

## **Impact of Social Media Experience on Offline Purchasing Decisions: The Case of Luxurious Cafeterias in Western Province, Sri Lanka**

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Social media has dramatically improved connectivity between businesses and consumers across industries. In today's Sri Lankan context, the online audience is actively engaged with the social media experience through different social media platforms, making it an important venue for marketing, communication, and brand interaction. More than 70% of social media users will refer social media platforms to review information on products and services before purchasing them offline. That may reduce the perceived risk of making a wrong purchasing decision in physical channels. In the luxurious cafeteria context, the customers are more likely to search online and make offline purchasing decisions because their purpose is to get a higher satisfactory value for their expenditure with a better experience in a physical environment due to the high cost of products and brand offers. For instance, luxury customers rely on cross channels, which help them in purchasing high-involvement products. Therefore, marketers of luxury brands are adopting to use of social media as a key marketing tool to interact with their target audience by publishing their content via social media platforms to drive consumers to offline purchasing decisions with their emerging social media experience practices. Furthermore, the combination of online and offline strategies enhances consumers' knowledge, attitude and purchase intentions towards the products. It appears that the online experience may have a significant influence on offline purchasing decisions.

The most of previous studies have investigated the impact of social media experience on purchasing decisions by mediating different factors in the

luxury brand contexts. However, past studies often failed to explicitly address the direct connection between social media experience and offline purchasing decisions as part of the online-to-offline strategy in the luxury brand context. The luxurious cafeteria concept is relatively novel in Sri Lanka which can be seen rarely in Western province, with the growing influence of social and cultural factors involving coffee culture. The luxurious cafeteria brands in Sri Lanka communicate their unified image through their social media pages, aligning with cultural preferences and promoting modernized café experience due to the wide spread of using smartphones, Internet and relying on social media platforms. This remains a noticeable gap in empirical studies exploring the impact of social media experience on offline purchasing decisions within the luxurious cafeteria sector in Sri Lanka. To address this gap, this study investigates how social media experience delivers luxury cafe brand information using various activities with promising to provide a seamless experience in physical stores. Thus, this study underscores the impact of social media experience on offline purchasing decisions by paying special attention to the luxurious cafeteria sector in Western province, Sri Lanka.

This study used the quantitative research technique to collect primary data from the sample using a structured questionnaire with 22 questions. The luxurious cafeteria culture is boomed in the Western province, Sri Lanka today. Therefore, this study selected Western province as the target population to collect data. The target population consisted of 18 – 55 age category people who follow the luxurious cafeteria brand's social media pages. The study was effective in collecting 424 responses using a convenience sample method, which is a subset of nonprobability sampling. After checking missing values and outliers, this study analyzed data by proceeding with 408 usable data. Based on the findings, this study presented that there has a significant and positive impact of social media experience on offline purchasing decisions in the luxurious cafeteria sector. The primary data collection method restricts this study to a small population size for investigation. Therefore, the data collection has been limited to 424 responses due to time restrictions. Also, the authors faced the challenge of finding supportive literature to investigate this study because there is a dearth of empirical studies. The practical implications were created for marketers of luxurious cafeteria brands in Sri Lanka, emphasizing the significance of providing useful and relevant social media experience to effectively attract and maintain their targeted online audience while driving offline purchasing decisions. Future studies can explore a combination of quantitative and

qualitative approaches to find a better outcome into the impact of social media experience on offline purchasing decisions in the luxurious cafeteria sector.

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