel availability and the Sri Lankan rupee's devaluation versus the US dollar contributed to an increase in industrial revenue. By accomplishing this goal, the study offers insightful knowledge of the industry's adaptive tactics and its ability to overcome economic distress. Other sectors and companies facing comparable crises can benefit from understanding the specific variables that contributed to their resilience by learning how to establish strategies for survival and growth.

The second objective aims to evaluate the impact of the economic crisis on the workers employed in the Sri Lankan apparel industry. Through primary interviews with workers, labor advocates, and industry experts, the research paints a detailed picture of the workers' working conditions, wages, job security, and overall well-being during the crisis period. The study's findings show that the workers are facing a challenging scenario. Despite the industry's expansion, there were worries about the precarity and exploitation of the workforce. Due to the industry's adaptability, certain employees enjoyed solid working conditions, while others encountered job security and pay equity difficulties. The report emphasizes the necessity to deal with labor rights issues and make sure that the expansion of the business results in better living and working circumstances for its personnel. The case study contributes to discussions on social sustainability and labor practices within the apparel sector by accomplishing this goal. It underlines the necessity of equal benefits for all stakeholders, including labor, and emphasizes the significance of a worker-centric approach to industry growth.

The third goal is to offer practical solutions for promoting the long-term expansion of the Sri Lankan clothing sector. The research presents a roadmap for the industry's transformation towards environmental and social responsibility through a thorough analysis of industry trends, best practices from other sectors, and input from sustainability experts. The suggested strategies include a range of sustainability-related topics. They place a strong emphasis on implementing environmentally beneficial behaviors, such as resource efficiency, the circular economy, and the use of sustainable materials. To ensure ethical and sustainable production, the case study also emphasizes the significance of supply chain openness. The study also suggests regulatory changes that can encourage sustainability activities and foster an atmosphere that is favorable for green investments in the sector. Additionally, it promotes greater customer knowledge of sustainable apparel options, promoting responsible consumer behavior. By reaching this goal, the study provides a useful and forward-looking strategy for increasing the sustainability of the Sri Lankan textile sector. These suggestions can serve as a roadmap for policymakers, investors, and other industry stakeholders who want to affect good change, encourage responsible growth, and advance a more sustainable future for the sector.

Case study recommendations

1. In-depth Worker-Centric Study: Future research should conduct an in-depth study focusing on the well-being and working conditions of apparel industry workers during economic crises. This study should delve into the experiences of workers across different segments of the industry to gain a comprehensive understanding of how growth and resilience during crises impact their livelihoods and job security.

2. Comparative Analysis with Global Apparel Sectors: A comparative analysis of the Sri Lankan apparel industry's crisis response with similar sectors in other countries can provide valuable insights. This research should explore the factors that contribute to resilience, successful sustainability practices, and strategies for achieving equitable growth amidst economic challenges, offering valuable lessons for sustainable development in the apparel industry.
3. Policy Impact Assessment: A future research study should assess the effectiveness and impact of policy reforms introduced to support the apparel industry during the economic crisis. This analysis should evaluate the extent to which these policies have contributed to the industry's resilience, worker well-being, and overall sustainability. The findings will guide policymakers in refining existing policies and developing new initiatives to further enhance the industry's long-term viability and social responsibility.

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IRSSB02

Sustainable Business Practices and CSR by Ceylon Cold Stores: A Case Study

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Abstract

This case study examines the sustainable business practices and corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives implemented by Ceylon Cold Stores (CCS), a leading food and beverage company in Sri Lanka. The study explores how CCS has integrated sustainability into its operations, focusing on recycling, efficient initiatives, sustainable packaging, and responsible supply chain practices. The positive outcomes of CCS's sustainability efforts, such as reduced carbon emissions, energy savings, waste reduction, and enhanced brand reputation, are highlighted. Additionally, the case study delves into the social impact of CCS's CSR initiatives, including community engagement, employee welfare, and ethical practices. The study emphasizes the value and interest of CCS's sustainability approach, highlighting the benefits of integrating sustainability and CSR into corporate strategies. Overall, the case study of CCS provides valuable insights into the transformative power of sustainable business practices and CSR, serving as a guide for people aspiring to create a positive environmental and social impact while achieving financial success.

Keywords: Corporate Social Responsibility, Ceylon Cold Stores, Sustainable business practices, Recycling, Responsible Supply Chain.

Overview

This case study will provide an insight into Ceylon Cold Stores' successful integration of business sustainability practices and CSR initiatives in its corporation and the food and beverage market, figures and facts will be provided for further clarity and references for further study.

Summary

This case study is based on Ceylon Cold Stores, a renowned Sri Lankan food and beverage manufacturer, and how it has implemented certain sustainable business practices. The value and interest of the case study is to investigate the values of the company, the certain initiatives that the company is creating, and its future vision of it with its sustainable path. The case study will end with a discussion in which all points made will be assessed.

Background

Ceylon Cold Stores (CCS) is one of Sri Lanka's oldest food and beverage manufacturing companies in Sri Lanka, it has been in the industry since 1866 and has an annual income of Rs 126,149 Mn according to the 2022/2023 annual report (2023), which makes it one of the leading companies in the market. Due to this success, it makes the company one of the largest and most influential brands in Sri Lanka. With sustainability as one of

CCS’s major targets, the company takes necessary actions to tackle this agenda. Figure 1.1 below shows the impact of these actions through these figures.

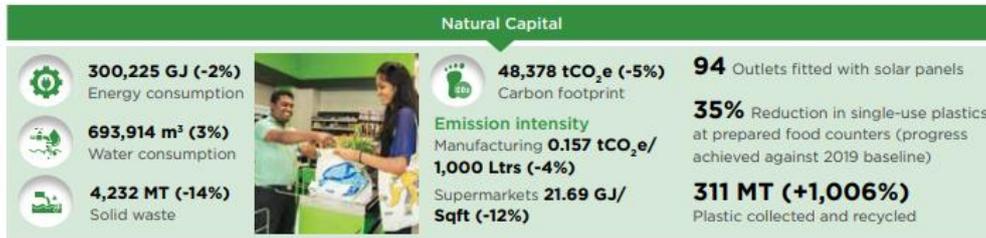


Figure 1 - Figures in the 2022/23 annual report of CCS providing the sustainable facts of the company.

According to the official website for CCS shown in figure 1.2, their sustainable business practices derive from their ‘CSR Vision’ by the John Keells Foundation which has a few areas they aim to focus on to help be a socially responsible corporation and that is: Education, Health, Livelihood development, Environment, Arts & Culture, and Disaster Relief and they do this by allocating 1% of their annual income to fund these initiatives, some of these areas had great success too like the Health area in which the brand was able to conduct 13,737 cataract surgeries for people in need. (John Keells Foundation, n.d.)



John Keells Website

In accordance with the CSR Vision, the CCS brand also personally creates a set of initiatives to achieve sustainability, Figure 1.3 shows one such example which is called ‘Plasticcycle’, a separate brand created in 2017 to tackle the plastic pollution issue. The brand has made efforts to reduce, reuse, and recycle the use of plastic and from 2017 to date, they have collected up to 72,280kg worth of recyclable plastic waste (Plasticcycle, n.d.)



Figure 3 - The 3 major focuses of the Plasticycle initiative taken from the Plasticycle site

Conclusion and Discussion

1. Conclusion

CCS is actively trying to make their company more sustainable and socially responsible; they demonstrate this by having a clear goal with their CSR vision and producing new initiatives to become more sustainable. In addition, they demonstrate their will to continue to do this and further go the distance to be more sustainable and responsible.

2. Discussion

Sustainable and Social Responsibility provides a positive impact on the company, by being sustainable CCS was able to find ways to tackle the plastic problem and make use of the plastic to benefit themselves i.e., reusing the plastic in their bottles and by being more socially responsible they were able to help society in different areas thus generating a reputation for the brand and making the people align with the brand creating CCS as a 'people's brand'.

Case study recommendations

1. Due to limited data on the impact of the initiatives and CSR, internal research would be needed to collect the quantitative data necessary to output a more legitimate case study on the impact.
2. The methodology used can be based on surveys and interviews, which can provide the best insight and data as it can help further prove the impact, the targeted groups can be customers, recipients of the initiative and the staff of the company.

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IRSSB12
**Moving Forward Post Crises Through Sustainable Business Practices: Jetwing
Kaduruketha, Sri Lanka**

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Abstract

The Sri Lankan economy relies heavily on the tourism industry. Prior to the recent Easter attacks and the subsequent pandemic and economic crisis, Sri Lanka has been internationally valued as a preferred travel destination that provides phenomenal and unique, culturally rich experiences, owing to its natural splendor and cultural legacy (Fathima & Sachithanatham, 2021). Among these destinations is one of Sri Lanka's most successful hotels, Jetwing Hotels. Jetwing Hotels strives to be a catalyst for change in the sustainable travel sector, through their prioritization of sustainability practices in their business operations, marking a positive impact on the environment and empowering local communities (Jetwing Hotels, 2023). The case study's focus will be on Jetwing Kaduruketha and Wellawaya, and how they can adopt a long-term focus on health and wellness, and regenerative tourism to move forward post-crises. We will also be extensively studying the UNEP environmental and social sustainability framework, and how it can be used to enhance sustainability development at the hotel. Finally, we propose a strong promotion of Ayurvedic medicinal treatments that move with post COVID-19 trends towards health and wellness tourism, as well as community engagement programs that enhance the sustainable development of local communities, while also offering guests a regenerative touristic experience.

Keywords: Sustainable Tourism, Jetwing Kaduruketha, UNEP Sustainability Framework, Regenerative Tourism, Community Empowerment, Wellness Tourism

Overview

Focusing on UNEP's environmental, social and sustainability framework, we aim to answer – How can Jetwing Kaduruketha move forward post-crises, while enhancing its sustainable business practices? We recommend a long-term focus on wellness and regenerative tourism.

Summary

Jetwing Kaduruketha is an agro-luxury, eco-friendly resort, located in the rural Wellawaya of Sri Lanka. It aims to improve the quality of life of surrounding communities while also providing a traditional Sri Lankan experience to its guests (Jetwing Hotels, 2023; The Green Cover, 2023). Collaborating closely with the local farming families, Jetwing Hotels is a firm believer in incorporating sustainable business practices that benefit their locality. Keeping this in mind, Jetwing Kaduruketha aims to uplift the economic stance of such farmers through financial assistance (offering seed money) that allows farmers to thrive without falling into a vicious debt cycle (The Green Cover, 2023). The resort also provides many culturally immersing experiences that highlight the paddy cultivation processes and rural village lifestyle and culture (Jetwing Hotels, 2023). Moreover, supporting local suppliers and cutting down the business' carbon impact are both achieved by prioritizing local purchasing. The percentage of goods sourced locally has increased from 43% to 46% between the previous and present year (22/23) (Jetwing Hotels, 2023). According to internal sources (via an informal interview with a resident naturalist), during 2022, the Kaduruketha farmers have received 60% more than the government's guaranteed price. This is just one example of how Jetwing Kaduruketha's sustainability initiatives have helped alleviate the financial burden of local communities, paving a path towards a more economically, and socially sustainable future.

Research question – This case study aims to explore how Jetwing Kaduruketha can adopt a long-term focus on wellness and regenerative tourism, to move forward post-crises while improving their present sustainable business practices.

The value and interest of the case study - This research paper will explore the evolution of sustainable tourism in Sri Lanka in the context of the economic crisis and post-pandemic. The UNEP environmental and social sustainability framework will be used as a theoretical framework, as it provides guidance on sustainable practices across different sectors. The framework aims to prevent and reduce harmful effects on human well-being and the planet and to encourage efficient and environmentally friendly resource utilization. It also guarantees the safety of those in need and protects cultural richness (United Nations Environment Programme, 2020).

Conclusion and Discussion

1. Conclusion

The post-crisis Sri Lanka brought in many changes and rifts to the tourism industry landscape. Managing through that change can be challenging. The UNEP sustainability framework has proved to be a useful tool in navigating through that change, providing such industries with the necessary guidance to pull through the storm. As we reflect on certain guiding principles under this framework, we look to transform Jetwing Kaduruketha into a more sustainable travel destination that is strengthened by its sustainable business practices. As such, focusing on preserving the traditional Sri Lankan cultures and practices, especially with moving trends

towards sustainable travel that focuses on wellness tourism and community engagement, we hope these recommendations will prove to be relevant, effective and practical in pulling through post-crisis, while enhancing what they stand for – to be a pioneer in the sustainability tourism industry, and continue to create a butterfly effect (inspiring others to follow in their sustainability journey) (Jetwing Hotels, 2023).

2. Discussion

Following the COVID-19 pandemic, Sri Lanka faced many challenges which significantly influenced the tourism industry. This can be noted from the dramatic downturn in tourist arrivals, revenues, and GDP contraction by 3.6% in 2020 (Fathima & Sachithanatham, 2021; Jetwing Symphony Annual Report 2020/21, 2021).

With low levels of occupancy noted at Jetwing Kaduruketha during the pandemic and post-pandemic, the hotel suffered financially (comparative to former years). However, due to its long-term focus on sustainability, they were successful in cushioning this negative impact to a certain extent.

The Hotel's unique take on sustainability focuses on harmonizing with the local communities in creating significant, positive long-term improvements, both socially and environmentally. This can be noted through their many sustainability-focused initiatives; and their co-existence with surrounding farming communities that aim at uplifting their livelihoods from an economic and social standpoint.

As the UNEP framework aims to strengthen sustainability initiatives, protecting the people and the planet from adverse impacts, it is committed to raise environmental and social standards that promote human well-being and preserve the environment (United Nations Environment Programme, 2020). Under the guiding principles of the framework, which include 'Leave No One Behind,' Gender Equality, Human Rights, Sustainability, and Accountability, the 2030 Goals for Sustainable Growth is a worldwide call to take steps to end poverty, preserve the environment, and guarantee that everyone can 'enjoy happiness and peace of mind' (United Nations Environment Programme, 2020).

Overall, standing firm on the UNEP framework for sustainable business practices can help alleviate the challenges arising from recent post-crises faced in Sri Lanka, and look towards building a brighter future for the tourism industry. Moving forward with a strong focus on present and upcoming sustainability travel trends, such as health and wellness indulgence, and regenerative tourism that allows tourists to immerse in the local cultures and traditions, can continue to enhance existing sustainability practices at Jetwing Kaduruketha.

Case study recommendations

1. Promotion of Health & Wellness Tourism

Building on one of the guiding principles of the UNEP sustainability framework - 'Leave No One Behind', ensuring proactive engagement with surrounding communities, especially the marginalized, and most vulnerable to crisis and climate change impacts (United Nations Environment Programme, 2020), i.e is the local farming communities of Wellawaya, under this context.

Accordingly, while traditional Sri Lankan Ayurvedic treatments exist at Jetwing Kaduruketha, increasing its promotion via digital channels can prove to help keep up with the new trend towards wellness tourism (Majeed & Kim, 2022), while also maintaining sustainable business practices that preserve local traditions.

2. Enhanced Community Engagement Programs

Keeping to the ‘Sustainability and Resilience’ framework, under the UNEP guiding principles, practicing community engagement programs helps promote sustainability, while also increasing the resilience of (under-valued) communities (United Nations Environment Programme, 2020).

Accordingly, while Jetwing Kaduruketha has many such programs in motion, like Sri Lankan cookery demonstrations and pottery classes (Jetwing Hotels, 2023), they can aim to increase sustainable development of local communities, while providing their guests with unique cultural experiences. As such, reflecting a regenerative tourism approach, implementing a sustainable skills workshop that focuses on upcycling, or handicraft-making using locally available materials can provide an opportunity for guests to actively engage with the community, learn about Sri Lankan traditions, while contributing to the community's economic growth through skill-sharing and support for local businesses.

Some suggestions for workshops include coconut-leaves weaving, wood carving, educational workshops on wildlife conservation, and passing on traditional ayurvedic healing practices through workshops.

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IRSSB13
Increasing Propensity for Corporates to Move Beyond CSR - Case of Zeroplastic Movement (Zpm)

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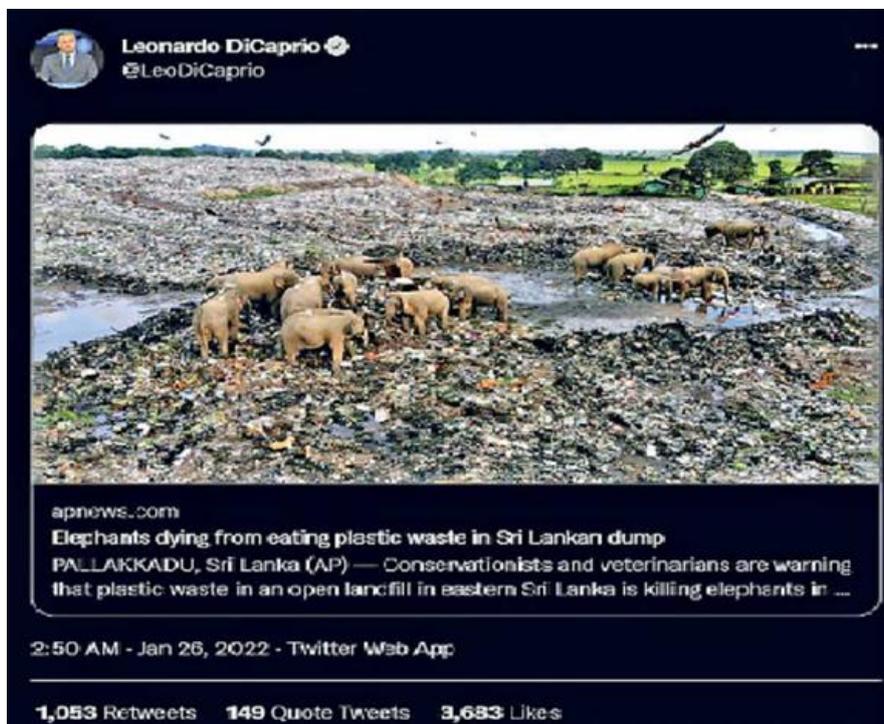


Figure 1 - The article about the issues of the elephants in SL

Executive Summary

The urgent need for environmental conservation is more apparent than ever in today's world. One obvious but less actioned area is the growing buildup of plastic garbage, which poses a serious threat to ecosystems, wildlife, and human health, especially in the Asian region including Sri Lanka.

Leadership movements are vital for influencing Institutions, Corporates, and the Public to move beyond CSR activities which are over a period seen as “green washing” or attempts to uplift self-image. The world needs fresh initiatives that can create a sense of urgency and inspire businesses and institutions to set examples through sincere and altruistic measures to reduce plastic waste and its negative effects on eco systems as a positive contribution towards mitigating environmental degradation.

ZeroPlastic is a newly established movement in Sri Lanka and since 2021 in the role of a catalyst, it has been steadily making a paradigm shift among the Corporates in Sri Lanka through a model of inclusive engagement of Students, Undergraduates, and Academicians. It is hypothesized that Business Corporations and SMEs will follow a sincere path provided by leadership/s which can show them the way through honest and non-profit approaches.

The leadership displayed through various programs, visibly stimulates compulsion among Corporations for the use of creative plastic substitutes, promotes ethical garbage disposal, and pushes for the adoption of sustainable policies and practices including recycling.

The Case study establishes that such movements with the simulative model of an inclusive approach, could acquire the power to activate major change in the minds of business houses to move towards a healthier and more sustainable future for which recommendations are given for urgent implementation.

The value of this study is the reflection from the case of a strong ‘influencing factor’ of leadership which can act as a model and forerunner in the accomplishment of a mission that has an optimistic target of making a country ZeroPlastic!

Background

Overview and Literature Review

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has established itself as a standard for businesses globally, demonstrating their dedication to moral behavior and sustainable growth. Nevertheless, despite the rising relevance of CSR, many businesses show resistance to expanding beyond their current CSR initiatives which can be summarized from various texts as follows.

Traditional CSR activities, such as community engagement, are sufficient for a positive brand image and stakeholder engagement (Porter & Kramer, 2011).

Corporates frequently have a risk-averse attitude as adopting novel ideas necessitates a time, resource, and financial investment with unknown results (Marquis & Raynard, 2015).

Many businesses lack the internal knowledge or direction necessary to address challenging social and environmental challenges. (Carroll & Shabana, 2010).

Implementation of long-term, revolutionary CSR techniques is severely hampered by the short-term focus imposed by financial markets and quarterly performance expectations. (Waddock, 2004).



Figure 2- Global Plastic waste facts

These call for studies that are required to ascertain visionary or leadership measures that can drive corporates from mere CSR activities into altruistic sustainable practices. This is a case to bring to light the leadership demonstrated by Zeroplactic Initiatives in Sri Lanka, which had been hitherto a driving force to compel some Corporates to take more proactive positions in this regard.

Problem Statement

Many companies engage in CSR activities just to enhance their public image and show that they are working to eliminate plastic waste. Even if these measures may have some beneficial consequences, it is critical to evaluate their level of dedication and the outcomes of their efforts. Sincere commitment to sustainability, particularly regarding plastic trash, calls for a comprehensive plan of action that goes beyond empty words and prioritizes the major reduction and proper treatment of plastic waste throughout their activities in a sustainable way.

Current predicament in waste and plastic dumping in Sri Lanka

Lack of funding and inadequate waste handling infrastructure are major obstacles in South Asia in waste management. The issue of waste management is made worse by inadequate trash collection systems and transportation networks. (UN Environment Programme, 2018). This applies to the management of plastic wastage too. Approximately 50% of the plastics produced

worldwide are single-use plastics, which are used for only a brief period but last for several hundred years in the environment.

Today, plastic usage and waste have come into a serious ecological hazard with far-reaching effects. The ecology is being endangered by plastic garbage including plastic contamination in rivers and oceans by unfitting discarding and deficient recycling (Jambeck et al., 2015).

Further documented text reveals a) Microplastics, which are produced as bigger plastic items degrade, pollute soil and water and harm ecosystems over time (Wright et al., 2013) and b) Human health is put in danger by plastic garbage. According to (Rochman et al. 2013), chemical additives in plastics like bisphenol A (BPA) and phthalates have the potential to seep into the environment and damage food and water systems.

The problems with plastic trash in Sri Lanka are caused by both the current disposal methods and the rising rate of plastic waste production. On average, 1.59 million tons of plastic garbage are generated on the island each year, of which half ends up in canals, rivers, and finally the ocean, spoiling marine ecosystems. Also, over 500,000 metric tons (MT) of virgin plastic are imported to the island each year. Only 33% of all plastic waste is currently collected, and only 3% of that is recycled nationally. (Switch Asia, 2020).

According to the country report of the Centre for Waste Management 2021. Below is a summary of Sri Lankan household replies to questions about plastic bags and materials. The sample of their customer survey gave the following answers.

- 40% respondents carry own bag for shopping
- 75% of the people use 1-10 plastic bags weekly.
- 82.7% separated plastic waste from other waste.
- 55% handed the plastic waste to the municipality tractor/lorry
- 29% burned the plastic waste openly.
- 90% of the people have no idea where their trash is ending.

As per ZeroPlastics Movement, around 20 million plastic bags (or shopping bags) are discarded into the environment each day. These bags cannot be recycled or reused. Only 3% of the numerous plastics thrown in the environment are recyclable. However, even recyclable PET bottles are discarded at random rather than being placed in recycling bins.

Having realized the impact of this program and connecting it to tourism, Chandra Wickramasinghe- Chairman of Connaissance group said to Daily FT on 30 June 2023 “*The moment authorities decide to ban all the single-use plastic in Colombo, it will be attracting the attention of new trend travelers. Colombo’s air quality must be improved when comparing the other four cities. However, according to the world air quality index map, Colombo is not in a danger zone, but it is in a better condition than Dubai*” (Daily FT, 2023).

Plastic Waste in Sri Lanka (Sources ZeroPlastic & AFP)

- Sri Lanka imports **over 500,000 (MT)** of virgin plastic annually
- Around **1.59 MT** of plastic waste are mismanaged annually
- 20 million of plastic bags are dumped into the environment on a daily basis in Sri Lanka.
- Almost half of this (775,000 MT) ends up in canals, rivers and eventually the ocean
- Only 33% of all plastic waste is collected, out of which only 3% is recycled nation-wide annually Source: (Switch Asia)
- In 2017, a garbage dump on the edge of the capital Colombo was shut when a mountain of rotting rubbish collapsed, killing more than 30 people and damaging hundreds of homes. Soon afterward, Sri Lanka banned all plastic shopping bags — but the rules were once again not strictly enforced.
- A 2020 study by the local Center for Environmental Justice showed single-use plastics such as bags, food wrappers, straws, polystyrene boxes, cups and cutlery made up almost 15% of urban waste.
- Spread of dengue fever has spiked dramatically, from 35,000 cases and 26 deaths in 2021, to 76,600 cases and 72 deaths in 2022.
- Heart-wrenching images of revered elephants and cattle eating plastic in Sri Lanka have prompted politicians to toughen pollution laws, but skeptical conservationists warn past bans were repeatedly ignored.
- After an estimated 20 elephant deaths and countless other wild animals perishing due to single-use plastics in the past decade, officials say a law banning many such items is expected to come into force within weeks.
- PET Bottle takes **around 400 years** to decompose in the environment

Figure 3- Plastic waste Sri Lanka

Degree of awareness among corporates on plastic usage

Per capita plastic consumption is estimated as 6 kg per year. Mourshed et al. (2017).

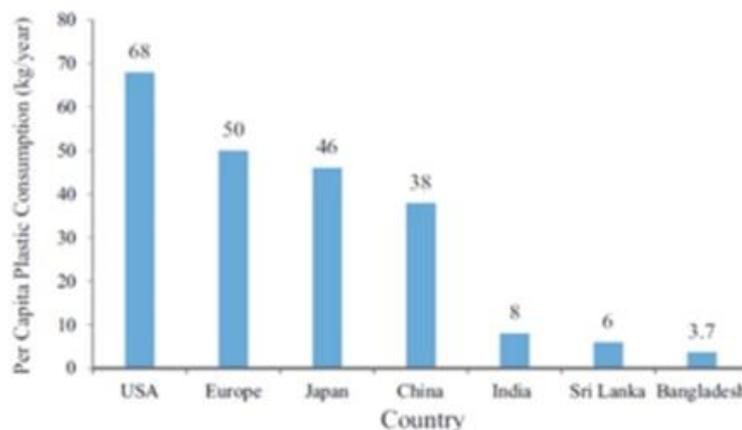


Figure 4 – Per capita plastic consumption is estimated as 6kg per year

The continued usage of plastics is a result of both corporate ignorance of the effects of plastics on the environment and customers' poor knowledge. Sustainable practices are hampered by a lack of knowledge (Ritchie & Roser, 2021).

