The Impact of Facebook Marketing on Customer-Based Brand Equity and Purchase Intention on Fashionwear Retail Industry in Sri Lanka

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ABSTRACT

Purpose –*This study focuses on examining the impact of Facebook marketing components on customer-based brand equity (CBBE) and purchase intention (PI).*

Design/methodology/approach – *A conceptual model was developed based on the literature and related hypotheses were tested based on the responses of 390 Facebook (FB) fans of four leading fashion-wear retailers in Sri Lanka who have been selected on a random basis. The data was collected using an online survey and analyzed using the structural equation modeling.*

Findings- *The results indicate that Facebook marketing has a strong impact on customer-based brand equity. The items entertainment, reputation and relationship remain for Facebook marketing construct to test its impact on customer-based brand equity. This finding helps to recognize the role of Facebook marketing from the strategic point of view, confirming its significant contribution in taking a brand to the next level. Furthermore, the direct impact of Facebook marketing on purchase intention was not significant and customer-based brand equity fully mediates the relationship between Facebook marketing and purchase intention.*

Originality –*This research applies the Honeycomb model which is a rarely used model to identify the components of Facebook marketing. Hence, this can be identified as one of first this kind of research in Sri Lanka. Further, this study address Fashion-wear retail industry which another important but understudied sector in Sri Lanka.*

Implications – *This article connects the consumers' opinion on Facebook marketing. The findings of Facebook marketing on taking brand equity into next level will be useful for decision making in business organizations. The effective use of social media will reduce the promotional expenses. Further, the application of Honeycomb model shows the appropriate criteria for Facebook marketing and fill the gap of the unavailability of criteria for social marketing evaluation.*

Keywords – *Facebook, Digital Marketing, Social Media, Brand Equity, Purchase Intention, Fashionwear, Retail*

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INTRODUCTION

The world has stepped into a new era in the past decade with the rapid popularity of social media (SM). Its power spreads to each and every corner and transforms human beings into a new pattern of life. Today, SM is a tightly bound element in the lifestyle of people. Luttrell, (2018) reveals that one-third of women aged 18-34 browse Facebook as the first task in the morning. This surprisingly tight relationship between the FB and humans saw this medium evolving as the most trusted source of information. Majority of youth move away from relying on other information sources such as newspaper, TV, radio and shifted to the habit of believing Facebook (FB) as a reliable source of information.

The impact of SM in the field of business is massive. While the society is heading towards the technological orientation, business firms which are experts in SM grab all opportunities in the marketplace. Despite the size or expertise in the industry, cleverness of business firms in the SM platform makes them progress as great players in the industry. Fashion-wear is an industry which fits in adequately to this platform due to its nature being glamorous (Ahmad et al., 2015). Customers also prefer to spend time watching elegant models wearing trendy outfits. These images provide a psychological satisfaction to customers in line with their expected entertainment from SM. SM platform is an open ground which provides immense opportunities for fashion-wear retailers enabling their businesses to thrive. While large players in the market struggle to fit into this SM platform, new players who are clever in this field grab this opportunity in the market. Further, these new players prove FB's potential as a business take off tool for fashion brands (Kim and Ko, 2012).

When considering the Sri Lankan context, the spending pattern of Sri Lankans is considerably different to that of South Asian and Southeast Asian countries. Sri Lankan, people spend largely on lifestyle and luxury products (Oxford Business Group, 2017). Further, with the increasing commonality of SM among the Sri Lankan consumer, a new kind of purchasing behaviour emerges. Shopping in digital space is growing along with the number of millennials who embrace the lifestyle of the digital world. Although this trend enhances the popularity of FB Day by day as a business tool and digital presence has been identified as a fertile breeding ground for fashion retailers (Lanka Business Online, 2015), only 10% – 15% apparel retailers in Sri Lanka are on online (Sandunima *et al.*, 2019). The others who are having online presence also expects the number of likes, comments, shares and sales generation (Rajapakahs and Thilina, 2020). This limited understanding generates doubts among the business firms as practitioners regarding the outcome of FB marketing (Hutter et al., 2013). In addition, many studies in this field have not extended beyond the focus on bottom-line improvement (Coursaris et al.,2016). To fill this vacuum, thus, this study focuses mainly on identifying impact of FB marketing emphasizing on the Sri Lankan fashion-retail industry to take a brand to the next level while investing in FB as a tool for bottom-line improvement. As a result, the goal of this research is to determine the influence of Facebook marketing on CBBE and purchase intent. It also focuses on determining the significance of CBBE as a mediating factor in the interaction between Facebook marketing and purchase intent.

