
Online Re-Purchase Intention of Apparel Products; The Mediation Role of E-Loyalty Among Millennials in Sri Lanka

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Abstract

Understanding how electronic word-of-mouth (E-WOM) influences customers' Online Re-purchase Intention (ORPI) is crucial since E-WOM has emerged as a powerful information source for digital consumers. This research study looks at how e-loyalty influences the relationship between the E-WOM aspect and Online Re-purchase Intention, specifically in the Sri Lankan Apparel industry. Data were collected from 211 survey respondents who had previously completed at least one online clothing purchase by millennials in the western province. The study aims to identify factors predicting ORPI and investigate the mediation effects of e-loyalty in the relationship between E-WOM factors and ORPI. Partially Least Squares (PLS) were chosen as the statistical method to assess the quantitative data due to the nature of the study and the complexity of the research model. The implication of findings reveals that online retailers may boost their customers' likelihood of making repeat purchases by giving them the tools to share favorable reviews around the Internet. The findings showed that two E-WOM Participating factors, E-WOM content and Intensity-have a favorable impact on E-Loyalty and ORPI, and found that E-Loyalty has partial mediation effects in the association between two participating factors of E-WOM and ORPI. The study's limitations include its focus on Sri Lanka, neglecting industry disparities, and limited resources to explore other factors impacting ORPI and E-Loyalty. Employers should leverage online reviews to understand customer perceptions and encourage repeat purchases. The government can aid creative industries by providing accurate information and supporting international sales for clothing businesses.

Keywords: Apparel, E-Loyalty, E-WOM, Online Re-Purchase Intention, Sri Lankan Millennials

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01. Introduction

The idea of web technology has started a complete platform to accommodate social network media to change the conventional mode of information dissemination, i.e., word of mouth, towards electronic word of mouth (Necula et al., 2018). To be clear on the issue mentioned above, it should be highlighted that with the development of technology, the idea of upfront reviews has been given a platform in the form of social media where customers can share their experiences concerning the goods and services supplied by the businesses (Oztemel & Gursev, 2020).

Sri Lanka's e-commerce sector has been overgrown in the past year ("Trends and Growth of Sri Lanka's E-commerce Industry - Features | Daily Mirror," 2020). Due to its vast impact on the world economy, the apparel industry is acknowledged as one of the most lucrative markets. It is a fast-paced sector that demands consistently adopting cutting-edge concepts and technology. Since the online clothes business is expanding, researchers and apparel marketers are interested in e-WOM. According to (Park & Lee, 2013), clothing items are symbolic objects that reflect a person's values, preferences, and social standing.

However, millennials have a strong desire to fit in and a strong urge to stand out and show how different they are; fashion trends and styles help this generation get the approval of their peers (Fernandez, 2009). According to Knox's (2012) study, customers constantly desire to experiment with new looks and experience the latest fashion trends. This desire is fueled by various goods and trends catering to constantly shifting fashion movements. Fashion items require a lot of effort to produce as well.

Some previous studies show that technological advancements have opened up more opportunities for information exchange, raising consumer awareness and spurring the market for apparel products to expand quickly. Due to recent developments in online communication, the earlier information sources, which were restricted to television, newspapers, radio, and magazines, have expanded. Consumers can directly share information with other consumers, manufacturers, and distributors. Many types of research also show that E-WOM is more trustworthy, empathetic, and relevant to customers than marketers who create information feeds on the web (Bickart & Schindler, 2001). When considering E-WOM, customers place 12 times more trust in other customer reviews (Yantina Debora, 2016), and consumers buy online naturally. Marketing research has previously identified that this behavior involves reading online reviews before purchasing.

In previous literature, researchers have identified two broad elements that can influence E word of mouth and examined whether those variables influence the consumers' re-purchase intention in the chosen setting to determine whether a group of customers is affected by E-trust and E-loyalty. Using the same methodology with few modifications, the author identified "E-loyalty," one key term from the literature on E-WOM, as an indicator of the E-WOM on online re-purchase behavior in the apparel industry. Previous researchers suggested the limitation of the research was ignorance of industrial differences and to examine the two aspects of E-WOM to a specific sector.

In the current study, electronic word-of-mouth (E-WOM) is examined from two dimensions. The first dimension is intensity, which refers to how often a person accesses information and

interacts with other social media users to gain knowledge about products or services provided by online retailers. The second dimension is content, which encompasses the information shared on social media regarding products or services. Various factors have been employed to analyze the correlation between E-WOM and purchasing intentions. Recent research suggests that the consumer's psychological state and the content found in customer reviews influence their inclination to make purchases through E-WOM (Knoll, 2016). The credibility of the information source plays a central role in determining the customer's level of confidence. Furthermore, marketing teams should exercise caution in selecting a persuasive appeal for their commercials to effectively convey the intended message (Park et al., 2007). The study also highlights the importance of brand equity, as it significantly impacts customer attitudes (Keller & Kevin Lane, 2001).

Numerous studies have been conducted in various country contexts on the benefits of e-WOM on re-purchasing intention, which has emerged as the most successful concept worldwide. However, there have only been a few studies on electronic word of mouth's impact in Sri Lankan settings (Muniweera et al., 2020), especially integrating E-loyalty and less has been done on the mediator; E-loyalty that explain cause-and-effect relationships, making them more crucial for improving knowledge in both theory and practice.