Obligation to address the issue through corporate practices has come under heightened scrutiny as a result of growing awareness of the adverse environmental effects of plastic usage and wastage. With that more Companies are becoming aware of their duty for reducing plastic waste through various programs. (Linnenluecke & Griffiths, 2020).

Therefore, Corporate entities are becoming increasingly aware of the issue of plastic usage. Some are pushing awareness-raising strategies into action by offering reusable substitutes, encouraging recycling initiatives, and providing rewards for sustainable decisions. This includes programs like re-cycling, packaging alternatives with no plastic, and informational advertising (Bezençon et al., 2020).

To manage plastic trash collectively, they are increasingly working with other businesses, non-profit organizations, and governmental agencies. Through partnerships, it is possible to pool resources, share information, and develop creative solutions to minimize plastic use across the entire value chain (Wells et al., 2020).

A strategic visionary approach to mitigate Plastics use in Sri Lanka

The Ministry of Environment of Sri Lanka released the National Action Plan on Plastic Waste Management for the period of 2021-2023 and implementation of same calls for both legislative and volunteer measures for desired results. The results are not so encouraging though following the aftermath of Covid-19 effects on the economy and political chaos seen thereafter.



*Figure 4- X-press Cargo Ship Disaster in 2011
(BBC, 2021)*

The advantages for the environment concerned society, and the economy of a plastic-free future can be visualized by a strategic visionary leadership. Leaders or statesmanship can motivate institutions and stakeholders to coordinate their efforts to decrease plastic consumption by articulating this objective in their respective businesses. (Sosik et al., 2018).

Leadership that takes a strategic visionary approach fosters innovation, creativity, and teamwork to bring about change in doing things. They develop alliances with suppliers, clients, and industry peers to cooperatively address the issue and they create an atmosphere where workforces feel comfortable and empowered to suggest and implement imaginative ways to reduce plastic use (Bansal & Roth, 2000).

These corporate leaders function as role models, affecting the behavior of employees and stakeholders by actively adopting sustainable practices and incorporating them into the company culture (Van der Byl et al., 2019). This has a cascading effect on the entire organization as well as institutions connected to them.

Alternatively, independent entities can be influencers in this regard in the reduction of plastic waste. This is possible only if the influencer demonstrates integrity and a realistic approach combined with creating awareness and urgency of the cause.

This case is about such an influencing entity, be they Non-Governmental or Certifying bodies when they become effective in communicating not only the sincere postures but also implementing techniques visibly thus making a transformational change in the mindset of the corporate world.

ZeroPlastic story reveals this with the activities and success they have achieved so far which can be conceptualized as a 'Visionary approach that can increase the propensity for Corporates to envision the need for waste management including mitigation and recycling plastic use.

Methodology and Data Collection

The background of ZeroPlastic Movement is descriptively presented in this report and purpose of this study is to make a simple qualitative analysis of the impact of ZeroPlastic work within a short period of time since 2021 on corporate mindset and plastic mitigation and to see such a paradigm in the mind set has occurred from the usual CSR spectrum.

Research Design

The design entailed a qualitative approach together with exploring attitudes, perceptions, and behaviors of Corporates by observing behavioral change in their approach from the previous CSR approaches. Case study design therefore takes the form of a longitudinal study to examine changes over time from 2021- July 2023 with the country-wide 'ZeroPlastic Trail 'in conjunction with 'World Environment Day'.

When conducting a study of ZeroPlastic and the results of their effort, there are various benefits to simplifying the research design such as this study. The purpose is to check the behavioral change of participating Corporates. Hence, first a straightforward design minimizes complexity, making it simpler to implement and comprehend within the unique context of the organization. Further, this makes implementation easier and less likely to cause disruptions to regular business. Second, such a plan makes the study more feasible by lessening the demand on the study's finite time, financial, and human resources, especially when the case study presents the outcome within a short period to the Government. This naturally increases the organization's interest in and willingness to contribute to the research process. Further, simplicity promotes a more accurate picture and a trend through the data resulting in outcomes that are trustworthy and significant. Therefore, to make the study design straightforward, selective activities of Zero Plastics were taken under the caption 'Evidence' after verifying the outcome with the respective Corporates.

Data Collection Methods

Data Collection was done through reputed publications followed by interviews that were independently verified with the Corporates involved in carrying out various activities. The informal data collection took place from the following.

Main personnel from ZeroPlastic Movement: Founder and Team members to ascertain their Vision, Mission, and Future strategies.

Heads, Managers and Employees of participating Corporates: To verify Attitudes, Awareness, and Engagement

Stakeholders viz. Environmental organizations – For their perception of the efforts of ZeroPlastic in the light of achievements within a short period.

Universities, Colleges, and Schools – Degree of awareness, perceptions, and willingness to participate in future activities.

General public – Degree of Awareness of the need for plastic mitigation efforts

Data Analysis Approach

For a study like this on business attitude and behavioral change in lessening plastic waste after a number of activities by the ZeroPlastic Movement, it is crucial to rationalize the qualitative data analysis. It guarantees an easier understanding of the data, promotes research process efficacy, and provides rapid advice based on non-quantitative findings. Simple analysis approaches permit focused investigation of crucial issues and provide unambiguous insights for decision-making. With the help of these findings, the ZeroPlastic Movement can successfully share the outcomes of their work and endorse the extensive adoption of sustainable waste management techniques in Sri Lanka and the rest of South Asia.

Case of Zero Plastics Movement

History

The Zero Plastic National Movement was founded in 2021 by IT consultant Nishshanka De Silva when he became aware of the mounting damage that plastics bring to the environment. Currently, this movement aims to significantly alter Sri Lankan society and institutions. Operating initially from home during Covid's shutdown, the campaign quickly expanded into a powerful force that aims to implement Zero Plastics in Sri Lanka by 2025 and then spread the concept to South Asia and the Asia Pacific. (Daily Mirror, 2023)

The rapid expansion of the ZeroPlastic Movement from 75 undergraduate volunteers to 3,500 volunteers in 2022 (ZeroPlastic Movement, 2022) and further to 7,000 volunteers in 2023 (Wickramasinghe, 2023) is a testament to its growing popularity and the increased awareness and concern surrounding the issue of plastic pollution. This significant increase in volunteer participation reflects a mounting societal recognition of the urgency to address the plastic waste crisis and the willingness of individuals to actively contribute to the cause. The Zero Plastic Movement is still growing across the nation with a vision of a world without plastic starting from Sri Lanka to regions.

Engagement



Figure 5- Local Universities

Progress of ZeroPlastic Movement Activities

The goal of ZeroPlastic is to influence people's behaviors so that they produce less plastic trash while also creating a market for locally made plastic alternatives. Their activities are focused on lessening plastic pollution; encouraging people to use sustainable plastic alternatives and developing and strengthening the network of plastic-free entrepreneurs.

Their activities span cleanups, awareness campaigns, youth competitions, and other initiatives and especially the part that convinces business houses to change their mind set in plastic usage. They have taken gigantic initiatives to influence all sectors, especially corporations, not only to reduce plastic usage but also to join hands with ZeroPlastic activities in their effort towards reaching its goals.

Since its inception, the ZeroPlastic movement has made significant progress in its role. Initially, the movement collaborated with Sri Lankan undergraduates, engaging in projects focused on tackling plastic pollution. This article reappeared in several magazines connected to environmental pollution drawing attention of Corporations who are getting themselves geared for plastic reduction mechanisms. The movement also targeted university students and preschoolers, conducting awareness campaigns to educate them about the importance of reducing plastic waste.

Over time, the ZeroPlastic movement expanded its reach and connected with the corporate world. This collaboration had a strong influence on corporate social responsibility (CSR) activities. By raising awareness and promoting sustainable practices, the movement encouraged corporations to change their approach towards plastic usage and waste management. This partnership resulted in positive changes in corporate practices, promoting eco-friendly alternatives and responsible waste management.

- National and Regional level Projects
- Town-focused programs
- Online & Physical Webinars
- University awareness programs and Engagement for Cleanups etc.
- Schools and Preschool Awareness & Implementation
- Village awareness, Implementation and Follow- up
- Religious places awareness

Corporate Engagement



Figure 6- Our Partners

Overall, the progress made by the ZeroPlastic movement since its inception highlights its successful efforts in creating widespread awareness, mobilizing diverse groups, and driving positive change in tackling plastic pollution in Sri Lanka.

Analysis of Data and Presentation

Establishing trends and patterns in the corporate mind-set to the use and waste of plastics requires evidence-based inferences from a qualitative case study. These results offer factual and dependable information about the practices, attitudes, and behaviors of Business Houses regarding plastic use. The study can get detailed insights into the procedures, difficulties, and motivations of corporate decision-making by analyzing such data that comes in various forms not only through activities but also expressions of Business leaders and opinion makers.

The development of focused strategies and interventions can be guided by these evidence-based findings, which help uncover shared themes, emerging practices, and areas for improvement. The results also add to the body of knowledge on business sustainability and plastic waste management, offering important information to those working to influence good change in this critical issue.

Evidence for the signs of paradigm shift in Corporate Culture

The ZeroPlastic movement has initiated a paradigm shift in corporate culture through collaborations with various organizations and impactful projects beyond CSR. These collaborations have played a crucial role in raising awareness, promoting sustainable practices, and fostering environmental responsibility within corporate entities. The evidence for this is reflected in the level of activities and the inclination of corporate participants to go along with ZPM vision. These activities have reflected increasing interest among Corporates to take part in projects thus not only enhancing their image for society concerns through the plastic waste management initiatives.

ZERO PLASTIC™ Influencing Model



Figure 7- Influencing Model

Evidence 1 – ZeroPlastic movement together with Intrepid Foundation led a massive awareness program in July 2023 on Environment Day inviting all Sri Lankans to join the ‘ZeroPlastic trail’ aimed at collecting plastic waste and garbage with the slogan ‘Start from wherever you are’. This invitation was extended to Sri Lankans, all Sri Lankans overseas, Corporates, Tourism Industry, and the public. The event was given wide publicity by regulars and social media drawing the attention of most of the target audience. This is the latest act of ZeroPlastic movement that influenced many Corporates especially the tourism industry to urge their employees to take part in the program apart from the acknowledgment for the support for the Movement, also saw the opportunity to have the plastic free area surrounding their locations and enhanced adaptation of plastic free procedures in respective off.



Figure 8- Promotions of Zeroplactic

Evidence 2- Credibility of ZeroPlastic Movement from an International perspective - Eric Solheim (former Minister of Climate and the Environment of Norway and former UN Environment Executive Director) was quoted as saying Quote ‘*What started at Versova Beach in Mumbai has become a global movement. A young Sri Lankan Nishanka De Silva started Zero Plastics movement amid the economic meltdown of his home country. Incredibly, young Sri Lankans turned out in droves to support the movement and making it a remarkable success*’ (Outlook Planet, 2023). This article reappeared in several magazines connected to environmental pollution drawing attention of Corporations who are getting themselves geared for plastic reduction mechanisms.

In an article in the ZeroPlastic, the chief is said to have stated “ *The plastics industry is backed by powerful multinational companies. So, every time the government tries to implement a ban on individual use plastics, they go and meet government officials and add pressure* (Daily Mirror, 2023).



Figure 9- Credibility of Movement from an International perspective

Evidence 3- The collaboration for Kaluthara Beach Cleanup in July 2022 with Star Garment, a leading garment manufacturer. By joining forces, the ZeroPlastic Movement and Star Garment organized a massive beach cleanup event by successfully demonstrating how businesses can actively contribute to environmental conservation and engage their employees in meaningful initiatives.



Figure 10 - Kalutara beach clean up

Evidence 4- ZeroPlastic Movement partnered with Midas Safety to celebrate World Cleanup Day initiating cleanup programs in 12 simultaneous places on the 17th of September 2022. This collaboration highlighted the power of collective action and the promotion of a cleaner environment which enables ZeroPlastic to raise interest among other Corporates.



Figure 11- Celebration of World Cleanup

Evidence 5- One major initiative of ZeroPlastic Movement was the collaboration made with 'The Ahangama International' for the program conducted with Island Tattoo Connections as

part of their Global movement against creating plastic pollution. The ZeroPlastic was able to make a huge impression on their capacity especially among tour operators and hotels apart from the Corporates who participated in the program viz BARISTA, Elephant House, and Midas Safety. This took place at a time the visitors to the country were hinting that the tourism campaigns should read not "#VisitSriLanka but #CleanSriLanka.

The project in Ahangama area was an enormous step that was taken with remarkable success. The zero-plastic community in collaboration with 80+foreign tattoo artists who represent countries from all over the world came together to execute this project news of which went viral internationally (ZeroPlastic, 2022).



Figure 12- Collaboration with 'The Ahangama International

Evidence 6- Collaborations with Sarvodaya Fusion, HSBC Bank, and USAID in initiatives such as Green Skills-Micro Plastic Sessions and the School Championship projects allowed the movement to engage with diverse sectors and target specific audiences. These collaborations facilitated knowledge dissemination and the promotion of sustainable practices beyond the typical CSR activities.

Evidence 7 - ZeroPlastic Movement joined forces with World Vision International for the PHINLA program, targeting school students in Ja Ela, Wattala, and Chavakacheriya involving the business houses in the region. This collaboration aimed to educate and empower young individuals as environmental advocates, fostering environmental stewardship from an early age with sponsorships from business entities drawing their interest to make such programs sustainable.



Figure 13- The programs in schools joining hands with World Vision

Evidence 8 - The ZP Movement also partnered with Intrepid Foundation, an international travel organization, for the ZeroPlastic Trail initiative nationwide walk against plastic pollution. This collaboration aimed to raise awareness among travelers about the impact of plastic pollution and promote sustainable travel practices. Engaging with the tourism industry, the movement instilled momentum for practicing responsible tourism and the reduction of plastic waste in destinations of the region. This is the partnership that led to ZeroPlastic Trail planned for July 2023.

Evidence 9- Collaboration with 'Clean Galle' with 'Travel Mad Mom' and Hotel Awareness initiatives highlighted the movement's further engagement with the hospitality sector. These collaborations focused on promoting sustainable practices, reducing plastic usage, and encouraging responsible waste management within the hospitality industry.

Evidence 10 - Creating Awareness - With the assistance of Derana Women Magazine, ZeroPlastic organized an engaging awareness event. The main goal of the session is to provide education targeted to women for their engagement in every aspect of their day-to-day work focused on plastic replacement. Derana being a powerful media house in Sri Lanka and their participant is an achievement for ZeroPlastic towards their efforts to influence the corporate world.

Evidence 11 - ZeroPlastic collaborated with UNDP Partner- The Green Innovation Challenge which will hold a Social Innovation camp in August 2023 that will bring together 20 teams from all over the island to tackle various development issues under thematic areas like Water

Management, Green Economy, Green Urban Living, Biodiversity and Conservation, Circular Economy, and more. This comes after a national call for applications which ended with over 100 ideas on reduction of plastic waste and similar proposals. The teams will go through a selection process in which they will receive cash and assistance to establish sustainable social enterprises, motivating them to take a more active role in creating a sustainable future for everyone.

To promote further cooperation on the project, together with ZeroPlastic, UNDP has teamed up with Dialogue Ideamart and Vibhava Solutions to make Sri Lanka more sustainable and environmentally friendly, to raise awareness of it, give young people the knowledge and skills they need to adapt their solutions, and give them the chance to connect with subject matter experts.

Evidence 12- On June 25, 2022, Negombo's "Moya" beach was the site of a beach cleanup project and awareness program organized by ZeroPlastic volunteers. ZeroPlastic volunteers made a remarkable effort to clean up Moya beach, which was covered in non-perishable garbage and decaying trash. Additionally, Zero Plastic volunteers were successful in educating the residents of this coastal community about the hazards that plastics pose to the environment, how dangerous they may be to humans, and how serious pollution is.

To get rid of beach debris, the Zero Plastic Group built a sizable landfill. A kids' club was also established in the area to gather kids and direct them towards garbage control. The Negombo beach cleanup & awareness initiative has been remarkably successful so far, and Zero Plastic Group is dedicated to continuing this work.

Evidence 13 - Through a partnership between the Zero Plastic National Movement, the Canadian High Commission, and the Sri Lanka Canada Business Council of Ceylon Chamber of Commerce, a remarkable cleanup initiative was carried out at the Beddagana Wetland Park. The goal of this campaign was to illustrate the value of community involvement and environmental care while preserving the priceless habitat by getting rid of plastic and related garbage. For example, when examined, the level of plastic contamination in terrestrial and freshwater systems can far exceed what is detected in marine systems (Tariq et al., 2022). (Andrade et al. 2019) report that urban freshwater systems have prominent levels of plastic pollution because they are 'pollutant sinks' fed by urban discharge, wind, and improper waste management (Townsend et al., 2019).

The results of the volunteers' work were astounding, with 750 kg of plastic and other debris being removed from the wetland region. The collected debris was delivered to Zero Trash, a recycling-focused company, for proper disposal and recycling procedures. This strategy emphasizes how crucial it is to incorporate sustainable practices into trash management. Beddagana Wetland Park is a part of a 1,000 ha Wildlife Sanctuary declared in 1984 by the Department of Wildlife Conservation, Sri Lanka.



Figure 14 - Baddegama Wetland Park clean-up

Discussion and Conclusion

Businesses in Asia are becoming increasingly aware of the need to cut back on plastic use and waste. To respond to rising environmental concerns and consumer expectations for more sustainable practices, several businesses have begun implementing plastic reduction campaigns, switching to sustainable packaging, and investing in recycling infrastructure.

Nevertheless, world statistics show plastic waste in Asia may well go out of hands unless some effective measures are taken collectively following the systems and technologies used in European countries towards minimizing the use of plastics.

As in the case of Sri Lanka, it is understood that in an overall plan for effective waste management, action must be taken to address the plastic use and waste threat which constitute a major part of waste that is not easily disposed of. This case suggests that Societies, Institutions, and people can take leadership roles to lessen the negative effects of plastic waste if a visionary of leadership precedes not only creating awareness but also urging actions not merely by words but by examples.

According to the concept, a strategic leadership approach can motivate and win over supporters in the business world to reduce plastic usage. Strategic visionary leaders may inspire business organizations to take effective initiatives to cut back on their use of plastic by igniting a common vision, establishing specific goals and plans, encouraging innovation and collaboration, and providing an example of sustainable behavior among their staff and to the outside world.

Leading the battle to reduce plastic consumption and waste requires setting examples. Businesses can encourage others to embrace sustainable practices by putting them into practice and displaying their successes. This will have a domino effect that encourages the use of environmentally friendly alternatives.

The Zero Plastic Movement is a forerunner of being an influencer for transforming Corporates and Institutions in Sri Lanka. The movement is growing to be international to replicate their role in South Asia in 2024 and Global thereafter. Their main goal is to imagine a world without plastic, which is a noble cause to which the corporate partners are now getting on board. The Movement has ignited activities partnering with Schools and Universities which are compelling the business houses to come along and adhere to standards and expand the usual

CSR activities into overall sustainable projects. This is so far model that has proven the results sought (Daily Mirror, 2023).

The beauty of this ZPM is how the Corporates not only collaborate within themselves bringing all positions to one platform but also among similar companies towards one goal. Cleanups, awareness campaigns, creative programs such as youth competitions, and other initiatives are examples of their projects including the international gathering of tattoo artists from all over the world to clean the waterways.

Corporate behavior changes for a good purpose, like managing plastic waste, often happens through a combination of education, incentives, and regulation. In this connection, ZeroPlastic has been able to raise awareness about the damaging consequences of plastic trash on the environment and human health. The rest becomes easier with actions sought after by the Corporates through campaigns, workshops, and cooperation with environmental organizations.

Usually offering rewards to businesses can be a strong inducement to alter behavior. In this instance, ZeroPlastic uses massive propaganda through social media which enhances the image of the Corporates which cannot be achieved through traditional PR practices.

Among the actual incentives, Companies are encouraged to invest in long-term approaches to managing plastic garbage by receiving financial incentives, such as tax cuts or grants for adopting eco-friendly practices. These are also embraced by Corporates as indirect incentives.

Regulation is a key factor in changing behavior. It is expected someday that the Government will clamp down the plastic use and waste, but it is difficult to implement due to a multitude of factors. Till then the short-term solutions will be to gear the Corporates by Environment leaders like ZeroPlastic to produce creative and sustainable options to comply with future laws yet to be enacted.

Outcome of the Case - Recommendations

ZeroPlastic may continue with campaigns and programs to inform businesses about the effects that plastic consumption and waste have on the environment while bringing to light the value of reducing plastic use and offering details on substitutes.

Research and data can be provided by ZeroPlastic to show evidence of the harmful effects of plastic consumption and waste. They can assist corporations in realizing the gravity of the situation and the requirement for swift action by supplying information that is supported by proof.

ZeroPlastic Movement can urge Government bodies to create incentive programs to persuade businesses to cut back on their use of and disposal of plastic. For instance, the state may praise or recognize companies that make considerable efforts to reduce their plastic footprint. To encourage corporations to adopt sustainable practices, financial incentives or tax breaks might also be considered.

ZeroPlastic can expand alliances and partnerships with significant corporations, trade associations, and other organizations. Together, they may share best practices, learn from one another, and create coordinated projects to address plastic trash on a larger scale.

ZeroPlastic can actively interact with decision-makers both locally and internationally and promote the adoption of stronger rules and policies to limit the use and disposal of plastics. To influence policy and promote the adoption of sustainable practices across industries, they can offer their experience and recommendations.

The case should enlighten Trade Ministries, Investment Boards, Trade, and Industry Chambers. Tourism Authorities to follow the leadership drive of ZeroPlastic to contribute to overall efforts in evaluating their plastic usage, tracking their progress, and identifying areas for improvement. This can include rules, resource materials, and internet resources that provide realistic solutions and tactics to lower plastic consumption and encourage recycling.

ZeroPlastic can provide certifications and auditing procedures to evaluate businesses' efforts to reduce their use of plastic. They can develop a transparent system that recognizes and rewards businesses for their dedication to reducing plastic waste by performing routine audits and certifying companies that satisfy specific criteria. The state and other institutions should support them by accepting accreditations of certificates from ZeroPlastic.

ZeroPlastic may arrange large-scale conferences, forums, and networking events where businesses can come together to discuss their experiences, difficulties, and achievements in relation to reducing their usage of and waste from plastic. This platform has the potential to promote cooperation and stimulate creative thinking.

ZeroPlastic can work with businesses to inform and involve consumers in the effort to decrease plastic waste. They may generate demand for plastic-free alternatives by increasing consumer knowledge and supporting ethical shopping practices, which will motivate businesses to cater to consumer preferences.

Track corporate progress in decreasing plastic use and waste by establishing a monitoring and reporting system with ZeroPlastic. This may involve conducting frequent evaluations, benchmarking, and releasing progress reports to highlight accomplishments and pinpoint problem areas.

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

IRSSB03

The Sustainable Business Practices in Australian Tourism Industry: Leading Towards Sustainability

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Extended abstract

The primary objective of this research is to analyze and investigate the sustainable business practices existing within the Australian tourism industry. A captivating transformation is unfolding in Australia Post Covid-19, tourism arrivals have surged since the unlocking in February 2022, government is focused on promoting sustainability along with tourism, the new strategy THRIVE 2030 is to promote Australia as a sustainable tourist destination (Communique – Tourism Ministers’ Meeting, 2023). Australia is already considered as a world leader in the sustainable tourism research, sustainable business practices are thought to be the only way to protect heritage (Australian Trade and Investment Commission, 2023).

This study adopts a comprehensive research approach, Australian Governmental sources and academic literatures were extensively reviewed to compile this report. The governmental sources and ministers’ meeting minutes provided the base for this research. The THRIVE 2030 strategy reflects the Albanese Government’s priority for tourism and sustainability in the sector along with climate change.

Tourism is playing a huge role in Australia’s economy, the contribution of tourism to economy GDP rose to 1.6% (Australian National Accounts: Tourism Satellite Account, 2021-22 Financial Year, 2022). THRIVE 2030 not only focuses on sustainable tourism, but on job growth and infrastructure that benefits the Australian communities to come out of the challenges posed by Covid-19 and the economic crisis. Long-term sustainability is achieved by minimizing environmental impact and preserving the cultural and natural resources of the country to foster a sustainable future for the industry and the Commonwealth of Australia.

Keywords – Sustainable business practices; Tourism; THRIVE 2030; COVID -19; Australian/ Albanese Government; Commonwealth of Australia.

Purpose/ Problem Statement – The primary purpose of this research is to meticulously dissect and decode the profound import of sustainable business practices in the Australian tourism industry, the study illuminates the intricate interplay between sustainability and tourism operations, which promotes the long-term viability of the industry.

Originality/ Value – The extended abstract focuses on the context of the Australian tourism industry and its drive towards achieving sustainability, by considering the academic literature and governmental publications and so it offers a unique perspective of the current state of the industry. The inclusion of the information from the Australian Governmental websites provides an authoritative and real-world perspective and aligns with the context of the Australian government’s priorities and initiatives during this post covid economic depression period the Australia faces. The governmental meeting minutes can be based on evidence, as policymakers and lawmakers affirm the sustainable tourism practices of His Majesty’s Australian Government.

Design/methodology/approach – The research bases itself on a comprehensive approach. The extended abstract was compiled by focusing on various aspects of the Australian governmental websites and academic literature. Content analysis and document review were the data collection techniques, selection of governmental publications and academic sources affirmed the sampling method. The research methodology navigates the various aspects of sustainability and sustainable business practices in Australia.

Findings/ Discussion – The key findings of this research highlight the vitality of sustainable business practices in terms of the Australian tourism industry. Energy-efficient practices, waste management and adapting to renewable energy sources in hospitality accommodations are some of the environmentally friendly operations to boost sustainability. Water-based tourist attractions conservation and biodiversity protection promote sustainable tourism business practices. Cooperation with the heritage, respecting the Aboriginal and Indigenous cultural rights and engaging with the local community in the microenvironment leads to the macro environmental sustainability. The government cannot lead to the vision of a sustainable tourism industry in Australia, rather, tourism operators, Non-Governmental Organizations and government agencies are vital when it comes to achieving the outcome. Tourists can do their part by being aware of their behavior and by promoting responsible travel behavior to contribute to the destination's sustainability. The above findings provide guidance for sustainability by influencing lawmakers and the public.

Theoretical implications – These extended abstract focuses on the specific context of the Australian tourism industry, examining how existing theories could be applied to this unique setting. By analyzing the intricate relationship between environmental conservation, community engagement, cultural preservation, and economic viability, the study provides valuable insights into the comprehensive nature of sustainability. It emphasizes the significance of stakeholder collaboration, raising consumer awareness, and active government involvement, shedding light on theories related to collaboration, tourist behavior, and government-led initiatives.