The first part of this paper is a review of the existing literature on Facebook marketing and CBBE. It then goes into detail on the scale development process as well as how to examine the scale's reliability and validity. Finally, the paper summarizes the findings and recommendations, as well as suggested avenues for future research to better understand the effect of Facebook marketing.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Facebook marketing

Remarkably, scholarly publications rarely carry the definition of FB marketing. Thus, the definition has been adopted and referred from other sources that are non-academic. FB marketing can be defined as the practice of promoting a brand and maintaining its presence on FB (www.bigcommerce.com, 2019). Another definition of FB marketing refers to creating—and actively using—a FB page as a communications channel to maintain contact with, and attract customers (Marketing-Schools.org, 2019). The popularity of FB as a SM tool worldwide and its vast fan base, lures business firms to use it as a communication tool. With the brand presence on FB, consumers can interact with brands in the same way they interact with their friends (Pinto and Yagnik, 2017). Thus, it paves opportunity for brands to go beyond the role of a communication tool and build relationships with customers. Further, the marketing tools available in FB marketing allow marketers to practice micro marketing by targeting a one-to one customer base. The power of FB converts the passive recipients into influential activists. Further, customers' confidence in the brands which are available on FB is comparatively high (Kavisekera and Abeysekera, 2016). However, a conflict occurs between the motives of two parties– i.e., motives of FB users and those of brands in FB. While users expect entertainment from FB, brands expect to sell something (Husain et al.,2016). These two motives which are not well connected create inefficiency in this digital platform. Further, brands need to be vigilant in every single use of their FB. If the target customers feel that the brand is genuine and breaches trust, it can trigger to dilute the brand image within seconds (Pinto and Yagnik, 2017).

The components of FB marketing have been identified differently according to various sources. Jayasuriya et al., (2018) summarized these components used in scholarly articles. In this analysis, entertainment, interaction, trendiness customization, and word of mouth have been identified as the popular components used to describe FB marketing. Smith, (2007) introduced a special model for SM named as the SM Honeycomb. However, this model has not been adequately employed in past studies. However, (Kietzmann et al., 2011) have extended this study and found out the implications on the building blocks of the SM Honeycomb model function differently in various platforms. Accordingly, presence, identity, relationship, reputation, and conversation have been identified as the important components of FB marketing (Figure 1). Regardless of many studies conducted in identifying the components of FB marketing, studies identifying the contribution of these components taking the brand to the next level, are limited (Jayasuriya and Azam, 2018).

Figure 1: Honeycomb model components important for Facebook Marketing
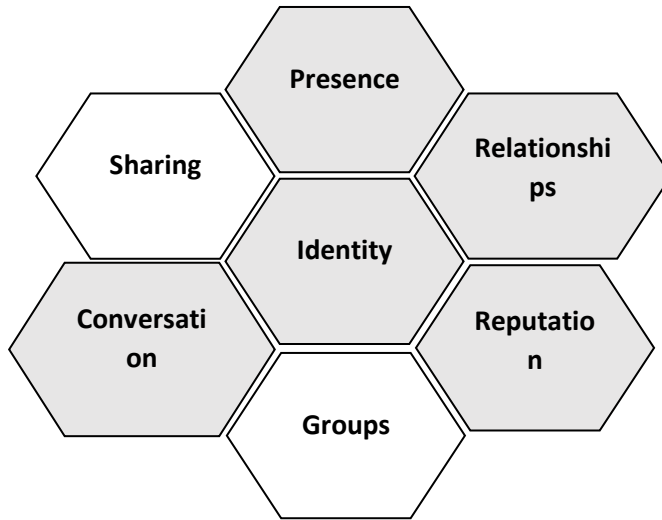
Source: (Kietzmann et al., 2011)

Perception related to the virtual or physical location of a person is considered as the Presence in the Honeycomb model. In the SM context, the perception of presence is highly important for SM platforms like Skype, MSN and Viber. Users can post their status updates and check-ins on such networks. However, a later study by Kietzmann et al. (2012) found that presence is less important on social media platforms like LinkedIn, Facebook, and YouTube. On this basis, the presence component has been omitted from this study.

The identity block describes how much information users reveal about themselves on the SM platform. This is beyond the disclosure of demographic information such as name age, and occupation. Some users manage their identity differently in various platforms. For instance, by protecting their identity (e.g. blog), using their personal identity to be in touch with friends (e.g. Facebook) and presenting a professional identify for self-branding (e.g. LinkedIn) (Jones, 2007). In an organizational setting, the corporate name, logo, slogan, color and website design, as well as the description mentioned under the "About" section, reveal their identity to the visitors (Hamzah et al., 2014).

The degree of interaction between different parties in FB is considered as the conversation building box. Many SM platforms have been designed in a manner to enhance conversations (Jones, 2007). The SM presence of business firms has enabled customers to interact with such firms. In order to encourage customers, organizations have to actively engage with their visitors using discussions, competitions and practical supports (Godey *et al.*, 2016).

Reputation can be used to predict future behavior based on previous behaviors. To put it another way, reputation is concerned with the development and maintenance of trust

between parties (Jones, 2007). Building trust needs to be achieved overtime. Companies which have a high visibility and are morally responsible can be considered to have a high reputation (Ghafoor et al., 2016).

The extent to which users can relate themselves to others has been discussed in the relationship building blocks. Consumers who have built some form of relationship may converse, share, or at least list these retailers/brands as their friends in FB. This relationship network is comparatively large in relation to the influencers in SM (Jones, 2007). In this sense, in order to be more influential, organizations which involve in FB marketing need to widen their relationship network with their customers (Babac, 2011). Consumers also prefer to have a relationship with companies which are considered as innovative, ambitious, ingenious and hardworking (Veloutsou and Moutinho, 2009).

