



THE INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA REVIEWS ON PURCHASE INTENTIONS OF SKINCARE PRODUCTS AMONG FEMALE GEN Z CONSUMERS IN COLOMBO DISTRICT

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ABSTRACT

Social media has become a powerful platform influencing consumer behaviour across various industries. In particular, electronic word of mouth (eWOM) plays a significant role in shaping purchase decisions in the beauty and skincare sector, where peer opinions and experiences are highly valued. This study examines the impact of social media reviews on the purchase intentions of Generation Z consumers in the Colombo District of Sri Lanka. The study focuses on four key attributes of online reviews: review valence, source credibility, review quantity, and review quality, as determinants of consumer behaviour in an online context. A quantitative research design was adopted, and data were collected through a structured questionnaire distributed via selected social media platforms. The data were collected over a two-week period. Responses were measured using a five-point Likert scale, and statistical analyses were conducted using SPSS, including descriptive statistics, correlation, and multiple regression analysis. The findings reveal that all four review attributes have a significant positive impact on purchase intention, with review quality and source credibility emerging as the most influential predictors. Review valence and review quantity also show significant positive relationships with purchase intention. The study provides valuable insights for marketers and businesses in the skincare industry to develop effective digital marketing strategies targeting female Generation Z consumers.

Keywords: Social Media Reviews, eWOM, Purchase Intention, Generation Z, Skincare Products

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1. Introduction

A digital platform is a web-based or mobile-based system that allows for interaction and transactions between different groups of users, including businesses, consumers, and sometimes other businesses. The evolution of digital platforms in today's society has significantly altered the way people interact with brands and shop. Social media is a form of these digital platforms. It consists of online platforms that enable users to share information as well as interact with virtual networks using various content types, ranging from text, images, to videos. As of 2024, the global population of users of social media applications and sites had reached five billion, which is over 62 percent of the total population of the world. This amount encompasses applications and websites aimed at exchanging messages and

communicating, socially oriented apps such as Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok, and communal discussion platforms such as Reddit and Discord (DataReportal, 2024).

Different marketing tools and techniques are applied to promote products by businesses, including digital marketing, content marketing, advertising, and social media marketing. Moreover, social networks offer convenient access to product reviews, influencer recommendations, and electronic word of mouth that has a massive influence on the consumer decision-making process.

In an analysis conducted by Stacy (2025), Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, WhatsApp, and TikTok are the most popular social media networks in the world as of February 2025. Instagram, Facebook, Pinterest, and TikTok are the best social media marketing platforms that can be utilized by fashion and beauty industry professionals.

This study focuses on examining the impact of social media reviews on the purchase intentions of skincare products among female Generation Z consumers in the Colombo District of Sri Lanka. Given that Generation Z consumers are highly exposed to social media and actively engage with online content, their purchasing decisions are increasingly influenced by electronic word of mouth (eWOM). In particular, review attributes such as review valence, source credibility, review quantity, and review quality play a critical role in shaping consumer perceptions.

Therefore, this study aims to investigate how these attributes of social media reviews influence the purchase intentions of female Generation Z consumers. The findings are expected to provide both theoretical contributions and practical insights for marketers, researchers, and policymakers in understanding digital consumer behaviour in the skincare industry.

Problem Statement

The global beauty and skincare industry has experienced significant growth, with social media playing a crucial role in influencing consumer behaviour through online reviews and electronic word of mouth (eWOM). Previous studies conducted in countries such as the Philippines and Indonesia have shown that positive and credible reviews enhance consumer trust and increase purchase intention. However, consumer responses to online reviews vary across cultural contexts. For example, a comparative study between Sweden and Sri Lanka found that Sri Lankan consumers are more negatively influenced by reviews and tend to rely more on personal networks, such as family and friends, rather than online sources (Gangabada & Yekbun, 2021). Nevertheless, Generation Z consumers, who are highly active on social media, may demonstrate different behavioural patterns.

In the Sri Lankan context, existing research on eWOM and purchase intention remains fragmented. For instance, Vithana and Fernando (2024) examined review credibility, quality, and quantity but did not consider review valence, while Ratnayake and Lakshika (2022) focused solely on source credibility. To date, no study has comprehensively examined all four aspects of review valence, source credibility, review quantity, and review quality in online reviews within a single framework.