Practical implications – Adopting energy-efficient operations such as installing LED lighting and implementing energy management systems in hotels and accommodations, waste management strategies by implementing reusable water bottles and offering refill stations and engaging in community initiatives. Creating consumer awareness and education programs empowers tourists to make sustainable choices. Building collaborative partnerships among government agencies, tourism operators, local communities, and NGOs are crucial for effective sustainability initiatives. Implementing these practical implications, stakeholders can contribute to the long-term sustainability of the Australian tourism industry while enhancing their competitiveness.

Social implications – Emphasizing community engagement and cultural preservation promotes positive relationships and contributes to the well-being of local communities. Sustainable tourism business practices support local economies by highlighting the artisan skills and selling of producers, preserving traditions, and fostering cultural exchange by breaking stereotype cultural understating, enriching the social fabric of communities. Promoting responsible travel behavior through consumer awareness encourages respect and tolerance, facilitating positive interactions between tourists and residents. By embracing these social implications, the Australian tourism industry can enhance social well-being creating a more sustainable and inclusive tourism experience for all.

Research limitations – The limitations of not covering all aspects and implementation challenges can be addressed by conducting primary research. This would provide firsthand data and insights, addressing gaps and offering practical recommendations. Furthermore, primary research would outline clear directions for future studies, identifying areas that require further exploration.

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IRSSB04**Transitioning to Electric Vehicles: Logistics and Supply Chains**Ushita Sirimalwatte¹, Hiranjan De Alwis² and Kushan De Silva³^{1,2,3}*Edith Cowan University, Colombo, Sri Lanka***Extended Abstract**

Industries impacting a nation's carbon footprint must increasingly pivot towards sustainable practices. The logistics and supply chain sector, essential to any economy, especially rings true for Sri Lanka, where the integration of electric vehicles (EVs) could usher in notable environmental and economic enhancements. By adopting EVs, Sri Lanka stands to strengthen its supply chain, merge cost-efficiency with sustainability, and significantly diminish its environmental ramifications. With such vast implications in view, this research seeks to address pivotal questions: How can the introduction of EVs in the logistics and supply chain sector help in attenuating Sri Lanka's carbon footprint? What tangible economic boons can the nation expect from this transition? And how might such a transformation align with and propel Sri Lanka's overarching developmental aims?

Keywords - Electric vehicles transition in Sri Lanka, Value addition, Supply chain and logistics, Economic downturn, Sustainability, Cost-effectiveness.

Purpose/Problem Statement -Despite Sri Lanka having an opportunity to gain from a change to electric automobiles (EVs) within its supply chain and logistics sectors, the country encounters numerous obstacles in making this transformation. The recent recession and gasoline crisis have highlighted these difficulties. One of the most significant obstacles that must be overcome is the lack of consumer awareness. It is common for potential customers to face limitations due to insufficient knowledge and usage. For example, as outlined in the study conducted by some customers may encounter issues related to charging or battery life. Sri Lanka's promotion of electric vehicles (EVs) is hindered by a major obstacle - the exorbitant cost. A report titled (*PDF Opportunities and Challenges to Promote Electric Vehicles in Sri Lanka*, n.d.) reveals that the country may have to bear a staggering \$30,000 for various types of EVs, making it unaffordable for many. Yet, the specifics of this transition, as well as its prospective implications for Sri Lanka's economy and logistics industry, remain mostly unresolved. This research analyzes to get a further understanding of the necessity, practicality, advantages, and disadvantages of Sri Lanka's shift to electric vehicles over the next five years, this study report intends to determine these gaps.

Originality/value - Our research aims to provide a comprehensive blueprint for the transition to electric vehicles in Sri Lanka's logistics and supply chain industry, highlighting the inherent challenges and opportunities. Our study not only underscores the benefits of this transition, but also seeks to inform policymaking, guide efficient resource allocation, and actualize a sustainable, eco-friendly logistics sector in Sri Lanka.

Design/Methodology/approach - An analytical approach involving qualitative methods (Personal Interviews) examines the transition to electric vehicles. The in-depth interviews provide personal specifics, resulting in an in-depth understanding of the processes at work in this transformation.

Findings/Discussions -The research provides a comprehensive collection of stakeholder perspectives, obtained through in-depth interviews, regarding the shift to EVs within Sri Lanka's logistics and supply chain industry. The significance of sustainability and cost-effectiveness in their organizations was a frequently discussed topic. Sri Lanka could encourage supply chain and logistics companies to switch to electric vehicles by providing tax incentives. This makes the change more feasible. The logistics manager provided this response. Regarding long-term viability, the conversation provided insight into the brand's image, particularly among ecologically conscious customers and financiers.

However, panelists additionally addressed several conceivable obstacles they anticipate throughout the shift. Panelists stated that it would be costly for the transition to take place. Rural areas may struggle with the transition to electric vehicles. The lack of necessities makes it unlikely that Sri Lanka will be fully ready by 2025. Consequently, the interviewees proposed a phased transition, underlining the importance of initial pilot projects to assess feasibility and impacts. The nuanced insights from these interviews underscore the multi-dimensional nature of transitioning to EVs in Sri Lanka and underline the need for meticulous planning and an inclusive approach to ensure the successful adoption of EVs in the logistics and supply chain industry.

Theoretical implications - This research delves into the complex transition to electric vehicles in Sri Lanka's logistics and supply chain industry by harnessing a combination of theories. The Environmental Economics Theory highlights the economic rewards of environmental conservation, underscoring the financial benefits of EV adoption. The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) examines the pivotal elements affecting stakeholders' acceptance of EVs. The Innovation Diffusion Theory provides insights into the potential spread of EV adoption across the industry. Through the Resource-Based View (RBV), the study assesses the readiness of firms to adopt EVs, identifying potential capability gaps. Lastly, the Public Policy Theory evaluates the role of government policies in the EV adoption process. Together, these theories offer a comprehensive framework, capturing economic, technological, organizational, and policy facets of Sri Lanka's eco-friendly transition in logistics.

Practical implications - The research underscores the pivotal importance of an extensive charging infrastructure in steering Sri Lanka's transition to electric vehicles (EVs). The seamless integration of EVs into the nation's transportation framework is contingent not just on the availability and functionality of the vehicles, but also on a comprehensive supporting ecosystem. This encompasses a widespread network of fast-charging stations strategically positioned in urban and rural areas, ensuring convenience for users. Moreover, the development of battery-swapping facilities could offer an alternative for quicker energy replenishment, particularly for commercial vehicles. Integration of smart grid technology can further enhance the efficiency of these stations. In tandem, government policies promoting sustainable energy sources for these charging units, and the establishment of dedicated EV service centers and training programs will be pivotal. Overall, a multi-pronged infrastructure strategy is imperative for Sri Lanka to truly embrace the EV revolution.

Social Implications (Policy contributions) -Despite the ongoing fuel crisis, the burgeoning EV sector offers new job opportunities, suggesting that the transition to EVs could drive both energy sustainability and economic resilience in Sri Lanka.

Research Limitations - This study offers an in-depth analysis of transitioning to electric vehicles in Sri Lanka's logistics sector, but it is not without limitations. Primary concerns arise from potential biases in stakeholder responses due to vested interests. We ensure fair feedback

by screening respondents and guaranteeing anonymity. Our EV technology information is constantly updated to avoid outdated research elements. Logistics and supply chains in Sri Lanka have unique features. Recognizing these limitations highlights our study's thoroughness and opens opportunities for further exploration.

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(PDF) *Opportunities and Challenges to Promote Electric Vehicles in Sri Lanka*. (n.d.). Retrieved August 9, 2023, from <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/346464108> Opportunities and Challenges to Promote Electric Vehicles in Sri Lanka

IRSSB05 Sustainable Business Practices for the Tourism Industry in Sri Lanka

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Extended Abstract

The tourism industry should be sustainable for the process of ensuring economic wealth in Sri Lanka. When establishing a sustainable tourism industry in a developing country like Sri Lanka, many challenges need to be faced (Gamage *et al*, 2017). Environmental degradation, overconsumption of energy, and lower amount of infrastructure availability are some challenging situations that we need to face when developing sustainable tourism in Sri Lanka (Gite, 2023). This research will be conducted to discuss sustainable business practices to implement in the tourism industry in Sri Lanka.

There were several studies that have examined the sustainability of the tourism industry in the local community apart from the Sri Lankan context. Griffith University in Australia has conducted research to evaluate the social and environmental impact of mainstream tourism sectors worldwide by using five key dimensions such as peace, population, prosperity, pollution, and protection (Buckley, 2012). And they developed another study to emphasize the government about human resources development in the Maldives tourism sector (Breakey *et al*, 2012). By implementing integrated coastal management and sustainable tourism development frameworks, (Wongthong and Harvey 2014) developed a case study in Thailand to build up a proposal for sustainable reef-based tourism. This study used a quantitative approach by collecting data through online surveys and questionnaires. The initial data was collected by tourist firms in Sri Lanka. After the approval, the researcher started to deliver the survey questionnaires forms to our target groups. In this study, it was found that firstly, we need to recognize the economic importance of the tourism industry, next the volume of tourist sites, and finally, the way of developing the tourism industry by using sustainable business practices. Though the Covid -19 period is the most prominent falling era of the tourism industry, the Sri Lankan government could stabilize the economy of the country by following some sustainable business strategies such as ensuring accommodation facilities, mobilization of revenue, and improving tax administration in order to build up confidence in the mind-set of foreign tourists about the country (Sri Lanka Development Update, 2023). Social organizations are also responsible for enabling society to safeguard the historical and natural heritages of Sri Lanka. Therefore, such types of sustainable business practices are suitable for uplifting the tourism industry in Sri Lanka.

Keywords – Tourism industry; Sri Lanka; Cultural heritages; Coastal Tourism; Resources needed for tourism; Tourism development strategies

Purpose/ Problem Statement – The aim of this research paper is to study the development of the tourism industry in Sri Lanka by using sustainable business practices. Past researchers have studied the tourism industry of the country and how it impacts the local economy.

Originality/Value – This research develops tourism industry development through sustainable business practices. Sustainable business practices can be followed by the whole local

community of the country. The government needs to implement the legal system while individual business organizations should develop infrastructure facilities for tourists.

Design/ Methodology/Approach – This research has been developed using online questionnaires and surveys for collecting data. The data was analysed by a Statistical Package for Social Science.

Findings/Discussion – The main finding of this research is the method of contributing to developing the Sri Lankan economy through the tourism industry. The results of this research proved that the development of resources needed for the tourism industry has a greater influence on tourist satisfaction, especially accommodation, food, beverages, etc. Moreover, Foreign tourists prefer the hot climate of Sri Lanka. Therefore, tourist stakeholders should involve in the expansion of core resources and infrastructure facilities for the promotion of the tourism industry. The development of these factors will impact positively the tourism industry.

Theoretical implications – The findings from this study on Sri Lanka's tourism underscore several key theoretical frameworks in the tourism discipline. Firstly, the concept of cultural capital is fortified, illustrating how Sri Lanka's cultural heritages are not mere markers of national pride but serve as essential economic catalysts, transforming inherent cultural values into tourism-driven economic growth. This realization has practical implications for destinations aiming to leverage their cultural assets. Additionally, insights from the research echo the demand-supply theory in tourism. The alignment of Sri Lanka's infrastructure and services with tourists' preferences underscores the importance of understanding and catering to tourist demand for optimizing success. The emphasis on sustainable practices bolsters the ecotourism theoretical framework. As a biodiverse nation, Sri Lanka's potential as an ecotourism destination is highlighted, advocating for harmony between tourism-driven economic activities and environmental conservation. Lastly, when contextualized within Butler's Tourism Life Cycle Model, the research intimates that post the challenges of COVID-19, Sri Lanka, having potentially experienced a phase of stagnation, is on the brink of rejuvenation through sustainable tourism strategies. This study thereby offers profound insights into the pragmatic application of tourism theories in the context of a developing nation, shaping sustainable trajectories for industry growth.

Practical implication – Tourism stakeholders, restaurant owners, communication firms, government, and legal organizations can apply the sustainable business practices which have been found throughout the study to establish a developed tourism industry in Sri Lanka which gives economic benefits for the country.

Social implications - This should include the establishment of social service communities for the tourists that promote tourism by providing transportation, and communication facilities. All the business and tourist agencies should be incorporated to plan valuable customer service. Planners can find information and discover unique places that are more attractive and satisfying for tourists to offer a successful outcome to the tourists in the end.

Research implications – Implementation of sustainable business practices will result in the development of the tourism industry in Sri Lanka. But the major limitation of this study is this research was conducted during the economic crisis in Sri Lanka. Therefore, researchers must consider the economic and financial status of the Sri Lankan people.

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IRSSM09**How Sustainable Are Sustainable Business Practices: A Dive into the Fast-food Industry of Sri Lanka**S I Rodrigo¹ and K De Silva²^{1,2}*Edith Cowan University, Colombo, Sri Lanka***Extended abstract**

The fast-food industry in Sri Lanka has experienced exponential growth, effectively catering to the ever-increasing demands of consumers seeking convenient and cost-effective dining options. However, as the industry continues to expand, heightened concerns regarding its overall sustainability have emerged as a prevailing issue. This research endeavors to undertake a rigorous and comprehensive assessment of sustainability practices within the fast-food sector of Sri Lanka, with a particular focus on waste management, energy consumption, economic viability, and social responsibility.

Keywords – fast-food industry, sustainability, waste management, energy consumption, economic viability, social responsibility, marketing strategy, integration, practical implications, stakeholder engagement, renewable energy, cost savings, corporate social responsibility.

Purpose/Problem Statement - This study endeavors to provide a nuanced evaluation of the extent to which sustainability is embedded within the operational fabric of the fast-food industry in Sri Lanka. It specifically seeks to discern whether sustainability is genuinely pursued or merely adopted as a marketing strategy or a tool for tax advantages. In pursuing these objectives, this research undertakes a comprehensive examination of the tangible measures implemented by these entities towards sustainable practices and assesses the efficacy of these initiatives.

The primary aim is to discern potential disparities between the industry's sustainability rhetoric and its actual practices, offering insights into the authenticity of the sector's sustainability commitments. This involves a critical analysis of whether sustainability is integrated into the core business models of these companies or merely positioned as a peripheral marketing or financial strategy.

By systematically unravelling the complex dynamics between sustainability and the fast-food industry, this study hopes to contribute to a sophisticated understanding of the sector's role in environmental, economic, and social sustainability. In doing so, it acknowledges the industry's far-reaching impact on various stakeholders, thus emphasizing the broader implications of this investigation beyond academia and into the realm of policymaking and industry practices.

Originality/value – Despite the considerable study of the fast-food industry's growth, there is less understanding of the actual implementation and effectiveness of sustainability practices. The research addresses this gap by developing a theoretical framework and conducting a thorough assessment, thus offering critical insights for stakeholders, policymakers, and consumers. The unique approach of this study lies in its comprehensive examination of core resources, such as location, personnel, and industry traits, as well as supporting elements like accessibility and promotion, to understand the sustainability practices and the wider ecosystem that facilitates them in the industry.

Design/methodology/approach – This study employs a quantitative approach using online surveys to collect data from a varied group of fast-food consumers in Sri Lanka, using convenience sampling. The survey data is analyzed using descriptive statistics, correlation, and multiple linear regression analyses to understand factors influencing customer satisfaction and the depth of sustainability practices in the industry. The research is complemented by a literature review that aids in establishing a theoretical framework and supports the data analysis. The combined insights from the survey and literature review result in a well-rounded evaluation of the fast-food industry's sustainability practices.

Findings/Discussion –The study reveals a potential gap between the professed and actual sustainability practices in the fast-food industry. While sustainability is often publicized, its full integration into operations is lacking, as some businesses prioritize immediate financial returns over sustainable investments.

Inadequate waste management is a primary concern, with many establishments struggling with waste disposal. Improved strategies, including recycling programs and responsible packaging, are urgently needed to minimize the environmental impact. Similarly, energy consumption is high, suggesting a lack of emphasis on energy-efficient practices. The promotion of energy-saving technologies could lead to considerable reductions in energy usage and greenhouse gas emissions.

Economic viability remains a barrier to implementing sustainable practices, as they are often viewed as costly. However, sustainability can result in long-term savings via waste reduction and enhanced reputation, underlining the need for innovative solutions.

Social responsibility practices are not widespread or standardized, highlighting the need for a greater focus on these as part of business strategies to boost overall sustainability. To overcome these challenges, collaboration among stakeholders, policymakers, and consumers is essential. Policymakers can encourage sustainability through regulations and incentives, while consumers can influence change by demanding sustainable options. These findings underscore the importance of a multi-pronged approach to enhancing sustainability in the fast-food industry.

Theoretical implications – This study has meaningful implications for multiple theoretical models, deepening the understanding of sustainability in the fast-food industry. The research contributes to the Stakeholder Theory, the Triple Bottom Line Theory, the Diffusion of Innovations Theory, and the Resource-Based View by providing insights into stakeholder engagement, practical sustainability implementations, the adoption of sustainable practices, and sustainability as a competitive advantage, respectively. The study also enriches the Transaction Cost Economics model by exploring the economics of sustainable practices. These theoretical contributions highlight the potential of the study to provide new insights into sustainability in the fast-food industry.

Practical implications – Businesses should prioritize integrating sustainability into core operations, improve waste management practices, adopt energy-efficient technologies, explore sustainable financial strategies, and enhance stakeholder engagement for social responsibility. By taking these practical steps, fast-food establishments can enhance sustainability practices, reduce waste, conserve energy, achieve long-term financial benefits, and make positive social impacts.

Social implications (Policy contribution) –This research has significant potential for broader societal impact, offering valuable insights to catalyze more sustainable practices within the fast-food industry. The findings can be harnessed to stimulate policy changes, pushing for stringent regulations or policies that foster sustainability within the industry and ensure social good. By raising awareness about the sustainability practices of fast-food companies, the research could prompt consumers to make more environmentally friendly choices, hence playing a vital role in waste reduction, resource conservation, and fostering social responsibility. These societal changes, brought about through corporate action, policy modifications, and consumer behavior change, contribute to a more sustainable future.

Research limitations – While this research provides an in-depth look at sustainability in Sri Lanka's fast-food industry, its limitations should be noted. The findings, influenced by Sri Lanka's unique conditions, might not apply to other countries. Convenience sampling and self-reported data might introduce bias or inaccuracies. The study, although covering key sustainability aspects, might not address all dimensions relevant to the fast-food industry. Additionally, the potential impact of external factors such as regulations and consumer attitudes might not have been exhaustively examined. These limitations present opportunities for further research.

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IRSSB10 Sustainability Practices in Sri Lankan Hospitality Industry

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Extended abstract

Due to several factors, including how the present climate change has affected Sri Lanka's bio variety and the depletion of many indigenous animals, plants, and natural resources, sustainable practices are essential for the country's hospitality sector. Sri Lanka, a renowned tourist destination, is well-known for its gorgeous terrain and fauna. Furthermore, the tourist business is one of the top income generators in the country, and the country's stagnant economic development and growing levels of poverty may be solved by focusing on job possibilities in hospitality organizations, which can enhance the quality of life. In the current norm, tourists are much more inclined to sustainable travel options. In response to that, hospitality service providers can make use of these practices which will eventually attract more tourists and boost their bottom line. Finally, the long-term viability and enhanced reputation and attractiveness of the country can attract socially and environmentally responsible tourists.

In recent years, there has been considerable worry about sustainable standards in the Sri Lankan hotel business. Sri Lankan hotels are quickly implementing similar procedures since the environmental effect is small. Clean water and sanitation (SDG 6), affordable and clean energy (SDG 7), responsible consumption and production (SDG 12), no poverty (SDG 1), quality education (SDG 4), life below water (SDG 14), finally life on earth (SDG 15) and climate action (SDG 13).

Referring to SDG 6, water is a valuable resource for Sri Lanka, a tropical island with a monsoon climate. As a result, water conservation may be identified as an essential topic to focus on for sustainable Sri Lankan hotels. Currently, hotels are diverting rainwater to reuse it, and rainwater collecting devices are being deployed. In addition, several hotels in Sri Lanka have installed low-flow showerheads and faucets, which are considered as water-saving devices.

Allude to SDG 12, waste minimization is an important aspect of sustainable practices in the hospitality business. Installation of biogas digesters, composting food wastes, recycling and reusing items and resources are some of the famous sustainable measures that Sri Lankan hotels have used. Furthermore, decreasing single-use plastics is another practice that hotels are attempting to do. (Refer to the appendix for examples)

Local sourcing can be connected to SDG 1 and SDG 12. This is a vital component of the four basic types of sustainability practices. Hotels have tried to acquire food and other required supplies from local vendors to help the local community lower their carbon footprint. (Refer to the appendix for examples)

Advert to SDG 7, energy efficiency is another crucial part of sustainable practices. In Sri Lanka, hotels have begun to employ solar panels to provide the necessary electricity, as well as energy-efficient appliances. This project is a significant energy saver, and hotels may now reduce their energy expenditures. (Refer to the appendix for examples)

Attributing to SDG 13, 14 and 15 large and small participants of the industry are actively participating in the conservation of nature, as a response to climate change and the initiative of cooperate social responsibility. (Refer to the appendix for examples)

The current trends in the dynamic world can be adopted in the Sri Lankan hospitality industry, even though tourism is the third largest export earner, female participation in the hotel and hospitality business is limited. Females account for fewer than 10% of the workforce, compared to 54% globally. Attracting more women into the workforce is critical for the hotel industry's long-term ambitions. Policy implementers should hold national awareness and recruiting camps. Through this initiative, gender equality (SDG 5) will be addressed.

Another trend that can be implemented in the Sri Lankan hospitality industry requires consistent and integrated marketing communication to carve a unique selling proposition and image among other tourist destinations, as well as comprehensive data-driven research to understand the visitor's needs and wants and cater to their needs and desired expectations. Customers have had an eye-opening, happy experience due to product development and diversity. According to the International Hotels Environment Initiative, 90% of hotel guests choose to stay in a hotel that cares about the environment. As a result, hotels should position themselves, brand themselves, and execute environmentally friendly methods. The government should encourage ecologically friendly methods that will help the environment to overcome negative environmental repercussions while also benefiting consumers.

About the adoption of sustainable practices, Sri Lankan government is also extending a helping hand to the hospitality industry. To demonstrate the commitment of the hotels towards the concept of sustainability, a program named the National Sustainable Tourism Certification (NSTC) program is currently running under the Sri Lankan Tourism Development Authority (SLTDA) as well.

Keywords – Sustainability, Sri Lankan Hospitality, customer satisfaction, CSR and 17 UN sustainable development goals

Purpose/Problem Statement – This study paper aims to comprehend the notion of sustainability in the hospitality sector in Sri Lanka, as well as how they focus on the 17 Sustainable Development Goals proposed by UNDP, using examples from both large and small participants in the industry.

Originality/value – This research develops a theoretical framework by taking 17 sustainable development goals introduced by the UNDP and how it has changed the hospitality industry while bringing out examples and trends into consideration.

Design/methodology/approach – This study will take a mixed-methods approach, incorporating Qualitative methodologies, including interviews, referring to research reports, journals, and news articles, which will be utilized to get in-depth insights on the sustainability initiatives of hospitality firms in Sri Lanka.

Findings/Discussion – The Sri Lankan hospitality industry's large and small players have been practicing sustainable practices for a long time, and many have focused on at least 5 to 7 of the most important sustainable development goals, such as no poverty, climate action, life on land, quality education, clean energy, responsible production and consumption, and life under the

sea. Addressing the sustainable development goals is critical for organizations to build new operations that will provide them with a competitive edge and allow them to generate passive revenue. More hotels and resorts will be able to establish important and valuable networks with governments and multilateral organizations.

Theoretical implications – This study proposed a theoretical framework for the efficiency of sustainability in the tourism industry and the overall efficiency of the organizations and their success when handling matters of operations in the organizations. Especial considerations are given to the big players of the Sri Lankan hospitality industry namely Cinnamon Hotel chain, Heritage, Jetwing and Uga Resorts and small-scale players and how they use sustainable practices to ensure the overall well-being of the planet, people, and profits.

Practical implications – Through the research findings, the hotels and resorts can identify the importance of the sustainable development goals and practices crucial for them to generate another passive income. The policymakers can identify the cruciality of sustainable tourism practices and look closely at the resort and hotel establishments and their sustainable goals and how they contribute to the planet, society, and economy of the world. The main stakeholder of the industry is the customers, as people are more concerned about socially responsible practices and the ability of the industry to attract them through means of customer engagement. Further, some of the enterprise owners do not know about the UN sustainable development goals but however, they had a special focus on environmental-related sustainable practices.

Social implications (Policy contribution) – The necessity of implementation of a board or authority to look at sustainable practices in the hospitality industry and necessary certifications and legislation to be brought forward by a government authority to implement sustainability across the Sri Lanka hotels and resorts while looking into ethical practices. To demonstrate the commitment of the hotels towards the concept of sustainability, a program named the National Sustainable Tourism Certification (NSTC) program is currently running under the Sri Lankan Tourism Development Authority (SLTDA) as well.

Research limitations – Currently, Sri Lanka's economy is a recession, and the entire world is going through an economic downturn post Covid-19 many do not spend their disposable income on holidays and therefore the optimum future of the hospitality industry in Sri Lanka is uncertain and further due to downturn many resorts and hotels do not invest on sustainable practices as they are seeking profits. During the interviews conducted with small-scale hoteliers, it was noticed that respective personnel were not aware of the UN SDGs. Adding on to that it was challenging to find the CSR reports and any published information regarding any sustainable practices pertaining to small-scale players in the industry.