In addition to the above mentioned elements, the literature analysis conducted Jayasuriya et al., 2018 discovered entertainment and electronic word of mouth as the most popular elements in SM. Hence these two elements were also incorporated to the study. Entertainment is a combination of fun, excitement, cool and play. Studies have identified entertainment as the main motive behind the use of SM and user-generated content (Godey et al., 2016). Similarly, consumers visit SM with the intention of seeking entertainment and business firms engage in SM with the intention to sell something. Entertainment has been recognized as a great way of getting closer to customers and business firms, thinning the line between marketing communication and entertainment. Consequently, business firms focus on developing brand-related content that are high in entertainment element (Lou and Koh, 2016).

E-WoM (electronic word of Mouth) can be defined as any positive or negative statement made by consumers or non-consumers in relation to a product or service (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004). To date, as a peer to peer communication medium, e-WoM is popular and widely used in terms of credibility and trustworthiness (Kapoor et al., 2013). In the SM, people use e-WoM to seek, give, and pass opinions (Godey et al., 2016). Hence, a consumer who is satisfied with a product may upload a picture/image of it while a dissatisfied may post a negative comment (Nigam, 2012). When a user posts a "like" on a certain brand, this news is instantly broadcasted in the respective brand's newsfeeds, thus, generates a "passive word of mouth" (Ramadan, 2017). Considering these facts, e-WoM can make a significant/high impact on Brand Equity (BE).

Facebook Marketing in Fashion-wear Industry

Fashion firms have recognized the value of social media communication for communicating with clients in recent years. Karamian et.al., , (2015) mentioned that Facebook is already considered as the business take-off tool for Fashion brands. This study was conducted in Major shopping districts in Esfahan and target audience was selected in convenient sampling method. The favorable and significant influence of social media marketing on brand loyalty, brand awareness, and perceived quality has been established based on the 315 responses to this study. Jayasuriya and Azam,

(2018) developed a conceptual framework based on a review of literature and in there SM marketing variables have been identified as identity, conversation, reputation and relationship and their relationship with brand equity components have been discussed. Kim and Ko, (2012) study on luxury fashion brands identified five contracts as entertainment, interaction, trendiness, customization, and word of mouth as the factors that impact on value equity, customer equity and brand equity. Respondents were selected based on convenience sampling method and data was analyzed using the structural equation modelling.

In the fashion-wear retail, the fast fashion industry is rapidly evolving. The fashion-conscious section of the market, according to Hayes and Jones (2006), is likely to be turbulent, rapidly changing, and difficult to predict. Further, Salem and Salem, (2019) also mentioned that consumer behavior towards fast fashion is still not fully explored. This study was conducted in Malaysia with 240 respondents selected in convenient sampling method. The data was analyzed using the PLS-SEM method, and the results show that SM has an indirect positive impact on several stages of brand loyalty via brand love and brand consciousness. Escobar-Rodrguez and Bonsón-Fernández, (2017) conducted a content study on Facebook postings, analyzing 2,326 FB posts from 46 international fashion industry leaders. The results indicates that photo albums and videos are the most popular items in the contents of the top fashion retailers FB. Furthermore, a research of Zara fans and non-fans discovered that Facebook strengthens consumer relationships for Zara fans more than for non-fans.

Customer-based Brand Equity

Aaker (2000) and Keller (1993) who are the leading researchers in the field of BE conceptualized Customer-based Brand Equity(CBBE) in two different ways. However, both of them discuss the BE in the customer perspective. Aaker (2000, p 15), provides most controversial definition for BE, as "a set of brand assets and liabilities linked to a brand name and symbol that add or subtract from the value provided by a product or service to a firm and/or to that firm's customers" Keller (1993) identifies two streams of BE as CBBE and firm-based brand equity. According to these findings, CBBE is "the differential effect that brand knowledge has on consumer response to the marketing of that brand" (Keller, 1993). According to Aaker (2000) , the four most crucial components in the customer's perspective are brand awareness, brand association, perceived quality, and brand loyalty.

Brand awareness is one of the four components, and it refers to a customer's capacity to recognize or memorize a brand in a new scenario (Aaker, 1991). The awareness of the brand increases its likelihood to be selected in a future purchase (Keller, 1993). Customers recognize features which are linked to a brand which is called as brand association. This recognition becomes stronger when customers are increasingly exposed to, and experience the brand (Aaker, 1991). Perceived quality is the customers' impression about the superiority or inferiority of the products which falls under a brand name (Kumar et al.,2013). Specific product factors, such as price, features, look, components, ads, and brand name, have an impact on how this

perception is formed (Ramaseshan and Tsao, 2007). Brand loyalty is identified as the consumers' behavior in response to a brand-related stimuli. Customers also declare that they purchase, or are willing to purchase a certain product in future (Godey et al., 2016), or their commitment to repurchase can be identified as brand loyalty (Kumar et al.,2013). Brand loyalty, is considered as the core element of CBBE, among others in BE (Aaker, 1996).

By presenting the 'Impact of Social Media Use on Brand Equity' model (ISMBE), Babac (2011) combined the components of the Honeycomb model to BE. The impact of each component of the Honeycomb model has been identified with each component of BE separately. According to this study, identity and conversation have an impact on brand awareness while reputation and relationship have an impact on perceived quality and brand loyalty, respectively. Further, the studies of Godey et al., (2016), (Bruhn et al.,2012), Coursaris et al., (2016) and Schivinski and Dabrowski (2016) prove that SM communication has an impact on BE. As a result, this study expects that the FB marketing of fashion-wear retailers has an impact on CBBE. The following hypothesis is developed to examine that effect.