Furthermore, the Colombo District represents the highest concentration of social media users in Sri Lanka, and female consumers are highly engaged in purchasing skincare products online. Despite this, limited research has specifically explored how female Generation Z consumers in this region respond to social media reviews. Therefore, there is a clear need to investigate how different attributes of online reviews influence the purchase intentions of this specific demographic group.

This study aims to address this gap by examining the impact of social media reviews on the purchase intentions of female Generation Z consumers in the Colombo District. The findings are expected to contribute to the existing literature while providing practical implications for skincare brands in developing effective digital marketing strategies.

2. Literature Review

The section provides the theoretical background of the study. These theories offer a sound conceptual foundation to learn how online reviews, defined in terms of their quality, quantity, credibility of the source and valence, can affect the consumer's purchase intentions. And reviews recent empirical studies to understand how review attributes affect purchase intentions, particularly for skincare products and among Gen Z consumers.

Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB)

Ajzen et al., (2011) is an extension of the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) and is called the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB). It assumes that the behavior of a person is mainly shaped by his behavioral intention, which is, in its turn, affected by three fundamental factors: attitude to the behavior, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control. TPB is extensively applied in the prediction of various human behaviors, especially where the choice is made through deliberation and information processing.

TPB is a relevant concept in the context of this research because it is directly theoretically related to purchase intention. Online reviews affect the attitudes of consumers (through review valence and quality), perceived social pressure (through review quantity and consensus), and perceived behavioral control (through the informative nature of reviews that make people feel more confident about making a choice). Thus, TPB provides a rich model of studying the consumer formulation of intentions to buy, depending on the assessment of the online review content.

Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA)

One model in behavioral psychology is the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA), proposed by Fishbein and Ajzen (1975). It states that a person's intention to perform a behavior is governed by their attitude toward the behavior and subjective norms, that is, beliefs that significant others believe that they should perform the behavior.

TRA comes in handy, especially in examining the mental processes that lead to consumer decisions. Review valence (positive vs. negative reviews) and review quality in this study have an impact on the attitudes of consumers, whereas the quantity and source credibility are used as a proxy for the subjective norms (social influence of opinion of others). TRA does not explain the perceived behavioral control, but it is still useful in explaining the fact that online reviews are the foundation of a consumer's intention to buy a product.

Source Credibility Theory

The other theory is the Source Credibility Theory, which was introduced by Hovland and Weiss (1951) focuses on the effectiveness of a message and the credibility of the communicator in terms of expertise and trustworthiness. The theory is specifically applicable to the research of online reviews, where the perceived credibility of a reviewer is significant to consumer reaction.

In the background of this research, source credibility mediates the role of the review content (high or low valence or quality) in creating attitudes and trust. As an example, a very favourable review by a credible reviewer will most probably carry more weight than a similar review by an anonymous or dubious one. Credibility of the source also positively influences the persuasiveness of the message, thus boosting the relationship between exposure to review and purchase intention.

Combining TPB, TRA, and Source Credibility Theory is a multidimensional theory of studying how the characteristics of online reviews determine consumer purchase intention. TPB and TRA provide a behavioral model based on attitudes, norms, and intentions, whereas the Source Credibility Theory supplements them since it considers the trust aspect of reviewer identity. Collectively, these theories

allow to have a holistic view of the psychological and social processes involved in how consumers process information about online reviews and then make purchase decisions.

Variables have been widely studied in the context of online consumer behavior, and the following section discusses the empirical findings related to each.

Review Valence and Purchase Intention

Review valence refers to the tone or direction of a review. Many studies have found a direct relationship between valence and consumer behavior. According to Adapon et al., (2024), TikTok reviews with overwhelmingly positive public opinion yielded a high purchase intention of local beauty products. Similarly, Sutanto and Aprianingsih (2023) have observed that the emotional tone of the reviews is crucial because it is used by buyers to make decisions in Indonesia. The Sri Lankan context indicated that both Facebook media positive feedback and brand credibility increase were related, particularly in the beauty and wellness sectors (Vithana & Fernando, 2024). Therefore, negative reviews make buying decisions slow down or cancel (Samarasinghe & Jayawardhana, 2020). Interestingly, according to some studies, the positive and negative reviews make the message credible since customers view balanced opinions as authentic and truthful (Chevalier & Mayzlin, 2006).