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Appendix

Large-Scale Hospitality Players

Sustainable Development Goal or Action	Hotel/ Resort or Group
Affordable and Clean Energy (SDG 7)	<p>Jetwing Light House 41% of energy comes from renewable energy sources and solar panels supplement the hotels' grid electricity supply. 54% of lights are illuminated by LED and CFL energy efficient.</p> <p>Uga Resorts committed to using renewable energy sources up to significant degrees and limited the use of LPL gases, diesel and petrol only for the key installations and processors. By conducting the relevant staff training on energy savings, Uga resorts were able to increase energy efficiency by installing sensors and motion detectors as well as low-energy light fittings.</p> <p>Cinnamon Lodge Habarana Cinnamon Lodge Habarana utilise energy on a co-generation basis and solar heaters have been installed at Habarana village to heat water to guest rooms. This has reduced energy usage by 8700 kWh per month. (Cinnamon CSR and Sustainability, 2021/2022)</p> <p>Heritage Ahungalle Further, the hotel manages energy through ISO 50001:2011 to conserve energy as well as reduce greenhouse gas emissions.</p>
Life below the sea (SDG 14)	<p>Jetwing Light House Dolphins and whales conservation centres.</p>
No Poverty (SDG 1)	<p>Jetwing Light House 75% locally resourced and purchased.</p> <p>Jetwing Vil Uyana Jetwing Youth Development project to train youth and provide improve quality of life by training school leavers. Jetwing Vil Uyana is dedicated to paddy cultivation both cultivation and harvesting operations and sourcing locally.</p> <p>Heritage Kandalama The local suppliers are given the opportunity to provide the materials to the resort and the resort has a defined 20 km radius boundary when prioritizing purchasing decisions. Through this initiative, Heritage Kandalama has the opportunity to reduce the carbon footprint and cost of operation by 68%. While providing opportunities to the community and improving their quality of life.</p>
Responsible consumption and production (SDG 12)	<p>Jetwing Blue water wastewater generated and treated onsite, reused for the garden, wet waste composted and used as organic fertilizer and onsite biogas registry for renewable gas. Dry solid waste for recycling.</p> <p>Heritage Tea Factory The hotel also cultivates organic vegetables, herbs and tea and contributes over 100kg on average per every month to the table which meets the good health and well-being and also responsible production and consumption.</p>
Climate Action (SDG 13)	<p>Cinnamon Hotels and Resorts Cinnamon has proudly launched a sustainable initiative of the Cinnamon Rainforest Restoration project to conserve the rainforest. Forest Department of Sri Lanka and John Keells Foundation plans to restore a 50-acre plot over a period of three years to improve biodiversity while responding to climate action.</p>
Quality education (SDG 4)	<p>Heritage Tea Factory Heritage Tea Factory has committed to implementing quality education by annually donating the village school, supplies of school bags, sweaters and shoes to the student from grade 1 to grade 5.</p>
Life On Land (SDG 15)	<p>Jetwing Vil Uyana 3.5 acres of land for conservation. More than 140 species of birds and 2 species of mammals and 51 species of butterflies and 44 species of amphibians and reptiles recorded within the hotel grounds.</p> <p>Cinnamon Hotels and Resorts Project Leopard is implemented to support livelihood of cattle farmers and protect the leopard population living in and outside the boundary of the parks. Further the Cinnamon Elephant project is implemented to conservation and research and develop best practices in elephant tourism. Cinnamon has work on Live and let live to mitigate the human-elephant conflict.</p>
Clean water and sanitary (SDG 6)	<p>Cinnamon Wild Yala Cinnamon Wild Yala have all installed in house system to control systems to prevent wastage of water in the washer/ extractors during power cuts and further recycled water being used for gardening and washing requirements.</p>
Sustainable Cities and Communities (SDG 11)	<p>Heritage Kandalama The hotel was designed and constructed with integrating nature and without harming the environment while protecting the environment.</p>

Small Medium Scale Hospitality Resorts

Resort	Practice
The Kandy House	The Kandy House is housed in an ancestral manor and promotes cultural awareness among guests and further supports local handicrafts and offers garden-to-table meals and further reduces waste.
Ulpotha Village	Ulpotha is open for 6 months of the year and the guest number is restricted to 100 visitors annually. Further Ulpotha uses age-old organic and bio-dynamic farming methods and everything is done by hand with and help of buffalos. The infrastructure is built with biodegradable materials. There is no electricity at Ulpotha and the lighting is done through lamps and lanterns. Ulpotha operates for half of the year and next the rest of the year the environment to recover and reconcile.
Jungle Beach Resort	Environmental conservation and wildlife protection and beach clean-up initiatives. They also work with local communities to increase their quality of life.
Mudhouse	The infrastructure of the accommodation is built from natural materials and the lodge to practices permaculture and engages with the community.

IRSSB14**The Impact of Technological Advancement and Merging Marketing Trends on Sustainable Business Practices in Dialog Enterprise**A. Perera¹ and A. Adrian²^{1,2}*Edith Cowan University, Colombo, Sri Lanka***Extended abstract**

The pursuit of sustainability has recently taken priority for corporations across all sectors, as businesses work to connect their operations with environmental and social concerns (Serafeim,2020). Dialog enterprises, which place a significant value on stakeholder engagement and open communication, play an essential to advancing sustainable growth as innovative marketing trends and technological advancements continue to reshape businesses (Together We Stand - with Resilience and Resolve, n.d.). To have a large beneficial impact on the telecommunications sector, Dialog Axiata has prioritised completing 5 of the 17 goals. The business is confident in its ability to help combat poverty, promote gender equality, and expand access to high-quality education. To ensure a safer future by combatting climate change as well as incorporating innovation and sustainable thinking into the business sector. (Together We Stand - with Resilience and Resolve, n.d.). This study aims to contribute to increasing awareness of the relationship between digital transformation and rising marketing trends on sustainable business practices in dialog enterprises.

A comprehensive analysis of the current published literature was conducted through a systemic review to assess the relationship between both occurrences and their impact on sustainability. This search technique involves browsing through relevant academic databases, industry publications and pertinent sources. After relevant data had been gathered, findings were examined to recognize recurring concepts, the emerging trends, and understand gaps in the area. Thereafter, a quantitative study design was employed, including collecting data using survey questionnaires. The target population for this study included employers of Dialog Axiata working in a range of sectors. Surveys were distributed to employees working in dialog enterprise with 108 participants. The data obtained was then analyzed to draw a conclusion using statistical software SPSS.

The initial outcomes indicate that technical advancements like digitalization, data analytics, and automation have given dialogue organization options to boost stakeholder participation, increase operational efficiency, and encourage sustainable practices. Furthermore, innovative marketing trends including cause-related marketing, sustainable branding, and ethical shopping have made it easier to effectively communicate sustainability activities to stakeholders. The study also identified difficulties and potential drawbacks brought on by technical advancements and innovative marketing trends such as concerns about privacy, increasing usage, and the possibility of greenwashing. These results highlight the necessity for further study and strategic planning, when incorporating technology and marketing into long-term commercial strategies within dialog enterprise.

Keywords- sustainability, digital transformation, marketing trends, technological advancement, dialog enterprise

Problem statement - To what extent have technological advances and emerging marketing trends influenced the development of sustainable business practices in Dialog Enterprises?

Originality and value - This research develops a theoretical framework for Dialog Enterprise. The main cause of this research was to provide technological advancements for the people in need and to contribute to the sustainability development goals. The base of the research was the mass affluent and the citizens in the country. The resources we used to collect the data were from the Dialog Axiata organization employees and the stakeholders. Furthermore, using SPSS, we have concluded in our survey regarding the positive impact of technological advancement and emerging marketing trends on Sustainable Business Practices in Dialog Enterprise

Design/methodology/approach - Online surveys were used in a quantitative method to gather data. The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) was applied to analyze this study.

Findings and Discussions - As a member of United Nations global compact network Dialog Axiata places emphasis on achieving the sustainability goal and has aligned cooperative strategies towards advancing sustainable development in Sri Lanka. The Company has put in time and effort to develop a suitable plan of action to meet these goals in due time. Following the study to formulate an appropriate strategy to achieve these targets in the due time, Dialog was able to identify 5 of the 17 goals where the telecommunications sector, creating sustainable infrastructure for the benefit of society, and combating climate change to ensure a safer future may have the greatest positive influence. The organization has made an effort to raise awareness of and demonstrate the beneficial impact of the five SDGs with which it has linked itself throughout the reporting year through a variety of projects and initiatives.

Additionally, the findings contribute to demonstrating that dialog's chosen target group was significantly impacted by the sustainable development goals. offering insights on those engaged in the dialog about developments and innovative marketing trends that enhance sustainable business alternatives. The main outcome of this research also highlighted dialog Axiata's value of sustainability and its crucial contribution to bridging the gap between the five core SDGs it has chosen. The survey responses were evaluated using SPSS, which made it possible to highlight the significant findings on the significance of sustainability in dialog Axiata and the influence it has on the organization's decision-making process.

Theoretical implication - The research's conclusions may help to strengthen or validate previously held theories and models about sustainable company practices, embracing new technology, and marketing tactics.

The study examines how technological advancements and new marketing trends affect sustainable business practices, adding to the theoretical understanding of these practices. It is useful to determine the degree to which these variables support the adoption and application of sustainable practices in dialogue enterprises.

The study aids in bridging the gap between theoretical ideas, for Dialog enterprises to improve their sustainability efforts. This paper offers practical insights and suggestions. It assists in converting theoretical information into useful tactical approaches.

Social implications - The study can provide insight into how adopting sustainable business practises, which are affected by technical advancements and new marketing trends, has a good

environmental impact. It can show how these procedures help businesses that engage in Dialog reduce carbon emissions, conserve resources, cut back on waste, and support environmental sustainability. This information may encourage other companies to implement comparable procedures and support more general environmental objectives.

The study can be used to highlight the significance of social responsibility in corporate operations and to support the notion that companies have a duty to solve social and environmental issues. This may result in Dialog enterprise becoming more conscious of the need to embrace sustainable practices, advance social welfare, and uphold their corporate social responsibility.

It can show how businesses can provide customers with greener choices thanks to technical progress and new marketing fads. The study can influence customers to make more educated decisions and prioritize sustainability by demonstrating the beneficial effects of such practices.

Practical implication - Businesses can coordinate their strategies to benefit from these developments. They can recognize chances for innovation, such as implementing cutting-edge technologies or implementing marketing tactics that support sustainability.

It can offer advice on the selection, incorporation, and application of technologies that have a record of accomplishment of having favorable effects on sustainability.

Emerging marketing trends that appeal to customers and promote positive brand perception can be found, such as green marketing, cause-related marketing, or socially responsible branding. These insights can be used by businesses to create marketing efforts that are specifically targeted, promote their sustainability objectives, and successfully interact with environmentally conscious customers.

By providing practical examples and case studies of successful collaborations, fostering the development of sustainable supply chains, responsible sourcing practices, and shared initiatives for sustainable development.

Research limitations - Due to the study's specific setting and sample, the research's findings might not be as generalizable as they could be. The results may not be directly transferable to other sectors or geographical areas as the research is specific to one industry.

The data collected through online survey questionnaires relies on self-reported responses from participants. This opens possibilities for biases in response, like social desirability bias or recollection bias. Participants may exaggerate or understate their use of sustainable practises, awareness of technical advancements, or understanding of marketing trends, which could result in inaccurate results.

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IRSSB15

Digital Transformation and Emerging Trends in Marketing: Empowering Sustainable Practices in Education

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Extended Abstract

In the ever-shifting realm of education, the intricate interplay of digital metamorphosis and nascent marketing trends has taken on paramount importance for establishments and associations, propelling the cultivation of more enduring practices (Mukul & Büyüközkan, 2023). Education 4.0, a paradigm centered around interactive erudition and digital fusion, aspires to govern comprehension, spark inquiry, and remain attuned to outcomes (Mukul & Büyüközkan, 2023). This extended abstract explores the realm of harnessing digital transformation and inventive marketing methodologies to propel sustainable practices within the educational sector, augmenting accessibility, engagement, and results for learners whilst confronting evolving challenges.

Digital Transformation has orchestrated a revolution within the sphere of education, opening novel avenues for learning, pedagogy, and cooperation (Ashida & Ishizaka, 2022). Educational institutions are capitalizing on digital platforms, internet-based resources, and virtual classrooms to expand the reach of education and surmount traditional constraints (Ashida & Ishizaka, 2022). The assimilation of digital tools and technologies empowers institutions to proffer pliable pedagogical alternatives, individualized experiences, and remote instruction, culminating in heightened sustainability in the delivery of educational amenities. Nevertheless, the transition to virtual learning during the pandemic has engendered predicaments such as constricted ICT facilities and disrupted face-to-face interactions (Ashida & Ishizaka, 2022).

Personalization and adaptive learning are emerging proclivities that accentuate the significance of shaping educational pathways to cater to the needs of each student (Zlatkovic, Denic & Stojanovic, 2023). Sophisticated analytics and synthetic intelligence facilitate tailor-made learning content, tempo, and evaluations, heightening engagement and enhancing educational upshots (Zlatkovic, Denic & Stojanovic, 2023). Nevertheless, predicaments linked to data confidentiality, predisposition, and lucidity must be addressed to ensure a secure and open pedagogical milieu (Zlatkovic, Denic & Stojanovic, 2023).

The traction gained by gamification and experiential learning tactics in education is on the ascent, fanning the flames of motivation, engagement, and knowledge retention (Ahmed & Sutton, 2017). By interweaving elements reminiscent of games, challenges, and incentives, establishments nurture a favorable and immersive learning environment (Ahmed & Sutton, 2017). Nevertheless, a judicious design is indispensable to circumvent a superficial approach and ensure consonance between game mechanics and scholarly objectives (Ahmed & Sutton, 2017).

Data analytics and insights assume a pivotal role in discernment-rooted decision-making and institutional potency (Wieringa et al., 2021). By collating and scrutinizing data on learner

performance, engagement, and input, establishments can distill patterns, tendencies, and domains necessitating amelioration (Wieringa et al., 2021). Data-informed insights endow institutions with precisely targeted interventions, individualized support, and incessant refinement, thereby contributing to the sustainability and expansion of educational establishments (Wieringa et al., 2021).

Digital technologies have paved the way for cooperation and community involvement within the domain of education (Ahmed & Sutton, 2017). Internet-based platforms, social media conduits, and virtual communities empower tutors, learners, and stakeholders to connect, pool resources, and coalesce on a global scale (Ahmed & Sutton, 2017). Collaboration and community involvement foster sustainability by nurturing an environment conducive to shared learning, innovation, and perennial professional development (Ahmed & Sutton, 2017).

Keywords - Digital Metamorphosis, Education 4.0, Interactive Erudition, Digital Technologies, Tailoring, Adaptive Learning, Gamification, Experiential, Erudition, Data Analytics, Insights, Collaboration, Community Involvement, Sustainability, Virtual Learning, Cyber Classrooms, Remote Instruction, Synthetic Intelligence, Data Confidentiality, Educational Outcomes, Institutional Efficacy.

Problem Statement - This article delves into the predicaments and openings presented by digital metamorphosis and marketing tendencies within the educational arena. It scrutinizes the modus operandi through which establishments can propel sustainability, augment access and engagement, and grapple with evolving quandaries. Predicaments encompass limited ICT amenities, qualms regarding the efficacy of online learning, data confidentiality, and the delicate equilibrium between gamification and academic profundity. Additionally, the article underscores the magnitude of data analytics while ensuring privacy safeguards and catalyzing cooperation for the communal pursuit of learning and innovation.

Originality value - The originality value of this article resides within its all-encompassing exploration of the nexus connecting digital transformation, burgeoning marketing tendencies, and sustainability within the realm of education. While digital metamorphosis and individualized learning have been exhaustively debated, this article singularly underscores the importance of propelling enduring endeavors within education through the adroit utilization of digital tools and technologies. It probes into the predicaments and deliberations interwoven with the assimilation of AI systems, gamification, data analytics, and cooperation in the pedagogical context. By addressing these facets, the article augments our profundity of comprehension of how establishments can leverage these trends to elevate student outcomes while fostering sustainability.

Design/Methodology/Approach – The design/methodology/approach of this article is fundamentally predicated on an exhaustive perusal and dissection of extant literature, research studies, and industry chronicles pertaining to digital metamorphosis, burgeoning marketing trends, and sustainability within the educational domain. The article incorporates insights and revelations drawn from sundry sources to provide a holistic grasp of the subjectmatter.

Findings/Discussion - The revelations accentuate the transformative sway of digital metamorphosis and inventive marketing within education. Digital platforms and cyber classrooms broaden access, while personalized and adaptive learning amplifies engagement and sustainability. Gamification amplifies motivation, yet upholding equipoise between game components and scholarly objectives is quintessential. Data analytics underpin decision-

making and institutional efficacy, with privacy protection assuming primacy. Cooperation and community involvement nurture shared learning and innovation. Collectively, these revelations underscore the latent potential of digital metamorphosis and marketing tendencies in fostering sustainability and elevating student upshots within education.

Theoretical Implications - This article augments theoretical comprehension by probing into the notions of Education 4.0, personalized and adaptive learning, gamification, experiential learning, data analytics, and cooperation in education. It expands upon these concepts within the precincts of digital metamorphosis and marketing trends, extending insights into their plausible implications for sustainability and student outcomes.

Practical Implications - Functionally, pedagogical establishments can harness digital platforms and personalized learning paradigms to amplify access and augment engagement. Educators can harness gamification and data analytics to enhance motivation and foster data-driven decision-making. EdTech providers can engender pioneering tools and resources. Policy architects can lend support to infrastructure evolution. Students can reap dividends from personalized learning and data-driven interventions.

Social Implications and (Policy Priorities) - This article's impact extends to societal policies, especially in education. Policymakers must prioritize infrastructure for digital transformation and enact rules to address data privacy and AI fairness. These policies promote equal access, safeguard privacy, and ensure a safe learning environment.

Research limitations - This research is limited by relying on existing literature and secondary sources, which affects depth. The rapidly evolving digital transformation and marketing trends in education may render some findings outdated as new developments emerge.

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IRSSB17

Digital Transformation and Emerging Trends in Marketing

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Extended abstract

The purpose of this study is to examine the impacts of digital transformation and emerging marketing trends on the Southeast Asian education sector. The field of education in Southeast Asia has undergone enormous changes because of the rising marketing trends and digital transformation, bringing both new possibilities and difficulties for educational institutions. This extended abstract thoroughly examines the emergence of digital marketing methods and their effects on the sector's sustainability, efficacy, and competitiveness. By focusing on the integration of digital marketing strategies in educational institutions in Southeast Asia, this study addresses a research need. While earlier study has looked at a variety of facets of the education industry, there isn't much work that specifically focuses on the development and application of digital marketing strategies in this field.

Information was collected quantitatively using online survey questions that were disseminated to Southeast Asian educational institutions. 400 institutions, including universities, colleges, and centers for vocational training, made up the sample, representing various educational environments. Statistical methods, such as Pearson's Correlation and Multiple Linear Regression Analysis, were used to analyze the acquired data.

The results show that the education market in Southeast Asia is significantly impacted by digital transformation and innovative marketing trends. Using digital marketing strategies like social media marketing, content marketing, and online advertising, institutions are now better equipped to attract students, increase brand recognition, and communicate with their target market. These strategies have helped educational institutions gain a sustained competitive edge, enhanced student satisfaction and better educational results.

The report makes suggestions for improving the use of digital marketing strategies in the education sector considering its results. Among these suggestions are expanding the scope of digital marketing initiatives, creating customized communication channels, and using new trends like influencer marketing and video marketing. For effective implementation, faculty training in digital literacy, investments in digital infrastructure, and collaboration with industry stakeholders are also essential.

This study adds to the body of knowledge by revealing details on the effects of digital transformation and new marketing trends on Southeast Asia's education industry. For legislators, educational leaders, and marketing experts, the study provides insightful information that will help them create plans that effectively use digital technology to improve educational experiences, outcomes, and sustainability. For improving learning experiences, expanding accessibility, and maintaining competitiveness in the global education scene, it is essential that education undergo a digital revolution and that marketing trends in this field continue to change. These themes are pertinent to Southeast Asia because they can address the region's particular educational possibilities and concerns.

Keywords – Southeast Asia, education sector, emerging marketing trends, digital marketing, sustainability.

Purpose/Problem Statement - The goal of this study is to determine how the Southeast Asian educational sector has been impacted by the digital revolution and new marketing trends. Even though digital marketing is becoming increasingly important in the field of education, there is not much research on its uses and effectiveness in Southeast Asia.

Originality/value – This study offers new insights into the application of digital marketing strategies in Southeast Asia's education industry. By filling in the research gap, it adds to the scant body of knowledge focused on this area and offers insightful information to educational institutions, legislators, and market research specialists.

Design/methodology/approach – Utilizing online survey questionnaires given to educational institutions in Southeast Asia, a quantitative method was used. 400 institutions made up the sample, which represented various educational environments. Data were analyzed using statistical methods, such as multiple linear regression analysis and Pearson's Correlation Analysis. The adoption of digital marketing tactics, and channels, and their effect within the setting of higher education institutions are critically examined in this research. An extensive evaluation of prior research covering six years, from 2016 to 2021, to accomplish this goal. Recognized resources including EBSCO, Web of Science, Wiley Online, and Google Scholar were used to find the chosen papers. In all, 28 papers that particularly address digital marketing in the higher education industry were chosen for our study. By offering a thorough examination of numerous features in an educational setting, this research stresses distinctively the improvement of digital consumer experiences, particularly among students.

Findings/Discussion – The results demonstrate the immense impact of digital marketing strategies on Southeast Asia's education industry. The use of tactics including social media marketing, content marketing, and online advertising had a favorable impact on audience engagement, brand awareness, and student recruitment. These tactics helped students achieve better academic results, were more satisfied as students, and helped maintain a competitive edge. Our data show that websites and social media have received a large amount of attention from previous research, with almost 75% of the publications we chose to include mentioning these tactics. Surprisingly, other effective digital marketing techniques including marketing automation, affiliate marketing, content marketing, search engine marketing, and email marketing have not gotten as much scholarly attention. In fact, only 25% of the chosen papers were reviewed in our study, indicating a significant space in the literature.

Theoretical implications – Specifically in the context of Southeast Asia, this study adds to the theoretical knowledge of digital marketing in the education industry. Future studies and theoretical frameworks relating to the incorporation of digital marketing strategies in educational institutions might build upon this basis. This study indicates that a more thorough and integrated strategy for digital marketing in education is required. They support ideas that call for the strategic fusion of different digital marketing techniques to provide a coherent and comprehensive engagement plan. The lack of emphasis on content marketing, email marketing, and other methods suggests that theory and practice may not be aligned. The findings of our study point to the unrealized potential for improving student engagement and retention, which calls for a deeper knowledge of the state of digital marketing in educational institutions.

Practical implications – The findings have applications for academic institutions, decision-makers in government, and marketers. To increase the efficiency and sustainability of digital marketing in the education sector, the study recommends expanding the implementation of these activities, investing in digital infrastructure, training faculty members in digital literacy,

and fostering strategic partnerships. Our report gives practical advice on how academic institutions, decision-makers, and marketers may improve their efforts at digital marketing in the higher education market. Stakeholders may develop an environment that successfully engages students and supports their academic objectives by diversifying digital channels, personalizing interaction, investing in digital literacy, promoting cooperation, and embracing innovation.

Social implications (Policy contribution) – The study emphasizes the significance of using digital marketing strategies in educational efforts and policy. The findings may be used by policymakers to create frameworks that support the incorporation of digital marketing into educational institutions, boost innovation, and improve the standard of education in Southeast Asia. The societal implications of our work extend to Southeast Asian education policy, where promoting digital innovation and raising educational standards are major objectives. Policymakers should use the potential of digital marketing tactics to generate good change in the education sector by building collaborative partnerships, boosting digital literacy, encouraging innovation, supporting individualized learning, and assuring equal access.

Research limitations: This study concentrated on the quantitative analysis of information gathered through online survey forms. Future studies might use qualitative techniques to acquire a greater understanding of the perspectives and experiences of those involved in the implementation of digital marketing tactics in Southeast Asia's education sector.

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IRSSB19

How Telemedicine Has Affected the Digital Health Industry in Sri Lanka and the Entire Globe

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Extended abstract

Studies show that COVID-19 made the world adopt a wide array of digital health strategies. Telecare through teleconsultations improved remote services. Social media platforms, electronic medical records and clinical decisions have all been improved by the digital health industry.

Master of Biomedical Informatics (Msc.) was aimed at all medical doctors. Digital health was improved by these doctors who followed the post-graduate course. From 2011 to 2020 graduates published 166 research titles as dissertations. There were 6 research titles namely digital health, public health informatics, clinical informatics, policy and education informatics, bioinformatics, and pharmacy informatics. Growing attention on telemedicine platforms and m-health around the world and in Sri Lanka, it is expected that the focus will continue to change in the future, with a heavy emphasis on clinical informatics.

26 studies were selected for healthcare-based telemedicine, the affected response areas for pandemic management include early diagnosis, patient isolation and contact tracing. They were related to different digital health components such as Telehealth and Telemedicine and telepsychiatry, has created a way of providing efficient and effective care. It has been observed that the COVID-19 related mortality among older people is high. Thus, phone calls, video telehealth, and other means of telecommunication have enabled the provision of psychological support and close monitoring within the limitations of strict social distancing.

This has contributed to the prevention of anxiety and depression among the elderly Chauhan et al., highlight another instance of remote monitoring using a residential or communal oxygen measuring instrument, together with digital health services. This is useful in the early identification of rapidly deteriorating COVID-19 patients. Evidence suggests that Telehealth and Telemedicine as supportive measures have been successful during past epidemics. Evidence suggests that Telehealth and Telemedicine adoption as supportive measures have been successful during past epidemics.

Countries identify specific challenges in adopting Telemedicine with a broader global dialogue to overcome such challenges through collaborative efforts. France has taken the initiative to actively support the use of telemedicine coupled with rapid authorization and reimbursement. While in Italy, telemedicine is not yet included as a basic level of care granted to all citizens within their National Health Service.

Keywords – Telemedicine; Sustainable; digital health; business practices

Purpose/Problem Statement - This research paper focuses on how telemedicine has shaped our modern world. In Sri Lanka, a biomedical informatics postgraduate degree has helped develop digital health. These studies focus on telehealth, telemedicine and telepsychiatry. However, research that focuses directly on sustainable business and telemedicine is rare and especially research focused on Sri Lanka.

Originality/value – This research constructs a framework for digital health. The two main components for developing digital health are the increase in postgraduate teaching and covid19. Furthermore, the supporting elements are telehealth, tele psychiatry, telemedicine, and remote health. COVID 19 speeds up the healthcare industry.

Design/methodology/approach: A quantitative approach used several research papers and other information to understand how telemedicine has transformed our lives and made it easy. It has also provided staff with a higher quality standard in their jobs and a better lifestyle for both the client and employee.

Findings/Discussion – The results found that the components of digital health in terms of efficacy had a considerable effect on their lives, especially for service providers. Telemedicine has helped with curbing COVID -19. Furthermore, there is a significant saving in the cost of transport for patient channeling and payments. COVID-19 killed many people through infection. This affected many businesses, especially the healthcare industry. Thus, through digitalization, businesses improved their revenue in an environmentally and socially friendly manner.