H1: There is a significant positive impact of FB marketing on CBBE.

Purchase Intention

Purchase intention can be defined as "the consumers' possibility of purchasing in future" (Kim and Ko, 2010, p.167). This behavior has been formed as a result of the positive attitude of consumers towards a certain brand. This positive attitude led consumers to evaluate the quality of a product/service favorably and select the same brand (Park et al.,2010). Applying these findings to the context of the study, PI can be described as the intention to purchase from the same retailer. Previous research has shown that consumers' perceptions and attitudes regarding social media advertisements have an impact on their purchase intent. Consumers consider SM advertisements as information source and purchase intention can be identified as the ultimate point of accepting these advertisements (Yeo, S.F., Tan, C.L., Lim, 2020). Thus, customer satisfaction and purchasing decisions are influenced by the information features of adverts.

As a result, understanding customer buying behavior is critical for a company's ability to attract and keep customers (Kim and Ko, 2010).

Brand Equity and Purchase Intention

Extensive debates remain as to how CBBE is beneficial for an organization (Godey et al., 2016). Despite these disagreements, most of the researchers agree on the strong contribution of BE on brand preference, PI, willingness to pay the price premium and brand loyalty (Aaker, 1991).Kim and Ko (2012) reveal that BE generated by SM marketing has a significant impact on the future purchasing behavior

of customers. For products and services that have a high visibility of consumption, FB would be highly important due to the public consumption process and high involvement for decision making (Gensler et al.,2013). Based on this literature following hypothesis are drawn on the influence of BE and the PI of fashion-wear customers.

H2: There is a significant positive impact of CBBE on PI.

Facebook Marketing and Purchase Intention

FB is considered as a fashionable way to advertise. Moreover, consumers are willing to purchase brands which have more "likes" and "shares" that suggest the brand is a reputable one (Dehghani and Tumer, 2015). In the study of Kim and Ko (2012), entertainment has been identified as the main element which has the highest impact on PI. Both, the user-generated and firm-generated content work in the context of FB. Among these, user-generated content has been discovered as the most influential method (Pütter, 2017). However, several data contradict one other, implying a skewed relationship between social media marketing (SMM) and the PI. In the study of (Bruhn, Schoenmueller and Schäfer, 2012) found an indirect effect of SMM on PI via brand attitude. The direct relationship between SMM and PI was found to be weak. A similar indirect relationship confirmed in the study of Dehghani and Tumer (2015) reveals that the impact of SMM extends through the BE to PI. In this study, BE was found to be the complete mediator proving that the direct impact of SM marketing of PI is not significant. Based on these findings, two hypotheses have been developed as follows.

H3: There is a significant positive impact of FB marketing on the PI.
H4: CBBE mediates the relationship between FB marketing and PI

METHODOLOGY

The proposed framework was created based on the literature review. Accordingly, FB marketing has seven dimensions. CBBE is identified as the mediator which consists of four subdomains. Both these FB marketing variables and CBBE variables are identified as having a direct relationship to PI (Figure2).
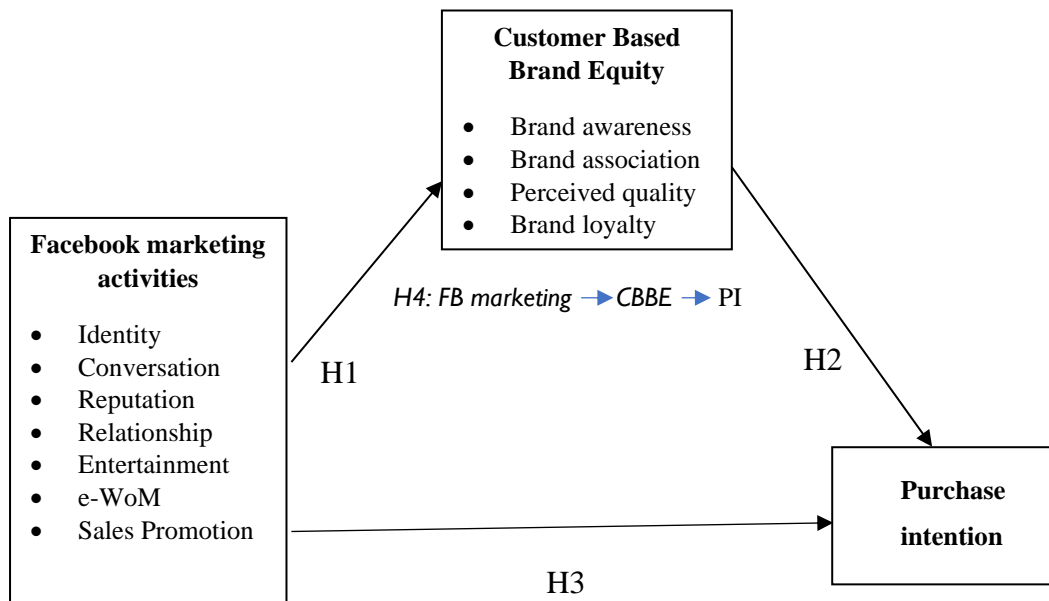
Figure 2: Conceptual Framework

Source: Based on Author's observations.