Review Quantity and Purchase Intention

Review quantity means the number of reviews associated with a product influences consumer confidence. Gangabada (2021) states that products with a higher number of reviews are more likely to inspire trust, especially on online shopping platforms such as Daraz and Instagram. This phenomenon is driven by the bandwagon effect, which argues that people generally associate popularity with higher quality. This assumes that since shopping customers are more likely to purchase products with a higher number of reviews, such products have been rigorously tested by a larger population.

Review Quality and Purchase Intention

The review quality refers to the review's depth, structuring, and informational value. High-quality reviews typically contain both subjective opinions and objective facts. Cheung et al., (2009) found that reviews with a high number of arguments and supporting facts are more persuasive, especially when consumers make choices with high levels of involvement. Also, Mudambi and Schuff (2010) showed that longer and structurally well-developed reviews are especially influential when it comes to high-risk products. In the beauty and skincare industry, high-quality reviews are crucial. Detailed reviews that document usage over time, side effects, and before-and-after images are valued more by consumers.

Source Credibility and Purchase Intention

Credibility of the review source has emerged as one of the most important variables influencing purchase behavior. Rathnayake and Lakshika (2022) established that high credibility influencers are very influential in purchasing skin care products among the Sri Lankan young population. Influencers who are educational, who tell their sponsorships, and who directly interact with their followers are seen as more genuine. Moreover, Kamalasena and Sirisena (2021) discovered that specific and informative reviews by credible sources have more power than general or vague recommendations. It aligns with the results of the world by Jafarova and Rushworth (2017), who observed that millennial and Gen Z customers are highly influenced by influencer trust.

3. Research Methodology

Figure 1 presents the conceptual framework developed for this study; it visually represents the hypothesized relationships between variables. It positions review valence, source credibility, review quantity, and review quality as independent variables, which feed into the purchase intention. The

results of this model will be useful in providing information about effective digital marketing tactics especially in the skincare sector.

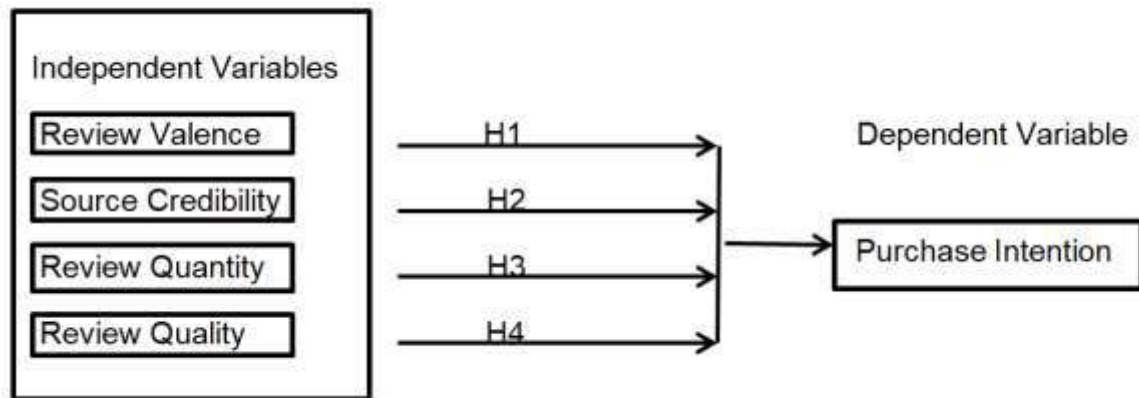


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

Source: Developed by the researcher (2025)

The hypotheses of this study developed based on the conceptual framework and the review of relevant literature. The study aims to test the following non-directional hypotheses.

H₁ - Review valence has a significant effect on the purchase intention of skincare products among Gen Z consumers.

This hypothesis investigates whether the emotional tone of social media reviews, whether positive or negative consumers' willingness to buy skincare products. Review valence is a key factor in shaping consumers' perceptions, and this hypothesis tests whether such sentiment plays a role in influencing decision-making among Gen Z consumers.

H₂ - Source credibility has a significant effect on the purchase intention of skincare products among Gen Z consumers.

The hypothesis will examine whether the credibility of the individual or the site on which the review is left has any effect on the intentions of the consumer to buy a product. This is a very important issue to consider when making purchases because it is known that Gen Z consumers are sensitive to authenticity and credibility, particularly on social media sites.

H₃ - Review quantity has a significant effect on the purchase intention of skincare products among Gen Z consumers.

