

The Impact of Electronic Word of Mouth on Electronic Loyalty in the clothing industry of Western province in Sri Lanka; with the Mediating Role of Electronic Satisfaction

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This study investigates the influence of Electronic Word of Mouth (E-WOM) on Electronic Loyalty (E-Loyalty) in the western province in Lanka's clothing industry, with a specific focus on the mediating role of Electronic Satisfaction (E-Satisfaction) among Instagram users. E-WOM, which includes online reviews, recommendations, and other forms of user-generated content, has gained prominence as a critical factor in shaping consumer perceptions and purchasing behavior in the digital era. The study explores three key dimensions of E-WOM—quality, quantity, and credibility—and assesses their direct and indirect effects on E-Loyalty, highlighting the critical role of E-Satisfaction in enhancing consumer commitment to brands.

A quantitative research methodology was employed to achieve the study's objectives. The research targeted active Instagram users in the Western Province of Sri Lanka, a region known for its high concentration of digital consumers and a thriving apparel market. Data collection was conducted through an online survey using purposive sampling. A total of 335 responses were obtained from an initial sample of 384 participants. Analytical techniques included reliability and validity tests, correlation analysis, and mediation testing based on Kenny's framework. These methods ensured a robust examination of the relationships among the variables and validated the hypothesized model.

The findings demonstrate that E-WOM significantly impacts E-Loyalty, with credibility emerging as the most influential dimension, followed by quality and quantity. Credibility, defined as the perceived authenticity and trustworthiness of user-generated content, was found to be a decisive factor in fostering consumer trust and brand loyalty. E-WOM quality, encompassing relevance and accuracy, also plays a vital role in influencing

consumer behavior. E-WOM quantity, representing the volume of online reviews and comments, enhances the visibility of information and provides social proof, contributing to positive consumer perceptions.

Furthermore, the study identifies E-Satisfaction as a crucial mediating factor in the E-WOM– E-Loyalty relationship. Positive E-WOM experiences contribute to heightened E-Satisfaction by validating consumer expectations and improving their overall experience with the brand. This, in turn, strengthens consumer loyalty, as evidenced by the model's ability to explain 55% of the variation in E-Satisfaction and 55.2% of the variation in E-Loyalty.

While the study offers valuable insights, its scope is limited to Instagram users in Sri Lanka's Western Province, providing a cross-sectional snapshot of consumer behavior without

longitudinal insights. Nonetheless, the findings have significant implications for marketers, emphasizing the importance of leveraging credible and high-quality E-WOM to enhance customer satisfaction and foster long-term loyalty. This research also contributes to the theoretical understanding of E-WOM in emerging markets, offering a foundation for future studies on digital consumer behavior.

Keywords: *Digital Marketing, E- Loyalty, E- Satisfaction, E-WOM, E-WOM Credibility*