Measures

The questionnaire items for this study were created from previous literature and then altered and amended based on the results of the pilot survey. Measures of the social media marketing dimensions are adapted from Kim & Ko, (2010), Kim & Ko, (2012) and Tresna & Wijaya, (2015). The brand equity components are adapted from Kim & Hyun, (2011) and Kumar & Purwar, (2013). Further, the measures of the purchase intention are adapted from (Moradi and Zarei, 2012), (Vinh and Huy, 2016), (Anselmsson and Bondesson, 2013), (Netemeyer *et al.*, 2004). All the items are used 5-point likert scale with anchors strongly disagree (1) and strongly agree (5).

Pilot Study

This study's findings are based on primary data acquired from Facebook friends of Sri Lankan fashion stores. In the first stage of the survey, responses were gathered to identify the most popular Fashion-ware retailers in the country. Following convenience sampling, an online query delivered via messenger was used to obtain 30 replies. According to responses, majority of these respondents experience the FB marketing activities of fashion-wear retail brands such as Kelly Felder, GFlock, Fashionmarket.lk and ODEL. Hence, rest of the research is based on the customer base of these retailers. In the second stage, a pilot survey has been conducted among 40 responses based on convenience sampling selected from those retailers' Facebook pages. The survey was performed on FB platform via Messenger. Based on the results of this pilot survey, few variables which were not properly contributed to measure the relevant concepts were eliminated.

Sample Design

The data were collected from FB fans of four leading fashion-wear retailers who are active in FB marketing namely, Kelly Felder, GFlock, Fashionmarket.lk and ODEL. All four retailers handle fashion-wear products for both men and women. The FB fan pages of these four retailers have been accessed with due permission for data collection. Using these databases, a disproportionate random sample has been selected for the study. This sampling method has been chosen due to unequal number of customers (Table 2)

Table 2: Sample Size Selection

Retailer	Kelly Felder	GFlock	Fashionmarket.lk	ODEL
Facebook community	448,720	439,848	214,379	766,384
Percentage	24%	24%	11%	41%
Sample	144	144	66	246
Responses received	90	85	45	170

The survey was conducted via Messenger on the Facebook platform. Collecting data through the Facebook network helps academics overcome major challenges in social science research by allowing them to access a big and diverse sample. Thereby, researchers can reduce over-reliance on small, students and WEIRD (Western, educated, industrialized, rich and democratic) samples. Furthermore, FB provides a great opportunity for researchers to gather data in a natural environment rather than through self-reported or laboratory base studies (Kosinski et al., 2015).

FINDINGS

In total, 600 questionnaires were distributed online, and 390 usable responses were received. Respondents were not compensated. The 65% response rate experienced is in line with the 69% response rate in similar contexts in past studies (Kavisekera and Abeysekera, 2016). The profile of respondents is presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Profile of Respondents

Measure	Item	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Female	261	67
	Male	129	33
Age	Under 23	93	23.8

	24 – 29	130	33.3
	30 – 34	84	21.5
	35 – 39	55	14.1
	40 – 44	13	3.3
	45 – 50	06	1.5
	50 above	09	2.3
Occupation	Senior manager	45	11.5
	Manager	80	20.5
	Executive	81	20.7
	Entry-level employee	38	9.7
	Non-administrative employee	22	5.6
	Self-employed	16	4.1
	Student	80	20.5
	Unemployed	28	7.1
Education	High School	15	3.8
	Diploma	26	6.7
	Degree	195	50
	Professional qualification	25	6.4
	Master's degree	122	31.3
	Doctorate degree	7	1.8

After data collection, exploratory factor analysis and reliability analysis were conducted to analyze the sample adequacy and internal consistency of the constructs using SPSS software. Then the measurement model was developed using Amos software and analyzed the goodness-of-fit indexes. Based on that the structural model was developed and hypotheses were tested using the structural regression analysis.

Measurement Model

The main data set underwent the reliability analysis of all items which exceeded the alpha coefficient of 0.7. It clearly shows that all underlying instruments are internally consistent, implying that the same construct's dependability is justified (Table 4). Factor analysis was used as the second stage, and it was subjected to principal component analysis with Varimax rotation. The analysis produced three-factor solution which accounts for 67.5% variation shown in Table 4.

Table 4: Factor Analysis

Construct	Measurement Items	Factor Loading	Cronbach's alpha	Single Factor Extraction	KMO Measure	Bartlett's Test of Sphericity
Facebook Marketing	• Easy to share its Facebook page information with your friends • Easy to have a conversation with others on this Facebook page • Easy to exchange your opinion through this Facebook page • This retailer replies for customer comments on its Facebook page • This retailer receives positive feedback from customers • Other customers recommend this retailer • What kind of reputation this retailer has among colleges/friends and family • How do you rate the reputation of your favorite fashion-wear retailer • This retailer is reliable for transactions • It is fun to collect information on fashion-ware brands or fashion items through this Facebook page • Contents in the Facebook page is interesting • It is exciting to use this Facebook page • I would like to share interesting information on this Facebook page with my friends • I like to upload contents of this retailer's Facebook page to my Facebook page • I would like to share opinions on brands, items, or services acquired from this retailer's Facebook page with my friends	.625 .543 .586 .618 .655 .702 .673 .540 .668 .680 .709 .538 .524 .614 .762	0.858	**69.36%**	**0.839**	0.000