The study shows reliable evidence for the variables that influence consumers' online Re-purchase shopping behavior. The study contributes to the effects of E-Loyalty and E-WOM (E-WOM Intensity and E-WOM Content) on Online Re-Purchase Intention. The study aims to pinpoint E-Loyalty 's mediating role between EWOM and Online Re-purchase Intention. As a result, the following questions is the focus of this study:

- What factors predict the Online Re-Purchase Intention (ORPI) in the apparel industry
- What is the role of E-loyalty in the relationship between E-WOM and Re-Purchase Intention (ORPI)

02. Literature Review

2.1. Apparel Industry in Sri Lanka

The apparel industry in Sri Lanka has been a vital contributor to the country's economy, and its significance continued into 2022-2023. The industry plays a crucial role in Sri Lanka's export sector, generating substantial revenue and providing employment opportunities for a significant portion of the population. Known for its high-quality garments, the Sri Lankan apparel industry has gained recognition globally, attracting international buyers and establishing long-term partnerships. With a focus on sustainable and ethical practices, the industry has made strides in adopting environmentally friendly manufacturing processes. As the industry continues to navigate the challenges posed by evolving consumer demands, technological advancements, and global market dynamics, it remains a key sector to watch in Sri Lanka's economic landscape. The apparel industry is encountering a challenging year in 2023, as the January exports of apparel hit their lowest level in five years, causing concerns within the industry. During January 2023, apparel exports reached \$396.6 million, experiencing a decline of 18.6% compared to the previous year, falling below the previous low of \$397.61 million in 2021. The industry's most successful January performance was in 2019

when exports reached a record high of \$5.3 billion, which was surpassed by last year's figures. In January 2023, exports to the US witnessed a decline of 24%, reaching \$162 million compared to the previous year. Similarly, exports to the EU decreased by 19% to \$113 million. Shipments to the UK were down by 8% to \$56.3 million, and other markets experienced a decrease of 10% to \$65 million. This marked the fourth consecutive year-on-year monthly decline in January, although the month-on-month figures showed some volatility. The recent negative growth can be attributed to increased inventories at both the retail and consumer levels, as well as high inflation in key markets. In the fourth quarter of 2022, the apparel industry observed a decline of 15-20% in orders. Industry analysts predict that Sri Lanka's apparel exports may continue to decline year on year until at least the first half of 2023. To boost exports in the short- to medium -term, the industry must access new markets and expand into emerging or high-potential markets.. Analysts emphasize the need for the prompt finalization of proposed Free Trade Agreements. Additionally, Sri Lankan manufacturers and exporters should focus on managing costs to improve the country's macroeconomic fundamentals and facilitate a better business environment. Concerns were recently expressed by the apparel industry regarding the government's decision to increase electricity tariffs by 66%, as it poses a severe blow to the industry's competitiveness.

2.2. Millennials and the apparel Industry

According to Jankovska, Hensley, Miller, and Yan (2015), Millennials have significant purchasing power, and their knowledge of socially conscious clothing is crucial. Stephen (2016) examined recent literature on the effects of digital environments and how they relate to consumer behavior and discovered five recurring themes: 1) consumer digital culture; 2) advertising; 3) the effects of the digital environment; 4) mobile; and 5) WOM online reviews. Furthermore, Puccinelli, Wilcox, and Grewal (2015) discovered that the use of emotion in commercials or videos altered consumer behavior and views toward particular goods or brands. Millennials have an obsession with fashion (Williams & Page, 2011), and because they influence consumer purchasing across a variety of product categories, including the fashion industry (Tee et al., 2013), they play important roles in the economy. Due to their obsession with fashion, Millennials spend close to 70% of their income on clothing and accessories (Bakewell & Mitchell, 2003). According to Colucci and Scarpi (2013), millennials make up a significant generational cohort for fashion-related expenditures. Researchers generally consider this large market segment when examining the fashion apparel industry (O'Cass & Choy, 2008; Joo Park et al., 2006).

2.3. EWOM

Online word-of-mouth, also known as E-WOM, is essentially the Internet's version of conventional word-of-mouth. However, E-WOM actions are distinct from those carried out in the real world in many ways. In the marketing literature, word-of-mouth (W.O.M.) communication refers to oral, one-on-one conversations about a brand, a product, a service, or a provider between a communicator and a receiver. Customers think online purchasing is riskier than in-person shopping (J., 2006; Jiuan Tan, 1999). Avoiding online buying is mainly based on the risk issue (Z. Hong & Yi, 2012). As a result of their buying online in a virtual environment with more hazards than in-person interactions, customers start looking for more W.O.M. communications (H.-K. Kim & Song, 2010); K. T. Lee & Koo, 2012). Due to this circumstance, E-WOM is more open and effective than W.O.M. (Akyüz, 2013). Contrary to

W.O.M., E-WOM has an unheard-of speed of dissemination and permits information exchanges between producers and receivers in several directions (Cheung & Thadani, 2012). W.O.M. and E-WOM are vital in pushing high customer re-purchase intentions (Reza Jalilvand & Samiei, 2012). Electronic word of mouth is one factor that determines the likelihood of re-purchasing (e-WOM). An increased possibility of making another purchase reflects how efficient electronic word of mouth (e-WOM) is (Arif, 2019). This is aligned with past studies that have shown that electronic word of mouth has a favorable and substantial impact on re-purchase intention (Panigoro et al., 2018). Balakrishnan et al. (2014) found a positive association between eWOM and brand loyalty and showed that the study indicates the ability of online brand communities to foster brand loyalty. Brand attachment to the company that the community revolves around is one of the factors involved in creating brand loyalty, which eventually results in re-purchase intention and positive word of mouth.

