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The Level of E-Procurement Usage in Project-related Procurement Practices in Sri Lanka: A Case Study

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Abstract

The term procurement has been become a very crucial in contemporary world. Procurement is the act of making the right product or service available to the right person at the right time at the right price in the right place. Procurement implications can impact on the overall cost of carrying out the decision in any organization. In this globalized world, almost all the processes are being becoming digitalized while manual systems are disappearing. In this context, procurement systems have also been digitalized in most of the countries in the world. The e-procurement practices have been acquired such a popularity just because of the benefits of it. In this context this study has been conducted to identify the level of e-procurement usage in public procurement in Sri Lanka. Accordingly, this study has been conducted as a case study with reference to the Sabaragamuwa University of Sri Lanka. The purpose of this study is to investigate the level of e-procurement usage in public procurement in Sri Lanka. This study is relating to the exploratory qualitative case study design. Primary data for this research has been collected through in-depth interviews followed a semi structured questionnaire and observation method. Sample size was 20 including Procurement officers, Administrative officers related to the procurement in the university, Project Coordinators and Activity Coordinators of the projects within the Sabaragamuwa University of Sri Lanka. Data has been collected using convenience sampling method. Gathered data have been analyzed using Within-case Analysis. Accordingly, it has been provided detailed description of the selected case and then it has been elaborated the several themes within the case. As the main findings of this study, it was revealed that the level of usage of e-procurement practices is low at Sabaragamuwa University of Sri Lanka. Further, recommendations for increasing the level of e-procurement practices and the way of increasing the efficiency while eliminating delays using e-procurement practices has also been provided in each stage of procurement based on the recommendations provided by the respondents.

Keywords: public procurement, e-procurement

Introduction

Through the uproar of media outlets and digital devices, technology is disrupting our natural lifestyles. By today, technology has been affected on almost everything in human lives. Technology has shaped our lives easier while introducing more simple and efficient ways of doing things. Accordingly, this situation has been influenced on the way of doing procurement practices as well.

Although “procurement” has become very popular by contemporary world its history goes back to 17th century. The term “procurement” has its roots in military logistics where formally acquired goods and services in in 17th century. Simple meaning of the term “procurement” is the process of finding and agreeing to terms, and acquiring goods, services, or works from an external source, often via a tendering or competitive bidding process. The **aim of e-procurement** is to provide digital solutions in order to optimize the **procurement** process.

It has been identified the ways of conducting all the Manuel procurement practices with the help of technology. It was revealed that doing thing electronically reduces the unnecessary delays. These kind procurement practices are well-known as “e-procurement” and the meaning of e-procurement is purchase and sales of goods, works and services through the internet as well as other information and networking systems. The e-procurement value chain consists of indent management, e-Informing, e-Tendering, e-Auctioning, vendor

management, catalogue management, Purchase Order Integration, Order Status, Ship Notice, e-invoicing, e-payment, and contract management.

E-procurement in the public sector is emerging internationally. Most of the developed countries like India, Bangladesh, United Kindom, United States, Malaysia and Australia successfully using electronic procurement systems as a governmental practice.

This study will distribute a significant knowledge regarding the usage of e-procurement within Sabaragamuwa University. Therefore, the implications will be vital for other universities as well because most of the government university practices are homogeneous in nature. Other government universities in Sri Lanka are possible to just conduct a pilot study and identify the level of usage of e-procurement. Then they can practice the recommendations provided by this paper. It is also possible to generalize the findings once this study conducted with a sample which represent all the public universities in Sri Lanka. Further rooms are available to expand this study with the use of public sector business organizations as well.

Literature Review

Definitions of Procurement

Procurement guidelines (2006) issued by the National Procurement Agency in Sri Lanka, defines Procurement as “obtaining by Procuring Entities of Goods, Services or Works by the most appropriate means, with public fund or funds from any other source

whether local or foreign received by way of loans, grants, gifts, donations, contributions and similar receipts". Therefore, the simple meaning of procurement can be mentioned that acquiring of goods and services from the most effective way. Public procurement is the process by which government buys goods and services from both public and private suppliers for the needs of its people (Cardapan-Antonio,2003).

E-Procurement

E-procurement became one of the most successful applications in the world. It had been widely adopted by companies seeking better business processes proved bottom line. These advantages had not been lost on governments which engaged in extensive buying activities and are major customers for a wide range of goods and services (Yusof, 2010)

Anthony Flynn and Paul Davis have been conducted a research on theory in public procurement research and for conducting a systematic literature review for their research they could only find 29 percent of articles theoretically grounded, with the incidence of theory having increased in recent years. The meaning of e-procurement is the use of IT in procurement activities. The prefix "e" usually denoted something related with information and communication technology. e-procurement referred to the use of integrated information and communication technologies to carry out individual or all stages of the procurement process (Croom et al, 2004). The level of e-procurement usage and e-procurement adoption

depend on various factors such as the organizational factors, managerial factors, customers and suppliers of the organization and government requirements. The factors affecting to the adoption of e-procurement is varied when it practices in different contexts (Williams,2006).

Lefebvre et al., (2005) classified e-Procurement functionalities in detail considering information and transaction perspective as a part of B2B e-commerce study. Accordingly, searching for new suppliers and searching for goods and services is considered as "electronic information search"; purchasing via e-catalogues, placing and managing orders with suppliers and accessing suppliers' goods or services database as "simple electronic transactions", purchasing via e-auctions, e-tenders, negotiating contracts with suppliers, making payments to suppliers, accessing suppliers' inventories and allowing suppliers to access the buyers' inventories as "complex electronic transactions"; and sending documents to suppliers, doing collaborative online engineering with suppliers' and tracking goods purchased during transportation as "electronic collaboration" (Hasan 2013).

Theoretical Framework

A framework has been derived from a comprehensive study on impacts of IT on the public sector (Andersen & Danziger, 2001). In this context we apply the four areas for evaluating the adoption incentives of the municipality of Copenhagen. The capability perspective suggests the motives for electronic procurement

adoption to be a matter of better access to valid information about products which could lead to improved quality of the information about electronic procurement. The perspective also includes the expectation of more efficient routines and faster procurement processes inside the public sector institutions. The interactivity perspective focuses on how digital procurement is corresponding with the patterns of power and control of the eProcurement process, communication among the units involved in eProcurement, and the coordination of the eProcurement tasks, people, and policies. It also considers the relations between the public and private sector such as enabling of shared eProcurement between the private and public sector and a different role of the suppliers.

There are theory and practice related to the e-procurement adoption. Orientation of the decision-making processes is related to the impact of digital procurement on the unit's cognitive, affective and evaluative considerations. For example, we consider whether digital procurement makes actors structuring problems differently and whether the employees perceive that their discretion has been altered by digital procurement. The perspective concerning value distributions is related to whether a public institution experiences a shift in values that is attributable to digital procurement. Specifically, values associated with the well-being of employees. That indicates the matter of do they experience increased surveillance of their procurement behavior and do

they disapprove this. Further, the job satisfaction and job enlargement of public employees which means do they experience a more interesting job are core attributes related to this perspective.

Methodology

Primary data for this research has been collected through in-depth interviews followed a semi structured questionnaire and observation method. Sample size was 20 including Procurement officers, Administrative officers related to the procurement in the university, Project Coordinators and Activity Coordinators of the projects within the Sabaragamuwa University of Sri Lanka. Data has been collected using convenience sampling method. Gathered data has been analyzed descriptively using Within-case Analysis. Accordingly, it has been provided detailed description of the selected case and then it has been elaborated the several themes within the case.

Discussion

Electronic procurement usage prior to initiate the procurement activities

There are two dimensions of procurement can be identified related to procurement in Sabaragamuwa University of Sri Lanka. Some procurement activities are focused to purchase for the purpose of functioning of the university. This dimension will be common for any of the public sector organization in Sri

Lanka. But another category of procurement is also available in government sector activities. The purpose of those procurement is developing the university. There are various development projects financed by World Bank or various grants are there to finance those university development projects. In this study, the term “procurement” refers both procurements related to general procurement of the university and university development projects.

Accordingly, there are some approvals and discussions to be conducted before the initiation of a development projects. The approval may be received from an external party to the university like World Bank, Asian Development Bank, voluntarily financing agency or the government.

Then the usual practice of the Sabaragamuwa University of Sri Lanka is physically attending such events and occasions and maintaining manual documents related to all the important discussions. In this phase telecommunication and letters were used to inform the event or meeting to participants. Most used methods to inform such meetings are email and registered post letters. Even though there is a possibility to use the novel technologies such as Skype, zoom etc. the university is still following the traditional methods of meeting without having any rational on behind.

E-procurement usage in Bid document preparation stage

The bidding document can be regarded as the care output of the Procurement Management process.

This document is used when requesting quotations from potential suppliers to purchase goods and services. This document consists of item list, price schedule and a detailed description of the products, constructions or services which is expected to be purchase or construct using this bidding document.

The preparation of bidding document can totally be done electronically. There is no need to maintain bidding documents manually. This is practiced by Sabaragamuwa University as well. At this stage it was evidenced that SUSL is following electronic procurement practices rather than any other stage in the procurement process.

E-procurement usage in getting approval for bidding document

Approval for bidding document mean the bidding document preparation committee should be recheck the Bidding document prepared and put their signature on the pages which consists the list of items which is going to be procure, specifications and the price schedule. The ordinary practice of SUSL is, firstly various resource persons belongs to the project team who have the knowledge regarding the items to be procure or works to be constructed, send the specifications to the relevant Project Assistant or the Project Coordinator via email. Then the Project Assistant accumulate all the specifications related to the certain procurement and prepare the bidding document. After that the hard copy of the bid document should be signed by the persons who have appointed to prepare the bidding document.

Specifications are exchanged electronically via email all the time. But the approval process takes considerable time because of the lectures of other appointed persons are not available at the university premises at the same day. Normally there are three to five persons appointed to prepare bidding documents and therefore, at least takes three to five days and it is certainly an unnecessary delay. Therefore, there is no usage of electronic procurement practices at this stage at Sabaragamuwa University of Sri Lanka.

If it allows to use electronic signatures on bidding documents, after circulating the soft copy of the bidding document among the relevant persons they can put their electronic signature after checking the accuracy of the details in the bidding document. This method will ease the task and it would be better the coordination part is done by the project assistant or procurement assistant.

It is needed to maintain electronic procurement files related to each procurement. Finally, this approved bidding document can be kept within that electronic file. Once the Project Assistant sent that bidding document to centralized office which is handling university procurement. But there is no such a practice at SUSL.

Appointing members for Bid Opening Committee and Technical Evaluation Committee (TEC)

While the approval for bidding document is going on it is possible to appoint members for bid opening and Technical Evaluation Committee

which is commonly known as TEC. Normally, these committees are appointed by the Vice Chancellor and there is a manual procedure. But it is possible and easy to appoint this committee electronically. Then the appointed soft copy can directly be sent to the centralized office which is handling university procurement to further proceed. Or else, a clerical person must go to the Vice Chancellors' office to submit procurement files for appointing committees and again go to Vice Chancellors' office to collect the appointed files. Such unnecessary time and energy wastage can be minimized by using e-procurement.

E-procurement usage in Invitation for Quotation

Initially it was invited quotations only via registered post. But when it has to re-invite quotations due to receive no quotations at first time or if the respective approving committee does not give the approval for TEC report, quotations were recalled via email. That practice indicates that there are no hard and fast rules that it must be invite quotations only from registered post. But, SUSL is not much familiar with e-procurement practices in this stage. Procurement is the procuring or buying of goods, services or construction work through electronic medium. E-bidding is the process of bidding through electronic medium. But such electronic bidding system cannot be visible at SUSL.

E-procurement usage in bid opening

In the normal practice, quotations are receiving time to time within the allocated period. Bid opening process

is totally manual in Sabaragamuwa University of Sri Lanka. But, bid opening process is totally run by electronic mode in the countries like India. For an instance, India has an electronic procurement hub called “Central Public Procurement Portal” and there is a comprehensive and very confidential method of bid opening. E-bidders can bid for procurement and bid opening occurs online. Summary of the bid opening also visible at the same time and it is very transparent method as well. E-procurement software is the enterprise system that automates and integrates the spectrum of a organization's procurement cycle. A good solution for e-procurement software will increase the transparency of spending and approval processes.

E-procurement usage in preparation of Technical Evaluation Committee (TEC) Report

After opening the bids, the next task is to send the opened bids to Technical Evaluation Committee for evaluating. Once opened the bids, bid opening minutes are preparing. In this e-procurement process, it will be easy to prepare bid opening minutes simultaneously even the bid opening is going on. Zoom technology will be the simplest method available and well known by the people after Covid 19 pandemic. If SUSL has an electronic procurement portal the bid opening minutes will be generate by automatically. But, after the bid opening, at least it takes three to five days to finish the preparation of bid opening minutes and submit the

relevant documents for TEC to evaluate.

The normal practice at SUSL is the project assistant collect all the related documents to evaluate bids and submit to the chairman of TEC committee. The person who has appointed as the chairman of TEC may not available all the time at university premises. Some project Assistants have experienced that, to submit the documents to the chairman of TEC takes more than a week. Any of the electronic systems are not practicing by SUSL at this stage as well.

Approval for TEC report

Just like in other stages, approval for TEC report also has become manual at SUSL. Approval for TEC report is granted by Department Procurement Committee (DPC), Minor Procurement Committee (MPC) or Regional Procurement Committee (RPC). There is not any electronic procurement methods are following by this phase by SUSL. But, if it uses the electronic procurement methods it is possible to send the electronic version of the TEC report prepared by Technical Evaluation Committee to the relevant procurement committee (DPC, MPC or RPC) by as email within just a second. Then the approval will also be received within a shorter period and the procurement process will be speedup.

Placing Purchasing Orders

Once received the approval for the report prepared by Technical evaluation Committee SUSL is writing purchase orders manually and send to the relevant suppliers by

registered post. It takes relevant days to reach the purchase order to suppliers and sometimes it further delay due to delays in the post. But if the purchase order sends to the relevant supplier via email the same expected thing happens and only difference is it takes only two seconds to reach the purchasing order to the supplier. Gradually SUSL has been adopted to electronic systems and as the current practice, before send the purchasing order by registered post, scanned purchasing order will be sent to the relevant supplier.