	• This retailer provides price discounts more frequently than competing brands	.614			
	• This retailer frequently offers gifts	.762			
	• This retailer uses gifts more frequently than competing brands	.793			
Customer-Based Brand Equity	• I am aware of the brand of this fashion-wear retailer.	0.622	0.887	67.14%	0.874	0.000
	• Characteristics of this fashion-wear retailer brand come to my mind quickly.	0.713				
	• The overall quality of the products provided by this retailer is excellent	0.758				
	• The high quality of this Fashion-wear retailer is consistent	0.749				
	• This retailer has a higher quality than other fashion-wear retailer brands in Sri Lanka	0.686				
	• I am satisfied with this fashion-wear retailer	0.783				
	• I regularly visit this retailer brand on Facebook	0.648				
	• I intend to visit this retailer brand again	0.810				
	• If anyone asks me which Fashion-wear retailer to choose, I will recommend this retailer	0.824				
Purchase Intention	• I will definitely buy products from this retailer in the near future	.860	0.848	64.7%	0.879	0.000
	• It is likely that I will purchase from this retailer in the near future	.733				
	• I would buy from this retailer rather than any other retailer	.733				
	• I am willing to recommend others to buy from this retailer	.821				
	• I think this retailer is superior to other competing retailer brands	.780				
	• When considering purchasing fashion-wear products I would consider this retailer first	.838				

Note: KMO: Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin

The reliability of the data set was further analyzed by Average Variance Extraction and Composite Reliability statistics. It is recommended that the variance extraction value is above 0.5 whereas the composite reliability value is above 0.7 (Hair, 2015). These values are presented in Table 5. Accordingly, this result attests the internal consistency of the instrument.

Table 5: Reliability and Validity Assessment

Construct	No. of Items	AVE	Composite Reliability	Cronbach's Alpha
Facebook Marketing				
Reputation	5	0.537	0.852	0.839
Sales Promotion	3	0.754	0.901	0.863
Conversation	4	0.525	0.813	0.714
WoM	3	0.623	0.832	0.786
Entertainment	3	0.576	0.801	0.840
Customer-Based Brand Equity	9	0.541	0.913	0.887
Purchase Intention	7	0.647	0.916	0.890

Note: AVE : Average Variance Extracted, WoM: Word of Mouth

Model Fit

Once internal consistency was confirmed, the model fit was ensured through Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA), Confirmatory Fit Index (CFI) and Chi square (CMIN/DF). After excluding five items which are below the 0.6-factor loading and combining 10 items which have a modification index above 15, the measurement model showed that all indexes were within acceptable ranges (p = 0.000, CMIN/DF = 3.320, CFI 0.915, RMSEA = 0.077), thus, indicating that the model had excellent goodness of fit (Awang, 2014).

The structural model also was tested against the model fit. The results were within the acceptable range (p = 0.000, CMIN/DF = 3.320, CFI 0.915, RMSEA = 0.077) supporting the goodness of fit of the structural model used in the study. Figures 3 and 4 show results of hypothesis testing.

Hypothesis Testing

Hypotheses have been tested using structural equation model. The results of this analysis shown in Figures 3.
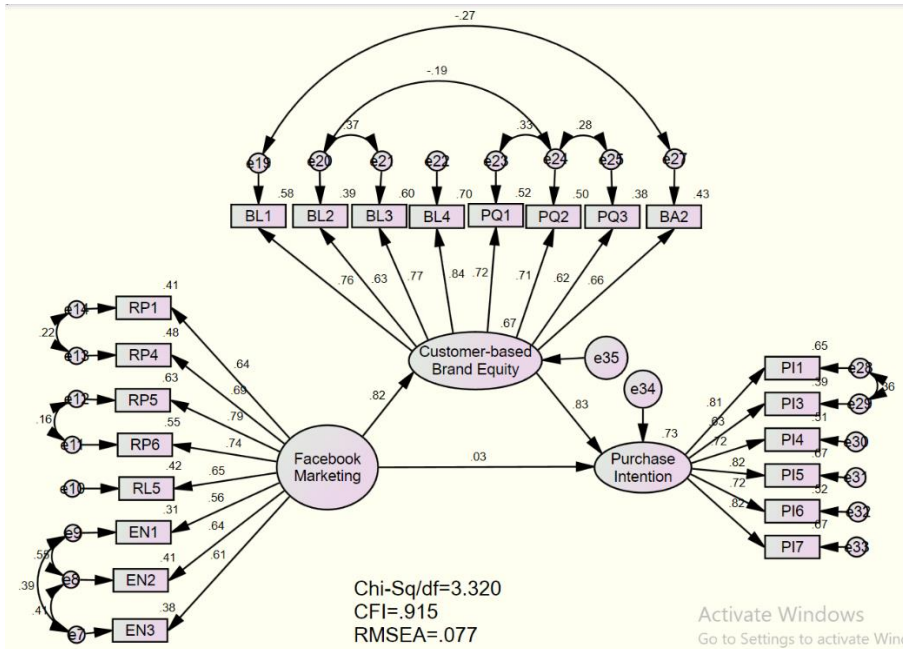
Figure 3: The Standard Regression Weights

Source: Author

As shown in Figure 4, the standardized beta estimate for the effect of FB marketing on CBBE is 0.82, while the standardized beta estimate for CBBE on FBM is 0.86. The value of the coefficient of determination R2 of CBBE is 0.67 and R2 of PI is 0.73.