Theoretical implications – This study proposed a theoretical framework for the efficiency of digital health in our day-to-day lives. It consists of two important structures: firstly, how covid-19 impacted telemedicine; and secondly, how digital health is useful in our lives.

Practical implications – Doctors, nurses, healthcare professionals and government sectors can apply the study's findings to establish an effective digital transformation. The public should also be more educated on telemedicine and the convenience it can provide for our lives.

Social implications (Policy contribution) – The researcher should improve plans for telemedicine framework and development, which includes the establishment of a digital and information privacy organization. Certain digital applications for laboratory and prescription drug purchases should also be developed in Sri Lanka.

Research limitations – Studies about the perspective of telemedicine users and bioinformatics, statisticians could be collected from patients, doctors, and allied healthcare professionals. This would help to get feedback and develop the telemedicine industry and make business more sustainable. This research was conducted post-covid, therefore there were bound to be limitations in the output. The sample size was also not enough due to the restricted budget.

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IRSSB20

Public Display of Affection on Social Media; Effects on Conservative Cultures

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Extended abstract

Although the widespread use of social networking by individuals of various ages to display affection publicly, there is only a small body of research on its effects on conservative cultures. This systematic review evaluates quantitative data on PDA on SM and its effects on conservative cultures. Studies published from 2010 January to 2023 January were assessed according to eligibility criteria. Four research papers were selected that studied the research objective closely and the data and both inferential and descriptive analysis done by the authors was quoted. Overall, the studies showed that the usage of SM to display affection publicly was significantly correlated with reduced relationship satisfaction and intimacy. Also, the greater display was found to lead to mistrust, loneliness, negative feelings, and SM addictions in partners. There is a substantial limitation in the number of studies on this important topic and it is recommended to carry out high-quality research to uncover valuable data which can help couples achieve happiness in relationships including marriage. **Keywords:** Public display of affection, social media, conservative cultures, satisfaction, intimacy.

People have long used verbal and nonverbal cues to communicate their thoughts and emotions to others. They no longer need to physically meet to connect and communicate thanks to social network platforms. SM platforms tend to make conversations between individuals much more intimate and public and are more inclined to divulge information that they would not feel comfortable divulging in person. This study plans to explore the role of public display of affection (PDA) on social media (SM) and its impact on conservative cultures. SM platforms are the most used websites online the internet. SM is on the rise whereas in January 2023, there are 4.76 billion SM users worldwide, which is 59.4% of the world's population, and 137 million new each year. With the increase in the use of SM and the marked popularity of it in younger generations, it is imperative that couples both young and old will use SM platforms to show affection towards their partner. This, therefore, questions what PDA is in the context of SM and how different are its impacts. There has not been much scientific research done on this and the few studies on this subject have focused on the level of use of SM and online disclosure of information, rather than public display per se. Furthermore, the research body on these effects on conservative cultures and intercultural variations in displaying affection is even low.

Keywords – Public display of affection, social media, conservative cultures, satisfaction, intimacy

Purpose/Problem Statement - When exploring conservative cultures and the impacts PDA on SM brings, conservatism is a political philosophy that puts focus on traditions and depends on the person to sustain society. Previous literature shows that PDA in general brings both good and adverse effects in conservative cultures. (Helsper and Whitty, 2010; Ridgway & Clayton, 2016) shows that partners who are brought up in conservative backgrounds feel that internet infidelity behaviors include flirting, sexting, and becoming infatuated with other people by making comments on and liking attractive photographs, approving a friend request from a former or ex-partner, receiving personal conversations are more likely with SM usage. Also. Studies found that

individuals tend to monitor their partner using SM and it is more with people with cultural backgrounds. On the other side of the spectrum, SM use and PDA on it has been seen favorably by those with poor self-esteem. When their partners make their partnerships public or update their SM profiles to "In a relationship," people in romantic partnerships report feeling happier and more confident (Whitty, 2008). SM has also made people feel closer to their spouses, and many have been able to settle disputes that were difficult to settle in person through SM. The impact of PDA on SM are vast and complex. It is therefore important to identify these impacts and these correlations to better navigate through the SM environment. A systematic literature search will be able to answer these questions and give a better understanding of the topic and its impacts. In order to understand this subject, the study will focus on a general research question, how does PDA on SM affect conservative cultures? The research approach will be described under methodology the overarching study results, its analysis and the discussion will follow.

Originality/value – People have long used verbal and nonverbal cues to communicate their thoughts and emotions to others. They no longer need to physically meet to connect and communicate thanks to social network platforms. SM platforms tend to make conversations between individuals much more intimate and public and are more inclined to divulge information that they would not feel comfortable divulging in person. This study plans to explore the role of public display of affection (PDA) on social media (SM) and its impact on conservative cultures. SM platforms are the most used websites online. SM is on the rise whereas in January 2023, there are 4.76 billion SM users worldwide, which is 59.4% of the world's population, and 137 million new each year. With the increase in use of SM and the marked popularity of it in younger generations, it is imperative that couples both young and old will use SM platforms to show affection towards their partner. This, therefore, questions what PDA is in the context of SM and how different are its impacts. There has not been much scientific research done on this and the few studies on this subject have focused on the level of use of SM and online disclosure of information, rather than public display per se. Furthermore, the research body on these effects on conservative cultures and intercultural variations in displaying affection is even low. There has not been much scientific research done on public displays of affection in intimate relationships or their consequences up to this point. The few research on this subject have focused on intercultural variations in affection-showing, as well as variations in gay vs heterosexual and interracial versus intra-racial relationships (Dibiase & Gunoe, 2004; Vaquera & Kao, 2005). The value of expressing compassion for physical health has been empirically supported in several ways, including the lowering of blood pressure and cortisol levels (Grewen et al., 2005; Floyd & Riforgiate, 2008). It is interesting to note that for health, expressed affection matters a little more than received affection. Additionally, showing compassion in romantic days boosts relationship happiness (Hesse et al., 2021). Though unsatisfactory, there are some researches that have explored public display of affection and its impacts over the years, but comparatively, public display of affection on social media and its effects have been rarely researched upon and is still on its inception on a study perspective (Hatfield and Rapson, 2015). Even the formation and preservation of intimate relationships may alter due to social networking. The act of holding hands or giving hugs is considered an offline display or show of affection in public. On the contrary, online displays of affection, often referred to as open displays of devotion, occur when people like photos, comment on posts, or share inside jokes. A virtual endorsement is expressed by liking materials posted by the partner. Furthermore, photographing a significant other and sharing them on social network platforms demonstrate dedication to other users (Whitty, 2008). In the end, updating the status online is a sign that the connection is official. It is also said to be a strategy to stop people from socializing with their partners. The usage of social media may also interfere with intimate affairs. Monitoring a relationship is simple thanks to social media.

Jealousy, anxiety, and distrust can result from watching partners' internet behavior. People with poor self-esteem could interpret their partners' social media behavior as a flaw that makes the relationship less satisfying (Lenhart and Duggan, 2014). These are some of the distinct characteristics and effects that one can find when it comes to expressing public display of affection on social media.

Design/methodology/approach – An extensive literature search of published studies was done to sweepthrough the primary data of studies that explored PDA on SM and its effects on conservative cultures. Strictly quantitative studies were selected due to the need of demographic data and the ability to be able to draw significant correlations. Studies that are peer-reviewed and published in well-reputed research databases and journals were only considered such as RESEARCHGATE, Emerald, INFORM, Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ), etc. The following keywords were used, “PDA”, “PDA” AND “SM”, “PDA in SM”, “SM” AND “conservative culture”, PDA” AND “conservative cultures”, “PDA” AND “SM” AND “conservative cultures”.

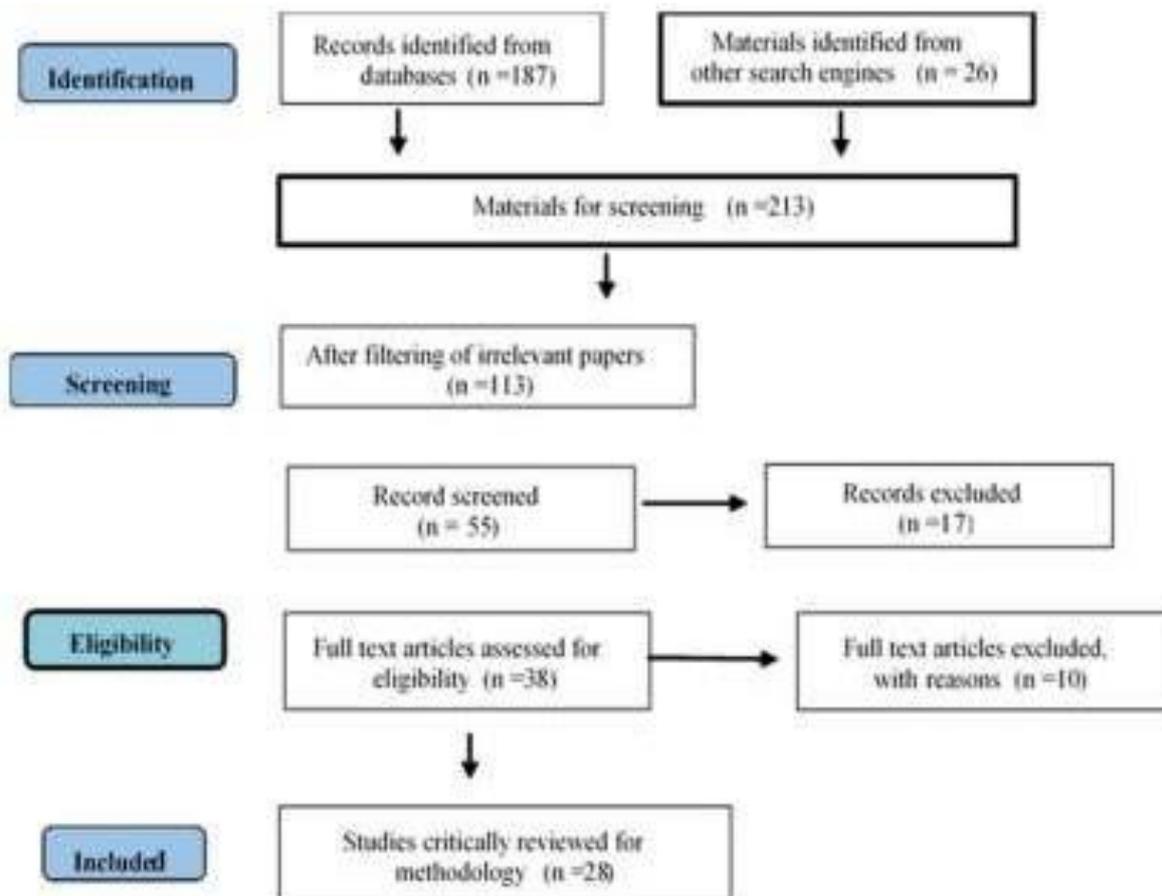


Figure 1- PRISMA flow chart

The paper selection and data extraction are shown in the PRISMA flow chart.

Findings/Discussion – According to the authors, PDA is any form of physical affection/intimacy shown for others to see. However, Gullledge et al., (2003) describe “any touch intended to arouse feelings of love in the giver and/or the recipient” as physical affection and display of this in public as PDA. Living in a digital age where SM has dominated every aspect of the world from business, and religion to politics, it is imperative that SM will have an imprint on relationships and culture. One such example is the Saudi Arabian cultural revolution that helped Saudi women to drive a vehicle, much of the propaganda and the political pressure was put through SM. Another such revolution in which SM played an integral part was the Black Lives Matter movement in USA. Having discussed the possible impacts that PDA on SM has, it is surprising to see the alarmingly low research body on that topic.

#	Study	Year	Mentioned about SM	SM platform	Study Characteristics					
					Freedom of expression	Relationship satisfaction	Relationship Intimacy	Negative feelings about the partner	Partner Surveillance	Overall Relationship dynamics
1	Goldberg, Yeshua-Kats & Marciano	2022	Yes	Facebook, Instagram	Yes	Reduced	Reduced	Increased	Yes	Negatively affected
2	Kocur et al.	2022	No	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
3	Stasinska	2022	No	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
4	Wang	2022	No	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
5	Blair & McKenna	2022	No	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
6	Ariani	2022	No	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
7	Matheson et al.	2021	No	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
8	Chairunnisa & Febriani	2020	Yes	Instagram	Yes	Reduced	Reduced	No difference	Yes	Negatively affected
9	Gull et al.	2019	Yes	Facebook	Yes	Reduced	Reduced	Increased	Yes	Negatively affected
10	Lee et al.	2019	Yes	Facebook	Yes	Reduced	Reduced	Increased	Yes	Negatively affected
11	Reddy et al.	2019	No	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
12	Torres & Ranchez	2018	No	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
13	Charton & Boudreau	2017	No	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
14	Brady	2017	No	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
15	Parmar	2016	No	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
16	Kaela	2015	No	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

17	Setyaningsih	2015	No	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
18	Hand et al.	2013	Yes	Facebook	Yes	Reduced	No difference	Increased	Yes	Negatively affected
19	De Oliveira et al.	2013	No	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
20	Oliveira et al.	2013	No	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
21	Fox, Warber & Makstaller	2013	Yes	Facebook	Yes	Reduced	Reduced	Increased	-	Negatively affected
22	Park et al.	2011	Yes	Facebook	Yes	Reduced	Reduced	Increased	Yes	Negatively affected
23	Utz & Beukeboom	2011	Yes	Hyves, Facebook	Yes	Reduced	Reduced	Increased	Yes	Negatively affected
24	Kent & El-Alayli	2011	No	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
25	Hill	2008	No	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
26	Gulledge et al.	2007	No	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
27	Vaquera & Kao	2005	No	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
28	Sasamon & Amankwaa	2003	No	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

*if you want references about the above studies kindly contact the author

Table1- Results of the study

According to the table above it clearly shows that out of 28 studies, only 6 looked at PDA on SM and its effects. Furthermore, the studies showed that PDA on SM by couples had a significant relationship between lack of trust, loneliness, negative vibes, inappropriate posts about the partner and eventually leading to harming marital relationships. Also, the studies found a relationship between increased use of PDA with increased levels of SMaddictions. (Lee, Gillat & Mille 2019) showed that online disclosure about a relationship (in other words PDA on SM) had a negative correlation with relationship satisfaction and intimacy between partners. Also, they found attachment anxiety and avoidance were related to intimacy and online disclosure in positive and negative manners. Also, the paper showed that the more a partner gets to know his/her partner is disclosing online the less intimate and satisfied they are about the relationship. Adding to these studies revealed the more inclusive online disclosure is, (in other words the more people can see disclosed information online) even greater the partners' dissatisfaction and loss of intimacy were. However, the study also found that both partners disclosing online equally had a canceling effect on the negative outcomes of intimacy and satisfaction.

Research limitations – This review acts as important secondary data for a topic that is not reviewed or studied well. This also acts as a building block of research on this topic for further research in this field. Though this review can be limited by the number of participants and the relevance to the research question, it is highly recommended for other researchers to expand on this field due to this gives valuable data for both relationships and marriages to thrive successfully. Out of 28 studies, only 6 looked at PDA on SM and its effects.

This systematic review shows multiple negative impacts are associated with increased use of SM to disclose relationship information or display affection publicly in conservative cultures. The review can conclude that with increased PDA on SM there can be problems with trust, loneliness, and negative feeling among partners. Also, it is important to note that the perceived and actual difference of online disclosure between partners compounds these negative effects. This review acts as important secondary data for a topic that is not reviewed or studied well. This also acts as a

building block of research on this topic for further research in this field. Though this review can be limited by the number of participants and the relevance to the research question, it is highly recommended for other researchers to expand on this field due to this gives valuable data for both relationships and marriages to thrive successfully.

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IRSSB26

Exploring How the Sri Lanka Tourism Industry Uses Environmentally Conservative Practices to Overcome the Economic Crisis

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Extended abstract

The societies' importance on sustainability has increased rapidly during the past few years, customers of different industries including the tourism industry tend to prioritize being environmentally friendly and sustainable, leading to higher demand for sustainable travelling options. In this research diverse ways, the tourism industry becoming environmentally friendly will be identified and how these methods help organizations to overcome the current post-pandemic economic crisis.

Sustainability can be described as where businesses tend to prevent any negative impact on their stakeholders and one of the main ways is by being environmentally conservative to preserve natural resources for future generations. With the increase in attention gained to environmental problems such as global warming, deforestation and exploitation of natural resources, consumers are more conscience of whether the products and services they consume are environmentally friendly. This has led to an increase in demand for sustainable products including sustainable tourism.

In this research, we shall prove that being environmentally friendly can help businesses face the current economic crisis and gain long-term success.

Key words- Environmentally conservative methods, economic crisis, tourism industry.

Problem statement- In this research the reasons why the tourism industry should continue investing in being Environmentally friendly, from a business point of view, despite the increasing number of organizations being Environmentally friendly, which creates the tendency of a mass market being created.

Originality and value - Within this research, we found factors which affect whether being environmentally conservative can help the current economic situation. The cost factor is a crucial factor, as if the cost of implementing environmentally conservative our highly costly and takes a long time to recover the cost, it would be an opportunity cost as this money could be invested on a different tourist attraction activity. Further excessive costs may result in unreasonable prices, however, due to economic crisis the disposable income consumers possess is lower, and this would lead to lower sales volumes. However, environmentally friendly practices can also help save costs. According to (Peng, 2020) a survey using 700 companies has shown that US\$14 can be saved for every US\$1 invested in reducing food wastage. This proves that if organizations use practices suitable for their organizations, they can cover the initial costs while making extra earnings.

The risks involved would also need to be measured when adapting environmentally friendly methods as it may affect the original product, for instances discarding food ingredients with minor defects may not be environmentally friendly however in a five -star hotel the quality of the food cannot be compromised as it may affect any reputation built for the high-quality dishes

(Peng, 2020). However, organizations could reduce the risk of some practices and ensure that their consumers priorities are being environmentally friendly by using TRA (Theory of related actions) or TPB (Theory of planned behaviors) models (Wang & Wong, 2020).

Moreover, the size of the organization, the target market segment's interest levels in sustainable services, and time consumption are seen as the main reasons why sustainability may not always help face the current economic situation.

Due to the dynamic nature of the market, apart from the above-mentioned factors companies should also consider the market situation and PESTLE factors when deciding on the extent and way to invest in being environmentally friendly.

Methodology - In this research, a descriptive research technique will be used to prove that using environmentally conservative will be helpful for businesses to overcome the current economic crisis. For this, currently used environmentally conservative methods will be identified as the benefits of adopting environmentally friendly practices. Further gathering validated information and case studies that imply that environmentally conservative methods help overcome the economic crisis.

Findings and Discussions - This extended abstract includes the findings and discussion of a research study that investigated how the Sri Lankan tourism industry uses environmental practices as a strategy to overcome economic crises. The study's goal is to offer insight into the relationship between environmental sustainability and economic resilience in the context of a developing country that relies on tourism for revenue production. The study investigates the adoption, impact, and effectiveness of environmental policies in minimizing the negative effects of economic downturns on the tourism sector through data analysis.

In the current market regardless of international or regional, being environmentally friendly is becoming more prioritized (O'neil, 2002), thus increasing the pro environmental behavior, which is to be involved in any activity that protects the environment and is also known as being eco- friendly or green behavior (Hwang et al., 2020). Due to the increase in pro-environmental behavior within societies it has become more important that organizations in the tourism industry adopt EF practices as product involvement plays a major role in consumer buying patterns (Hwang et al., 2020). This has increased the demand for environmentally friendly hotels (González-Rodríguez et al., 2019; Wang & Wong, 2020) thus gaining high sales volume for EF businesses.

However, it involves a high initial cost, which would negatively affect the cash flow and finances of the company at the initial stages of the investment and would unable short-term profits from being gained, despite being an investment in the environment and community under the current economic situation, business finds it a difficult decision (Hwang et al., 2020). Furthermore, the improvement in the services would result in an increased cost which would need to be covered with an excessive cost, which the organization believes customers would not be willing to pay. Contrastingly green consumers who are willing to pay a premium price can be seen to be increasing, consumers can be seen to be willing if the organizations show their commitment and build trust within customers to wards their brand (González-Rodríguez et al., 2019). This can bring a good brand reputation and high sales revenue. Moreover, being EF can help them reduce operational costs, by purchasing locally produced products. Companies can reduce carbon emission while reducing distribution cost (Peng, 2020). However, organizations should adopt an effective green marketing strategy to avoid accusation of green washing which can damage the brand reputation (Peng, 2020).

Among many Environmentally Friendly (EF) practices many ways are focused around being energy efficient. Wyndham can be seen to be more energy efficient through the help of sensors, introducing ozone technologies and low electricity consuming light bulbs (Services, 2011). Comparatively, Kandalama heritage uses solar energy (Weerasooriya, 2023) and Travel Lodge invests in wind energy (Services, 2011). Further, waste management systems can be seen adopted by Kandalama (Weerasooriya, 2023), Novotel, Holiday Inn etc. (Services, 2011). Organizations can also be seen involving consumers through in-room recycling and other environmentally friendly practices such as recycling water, underground heating systems, low volatile organic compound paints etc.

Theoretical Implications

Sustainable Tourism Theory

Sustainable tourism theory provides a framework for guiding the tourism industry's efforts to overcome economic crisis by implementing environmentally responsible practices. Sustainable tourism theory promotes a comprehensive strategy that examines the long-term viability of both the sector and the ecosystems on which it depends by emphasizing the concepts of environmental stewardship, resource efficiency, and responsible management. While the theory offers an appealing vision, its actual execution in times of economic distress requires careful consideration. The effectiveness of ecologically friendly operations is dependent on striking a careful balance between economic recovery and environmental protection (Wijesundara, 2017).

It is necessary to evaluate potential problems, such as the financial costs of developing sustainable infrastructure and making operational changes. Furthermore, the theory should consider the potential conflict between short-term revenue generating and the time required for some sustainable activities to deliver considerable environmental advantages. To effectively use sustainable tourism theory in crises, clear strategies for stakeholder participation, government backing, and public awareness are required. The tourism industry may leverage the potential of sustainable tourism theory to not only navigate economic crises but also contribute to a more resilient, environmentally responsible, and socially inclusive sector by understanding these essential factors and proposing practical solutions.

Crisis Management Theory

The need for preparedness, responsiveness, and recovery strategies in times of disruption is highlighted by Crisis Management Theory, which aligns well with the industry's requirement for effective measures during economic downturns. Adopting environmentally responsible practices can be considered a proactive crisis management strategy, strengthening the industry's resilience by limiting negative environmental impacts and ensuring long-term sustainability. While these practices reflect a commitment to long-term growth, they may necessitate significant investments and adjustments, straining already financially vulnerable organizations. The idea also encourages the evaluation of trade-offs between fast economic recovery and the time required for ecologically focused policies to achieve verifiable outcomes. Effective crisis management under this framework necessitates a delicate balance between short-term survival and long-term sustainability. Furthermore, stakeholders' various interests and varying levels of engagement must be handled, as adopting ecologically conservative policies may necessitate collaboration across government agencies, local communities, and commercial firms. (Koswatte & Fernando, 2022).

The use of Crisis Management Theory to environmentally driven recovery techniques can assist the Sri Lankan tourism industry in optimizing its potential for resilience and sustainability while understanding the complexities inherent in such an approach by critically examining these problems.

Practical Implications - The tourism industry in Sri Lanka has taken repeated blows due to the Easter Sunday attack, Pandemic lockdowns and political unrest which continued to disrupt tourism with international tourism of the country affected. Post such events, the industry and government are set on a comeback on the dropped tourism. In the current situations, it can be said that it is crucial the industry serves to the current trends, tastes and demands of the potential customers, environmentally friendly such can be seen as an increasing topic and new adaptations must comply to gain more consumers. This paper provides methods and considerations factors organizations can use to be more environmentally friendly, to increase sales to survive through the current economic crisis.

Social Implications - The pursuit of environmentally conservative practices as a means of overcoming economic crises in the Sri Lankan context has both promising social implications and potential challenges. On the one hand, such practices can promote positive social outcomes by emphasizing community engagement and empowerment. By involving local communities in sustainable tourism initiatives, these practices may create new economic opportunities, strengthen social cohesion, and revitalize cultural traditions. Furthermore, increased environmental awareness among tourists and residents can lead to more responsible behavior and a greater appreciation for the interconnectedness of ecosystems.

However, a critical evaluation underscores the need for cautious implementation. While environmentally friendly practices can contribute to community well-being, their success hinges on the equitable distribution of benefits. There is a risk that the benefits may primarily accrue to certain segments of society, leaving marginalized groups further disenfranchised. Moreover, potential conflicts may arise if the adoption of these practices leads to a commodification of culture or disrupts local ways of life. Striking a delicate balance between sustainable practices and addressing immediate economic needs is crucial. Successful implementation requires effective communication, stakeholder collaboration, and mechanisms to ensure that the social benefits of environmental conservation are equitably shared while minimizing potential negative social outcomes.

Research limitations - A major limitation is the unawareness of sustainable tourism in society while some consumers know most travelers are unaware of it. While this has resulted in fewer people committing to the change, the lack of a common goal results in many obstacles when implementing. For instance, people who are aware would find the high price worth the spending while people unaware would rather prefer low-price services that are not sustainable, thus delaying the implementation of sustainability in the industry. Furthermore, this has resulted in less research being carried out in this industry to help organizations overcome problems they face.

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IRSSB29**Outbound Tourism and Survival of Outbound Tourism Companies: Case of Sri Lanka During Economic Crisis**

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Extended abstract

This research aims to investigate the strategies employed by outbound tourism companies in Sri Lanka to survive during economic crisis. The objectives include understanding the challenges faced by these companies, identifying effective survival measures, and assessing the impact of these strategies on their long-term sustainability.

A mixed-methods approach will be employed for this research. The study will begin with a quantitative phase, utilizing data from secondary sources and industry reports to analyze the economic impact on outbound tourism companies during previous crises. In the second phase, qualitative interviews will be conducted with key stakeholders from outbound tourism companies in Sri Lanka, to gain insights into the specific strategies they implemented during economic crisis.

The research findings indicate that outbound tourism companies in Sri Lanka face significant challenges during economic crises, including declining demand, reduced revenues, and operational constraints. However, successful companies have adopted various strategies, such as diversifying their product offerings, targeting niche markets, forming alliances with other travel service providers, and leveraging digital platforms to sustain their businesses during challenging times.

Based on the research findings, several recommendations are proposed for outbound tourism companies in Sri Lanka, to enhance their survival during economic crises. These include investing in market research to identify emerging trends and niche markets, adopting flexible pricing strategies, building strategic partnerships with local and international partners, and strengthening their online presence to attract new customer segments.