The expansion of these online communities gives internet users a place to interact, share ideas, and learn about products and services. There are a ton of chances here for retailers, especially those operating online enterprises. According to Munnukka et al. (2015), brand community commitment and brand community promotion activities have a substantial positive correlation with brand loyalty. On the other hand, Facebook users may access the newsfeed to view the posted comments made by their friends in real-time (Debatin et al., 2009). As a result, purchasing decisions may be influenced by consumers' opinions about goods and services shared by several other consumers ((Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004). As a result, it was determined by Balakrishnan et al. (2014) that online communities significantly affect customers' purchasing intentions. Supporting brand decisions at eWOM and protecting the brand from unfavorable eWOM rises as brand loyalty rises (Chang et al., 2013). The likelihood of various links between eWOM participation, e-loyalty, and O.R.P. is further strengthened by these data. Relationship managers are interested in the loyalty intentions of consumers who have been effectively drawn to a company's product, according to Gruen et al. (2006) research. Re-purchasing the company's offering and generating positive word-of-mouth are examples of loyal intentions. According to Ben-Shaul and Reichel's study from 2017, there is a correlation between consumer participation levels, the amount of active contribution to E-WOM, and loyalty indicators such as intention to promote and reuse products. Therefore, the above hypotheses are put out to research how these characteristics and the effects of E-WOM participation components on e-loyalty interact with one another. According to Bloemer and Kasper (1995) and Malik et al. (2013), brand loyalty is essential for a company to increase volume, secure premium pricing, and keep consumers rather than attract new ones. Repeat purchases are purchases of the same brand on a regular basis, whereas brand loyalty results from consistent behavior.

Because of that, there is a big disparity between the two. Such loyalty will benefit the firm since, at the end, clients will be willing to pay a greater price and may even recommend the business to others. According to (Das, 2014). brand loyalty is a commitment to re-purchase consumers make that they will do so under any circumstance. In the research on internet marketing, loyalty is widely acknowledged as a key factor influencing the intention to re-purchase (Anderson & Srinivasan, 2003); (Chauke & Dhurup, 2017). Gummerus et al. (2012) discovered that consumer loyalty is influenced by brand communities' engagement behavior through the mediation of leisure advantages that result from enjoyment and relaxation. On the other hand, according to (Gruen et al., 2006) the amount of consumer-to-consumer knowledge sharing has a major impact on building W.O.M. loyalty but not on purchase intention loyalty. For instance, (Wang et al., 2006) concluded that website loyalty predicts

ORPI. Similar and expanded findings were presented by (I. B. Hong & Cho, 2011), who concluded that e-loyalty might be increased in online buying by boosting consumer satisfaction and trust. Consequently, it is suggested the below hypothesis.

H1 - E-WOM has a positive and significant influence on E-loyalty

2.4. E-Loyalty

Sustaining customers or developing customer loyalty is a crucial consideration for online and offline businesses since it is less expensive to do so than to bring in new consumers (Hart, 1990; Oliver et al., 1997); Reichheld et al., 2000). As a result, businesses with more loyal consumers would be better able to increase revenue, increasing their profitability as long as customers kept making purchases from them. When customers are committed to a brand and want to express gratitude, positive W.O.M. is supposed to happen. (Dick & Basu, 1994). According to (Luarn & Lin, 2003) one definition of e-Loyalty intention is "the intention of a consumer to re-purchase products/services through a particular e-service provider." Brown (1952) developed four loyalty categories based on customer purchase patterns. They are divided, undivided, unstable, and have nonexistent loyalty. According to Lipstein (1965) and Kuehn (1962), the likelihood of repeat purchases may be used to measure loyalty. Focusing on e-loyalty from this perspective is essential for the theoretical and practical application of online marketing since millennials make up 25% of the global population and have more disposable income than previous generations (Gurău, 2012; Nusair et al., 2013; Ordun, 2015) states that Millennials' loyalty to a brand is based on how much they trust it. Millennials are aware of how significant their purchasing power can be and are informed about the reputations of the businesses and items they purchase. Millennials won't display devotion to a product until they believe in it. According to (Lissitsa & Kol, 2016), Millennials' brand loyalty may be fleeting owing to shifts in their lifestyles, trends, or brand popularity. Brand loyalty lasts only six to eight months, according to Bilgihan (2016), who also noted that hedonic and utilitarian elements like price comparison and aesthetically pleasing website designs may favor consumers' online interactions and loyalty. According to a past study, loyalty increases e-WOM (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004).

E-loyalty is "a customer's good attitude toward the e-retailer that results in repeated buying behavior" (Assael, 1992, p. 87). Brand loyalty is "a favorable attitude toward a brand resulting in the consistent purchase of the brand over time" (Anderson & Srinivasan, 2003). Recent studies have shown that customer loyalty is a key factor in determining whether a consumer would make another purchase (Eisingerich & Bell, 2007). Re-purchase intent is one of the signs (effects) of client loyalty, which will boost the vendor's profitability (H. Zhang et al., 2015). Additionally, Yee et al. (2010) showed that customer loyalty would significantly increase business profitability (Yee et al., 2010). Some research studies suggested that customers must feel good about a brand to be motivated to make a purchase. Additionally, Gruen et al. (2006) discovered that relationship managers are curious about the customers' intentions to remain loyal to the company's product. Re-purchasing the company's offering and building W.O.M. are examples of loyal intentions.

