

## The Impact of Fission Marketing on Online Consumer Buying Intention in Sri Lanka

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### Abstract

This paper investigates the fission marketing activities that influence when purchasing goods and services via online platforms in Sri Lanka. This research was carried out with a quantitative approach. This quantitative approach adopted a convenience sampling technique to determine the sample size (n=384). A self-administrative questionnaire was used for the data collection from private and government sector workers. Both descriptive and inferential statistics were used. The results of the study indicate that except e-WoM, the other fission marketing factors such as website content, e-referral, and live streaming e-commerce have a positive and significant impact on consumers' online buying behaviour. As fission marketing is originated very recently and commonly practiced in China, this study can be considered as one of the pioneering studies in Sri Lanka on this topic.

**Keywords:** Customer buying behaviour, e-referral, e-WOM, Live streaming e-commerce, Website content.

### Introduction

Fission marketing is an important way for e-commerce platforms to import new consumers from social media platforms and it brings social pressure, resulting in consumer loss and poor platform reputation (Hao & Yang, 2022). Further, fission marketing can be considered as the newest strategy which was introduced by the Chinese community to make awareness and sell the goods and services via digitalized platforms. It is an important way for e-commerce platforms to bring in fresh customers via social media. E-commerce sites in the former have

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faith in the calibre of their products. They work to satisfy consumers' psychological demands or raise the entertainment value of sharing (Hao and Yang 2022).

Fission marketing tactics which are being implemented in China and United States are proved to be a unique and a newest way to reach the customers through online platforms (Hao & Yang, 2022).

When it comes to the Sri Lankan context, how researchers can practice those techniques to develop local businesses and strengthen entrepreneurs need to be addressed. Target audience is the consumers who shop in digitalized platforms. It is the duty of businesses to understand the consumer buying behavior before the purchase stage. Hao and Yang (2022) have stated that Fission marketing, which mixes the consumer market with social media to generate a "social + sharing" marketing mode, is now seen as a cost-effective method of bringing in new customers. Fission marketing's primary objective is to drive traffic from outside social media platforms by enticing customers to share products.

Accordingly, the purpose of this research is to find out the fission marketing activities that influence when purchasing goods and services via online platforms in Sri Lankan context. When considering the Sri Lankan online shopping context, most of the youth are tech-savvy and they experience the technology very quickly. As a result of the reasonable users in an online context, entrepreneurs were able to start their own brands via digital platforms. The present study may help not only those who are in the market currently but also those who wish to start up an online business soon. According to (Rahman et al., 2018), businesses have become so varied in the twentieth century that multimedia commerce has developed, and internet purchases have grown tremendously around the globe.

The current study fills the gap in the literature through the in-depth investigation of the impact of website content, e-wom, e-referral and live streaming e-commerce on the online consumer buying behavior in the context of Sri Lanka. Furthermore, as per the authors understanding, this study is one of the first empirical study to be focused on fission marketing and online consumer buying behavior.

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This dearth of literature prompted the authors to conduct this research study. Thus, the study findings contribute to bridging the literature gap in this subject area.

Rest of the paper is structured as follows; section 2 presents an comprehensive overview of the literature on the aspects influencing online buying behavior in fission marketing activities in the Sri Lankan digital platforms; Section 3 discusses the methodology, Section 4 presents the results and a discussion of the outcomes that describes the fission marketing activities that influence when purchasing the goods and services via online platforms in Sri Lankan context; and Section 5 is the conclusion which provides the summary and implications of the research.