The hypothesis is concerned with the number of reviews that are available and whether or not an increase in the number of reviews has any effect on the perception of the product by the consumer. When in an online context, there would be reviews in large numbers; this would be an indicator of popularity and social proof, which may influence the consumer to trust in their buying choices.

H₄ - Review quality has a significant effect on the purchase intention of skincare products among Gen Z consumers.

This will be tested by this hypothesis to determine whether purchase intention depends on the depth of review, the detail of review, and the clarity of review. Quality reviews that are informative and well-written may make consumers better-informed in their decision-making, particularly when it comes to

product categories such as skincare, where consumers require some guidance and a sense of assurance before they purchase.

Study Design

The study specifically focuses on female Generation Z consumers as they represent a highly engaged demographic in social media usage and skincare product consumption. This group is more likely to rely on online reviews and digital content when making purchase decisions. Data were collected over a two-week period through a structured online questionnaire distributed via selected social media platforms. The selection of Instagram, Facebook, and WhatsApp as data collection platforms is based on their widespread popularity and high user engagement within the Sri Lankan context. These platforms are commonly used by Gen Z consumers for communication, content sharing, and product-related interactions.

The research philosophy embraced in this research is positivism, which focuses on objective and measurable data to examine the hypotheses on how social media reviews of reviews influence purchase intentions among Gen Z consumers. It employs a deductive methodology that starts with a theory and a hypothesis, which is checked by a quantitative survey. It will be a mono-method quantitative design in that it will use only structured questionnaires and statistical analysis. The method of the research is a survey, which would be appropriate to obtain standardized data from a large sample. Its time horizon is cross-sectional since it is concerned with data at one time to explain the current consumer behaviour. The statistics of data analysis will be performed by hypothesis testing, correlation, and multiple regression analysis.

Population, Sample and Sampling Technique

The target population in this research will be female consumers of Generation Z who were aged 1997 to 2012, living in the Colombo District of Sri Lanka. The population has a high level of usage of social media platforms, and it also exhibits a behavioral consistency in the usage of the skincare products. The sample size was calculated by the Cochran formula on an unknown population, which has a confidence level of 95 and a 5 per cent margin of error. On this basis, it was acceptable that there was a minimum of 384 respondents. This study utilised a non-probability convenience method of sampling in which the participants were chosen to be part of the study at a voluntary and convenient manner. The questionnaire was spread on three social media Instagram, WhatsApp, and Facebook. To prevent the sample from lacking validity due to the small number of people who did not meet the inclusion criteria, screening questions were also included. All the variables were measured on a 5-point Likert scale, 1 = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree, with the help of a structured questionnaire.

4. Data Presentation and Analysis

399 responses were collected; 11 people who said they did not use skin care products were removed. Thus, the number of valid responses was 388.

Descriptive Analysis

This section presents the descriptive analysis of the survey data. It begins with the demographic profile of the respondents and then provides descriptive statistics of the main study variables. Before proceeding to the main statistical analyses, the reliability and validity of the study constructs were tested, followed by descriptive statistics to summarise the key variables.

Reliability Test

Table 1 - Reliability Statistics for Study Constructs

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
Review Valence	.636	4
Source Credibility	.643	4
Review Quantity	.610	4
Review Quality	.603	4
Purchase Intention	.601	4

Source: Survey Data, (2025)

For reliability analysis, Cronbach's Alpha was used to evaluate the internal consistency of the study constructs. The different constructs' Cronbach's Alpha values are shown in Table 1. Cronbach's Alpha values ranged from 0.601 to 0.643, where the reliability coefficient from none of the scales exceeded the conventional value of 0.70 (Nunnally, 1978). However, all values were above the value of 0.60, and therefore can be determined to have moderate reliability (Hair et al., 2010). Moreover, since this is an exploratory study, then the reliability coefficients are acceptable. This means that the items for review valence, source credibility, review quantity, review quality, and purchase intention are reasonably consistent to execute statistical analysis.

Validity Test

Table 2 - KMO and Bartlett's Test

KMO and Bartlett's Test		
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.888
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	2343.207
	df	190
	Sig.	.000

Source: Survey Data, (2025)

An Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) was used in order to measure construct validity. The value of Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) stood at 0.888 which lies under the excellent category, and this means that the sample size and the data used were very suitable in the analysis of factors (Kaiser, 1974). Moreover, Bartlett Test of Sphericity was statistically significant (Approx. Chi-Square = 2343.207 190, $p < 0.001$), which proves that the correlation matrix is not the identity-matrix, and the items are related to each other enough (Bartlett, 1954). These findings combined prove that the dataset can be analyzed using factor analysis and there are high indications of construct validity.