H2 - E-Loyalty has a positive and significant influence on ORPI

2.5. Re-purchase Intention

Re-purchase intentions refer to an individual's decision to purchase a product from the same business again based on past interactions with the brand (Otero & Wilson, 2018). Global Web Index reports that 54% of social media users use the platform to research items, and 71% are more inclined to purchase after hearing about it on social media. Whether it was a message from a friend or an advertisement that convinced them, everyone has at least once made a purchase based on what they viewed in their feed. According to (Zhang et al., 2017), online buying behavior has two stages. In the early stage, customers are worried about making their first online purchase and its implications, such as the perceived risk or uncertainties regarding the payment or product delivery. The second stage concerns the desire to purchase further goods from the same online retailer. Consumers evaluate their ORPI based on their perceptions of the product information, the method of payment, the delivery terms, the service provided, the risk involved, the privacy and security of their information, and the level of personalization, visual appeal, navigation, entertainment, and enjoyment (Burke, 2002); (Parasuraman & Zinkhan, 2002); (Mathwick et al., 2001)). Consumers with high levels of loyalty are more likely to promote or suggest the brand or the items to other customers, which results in a behavior termed as repeated purchase intention (Janes & Sasser, 1995). Oliver defines loyalty as "a strongly held commitment to re-purchase or patronizes a preferred product/service consistently in the future, resulting in repetitive same-brand or same-brand-set purchasing, despite situational influences and marketing efforts having the potential to cause switching behavior" (Law, Hui, & Zhao, 2004, p. 547). In other words, they don't see loyalty as conduct but as an attitude. The only measure of behavioral loyalty is repeat purchases of the item or service.

According to studies by Adjei et al. (2010), consumers are more inclined to accept online product reviews that vary not only in quality but also in the polarity of positive to negative comments when they acquire pre-purchase information (Sparks & Browning, 2011). Positive internet reviews of a particular hotel were found to considerably increase booking intentions (Ladhari & Michaud, 2015). Additionally, EWOM assessments may influence consumer outlooks, attitudes, purchasing decisions, and post-use evaluations (Akroush & Al-Debei, 2015). Furthermore, Elseidi et al. (2016) found that word-of-mouth strongly influences purchasing intention.

H3 - E-WOM has a positive and significant influence on ORPI

H4 - The mediating role of E-Loyalty significantly affects the relationship between Electronic Word of Mouth and Online Re-Purchase Intention

03. Methodology

3.1. Research Philosophy

The author intends to conduct a quantitative study using a positivist viewpoint and a deductive methodology. This is acceptable given that the author attempts to gather evidence to support the existence of the theoretical idea of E-WOM in consumer re-purchase intention behavior in e-commerce platforms. There are three different ways that survey research may be conducted: through interviews, questionnaires, or a Delphi survey. For this study, a

questionnaire was chosen. Since all the research questions are centered on "What is," the author chose survey research as the study method. Additionally, adopting this tactic might be justified by the existence of a clear problem that calls for a solution and the need for additional data to do so.

The numerical values associated with each variable will be examined in this research. This study, which focuses on acquiring new knowledge while considering the study's validity, scope, and methods, expects to observe the underlying factors evaluating hypotheses that influence cloth users' re-purchasing decisions. This study adheres to the positivistic study approach and epistemology philosophy. The researcher chose a correlational research design by the tradition of positivistic research since it used survey research and had priori-based hypotheses to evaluate ((Baker et al., 2019).

3.2. Population and Sample

The population of the study is Sri Lankan online millennials who bought clothes online shopping at least once in the last month. After compiling their replies to the questionnaire sent with reference to conducting the survey, a sample of 211 respondents of the chosen population is considered. Additionally, convenience sampling is utilized in this study to distribute the questionnaire and allow respondents to be chosen to participate in the data analysis. In this survey research, the author collected data from millennials who live in Colombo, the biggest city in terms of population in Sri Lanka (2,480,000). People born between 1982 and roughly 2002 will be further narrowed down in the study sample selection. The term "Millennials" refers to this sample group (Howe, 2000), as reported in (Junaid & Nasreen, 2012). People of the Millennial generation were born between 1982 and 2002. The Millennial generation has also been referred to by terms like Generation Y, Nexters, Echo Boomers, and the net generation. High hopes have been set for this generation, which has been called the next great or the next hero (Debard, 2004); (Howe, 2000). Millennials have typically been portrayed positively, and the negative parts are frequently ignored (Bonfiglio, 2007; Newton, 2000). To define this generation, Howe (2000) identified seven persona traits: special, insulated, confident, team-oriented, accomplishing, pressurized, and conventional. Other attributes represented in these representations include optimism, technological savvy, civic-mindedness, morality, goal orientation, diversity, balance, pragmatism, hard work, and respect for authority (Alch, 2000; Barron, Maxwell, Broadbridge, & Odgen, 2007; Bartley et al., 2007; DeBard, 2004; Howe & Strauss, 2000; Gordon & Steele, 2005; Strauss & Howe, 1991; Tenofsky, 2006; Wolburg & Pokrywczynski, 2001; Zemke et al., 2000).

Probabilistic sampling and non-probability sampling are the two main categories of sampling designs. In probability sampling, the population's constituent parts have a known, non-zero chance of being chosen as sample subjects. The chances of the elements being selected as subjects are unknown or predetermined in non-probability sampling. Non-probability sampling was applied in this research because it is typically used when time or other considerations become more important than generalizability and it is really difficult to find a sampling frame for the selected population.

3.3. Operationalization of Variables

The purpose of the study was to investigate the theory that certain factors affect millennials' intentions to make repeat purchases of apparel. The generated hypothesis determines if the identified variables have a substantial impact on the E-desire WOMs to repurchase after doing online shopping. Young millennial online shoppers from Sri Lanka who have experience purchasing online apparel as the study's unit of analysis. Individual respondents provided the data. The current study used multi-item measures that have been validated in earlier empirical research. One exogenous and one endogenous variable make up our model particularly. Employed multiple-item, five-point Likert scales, with 1 denoting "strongly disagree" and 5 denoting "strongly agree." The following variables' indicators were taken from earlier studies by a number of scholars.

