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Original Article

The Impact of Facebook on Generation Z Consumer's Fast Food Purchase Intention; Reference to Colombo District, Sri Lanka

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Abstract

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Introduction: Due to the rising appeal of social media platforms among young individuals, fast-food advertisers see them as an efficient channel to promote businesses among youth. The fast-food industry has experienced a surge in popularity in Sri Lanka, particularly among the youth and individuals with hectic schedules. In comparison to other sectors, the franchise fast food industry in Sri Lanka extensively utilizes social media marketing for its promotional efforts.

Objectives: To evaluate the impact of Facebook on generation Z consumers' fast food purchase intention.

Methodology: A descriptive cross-sectional study was conducted among 242 generation Z consumers (people born between 1996 and 2010). Online questionnaire was used to gather details regarding consumers' preference for fast food purchases following advertisements on Facebook. Correlation and multiple linear regression analysis were employed to analyze the data using SPSS version 25.

Results: Most of the participants were males (62.5%, n=125), who belonged to the age category of 18-25 years. Findings revealed that activities such as Likes ($p < 0.05$), Friend's Likes ($p < 0.05$), Comment posting ($p < 0.05$), and Sharing ($p < 0.05$) on Facebook had a significant impact on the intention to purchase fast food. Additionally, the study indicated generation Z consumers are receptive to fast-food advertising on Facebook.

Conclusion: Generation Z consumers are receptive to fast food advertising on Facebook. Therefore, Facebook will be an effective method to promote fast food among generation Z consumers. Further, advertisements on Facebook would enhance the promotion of fast-food vendors.

Keywords: Comment posting and sharing, Fast-foods, Friends likes, Likes, Purchasing intention

Introduction

Social media refers to online platforms and technologies that enable users to create, share, and exchange information, ideas, and multimedia content in virtual communities and networks (Karaaslan et al., 2021). Scholars have followed the emergence of social media from the earliest electronic bulletin boards and online communities to current platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram (Ansari & Khan, 2020). The increased use of social media platforms has been greatly aided by the widespread use of the Internet, the creation of user-friendly interfaces, and accessibility to low-cost personal computers and mobile devices (Ansari & Khan, 2020). The social effects of the emergence of social media have been researched by scholars. Past reports have investigated its effects on communication, identity development, political participation, activism, and information intake (Nadaraja & Yazdanifard, 2014).

Facebook boasts one of the largest user bases among social media platforms. Facebook now controls a significant portion of the social media market. In terms of user base, revenue, and overall market share, it has consistently ranked among the top social media platforms. Its dominance increases its appeal (Khan, 2018). Facebook's users are known to be highly engaged with the platform. Studies have shown that Facebook users spend a significant amount of time on the platform, interacting with content, sharing updates, and engaging with others. This high level of engagement is an indicator of its popularity (Nadaraja & Yazdanifard, 2014).

Social media platforms have emerged as powerful marketing and advertising tools in the digital age, with Facebook leading the way in terms of user engagement and reach. To capture the attention and loyalty of the younger generation, fast food companies have used Facebook's large user base targeting its capabilities to promote products (Ansari & Khan, 2020). Facebook has several distinguishing features that make it an appealing platform for fast food marketing. Fast food

brands can tailor their promotions to reach young consumers due to its ability to create targeted advertisements based on user demographics, interests, and behaviors. The interactive nature of the platform allows direct engagement with users via likes, comments, and shares, thereby fostering brand loyalty and raising brand awareness. Furthermore, Facebook's integration with other platforms, such as Instagram, broadens the marketing potential by bringing fast food promotions to a wider audience (Khan, 2018).

The exponential growth of Facebook advertising has had a significant impact on consumer purchasing habits, particularly in the fast food industry (Khan, 2018). Advertisements on Facebook use various persuasive techniques to influence consumer preferences and create a sense of urgency, such as appealing visuals, celebrity endorsements, limited-time offers, and targeted promotions (Yaman, 2016).

Furthermore, Facebook's interactive nature allows for user engagement, social sharing, and peer influence, which increases the effectiveness of fast food advertising on the platform (Yaman, 2016). As a result, there should be a proper mechanism in place to identify the factors that influence the fast-food consumption behavior among generation Z consumers. Because both advertisers and customers are still unaware of Facebook's influence on fast food purchasing behavior. There is limited existing research investigating the impact of Facebook on generation Z consumers' fast food purchasing intention. Therefore, the study aimed to evaluate the impact of Facebook orientation on generation Z consumers' fast food purchase intention.

Methodology

The study was based on the Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT) model (Batucan et al., 2022). A descriptive cross-sectional study was conducted among 242 generation Z consumers (people born between 1996 and 2010) in Colombo district, Sri Lanka. The snowball sampling method was used to

enroll participants in the study. The data were collected by online questionnaires from 242 participants. The questionnaire was prepared on a 5-point Likert scale.