Descriptive Statistics of Study Variables

Table 3 - Descriptive Statistics of Key Variable

Variables	Mean	Std. Deviation
Review Valence	4.4407	.38382
Source Credibility	4.6430	.37419
Review Quantity	4.3937	.38353
Review Quality	4.6327	.35370
Purchase Intention	4.3744	.37591

Source: Survey Data, (2025)

The descriptive statistics of the key study variables indicate that participants generally have very positive perceptions of online reviews. The mean values of all of the variables are all over 4.3, suggest greater than strong agreement across participants for a five point scale. Based on the fact that valence (M = 4.44, SD = 0.38), source credibility (M = 4.64, SD = 0.37), review quantity (M = 4.39, SD = 0.38), and review quality (M = 4.63, SD = 0.35) were all high rated, it can conclude that the respondents likely believe reviews are credible, important in quality, and that quantity and valence are also taken into consideration. The purchase intention also had a high average (M = 4.37, SD = 0.37), and therefore strongly indicates that online reviews have a large influence on consumers purchase intent. In conclusion, these results show that online review characteristics especially credibility, and quality are viewed as highly influential components to purchase intentions.

Inferential Statistical Analysis

Correlation Analysis

Table 4 - Correlation Analysis

Correlations						
		Review Valence	Source Credibility	Review Quantity	Review Quality	Purchase Intention
Review Valence	Pearson Correlation					
	Sig. (2-tailed)					
	N	388				
Source Credibility	Pearson Correlation	.530**				
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000				
	N	388	388			
Review Quantity	Pearson Correlation	.519**	.545**			
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000			
	N	388	388	388		
Review Quality	Pearson Correlation	.535**	.627**	.590**		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000		
	N	388	388	388	388	
Purchase Intention	Pearson Correlation	.503**	.556**	.581**	.541**	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	

	N	388	388	388	388	388
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).						

Source: Survey Data, (2025)

As predictable, Pearson correlation findings indicate that all the independent variables have a positive and significant correlation with purchase intention at 0.01 level in 2 tails. In particular review quantity is positioned at the highest rank of positive relationship with purchase intention ($r = .581$, $p < .01$), source credibility ($r = .556$, $p < .01$), review quality and review valence ($r = .541$, $p < .01$, review quality and review valence, respectively). This is an indication that the higher the consumers view the increased number of reviews, their perceived credibility, and the high quality of the reviews coupled with the positive valence, the higher their intention to purchase among them. In addition, the independent variables alone are also moderately and positively correlated amongst themselves with correlation coefficients of a value between .519 and .627. Indicatively, the two sources have the strongest correlation, and this is source credibility and review quality ($r = 0.627$, $p < .01$), and thus, a review that is thought to be credible is commonly rated as high quality. Generally, the results demonstrate the existence of all the review attributes in making consumer purchase intention, in that review quantity becomes the most influential predictor at the bivariate level.

Regression Analysis

Multiple regression model was used to determine the value of the four independent variables (Review Valence, Source Credibility, Review Quantity and Review Quality) in predicting the dependent variable (Purchase Intention).

Table 5 - Model Summary

Model Summary									
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.672 ^a	.451	.446	.27987	.451	78.802	4	383	.000

Source: Survey Data, (2025)

The regression model indicates that there is moderate to strong positive relationship between the predictors (Review Quality, Review Valence, Review Quantity and Source Credibility) and purchase intention with $R = 0.672$. The R^2 of 0.451 means that 45.1 percent of the variance in purchase intention is explained by these four independent variables. An adjusted R^2 of 0.446 means that the variance is explained beyond the number of predictors. The standard error of the estimate = 0.27987, indicating that, on average, the predicted values of purchase intention differ slightly from the actual values by about 0.28. The F change value of 78.802 is significant ($p < 0.05$), which means that the overall regression model is important and the collection of the predictors has a significant effect on purchase intention.