## **Literature Review**

### **UTAUT Model**

The model is determined by behavioral intention where it determines the anticipated likelihood of adopting the technology direct impact of four main constructs, including performance expectancy, effort expectancy, social influence, and facilitating factors. The influence of predictors is tempered by factors such as age, gender, experience, and willingness to use (Venkatesh et al., 2003). According to the study was done by Zhang et al. (2022), grounded theory is UTAUT model and same model has been used to build the theoretical model. When it comes to Zhang et al. (2022), they investigated the factors influencing users' willingness to participate in fission marketing campaigns. This study is also a similar study to Zhang et al. (2022) and about influencing factors of fission marketing on purchase decision. The study also focus on the digitalized technology which is new and how it explains the behavior on online purchasing decisions. Therefore, based on the UTAUT model, variables, and items with a comparatively high dependability in earlier past research are mentioned in this study. Therefore, a study was conducted under the UTAUT model.

### **Fission Marketing**

Fission marketing is a newest concept which was introduced by Chinese to promote their online business among the social media users. Basically, it gives customers to share the products and services through social media and customers act as ambassadors of online business (Hao

and Yang 2022). According to the research published by China known as Siyu (2021), stated that everyone is a "we media" in this era of rapid internet development, making it even more difficult to conceive how quickly news can be spread. This is especially true for short videos like those on TikTok, One Smile, etc. Therefore, this social contact-based approach is unquestionably one of the finest strategies to draw in new clients. Based on few past research, author was able to identify the activities that practice in the market. Since this area is new to the market it was lacking resources to come up with several attributes. Main components of the fission marketing activities that were identified through past research. Based on the studies from Hao and Yang (2022) and Zhang et al. (2022) identified website content, e-WOM, e-referral and live streaming e-commerce are some fission marketing activities which practice in the online platforms.

### **Website Content**

Online hop atmospheres are created by tailoring online space to customer preferences. Different quantities of ambient cues are accessible to online shops and online businesses. Argued that Customers prefer to deal with an online store through a technical interface rather than a human employee. Because the website serves as the interface, the design of the site has a significant impact on how satisfied customers are (Ganguly et al., 2010). In picture sites the customer might anticipate emotive encounters instead of intelligent decision planning. Product details such as the price and the shipping information) and business details (organization's goals and contact details) are addressed on the informational websites. Furthermore, the quantity of data is considerable. Price is affected by the website's presentation. Comparisons and consumer benefit. When clients feel a larger value, value in online purchasing experiences, people are more likely to Trust that specific online retailer consequently, the amount, quality and trust in a company might rise if the information presented is pertinent.

The characteristics of brand equity and the effect that brand assets have on purchasing choices (Yoo, Donthu and Lee 2000). Moreover, it is shown that brand loyalty has the influence on customers to continue purchasing the same item (Wilson and Christella, 2019). Brand enables consumers to access vast amounts of product and brand information.

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Advanced technology and ancillary services that provide personalized services on an e-commerce platform are a very excellent measure of perceived usefulness (Dachyar and Banjarnahor, 2017). According to most researchers and customers, the primary reason for shopping online is the Internet's great convenience for consumers (Kim and Kuljis, 2014). The Internet enables customers to purchase online at any time and from any location. When considering the buying behavior of the customers, 49% of consumers completed their purchases after visiting social media websites for product information, and 60% of them chose to share that knowledge online with other users and shoppers. Only 7% of consumers made a purchase during the process (Palalic et al., 2020). Based on the relationship between website content and purchasing decision, according to Junejo (2020) from Pakistan, the necessity of basing a purchase choice on the geographic location of potential customers and the informative dynamics of websites is stressed by the online retailer.

Based on the above discussion, there are much research to discuss about the website content impacting on purchasing decision of online consumer and hypothesis one is developed assuming that.