Table 1: Operationalization

Variable	Scale Items	Source
E-WOM content	I discuss the user-friendliness of its website	Goyette, Ricard, Bergeron, and Marticotte (2010)
	I discuss security of transactions and its Internet site	
	I discuss the prices of products offered	
	I discuss the variety of the products offered	
	I discuss ease of transactions	
	I speak of the rapid delivery	
E-WOM intensity	I speak of the company's notoriety	Goyette, Ricard, Bergeron, and Marticotte (2010)
	I discuss the quality of the products offered	
	I spoke of this company much more frequently than about any other e-services company.	
	I spoke of this company much more frequently than about any other e-services company.	
E-loyalty	I spoke of this company to many individuals.	Zeithaml, Berry, and Parasuraman (1996) and Anderson and Srinivasan (2003).
	I will do more business with the website in the next few years	
	When I need to purchase, this website is my best choice.	
ORPI	I consider this website to be my first choice to buy the kind of product I most recently purchased online	Limayem, Khalifa, and Frini (2000)
	I intend to purchase through this website in the near future	
	It is likely that I will purchase through this website in the near future.	
	I expect to purchase through this website in the near future	

3.4. Conceptual Framework

The section's objectives are to provide a theoretical foundation for this research area and to highlight the contributions made in previous works. The broad concepts from prior literature, as described above, have been further improved and merged to produce a practical framework, as shown below.

3.5. Data collection methods

The research involved the collection of two different types of data. Initial data was gathered online by sending messages through email and social networking sites, including Facebook, WhatsApp, and Viber. Secondary data was gathered using books, journals, articles, reports,

and other sources. As a result, primary data were collected using a particular measurement tool. This tool was a structured self-administered questionnaire. Due to English's widespread acceptance, a questionnaire was created in English. There are two primary portions to the questionnaire.

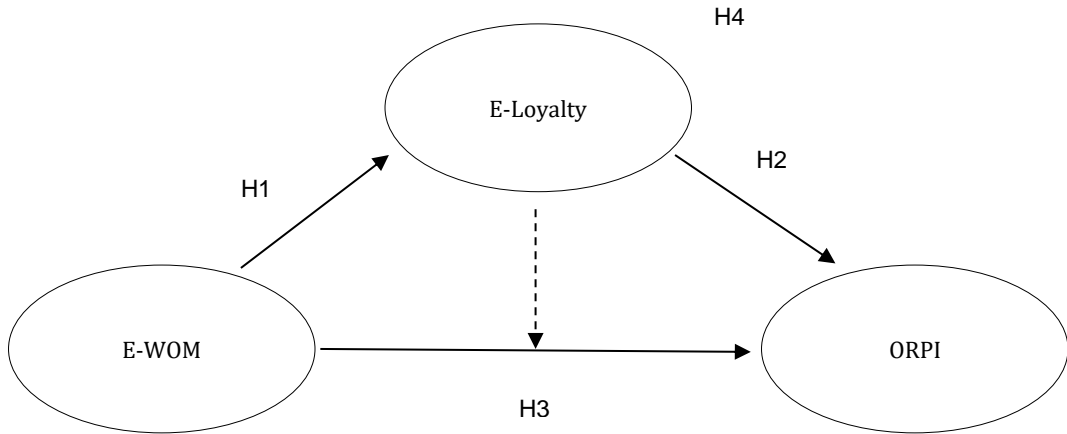


Figure 1: Conceptual framework

Section A and Section B make up the questionnaire for this study. The demographic profile of the respondents, including their gender and level of education, occupation, time spent on the Internet, online shopping in a month, frequent purchase of product items, and the average spent in online shopping, is covered in Section A of the questionnaire. The core elements of the study framework are protected in Section B of the questionnaire, including online re-purchase intention, E-loyalty, E-WOM Content, and E-WOM Intensity. The distributed questionnaire does not include any open-ended questions besides those mentioned above, which support the indicated independent factors and the dependent variable.

Regarding criteria like re-purchase intention, e-loyalty, and E-WOM Content, respondents were asked to assess how much they agreed with each statement. The Likert scale, with responses ranging from 1 to 5, or strongly disagree to agree strongly, is the typical scale for measuring. The respondents gave the criterion more weight while purchasing online the higher the score they selected.

3.6. Data Analysis Method

Descriptive statistics and regression analyses were used to examine the collected data. The Smart PLS software package includes many statistical analytic tools for analysis. With the use of data acquired through a self-administered questionnaire, the study's hypotheses have been put to the test. Each construct contains elements taken from scales that were constructed and

verified. All scale items were measured using a five-point Likert scale, 1 indicates strongly disagree, and 5 indicates strongly agree.

The analysis conducted in this study encompasses both descriptive and inferential aspects. The descriptive analysis involved a questionnaire that was self-administered by 295 participants, providing a comprehensive overview of the responses collected for each item. This analysis includes a frequency table, measures of central tendency, with a particular focus on means, and a description of data dispersion through the standard deviation for each distribution.

Moving on to the inferential analysis, an assessment of the measurement model was carried out to evaluate the reliability and validity of the study construct. The construct validity test involved examining the findings of the convergent validity and discriminant validity tests. The convergent validity of the measurement model was observed based on the results of the association between indicator scores and construct scores. Furthermore, the convergent validity analysis evaluated the significance of outer loadings with reflexive indicators. An indicator was considered valid if the value of the outer loading was above 0.7 and/or the t-statistic value exceeded 1.96.