Findings and Conclusion

According to the findings of this study, it was revealed that Sabaragamuwa University of Sri Lanka is following traditional ways to conduct their procurement activities. Sabaragamuwa University of Sri Lanka is relying on manual

procurement processes and practices although inefficiencies are there. Although some procurement officers are aware of the inefficiencies, they have become muted due to the fear of red tape bureaucracy embedded with the university system. Almost all the officers from top to bottom are concerning about their job security and anyone will not go to break the existing rules and procedures revealing the drawbacks or inefficiencies of the system. This study also evidenced that the level of e-procurement usage is low at SUSL. According to the view of the respondents SUSL is gradually engaging with the e-procurement practices

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Information and Communication Technology Adoption Models in Small and Medium Scale Enterprises: A Literature Review

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Abstract

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) is regarded as an important aspect for both businesses and individuals alike. When it comes to businesses, the use of ICT is generally accepted to bring about enhanced performance and competitiveness through various means such as reduction of costs, an increase in efficiency and production. While knowledge of the use of ICT is necessary for businesses, it is equally important to understand the factors that would contribute to or affect such adoption by businesses as well. This study aims to analyze the several models that have been formulated over the years for the Adoption of ICT and summarize its applications, weaknesses, and strengths in explaining ICT Adoption. This literature review hopes to explore the most prominent theories: The Diffusion of Innovation Model, Technology, Organization and Environment (TOE) Framework, and the Iacovou et al. Model in an attempt to close the knowledge gap that exists concerning the Adoption of ICT by the Small and Medium Scale (SME) sector and its implications.

Keywords: Information and Communication Technology, Small and Medium Scale Enterprises, Diffusion of Innovation

Introduction

In the 21st Century, Information and Communication Technology (ICT) can be considered as one of the most important aspects of society. And its rapid expansion into almost every aspect of the world has a tremendous impact with regard to new opportunities for both businesses and individuals alike (Azam, 2015). However, these positive impacts can

only be expected if ICT adoption is widespread, especially in the case of smaller businesses that are often lagging behind in technology adoption. Therefore, it is important to get a clear understanding of the factors that would explain such Adoption of ICT through models and theories of adoption (Hoffman and Novak, 1996; Evans and Wurster, 1999). In order to remedy this, the objective of this literature review is to

analyze the available literature and models on ICT adoption to get a clear understanding of which aspects of the firm, individual or external environment play a role in the adoption of ICT in SMEs.

While such adoption can be seen in businesses of many scales, this paper focuses on the adoption of technology by the Small and Medium Scale Enterprises (SMEs) while giving a special emphasis on the models of ICT adoption.

In this study, the main models that are reviewed are the Diffusion of Innovation (DOI) Model (Rogers 1995) and Technology, Organization and Environment (TOE) Framework as they are the most commonly cited models of technology adoption, along with the Iacovou et al (1995) model which is essentially a combination of these two models.

ICT and its Implications

An all-inclusive definition of Information and Communication Technology was given by Porter and Millar in 1985. According to them, ICT general refers to a wide range of software and hardware facilitated by telecommunication and various information management techniques, applications, and devices that all come together to "*create, produce, analyze, process, package, distribute, receive, retrieve, store and transform*" information (Porter and Millar, 1985). This definition manages to capture the entirety of what ICT represents rather than focusing on a specific area to which it can apply, and due to this all-encompassing nature of ICT, it is viewed as a force that is

inevitable even before its widespread adoption that we see today. ICT was seen as a revolution that is changing the landscapes of the businesses and of the overall economy through its ability to reduce the costs associated with acquiring, processing, and distributing information (Porter and Millar, 1985).

In a more specific sense, the literature describes Information and Communication Technology under different aspects or perspectives. For instance, in an "*Economic or Managerial point of view, ICT can be seen as (1) a social construct; (2) an information provider; (3) an infrastructure; and (4) a business process and system*". While from a marketing viewpoint, "*ICTs have also been viewed as (1) a variety of separate applications (Internet, databases, PowerPoint); (2) a marketing channel; (3) a communication/promotional medium; (4) a marketing technique; and (5) a tool for relationship marketing*" (Brady, Saren, and Tzokas, 2002).

It is clear that in spite of the fact that it constitutes a large part of ICT, it is more than just the amalgamation of Computers and the Internet. It is, rather, a system of components all acting together in the creation, storage, and dissemination of information and knowledge (Archrol and Kotler, 1999; Vilaseca, 2003) talks about how economies and societies need to adopt a more 'can-do' attitude based around novel idea generation and effectively transform such ideas into business opportunities to be successful. This highlights the importance of knowledge (or information) creation and

dissemination for the development of an economy and how any facilitation to this factor, as such awarded by the Adoption of Information and Communication Technology, can act as a powerful catalyst for the generation of such ideas and their conversion into business opportunities (Barba-sánchez, Martínez-ruiz, and Jiménez-zarco, 2007)

The benefits of ICT adoption are widely cited in the literature. ICT is a tool that can be used by businesses in order to enhance the productivity and effectiveness of their business functions and activities (Brady et al., 2002). This results in enormous cost savings for the businesses that will, in most cases, outweigh the cost incurred in adopting and investing in ICT. Due to the way ICT changes the way businesses and people work ICT will encourage the adoption of new organizational, strategic, and management models (Barba-sánchez, Martínez-ruiz and Jiménez-zarco, 2007). It also acts as an agent that will improve the quality and the specialization of the other resources of production, such as human resources, which again will increase efficiency and the efficacy of employees and businesses (Vilaseca, 2003) And Due to the vast communicational benefits that result from the development of ICT, Adoption of such will enable businesses to access new markets, generations, environments, and even business models that were otherwise previously impossible due to various geographical and logistical limitations. This expansion of the available market for businesses

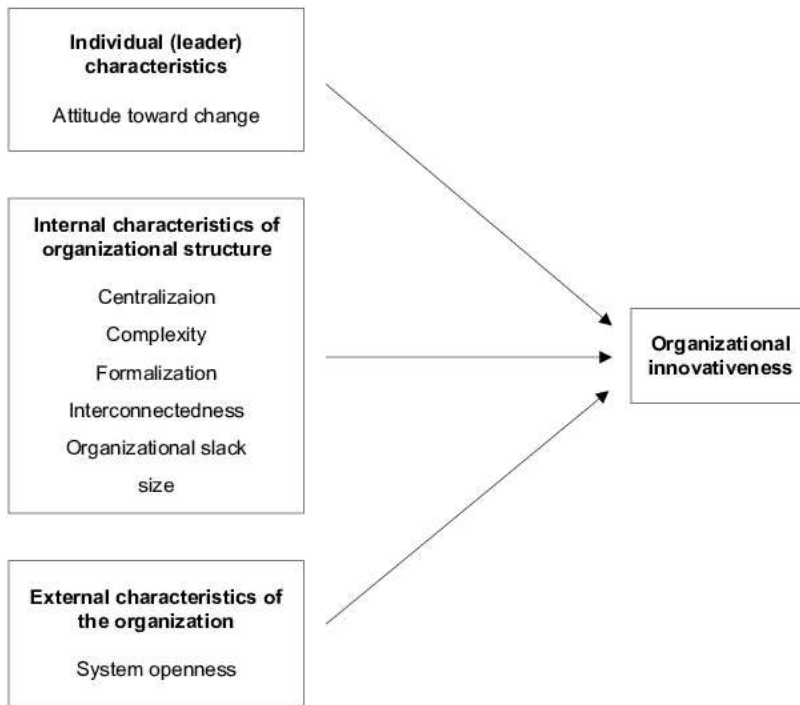
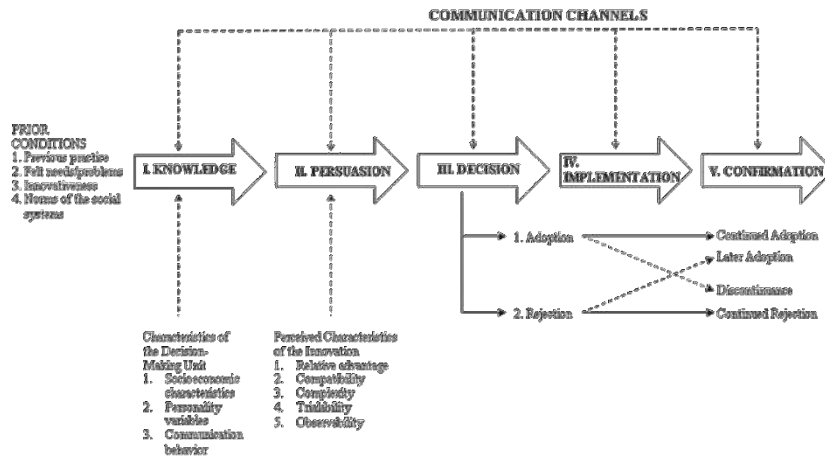
resulted in the rapid growth of many businesses throughout the past decades, even allowing businesses to escape high local competition by moving into untapped markets abroad that were now reachable easily (Corbitt, 2000; Javalgi and Ramsey, 2001).

ICT Adoption Models

Diffusion of Innovation Model

The Diffusion of Innovation Model (Fig. 1), introduced by Rogers in 1962 and revised in 1995 and 2003, is among the most popular models that are used to explain the adoption of information technology and innovation. The DOI model is helpful in investigating the behaviour of the adopters when it comes to technological innovation. The Diffusion of Innovation model describes the patterns of technology adoption through broad psychological and sociological elements by explaining the mechanisms of adoption and aiding the prediction of whether and how innovations will be successful (Tan *et al.*, 2009).

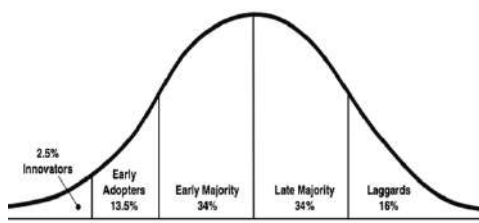
Figure 1: Diffusion of Innovations (Rogers 1995)



Source: Rogers (1995)

Within the context of the DOI model, diffusion is defined as a process by which innovation is communicated or transferred through certain channels over a given period of time within and among the systems and its members. Whereas Innovation is defined as "an idea, practice, or object that is perceived to be new by an individual or other unit of adoption" (Rogers, 2002). DOI is, therefore, concerned with how new technology or an innovation moves through a social system through specific communication channels from among the members of such system, starting from the creation to the usage of that technology. Rogers noticed that while the majority of the population adopting new technology is normally distributed, there is an exception to this normality in the form of *innovators*: who implement change, *early adopters*: who are the earliest to adopt new technology before the rest, *early majority*: the majority of the population who adopt the technology in its early stages, *late majority*: the portion of the population that delay the adoption and *laggards*: the portion of the population that lags behind when it comes to adoption of innovations (Fig. 02)

Figure 2: Diffusion of the innovations Adoption curve

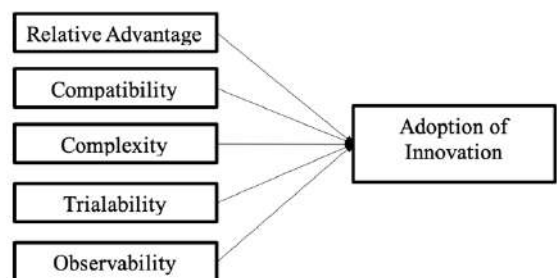


Source: Rogers (1995)

Based on the DOI model (Roger, 1995) and (Roger, 2002), the following characteristics of innovation (which he described being the Perceived Attributes of an Innovation) are deemed to be important in the adoption of technology (or innovation) within a system;

1. Relative Advantage
2. Compatibility
3. Complexity
4. Trialability
5. Observability

Figure 3: Perceived Attributes of an Innovation



Source: Oliveira, Martins and Lisboa (2011)

Relative Advantage

The relative advantages or benefits are among the first to be considered when measuring the value of any component. The relative advantage, therefore, refers to the degree to which an adopter or a potential adopter may perceive such adoption of new technology to be preferable to existing technology or conditions (Le *et al.*, 2012). In most cases, the relative advantage acts as a strong indicator when it comes to the adoption of information and

communication technology among small and medium scale enterprises (Kendal et al., 2001).

The benefits of ICT Adoption to SMEs have been well established in the literature across different fields. It mostly comes in the form of an increase in profitability through the reduction in costs, increasing the efficiency of processes, etc. This creates a positive relationship between the relative advantage and the Adoption of ICT among businesses (Tornatzky & Klein, 2012). This was further corroborated through a study conducted in India to determine which factors influenced the adoption of consumer-oriented e-banking. This study was able to prove the existence of a positive relationship between the level of adoption of e-banking technology with the perceived level of the relative advantage of such adoption (Saxena and Kehar, 2011).

Compatibility

Compatibility is how well the new system matches the specifications or the workflows of the existing systems. It measures the degree to which the new system or innovation is seen to be keeping up with previous experiences. This is not only concerned with the processes followed with the existing systems but also relates to the compatibility of the new system or innovation with the existing values of the business (Teo & Tan, 1998). Such compatibility with existing systems, culture, and values of the business ensures the smooth adoption of new technologies with minimal resistance (Grover, 1993; Teo & Tan, 1998),

whereas incompatibilities were seen to not only cause hindrances in the adoption of such new technology but also was seen as detrimental to the workflows and overall efficiency of the business organization. Therefore, SMEs and business owners/managers would only tend to adopt systems and technologies that are compatible with their existing systems (Kendall et al., 2001; Thong, 1999).

Compatibility ensures the easy integration of technology into existing systems and is the key to determining whether the new technology will be adopted by the company or not.

Perceived Complexity

Perceived complexity refers to the degree to which the technology to be adopted is seen as being difficult to understand, implement, and used in business operations. (Le *et al.*, 2012). According to (Seyal & Rahman, 2003; Grover, 1993), the level of adoption of technology will be significantly reduced based on how complex the technology under question is seen to be by the owners/managers of the decision-makers of a business organization. Such complexity comes in the form of the initial requirement of technical-knowhow (Le *et al.*, 2012), the degree of difficulty in integrating the new system into the organization, training, and development required to obtain the optimal benefits of the introduced system, whereas the failure to do so would result in the under-utilization of the adopted technology (Song and Mueller-Falcke, 2006).

As per (Greenhalgh et al., 2004), for technology to be adopted without much resistance, it should be sufficiently simple and user-friendly. Meaning that the people who are using it should feel that the technology is simple enough to be understood and used (Rogers, 2003)

Trialability

Trialability can be described as the degree to which new technology or innovation is able to be tested before its adoption on a limited frame of time. Tan et al. (2009) expressed Trialability is the degree to which the innovation or the technology could be experimented on. This too has a positive relationship with the level of adoption of a given technology where the more of an opportunity is granted to the adopter to test out the technology prior to the adoption, the higher the rate of such Adoption (Tan *et al.*, 2009).

