

## **Impact of E-Word of Mouth on Purchase Intentions Among Generation Z: The Mediating Role of Brand Credibility in Sri Lanka's E-Commerce Industry in the Western Province**

**N Y Jagoda**

Department of Marketing Management, University of Kelaniya, Sri Lanka  
*nadunyashodana2020@gmail.com*

**S I Wijenayake**

Department of Marketing Management, University of Kelaniya, Sri Lanka  
*shanikaw@kln.ac.lk*

In Sri Lanka's rapidly evolving e-commerce industry, E-WOM has emerged as a pivotal factor influencing consumer decision-making, particularly for Generation Z, who rely heavily on co-generated digital content. E-WOM has proven to be an effective tool in shaping purchase intentions among this demographic. However, despite its capacity to capture consumer attention, questions remain about how trust built through E-WOM translates into actual purchasing behavior. Additionally, past research has yet to sufficiently explore the mediating role of brand credibility, leaving gaps in understanding how E-WOM strengthens the trust and credibility between brands and consumers, especially in emerging markets like Sri Lanka.

Compounding this issue is the underexplored influence of trust dimensions such as expertise, trustworthiness, and E-WOM valence on customer loyalty and purchasing behavior. While studies conducted in global contexts emphasize the importance of these dimensions, their interaction within Sri Lanka's e-commerce industry, particularly among Generation Z, has not been adequately addressed. This underscores the need for a focused investigation into the factors that maximize the impact of E-WOM on purchasing intention, while simultaneously strengthening consumer trust and loyalty in a dynamic and growing digital marketplace. This study seeks to fill these gaps by analyzing the relationship between E-WOM and purchasing intention, with brand credibility acting as a mediating variable. Operating within a positivist paradigm, the research follows a deductive approach, surveying 406 respondents aged 18-26 from Sri Lanka's Western Province. A structured questionnaire was used to measure key variables, including dimensions of E-WOM (source expertise, trustworthiness, volume, and valence), brand credibility, and their collective influence on purchasing intention. Regression

and mediation analyses were conducted using SPSS to test the hypotheses and provide actionable insights.

The results indicate a significant positive correlation between E-WOM and purchasing intention, with brand credibility partially mediating this relationship. Among the dimensions of E-WOM, source expertise and trustworthiness were identified as key drivers of consumer trust, while higher message volume and positive valence further amplified purchasing intentions. These findings highlight the importance of brand credibility and consistent digital communication in building trust, ultimately influencing Generation Z's purchasing behavior within Sri Lanka's e-commerce sector.

However, the study has some limitations. The focus on Sri Lanka's Western Province limits the generalizability of the findings to other regions, including suburban areas. The cross-sectional design also restricts the ability to observe long-term changes in consumer behavior. Furthermore, by exclusively concentrating on E-WOM and brand credibility, the study overlooks other potential factors, such as cultural nuances or digital literacy, which could provide further insights into consumer behavior in emerging markets.

Despite these limitations, the study offers significant theoretical and practical contributions. Conceptually, it advances the understanding of E-WOM as a critical driver of purchasing intention, while elucidating the mediating role of brand credibility in this process. From a practical perspective, the findings offer valuable guidance for e-commerce businesses aiming to enhance consumer engagement and loyalty. By prioritizing trust-building through credible and consistent E-WOM strategies, businesses can effectively influence Generation Z's purchasing behavior. Future research could build on these findings by employing longitudinal designs, exploring additional mediators, and expanding the scope to include diverse geographic and cultural contexts.

**Keywords:** *Brand Credibility, E-Commerce Industry in Sri Lanka, E-WOM, Generation Z, Purchasing Intention*