Keywords – Outbound tourism, economic crisis, survival strategies, Sri Lanka.

Purpose/Problem Statement - The purpose of this research is to explore the strategies employed by outbound tourism companies in Sri Lanka to survive and thrive during economic crises. Economic downturns often disrupt the tourism industry, leading to challenges for outbound travel companies. Understanding the key challenges and effective survival measures will provide valuable insights into building resilience in the face of economic uncertainties. The study aims to address the following research questions: How do outbound tourism companies in Sri Lanka cope with economic crisis? What strategies do successful companies adopt to maintain their competitiveness and ensure long-term sustainability? By answering these questions, the research seeks to contribute to the knowledge base on crisis management in the outbound tourism sector.

Originality/value – This research fills a gap in the existing literature by focusing on the survival strategies of outbound tourism companies during economic crisis, specifically in the context of Sri Lanka. While many studies have examined the impact of crisis on the tourism industry, limited

research explores the specific measures employed by outbound travel companies to navigate challenging economic conditions. The findings of this study will offer valuable insights for outbound tourism businesses, policymakers, and industry stakeholders, contributing to the development of effective crisis management strategies.

Design/methodology/approach – The research will employ a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative and qualitative methods. In the initial quantitative phase, secondary data from industry reports, government publications, and economic indicators will be analyzed to assess the historical impact of economic crisis on outbound tourism in Sri Lanka. The data will be collected from various sources, including the Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority, Central Bank of Sri Lanka, and travel trade organizations. In the second qualitative phase, semi-structured interviews will be conducted with key stakeholders from outbound tourism companies in Sri Lanka. Participants will include senior executives, marketing managers, and business owners. The interviews will explore the challenges faced by these companies during economic crisis, the strategies they employed to adapt to changing market conditions, and the outcomes of these strategies. The research will adopt thematic analysis for the qualitative data and use statistical software for the quantitative data analysis. The findings from both phases will be integrated to provide a comprehensive understanding of the survival strategies of outbound tourism companies during economic crisis.

Findings/Discussion – The research findings highlight the significant impact of economic crisis on outbound tourism companies in Sri Lanka. The quantitative analysis reveals declining tourist arrivals, reduced revenues, and financial constraints experienced by these companies during previous crises. In contrast, the qualitative data sheds light on the successful strategies implemented by certain companies, such as product diversification, targeted marketing campaigns, and collaboration with local stakeholders.

Theoretical implications – This research draws on two theoretical frameworks: crisis management theory and resource-based view theory. Crisis management theory provides insights into how outbound tourism companies respond to and recover from economic crises. The resource-based view theory helps understand how companies leverage their unique resources and capabilities to gain a competitive advantage during turbulent economic conditions.

Practical implications – The findings of this research offer practical implications for outbound tourism companies in Sri Lanka and South Asia facing economic crisis. The study suggests adopting flexible business models, developing contingency plans, and fostering collaboration with local partners to overcome challenges. Additionally, companies can focus on product innovation, digital marketing, and sustainable practices to enhance their resilience and competitiveness.

Social implications (Policy contribution) – The research findings have significant social implications for Sri Lanka, as outbound tourism plays a vital role in the country's economic development. Policymakers can use the insights to formulate measures that support the survival of outbound tourism companies during economic crisis. This may include providing financial assistance, facilitating access to digital platforms, and promoting sustainable tourism practices to ensure the sector's long-term growth.

Research limitations – This research faces some limitations, including the reliance on historical data from previous economic crises and the selection of a specific outbound tourism market segment. The COVID-19 pandemic may also impact the research timeframe and data collection methods. Moreover, the study focuses on Sri Lanka's context, limiting its generalizability to other regions.

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IRSSB30

A Conceptual Review of Artificial Intelligence Technology on Customer Value Co-creation: With Special Reference to the Telecommunication Industry

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Abstract

The way businesses interact to generate and capture value is changing quickly because of digital transformation (Xie, et al., 2016; Lenka, et al., 2017; Teece, 2018; Appio, et al., 2020). Artificial intelligence has become one of the trendiest topics across all platforms in the modern era. The rise of different AI models introduced by tech giants in the world has conquered different perspectives in business organizations. It has contributed a lot in terms of developing or improving the distinct functions of the business. Artificial intelligent technologies are operative assets whose knowledge and skill can co-create value with and for their users in addition to facilitating and enhancing interactions. Moreover, AI provides the facility of making manual/cognitive and routine/non-routine tasks possible. Also, this will allow customers to make more accurate decisions with their scope. (Barle, et al., 2020). Also, it will directly connect with customer value co-creation. Service sector business organizations can use AI in terms of improving customer value co-creation.

Keywords - Artificial Intelligence, Automation, Customer Satisfaction, Digital Transformation, Telecommunication, Value Co-Creation

Problem Statement - The aim of this study is to investigate the actual impact of artificial intelligence technology on value co-creation in the telecommunication industry. This industry is quite a tech-savvy industry that requires regular updating with new technological infrastructure. Further, it can be investigated on the adaptation of AI technology on value co-creation. Many of the past studies have already investigated multiple industries such as tourism, health, education and banking, fewer studies have been conducted to evaluate the telecommunication industry. However, this study tries to discover how artificial intelligence can be used to provide value co-creation in this industry.

Originality - This study attempts to create a proper conceptual framework for the said area which will provide a utilizable service to generate value co-creation in the telecommunication industry. The role of the AI should be more specific, and it should include qualities such as explainable, ethical, trustworthy, and frugal. On the other hand, AI in terms of generating value co-creation there should be some factors to be considered such as cost, benefit, risk, and impact.

Methodology – A deductive approach will be used to conduct this research and a quantitative strategy will be employed as per the research questions being considered. It will use a structural equation model to run the data and test the hypotheses on par with the path diagram of the variable links.

Discussion – Customer value co-creation is one of the most key areas to be considered when it comes to the services industry. Customer co-creation is the joint, collaborative, concurrent, peer-like process of producing new value, both materially and symbolically (Groenroos et al., 2013; Cova et al., 2013). When it considers modern technology such as Artificial Intelligence,

it has become a revolutionized technology across all the industry. It can be used to increase customer value co-creation in any organization by following a proper framework. This study proposes a framework for AI technology which can be implemented in the telecommunication service sector to increase customer value co-creation. Moreover, it will provide a vast number of benefits

to these organizations. Further, these elements can be followed by any telecommunication sector business organization to utilize AI technology to increase their customer value co-creation. Major elements can be identified as explainable, ethical, trustworthy, and frugal. On the other hand, AI in terms of generating customer value co-creation there should be some factors to be considered such as cost, benefit, risk, and impact. Focusing on these factors towards AI technology implementation, the telecommunication industry can enhance customer value co-creation in their business organization.

Theoretical Implications - This study suggests a theoretical framework that includes several factors to be considered when implementing an AI system for a particular organization.

Practical Implications - Telecommunication service centers, customer call centers and existing services can be re-launched with the involvement of AI in terms of generating better customer value co-creation. Further, it will reduce human interaction. However, it will reduce the human capital and maintenance cost.

Research Limitations - Artificial intelligence has evolved as a major technological update in the new era but other technologies such as machine learning, big data analytics, the internet of things, augmented reality, and virtual reality also can affect customer value co-creation. Also, it can affect multiple industries such as health, hospitality, education, restaurants and many more. Moreover, it will depend on the ethical consideration factors when adapting AI technology for organizations.

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IRSSB31

Impact of Country of Origin on Product Evaluation: Examining the Moderating effect of Reference Groups with Special Reference to Smart Phone Brands in Sri Lanka

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Extended abstract

Due to rapid globalization and reduction in trade barriers, world markets witness the entry of cross-border brands into their markets. This made consumers to be concerned on the importance of the country of origin of products which affects consumers' product judgements. Personal experiences, brand names, advertising and packaging are used to make implicit and explicit references to a country. Smartphones have become an essential tool of the everyday life of individuals. The worldwide smartphone market has experienced exponential growth, and this trend seems to be continuing (Mukherjee, 2019). Forecasts indicate that by 2022, there will likely be 7.26 billion mobile subscribers worldwide, up from 7.1 billion in 2021. The total number of mobile users is anticipated to reach 7.49 billion by 2025 (Statista, 2023). Currently, the global mobile phone market is dominated by Samsung where Samsung surpassed Apple as the leading smartphone player in Q1 2023, driven by the success of its mid-tier A series and the recently launched S23 series (Counterpoint, 2023). Previous studies have investigated the effect of COO on consumer behaviors. This study aims to measure the impact of COO on smartphone evaluation and effect of informative and normative influence on product evaluations on par with the research gaps claimed. A survey was carried out among 221 respondents followed by a convenient sampling method. The Regression analysis and Hayes process model were incorporated in order to test the hypotheses. The findings proved that there is a significant relationship between COO and product evaluation. It further indicated that Reference Groups have a significant moderating effect on the relationship between COO and product evaluation. The findings will be insightful for consumer durable importers in general and specifically for smartphone industry to improve COO's perception on foreign-made mobile brands. Alongside, this study contributes managerial implications as one of the very few studies conducted on the impact of COO on smartphone brand evaluation in the Sri Lankan context.

Keywords: Country of Origin, Product Evaluation, Reference Groups, Smartphone Brands

Purpose/Problem Statement – Country of origin effect is a phenomenon which has a huge effect on consumer durables. This is a concept that has a significant impact on industries' hi-tech technology and infrastructure for their creations. There are distinct reasons that affect the decisions taken and perceptions created in customers' minds towards a smartphone brand. The study is focused on how countries of origin affect the automobile industry in Sri Lanka. How far the country of origin has influenced consumer product evaluations and potential behavioral outcomes. And the moderating impact of reference groups on product evaluation when it comes to smartphone brands.

Originality/value – This research develops a theoretical framework for product evaluation (PE). The two main components for product evaluation are country of origin and reference groups. The country of origin comprises; the innovativeness, prestige, design and workmanship of smartphone brands and reference groups comprise; informative influence and normative influence. Under

these two elements, the features assessed in the smartphone were performance, features, conformance, aesthetics, and perceived quality.

Design/methodology/approach – A quantitative approach used online questionnaires for the collecting of data. The study's data were analyzed using a Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), with Andrew F. Hayes process model and simple Linear Regression Analysis. The respondents were carefully chosen via a filtering question and all the 221 respondents were individuals who had used a smartphone for more than 03 years.

Findings/Discussion – Data derived from the findings highlights that innovativeness, design, prestige, and workmanship (Roth & Romeiro, 1992) are more over equally important when it comes to smartphone evaluation based on Country of Origin. Based on the findings derived, author was able find out that Design – 33.76% (Survey Data) stands out as the most considerable factor in Country-of-Origin evaluation. The study indicated that Samsung and Apple stand out as the most preferred smartphone brands in the Sri Lankan context. Furthermore, point of reference/ reference groups play a key role in consumer product evaluation. Collated data derives that both Informative and Normative influence significantly impacts on the consumer evaluation of smartphones. Research findings derive a clear picture of the connection between independent and dependent variables. While the moderation impact hypothesis got accepted too. There was a .644 correlation between the major IV & DV, which indicates a statistically moderate positive between Country of Origin and Product Evaluation. A significance moderation is shown with 0.046 P value and 0.000 significance.

Theoretical implications – This study proposed a theoretical framework for the product evaluation of smartphone brands. It consists of two important structures: firstly, product evaluation in terms of country of origin; and secondly, product evaluation in terms of informative and normative influence.

Practical implications – Smartphone authorized dealers, small and medium smartphone dealers/sellers, and other stakeholders as well. Dealers should always focus on importing smartphones with attractive designs, improved performance, and durability. As the study revealed the importance of point of reference and its level of impact, the author suggests that the authorized dealers form brand communities to act as points of reference while promoting their dealing brand.

Research limitations – The study area is limited to Product Evaluation; therefore, it is a limitation in generalizing findings because it might not be a fair representation of the overall picture. As the study is limited to the responses from Western Province and 221 responses were taken as the sample and respondents' composition is not equally distributed, the representation of findings cannot be derived as sufficient and accurate due to these limitations. This study was conducted in a period where most of the imports have been restricted and it affected severely the disposable family incomes of consumers. Therefore, it's worth re-investigating the study scope once the import ban is lifted.

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IRSSB32

Effect of Greenwashing on Green Purchase Intention: With Special Reference to the Cosmetic Industry in Western Province Sri Lanka

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Extended abstract

With the awareness given to Sustainable Development Goals, Green Purchase Intentions seem to be increasing significantly. With regards to SDG no 14 Life under Water, people are more concerned about reducing pollution. According to research studies, 73% of millennials and 62% of Generation Z support sustainable businesses and prefer to purchase green products. This growing trend pushes companies to act and be environmentally friendly. (Akturan, 2017). However, due to several reasons such as high investments involved, and time companies tend to adopt deceitful methods to entice consumers and this deceitful method is known as Greenwashing (Szabo & Webster, 2020). Thus, this article aims to identify the effect of Greenwashing on Green Purchase Intention with special reference to the Cosmetic Industry in the Western Province of Sri Lanka. Followed by a deep literature review, the research framework is tested using an online survey with 394 responses. The researcher has used the convenience sample technique under the non-probability sampling method. The hypothesis developed was tested using the SPSS version 26 statistical package. The findings established that there is a negative relationship between Greenwashing and Green Purchase Intentions. Further, in the Sri Lankan context the impact of having proper Green Knowledge and the Cultural Impact of Sri Lanka on Greenwashing to moderate the relationship between Greenwashing and Green Purchase Intention to be tested.

Keywords: Sustainability, Greenwashing, Green Purchase Intention, Green Skepticism, Cosmetic industry, Unethical Marketing

Purpose of the Study/ Problem Statement - The aim of this research paper is to study how Greenwashing impacts the Green Purchase Intention with special reference to the cosmetic industry. While previous studies have focused on Greenwashing, types of Greenwashing and its impact in general, this study fills a gap by specifically examining the impact of Greenwashing in Sri Lanka. According to past researchers, Green Skepticism plays a mediating role in the relationship between Green Skepticism and Green Purchase Intention among other potential mediating variables. Thus, this study also examines the role of Green Skepticism in the context of Sri Lanka.

Originality - The researcher has developed a conceptual framework, to test the relationship between Greenwashing and Green Purchase Intention in the Cosmetic Industry of Sri Lanka. The variable Green Skepticism is also considered to test the mediating effect on the above relationship.

Design / Methodology/ Approach - The researcher has used the deductive research approach, which is the formal approach of the top-down method for research because the research study, hypotheses, and constructs were developed based on the literature. Data collection was conducted followed by primary sources whilst secondary data sources assisted with it. The main research instrument was a structured questionnaire which supported gathering over 390

responses. The hypotheses were tested using SPSS, with Hayes process model and simple regression analysis.

Finding/ Discussion - After an in-depth analysis, the researcher could derive the below-explained findings. There is a negative relationship between Greenwashing and Green Purchase Intention and a negative relationship between Green Skepticism and Green Purchase Intention. Meanwhile, this study proves that the manipulation done by companies called “Greenwashing” positively impacts consumers to be doubtful about the green concept and Green Purchase Intention. Hence, there is a positive relationship between Greenwashing and Green Skepticism. The last hypothesis to test the mediating role of Green Skepticism on the relationship between Greenwashing and Green Purchase Intention was not significant enough. Hence the hypothesis was rejected. Yet through the open-ended quotations, it was understood that Sri Lankan consumers are not satisfied with the contribution made by the Cosmetic Industry in Sri Lanka to eradicate pollution in Sri Lanka, yet they appreciate the small efforts they may take and expect more in the future.

Theoretical Implications - This study proposes a theoretical framework which impacts the Green Purchase Intention of consumers in an environment where Greenwashing exists.

Practice Implications - All the stakeholders involved with the Cosmetic Industry in Sri Lanka will be able to apply the findings of this research. Especially the users and the endorsers of these types of products can be more careful with the findings obtained.

Social Implications - The policymakers can utilize the findings to formulate better policies and rules to support eradicating greenwashing practices to help reduce solid waste in Sri Lanka.

Research Limitations - Even though the researcher has considered only the mediating effect of Green Skepticism, there can be other variables that may mediate or moderate the relationship between Greenwashing and Green Purchase Intention.

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IRSSB33

The Impact of Greenwashing Perception on Green Purchasing Intention: Moderated Mediation of Perceived Betrayal from the Environmental Concern

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Extended abstract

The trend of “Green consumerism” has created pressure on business organizations and producers to act in an environmentally responsible manner and to engage in sustainable business practices (Berrone, et al., 2017). However, some companies tend to follow a more economical way of making them appear environmentally friendly and to increase consumer trust and gain financial benefits while only making superficial or minimal changes towards sustainability (Sun & Shi, 2022) which can be defined as “Greenwashing” (Delmas & Burbano, 2011). Thus, this study aims to explore the impact of greenwashing perception on green purchasing intention, considering the role of perceived betrayal from environmental concern, with a focus on the FMCG industry in Sri Lanka.

Keywords – Environmental Responsibility, Green Purchase Intention, Greenwashing, Greenwashing Perception, Moderated Mediation, Perceived Betrayal

Purpose/Problem Statement - Green consumerism has created pressure on business organizations and producers to act in an environmentally responsible manner and to engage in sustainable business practices (Berrone et al., 2017). Thus, more companies are now inclined to invest capital in sustainable business practices and green marketing aspects. However, some companies tend to follow a more economical way of make them appear environmentally friendly and to increase consumer trust and gaining financial benefits while only making superficial or minimal changes towards sustainability (Sun & Shi, 2022) which can be defined as “Greenwashing” (Delmas & Burbano, 2011). Accordingly, the purpose of this study is to identify the impact of greenwashing perception on green purchasing intention: with the moderated mediation of perceived betrayal from environmental responsibility.

Originality/value – This research contributes to the existing literature on green consumerism and green marketing by investigating the intermediate mechanisms of psychological changes in individual consumers when they perceive greenwashing. The majority of the studies in the area have been conducted from the perspective of enterprises to explore the negative effects of greenwashing and the mediation or moderation effect of green brand loyalty (Akuturan, 2018; Lehnert & Hennings, 2020; Naderer, 2021), green brand image (Naderer, 2021; Chen et al., 2020), brand equity (Akturan, 2017), Green Skepticism (Nguyen et al., 2019) and green word of mouth (Zhang, et al., 2018) can be seen. Moreover, relatively few studies have been conducted on the intermediate mechanisms of psychological changes in individual consumers (Sun & Shi, 2022). Thus, to enhance the originality and value of the current research, this paper extends the study of greenwashing to the field of psychology, based on the classic theory of psychological contract, and introduces the perceived betrayal into the study of the influence of consumers’ greenwashing perception on their green purchasing intentions.

Design/methodology/approach – The research intends to use the deductive research approach. Further, this will be conducted as a quantitative study. Data collection will be done by both primary and secondary data collection methods. As the sampling frame, this study targets the

population residing in Sri Lanka, specifically individuals aged 15 years and above, encompassing both males and females. The convenience Sampling method which is a non-probability sampling method will be used for this research as the researcher is gathering information. The current research aims for at least 385 individuals according to the Morgans Sampling Table.

Findings/Discussion – This paper expects to explore the psychological mechanisms of consumers' green purchasing intentions after exposure to firms' greening behavior. The study expects an outcome that shows that perceived betrayal and environmental responsibility influence consumers' green purchasing intentions. Also, it expects that Greenwashing perception has a significant negative effect on consumers' green purchasing intentions. Perceived betrayal plays a partially mediating role in the relationship between greenwashing perception and green purchasing intentions.

Theoretical implications – The research will contribute to the current theoretical understanding by providing insights into the psychological mechanisms that mediate and moderate the relationship between greenwashing perception and green purchase intention. It will contribute to the literature on consumer behavior, green marketing, and sustainability by exploring the role of perceived betrayal and environmental responsibility in shaping green purchasing intentions.

Practical implications – Today the information gap between companies and consumers is becoming smaller and smaller, and managers should understand the fact that greenwashing can deliver short-term benefits but eventually it can be severe damage for the company's reputation and brand equity. Thus, this research will further emphasize the importance of genuine corporate environmental responsibility and transparency to build trust with consumers and take a pragmatic approach to corporate environmental responsibility.

Social implications (Policy contribution) – The study's emphasis on the value of ethical and responsible marketing strategies for protecting the environment may have wider social implications. The study's findings can help improve policy discussions about consumer protection and sustainability, by highlighting the need for more precise rules and regulations, to stop deceptive and manipulative green marketing practices.

Research limitations – Primarily, one limitation of this study is that it focuses on consumers in Sri Lanka, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other regions or cultural contexts. Moreover, there can be many other mediating or moderating variables that may mediate or moderate the relationship between Greenwashing and Green Purchasing Intention that could have given a broader view of the impact. However, in this study, those other variables were not considered by the researcher, which is a limitation.

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IRSSB37

The Impact of Immersion of Influencer's Content on Brand Engagement with the Mediating Effect of Brand Content Enjoyment

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Extended abstract

The concept of source credibility has been one of the main theoretical foundations to discuss the impact of celebrities, testimonials and even influencer's content with reference to consumer responses. The content made by a source, its impact on the brand-related properties and the notion of consumer behavioural responses towards the sponsored or endorsed brand found in social media as main highlights of the contemporary research studies (Lun, 2018; Lou & Yuan, 2018). The conversion of digital mode of doing businesses had made a significant impact on marketing applications. The digital marketing platforms have been creating different landscapes for branding strategies and consumer engagement natures across the cultures. Market contexts and product contexts as well (Tiruwa et al., 2016; Kim & Han, 2009). Alongside, the typical celebrity endorsement practices have been transforming to influencer marketing practices though some basic concepts remain namely the notion of source credibility (Andrew Garr et al., 2011). The proposition of influencer's content is one of the key matters being discussed and claimed to be further examined within the domain of consumer behaviour and brand relationship aspects (Suh et al., 2018), and the brand content enjoyment (Nakamura & Csikszentmihalyi, 2014). This denotes that the inclusion of the visuals, creative aspects and other attractive properties of a content created by influencers could provide an enjoyable evaluation for the brand content. Accordingly, this study aims to develop a comprehensive explanation of how immersion of influencer's content impacts brand content enjoyment and results in brand engagement. This study addresses the knowledge and practice-related issues found in this context to contribute a conceptual review of the variables and their interlinks whilst highlighting the application perspectives.

Keywords: Brand Content Enjoyment, Brand Engagement, Influencer's Content, Source Credibility

Purpose of the Study/Problem Statement - The aim of this research is to study and examine the impact of influencer content on brand engagement. Many past studies have focused on the impact of brand personality, brand familiarity, brand experience, brand love and user generated content on brand engagement. This study directly focuses on the impact of immersion of influencer's content (a form of firm-generated content) on brand engagement, and the relationship of brand content enjoyment between immersion of influencer's content and brand engagement.

Originality/ Values - The researcher has developed a conceptual framework, to test the relationship between Immersion of Influencer's Content and Brand Engagement. The variable Brand Content Enjoyment is also considered to test the mediating effect on the above relationship.

Methodology - This study will be conducted using a quantitative technique and a deductive approach. To analyze the data and test the theories in line with the path diagram of the variable linkages, a structural equation model will be used. The sample will be selected using a simple random sampling technique.

Discussion - The immersion of influencer content has been rapidly growing with the impact of new technological infrastructure development and it has resulted in gaining more brand engagement in diverse ways. However, brand enjoyment has affected in both positive and negative ways the study's main relationship. With the referred articles and papers, this study has identified different variables under the immersion of influencer's content which can impact brand engagement. According to the (Liu, 2021), the author provided a module denoting a process for this study. Major indicators considered as parasocial relationship, source credibility and brand credibility. With the new tools and new technological platforms such as generative artificial intelligence tools and AI powered content driven tools have changed the standardized content creation procedures. It has a high impact on the cost factor and other related factors such as convenience, and time. It also enhanced the quality of a content generation in a convenient manner. When it comes to brand enjoyment, it has emerged due to the creativity of content generation. It provides more enjoyment for the customers by engaging with the brand. It always drives customers towards engaging the brand. Moreover, it has driven customers towards enjoyment, but it is very minimal to engaging customers with the brand in terms of achieving the brand KPIs.

Theoretical Implications - This study proposes a theoretical framework for brand engagement. It consists of two important structures: firstly, brand engagement in terms of immersion of influencer's content; secondly, brand engagement in terms of brand content enjoyment.

Practical Implication - The findings of this study could be used by any brand which is expecting to utilize influencers for their brand campaigns. Both positive and negative implications and the recommendations will allow brands to execute better campaigns to catalyze the brand- engagement with the immersion of influencer's content.

Research Limitations - Even though influencer content has been used and recommended by many, there are multiple other areas that can impact Brand Engagement such as user generated content, Ewom, Virtual Reality, Augmented Reality etc.

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IRSSB38

The Impact of Market Sentiment and Macro-Financial Factors on Cryptocurrency Prices

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Extended abstract

The aim of this study is to identify the impact of sentiment and macro-financial factors on cryptocurrency prices. Cryptocurrency is a technology-based phenomenon that embodies virtualization and decentralization in monetary and financial transactions. It is an open network accessible to anyone with an internet connection, and participants can engage in various activities such as governance, voting, staking, examining blockchain transactions, running nodes, or mining transactions to ensure the security and decentralization of the blockchain network (WEF, 2021). The decentralized nature of cryptocurrencies and their potential for high returns on investment have garnered widespread attention in recent years. Nevertheless, these assets' prices are highly volatile and can be influenced by various factors.

Several studies have identified that cryptocurrency prices are affected by a range of internal and external factors, including supply and demand dynamics, adoption and recognition, utility, legal status, and macroeconomic conditions. Additionally, previous studies into the behavioral aspects of the cryptocurrency market have indicated that investor sentiment, driven by popularity, news, and perception, also plays a crucial role in determining cryptocurrency prices (Bouoiyour and Selmi, 2015; Ciaian et al., 2015). Contributing to the ongoing discourse, this study investigates the impact of United States macro-financial factors, namely, real GDP, inflation, interest rate, exchange rate, stock market, and market sentiment on cryptocurrency prices during the period January 2018 to September 2022. The research methodology utilized in this study centers on the Autoregressive Distributed Lag (ARDL) model proposed by (Pesaran et al., 2001).

The research findings demonstrate that the Nasdaq-100 stock market index exerts a positive and significant influence on cryptocurrency prices in both the short and long run, suggesting that investors must account for the interconnectedness of these markets when making investment decisions. The study also finds that the US dollar index (DXY) has a negative and significant impact on cryptocurrency prices eventually. In contrast, the other explanatory variables, including real gross domestic product, inflation, the federal funds rate, and market sentiment, are found to have no statistically significant impact on cryptocurrency prices. These results have important implications for stakeholders, as they can be used to inform decision-making, develop forecasting models, and guide risk-management strategies in cryptocurrency investments.