Observability

Observability refers to the degree of visibility of the innovation results (Tan *et al.*, 2009). It is also the ability of the adopted technology to be modified and its changes viewed as a response to the comments and requests that are being presented to the system or technology (Hayes *et al.*, 2015). The rate of adoption of technology will be higher when its immediate and latent (direct and indirect) benefits are apparent to the adopter. While creating a higher level of confidence in the technology itself, this will also act as a justification of the adoption of the technology in the case of enterprises, especially in the case of Small and Medium Scale enterprises in which resources are

limited, and each investment and purchase are usually carefully screened.

Table 1: Studies that have adopted the DOI Model

IT Adoption	Author(s)
Material requirements planning (MRP)	(Cooper and Zmud 1990)
IS adoption (uses at least one major software application: accounting; inventory control; sales; purchasing; personnel and payroll; CAD/CAM; EDI; MRP), and extent of IS (number of personal computers and the number of software applications)	(Thong 1999)
Intranet	(Eder and Igbaria 2001)
Web site	(Beatty <i>et al.</i> 2001)
Enterprise resource planning (ERP)	(Bradford and Florin 2003)
E-procurement	(Li 2008)
E-business	(Zhu <i>et al.</i> 2006a)
E-business	(Hsu <i>et al.</i> 2006)

Source: Oliveira, Martins and Lisboa (2011)

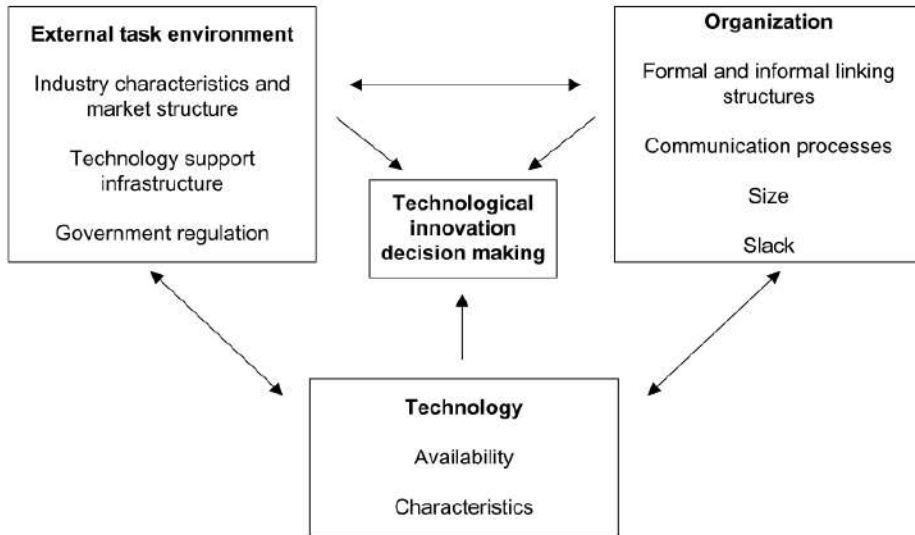
Technological, Organizational and Environmental (TOE) Model

The Technology, Organizational and Environmental (TOE) Model (Fig. 4), developed by Tornatzky and Fleischer in 1990, showed the importance of information technology adoption in firms while providing a means of evaluating such adoption of technology. Since then, the TOE model has widespread adoption and provides a more comprehensive framework on the Adoption of Information and Communication Technology among organizations (Zhu *et al.*, 2004). The TOE model, which provides a basis for the development of further models such as the Innovation Diffusion in

enterprises, consists of three aspects of an organization that influences the adoption, implementation, and usage of information technology within the organization.

The TOE model, which has solid theoretical and empirical support (Salwani *et al.*, 2009), put forward Technological Context, Organizational Context, and Environmental Context as the main aspects that influence such adoption as described below. This inclusivity has made the TOE Framework superior to other similar frameworks to measure the adoption and the implementation of Technology within organizations (Zhu and Kraemer, 2005; Ramdani, Kawalek and

Figure 4: Technology, organization, and environment framework



Source: Tornatzky and Fleischer (1990)

Technological Context

Technological context involves the description of both internal and external technologies applicable to the organization, including all equipment, competencies, currently practiced protocols and procedures that are intrinsic to the organization (Starbuck, 1976), as well as all available technologies that are available beyond the boundaries of the organization (Thompson 1967, Khandwalla 1970, Hage 1980).

Technology Competence

According to (Salwani *et al.*, 2009), competence or organizational competence refers to all existing and future technologies that are relevant to a business organization. This also

implies the ability of the organization and its members, which constitutes the firm, to adopt the use of new technological elements such as e-commerce.

Therefore, the Technology competence of a firm directly correlates with the adoption of technology as well as having a direct impact on all decisions relating to such adoption. Tan, Tyler, and Manica (2007) explained technology competence as the organizational readiness, which is the owners' or managers' perception and the degree to which they believe that the organization has the necessary resources, commitment, governance, and the awareness to adopt and properly implement ICT in their

organizations. This has been indicated through two factors: Financial Readiness which includes the financial capability of the organization to purchase, implement, and successfully meet ongoing expenses relating to ICT and Technological Readiness which includes the necessary human capital and the underlying infrastructure to adopt and implement ICT within the organization (Oliveira and Martins, 2010; Musawa and Wahab, 2012)

Organizational Context

Organizational context involves the descriptive measures relating to the

organization, such as the scope, scale, management, and organizational structure. (Oliveira, Martins and Lisboa, 2011)

Environmental Context

The Environmental context in the TOE Framework refers to the arena inside of which an organization conducts its business activities. This includes the larger external environmental factors such as the industry, government, and the task environmental factors such as competitors (Tornatzky and Fleischer 1990).

Table 2: Studies that have adopted the TOE Framework

IT Adoption	Author(s)
EDI	(Kuan and Chau 2001)
Open systems	(Chau and Tam 1997)
Web site	(Oliveira and Martins 2008)
Web site	(Oliveira and Martins 2009)
E-commerce	

Source: Oliveira, Martins and Lisboa (2011)

Table 3: Summary of ICT Adoption Factors in SMEs using the TOE Framework

Influencing Factors	ICT Adoption	SME Size	Authors
Technology context, organizational context, environmental context	E-commerce adoption	926 SMEs (n/a)	Huynh et al (2012)
External pressure, perceived benefits, organizational readiness	EDI adoption practices	7 SMEs (n<200)	Iacovou et al (1995)

Technology, environment	organization,	EDI adoption	575 SMEs (n<100)	Kuan & Chau (2001)
Technology context, organizational context, environmental context		Internet, web site and e-commerce adoption	3155 small firms	Martins & Oliveira (2008)
Perceived benefits, readiness, external pressure	organizational	Internet adoption	7 SMEs (n<200)	Mehrtens et al (2001)
Relative advantage, top management support, organizational size, external competitive pressures		Online data access, e-mail, and the Internet	78 SMEs (n<90)	Premkumar & Roberts (1999)
CEO characteristics, characteristics, characteristics	IS organizational environmental	IS adoption	166 SMEs (n<100)	Thong (1999)

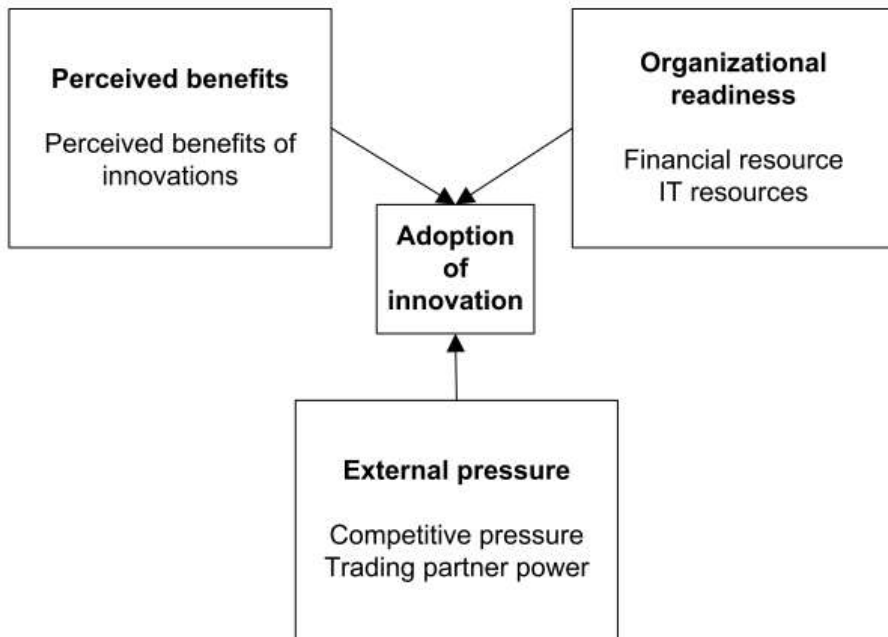
Source: Adopted from Grandon & Pearson (2004)

Iacovou et al (1995) model

The Iacovou et al. model (Fig. 5) is yet another model designed to explain the adoption of technology among businesses. This model is derived from the TOE Framework and consists of several additions that are

helpful in explaining the reasons behind the adoption of technology and innovation among businesses.

Figure 5: 5 Iacovou et al. (1995) model



Source: Iacovou et al. (1995)

Although the model was developed to explain the Adoption of Electronic Data Interchange (EDI) system adoption among firms through the analysis of inter-organizational systems (IOSs), the same can be used as a model to explain the factors affecting the adoption of innovation among businesses organizations as well. (Oliveira, Martins and Lisboa, 2011). As such, the model employs

three factors as stated below;

Perceived benefits

This factor is different from the TOE framework and includes the benefits that the innovation adoption perceives to obtain through the adoption of such innovation. Perceived benefits refer to the level of

recognition of the relative advantage that EDI technology can provide the organization (Iacovou et al., 1995). Higher managerial understanding of the relative advantage of EDI increases the likelihood of allocation of the managerial, financial, and technological resources necessary to implement an integrated EDI system (Benbasat et al., 1993). It is therefore expected that small firms with management that recognize the benefits of EDI will be more likely to adopt EDI and enjoy higher impacts compared with firms with management that do not recognize the benefits of EDI.

Organizational Readiness

Organizational Readiness is a combination of the Technological and

Organizational Contexts from the TOE framework where the similarity lies between IT Resources and Technological Context and Financial Resources and Organizational Context (Oliveira, Martins and Lisboa, 2011). This again refers to the resource availability of SMEs.

External Pressure

This refers to the influences of the external environment on the business. External pressure is a result of two main sources: competitive pressures and trading partners. Competitive pressures are the degree of influence the business faces from the industry in which it operates in while the pressures from trading partners refer to the relative power with the partners that the business deals with in order to push the adoption of ICT (Kuan and Chau, 2001). As for SMEs, they arguably encounter a higher pressure from the external environmental agents such as competitors, suppliers, and buyers, and it plays a key role in the adoption and implementation of technology (ICT) in their businesses (Daniel & Wilson, 2002; Dasgupta, 2000; Lai & Hsieh, 2007; Scupola, 2003)

Discussion

Both the DOI Model and TOE Framework are considered popular theories of ICT Adoption at the firm level (Taylor, 2015). These models, while all are explaining the different aspects that affect the adoption of technology/innovations within organizational systems, take different approaches in doing so.

The DOI Model explains the Psychology behind the decision-

making process when adopting innovations within an organization. However, the characteristics of the individual (leaders/decision-makers) and the characteristics of the organization, both with regard to its internal aspects as well as how it deals with external parties, are all characteristics of the organization itself and do not regard the external environment.

The TOE framework, on the other hand, remedies this issue with the introduction of the External (Task) Environment, which includes institutional support, competitive pressures, which makes it a more complete model than the DOI model.

The Iacovou et al (1995) model then combines the DOI and TOE Framework to highlight the Perceived Benefits of the Technology, the readiness of the organization when it comes to implementing change, and the external pressures faced by the organization when trying to explain the Adoption of ICT within an organization.

Integrating Model of ICT Adoption in SMEs

Through the analysis of literature and various ICT Adoption models, an integrated model of ICT adoption in SMEs detailing the factors influencing adoption decisions was proposed by Taylor, 2014. This model explains the factors that influence the adoption of ICT among SMEs. It breaks down the factors as internal and external of which, internal factors include the personal preferences of the SME (owner's wishes and/or family wishes) and the preference of the Employees. While

the External Factors contains a collection of elements from a variety of ICT Adoption Models. It should be noted that major aspects of the DOI Model (Owner Characteristics, Organizational Structure, External Characteristics of the Organization) are integrated into this model. Similarly, it is observed that the components of the TOE Framework are also present in this model.

This model can be used to summarize the components of the ICT adoption

models and how they can be explained in the context of SMEs. Therefore, it can be stated that the TOE Framework and the DOI Model too is capable of explaining the ICT Adoption among SMEs. This also highlights the fact that the best approach to explain ICT Adoption [especially among SMEs] is through a combination of the elements from different Models, whereas a single model would fail to encompass all the important aspects

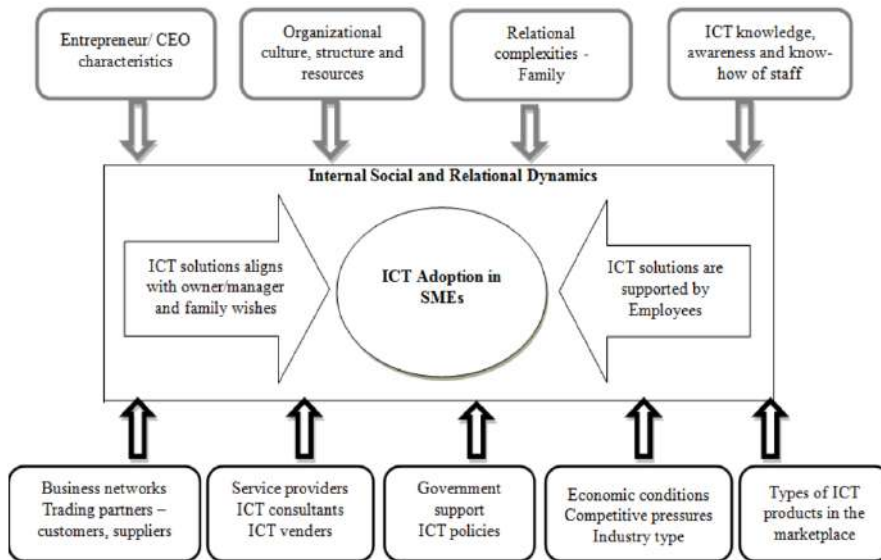


Figure 6: Integrating Model of ICT Adoption in SMEs

Source: Taylor (2015)

The summary of the models discussed in this paper are as follows.