Additionally, reliability and validity analyses were conducted in line with research principles. These analyses play a crucial role in ensuring the accuracy and assessment of research work. Reliability analysis enabled the examination of the characteristics of measuring scales and the individual items comprising those scales. Various measures of scale reliability were computed using the reliability analysis technique, providing insights into the relationships between the individual items within the scale. Internal consistency was determined using Cronbach's alpha as a measure of scale reliability.

04. Findings

4.1. Initial Response Rate and Screening Question

Data was collected through a survey questionnaire that targeted Colombo western province. A total of 295 responses were collected for the study, and out of that, only 211 respondents had done online shopping for clothes as most frequently before. For further analysis, only 211 responses were used in the study. And as a percentage, it may be understood to be 71.5%.

The accompanying section will interpret the study's major findings. For the basic random sampling approach, individuals who selected clothing as their most often purchased item online were chosen.

4.2. Sample Composition

A female constituted 63 percent of the selected sample, while 36.5 percent of the participants were men, and one respondent recorded not preferring to say. According to gender discrimination, women are more likely than men to shop online for clothes. As a percentage, 48.3 is the percentage of customers in the sample group, mainly in the 25–29 age range. Ages 40 and over had a rate of 5.2, and those between the ages of 20 and 24 had a recorded 38.4

percent. Those between the ages of 30-34 had a percentage of 4.7 percent. And 3.3% more responders were in the 35-39 age range. When considering the level of education, 74.9 percent of respondents have education only up to the Bachelor's degree level. Another 6.2 percent obtained professional qualifications, while 3.3 percent have completed the certificate level. Both diploma and postgraduate levels counted for 7.6 percent. The majority of the sample consisted of 74.9 percent who were educated bachelor level. The "student" group, which includes a large portion of the sample's responses, is represented by a proportion of 47.4%. The second-highest contribution comes from the "Professional" group, which accounts for 42.7%.

4.3. Reliability

4.3.1. Indicator Reliability

The indicator's outer loadings display the indicator's total contribution to the latent variable's specification. These may be viewed as item reliability coefficients for reflective models; the closer the loadings are to 1.0, the more reliable the latent variable. The convention states that route loadings for a well-fitting reflective model should be more than 0.70.

Table 2: Outer Loadings

	EL	EWOM	ORPI
EL1	0.863		
EL2	0.864		
EL3	0.903		
EWOMC1		0.763	
EWOMC2		0.702	
EWOMC3		0.741	
EWOMC4		0.762	
EWOMC5		0.772	
EWOMC6		0.741	
EWOMC7		0.629	
EWOMC8		0.714	
EWOMI1		0.728	
EWOMI2		0.747	
EWOMI3		0.742	
ORPI1			0.867
ORPI2			0.867
ORPI3			0.882

First, it was determined the variables' outer loadings. Except for EWOMC7, all the outer loading values are more than 0.7. Therefore, the researcher chose to solely eliminate the above to acquire the final's outer loadings. All values in the final models' outer loadings are more than 0.7, satisfying the outer loading criteria.

Table 3: Outer Loadings

	EL	EWOM	ORPI
EL1	0.863		
EL2	0.864		
EL3	0.903		
EWOMC1		0.763	
EWOMC2		0.702	
EWOMC3		0.741	
EWOMC4		0.762	
EWOMC5		0.772	
EWOMC6		0.741	
EWOMC8		0.714	
EWOMI1		0.728	
EWOMI2		0.747	
EWOMI3		0.742	
ORPI1			0.867
ORPI2			0.867
ORPI3			0.882

4.3.2. Internal Consistency

According to Sekaran and Bougie (2016), a measurement's reliability is a sign of the instrument's stability and consistency in measuring the idea, and it helps determine how "good" the measure is. The interterm consistency reliability test that is most frequently employed is Cronbach's coefficient alpha. The reliability analysis findings are displayed in the table below. The composite reliability for the constructs EL, E-WOM, and E-LOYALY are shown to be 0.909, 0.925, and 0.905 respectively, indicating high levels of internal consistency reliability. Prior research suggests that a threshold level of 0.70 or higher is required to demonstrate satisfactory composite reliability in exploratory research (Sekaran & Bougie,2016)) but not exceeding the 0.95 level (Hair et al., 2013).

Table 4: Reliability

Variables	Composite reliability (rho_c)	Cronbach's Alpha	No of items
EL	0.909	0.849	3
EWOM	0.925	0.911	11
ORPI	0.905	0.843	3

4.3.3. Validity

The assessment of the measurement model presupposes a confirmatory evaluation of the convergent and discriminant validity of the constructs and a determination of the model's predictability (Campbell & Fiske, 1959). Bagozzi and Yi (1988) suggest an AVE threshold level of 0.5 as evidence of convergent validity. Adhered to Hair et a suggestion to evaluate the reliability and validity of each concept (2011). By looking at the average extracted variance (AVE>0,5), the criteria surpass the necessary levels. Table 5 clearly shows that discriminant

validity is met for this research because the square root of AVE for EL, EWOM, and ORPI is much larger than the corresponding LVC. The AVE for the construct EWOM, ORPI, and EL are 0.554, 0.761, and 0.769 respectively, well above the required minimum level of 0.50 (Bagozzi & Yi, 1988). Therefore, the measures of the three reflective constructs can be said to have high levels of convergent validity.