Keywords: Cryptocurrency; Bitcoin; Sentiment; Macro-financial variables; Autoregressive distributed lag (ARDL) model

Purpose/Problem Statement- From the standpoint of investment assets, cryptocurrencies are accessible to anyone, unlike traditional financial instruments. Nonetheless, some aspects of cryptocurrencies distinguish them from traditional financial products. Their key characteristics are their irregularity and decentralized nature. As a result, the analysis cannot be restricted to

examining their speculative buying and selling on cryptocurrency exchanges. It is also vital to thoroughly cover macroeconomic and financial aspects, as well as investor behavior.

Originality/value - This study contributes to a new and rapidly expanding field of research regarding cryptocurrencies and the digital asset market. Most of the prior literature has concentrated on the attempt to categorize Bitcoin as a financial asset and the discussion surrounding its characteristics, including whether it should be seen primarily as a store of value or a medium of exchange and its price determinants. This study focuses on the broad cryptocurrency market and examines whether they share similar links to equities, investor sentiment, and macroeconomic factors, further contributing to this growing field in finance. Identifying the influential macro-financial variables is helpful to determine whether a diversified cryptocurrency portfolio can be a hedge against the US dollar, stock market, or other macroeconomic factors.

Research Methodology - The study employs a quantitative approach using monthly data collected from secondary sources, such as the Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis, the Bureau of Economic Analysis, Investing.com, S&P Global Incorporation, and Alternative.me, from January 2018 to September 2022. The analysis was conducted through the use of the autoregressive distributed lag (ARDL) model proposed by (Pesaran et al., 2001) to achieve research objectives. To thoroughly analyze the data, a series of prerequisite tests were conducted. This included unit root tests and bound tests performed to determine the stationarity and co-integration of the study variables. The estimated model was evaluated for statistical significance and stability using the F-test, Breusch-Godfrey, CUSUM, and CUSUMSQ tests. The results were analyzed and interpreted, examining the coefficients and overall fit of the model, to draw conclusions regarding the relationship between the explanatory variables and cryptocurrency prices in both the short-run and long run.

Analysis and Findings - The order of integration of the study variables was tested by employing Augmented Dickey-Fuller unit root tests. The first lag value was chosen as the optimal number of lags to include in the model, as indicated by the lowest Lagrange multiplier (LR), the Schwarz criterion (SC), and the Hannan-Quinn (HQ) values. The autoregressive distributed lag (ARDL) bound test was conducted to test for cointegration and identify long-run relationships between variables. Consequently, the explanatory variables were found to have a long-run relationship with cryptocurrency prices. An ARDL error correction model was specified, enabling the examination of the short-run and long-run dynamics between the variables.

The results indicated that the Nasdaq-100 stock market index, which tracked the stocks listed on the Nasdaq exchange, was positively and significantly associated with cryptocurrency prices in both the short and long run. Furthermore, the study revealed that the exchange rate, as measured by the US dollar index (DXY), negatively and significantly impacted cryptocurrency prices eventually. The other explanatory variables, namely real gross domestic product, inflation, interest rate, and market sentiment, had no statistically significant impact on cryptocurrency prices.

Implications - The research findings demonstrates that the Nasdaq-100 stock market index, exerts a positive and major influence on cryptocurrency prices in both the short and long run, indicating that investors should take the interconnection of these markets into consideration when making investing decisions. Furthermore, a well-diversified cryptocurrency portfolio does not act as a hedge against traditional market swings, because the cryptocurrency and stock

markets tend to move in the same direction during the period under study. The study also finds that the US dollar index (DXY) has a negative and significant impact on cryptocurrency prices eventually. The findings underscore the importance of considering the macro-financial dynamics that affect the cryptocurrency market, potentially aiding in building risk-management strategies when investing in cryptocurrencies.

Limitations - The macro-financial scope of this study is limited to the United States. Despite the decentralized characteristic of cryptocurrencies, which endows them with a global reach, the United States holds a significant influence over the macro-financial factors affecting the cryptocurrency market. This is demonstrated by the substantial cryptocurrency user base in the country, its dominant position in the global financial market, and the widespread use of the US dollar as the primary currency for Bitcoin transactions. Furthermore, the study covers a limited time horizon; thus, it might not fully represent all market circumstances or even one cryptocurrency.

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IRSSB39

Market Liquidity as a Sentiment Indicator in Predicting Stock Returns in Frontier Markets: Evidence from Sri Lanka

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Extended abstract

This research aims to examine the extent to which market-wide illiquidity and sentiment proxies by turnover measure, that can forecast the short-term expected returns of the frontier market Sri Lanka during the period 2010-2021. While traditional asset pricing models try to capture asset prices by examining the risk-return trade-off based on assumptions about market efficiency, alternate models based on liquidity risk consider the impact of trading costs on asset prices. However, these models have failed to fully capture all the market anomalies. Behavioral finance theories argue that market anomalies can be explained based on human biases and heuristics. Thus, it contends that liquidity and investor sentiment are related. Irrational investors under reaction can result in reduced price impact of order flows and higher liquidity. The OLS time series regression results show that aggregate turnover as a sentiment indicator has a positive and significant relationship with expected market returns, contrary to the findings of the US market. The impact of expected illiquidity on ex-ante return is highly negatively significant when heavier emphasis is given to large-cap stocks in a value-weighted model. Furthermore, in the Colombo Stock Exchange (CSE), unexpected illiquidity shocks depress the contemporaneous market returns significantly. Small-cap stock returns show greater sensitivity to market illiquidity, indicating greater illiquidity risk than large-cap stocks. These findings contribute to the existing literature by providing insight into how investor sentiment can drive market-wide liquidity and how liquidity risk pricing affects market returns over time in a frontier market.

Keywords – Liquidity; Sentiment; Asset Pricing; Frontier Market; Behavioral Finance

Purpose/Problem Statement – This research aims to examine the impact of investor sentiment on aggregate market returns and how market liquidity and liquidity risk are priced by studying the time-series variation of aggregate liquidity measures against market returns, based on evidence from the frontier market Sri Lanka. The impact of liquidity and sentiment may be more significant in an emerging market such as Sri Lanka, due to the low transparency and limited diversity in available securities, leading to few portfolio choices and the sentiment of investors being more short-term oriented.

Originality/value – This research addresses the empirical gap by giving a behavioral theoretical explanation of the relationship between liquidity and share returns from a frontier market. Investor sentiment, evaluated with liquidity proxies, has not been previously examined as a critical factor in predicting stock returns in Sri Lanka. This study will pave the way for a new research area in the field by providing a behavioral understanding of the variation in Market returns in Sri Lanka.

Theoretical Framework – Transaction cost-based asset pricing theories consider liquidity as a priced risk factor. Investors will discount assets by their expected transaction costs leading to a positive return-expected illiquidity relationship (Amihud, 2002). Behavioral Finance theories postulate that sentiment factors related to irrational investors' biases regarding future

fundamentals impact market liquidity and consequently returns. (Baker and Stein, 2004) find that, in a market with short-sale constraints, an increase in irrational investors causes the price impact of trade to decline, leading to increased trading volumes and liquidity. Therefore, (Baker and Stein, 2004) suggest that liquidity driven by investor sentiment could have more predictability in time series variation in stock returns compared with the transaction-cost-based theories.

Design/methodology/approach – This study uses a sample consisting of all 296 firms listed on the CSE during the 142 months (about 12 years) between January 2010 and December 2021 (the month of April in 2020 has been omitted since the market was closed due to the Covid-19 pandemic lockdowns). The ordinary least square time-series regression has been used to investigate the relationship between market sentiment and returns.

Findings/Discussion – The study first examines the impact of expected and unexpected (Amihud's, 2002) illiquidity on ex-ante excess market returns over time. Regression results indicate that the impact of expected illiquidity on ex-ante market return is significantly negative for the value-weighted model. This signifies that expected illiquidity acts as a determinant of future returns when heavier emphasis is given to large-cap stocks. Unexpected market illiquidity has a significant negative effect on contemporaneous returns. The effect of unexpected illiquidity is weaker for large, more liquid stocks when compared to small, illiquid stocks. Next, the predictive power of short-term future returns while accounting for the effect of market-wide investor sentiment, measured by turnover, is investigated. Aggregate turnover for the CSE positively and significantly affects market returns one-month-ahead market returns. This positive coefficient indicates that an increase (or decrease) in market sentiment correlates with an increase (or decrease) in stock returns.

Theoretical implications – In contrast to (Amihud's, 2002) deduction, this study finds that ex-ante market returns decrease in expected illiquidity. In the CSE, investors do not seem to demand higher expected returns from large-cap stocks even when the market is expected to be illiquid. Investors in CSE react strongly to unexpected illiquidity shocks becoming more risk averse, causing a decline in current prices of assets, like findings from the US market. The greater sensitivity of small-capitalization stock returns to market illiquidity indicates that they face greater illiquidity risk. Turnover as a sentiment indicator has a positive impact on returns one-month-ahead. This finding opposes the sentiment-based model derived by (Baker and Stein, 2004), where turnover negatively predicts expected returns. (Schmeling, 2009) finds that the expected return-turnover relationship varies based on the underlying sources of market heterogeneity.

Practical implications – Investor sentiment's impact on equity prices in Sri Lanka can potentially influence short-term market fluctuation without fundamental support leading to significant devaluations, negatively impacting investor portfolios and overall market stability. Considering the effect of liquidity and investor sentiment on market returns can provide valuable insights into the behavior of investors and the potential risks and opportunities to market participants.

Policy Implications – The impact of market illiquidity on market returns underscores the need to implement policies that regulate market liquidity through efficient trading mechanisms and increased transparency. Considering the strong influence of market sentiment on future returns, policy decisions need to incorporate the effect of investors' cognitive biases on market returns. Countermeasures, like mandatory cooling-off periods during high volatility, could be used to

mitigate market instability.

Research limitations – The current research is focused on the short-term predictability of market returns. Further research is required to understand market sentiment's long-term effect on expected market return. Future research can delve into market microstructure factors contributing to CSE's observed negative market illiquidity premium. Sectoral analysis to understand how the illiquidity premium and impact of turnover on market returns variate across various market sectors is also a lucrative research area.

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IRSSB40

Conceptual Model on Impact of Emotional Intelligence on Organizational Performance to Change: A Study Based on Aviation Industry in Sri Lanka

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Extended abstract

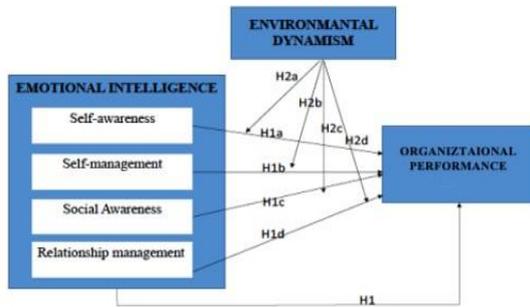
This study aims to develop a conceptual model on the impact of emotional intelligence affecting organizational performance to change during environmental dynamism. Air travel remains a growing industry by accelerating economic growth, world trade, international investment, and tourism, central to globalization-taking in many other industries. Since late as an elucidation, the aviation industry has struggled with bankruptcy, merging, and closedown processes. The aviation sector has chosen organizational change strategies. The aviation industry has been battling the section of the executive change method since late. Presently, organizations ought to acclimate to survive in their environment. The environmental dynamism factor is named because of the moderator as per the literature. The relationship between the construct of emotional intelligence, organizational performance under change, and the lack of study on the Sri Lankan context has however not been the subject of thorough empirical analysis. Based on a study of the literature from earlier studies, this paper tests a model to comprehend how emotional intelligence affects organizational performance throughout an organizational change. Journal papers from the Scopus database and other sources were reviewed for this investigation. The establishment of a conceptual framework that can be applied in future empirical studies marks the study's conclusion. Finally, to identify and manage any critical times by inspiring their level of emotional intelligence to change the mindset of staff, to cope with the organizational change to enhance the performance by developing the conceptual model. These literature-based findings have considerable implications for academics and HR practitioners.

Keywords – Aviation Industry, Emotional Intelligence, Environmental Dynamism, Organizational Change, Employee Performance

Purpose/Problem Statement –The aviation sector faces challenges such as changing economic conditions, industry competition, higher fuel costs, customer demands, air pollution, political conditions, cultural implications, social, and technological factors, regulatory challenges, environmental aspects, and turnover of staff (Choi, Lee & Olson, 2015; Lawton, 2017). To survive in the industry, the organization is under constant pressure on their staff (Nilam, 2020). To deliver an outstanding performance, the employees need to be more involved in their work than ever before with difficulties (Elias, 2009). However, there was a fashionable loss of empirical proof that systematically analyses the relationship among the assemble of emotional intelligence, environmental dynamism, and organizational dedication to alternate and the dearth of studies in the Sri Lankan context in unsure surroundings. The hole in those findings attempts to fulfill a man or woman's degree of dealing with feelings closer to dedication to alternate. It is essential to fill the distance because obtaining excessive ranges of dedication amongst personnel might benefit the business enterprise's success.

Originality/value – Based upon reviewed literature, researcher developed a conceptual model to find out, how emotional intelligence effects on organizational performance during an environmental dynamism as a moderating variable. To create the causal links between the

constructs known from the research, conceptual frameworks are typically useful for quantifying the data (Malhotra et al., 1996). The study's conceptual framework was created using empirical evidence and reasons drawn from previously published research that has been critically assessed.



H1: There is a significant impact of emotional intelligence on the organizational performance to change.

H2: There is a moderating impact of environmental dynamism on the relationship between emotional intelligence and organizational performance change. Source: Researcher developed through an extensive literature review

Design/methodology/approach – The conceptual framework is going to be built for this paper where research evidence from the previous study reviewed journal articles from the Scopus database and other sources taken to discuss and build the relationship between the assemble of emotional intelligence, organizational performance, and environmental dynamism.

Findings/Discussion – Frontline staff with a higher level of emotional intelligence are committed to any organizational changes and can manage their emotions throughout changes which are also, compatible with the decisions that the organization made (Eriksson, 2004). Employees are committed to the workplace environment and give the highest performance to support and implement the changes. The analysis of the theories and previous studies explore that there has been a significant relationship between emotional intelligence and organizational performance during change. Employees who are emotionally intelligent exhibit a more upbeat outlook and seem more engaged in their professional development and organizational growth, which fosters a positive work environment that is conducive to improved performance at work (Miao et al., 2017). Increasing EI skills at work will benefit organizational performance since those with higher EI scores are able to do so.

Theoretical implications – This study's main advantage from SCT highlights social influence on external and internal social reinforcement. This theory elaborates on how people grab, maintain, and manage their behaviour whereas action the social surroundings the approach people perform the behaviour. It considers somebody's past experiences and the way their behaviour is compatible with them (Fiori & Antonakis, 2011).

Practical implications – From a practical aspect, the current study provides essential and valuable contributions to hospitality and service management (Cossin & Caballero, 2013). These enlighten that committed employees are prepared even before any situation to confront workplace problems such as employment-related implications. This can be proposed to organizational leaders considering emotional intelligence in hiring employees and EI training.

Social implications (Policy contribution) – The link between EI, environmental dynamism and performance will benefit emotional labor related industry decision making. That will be important for this industry to maintain good relationships with its customers since the industry deals with emotions. The retention of satisfied customers is an asset to any organisation (Burns & Neisner, 2006). Therefore, the research findings can be directly endorsed in the Sri Lankan service sector.

Research limitations –In order to determine the contribution of EI on a larger scale, this study suggests that additional research be conducted on other sectors. Future research may be conducted in qualitative research through interviews to further reach additional information that may produce an improvised conceptual framework.

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WORKING PAPERS

IRSSB11 Sustainable Business Practices

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Abstract

This working paper consists of the business practices used in the sustainability process of a global economy. Introducing the processes of lean thinking and green manufacturing involves the minimal usage of materials to produce green products by cutting higher costs and this paper discusses the eco-innovations used in technology-based firms. Also, this working paper considers the factors which benefits and limit the sustainability process, in the operations of a current organization while targeting the principal areas of the triple bottom line through the involvement of environmental rules and regulations. Most importantly, the eco-innovations are used to produce green products through technological changes.

Keywords: Sustainability, lean thinking, green manufacturing, eco-innovation.

Overview

Sustainable business practices are adopted to sustain greenery in the global economy as a result these practices are contributing to a social awareness of an economy. The sustainable business strategies enforced into organizations through touching the triple bottom line.

Background/ Context

This research has been conducted in a competitive environment to find out the practices of human behaviour which contributes the sustainability practices in a business context. The following paragraphs consist of the relationship of 'lean' and 'green' thinking in an enterprise which relates to a global economy. In addition to that, the benefits, and limitations of green and sustainable manufacturing throughout the manufacturing industry. Further, implementing eco-organizational innovations is a main factor that contributes the social performance in the industry leading to improved sustainable business performance.

Current Achievements of the research

According to the research, a significant proportion of small to medium-sized organisations are dominating the industrial global waste pollution in the world's economy. When considering these waste pollution prevention methods, lean and green thinking is an important way of aligning sustainable practices in enterprises. Lean thinking focuses on resource optimisation and encouraging improved productivity throughout a production process by cutting down the waste of the raw materials used. Consequently, adopting lean manufacturing is a useful influence on waste and energy-management to achieve social and productive capital (Caldera et al, 2019).

For managing sustainable operations, there is a large force to merge sustainable practices into an organisation, therefore manufacturers introduce an awareness of green products/processes for consumers and issue these products with optimum usage by adhering to environmental regulations. When these producers use green manufacturing, it will result in a reduction of

energy consumption, business waste and environmental costs. However, green manufacturing targets and fulfil the requirements of environmental and social impacts, where sustainable manufacturing targets the three aspects, economic, social, and environmental of the triple bottom line in a working environment. Whereas this involves an investment cost, return on investment and information and technological limitations in a manufacturing industry (Raut et al, 2019). On the other hand, these limitations can be prevented by using far more effective low-cost sustainable strategies without adhering to high-cost regulations implemented.

An eco-innovation strategy can be used to obtain each dimensional aspect of sustainable organisational performance such as environmental, economic, and social. The fierce competition in the industry, market turbulence, customer tastes and technological changes build up a beneficial impact on eco-friendly innovation of the social performance in a technological firm and this further contributes to a competitive advantage (Ch'ng et al, 2021). For example, the organisation NTT in Japan is committed to a sustainable future using renewable and alternative energies by inventing eco-friendly disposable batteries (Global NTT).

Another example is that Schneider Electric, which is a European company drives digital transformation by aiming for sustainability and efficiency (Schneider Electric).

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IRSSB24

The Impact of Diversity and Inclusion on the Performance of Modern Workplace

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Abstract

This research discovers the impact of diversity and inclusion on the modern workplace by taking different case studies with an extensive literature review. By doing this study, we will find the reason for success in the modern workplace regarding cultural diversity aspects. The idea of diversity includes demographic factors such as age, ethnicity, and gender and behavioral factors such as values, attitudes, beliefs, and sexual orientation. This study focuses Sri Lankan workforce and similar studies are hard to find especially with respect to the workforce in industries in Sri Lanka. To do this research, we will use secondary data and take some industries as case studies.

In the background, the concepts of diversity age, gender, ethnicity, and educational level are acknowledged as universal diversities. In the context of Sri Lanka, gender diversity is concerned with the emotional and experiential differences between males and females in the workforce. Age diversity brings together individuals from various age groups, offering organizations the advantage of accumulated skills and experience. However, it raises the challenge of young employees struggling to find opportunities due to professionals continuing to work past retirement age. Ethnic diversity includes language, religious, and cultural differences, with Sinhalese, Tamils, Muslims, Burghers, and other groups represented in the Sri Lankan workplace. Educational diversity is also significant, influencing knowledge, skills, experience, and qualifications. It affects income levels, as employees with higher education tend to earn more. Organizations value employees with a strong educational background due to its positive impact on performance.

Finally, the study finds that having a diverse workforce brings numerous advantages to the workplace. Such as employees and leaders with a wider range of experiences, perspectives, and opinions help organizations to attract and recruit talented individuals from a larger talent pool. In addition, it facilitates a better understanding of customers' needs and preferences, improved business innovation, and overall performance.

Research mythology used for this study depends on secondary data and websites and for that successful stories and failures will be studied to achieve the research objectives. Overall, this study underscores the significance of diversity and inclusion in the global workplace and its positive effects on organizational performance and innovation.

Keywords: Globalization, diversity management, talent management, workplace spirituality, diverse perspective

Overview

Diversity and inclusion in the modern workplace refer to creating an environment where individuals from various backgrounds are valued, respected, and provided equal opportunities, fostering innovation, collaboration, and organizational success.

Background and context

This research explains diversity in the modern workplace and how diversity and inclusion affect the performance of a workplace. Diversity means differences between two or more people that can affect their life in several ways, which involve age, ethnicity, and gender. According to these factors, groups have been created in society. Inclusion means how well organizations accept and treat employees. The diverse culture in a workplace helps build interaction and engagement in the workplace that helps create a productive workplace. Culture, ethnicity, age, and gender are not the only diversity that a workforce can have. Values, attitudes, beliefs, and sexual orientation also can be characteristics that can influence a diverse workplace.

Gender, age, ethnicity, and educational level are universal elements in a workplace. If we consider the Sri Lankan workplace, gender diversity refers to males and females. It highlights the differences in emotions and experiences that males and females may face in the workforce.

Age diversity means the different age groups in the workplace. The workplace always has people from different age groups. To an organization, having different age groups is advantageous because when people grow, they gather a lot of experiences and skills, which can be important to the organization. There are issues where professional people work even after their retirement age which leads young employees to struggle when finding a job. This issue is currently in Sri Lanka.

Ethnic diversity includes the differences in languages, religions, and cultural backgrounds of people. The main ethnic groups which can be seen in Sri Lanka involve Sinhalese, Tamils, Muslims, and Burghers and other minor ethnic groups.

Educational diversity also plays a part in a diverse culture. This refers to the differences in knowledge, education, skills, experience, and qualifications. People's earnings depend on the educational level. People who have a proficient level of education can get higher salaries, also people who do not have much education could get lower salaries. Every organization is willing to have employees with good education because it affects their performance.

In the modern workplace, diversity is an essential part because it enhances the creativity and innovative ideas of employees, which can be advantageous for the workplace. Besides, spreading diversity and inclusion in the workplace boosts a positive mind and shows employees how to work with people from diverse backgrounds. All this positivity helps organizations to boost their productivity.

As an example, Dilmah is a tea manufacturing company in Sri Lanka. They value diversity in the people. They have employees from different races, genders, colors, national or social origins, religions, ages, disabilities, and sexual orientations yet they maintain their workplace without any discrimination and harassments. Dilmah will not allow disrespectful or improper behavior or unfair treatment, no matter what one's character or status is.

Research mythology used for this study depends on secondary data and websites and for that successful stories and failures will be studied to achieve the research objectives.

Current achievements

Through the literature review, it is found that the importance of having a diverse background in the modern workplace is that workplace will benefit from employees and leaders who have a broader range of experience, perspective, and opinion and able to recruit talented employee from large pool of talent. Also, it helps to understand buyers' needs and desires, and improves business innovation, business performance and reputation.

The research emphasizes that diversity also helps to foster creativity and positive mindsets among employees. Encouraging diversity and inclusion promotes effective collaboration among individuals from diverse backgrounds, enhancing organizational productivity.

Limitations are also there where diversity is concerned. Such as communication barriers, slower decision-making, cultural misunderstanding, discrimination, and inequitable inclusion. Communication barriers occur due to different communication styles or preferences, language issues or hearing issues. Decision-making can be slower due to different ideas and diverse cultural aspects among the team. Cultural misunderstanding occurs due to diverse cultural beliefs. 61 percent of workers have faced discrimination in the workplace based on their gender, age, race, or LGBTQ identity.

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IRSSB27**The Impact of Remote Work on Organizational Behaviour in the Technology Industry in the United States; Sustainable Business**S. Samaradiwakara¹¹*Edith Cowan University, Colombo, Sri Lanka***Extended Abstract**

The aim of this research paper is to study the influence of remote work on contemporary organizational behaviour within the technology industry in the United States, with a specific emphasis on sustainable business practices. Despite the expanding area of literature investigating the impact of remote work, a notable research gap exists regarding the significant interconnection between remote work arrangements and the achievements of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly in the context of US tech companies. The research problem addressed in this study is how remote work impacts organizational behaviour whereas the research objectives involve analysing the effects of telework on employees and the alignment with sustainability goals. The challenges and benefits of working remotely, its impact on organizational behaviour and the potential to promote sustainability can be considered as the inquired research questions of this study. The research used the descriptive method using reviewed literature, to identify the influence and impact of remote work on modern organizational behaviour in the United States technology industry. Furthermore, the study has used an analysed survey database of technological organizations' reviews of how remote work occasions affect employees. In addition, the research paper's findings highlight the positive correlation between remote work and employee well-being. However, it also acknowledges a few issues regarding working remotely. The paper underscores the potential for remote work to align with sustainable principles and contribute to the Sustainable Development Goals by providing empirical evidence. Some suggestions for improving workplace dynamics are to encourage clear communication, utilize technology to collaborate with colleagues from various cultures and establish adaptable policies that facilitate working remotely. However, the study acknowledges its limitations such as remote work's dynamic impact and potential bias in survey responses. Overall, by examining the intersection of remote work, the global workplace, modern organizational behaviour, and sustainable business practices, this research paper intends to contribute valuable insight for fostering sustainable and resilient business models within the highly competitive U.S. technology industry in the post-pandemic era.

Keywords – Remote Work; Sustainable Business Practices; Organizational Behaviour; Global; Technology Industry

Overview

This working paper examines the influence of remote work on modern organizational behaviour within the technology industry in the United States, with a specific focus on sustainable business practices.