Table 4 Summary of Models

Model/Framework	Main Factors	Other Factors
1. Diffusion of Innovation Model	Individual (Leader) characteristics	Relative Advantage
	Internal characteristics of organizational structure	Compatibility
	External characteristics of the organization (System Openness)	Complexity Trialability Observability
2. Technology, Organization, Environment Framework	Technology	
	Organization	
	External Task Environment	
3. Iacovou et al (1995) model	Perceived Benefits	
	Organizational Readiness	
	External Pressure	

Source: Compiled by Author

Conclusion

This paper reviewed the literature on the Adoption of Information and Communication Technology among Small and Medium Scale Enterprises. Out of the models used in the explanation of such adoption, the *DOI Model* and the *TOE Framework* can be considered as the most frequently adopted by most empirical studies. These models are equally competent to explain the Adoption of ICT among SMEs as they are with larger organizations. However, this universality should be further explored in future studies through empirical data.

Each model reviewed explains an aspect of technology not covered by

the others. *TOE Framework* includes the Environmental context, which is absent in the *DOI Model*. Therefore, in some instances, the best course of action is to combine two or more models when trying to explain the adoption of technology in a more complex setting. *The Iacovou et al (1995) model* is a valid example of this. Therefore, this concludes that it is more practical to modify the model to fit the context of the study and the subject that is under consideration in order to obtain the optimal results.

This study contributes to the field through the collection and the summarization of various literature and Models of ICT Adoption. This study also explores the subsequent studies that have been conducted that

supports these individual models and highlights its merits and the applicability of these models in varying contexts especially how these

models can work together or individually to explain the ICT adoption among SMEs.

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Perception of Sri Lankan Marketing Managers regarding the Big Five Personality Traits: Generations Y and Z

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Abstract

Purpose: Innovation and technology propels in an explosive rate and utilization of marketing strategies should be based on generational profiles. The aim of this study is to review the purported qualities of personality traits of Generation Y and Generation Z, recommending managers in utilization of profile responsive strategies of marketing using Big Five Personality traits.

Design: The study relies on qualitative approach, where emergent themes were revealed from secondary resource reviews, articles, journals and identifying the manager's perspective towards generational profiles by conducting a series of interviews on semi-structured question setting with marketing managers.

Findings: Results revealed that the value for technology, innovation, freedom, and diversity varied across the generational profiles and managers across vivid industries comprehended the significance of applying divergent marketing techniques to Generation Y and Generation Z independently. Edutainment, tech savvy, honest and transparency were emerging personality traits explored through the study regarding the two cohorts which was a significant finding.

Research Implications: Impeccable knowledge gained from the study can be utilized by managers to develop compelling strategies considering Generation Y and Generation Z cohorts bridging the knowledge gap existed in the context facilitating managers to effectively communicate. Edutainment and maintaining corporate responsibility through marketing communications is an eyeopener to the marketers to reach the consumers effectively by minimising the cost to reach.

Originality: A novel study in the Sri Lankan context exploring big five personality traits of Generation Y and Generation Z that can have a sequel of social media

approach and marketing by managers addressing generational profiles. The study widened the knowledge that can be recommended to managers to enrich their marketing strategies to be meaningful for customers.

Keywords: Generation Y, Generation Z, Social Media Marketing, Big Five Personality Trait

Introduction

With technological advancements different generations accustoms and adopt to technology in different ways which changes the buying behaviours of the consumers which marketers need to thoroughly study to customise its approach to market products more effectively. In 2020, the latest two generations are Generation Y and Generation Z. Vast technological developments has led social media to be one of the prioritized mode of media for digital communication in every aspect of business operation in the 21st century. Generation Y is the cohort which was exposed to social/digital media during their youth, but Generation Z had the benefit of using social/digital media from the day they were born. Based on the study conducted by Berkup in 2014 classified Generation Y as the cohort born between the years of 1980 to 1994 which is termed as ‘millennials’ (children of globalization) while Generation Z was born after 1995 which is considered as the ‘technology generation’. The usage and purpose of using goods & service across the two cohorts varies drastically

therefore the marketers cannot uniformly strategized pitching their messages to the two vivid generations which are completely diverse with personality traits. Therefore, when pitching a message to build a strong brand perception marketers need to pay attention to important factors such as medium of delivery, time frame, perceptions and personalities of brand ambassadors attracted by individuals in different cohorts, the mentality of receivers of the message along with other significant internal and external factors should be taken into consideration. Therefore, the role of the marketers has become more challenging to build marketing strategies which will attract different cohorts cost efficiently and this study is conducted to identify the perception of the marketers towards the personality traits of the two cohorts in consideration within the context of Sri Lanka.

What happens in one geographic market is transmitted swiftly via global media to receptive consumers via computer, television, and cell phone screens and is almost immediately accessible. The world of

such information accessibility and the demise of corporate invisibility is a communications reality for businesses and consumers today (Kitchen & Protocol, 2015). Hence, Digital Media plays a crucial role as a connection stream among consumers and marketers which has created a platform through instant feedbacks an organization's corporate reputation can be appreciated or depreciated within a single click therefore modern marketers needs to minimise vulnerabilities and deliver strong messages to the society which is been supported by all generations without any backlashes

Prior, researches have been conducted in illustrating identification on social media influences on young consumer behaviours (Duffett, 2017) and identification on marketing communication in the post-world (Kitchen and Protocol, 2015). However, the real question is whether it is effective to practice the same marketing communication techniques using the same tools to deliver messages for the mere reason that the two generations use digital media. The marketers must understand that one generation is tech savvy while the other is using technology for survival in day-to-day routine activities, therefore different personality traits should lead to different approaches of reaching. It

was observed in the context that there was a lack of research study on providing recommendations to marketers on effective marketing strategies, considering the traits of Generation Y and Generation Z.

The purpose of the study was to identify the perspective of marketing manager in regards to the big five personality traits of two cohorts of Generation Y and Generation Z while exploring further personality traits where the knowledge can enrich marketers approach in social/digital media communication strategies based on the results of the study. This study aims to deliver more contented, engaging, and well responsive marketing strategies up to date. The specific objective of the study is to obtain a detailed understanding of the traits, features and trends of both cohorts from the perspective of the marketing managers and to identify digital marketing strategies that marketers should follow or aim to successfully pitch goods and services to the two cohorts in consideration.

Mostly, researches have been performed by considering Growth in smartphones, Log on Frequency, Gender, age, and population group as independent variables in influencing digital media marketing (Duffett, 2017) and Family life cycle, Occupation, Behavioural lifestyle in building marketing communication in post-world (Kitchen and Protocol, 2015). Even though usage and

frequency has been evidently tested very rarely consumer's traits related to innovation, trend, technology, socially responsibility, wholistic view were examine in the context. This study provides more opportunities to explore the big five personality traits of generation Y & generation Z and other factors to examine. The results of the study will lead marketers to formulate quality and effective marketing strategies while using the communication tools cost effectively.

Literature Review

Big Five personality traits

According to the study conducted by Costa and McCrae (2008) found that individual personality is a strong mental well-being which doesn't vary over situations and stabilises overtime. Namely the five factors are openness, Conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism. The big five personality trait framework has been able to explain many different relationships between personality and behaviour of individuals. With the latest advancements of technology could change individual personalities where traits of a consumer personality are hard to be universal. The attempt of the study to understand the managers perception regarding the theory been applied in the Sri Lankan context and are there any other personality traits the marketers do capitalise to market

goods and services to the two different cohorts in consideration. The five traits are further described with comparison to previous literature in relation to the two cohort's generation Y and generation Z.

Openness

Openness is seen as the extent of one exposed to new knowledge, out of box thinking, new ideas and adventurous spirits; often being spontaneous; flexible; and creative is openness. According to the research carried out by Deloitte (2019), it was identified Generation Z as first digital native generation whose attention span is only eight seconds compared to Generation Y where their attention span lied at 12 seconds. According to Business Insider Intelligence (2019), before the 12th birthday of a member from Generation Z, he/she starts to use a smartphone first time and is exposed to at least five digital monitors - television, phone, tab, desktop and laptop that is available in a household of Generation Z (Artemova, 2018).

Generation Z is exposed to vulnerability which impacts the decision-making process regarding career or educational path which add pressure on the generation in substituting creative technological approaches (Sparks and Honey, 2015). Generation Z is quite comfortable with the procedures of

AI technology and automation where the member of this cohort is willing to explore the unfamiliar while Generation Y is accustomed to technology which is already evolved and is not risking for a novel experience (Vision Critical Report, 2016).

Generation Y experienced economic prosperity and that influenced the generation to be idealistic, backward to accept differences between individuals along with diverse perceptions. But Generation Z was heavily exposed to economic recessions globally which made the generation rely on more analytic and pragmatic approaches in decision making forcing the generation to explore uncertainty (McKinsey and Company, 2018). Based on the studies conducted by Lan (2019) it was observed from the literature survey that Generation Z are open minded towards breaking gender boundaries which has led to accept same sex marriages. These perceptions lead marketers to develop gender – neutral marketing policies. This type of openness is not observed within Generation Y members. Besides, Generation Z looks for diversity in consumption; ranges of products and services within shorter period time whereas Generation Y is consistent with consumption for a significant period.

Conscientiousness

Conscientiousness means the extent of one exposed to be efficient, organized, strong-willed and determined. Generation Z prefers entrepreneurial opportunities with a stable employment which is valued immensely due to the exposure of the generation to economic recessions with a strong goal attainment while Generation Y prefers team-based tasks for the survival. This indicates Generation Z is stronger willed to be individualistic while half of Generation Z accepts interesting jobs with lower pay than a boring job opportunity with higher pay whereas most of Generation Y consider the salary and allowances received when seeking job opportunities (Deloitte,2019). Generation Z believes in being independent. They are strong willed and determined to explore things at own, rather than seeking for a help whereas Generation Y seeks for the support and guidance from others.

Extraversion

Extraversion means the extent of one exposed to focus on sociability, talkativeness; optimistic; interpersonal involvement. Generation Z prefers to spend time at home though they are more social with others. They prefer unique products which delivers personalized experiences. Generation Z likes to involve in different tasks using AI technology controlling household settings (Lan, 2019).

Forbes (2017) opined that Generation Y are hardworking and ambiverts whereas Generation Z is so extroverted, and passionate while Sulainman and Mahbob (2017) stressed that generation Z tends to form communities with those who never met each other from different geographical locations which makes them virtually sociable, chatty and collaborative but less when compared in the real world.

Agreeableness

Agreeableness means the extent of one exposed to be sympathetic and possesses willingness to help others; being approachable and friendly; being themselves. According to Hughes (2017), Generation Z values to be independent and they aspire to care the world they like to live. Deloitte (2019) stressed that Generation Z understand everyone and believe that everyone needs to live in the world, and they accept norms of diverse communities. While Generation Y subject others into judgements and reluctant to accept if someone or something rise out of the society's values they brought up to (Artemova, 2018).

Neuroticism

Neuroticism means the extent of an individual been exposed to the feelings of fear, sadness, anger, and nervous; ability to handle stress; emotional stability. Generation Z are not psychologically impacted by

celebrities and influencers like Generation Y and Generation Z prefers real opinion from known people around them (Lan, 2019).

Lenhart and Madden (2007) highlights the adverse side of media saturation is that attention span is shorter, self-esteem is lower, higher bullying and peer pressure. Nevertheless, Generation Z are creative, adaptive and include a highly marketable mindset. Since Generation Y uses social media lesser than Generation Z, their attention span is greater relatively.

Based on the previous literature Generation Z is considered to be higher on openness, extraversion, conscientiousness, agreeableness and neuroticism compared to Generation Y. Generation Z is more open, independent, and exposed to new ideas than Generation Y. Generation Z is highly extrovert on digital platform while Generation Y value live interaction in their routine activities. Generation Z is strong willed and determined on individual tasks; has high conscientiousness whereas Generation Y seeks for team-based activities focusing towards achieving common goals. Generation Z expects others to be respected equally and raise voices against social concerns such as Gender equality, pets, spirituals, and feminism; able to form communities. Generation Z scores high on impatience, irritable, and restless

than whereas Generation Y is calmer, controlling action and reactions possessed through maturity. Generation Z's attention span is lower since attached to technology much whereas Generation Y has relatively longer attention span.

Marketing Strategies

Core activities of marketing are developing effective marketing strategies in deciding what is the consumer category to target and build relationships. For the purpose of this, marketers should locate their Segmentation, Targeting and Positioning (STP). Traditionally, this process was recognizing bracket of consumers who has similar or distinct behaviours offline. Segmentation means execute market research and analyse customer data online to penetrate customers' expectations on certain segment category (Viitanen, 2019). Today all prospective consumers are affected by inordinate marketing messages, and all messages are the homogenous, therefore, it's rigid to persuade prospective consumers (Alqvist, 2018). Hence there should be necessity of upgrading within marketing strategies. (McClean, 2012). While getting to customers at right time and place, it is essential to get to know behaviours of consumers and factors determine their decision in reaching consumers in terms of most influence their decision (Viitanen, 2019).

Generational theories

Commonly, it is idealized that birth year is the base to discuss about generational distinctions but in real, history, social factors and individual characteristic are also should be placed in mind regarding evaluation of generations' distinctions (Artemova, 2018). From one generation to another, the view of personality matters. According to Eysenck (1952), five core traits and interconnections have been identified in outlining one's personality. This is called Big Five personality theory as per Eysenck, With the support of this theory, it is helpful to understand personalities of individual among both generations. The personality would be affected not only by internal factors, but also by external factors such as characteristic of peer group, culture, social status, technological, economical, education, and childhood memories because individual is linked with environment (Ryder, 2014). In evaluating how generations use social medias to make them engaged, environmental factors and individual level factors (stable and dynamic factors) would be considered. Environmental factors concern such as Economical, Technological, Cultural, and Legal factors and stable individual level factors such as socio- economic status, personal preferences, lifecycle stage and dynamic individual factors

such as goals, emotions and norms (Bolton et al, 2013).

Generation Y

According to Bloomberg analysis of United Nation data (2019), 31.5% of global population is from Generation Y. Member of the cohort has been dominant technology enthusiasts, while many members has created social networking profile and used cell phones to exchange text messages more likely to other previous generations (Ordun, 2015). Generation Y possess inflated purchasing power and eagerness to commit in online purchasing comparing to all other prior generations (Ang, et al, 2009). The standout identity of this generation is social media usage and technological methods. While being appreciating market opportunities, this generation is hugely social influenced to familiar and influential brands or people (Ordun, 2015). This generation prefers products quick through online services with their digital behaviors on social medias and Internet (Valentine and Powers, 2013). Marketers has adjusted their marketing when the time was arrived to consider for Generation Y attributes with the equilibrium of word of mouth and digital medias.

