

## **Impact of Social Media Promotions on Customer Brand Love in the Chocolate Industry in Sri Lanka; with the Mediating Effect of Brand Awareness**

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This research aims to investigate how social media promotions influence on customer brand love within the Sri Lankan chocolate industry, with a specific focus on mediating role of brand awareness. As digital marketing is increasingly dominating the branding landscape, it is crucial to understand the mechanisms that foster deep customer relationships, especially in emerging markets like Sri Lanka. While past studies highlight the direct effect of social media marketing, few address the mediating role of brand awareness in developing emotional connections and loyalty. This research addresses this gap, exploring the effectiveness of social media elements such as high-quality content, influencer collaboration and engagement driven posts in increasing brand awareness and deepening consumer engagement. The findings aim to integrate theoretical and practical knowledge, providing strategic insights for marketing in the competitive chocolate industry.

Adopting quantitative research with deductive method, the study focuses on consumers within Sri Lanka's chocolate sector, and who are highly engaged with digital platforms in the chocolate sector in Sri Lanka. A structured questionnaire was used to collect data, combining online surveys distributed through social media and in-person methods to enhance response diversity and minimize bias. A total of 385 valid responses were obtained. Data analysis was conducted using IBM SPSS 23, using descriptive and inferential techniques such as multiple regression and mediation analysis to evaluate the relationships between variables. Tests for reliability and validity ensured that the findings were statistically robust and contextually relevant.

Research shows that social media promotions have a significant positive impact on consumer brand love. Brand awareness was identified as a key

mediator, strengthening the relationship between promotional activities and consumers' emotional attachment to chocolate brands. High-quality content, influencer collaborations, and engagement-focused strategies emerged as particularly effective. The study found that content quality had a strong impact on brand love compared to other factors. This suggests that visually appealing and emotionally resonant content is crucial for building deep emotional connections, as consumers respond positively to storytelling elements and relatable messaging. Mediation analysis confirmed that brand awareness plays a key role in bridging the gap between promotional efforts and consumer brand love. Consumers with higher brand awareness demonstrated stronger brand loyalty and advocacy, confirming that familiar and recognizable brands elicit deeper emotional responses. These findings are consistent with existing literature and highlight the importance of engagement-based content in creating lasting customer relationships not only focus content quality of social media promotions. This study contributes to the literature by explaining how social media tactics can drive both visibility and emotional resonance in a niche market such as the chocolate industry in Sri Lanka.

Several limitations affected the scope and results of the study. First, the research focused only on the Sri Lankan chocolate industry, limiting the generalizability of the findings to other industries or regions. Cultural and market-specific factors unique to Sri Lanka may affect consumer behavior differently elsewhere. Second, self-reported survey data are susceptible to response biases such as social desirability bias or false memories, which could affect the reliability of the results. While efforts were made to ensure data accuracy, these limitations remain a limitation. Furthermore, the study primarily reflects current consumer behavior and social media trends, capturing a temporary snapshot rather than long-term implications. The rapid evolution of social media platforms and marketing strategies may change the relevance of the findings over time.

This study makes theoretical and practical contributions. Theoretically, it expands the understanding of the role of social media promotion and brand awareness mediation in emotional consumer-brand relationships. Contributing to the growing literature on emotional branding and digital marketing, the findings highlight how digital strategies can improve brand visibility and foster emotional connections. Practically, the study provides actionable insights for marketers in the chocolate industry. By leveraging

high-quality content, engagement-focused campaigns, and strategic influencer partnerships, brands can improve visibility and emotional resonance with consumers. In addition, these strategies enable brands to allocate marketing resources effectively and maximize return on investment, especially in competitive markets. Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) could particularly benefit, and the findings suggest affordable and effective social media tactics for developing customer loyalty and advocacy related to their brands.

**Keywords:** *Brand Awareness, Chocolate Industry, Content Quality, Customer Brand Love, Social Media Promotions*