Table 5: Validity

	EL	EWOM	ORPI
EL	0.877		
EWOM	0.670	0.744	
ORPI	0.846	0.739	0.872

4.3.4. The Coefficient of Determination (R²)

When predicting the outcome of an event, the coefficient of determination is a factual measurement that examines how differences in one variable may be explained by differences in another. The "goodness of fit" is another name for this coefficient, commonly referred to as R-squared (or R²). This computation is given a value between 0.0 and 1.0, where a value of 1.0 indicates an excellent fit and that the model is trustworthy for future estimations. In contrast, a value of 0.0 indicates that the model fails to describe data correctly.

Table 6: Coefficient of Determination

	(R ²) R-square	R-square adjusted
EL	0.449	0.447
ORPI	0.769	0.767

The R-squared value for the model is displayed in Table 6. EL has an R-squared of 0.447. The variance in EL caused by the independent variable accounts for 44.7%. The ORPI has an R-squared of 0.767. 76.7% of the variance in ORPI is due to independent factors. After that, the researcher can decide that both models are adequate.

4.3.5. The (f²) Effect Size of Exogenous Factors

One of the most well-known methods for calculating the effect size of each element or development in a multiple regression model when both independent and dependent factors are continuous is Cohen's f². Small, medium, and high-impact sizes were classified by Cohen (Cohen, 2013). A "high" f² effect size exceeds 0.35, whereas a "small" f² effect sizes are 0.02, and the medium effect is 0.15.

Table 7: Effect Size

	EL	EWOM	ORPI
EL			0.965
EWOM	0.816		0.223
ORPI			

Based on the given information, it appears that the relationship between E-Loyalty and Electronic Word-of-Mouth has a higher effect size compared to the relationship between

Electronic Word-of-Mouth and Online Re-purchase Intention. It indicates that EWOM highly affects EL, and EWOM medium effect ORPI. The other f 2 value exceeds 0.35, which indicates that EL has a higher effect on ORPI.

4.3.6. Path Coefficient and Findings of the Hypothesis Testing

The researcher used the path coefficient to analyze the four hypotheses. With the help of the coefficient B and p-value, hypotheses were assessed (sig-level). The P-value at the 95% confidence interval must be equal to or less than 0.05 to test the hypotheses. The preceding conditions must be met for the hypothesis to be considered supported.

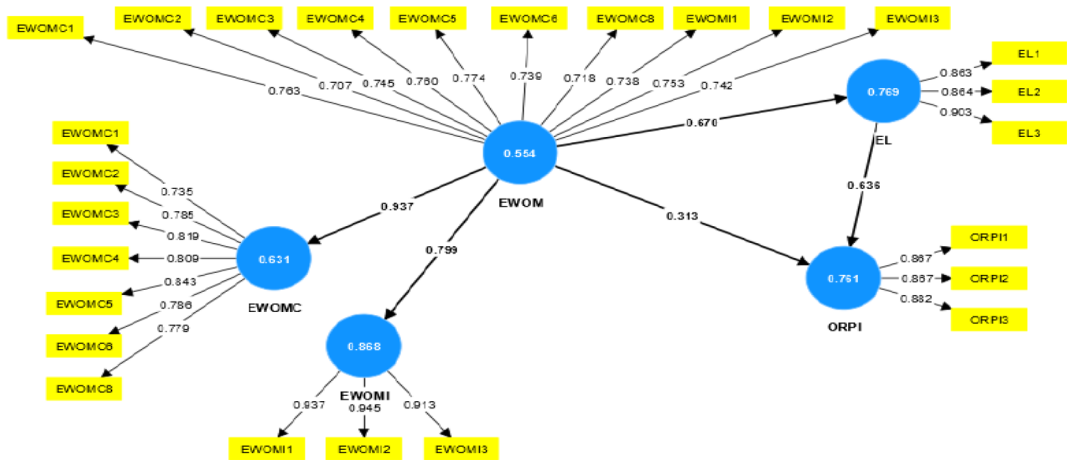


Figure 2: Smart PLS Graphical illustration

Table8: Path Coefficients

	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics (O/STDEV)	P values
EL -> ORPI	0.636	0.636	0.05	12.703	0
EWOM -> EL	0.67	0.669	0.052	12.97	0
EWOM -> ORPI	0.313	0.311	0.052	5.986	0
EWOM -> EL -> ORPI	0.426	0.425	0.043	9.848	0

H1; According to the p-value for the variable "E-WOM," which is 0.000, the value is lower than the crucial p-value (0.05). $t = 12.970$, which is significant at $\alpha = 0.05$ ($b = 0.670$, $p < 0.05$). This concludes that 1 unit of change in E-WOM (independent variable) will change 67% in the E-Loyalty. This explains their high confidence and lower Torrance; hence the hypotheses developed to measure the influence on customer E-WOM and E-Loyalty are accepted. Because of this, it is possible to rule out H1 (E-WOM positively influences the apparel Online Re-purchase Intention). Consequently, it can be said with 97.5% certainty that Source trustworthiness does influence the intention to purchase apparel.

H2; According to the p-value of 0.000 for the variable "E-Loyalty," this result is lower than the crucial p-value (0.05). Thus, Ho (E-loyalty has a positive influence on apparel Online Re-Purchase Intention) can be rejected due to enough sufficient data. $t = 12.703$, which is significant at $\alpha = 0.05$ ($b = 0.636$, $p < 0.05$); this concludes that 1 unit of change in E-loyalty (mediator variable) will change 63% in the customer repeat online purchase intention of apparel products. This explains their high confidence and lower Torrance; hence the hypotheses developed to measure the influence on customer E-loyalty and Online Re-Purchase Intention are accepted. Consequently, it can be said with 97.5% certainty that E-loyalty has a beneficial effect on the Re-purchase intention of apparel. Also, other research claimed that for customers to be motivated to make a purchase, they must feel good about a brand.