Emotional based choices are usual in era of Generation Y which leads to less loyalty towards the brand. Hence, being innovative to get

attracted is crucial in this era (Parment, 2008) As being the generation expecting fast and easy services, marketers started engaging in online shopping where advertisements and promotions are on social media and internet-based strategies (Valentine and Powers, 2013), and web-based marketing but not much exposure in marketing (Williams and Page, 2011).

Generation Z

According to Bloomberg analysis of United Nation data (2019), 32% of global population is from Generation Z. Since Generation Z is emerging consumer category with their dynamic behaviors, it is expecting that 40% of all consumers would be Generation Z by the year 2020 (Finch, 2015). The generations which concern about more protection than earlier generations and asking for trust and transparency in their performance on the Internet (Forbes 2017, PwC 2017). Consumers from Generation Z is highly connected via with technology, internet, smartphones, sending emails and SMS as their part of Daily lives (Viitanen, 2019).

Generation Z members are most universal and multicultural generation, which witnessed from day one of them in arena of internationalism, gender equality and climate change awareness. Therefore, a social responsibility, social

advocacy, and their caring for greater are crucial in altruistic behavior of Generation Z members, who are sensible of the universal affairs than prior generations and deceived to change the world for the better (Sparks and Honey, 2015).

Sense of intolerance for waiting is common among individuals from this generation. Internet privacy is one of the core concerns of the member of this cohort; hence they are conscious in sharing information online (Vision Critical Report, 2016). For instance, 14% of generation uses vlogs, 17% of generation uses social network page and 19% uses celebrity endorsement in finding information (Young, 2017). The generation members seek new idea, “Virtual friends” and technology driven trends (Williams and Page, 2011). This cohort expects explicit content and customized experience to be offered by marketers (Grubor and Olja, 2018).

The review insists that there are varies personality traits across the two generations (Berkup, 2014). Thus, it is essential to understand how content of marketing strategies should be at equilibrium to balance the features of both cohorts. Literature has provided ample application of big five personality traits but is the perception of the Sri Lankan marketers the same or do they believe other traits and features that need to be considered in

developing a strong marketing strategy in the business environment. With the significant growth of the technology especially digital advancements it is very important for the academics and managers behaviours of the two cohorts to improve the effectiveness of the marketing communication efforts.

Methodology

The objective of the study is to understand the perception of the marketing managers towards the big five trait personality of Generation Y and Generation Z. The study explores how those perceptions can effectively utilised to send strong marketing communications regard to product offerings of their respective organization. This study is based on qualitative approach attempting to examine Generation Y and Generation Z traits in the perceived mindset of marketing managers in Sri Lanka which assist them in the future to encounter the emerging consumer’s sophisticated needs and approach to market products.

The target population for the study is marketing managers in Sri Lanka and 10 companies from different industries were selected to interview the respective marketing managers who possess knowledge and experience on topic of interest. To understand the traits of the two cohorts which was primary explored through various sources such as

articles, journals, reliable websites, reports. This understanding was a value addition to explore for more information and aspects with the interviews conducted with the managers which enriched the knowledge gathered.

In depth exploration of marketer's points of view towards prevailing generations was carried out through an interview process. This approach aimed at exploring marketing managers experience towards individual traits of the Generation Y and Generation Z. Interviewing managers around the topic of interest was based on non-probability sampling: with semi structured questions; from different industries, which facilitated to understand the marketer's perception in regard to scenario variations regarding to the personality traits similarities and dissimilarities among the two cohorts in consideration.

Initially the authors investigated the experience and knowledge of marketing managers before they were interviewed whether they fulfil the requirement of the study. Once it was clarified, the next step was to record interviews and summarizes the insights shared. Finally, key points were identified and clustered based on the summarised insights from the interview and was aligned with the purpose of the study.

Findings: Interviews

The study paid attention on one-to-one interviews with semi structured question. 10 marketing managers from 8 different industries such as online store, beverage, textile and healthcare, insurance, supermarket, digital marketing agency and tech consultancy were participated. Table 1 shows the demographic characteristics of the interviewers.

Table 1: Demographical characteristics of the respondents

Characteristic	Frequency	Response code
Gender:	9	MM2 – MM10
Male		
Female	1	MM1
Industries:		
Online store	1	MM1
Textile	2	MM2 & MM3
Beverage	1	MM4
Healthcare	1	MM5
Insurance	2	MM6 & MM9
Supermarket	1	MM7
Digital Marketing Agency	1	MM8
Tech Consultancy	1	MM10

Social media from the perspective of marketers

All the interviewers indicated that social media is the key for communication operations in today's business world. Social media is considered as the source of engagement with the audience, medium to understand their customers, platform to inspire on CSR projects, platform facilitates to target the right people at right time with right content compared to the conventional mechanisms which are practiced.

“Me as CEO of a beverage company, I believed in occasional marketing. Social media connects our product with right audience according to different occasions and seasons we come across. So hence, making our product as their habit.” (MM5)

Managers express the importance of time and cost-efficiency in delivering their respective messages to the customers as prime activities and switching to social media platforms has been beneficial for companies with the reduction of the conversion cost and marketing related cost.

“It is the fast-growing channel in my eyes; indeed, very efficient and highly cost effective and very budget friendly channel” (MM5)

“It is the ideal and cost-effective platform to communicate and reach the target audience, irrespective of the industry one is in” (MM9)

Also, the marketers did agree on the fact that the community is gradually witnessing the change of been addicted to social media platforms and spends most of the idle time on it and that it's the time for marketers to concentrate more on marketing strategies using social media platforms rather relying solely on print media and TV, radio marketing.

“Social media is a lifestyle platform, where everyone of us used to it as a habit” (MM10)

Adaption of The Big Five Personality traits to strategize marketing operations

Openness

The behaviour pattern of Generation Z and Generation Y with regard to periodic trends are significantly impacting on business organizations; to be more competitive, productivity; to supply in line with demand flow and to gain first mover advantages were highlighted during the interview sessions. Researches identified that marketers are continuously learning and monitoring trends due to the high volatility in the market and Generation Z is highly vulnerable as per the views of the respondents. Therefore, marketers stressed the importance of continuous learning of trends and generational behaviours to effectively communicate through digital marketing mechanisms.

“Generation Y is a stable consumer group that their trend is constant at

least for a minimum of one year but surprisingly Generation Z is in one trend for a maximum of 2 months. We consider this as a challenge in our target market because it makes us to be quick and instant on producing, marketing and selling the product. We need to be quick and instant on producing, marketing and selling the product as emerging consumer category expects new things every time. Otherwise, our product will be outdated soon” (MM2)

As identified in literature Generation Z is open for innovation and expect developments lead to improvement of productivity. Generation Z with its multitasking behaviour expect everything to happen in split seconds and with the dynamic nature of the environment they expect the products to adapt that pace with reaching the consumers through product variations. Consumers are delighted to have a healthy new experience and through the generational trait observations has understood the readiness of Generation Z to experience something new irrespective of the end result compared to Generation Y who values the experience of the entire process. Marketers have understood that new product launch to the market is a new normal situation and is not an exclusive advantage over the other competitors.

“Generation Z is an instant generation who clicks and gets

products delivered to their doorstep. Generation Y loves the experience of visiting stores. I’ve seen the current generation is exposed to smart phones and control everything in life within their fingertips. One is digital banking. During our time, I used to go bank just to check my account balance. Just look at the services that each business tries to offer newly to stand great. This is all because of the influence of Generation Z traits and business operations in a war to attract the members of the cohorts with something new before they get bored with what they have now”. (MM10)

The term “Innovation” is almost embedded in the core values of all companies. The reason is that innovation is not anymore secondary in the trendy world. A few marketers the researchers interviewed explicitly mentioned the prime objective is not only to create a new experience, but also it is about offering innovative ideas which shapes the consumer experience.

“When you look at the great companies such as Apple, you just can realize how innovative the company is. The company has well branded itself and whoever the user of Apple products knows that they will be surprised continuously with the innovation. That’s how iPhone, iPod, and podcast service are all in the list. Now you know why it is

called as one of the great companies”. (MM3)

Extraversion

A few respondents stated an interesting insight that individualism among members of Generation Z has changed the content pattern of marketing. There could be many reasons why an older promotional content cannot be used as a digital marketing strategy today. The marketers did believe the quality of individualism which is observed in Generation Z will change the marketing environment completely in Sri Lanka within the next two to three years.

“Generation Z is busier group who values “Individualism” whereas Generation Y values “Togetherness”. As our product is beverage, the target group is aged between 18 to 35. Currently, our promotions are contented with small/mini a bottle which is enough for a person. To speak about the scenario 4 years ago, content was based on a mega bottle which is enough for a family”. (MM4)

A few marketers addressed the social aspect of the consumers they deal with on a day-to-day basis. They stated that their marketing strategies have been flexed by viewing through a social eye of the consumers which assist the marketers to reach the cohorts more effectively by speaking

to their heart directly. Topics such as homosexual relationships or sex or certain aspects of religious views which were intact couple of decades ago has taken a different stance in today’s world moulding social standards which the marketers should observe thoroughly in order to communicate to the cohorts effectively.

“As I deal with many products such as Durex, I’ve seen the turn round of advertising. Talking about the sensational headline like sex education becomes easy. How many of us have watched advertisements related to lingerie and undergarments? Have you watched “Close Up” advertisement where it encourages dating? These kind of open talks were not possible among Generation Y members since they were judgemental and hesitating to accept in the Public. Moreover, it is especially in Sri Lanka where values are highly appreciated”. MM8)

The respondents common thought process was to identify how the two cohorts face challenges in routine activities. According to the views of respondents Generation Z members are very optimistic while Generation Y is pessimistic in viewing life.

“I’ve seen Generation Z members are very positive and interested in spreading positivity. They are not kind of people who sit and worry, instead they fight until they reach

their objectives. It's great to see that Generation Z members are very talkative, enjoyable character as a multitasker, and spreading positivity which are lacking at Generational Y members'. (MM2)

Conscientiousness

A few respondents indicated that the money management behaviour is completely has a different viewpoint among both considered generations. The reason is the user experience tricks Generation Z members whereas cost effectiveness tricks Generation Y members. Marketers have observed different traits related to monetary rewards where Generation Z members do not prefer to commit to something for the mere fact that they are paying for the product.

“Generation Y would pay an upfront cost to acquire. Generation Z would prefer subscription basis for the user experience testing. So if satisfaction is not earned with usage, switching is easier. Though Subscription paid will eventually be higher than upfront cost. Generation Z has smartphone; hence needs everything in the tip of their fingers. (4P – Price) “. (MM10)

A few marketers expressed their view on the entrepreneurial aspects of these two cohorts. They have identified that Generation Y members are more comfortable with team-based tasks. Strong determination and will power commonly exist within the

generation Z members. The reason is they accept “Fail, Learn and Succeed” concept.

“In workplace as well, I've experienced those employees below the age of 25 requests for more individual works and not afraid to fail. I'm impressed at their individual contribution to a project and eagerness to be the leader sooner. Generation Z members embraces the entrepreneurship. That's why we can see many online businesses are at their progress in the Instagram and Facebook. However, Generational Y members are likely to have participation in team-based tasks. They are even more afraid to lose the job in hand”. (MM9)

A few respondents stated that age of smartphone and internet in use are likely same as the age of Generation Z users. The easy access to information, availability of tools at their fingertips and one click away have caused Generational Z members to be more efficient.

“Generation Y are relatively considered less efficient. If they wanted to purchase a shoe, they merely had the means of knowing which was better. If they wanted to get a work done by an employee or was in need of communicating to a supplier, it took hours or even days. If they wanted to analyse a company, buying annual report had taken a long time. The scenario is changed

now. Everything is a click away. It makes Generation Z members more efficient and allows them to spend time on what is adding value". (MM10)

One of the seldom findings of the study was during the interview; marketers expressed that

Generation Z are self-interested to do the things at own without seeking for extensive support even from the organization they receive service. Generation Z signals that they are risk takers and the fact that they highly value autonomy in engagement with the service providers.

"I personally feel that Generation Z members are not paying much attention to an assistant; indeed, wish to do things at own with pre-defined set of instruction. This leads to a particular business strategy for upcoming generation; that is to automate all the process without a need of contacting even customer service offline, perhaps through Chat blogs" (MM1)

Neuroticism

Marketers shared their experience during the interview highlighting that Generation Y is backward and less engaging in relation to technological upgrades and very reluctant to engage in viral campaigns in the beginning, but the marketers observed Generation Z is highly motivated and is willing to make an

adventurous run irrespective of the end result.

"Firstly, Generation Y was reluctant to leave a public review or comment, but later this became a group which is very active in the first level engagement; commenting. Generation Y are not brought up in the way to involve in second level engagement like sending video for a promotional campaign. Generation Z feels motivated to take an effort and engage in second level of engagement. TikTok as a social media platform is a great example for this. The feel of fear of public notice is high among Generational Y members" (MM5)

Marketers expressed their experience in the patience level of both cohorts. With technology improving efficiency Generation Z expects everything to happen quickly. Personally, the marketers have experienced that Generation Z members have shorter attention span compared to Generation Y members. One of reasons for this is lower patience level among generation Z members since they do have many tasks working in their mind while physically been committed to a specific task.

"This is a personal experience of mine. I waited in the queue of ordering at a famous chicken franchise. It took some time to clear the queue. I did see some of young

people were dissatisfied with the long queues and some started complaining the management about their dissatisfaction where I believe the workers were pretty efficient trying to cope up the long queue which isn't a new thing during peak hours. On another situation at my home, internet connection was too slow. I was trying to trouble shoot the problem. Meanwhile, my children were shouting, and they could not wait until the connection return to normalcy. I personally believe it's a real challenge for the Generation Z to be patient when things aren't going their way". (MM5)

Marketers have understood that attraction towards a product plays a major role in influencing a customer to make a purchase an interesting insight was extracted from the interviews; where marketers strongly believe visuals or colour attraction convince consumers' mind more than any other effort taken by marketers. The product with an incredible visual and aesthetic has commonly been the first choice of the consumers and nowadays corporate giants uses special blended colour coding mechanisms to arrange their products in shelves at outlets to attract customers.