Table 6 - Coefficients Table

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	95.0% Confidence Interval for B	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
(Constant)	.681	.212		3.203	.001	.263	1.098
Review Valence	.152	.047	.155	3.217	.001	.059	.245
Source Credibility	.224	.052	.223	4.286	.000	.121	.327
Review Quantity	.288	.049	.294	5.855	.000	.191	.385
Review Quality	.154	.057	.145	2.694	.007	.042	.266

Source: Survey Data, (2025)

The coefficients can tell how each of the independent variables correlates with the dependent variable, purchase intention, and to what extent. The intercept is 0.681, meaning the purchase intention is predicted when all the predictors take the value of zero. The coefficient of review valence is not standardized, and its beta is 0.152, and $t = 3.217$ with $p = .001$, implying a significant positive impact on purchase intention. This implies that purchase intention increases by 0.152 units with every one-unit change in review valence, at other factors being held constant. The source credibility boasts of $B = 0.224$, $\beta = 0.223$, $t = 4.286$ and $p = .000$, indicating a strongly significant positive impact on Purchase Intention. Review quantity has the largest effect with $B = 0.288$, $\beta = 0.294$, $t = 5.855$, and $p = .000$, meaning that the more reviews, the higher the purchase intention. Review quality has B , β , t , and p of 0.154, 0.145, 2.694, and .007, respectively, meaning that review quality also has a significant effect. The p -values of all the predictors are less than 0.05, and this implies that they are important in predicting purchase intention. The 95% confidence intervals of B do not contain zero, which again validates the significance of every predictor. On the whole, it can be concluded that the variables review quantity, source credibility, review valence, and review quality have a positive effect on purchase intention, with the strongest one being review quantity.

Testing of the Hypotheses

H_1 - Review valence has a significant effect on the purchase intention of skincare products among Gen Z consumers.

Purchase Intention is significantly related to review valence at a positive ($r = 0.503$, $p < 0.001$). This is also demonstrated in the regression analysis where review valence has been significantly predicted to purchase intention ($\beta = 0.155$, $t = 3.217$, $p = 0.001$). This indicates that the greater the review valence, the greater the purchase intention by the Gen Z consumers.

Accordingly, hypothesis H_1 is successfully accepted. Consumers are more likely to purchase skin care products when there is a positive sentiment of online reviews. This result aligns with previous research. For example, Chevalier & Mayzlin (2006) found that the valence of online reviews strongly influences book sales, as positive reviews increase consumer trust.

H_2 - Source credibility has a significant effect on the purchase intention of skincare products among Gen Z consumers.

Purchase Intention is significantly related to source credibility at a positive ($r = 0.556$, $p < 0.001$). This is also demonstrated in the regression analysis where source credibility has been significantly predicted to purchase intention ($\beta = 0.223$, $t = 4.286$, $p < 0.001$).

Therefore, H2 is accepted. Reviewers who are credible and are trustworthy play a significant role of boosted purchase intentions by consumers. This is consistent with the argument that was presented by Ohanian (1990), who opined that persuasion is enhanced by credibility (expertise, trustworthiness and attractiveness). In the online reviews case, Filieri, Alguezaui and McLeay (2015) discovered that reliable reviewers of a product are more convincing, and hence higher purchase intentions.

H₃ - Review quantity has a significant effect on the purchase intention of skincare products among Gen Z consumers.

Purchase intention is significantly related to review quantity at a positive ($r = 0.581$, $p < 0.001$). This is also demonstrated in the regression analysis, where review quantity has been significantly predicted to purchase intention ($\beta = 0.294$, $t = 5.855$, $p < 0.001$).

Therefore, H3 is accepted. The higher the number of reviews, the more likely the product will be purchased. This was confirmed in the research. This finding is consistent with the findings of Duan et al., (2008). They showed that the number of online reviews affects the box office performance of movies.

H₄ - Review quality has a significant effect on the purchase intention of skincare products among Gen Z consumers.

Purchase Intention is significantly related to Review quality at a positive ($r = 0.541$, $p < 0.001$). This is also demonstrated in the regression analysis where Review quality has been significantly predicted to Purchase Intention ($\beta = 0.145$, $t = 2.694$, $p = 0.007$).

Therefore, H4 is accepted. Detailed and informative reviews positively influence purchase intention, although with a relatively weaker effect compared to quantity and credibility. This finding supports Mudambi and Schuff (2010), who showed that high-quality, detailed reviews are more persuasive than short or vague ones. Similarly, Filieri and McLeay (2013) found that review quality enhances consumers' perceived usefulness of reviews, which directly increases purchase intention.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, several practical recommendations can be proposed for businesses operating in the skincare industry.