Hypothesis 1: There is a significant positive impact of FB marketing on CBBE.

H1 is tested with a structural equation model. The impact of FB marketing on CBBE is significant at (β=0.82, p<0.001)

Hypothesis 2: There is a significant positive impact of CBBE on PI.

The study verifies that CBBE has a significant positive impact (β=0.85, p<0.001) on the PI of customers in the fashion-wear retail industry.

Hypothesis 3: There is a significant positive impact of FB marketing on PI.

The study does not support the above hypothesis which proves a non-significant result (p>0.001) and accounts for 3.6% variance in the PI. It indicates that there is no significant impact of FB marketing on PI in the fashion-wear retail industry. Further, this finding proves that FB marketing is highly relevant when building a brand rather than generating a PI. Thus, focusing on brand building rather than increasing sales via FB marketing would be much fruitful. (Table 7)

Hypothesis 4: CBBE mediates the relationship between FB marketing and PI.

To test the mediator effect, first the structural model was tested without the mediator (figure 4)
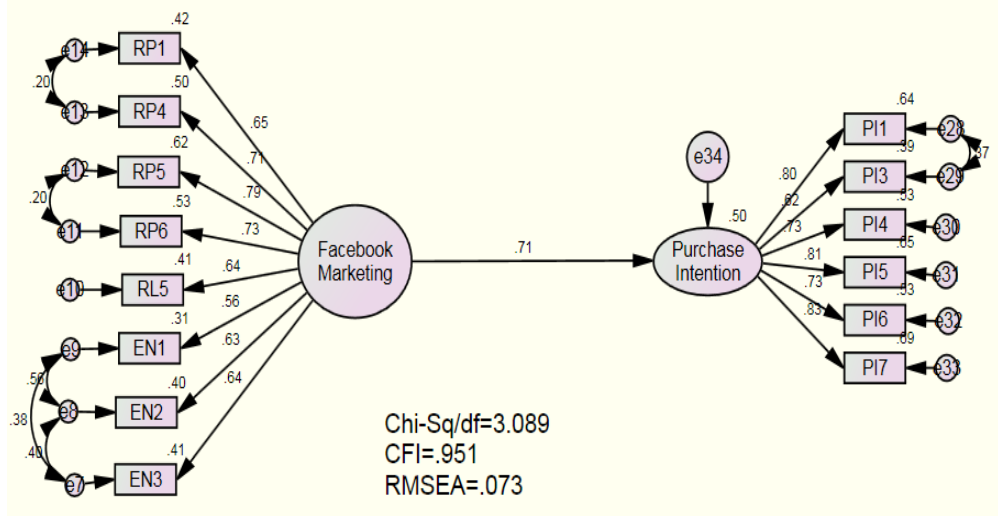
Figure 4: The Standard Regression Weights Facebook Marketing on Purchase Intention

The impact of FB marketing on PI when the mediator CBBE does not exist, is significant and accounts for 71% variance of PI (figure 5). Table 8 presents the causal effect of FB marketing on PI without CBBE. However, when the mediator (i.e., CBBE) enters the model, this value is reduced to 3.6% and as such, the impact becomes non-significant (figure 3). The strong relationship between FB marketing and CBBE may contribute to weaken the relationship between FB marketing and PI. Hence, CBBE becomes a complete mediator for FB marketing and PI. Table 7 presents the summary of regression analysis.

Table 7: The Regression Weights between Constructs

Path		Path	Estimate	Std. Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P	Result
CBBE	<- --	FB Marketing	0.871	0.819	.078	11.180	***	Significant
PI	<- --	CBBE	1.065	0.832	.119	8.933	***	Significant
PI	<- --	FB Marketing	.036	0.027	.112	.325	.745	Not Significant

Note: S.E: Standard Error, C.R: Critical Ratio, P: P value, CBBE: Customer-based Brand Equity, PI: Purchase Intention, FB: Facebook

Table 8: The Hypothesis Testing for the Causal Effect of FBM on PI (without CBBE)

Path		Path	The Actual Beta Values	S.E.	C.R.	P-value
PI	<---	FBM	.977	.096	10.154	0.001

DISCUSSION

This study provides new insights to the FB marketing practices of fashion-wear retailers, especially in the context of Sri Lanka. Valid components for FB marketing have been identified based on the Honeycomb model variables and past literature. Among these, items related to reputation, entertainment and relationship remain for FB marketing construct for final analysis. In relation to CBBE, the items related to brand loyalty, perceived quality and brand awareness remain. The other items have been removed in the stages of reliability, validity and achieving the model fit. Considering the FB activities, the brand reputation and entertainment remain as the impactful activities for CBBE and PI.

Furthermore, findings of this study disprove myths related to FB marketing. To date, FB marketing has been identified as a tactical tool rather than a strategic tool. However, with the effect of CBBE, the significant of FB marketing on PI was reduced significantly (from 71% to 3%); CBBE as the complete mediator proves the importance of building strong BE through FB marketing (Table 7). This outcome is consistent with prior research results that SM marketing had a positive impact on BE (Kim and Ko, 2012; Godey et al., 2016; Seo and Park, 2018).