"Generation Y members had asked about the functionality of the product first to me. Generation Z members see for how it looks and whether it could be the trend setting

consumption. Just search in the google for phone covers. It's not surprised to view classier covers with stones and cartoon characters. The consumers are even not sure whether it can protect if the phone falls". (MM1)

Anger and aggressiveness are powerful trait that Generation Z member possesses according to the marketer's researchers have interviewed. One unhealthy experience related to the product or service related to can go viral within seconds. Social media has become a platform that has given the opportunity to articulate anger of consumers into hate speech, movements, and propaganda.

"An unhappy customer can wreak havoc on social media which will counter the campaigns. Generation Y is more reliant on peer feedback and experience which will also usually be affected by open reviews. Remember, there is intense rivalry in the marketplace as well". (MM9)

"Generation Z members unite and do even the protest when something bad happens. One's personal anger can become as the whole country's anger and can make the responsible authority to take decisions or destroy the brand name. The good example I can say is the milk powder that children consume" (MM4)

The social awareness is something that a few marketers brought out an

important point. It was mentioned that the fear of anxiety is higher among generation Z members whereas Generation Y members are not afraid to things that Generation Z members are scared of.

“Though Generation Z members are strong willed and optimistic, it is must to say suicides rate also increases along with. The reason is that more they are into screen; lesser they share with their families or friends. Besides, they are more open to bad experiences as well. More independent they are, lesser they have control over certain things. When something slightly bad happen even, they lose their mind and become scared of public reviews. Generation Y members are not to the extent as Generation Z members”. (MM3)

Agreeableness

Marketers addressed their opinion that the attention to feminism, gender equalities, women rights, greener world, pet rights, hate speeches and other social sensational concerns is very well rooted in the generation Z cohorts. Organizations are also expected to respect and pay attention in all sort of activities it does to a stronger sustainability.

“Generation Z pays attention on equality, pets right, feminism and social concerns. For an example, "StopHateSpeech" in which 500 companies are out of Social Media to

prevent hate speech since Generation Z concerns more on it and I could not witness such mind set among Generation Y members”. (MM5)

“Gen Z has easy access to information. Hence, they move things in the way of right, ethical, healthy and green ways whereas Gen Y had a limitation in accessing right information at the right time”. (MM4)

Marketers believe that Generation Z members are more sympathetic and willing to help others. The number of voluntary services at difficult times are increasing and the engagement of generation Z members for worthy causes are increasing day by day. Social media has become a great platform shaping sympathetic traits Generation Z members compared to Generation Y viewing them as public stunts to get attention from the society.

“Generation Z prefers a product or service not only offering for the benefit of the self, but also to the benefit of the whole community. Generation Z members buy a product if the product serves to the society in any means; may be taking care pets from the profit earns. Generation Y members don't focus on such things mostly”. (MM6)

Social media as a channel

Marketers during the interview process expressed that several years back they neglected marketing

campaigns been conducted via social media platforms because it wasn't a timely need, but few organizations understood the value of the platform and started investing on the technology. Based on their experience they mentioned there is a paradigm shift in media and communication in the country and heavy reliance on print media and digital media is switching to social media platform which makes it an hourly need for companies to masterfully deliver its marketing practices across all channels. Even the reliability of information in social media has improved over the years building strong confidence among the users of social media.

“Previously, stores are the channels to request the certain amount of stock of t-shirts and that would be the estimation for the company to sell. With evolution of Generation Z, it depends on numbers of views on social media. For example, if it has 10000 views, expecting 500 people to buy. Social media evolved as the demand forecasting channel”. (MM3)

Some respondents highlighted their preference over multiple channels in the social media context and agreed on the fact that these latest developments showed the importance of Omni-channel mechanism to increase customer contact points which has helped many organizations to reach vast number of potential

customers and improve their revenue. Though channels such as Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, Tweeter, TikTok, YouTube or any other emerging channels seem competitive to each other's, there is a unique purpose and a market they communicate therefore the marketers express the importance of the company to be present in the vivid range of platforms available.

“Communication patterns is substantially get differed in the consideration of tech products under the content marketing context. There are no definite platforms to target for the market. There are timely platforms according to trend. For an example: The survey found that TikTok is the platform covering 99% of consumers for a product like “Dettol”. Instagram is considered as Lifestyle application whereas Facebook is informative application”. (MM8)

Some respondents were worried in a way that social media is utilized. They viewed that social media is underestimated in Sri Lanka; it is only used for the purposes like scrolling, passing time, chats or online shopping. However, social media is open for much better things.

“Facebook and LinkedIn are not utilized at its optimum. It could be more used in terms of knowledge gaining and networking”. (MM6)

“USA based generation Z members are using social media effectively. I feel that Sri Lankans should be understanding the optimum of social media; what a social media can do massively. Getting to know the meaningful use of social media as generation Z who are named for tech savvy is crucial. It is important for the development of the country too”. (MM2)

An impactful insight was addressed by a respondent. Behaviour of Generation Z members is yet under observation. The maximum age that Generation Z member could old be is 25. Hence most of Generation Z members are not yet grown and even the grown members will have to grow another 25-30 year, it is still an early conclusion on their behaviour.

“We have limited information on behavioural impact on generation Z members. Max age is 25 a Generation Z member could be now. Hence from 25 to rest of his/ her life, it is clueless how he/she could behave”. (MM10)

Specific Insights gathered

Most of the respondents highlighted Generation Y seeks content and information on factual basis, simply the marketing strategies should cover all the scope justifying the reason to purchases the product which is comparatively different to the approach that should be practiced with Generation Z. Where generation

Z values creativity along with the concept of edutainment which consist of the education and entertainment fused together as a marketing strategy which assist to effectively communicate the target audience of Generation Z. The sense of being cool and be informed can be categorized under extraversion and openness respectively. However, the mix of personality traits are found within users on the same content/subject. This personality traits mix cannot be considered under only one personality trait of big five personality traits.

“To whom we do talk to derives what kind of content you should go with”. *Generation Y interests in factual information whereas Generation Z interests in educational content with more fun related. For an example: An advertisement for a milk powder, content should be including nutritional facts for the target group of generation Y members. The case is different for Generation Z. The content with a video on how a recipe could be made using the milk powder would be attractive for them’.* (MM8)

It was mentioned about the honesty and transparency expected by both cohorts. Most respondents stated explicitly that the usage of words, language, and promotional strategies with gifts are highly important in the content especially in digital marketing campaigns. Hence it is a sensational issue among Generation

Z members if it goes wrong. It is identified that honest as a personality trait is underestimated. It can be categorized under agreeableness as it includes compliance or modesty. However, honesty is beyond being truthful; it's about being consistent and genuine with others in all the situations in line with core values. As marketers and consumers, it should be incorporated as a well-established separate personality trait.

Generation Z is highly responsive, and we should be geared to deliver every promise made during Comments to ensure no backlash. Corporates will not be able to get away with. "conditions apply" when dealing with Generation Z. Deliver as promised will be the expectation and should be the motto of each and every business". (MM9)

A few respondents from textile and fashion industry highlighted that design of the product or packaging wins the audience differently. From generation to generation, the preference for design which is the content image/ video in marketing changes.

"It could be subjective, but I see Generation Y as the generation expects simple graphics with simple word to be printed on a T-Shirt; that's what we consider when designing to Generation Y. Generation Z expects complex whole printed patterns. I do know ... know

that Generation Z is very concern on what other's perspective if I wear this, but they do choose for complex graphics in design. That could be a reason for maximum 2 months of a trend" (MM2)

Most of the marketers stated that a specific attention needs to be given within the tech world. The current and potential consumers are tech-savvy. Their behavioural and thinking pattern will be differing from a typical traditional world. Though Generation Z is open for more new ideas, trends, and experience, it's more beyond being open. Considering the next generation (Generation Alpha), it is must to understand the tech savvy as a separate personality.

"Tech world is different. It moulds the way we behave, consume, and expect. Understanding tech savvy personality within tech world is a must for future marketing". (MM8)

The results highlighted big five personality trait and other insights in terms of social media marketing and consumer's behaviour. It indicated to whom to market, what to market, how to market, suggesting there are contradicting individual traits among both considered generation despite of their commonalities. Table 2 below summarizes key findings of the survey.

Table 2: Summary of Key Findings

<p>Where to market; social media</p> <p>The purpose of social media</p> <p>The extent of utilization of social media</p> <p>Whom to market; The big five personality traits</p> <p>Openness (Continuous learning and monitoring trends, innovativeness, and experience)</p> <p>Extraversion (Optimism, Socialization)</p> <p>Conscientiousness (Entrepreneurial Behaviour, autonomy)</p> <p>Neuroticism (Patience, Anger, Aggressiveness)</p> <p>Agreeableness (Acceptance of status quo, sympathetic)</p> <p>How to market; Channel</p> <p>Platforms mostly used</p> <p>The reason for the said use</p> <p>Specific insight gathered</p> <p>Entertainment; Humour</p> <p>Honest and Transparency</p> <p>Fashion</p> <p>Tech Savvy world</p>
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Discussion and Conclusion

The study on individual traits of Generation Y and Generation Z subjects to subjectivity of experiences and observation and the findings was clustered under the main five traits based on the Big Five Namely Personality Traits: namely Openness, Agreeableness, Extraversion, Conscientiousness and Neuroticism. Based on the range of literature survey, it was identified all the characteristics can be simplified under these five traits and understanding Generation Y and Generation Z under those traits will be effective to marketing managers in Sri Lanka to enhance market share through promotions and target marketing strategies more effectively with the insights of the potential customer base. The findings of the study do make a major contribution to the market with marketing managers understanding the timely need that generalised, standardised marketing campaigns aren't going to bear positive results in the future.

Based on the findings of the study, it is identified that there are major personality traits that need specific attention. Generation Z members seek for entertainment, and education whereas Generation Y members seek only for factual information. This illustrates that there is a mix of informative and fun seeking personality of members. Another personality that needs an attention is

honesty and transparency. With many options in the market and technological development leading to perfect information, consumers pay a special focus to the product or service truthfulness. More transparent the promotion is, more reach it has. Organization must deliver what they have promised due to the heavy scrutiny which challenges the survival of the product or service. What matters is not the scale of operation even if a SME

can assure standard on time delivery, promised quality, succeed objectives without compromising tomorrow's need is highly valued by the cohorts. Thirdly, it was identified tech savvy as the new personality trait. It can be included under the big five trait openness. However, the future world will be more advanced technologically and with sophisticated needs marketers must adapt advance process to give better solutions. As Generation Alpha era will come along with Generation Z, it is more sensible to understand about the tech savvy nature as a separate personality trait. The final personality that deserves a special attention is the fashionable personalities. More than it's about an industry or just another trend, it is a part of a human, and evolves as generations evolve. As the conclusion extracted from the interviews, it was noted that researches can be done on the personalities and behaviours in the

utilization of the platforms and channels in the tech world. These mentioned personality traits open a room for future discussion as there are important personality traits that need additional attention in the world of marketing.

Based on the findings from interviews conducted for marketing managers in Sri Lanka, it is noted that respondents considered Generation Z customer insights are already in their customer analysis but there are considerable marketing managers in Sri Lanka accepting that lack of wide range statistical data in relation to the two cohorts available for general use limits the strengths of organizations to develop effective marketing strategies. Based on data collected, researchers identified that Government's Census and Statistics department too does not maintain statistics in relation to Generation Z and Generation Y separately, their purchasing power, the internet users, number of transactions taken place compared to many developed countries. According to interview results, it was identified efficiency in response rate and viewership is highly regarded by the generations and lack of information has led marketing managers targeting and segmenting in the marketing process ineffective.

The study attempted to explore the perspective of managers in regard to big five personality traits of

Generation Y and Generation Z which could support the marketing managers to design marketing approaches effectively considering relevancy of the target market. From the interview conducted with marketing managers in Sri Lanka, it is noted the perception of generational difference in customer insights to support the findings from literature survey were exposed to subjectivity, thoughts from literature reviews and interview outcomes were similar. Based on the findings some implications are suggested to improve better marketing practices in the corporate world; Advertisements should be with lower attention span to convey the right message to Generation Z members. According to Deloitte report, it is 8 seconds whereas it was 12 seconds to members of Generation Y.

Generation Z concerns on social issues such as gender equality, feminism, pollution, animals. Therefore, marketing approach goes beyond creating brand awareness and branding, but it's essential to address social issues in order to build a strong loyal customer base which would ensure repeat purchase. Generation Z is highly vulnerable and therefore marketing campaigns should adhere to strict ethical behavior and transparent whereas Generation Y in the meantime will not heavily elaborate on social concerns explicitly. Sustainable marketing

concepts are important for the growth and survival in the Sri Lankan context.

Words, languages, gestures and rewards needs to be decided with extreme care. Since Generation Y members are not reluctant to comment, review and dislike publicly, even the negligence in promotion could cause the brand image to be destroyed in a second.

Generation Z members needs a product which goes beyond serving the core purpose of the good or of the service but expects holistic approach favouring the consumer, community, and environment in large.

Marketers in Sri Lanka had enough time to adapt and to adjust to the needs and wants of Generation Y expectations since Generation Y was new as the marketers to technology. Generation Y was not born with digital devices, but the situation is different for Generation Z who were born with technology, and they are digitally savvy. Kids or teenagers today are already well adapted with technology. Hence marketing managers has no time to design and pitch their strategies once Generation Z grows as powerful consumers, marketing managers in Sri Lanka should be well prepared.

This research is only based on selected marketing managers in Sri Lanka across few industries. The in-depth research based on single

industry, individual traits of Generation Z and Generation Y and the impact on marketing approaches can be discussed and will further add value. In order to identify individual traits of Generation Z and Generation Y, literature survey was carried out. To get insights of Sri Lankan consumers can conduct a survey through questionnaire basis and explore the market in local context more clearly. There is no systemic identification of generational cohorts in Sri Lanka.

Considering Sri Lankan market, it is noted that few marketing managers are aware about the importance approaching the two cohorts separately and in the meantime some marketers are reluctant to accept the reality. Many developed countries across the globe has already invested on data of Generation Y and Generation Z to get better consumer insights and to analyse the trends related to buying decisions and other marketing related activities and therefore it's a timely need for Sri

Lankan managers to expand their knowledge in regards the two generations in order to sustainably grow their respective brands and corporate reputations.

As overall, it is evident that the big five personality traits understanding is essential to reach the consumers effectively through product offerings. Marketing managers participated for the study have expressed their experience on how Generation Y and Generation Z members behaves. It is noted that the perception of the respondents is in line with the five personalities that are addressed by the model "The Big Five Personality Traits". However, findings of the study paves for a discussion on the additional four personalities such as Entertainment (Humour), Honesty and Transparency, Tech savvy, and fashion. Besides, the study directs further researches toward the personalities or behaviours within emerging cohorts in the tech world exclusively.