Firstly, to enhance review valence, brands should actively encourage satisfied customers to share positive experiences on social media platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, and WhatsApp. This can be achieved through personalised follow-up messages, loyalty programmes, and post-purchase engagement strategies. Highlighting customer testimonials through Instagram posts, Facebook reviews, and WhatsApp status updates can further strengthen positive sentiment and influence purchase intention.

Secondly, to improve source credibility, businesses should collaborate with trusted individuals such as dermatologists, skincare professionals, and micro-influencers who maintain authentic relationships with their audience. On platforms like Instagram and Facebook, verified badges and transparent communication should be utilised to distinguish genuine reviews from promotional content. This helps to build trust and reduces consumer uncertainty.

Thirdly, given that review quantity was identified as a strong predictor of purchase intention, companies should implement structured strategies to increase the volume of customer reviews. Encouraging feedback through WhatsApp follow-ups, Facebook review sections, and Instagram engagement

campaigns can help generate a higher number of reviews. Incentives such as discounts, loyalty points, or free samples may further motivate customers to share their experiences.

Fourthly, to enhance review quality, businesses should encourage customers to provide detailed and informative feedback, including information on product usage, skin type, and results. High-quality reviews can be promoted on Instagram and Facebook to guide potential customers in their decision-making process. Additionally, providing simple guidelines on how to write useful reviews can improve the overall quality of user-generated content.

Finally, organisations should integrate online review management into their core digital marketing strategy. Since the findings indicate that social media reviews significantly influence purchase intention, businesses should continuously monitor, analyse, and respond to customer feedback across Instagram, Facebook, and WhatsApp. A structured review management approach will not only improve customer trust but also support product development and long-term brand engagement.

Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

Despite the fact that this research met its goals and presented interesting information on how online reviews impact the purchase intention of the target group of female consumers in Generation Z in Colombo District, some weaknesses need to be noted. The identification of these limitations not only gives a context in interpreting the findings but also gives opportunities of further research in the future.

This study focused exclusively on the Generation Z female customers within the Colombo District. Although this specific target market is a large segment of the skincare trade, the performance may not apply to other groups of people, including male consumers, other generations, or even rural populations. Expansion both in geographical and demographical sense would lead to a larger degree of knowledge of the consumption behavior.

In this study, it employed cross-sectional survey which collects perceptions at a given timeframe. This approach restricts the capacity to build causality or determine the behavior changes with time. The opinions of consumers towards reviews posted online can possibly shift, namely, against the background of rapid modernization of the sphere of technology, along with the changing social tendencies in media.

This research considered only four dimensions, which are review quantity, quality, valence and source credibility. Though these dimensions have been determined in the literature, other factors such as platform features, multimedia contents (images and videos), timely review and reviewer profile have not been considered. Such factors might also be included to allow a deeper insight into customer value and the interpretation of online reviews.

The skincare industry was the major focus of the study. Given its heavy emphasis on digital marketing and eWOM, this industry is extremely relevant, but it cannot be assumed that the findings hold true for other product categories like electronics, fashion, or food.

Keeping such boundaries in place, some possible research directions can be determined. Male consumers, different age groups, and rural or semi urban respondents in the population can be included to expand the population scope and give a representative and broader representation of the consumer behavior of Sri Lanka. Comparative studies between regions of Sri Lanka can also uncover cultural differences that drive purchase intent from online reviews. Longitudinal or experimental designs can be used in future studies to establish cause and effect and determine the extent to which consumer dependency on online reviews emerges. For instance, experimental research can be done to explore the immediate effect of review attributes on purchasing behavior under lab conditions.

To make online reviews more understandable, researchers can add new review dimensions such as popularity, timeliness, emotional tone, and multimedia content. With the rise of short-video platforms

like TikTok, it is interesting to explore whether visual reviews have a greater impact on viewers than written reviews. Expanding the scope to other industries outside of skincare improves comparative insight and strengthens finding strength. For instance, considering holding industries such as fashion, hospitality, or technology in mind can elucidate how review dimensions variably impact purchase intentions for these kinds of industries.

This study concludes that social media reviews significantly influence the purchase intentions of female Generation Z consumers in the Colombo District. Among the reviewed attributes, review quantity and source credibility emerged as the strongest predictors, followed by review valence and review quality. The findings highlight the importance of specific social media platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, and WhatsApp in shaping consumer perceptions and purchase decisions. Therefore, businesses should strategically manage online reviews on these platforms to enhance customer trust and engagement.

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