H3; According to the p-value for the variable "E-WOM," which is 0.000, there is a value over the threshold p-value (0.05). Thus, Ho (E-WOM has a positive influence on Online Re-purchase intention to purchase apparel) can be rejected due to enough evidence. $t = 5.986$, which is significant at $\alpha = 0.05$ ($b = 0.313$, $p < 0.05$); this concludes that 1 unit of change in customer E-WOM (independent variable) will change 31% in the dependent variable customer Online repeat purchase intention. This explains their high confidence and lower Torrance; hence the hypotheses developed to measure the influence on customer E-WOM and repeat purchase intention is accepted; therefore, hypothesis H1 is satisfied. Consequently, it can be said with 95% certainty that review ratings do not favorably affect a consumer's intention to purchase apparel. The acceptability of a product in an electronic word-of-mouth system will be impacted by product reviews in managing customer re-purchase intentions and the reliability of informants who submit reviews, according to Wang et al. (2015).

H4; The significant analysis of indirect effect and total effect route coefficients from the bootstrapping technique was displayed in Table 7. Using a path coefficient (Beta value=0.426; t-value=5.495; p=0.000), the findings indicated that E-Loyalty partially mediates the relationship between E-WOM and Online Re-purchase Intention.

05. Discussion and Conclusion

During this process, the researcher's core concern has been constructing a conceptual framework that includes the mediating variable, E-Loyalty between e-WOM and online re-purchase intention. The conceptual model was established based on a critical analysis of earlier literature, considering the primary research issue and study goals. Four hypotheses were constructed to show the connection between the key research model elements. This study contributes to a better knowledge of e-WOM and its influence on e-loyalty and the re-purchase process within the online millennial population by examining the function of e-WOM.

The theoretical model and supporting hypotheses addressed the study's research goals. As per the results of the data analysis, it may conclude that there was a moderating relationship between E-WOM, E-loyalty, and Online Re-Purchase Intention. Also, by making revisions, the theoretical model's overall goodness-of-fit was improved to an acceptable level. The theoretical model and accompanying hypotheses addressed the study's research goals. There

was a 0.670, 0.313, and 0.636 association between e-WOM and e-loyalty, e-WOM and online re-purchase behavior, and e-loyalty and online re-purchase intention, respectively.

This research focused on one E-WOM component: E-WOM participation. Even though the relationship between E-WOM and consumers' intention to make another purchase has been researched in the pertinent literature, this study adds to the growing body of research by examining the direct and indirect relationships between E-WOM, E-WOM participating factors, e-loyalty, and ORPI. First, our findings offer ground-breaking proof of the significance of E-WOM contributing components, E-WOM content, and E-WOM intensity in determining e-loyalty and ORPI. This means that customers act in a way that supports the cognitive dissonance theory. This outcome is consistent with Yoo et al. earlier' s discovery (2013). E-loyalty is positively more influenced by E-WOM content than by E-WOM intensity. It was shown that E-WOM intensity and E-WOM content indirectly affected ORPI through the mediation of e-loyalty. This finding indicates that the effects of consumers' E-WOM messages vary depending on their content and intensity. Consumers' authoring of E-WOM material has an impact on their loyalty, and the more intense their writing, the greater impact it has on ORPI. This result is consistent with the significant impact of E-WOM amount on ORPI.

According to the study, electronic word-of-mouth had a favorable and significant impact on consumers' re-purchase intentions to purchase apparel items online. Moreover, the impact of EWOM or online reviews on consumer re-purchase intentions for apparel can be moderated by brand loyalty. All marketing initiatives, including the use of electronic word-of-mouth, aim to enhance consumer loyalty toward brands and re-purchase intents since rising and positive customer loyalty will then raise consumers' desire to re-purchase apparel products. Because there is an emotional connection between customers and brands, brand loyalty is one of the factors influencing consumer re-purchase intentions. Brand loyalty may be achieved by having a constant attitude toward something that one believes to be in line with their expectations. Thus, employers or managers should consider how customers feel about the brand. Electronic word-of-mouth or online reviews are another way that consumers evaluate a company. From the quality of the evaluations posted by customers on the website and social media pages of a local clothes retailer, both the brand's strengths and faults may be identified. Consumers will learn that a brand's goods will benefit them by spreading information on internet reviews. In addition to spreading the information it contains, electronic word of mouth has the power to alter customer perceptions of a brand and persuade them to make repeat purchases. In its capacity as a policymaker, the government can implement another suggestion. By providing and disseminating accurate and reliable information about the industry, and later by working with clothing business owners to help them sell their goods outside of the country and abroad, the government is anticipated to be able to support the growth of creative industries in the city.

06. Limitations and Further Areas of the Study

There are a few restrictions to this study. Only Sri Lanka has been used for this study's fieldwork. Although the sample is heterogeneous in terms of mean age and gender, it is important to remember that cultural variations may impact how E-WOM components influence ORPI. This study's ignorance of industry disparities is another drawback. Moreover, with the limited resources and time, could not consider other factors that affect ORPI and E-

Loyalty. Further studies looking at the impact of E-WOM's two facets could focus on a single industry or offer a broader perspective by contrasting several sectors. This study's sample size is modest. Future research should thus use a larger sample size. Moreover, the current study's sample method used convenient sampling, which restricts its capacity to generalize its findings. Therefore, it is advised that future studies use random sampling to allow for more generalizable results. The study was conducted among respondents who might not be ideal millennial Sri Lankan Colombo District population representations. Given that over 760,747 people live in Colombo, it is illogical to assume that the study's findings apply to the whole district, given the variety that is unavoidably present there.

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