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The Importance of Social Media Presence For Small Scale Delivery Only Textile Entrepreneurs In Sri Lanka

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Abstract

Over the last few decades, the rapid evolution of the Internet has provided many new opportunities for both businesses and consumers. Aside from the obvious uses of searching for information and communicating, online platforms can now be used to conduct an entire business. Small-scale delivery-only textile shops have become one of Sri Lanka's fastest-growing online businesses, with social media serving as the primary platform. Similarly, anyone with an internet connection and a device that allows them to browse the Internet can easily order anything they want online while remaining in their convenient locations. Because of recent technological advancements in Sri Lanka and worldwide, both consumers and sellers are drawn to virtual shopping, where social media plays a vital role in success. In such a backdrop, this study investigates the significance of social media presence for small-scale delivery-only textile entrepreneurs in Sri Lanka. To elicit genuine insights from the respondents, a qualitative research approach was used. In-depth interviews were conducted with sixteen entrepreneurs who run small-scale textile shops on social media platforms, and data were analyzed using a thematic analysis approach. According to the findings, Facebook and Instagram were recognized as the most popular social media platforms for small-scale delivery-only textile shop owners. Furthermore, the study revealed the importance of paid advertising campaigns and points of differentiation achieved through island-wide free cash on delivery, replacement, refund, and return policies, and ease of access. The importance of having backup plans and the influence of situational factors were also identified as critical in running businesses via social media platforms. These insights will help small-scale entrepreneurs to grow their businesses on social media platforms by maximizing the efficiency and effectiveness.

Keywords: Social Media, Social Media Marketing, Small Scale businesses, SMEs, Textile Shops, Online Shopping

Introduction

During the past decade, the evolution of the Internet has presented many opportunities

(Krotov, 2017) for consumers as well as business organizations (Viriyasitavat et al., 2019). Besides searching and sharing information (Morris and Ogan, 1996), the

Internet has become a rich platform for business organizations (Perera and Galdolage, 2021) to achieve their target markets in an efficient and effective way (Tsimonis and Dimitriadis, 2014). Among these online platforms, social media is identified as one of the most influential methods for marketing, promoting, selling, and relationship building (Bartlett, 2010). Practically many small-scale business organizations consider social media as a new marketing tool (Berinato and Clark, 2020) and very few organizations obtain benefits from such media platforms to enhance their business performance (Dong-Hun, 2010a).

Further, lack of resources (Mukhopadhyay and Suryadevara, 2014) and high competition among businesses (Wang and Zhang, 2015) in today's environment have made it difficult for new small-scale organizations to enter the market (Levy and Powell, 2003). It encourages business owners/marketers to differentiate their marketing and communication strategies rather than limiting them to traditional marketing approaches (Mathews and Healy, 2008). Therefore, now small-scale entrepreneurs are trying to use social media platforms (Derham et al., 2011) such as Facebook (Wong, 2012), Instagram and WhatsApp to reach their target market in a quick, easy and cost-effective way (Virtanen et al., 2017). Jayasuriya et al. (2017) pointed out the impact of social media marketing to build brand equity for Sri Lankan fashion wear businesses, while Farook and

Abeysekara (2016) recognized the significance of social media in obtaining customer engagement.

These new marketing and communication strategies help reduce the cost to a greater extent and give massive financial relief for small-scale businesses that are still growing in the market (Stockdale et al., 2012b). Also, other types of costs such as maintaining a physical store, rentals, maintenance costs, and other related costs can be turned to a minimal level through running online businesses (Sarosa, 2012). The considerable cost element for such organizations would be the delivery cost since online businesses need to deliver their products to the customers' doorsteps (Konradt et al., 2003).

Practically, in Sri Lanka, some small-scale textile shops use social media marketing to achieve their business aims. Some shops are not manufacturing textiles; instead, they collect textiles from different manufacturers and engage only in delivering them to the customers. It has been observed that even though small-scale delivery-only textile businesses are moving towards social media such as Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp, the scholarly attention given to understanding this practical movement is minimum (Jayasuriya et al., 2017). There is a gap in understanding how and why firms use social media in achieving their business goals (Stockdale et al., 2012a). Thus, this study aims to explore the importance of social media presence for small-scale

delivery-only textile shops in Sri Lanka.

Next, the paper presents the conceptual background of the study; subsequently, the methodology of the study is elaborated before providing the finding and discussion. Third, theoretical and practical contributions are discussed, along with the limitations and future research directions

Literature Review

Social Media

Social media is a new phenomenon that has changed how the business environment operates (Ainin et al., 2015). Social media is occasionally termed as social networking and Web 2.0, which collaboratively produced and shared media content and network communities. Therefore, users of social media can share their views and encounters (Berthon et al., 2012). Social media has rendered opportunities for people to interact with many others on online platforms (Mayfield, 2008). Thus, the one-to-one communication, one-to-many communication, and many-to-many communication are geared to a substantial level (Castronovo and Huang, 2012). In such platforms, opportunities received for consumer-to-consumer communications have been significantly increased (Mangold and Faulds, 2009).

Social media offer the chance to link with customers using rich media platforms with a better reach

(Thackeray et al., 2008). The interactivity embedded in these new digital media permits marketers to communicate and exchange information with their customers (Russo et al., 2008). Further, it allows two-way communication (Cade, 2018) by permitting customers to share their views and experience with other customers and the organization (Castronovo and Huang, 2012). This interactive nature of social media (Saravanakumar and SuganthaLakshmi, 2012) allows to practice and maintain relationship marketing well (Hlavinka and Sullivan, 2011).

Using social media, organizations can build contacts with existing as well as new customers and form groups of customers who interactively collaborate with the organization in creating value (Siddiqui and Singh, 2016). These interactions change the conventional roles of both seller and customer in exchange relationships (Edosomwan et al., 2011). Customers add value to the company through their interaction, generating the content, and they can influence the purchase decisions of others in peer-to-peer interactions (Sashi, 2012).

Why SMEs Use Social Media

Sri Lanka's economy is dominated by small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), accounting for 80% of all businesses. These can be found in the primary, secondary, and tertiary sectors of the economy. Over 90% of companies in the service industry are small and

medium-sized enterprises, while an estimated 35% of employment is attributed to SMEs. The SMEs in Sri Lanka play a critical role in fostering entrepreneurship, innovation, and overall economic growth (National Human Resources and Employment Policy, 2021).

SMEs are not a homogeneous group (Gilmore et al., 2001), instead, they differ in several ways such as in their “educational level, their attitude towards the business, their degree of entrepreneurship, market orientation, business goals, degree of preference for face-to-face interaction with customers, strategic focus, level of eBusiness knowledge and skills” etc. (Derham et al., 2011 ,P2). SMEs have often struggled to accept technology due to their lack of skills, resources and technical knowledge compared with large firms (Karimi and Naghibi, 2015). Thus, these small and medium-sized enterprises require an improved business environment.

Social media marketing can be viewed as a new field and a new business practice, particularly for small and medium businesses (Ainin et al., 2015). It is gaining popularity in developed countries and is increasingly used in many companies' regular operations, including start-ups, small, medium-sized, and large organizations (Rugova and Prenaj, 2016). However, in Sri Lanka, still, small businesses are reluctant to incorporate their business practices with improved technologies.

Social media involves marketing goods, services, information, and ideas online, which allow users and groups member sharing, co-creating, discussing, and modifying known as user-generated content (Dahnil et al., 2014). Social media permits organizations to contact many people at once (Aral et al., 2013). Since social media is a place where millions of people gather, the business organization can quickly bring their brands to them and enhance brand awareness (O'Flynn, 2012). Social media helps to enhance sales (Dong-Hun, 2010b) and customer base (Qualman, 2012). When more people visit a company's social media page, it is likely to create traffic for the website and make more online sales (Atanassova and Clark, 2015).

Though people have quickly adopted social media platforms for their personal use (Mayfield, 2008), business organizations have been slower to adopt these technologies (Beier and Wagner, 2016, Meske and Stieglitz, 2013). Among firms, large businesses have primarily increased their presence on social media platforms (Duggan et al., 2015), while SMEs still haven't recognized their potential (Meske and Stieglitz, 2013). Social media adoption by firms has generally increased over time (Greenwood et al., 2016); however, little is known about why small firms do or do not use these digital technologies (Beier and Wagner, 2016)

However, due to the continuous growth of social media platforms and the several applications that they offer, business organizations

get a chance to test numerous new opportunities that arise in social media (Çalli and Clark, 2015). Further, it is a good media to know well about their customers as well as competitors (Hlavinka and Sullivan, 2011).

Online Shopping

Internet usage has increased dramatically in the past decade, offering many chances to people to obtain information, engage in economic and social exchanges, and mainly do online shopping (Lissitsa and Kol, 2016). It should be facilitated by the investment in internet infrastructure (Javadi et al., 2012). In recent years, online internet shopping has increased globally (Park and Kim, 2003). As the Internet develops in scope and popularity, more and more users are becoming familiar with it and adopting it as a medium for shopping online (Lissitsa and Kol, 2016)

Selling online presents unique benefits and challenges to cyber marketers (Goldsmith and Goldsmith, 2002). Using social networks positively relates to purchasing products via online (Limayem et al., 2000). People who are used to staying online and spending time in social media are exposed to more information/advertisements about products (Muralidharan and Men, 2015).

Further, conversations and opinions about recent shopping experiences shared by friends and peers in social media platforms also influence online shopping (Mayzlin

and Chevalier, 2003, Moe and Trusov, 2011, Stephen and Galak, 2012). Despite the increasing body of marketing literature on social networks, researchers have paid little attention to studying the use of social media in enhancing customers' online shopping (Zhang et al., 2017).

Social Media for Textile Businesses

The textile industry has assisted many developing countries in getting rid of their dependence on primary goods (Shiwanthi et al., 2018). Sri Lanka was also initially dependent on its commercial crops such as tea, rubber, and coconut and has changed into apparel (Sivalogathan and Wu, 2015).

Textile Industry offers one of the most fundamental requirements of people and maintains sustained growth for improving quality of life (Ghouri et al., 2011). Demand changes rapidly in the fashion and textile business due to the volatile market situation and evolving nature of the fashion trends (Hilteofth and Hilmola, 2008). The establishment of state-of-the-art communications and transportation brought about significant changes in the production and distribution of textile goods (Gómez-Galvarriato, 2008). The textile sector significantly contributes to the global economy and the economy of Sri Lanka too (Kapuge and Smith, 2007). Additionally, textile agreements are a vital fragment of international business.

Most of the textile companies are using social media as their online platform. It enhanced reach and globally, and wherever the customer is, they can buy matching textiles for them, disregarding the geographical boundaries (Zhang et al., 2017). Appearance in social media provides massive benefits to the textile business, especially businesses that cannot spend on other modes of communications to reach an immense customer base. Additionally, it helps to reduce cost factors which allows them to practice fair pricing for their customers (O'Flynn, 2012).

Methodology

This study explores the importance of social media presence for small-scale delivery-only textile shops in Sri Lanka. It mainly aims to understand the most commonly used social media platforms by small scale delivery only textile shops and the importance of social media for such entrepreneurs. The literature on the use and importance of social media in such a business context is limited. As a result, an exploratory type of research was conducted using qualitative inquiries (Sekaran and Bougie, 2016, Malhotra and Birks, 2007).

A non-probabilistic purposeful sampling technique was used to recruit participants for the study, with the goal of hiring information-rich cases who run small-scale delivery-only textile businesses in Sri Lanka (Abrams, 2010, Palinkas et al., 2015, Patton, 2002). In qualitative studies, the sample size is rarely predetermined (Robinson,

2014) because qualitative researchers are frequently unaware of the level of theoretical saturation (Silverman, 2010). It is more dependent on the researcher's level of achievement of required information (Palinkas et al., 2015). In this study, sixteen small-scale delivery-only textiles entrepreneurs who use social media platforms as a mode of delivery were taken to the sample. The sample profile is provided in the table 1.

Table 1: Sample profile

No	Gender	Age	Location
1	Male	24	Colombo
2	Male	23	Kegalle
3	Male	27	Colombo
4	Male	23	Colombo
5	Female	25	Kalutara
6	Male	24	Polonnaruwa
7	Male	26	Kandy
8	Male	26	Colombo
9	Male	35	Colombo
10	Male	23	Kegalle
11	Male	38	Colombo
12	Male	25	Gampaha
13	Male	24	Polonnaruwa
14	Male	35	Colombo
15	Male	22	Kalutara
16	Male	30	Matale

Semi-structured interviews, one of the most common qualitative research methods, were used to

collect data. An interview guide was developed to make the interviewing process as easy, seamless, and focused as possible. This is a one-on-one interview with one respondent at a time that is purely conversational and allows for more insights from the respondents. The interviews began with a brief introduction and description of the research, emphasizing the importance and utility of respondents' feedback. Before the interview, a formal consent sheet was created to obtain the respondent's voluntary participation in the research. A request was made to record the interviews in order to aid transcription. Interviews lasted 30-45 minutes and were repeated until information redundancy was achieved. Interviews were transcribed into word documents and analyzed using Thematic analysis following the six steps; transcribing data, organizing data, familiarizing with data, coding, producing themes, and maintaining rigor as Lacey and Luff (2009) recommended.

Findings

This study aims to explore the importance of social media presence for small-scale delivery-only textile shops in Sri Lanka. First, the study attempts to understand common social media platforms where Sri Lankan small-scale delivery-only textile entrepreneurs are actively present.

Social Media Presence

According to the findings, social media presence is vital for a small-scale delivery-only textile business. Throughout the interviews, this has been justified as all the respondents had a very strong presence on social media. Further, their main source of demand also were recognized as the orders through social media.

Instagram Vs Facebook: From the 16 interviews conducted by the researchers, it is found that Facebook and Instagram are the two major social media platforms that small-scale textile shops engage with. In fact, these two platforms were used by all the participants in the study. However, out of Facebook and Instagram, some respondents said that Facebook is the most beneficial platform for them. In contrast, others backed Instagram to be the most helpful platform for an online textile shop.

One respondent, who is running a small-scale delivery-only textile shop since 2019 and use both Facebook and Instagram, said Facebook to be the platform that has the most impact on their business and as the platform that brings the majority of sales for his business.