Context

Remote work, also known as telecommuting, telework or working from home, which has become increasingly prevalent in recent years, has accelerated even further by the COVID-19 pandemic (Althoff et al., 2022). This shift has profoundly impacted organizational behaviour within global companies specifically in the United States, transforming how employees interact, collaborate, and perform their work (Sullivan, n.d.). Especially, the technology industry has been at the forefront of embracing remote work even before the COVID-19 pandemic, making it a key area in the context of organizational behaviour. U.S. statistical data says that after the pandemic ends, one-quarter of entire workdays will take place at home or at other remote locations, which is five times the pre-pandemic ratio (Barrero et al., 2021). Since the technology industry is highly globalized, with companies operating and collaborating across borders it is crucial to implement remote work for their operations (Błaszczyk et al., 2022). The impact of remote work on organizational behaviour within the technology industry provides insights into how global teams overcome remote work obstacles, such as cross-cultural communication, coordination across different time zones and diverse work practices. According to (Niche, 2023), renowned companies in the technology industry in the United States such as Apple, Microsoft, Google, and Oracle have allowed their employees to work remotely to experience employee high work-life balance. The implication of remote work in a global workplace enables challenges and opportunities for the organization (Raghuram, 2021). Working remotely can enhance autonomy and empower employees to increase productivity. It also offers benefits such as improving work-life balance and employee well-being, increasing flexibility and accountability, and having the ability to attract and retain top talents across the globe (Ferreira et al., 2021). However, at the same time, it can also lead to a sense of being left out, feelings of isolation, challenges in maintaining work-life balance, and reduced social and physical interaction where organizations need to build trust and foster effective working relationships among employees (Flores, 2019). By enabling remote work arrangements tech companies in the United States also aligns with sustainable principles by contributing to several Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). According to (United Nations, 2023), SDG 8, SGD 9, SGD 10, SGD 11, SGD 12, and SGD 13 can be fulfilled by implementing remote work since it minimizes negative impacts on the planet and society such as reducing carbon footprint, resource efficiency and cost savings, work-life balance, and well-being etc. According to research, if workers have jobs that are compatible with working remotely and wish to do so, only half the time, the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions would be the same as taking all New York State workers off the road and it is estimated to be reduced by 75% in days when people telework (Global Workplace Analytics, 2023). Overall, by aligning the principles of modern organizational behaviour and remote work arrangements, organizations can create an organizational culture that supports and promotes sustainable business practices.

Current achievements

Through a comprehensive literature review, considerable progress has been made in the research of the impact of remote work on organizational behaviour in the technology industry in the United States, with a particular focus on sustainable business practices. According to a survey data review about technological companies, it is confirmed that the effects of remote work on employee work-life balance, job satisfaction and engagement are high even though there can be seen some pitfalls within the process. These current achievements disclose the connection between remote work and sustainability within the context of the global workplace and modern organizational behaviour.

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IRSSB34

Unveiling the Working-from-Home Gender Disparity: An Investigation of Sri Lankan IT Professionals

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Abstract

The shift to new work models like working-from-home, particularly during the pandemic, has blurred the boundaries between work and home. The impact on work and life routines seems to generate vital implications for gender equality. Traditional gender norms and discriminatory practices have placed women in a more vulnerable position. Understanding how working-from-home is perceived differently by women and men in the IT field, where remote work is highly feasible, becomes crucial against the backdrop of gendered patterns prevalent in social structures at work and at home. This paper aims to explore the experiences of gender relations of women and men in the IT sector in Sri Lanka, where traditional patriarchal values persist and economic struggles prevail, as they shift to working-from-home. The following research questions are addressed: (1) What is the gendered nature of the IT profession in Sri Lanka? (2) How is the pandemic-induced work-from-home experience perceived by IT professionals? (3) How does gender disadvantage operate among IT professionals working from home? (4) What is the nature of the gendered impact of working from home on work-life balance and well-being for male and female IT professionals? (5) What are the recommendations that could be proposed for policymakers and practitioners to facilitate gender equality, employee well-being, and work-life balance for IT professionals working from home? A qualitative research approach is adopted, involving 30 in-depth interviews with IT professionals who are currently working-from-home or in a hybrid work arrangement, followed by a thematic analysis to generate insights from their experiences.

Keywords: working-from-home; gender; information technology sector; Sri Lanka

Overview

This paper explores the gendered nature of IT professionals' work-from-home experiences in Sri Lanka given its conventional household structures, cultural norms and the gendered patterns of employment.

Background

During pre-industrial times work and family were one consolidated production unit, and later in industrial societies, a clear division between work and family spheres was developed. Over time, changing socio-economic, technological and rising demands and complexities associated with working lives required the organization of work to be adjusted to facilitate better work-life balance (Papalexandris and Kramar, 1997), flexible working arrangements were thus designed. The modern IT workplace encourages the new work culture of working-from-home and hybrid work arrangements. Working-from-home is argued to be blurring the boundaries between work and life worlds with gendered experiences and implications. The notable shift to work-from-

home during the pandemic had the potential to significantly shape and transform traditional gendered patterns of behaviour in the household (Shockley et al., 2021). However, a regression to customary gendered patterns to manage work and family domain is noted as women were increasingly reported to reallocate the flexibility in their work to meet household and family demands, thereby internalizing gendered patterns and upholding the traditional division of labor within households (Chung et al., 2021). Globally, research during and post-pandemic era reports that women reassumed traditional gender identities and shared more household burdens of caring for children, caring for the sick, caring for the elderly as well as sharing household labour (Power, 2020). When work-from-home arrangements do not factor in perspectives of gender roles, it can further widen gender gaps and place women in a more disadvantageous, vulnerable position, with losing their emancipatory prospects of work and careers and fulfilling lives.

Gender-related problems encountered by women take diverse forms across diverse cultures and life conditions (Parlak, et al., 2021). In Sri Lanka, despite the extension of women's economic roles, in the household inequitable gender division of labor has only dimly transformed (ADB, 1999). Though education and employment indicators place Sri Lankan women in a better position in the South Asian region, patriarchal forms of organization persist (Hapke, 2013), and patronizing gender ideologies such as good women, good girl and loyal wife (Jayawardena, 2018; Wimalasena, 2017) that impact adversely on women are still predominant (ADB, 1999). Thereby this study focuses on reflecting on the experiences of women and men working-from-home in the IT sector, in the unique Sri Lankan context.

Current Achievements

Data collection through in-depth interviews is currently in progress. Target individuals, who have switched to working-from-home with the pandemic mandates and continued to work in either pure work-from-home or hybrid work arrangements during the time of interviewing, are reached through purposive sampling and snowballing. Currently, we are in the process of conducting the remaining interviews with the assistance of the Sri Lanka Association of Software and Service Companies.

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POSTERS

IRSSB06

Marketing and Sustainable Practices in the Hospitality Industry in Sri Lanka

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Marketing and Sustainable practices in the Hospitality Industry in Sri Lanka

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Sustainability has become an important initiative in the dynamic business world and Sri Lanka economy is dependent on the hospitality Industry and therefore this poster will discuss how sustainability has been used as a marketing tool in the Sri Lankan Hospitality Industry.

Introduction

Hospitality industry is the key contributor to the Sri Lankan economy accounting for over 10% of GDP and provides significant employment opportunities to the country's population. Sustainable approach has been prominent in the world because most of the youth and the modern day customers are environmentally conscious and they care about the flora and fauna and the community.

Objective

To explore the challenges and opportunities for sustainable marketing in the Sri Lankan Hospitality Industry.

Identifying the current sustainable practices used as a marketing tool in the Sri Lankan Hospitality Industry

Methodology

Interviewed with small scale hospitality owners. Investigated the annual reports and sustainable reports while looking at Social media presence.

Background

The purpose of this research paper is to investigate the convergence between marketing tactics and sustainable practices in the Sri Lankan hotel industry. With the rising worldwide emphasis on sustainability and the desire for responsible tourism, the hotel industry must adapt and match its marketing efforts with sustainable practices. This research intends to discover successful marketing techniques that encourage sustainability, contribute to the local economy, and protect the country's natural and cultural heritage by studying the existing landscape of the sector in Sri Lanka.

Conclusion and Recommendation

- Recommendations**
- Improve environment friendly transportation services in hotels along with more environment in Jetwing Lake.
 - Highlighting sustainability initiatives and certifications in marketing materials by showcasing eco-friendly practices using Faucet Aerators, Toilet Tank Fill Cycle Diverters, Outdoor Irrigation Controls and Rain Sensors, Soil Moisture Sensors in hotels like Jetwing Hotels' Yathra Houseboat with increased water conservation efforts.
 - More hotels in Heritage can use guest feedback and reviews using new technology to showcase their sustainability achievements, and organize sustainability-focused events and workshops for guests.

Finally, integration of marketing and sustainable practices can greatly benefit Sri Lanka's hospitality industry. By leveraging social media, optimizing online presence and using digital marketing strategies to increase engagement with visitors, organizations can effectively promote their commitment to sustainability as well as champion marketing through it and attract environmentally conscious tourists. Highlighting eco-friendly initiatives through various tactics as well as offering sustainable packages and experiences and collaborating with local communities will further enhance the sustainability profile of the industry. It is also important to pay attention to sustainable food development and improving the participation of the farming community as sustainable marketing strategies used in the hospitality industry in this country.

Sustainable Marketing Strategies used in the Sri Lankan Hospitality Industry

Eco-Friendly Practices

- Hotels in Sri Lanka, such as Kandyan Hotels environmental management system and carbon reduction initiatives, are adopting eco-friendly practices such as energy efficiency, renewable energy, water conservation, waste management, and sustainable buying (Heritage Kapdhalma, 2022).

Community Engagement

- In Sri Lanka's hotel business, sustainability marketing focuses on community participation, assistance for local schools, job opportunities, and procurement from local suppliers, building a favorable brand image and local economic well-being (Jetwing Hotel, 2023).

Sustainable Food and Farming

- Sri Lankan hotels focus food and agricultural methods, emphasizing locally produced, organic products and assisting small-scale farmers. Jetwing Kaduruketha works with local farmers, providing seed money and sharing the harvest to ensure the community has a consistent source of income (Jetwing Hotel, 2023).

Collaborating with NGOs

- Sri Lankan hotels collaborate with NGOs and government bodies, showcasing their commitment to sustainability through marketing campaigns. Chintaman Hotels partnered with UNESCO for community engagement, energy and water conservation, waste reduction, and eliminating single-use plastics (Daily 11, 2022).

Challenges and Opportunities for Sustainable marketing in the Sri Lankan Hospitality Industry

Lack of Infrastructure and Resources

- Lack of infrastructure such as management facilities or recycling system can hinder the sustainable practices. Limited resources and lack of knowledge among the locals has a detrimental effect in implementing green supply chain system and recycling plants.
- Initial investment cost associated with sustainable practices such as installing energy systems and waste management system is a barrier to the small and medium scale hospitality business.
- Inconsistent or weak regulations related to sustainable practices can create confusion when implementing certain rules and regulations.

Rising demand among

- The consumers who represent gen z are environmentally conscious and the awareness and globalization has provided the opportunity for the hospitality business to meet the demand and provide the sustainable offerings.

Cost saving and Efficiency

- Adopting Sustainable practices can provide the opportunity for the companies to reduce the cost and enhance the efficiency. The use of biogas in the hotels is a sound renewable energy method and also it will help to reduce the water and carbon print of the organization providing a positive impact to the environment and organization.

Enhanced brand reputation

- Embracing sustainability can enhance the impact of the company's brand image and reputation can brand themselves as a sustainable corporate citizen which can reward the brand name as well as a marketing tool.

IRSSB07

Catalysts of Sustainability for Sri Lankan Tourism

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Catalysts of Sustainability for Sri Lankan Tourism

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Emerging marketing trends and Digital Transformation...

In the era of constant technological advances and yielding consumer behavioural patterns, organizations are forced to use sustainable acts to enfold their strategies. Tourism is the utmost crucial industry which is significant for Sri Lanka's economic development. As tourism evolves daily, urgency towards sustainable practices is inevitable for its prolonged feasibility. These include Cultural Heritage Preservation, Protection of Nature, and Biodiversity Conservation.

ABSTRACT

The academic research poster prospects the implications of digitalization and emerging marketing trends towards the long-term sustainability of the tourism in Sri Lanka. Highlighting a vast area of knowledge focusing consumer behavioural changes, technological advancements, and unfolding demand patterns; the poster also sheds path towards various practices which are currently being adopted in the Sri Lanka context..

RESEARCH QUESTION & HYPOTHESIS

Question - How has emerging marketing trends and digital transformation shaped the adoption of sustainable business practices within the Tourism Industry of Sri Lanka?

Hypothesis – The emergence of these two key aspects has had a positive impacts towards the Sri Lankan Tourism which prompts to attain brand loyalty, new market opportunities, and operational efficiency.

OBJECTIVES

- Traverse the impacts of emerging marketing trends and digital transformation on the tourism industry of Sri Lanka.
- Analyse the concepts of the two key aspects in depth.
- Identification of the key barricades and plus points towards being more sustainable when doing tourism.
- Providing actionable recommendations for business which seeks adopting to being sustainable within the industry.

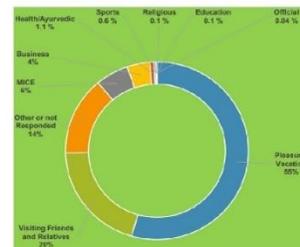


Diagram 1 – Tourist arrivals by purpose of visit

METHODOLOGY

- An in-depth assessment of academic literature, case studies, industry reports and graphical illustrations to provide a pro-founding theoretical foundation towards sustainable business practices.
- The use of industry reports from Sri Lanka and academic literature embodies qualitative research.
- In addition, clustering of statistical data secures the use of quantitative credibility of the information provided.

Key Activities to be Achieved

- Complete the development and launch of the proposed Tourism Travel App. Digital Campaign launch to create awareness about the app
- Complete the revamping of the tourism's consumer website
- Creation of a content repository and continuous creation of digital content for Sri Lanka Tourism (Videos, Imagery, Soundtracks etc) as a means of enabling digital footprint and shared media reach. (This could be linked to website and app)
- Continuation of the creation of the comprehensive tourist information D-base of attractions/experiences and creating content for the identified sites/experiences.
- Improve Sri Lanka Tourism's social media reach to build a social media community and thereby reach and engagement for the product/destination
- Continue the live streaming of Parashara to enhance an online engagement and viewership
- Continue the live streaming of wildlife to enhance an online engagement and viewership
- Introduce a technology driven tourist/customer engagement center to enhance better customer service
- Use of augmented reality at identified key tourist sites/attractions to enhance visitor experience
- Working in collaboration with the Department of Immigration to further streamline the tourist visa application process using technology

Diagram 2 – Technology based Tourism Sector

FINDINGS

- Digitalization has transfigured the business patterns in the Sri Lankan Tourism industry with the aid of technologies like online booking & reservations and social media marketing which enables businesses to improve reach, efficiency and promote consumer experiences vitally. As a result of these improved operations, sustainable business practices are being facilitated progressively.
- With the constant rise in eco-conscious consumers, the tourism industry in Sri Lanka has further budgeted towards sustainable practices including renewable energy sources, sustainable transportation, and waste reduction strategies. Travellers have the potential to experience more authentic and socio-friendly experiences.
- If digital transformation and emerging marketing trends are fully optimized, tourism industry can prompt cost reductions, improved brand loyalty and intensified destination captivation.

CONCLUSION

- Highlights the two key concepts towards fostering sustainability within Sri Lankan tourism.
- Analysis on technology, sustainability, and market geographics assists researchers and policy makers further.
- Poster also spotlights the continuous need for innovation and collaborations through digitalization and marketing trends towards a sustainable tourism sector.

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IRSSB25
Global Connectivity through Organizational Workforce

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Global Connectivity through Organizational Workforce

Background Information

In today's globalized economy, organizations face new challenges and opportunities in managing their workforce. The global workplace is characterized by cultural diversity, technological advancements, virtual teams, and remote work arrangements. These factors significantly impact organizational behaviour, including employee engagement, motivation, job satisfaction, and innovation.

Purpose

The purpose of this research is to contribute to the existing body of knowledge on global workplace and modern organizational behaviour. By providing empirical evidence and statistical analysis, this study enhances our understanding of the factors that shape organizational behaviour in a global context. The findings have practical implications for organizations seeking to navigate the complexities of the global workplace, manage a diverse workforce, and foster a positive work environment.

Limitations

It is important to acknowledge the limitations of this research. Firstly, the study focused on a specific set of organizations and may not be representative of all global workplaces. Further research with a larger and more diverse sample could provide a broader perspective.

Secondly, the survey responses were self-reported, which may introduce response bias. Future studies could consider incorporating additional sources of data, such as observational or qualitative methods, to provide a more comprehensive understanding of organizational behaviour.

Finally, due to resource constraints, the sample size was limited, which may impact the generalizability of the findings. Replication studies with larger sample sizes could validate the results and strengthen the research findings. In conclusion, this research poster provides valuable insights into the dynamics of the global workplace and its impact on modern organizational behaviour.

By employing a rigorous methodology and analyzing statistical data, this study contributes to the existing literature in this field. The findings offer practical implications for organizations seeking to navigate the complexities of the global workplace, manage a diverse workforce, and foster a positive and productive work environment.

Hypothesis

Based on the existing literature and theoretical frameworks, several hypotheses were formulated for this study:

- H1: Cultural diversity in the workplace has a positive impact on employee creativity and innovation.
- H2: Transformational leadership positively influences employee motivation and job satisfaction in a global organizational setting.
- H3: Organizational culture significantly affects employee engagement in the global workplace.
- H4: Technological advancements, such as the rise of virtual teams and remote work, influence organizational behaviour and communication patterns.

Results

The analysis of the collected data yielded significant findings that supported the hypotheses proposed in this study. Firstly, the results revealed a strong positive correlation between cultural diversity in the workplace and employee creativity and innovation.

(H1). This suggests that diverse teams, with individuals from different cultural backgrounds, bring unique perspectives and ideas to the table, fostering innovation and creativity.

Secondly, the study found that transformational leadership had a significant positive impact on employee motivation and job satisfaction in a global organizational setting (H2). Transformational leaders inspire and motivate their teams to achieve higher levels of performance, which is particularly crucial in a global workplace where employees may face additional challenges due to cultural differences and geographical distances.

Additionally, the findings highlighted the importance of organizational culture in shaping employee engagement in the global workplace (H3). A positive and inclusive organizational culture fosters a sense of belonging and commitment among employees, leading to higher levels of engagement and productivity.

Lastly, the study confirmed the influence of technological advancements on organizational behaviour and communication patterns (H4). The rise of virtual teams and remote work arrangements has changed the way employees interact and collaborate, emphasizing the need for effective virtual communication tools and strategies.

Methodology

To achieve the research objectives, a mixed-method approach was employed. Firstly, an extensive literature review was conducted. This involved reviewing scholarly articles, books, and reports related to the global workplace and its impact on organizational behaviour. The literature review provided a theoretical foundation for understanding the concepts and identifying research gaps.

Secondly, primary data was collected through surveys distributed to employees in various organizations operating in different global locations. The survey instrument was designed to capture information on workplace dynamics, cultural influences, leadership styles, employee engagement, and communication patterns. The data collected was then analyzed using statistical techniques such as regression analysis, correlation analysis, and factor analysis. Cultural diversity could bring innovative ideas to the Company as when seeing the company McDonald the McDonald Company sets a menu for all the cultures in different country. As we take India Indian McDonald has Vegetarian burger as there is a lot more vegetarian population in India.

Conclusion

This research poster provides valuable insights into the dynamics of the global workplace and its impact on modern organizational behaviour. By employing a rigorous methodology and analyzing statistical data, this study contributes to the existing literature in this field. The findings offer practical implications for organizations seeking to navigate the complexities of the global workplace, manage a diverse workforce, and foster a positive and productive work environment.

- Key Elements:**
1. Global Workforce: Illustrate a diverse group of professionals representing different cultures, ethnicities, genders, and age groups working together harmoniously.
 2. Cultural Symbols: Incorporate iconic symbols from various cultures to represent the rich diversity present in the global workplace.
 3. Modern Organizational Behavior: Showcase key aspects of modern organizational behavior, such as teamwork, collaboration, adaptability, and flexibility.
 4. Benefits of Diversity: Highlight the advantages of a diverse workforce, such as enhanced creativity, increased innovation, and improved problem-solving capabilities.
 5. Inclusion and Communication: Emphasize the importance of inclusive practices and effective communication strategies to foster understanding and collaboration among employees.
 6. Global Connectivity: Depict the interconnectedness of the global workplace through imagery that represents technological advancements and virtual collaboration tools.

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IRSSB35

Success Case Study: Bangladesh's Apparel Manufacturing Industry

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Success Case Study: Bangladesh's Apparel Manufacturing Industry

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Introduction

Bangladesh has emerged as a global leader in the apparel manufacturing sector over the past few decades. Its success can be attributed to various factors, including low labor costs, government support, and improved infrastructure. This research poster aims to present a case study of Bangladesh's apparel industry, analyzing its growth and development based on relevant literature. Furthermore, we will provide recommendations for Sri Lanka's apparel sector, drawing from the success story of Bangladesh.

Background

The apparel industry in Bangladesh has experienced remarkable growth since the early 1980s. Initially, the industry focused on low-cost manufacturing primarily catering to Western markets. However, over time, it has evolved to offer high-value products, gaining recognition for its capacity to deliver fast fashion at competitive prices.



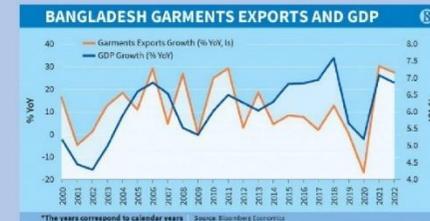
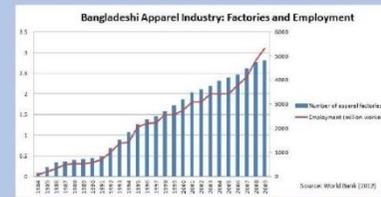
Factors Contributing to Bangladesh's Success

- **Labor Cost Advantage** Bangladesh possesses a large and relatively low-cost labor force, making it attractive to international apparel brands seeking cost-effective production solutions.
- **Favorable Government Policies** The Bangladesh government has provided incentives and support to encourage foreign direct investment in the apparel sector. Special economic zones and duty-free access to major markets have further facilitated the industry's growth.
- **Skilled Workforce** The country has invested in training and developing skilled workers, leading to improved productivity and product quality.
- **Market Diversification** Bangladesh has diversified its market base, reducing reliance on a few countries and expanding its exports to various regions.



Research Methodology

To develop this case study, a literature review was conducted, analyzing scholarly articles, reports, and industry publications on Bangladesh's apparel industry. Data from reliable sources such as the World Bank, IMF, and industry associations were also utilized.



Recommendations for Sri Lanka's Apparel Sector

Drawing from the success of Bangladesh's apparel industry, Sri Lanka can take several strategic actions to enhance its own competitiveness:

- **Skilled Workforce Development** Invest in training programs to improve the skills of the local workforce, enhancing productivity and product quality.
- **Government Support** Sri Lanka's government should implement supportive policies and incentives to attract foreign investment in the apparel sector, fostering growth.
- **Sustainable Practices** Embrace sustainable and eco-friendly manufacturing practices to appeal to environmentally conscious consumers and meet international standards.
- **Market Diversification** Sri Lanka should diversify its export destinations to reduce dependency on specific markets and cater to a broader consumer base.

IRSSB36

The crash of the local footwear business in sri lanka: a market analysis

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THE CRASH OF THE LOCAL FOOTWEAR BUSINESS IN SRI LANKA: A MARKET ANALYSIS

Pathirana, M. T. and Siriwardana, A.

Introduction

The local footwear industry in Sri Lanka has been facing a challenging period marked by a notable decline in business performance and the closure of several enterprises. To understand the root causes of this downturn, our research delves into various factors influencing the decline of the local footwear market. These include intense competition from international brands, changing consumer preferences favoring global trends, limited innovation in design and features, escalating production costs, and inadequate marketing strategies. By exploring these factors comprehensively, our study seeks to propose viable strategies for recovery and growth, aiming to revitalize the industry and foster long-term sustainability for local footwear businesses in Sri Lanka.

Research Objective

The primary objective of this study is to analyze the challenges faced by the local footwear businesses in Sri Lanka and identify viable opportunities to revitalize the industry. By understanding the underlying causes of the crash, we aim to provide insights and recommendations to foster resilience and long-term success.

Year	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Footwear (components) (US\$)	25,238,500	26,441,288	32,679,298	32,742,915	24,474,082	13,546,520
Footwear (US\$)	61,217,025	50,884,150	84,509,842	73,083,109	66,726,296	23,993,491

Methodology

The methodology employed for this research involved comprehensive data collection through surveys and interviews with key stakeholders in the local footwear industry, including manufacturers, retailers, and consumers. The surveys were designed to gather quantitative data on market trends and consumer preferences, while the interviews provided valuable qualitative insights into the challenges and opportunities faced by businesses in the industry.

Market analysis played a crucial role in understanding the dynamics of the local footwear market. By examining market trends, we identified shifts in consumer demand and preferences, which have been influenced by global fashion trends and changing lifestyles. Additionally, we analyzed the strategies adopted by international and domestic competitors to gauge their impact on the local market. This analysis provided valuable information to formulate effective strategies for recovery and growth, taking into account the evolving landscape of the footwear industry in Sri Lanka.

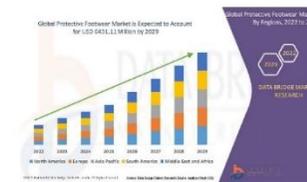


Challenges Leading to the Crash

- Intense Competition: The market has witnessed a surge in international footwear brands, intensifying competition for local businesses.
- Changing Consumer Preferences: Consumers now prefer trendy and branded footwear, leading to reduced demand for traditional local products.
- Lack of Innovation: Local manufacturers struggle to innovate and keep up with modern design trends, impacting their competitiveness.
- Rising Production Costs: Escalating raw material and production costs have squeezed profit margins for local footwear businesses.
- Inadequate Marketing Strategies: Limited marketing efforts have resulted in low brand visibility and reduced consumer awareness.

Opportunities for Recovery

- Highlighting Local Craftsmanship: Emphasize the traditional craftsmanship and quality of locally made footwear to attract consumers seeking unique products.
- Collaboration with Designers: Partnering with local designers to create fashionable and culturally inspired designs can rejuvenate interest in local brands.
- Sustainable Footwear: Embrace sustainable practices and eco-friendly materials to appeal to environmentally conscious consumers.
- Digital Marketing and E-commerce: Leverage e-commerce platforms and digital marketing to expand the reach of local footwear businesses.
- Focus on Niche Markets: Identify and cater to niche markets, such as custom-made footwear or specialized sports shoes, to gain a competitive edge.



Conclusion

The crash of the local footwear business in Sri Lanka has been driven by fierce competition, changing consumer preferences, and limited innovation. However, there are promising opportunities for revival by promoting local craftsmanship, adopting sustainable practices, and engaging in effective marketing. By embracing these strategies, local footwear businesses can re-establish their presence and thrive in the Sri Lankan market.



Local footwear. Daily Mirror, 2022

End of Conference Proceedings.