The results were analyzed using IBM SPSS version 25. The mean and the standard deviation were tested for the study to define the variables effectively. The correlation and regression analysis were performed to find the impact of independent variables such as Likes, Friend's Likes, Comments Posting and Sharing on Facebook over the dependent variable (Consumer Purchase Intention). A "p value" of 0.05 at 95% level of confidence was considered significant.

Results

In the process of data cleaning, 200 responses were accepted out of 242 for the analysis. The effective response rate was 82.6%. Cronbach's Alpha values of all items of the scales were above 0.7 (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016).

Out of 200 respondents, 62.5% (n=125) were males while 37.5% (n=75) were females. All respondents belonged to generation Z category and were employed (n=200).

The mean value for the purchase intention of Facebook users was 4.37 and the standard deviation was 0.812. There was a strong positive relationship between the consumer's purchase intention via Facebook and the likes (r=0.999, P=0.000), friend's likes (r=0.987, P=0.000), comment posting (r=0.967, P=0.000), sharing (r=0.992, P=0.000) (Table 1).

Table 1: The Correlation Table

Variable	Pearson Correlation Coefficient	P – Value
Likes	0.999	0.000
Friend's Likes	0.987	0.000
Comment Posting	0.967	0.000
Sharing	0.992	0.000

Table 2: The Coefficient Table

Model	Coefficients			t	Sig.
	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
	B	Std. Error	B		
(Constant)	0.145	0.032		4.504	0.000
Likes (L)	0.223	0.062	0.228	3.631	0.000
Friends likes (FL)	0.217	0.041	0.232	5.290	0.000
Sharing (S)	0.367	0.069	0.377	5.319	0.000
Comment posting (CP)	0.162	0.025	0.168	6.540	0.000

Generation Z consumers' fast food purchase intention was predicted based on the following formula,

$$\text{(Generation Z consumers' fast food purchase intention = 0.145+ 0.223L+ 0.217FL+ 0.367S+ 0.162CP+ e)}$$

According to Table 2, sharing had the strongest influential factor with the consumer's purchase intention (B=0.367) while the least influential factor was comment posting (B=0.162).

Table 3: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin – Watson
4	0.995	0.990	0.990	0.08209	1.655

According to Table 3, the R² value highlights that the explanatory power of the independent variables in this study accounted for 0.990 which indicates that the study variables such as likes, friend's likes, comment posting and sharing account for 99% for generation Z consumers' fast food purchase intention. Similarly, adjusted R accounted for 99%, summing up that, likes, friend's likes, comment posting and sharing on Facebook has a great impact on generation Z consumers' fast food purchase intention.

Discussion

The current study indicated that sharing on Facebook had the highest impact on generation Z consumer's fast food purchase intention. Similarly, Appel et al. (2020) discovered that the social media factor "sharing" had a positive impact on customers' purchase intentions.

Further, Samarasinghe (2021) reported that "sharing" had a positive impact on customers' purchase intention ($t=5.913$, $p<0.05$) in a study done with the generation Y and Z in Colombo district, Sri Lanka, respectively.

According to Richard and Guppy (2015), "likes" on social media factor had a positive impact on customers' purchase intention ($R^2=0.423$, $p<0.001$). Further, Appel et al. (2020) also reported that "likes" had a positive impact on customers' purchase intention. According to the findings of the current study, in keeping with previously published reports, "likes" has the second highest impact on generation Z consumers' fast food purchase intention.

Jamil et al. (2022) reported that the social media factor "friends' likes" had a positive impact on customers' purchase intentions ($t=2.873$, $p<0.05$). In addition, Samarasinghe (2021) also reported that "friends' likes" had a positive impact on customers' purchase intentions in generation Y and Z consumers in Colombo district. In accordance with previously published results, the current study also reports that, "friends' likes" had the third most influential factor on generation Z consumers' fast food purchase intention.

Samarasinghe (2021) reported that the social media factor "comments" had a positive impact on customers' purchase intention ($t=3.483$, $p<0.05$). Furthermore, Appel et al. (2020) concluded that "comments" had a positive impact on customers' purchase intention, and the current study emphasizes the least impact of "comments" on generation Z consumers in

fast food purchase intention compared to other variables in this study.

In this regard, the research study pinpoints the importance on analyzing the generation Z consumers' purchase intention as this generation is widely recognized for their propensity towards extensive digital connectivity (Lina, Hou and Ali, 2022). Generation Z consumers demonstrate a notable inclination towards depending extensively on peer endorsements and online evaluations when determining their purchasing choices (Khadar, 2020). Social media platforms, such as Facebook, possess the capacity to contribute to this phenomenon by enabling users to disseminate commendations, assessments, and personal encounters pertaining to various commodities (Lina, Hou and Ali, 2022). Further, this study confers the gap in existing literature, revealing the impact of Facebook on generation Z consumers' fast food purchasing intention.

Conclusion

The study's findings emphasize the importance of Facebook marketing in influencing consumers' fast food purchase intentions. Accordingly, the most influential Facebook factor on generation Z consumer's fast food purchase intention is "Sharing." According to the findings, customers prefer to get recommendations from sharing sources.

Conflicts of Interest

No conflict of interest

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