“I think Facebook is the most beneficial platform not only for me but also for any small-scale textile business which is in social media. Major reason for that is the user-friendly interface of Facebook when compared with Instagram which most consider to be a posh

platform, while Facebook is considered as the platform for “all” irrespective of their age, gender or any other factor. Also, when looking at the number of active users and the audience that we can reach, Facebook outperforms all other platforms, including Instagram. Hence, for me Facebook has been the most beneficial platform so far and Instagram is the second best.” (Male, 24 years, Colombo)

However, another respondent slightly has a different story as an online seller who uses both Facebook and Instagram platforms and mentioned that Instagram was the more beneficial platform for small-scale textile shop owners.

“For me Instagram has been the more beneficial out of two since Instagram is basically a photo-sharing platform while Facebook is a multipurpose one. So, it is easy to market and share my products on Instagram, which has a user base almost similar to the one I need as a small-scale online textile retailer. Also, Instagram too have many inbuilt facilities same as Facebook which makes it even easier to reach the exact target market, we need to market our products. Therefore, Instagram is the more beneficial platform for me, and it is the one single platform which I invest most to market my products. (Male, 23 years, Kegalle)

Next, the study focuses on exploring the benefits for small-scale delivery-only shops of using social media platforms.

Accordingly, most such entrepreneurs use social media to advertise their products as a low-cost medium that allows interaction between the organization and the customer. Further, they use social media as communication as well as the delivery mode to differentiate themselves from those of other competitors (Points of Differences). According to respondents, social media presence helps them prevent some situational effects, such as the Covid 19 pandemic, since customer online engagement and ordering increased within that period. Further, social media packages given by internet providers became excellent facilitation for them to run their business. Finally, respondents pointed out a need for a back-up plan, especially for businesses like them who do small-scale delivery-only shops using social media platforms since social media policies and regulations are out of their control.

Paid Advertising Campaigns Targeting Special Markets: All major social media like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn has paid advertising and target marketing options for their advertisers. A respondent who is also working at a Digital Marketing Agency and has hands-on experience in running paid advertising campaigns and target marketing who is also an owner of a small textile shop, shared his thoughts on paid advertising and target marketing as given below.

“In social media, if we publish good interactive content, often we will get a good reach and

engagement even without spending a penny. But that is mainly true only for personal profiles not for business pages and brands as people are not “searching” for our products. Therefore, we must advertise and run paid advertising campaigns on almost all social media platforms in order to secure a good reach, engagement and attain our business objectives.” (Male, 27 years, Colombo)

Customer Interaction:

Respondents had different points of view regarding customer interaction. They recognize social media as very interactive, which allows live interactions with customers. One respondent shared her experiences on customer interaction as,

“Customers mainly inbox us their queries or reply to us using the “Contact Us” option in our posts. Generally, all conversation happens through inbox, but rarely some customers like to call and engage directly with the seller. We also ask them to send a photo of wearing the dress if they are comfortable with it so we can put it in our social media stories and often send us an image. So, the positive word of mouth is a big part for us when it comes to customer post-purchase customer interaction.” (Female, 25 years, Kalutara)

Point of Difference

As respondents mentioned, they are using social media to differentiate their products/ services from those

of other competitors. Based on the responses, they have used primarily ‘island-wide free delivery’, ‘free replacement or refund’, ‘ease of access’ as major components to differentiate their businesses from the competition.

Island-wide Free Cash on Delivery: According to the insights found from many respondents’, most of them involve in island-wide delivery, mostly free, promoting through social media. One respondent shared his thoughts on why he does island-wide free delivery as,

“We are covering all of Sri Lanka and we do free cash on delivery. Since we have not specialized in a geographical area, we carry our promotions for all areas in the island and arrange delivery to their doorstep through local delivery services like Domex and Pronto. We don’t use services like DHL since they are bit high in price. Giving Free Delivery and Islandwide delivery are the major differentiating factors for our shop when compared with other online textile shops. (Male, 24 years, Polonnaruwa)

Replacement, Refund and Return Policies:

According to many textile shops who run their business via social media, replacements and refunding policies play a major role in attracting customers in online platforms. As per one respondent, who is a university passed finalist running an online textile shop, one of major concern was the replacement cost.

“Our utmost priority is customer satisfaction, because if he is not satisfied, then the customer can simply put up a social media post and tarnish our brand page which we can’t afford as a small-scale textile shop. Therefore, we offer replacements, refunds and free returns for any customer who have issues with our products. Replacements need to be arranged for customers, especially since there are no ‘fit-on’ options when purchasing online. Another concern is return cost where we have to bear courier costs.” (Male, 26 years, Colombo)

Ease of Access vs. Lack of Physical Store: As the respondents point out, the major advantage of having a small-scale delivery-only textile shops run in social media platforms was the ease of access while major disadvantage was lack of a physical store where customers can see and try the products before purchase.

“In my point of view and experience in last year or so, major difference is ease of access to the store. Customers can access our products from the ease of their fingertips with the use of a mobile, tab or laptop. In a traditional shop you have to physically visit the store, which by the way some customers prefer” . (Male, 23 years, Kegalle)

The effect of Situational Factors

Through the interviews done, the researcher found from respondents that even for an online store with no physical locations, situational factors have a major effect on the

performance of their stores in social media.

Crisis situations: Easter Sunday Attacks and Covid-19 pandemic are the two major issues raised by the respondents during interviews. However, according to many respondents, these incidents positively affected social media-based textile shops since customers were not keen on physically visiting the stores.

“I haven't run an online store when Easter Sunday Attacks happened, but was preparing to open my online store. However, the Covid-19 pandemic had a larger impact since I originally planned to start my business by march 2020, but had to postpone it till July and even after starting the business. The 2nd wave of Covid-19 pandemic affected me a lot, especially when it comes to getting required textile and arranging delivery services for orders. I had to come to Colombo amidst the pandemic situation to get the required materials for T-shirts. I also managed to partner with a local courier service to deliver my products in Western Province. So, the difficulties I had earlier sorted out, not entirely, but mainly.” (Male, 25 years, Gampaha)

Social Media Packages by Internet Service Providers: Over the last couple of years, all major Internet Service Providers in Sri Lanka have introduced specially designed packages for Social Media, Learning Sites and Video Sites. A respondent from Nugegoda who works for an advertising

company while running an online store shared his thoughts on these special data packages.

“I think it definitely has a positive effect since people tend to spend more time on Social Media. However, I do not think this is groundbreaking as people spend the majority of their time on social media than earlier. So, these latest additions will give a push but not a huge one. But it is important to note that these packages have an effect not only on buyers but also on us, sellers, since we can use more time on Social Media researching competitors and surfing new ideas even from our desktop, which consumer lot of data. In my point of view, introduction of such packages has urged me to spend more time on Social Media as I know my cost is low. There are monthly unlimited social media packages for as low as Rs 107, which we can use on almost all our devices through hotspot. Therefore, these packages definitely had a positive effect for me as a seller who runs a small-scale delivery only textile shop.” (Male, 35 years, Colombo)

Back up plans

The researcher found that many respondents have a back-up plans and textile shops is not their only or major source of income but a part-time income and business. Therefore, the risks associated with running an online delivery-only textile shops are minimum for most respondents.

Policies of Social Media Platforms: Rules and regulations of relevant social media platforms

play a crucial role. Violation of such policy by members may cause permanent loss of access to the store. One of the respondents mentioned that getting access back is a complex process when something like that occurs since social media platforms do not have any official representatives.

“I was removed from social media and the only thing I received was an email saying that I have violated a policy which Facebook did not disclose. I think it may have something to do with some policy updates Facebook did with the recent ‘Black Lives Matter’ moment and obey the growing public pressure on Racism. But I had never knowingly been involved in any such activities, so it is a mystery to date for me on why my store, which was over 4 years old, got banned from Facebook.” (Male, 22 years, Kalutara)

Future Growth: According to the interviews, many started a small-scale delivery-only textile shop with less capital requirements as a part-time income source. However, when this small-scale shop grows gradually, many respondents plan to expand their delivery-only small-scale textile shops into a traditional physical store. However, this expansion is a long-term plan for all respondents. In the short term, their aim is to operate as much as possible through online. Respondents believed that moving on to a physical location is inevitable if their stores keep growing.

A respondent from Kandy, who have not only social media stores but also a website as well and moving from small scale to medium-scale, shared his thoughts on future growth potential of online store as,

“I firmly believe that it is indeed inevitable to move into a physical store if my store keep growing the way it grown in last year or so. I have started this business when I was in first year of my university and now, I am at final year and I have partnered with several others in turning this small-scale textile

business to a medium scale one. However, moving onto a physical store is not in my short-term goals.. However, when things get back to normal (Covid pandemic is over) and I have a spending capacity to go into a physical store, I wouldn’t say no to that. (Male, 24 years, Kandy)

Conclusion

The following table (Table 1) summarizes the findings of this study.

Table 5: Summary of Findings

Key Themes	Sub Themes	Meaning
Social Media Presence	Facebook vs. Instagram	Facebook and Instagram were found o be the leading social media platforms for small textile shop owners.
	Paid Advertising and Target Marketing	The significant aspect highlighted by the respondents was the advertising facilities provided by social media platforms for their sellers. One prominent feature of advertising on Social Media is the ‘Target Marketing’ option, where the exact audience can be reached and optimized the advertising budget.
	Customer Interaction	The interactivity through social media was found as important especially in pre-purchase, purchase and post-purchase stages.
Point of Difference	Islandwide Free Cash on Delivery	The majority of small-scale shop owners do island-wide free delivery using ‘Cash on Delivery’ method. However, some sellers targeted a specific geographical area and some sellers offered card payments and bank transfers apart from cash on delivery payments.
	Replacement, Refund and Return Policies	All respondents offer replacements if a customer is not satisfied with the purchase, while only a few offer full refunds. Few sellers arrange free returns by paying local courier services themselves, while one seller

		charged the customer for return courier service.
	Ease of Access vs. Lack of Physical Store	The main advantage of online delivery only shops highlighted by respondents was the ease of access for customers while the main disadvantage was the lack of physical locations to try out clothes before purchasing.
The effect of Situational Factors	Crisis handling	The researcher found that two major incidents in Sri Lanka last year, Easter Sunday Attacks 2019 and Covid-19 Pandemic 2020/2021 had mainly positive effects on delivery only textile shop owners.
	Social Media Packages by Internet Service Providers	Special data packages introduced by Sri Lankan Internet Service Providers (ISP) were seen as a major factor by the respondents since it allows customers as well as sellers to surf through social media platforms for a minimum monthly data charge.
Back-up Plan	Policies of Social Media Platforms	Few respondents have lost access to their stores due to frequent policy changes done by Facebook and other leading social media platforms. Most of the respondents had back-up plans if something happens for their stores in the future.
	Future Growth	The researcher found that most respondents are interested in expanding their small-scale delivery only textile shops to physical stores based on the success they get online. However, these expansions were not short-term goals of them, and most sellers were happy with continuing their stores online with the help of Social Media.

Source: The authors

Discussion

According to the interviews, researchers found that Facebook and Instagram to be the most dominant two social media platforms for small-scale delivery only textile shop owners in social media. Another insight founding was the Paid advertising campaigns run by shop owners targeting the exact audience they need to market their products with the help of inbuilt advertising tools on almost all social media platforms. Based on the findings, the researcher can conclude that customer interaction plays a major role especially in online small-scale textile businesses, since customers can make or break a small-scale shop through their behavior. According to the literature, the emergence of Internet-based social media has made it possible for one person to speak with hundreds or maybe thousands of people about products (Chu and Kim, 2011). Thus, the impact of consumer-to-consumer communications has been dramatically magnified within the marketplace (Karimi and Naghibi, 2015). Therefore, interacting with the customers in a friendly manner and satisfying their needs to the fullest was a significant insight brought forward by the respondents (Vollmer and Precourt, 2008). Previous researchers pointed out fundamental changes and improvements in businesses in terms of ease of contact, volume, speed, and nature of these interactions due to the use of social

media (Gallaugh and Ransbotham, 2010).

Similar to this study, Dahnil et al. (2014) also explained the importance of social media to accomplish business goals such as expanding the delivery network. Qualman (2012) points out opportunities such as coverage and ease of access as massive in social media platforms. As this study points out, the positive effect of situational factors such as Easter Sunday attacks and Covid-19 pandemic to the businesses who perform on online platforms, Tran (2021) also shows how online companies can be advantaged during the periods of consumer travel restrictions occur. Finally, this study identified the importance of having a back-up plan to deal with the frequent policy changes of social media platforms and the future growth potential of current small-scale delivery-only textile shops and their owners. Similarly, Hormozi et al. (2002) point out the requirement of having back-up plans, especially for small businesses who run their businesses on limited platforms.

Theoretical Contributions

This study investigates a timely issue that has received rare attention, especially in the Sri Lankan context. The study discovered that Facebook and Instagram are more popular among small-scale delivery-only textile shop owners among many social media platforms. Moreover, the importance of paid advertising campaigns and points of

differentiation achieved through island-wide free cash on delivery, replacement, refund, and return policies, and ease of access were recognized. The value of having back-up plans and the influence of situational factors were also identified as critical in using social media as sole communication platforms.

Practical Implications

The study found that the trend of starting small-scale delivery only textile shops from the household basis is increasing and using social media as marketing and communication platforms. Further, most of the businesses were found in Colombo district in Western Province, indicating that online delivery is still mostly limited to the urban areas in the country. Thus, the business organizations in textile can expand their online deliveries to the other areas in Sri Lanka would provide the first-mover advantage in the market since this small-scale delivery only textile shops are an emerging trend in social media and online shopping. As the study found, businesses can pay attention to how to differentiate their online platforms to get competitive advantages. Further, businesses need to pay attention to how to arrange deliveries, possible payment modes such as whether cash on delivery or online payments, and arrange replacement, refund, and return policies. Because these factors would be highly material for online delivery businesses. Further, suppose the business organization do their businesses only through social

media platforms, in that case, the study recommends them to have back-up plans for expanding the delivery network through other modes of delivery.

Limitations and Future Research Directions

The study was limited to a set of participants selected from company clients and personal contacts, where the majority of them are in the Colombo district and are in a similar social status with similar educational levels. Hence, the individuals' diversity was being limited. Instead, selecting a diversified sample varying on their geographical locations, social status, and educational backgrounds could have a chance of having rich and diversified insights to the study.

Future research can be initiated from the buyer perspective instead of the seller perspective in order to explore the conditions, issues, and trends in small-scale delivery-only textile businesses. It would be valuable if future practitioners could get the view of the digital marketing experts, textile industry specialists, advertising agencies, and professionals in the field to understand the way forward for online businesses, particularly SMEs who run businesses via online platforms.

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Competing Interests

The authors declare no competing interests

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