The positive impact of CBBE (83 percent) on PI demonstrates that strong BE improves an organization's bottom line by having a significant impact on the target customer group's purchasing intention. Especially in an online context customer get limited space to experience the product. Further, customers are required to disclose credit card details and personal information in online purchases. As such, disclosing sensitive information of this nature can be risky. Hence, for secure electronic transactions in online purchases, customers tend to rely on experience with the brand or its reputation. Finally, the way a firm position themselves in the marketplace will have an impact on customers' PI. This result aligns with the studies of Vihn and Huy, (2016), Bruhn et al., (2012), Dehghani and Tumer, (2015). In a study on creative products, Chiu et al., (2016) were of the view that brand driven products which are embedded with perceived trustworthiness have a high preference to be purchased than those with other attributes.

The impact of FB marketing on PI was not significant (0.03), although relationships between FB marketing, CBBE and PI are significant. This result is caused due to two

reasons. When CBBE does not exist, FB marketing shows a significant impact over the PI (71%) (Table 8). However, with the existence of CBBE, the impact has drastically reduced to the level which is not significant (3%) (Table 7). On one hand, this finding helps to recognize CBBE as a complete mediator as it satisfies the requirements for PI. Furhter, it helps to understand the role of brand loyalty and reputation. Business firms should give priority to invest in building brand value rather than directly focusing on sales. Consequently, this strategic effort will generate revenue for the organization in long term. This finding is in conformity with the study of (Coursaris, Van Osch and Balogh, 2016)which reveals CBBE as a complete mediator and also with the study of (Bruhn, Schoenmueller and Schäfer, 2012) which suggests a weak relationship between FB marketing and PI.

THEORETICAL CONTRIBUTIONS

Overall, these results indicate a largely under-investigated area in the field of business. Perception is not clear among the business community about the role of FB marketing and its contribution to the enhancement of bottom-line organizational performance (Amarasinghe, 2012). This limited understanding points out to doubts/uncertainty among the practitioners (Hutter *et al.*, 2013). Hence, this study focusses on the importance to connect with consumer opinion, to provide recommendation for marketers, managers, and business owners. These findings will help to improve the overall effectiveness of Facebook marketing operations and their relative performance. For instance, a marketing practitioner may invest in FB marketing without hesitate because latter is perceived as a strategic tool. Expanding the findings of Smith (2007), the SM Honeycomb model provides a new step, with a forward looking perspective on FB marketing practices which have attracted FB users. In doing so, the adapted Honeycomb model was successfully operationalized in the fashion-wear retail sector. Furthermore, this study has contributed to the existing body of knowledge on FB marketing. In addition, this study also addresses the empirical gaps in understanding the impact of SM and brand building, an area which many researchers seek to explore (Schivinski and Dabrowski, 2016). Overall, the findings are valuable specially focusing the strategic importance of digital marketing in the fashion-retail industry in a Sri Lankan setting.

To date, Sri Lankan retailers remain doubtful on the impact of FB marketing to gauge the strength of this tool. As such, these findings can be useful to address such uncertainties, thereby to realize the potential of FB marketing. Majority of the Sri Lankan business sector deploy conventional methods (Thelijjagoda and Hennayake, 2015). However, based on the results of the study, it can be justified that business organizations can strategize the use FB marketing to build and strengthen their brands. Further, as marketing information that go viral are increasingly trusted in Sri Lanka (Fernando and Wijesundara, 2016), the retailers should prioritize the use of FB to build two-way communication with customers. Strategies of this nature can contribute to strengthen the brand image as well. The growth of business sector can be expected when FB marketing takes a strategic turn. It will ultimately add value to the economic development of the country.

PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

The practical implications drawn from this study involve dealing with business owners, managers and marketing experts who are ready to invest in the FB platform. These stakeholders can distinguish the capabilities of FB not only as a tactical tool but also as a strategic tool. With the growing interest of Facebook marketing, this study opens new opportunities for business firms to grow in future.

Further, this study fills the vacuum in research in the field of fashion-wear retail industry and contribute to the literature by providing a holistic framework that demonstrates the FBM impact on CBBE and purchase intention.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

Several limitations of this study are noted. Firstly, the FB fan databases of chosen retailers have been used for data collection. It is possible that some users have been omitted from the survey sample and framework of this study. Secondly, data collected via the online questionnaire and sent via Messenger are likely to encounter several commonly known limitations, such as non-responses and survey biases. Thirdly, the study was based mainly on the FB platform due to the less popularity of other social networks in the Sri Lankan context.

Following approach can be recommended for ongoing or future research. Firstly, the research studies can be extended to other social platforms like Linkedin, Instagram, Youtube and Twitter. Secondly, future researchers can study other key components of SMM practices which emerged along with the changes in technology and consumer behaviour. Thirdly, the study results can be used to do future study about the entertainment element in SM and its effective use of it. Fourth, researchers could undertake studies to identify the moderating impact of socio-demographic factors such as age, gender, income, and education, especially on fashion-wear retail industry in Sri Lanka.

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COMPETING INTERESTS

The authors declared no competing interests.

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