

The Impact of Social Media Marketing on Consumer Purchase Decisions: Mediating Effect of Brand Awareness in Modern Trade Supermarkets in the Western Province of Sri Lanka

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With the proliferation of social media and its integration into modern lifestyles, more and more buyers and sellers are now meeting and transacting via social media platforms. Most modern consumers use a range of different social media platforms to facilitate various activities in their day-to-day lives. And the number of shoppers who use social media platforms to do their shopping is on the rise. The retail and modern trade sectors also contribute significantly to the GDP of Sri Lanka. Furthermore, the addition of social media platforms to complement the traditional brick-and-mortar models of selling is a fast-growing phenomenon in this sector. Therefore, this study analyses the impact of social media marketing on consumer purchase decisions and how that relationship is mediated by the effect of brand awareness in modern trade supermarkets. A quantitative research strategy was adopted for this study, and a questionnaire was used as the primary source of data collection from 384 respondents. The findings of the study demonstrate that social media marketing has a positive and significant impact on consumer purchase decisions, while brand awareness has positively and significantly mediated the impact of social media marketing on consumer purchase decisions. These findings provide valuable insight to decision-makers in the modern trade sector on how to utilise social media platforms more effectively in their marketing activities.

Keywords: *Brand Awareness, Consumer Purchase Decision, Social Media, Social Media Marketing*