H1: There is a significant positive impact between website content on online consumer purchase intention

### **Electronic Word of Mouth**

Communication which is done using Internet-based technologies between various parties online can be termed as electronic word of mouth (e-WOM). Customers may share comments and views with another person online (Meng et al., 2022). E-WOM is spreading through social media in a rapid rate. In practice, we frequently see influencers leverage their personality qualities and fame to communicate the endorsement brand's product or service information to consumers, resulting in a word-of-mouth reputation perception (Wang et al., 2022). E-WOM is like viral marketing in that it may spread through e-mails, online forums, online chatting platforms, mobile short messaging applications, media websites, and social networking sites. These comments, blogs, reviews can influence a customer's purchase intention (Chu, 2011). The volume and quality of the reviews had a favorable impact on sales and online behavior, as well as engaging

individuals in the e-WOM generation, Peer influence, inter-use, and culture all have an impact on e-WOM intentions in emerging economies (Roy et al., 2021). It is common for people to judge a site's usefulness only based on the quality of its infrastructure as well as the quality of customer service it provides (Tanprajna and Ellyawati, 2021). In contrast, a research conducted in Iran found no significant relationship between perceived utility and online purchase (Aghdaie and Yousefi, 2011).

In accordance with research by Kim and Song (2010), buyers expect to get helpful information and to be able to easily peruse items before making a purchase. Motivations to purchase online include the need for convenience and variety. Consumer-perceived user-friendlier technologies have a greater rate of adoption. When considering the consumer purchase decision, Pauliene (2020) highlighted many businesses now perceive online customer evaluations as a crucial tool for helping them sell goods, win over consumers' trust, and even manipulate online reviews to influence customers' purchase intents and choices.

Based on the above discussion, overall past researchers have stated that e-WOM is impacting on purchasing decision of online consumer. Therefore, hypothesis two is developed assuming that.

H2: There is a significant positive impact between e-WOM on online consumer purchase intention.

### **Electronic Referral**

Electronic referrals, or e-referral, are a type of affiliate marketing that happens among people who have strong social links (Hu, 2021). People should be informed about referral programs and the value of referring a product or service to their peers. The brand reputation or brand image will be influenced by negative or positive e-Referral assessments, these assessments can influence the purchase intention (Zhang et al., 2019). Customers' willingness to participate in follow-up referral behaviour is influenced by their perceptions of costs and benefits (Zhang et al., 2019). If the reference successfully leads to the receiver purchasing the product, the receiver and the company will engage in another exchange. When it comes to establishing a

relationship with customers online, trust is a vital component.

The degree of trust in online interactions is lower than in person encounters at a physical shop (Cassell and Bickmore, 2000). The e-commerce website's credibility is highly dependent on the level of privacy protection available. When uncertainty occurs, most financial and social exchanges emphasize the need for trust. In the context of internet buying, buyer and seller cannot address their difficulties face to face and doubt develops naturally because of the unpredictable conduct on both sides. Therefore, establishing Trust in the online platform is necessary for success in the digital reality and motivations to purchase online include the need for convenience and variety. According to Tanprajna and Ellyawati (2021) from Indonesia, based on their personal experience, seasoned customers frequently offer recommendations or information on goods that other shoppers would purchase, which may influence their behavior and purchasing preferences.

Based on the above discussion, overall past researchers have studied that e-referral has impacted on purchasing decision of online consumer. Therefore, hypothesis three is developed assuming that.

H3: There is a significant positive impact between e-referral on online consumer purchase intention.

### **Live Streaming E-Commerce**

A new type of social commerce known as live streaming commerce has emerged because of the use of a variety of live streaming activities by e-retailers to present products, engage with customers, and encourage sales as well as help to increase online traffic, collect more customers in short run and lead them to purchase (Bao and Zhu, 2022). Live streaming has really been frequently used by e-retailers in China as a marketing tool to display a variety of products. E-commerce live streaming transformed conventional online transactions by enabling customers to view genuine product demonstrations and to communicate with e-retailers immediately (Zhang, Sun and Wang, 2021).

As a newest mode of earning through the online is virtual gifts

provided by the platform. The streamer and other viewers can see what the presents are, who gave them to the streamer, and how many gifts the streamer has received overall (Hou et al., 2020). According to Zhang et al. (2020), from China and United States of America, live-streaming platforms give online shoppers additional ways to simulate in-person shopping experiences. To grab clients' attention and ultimately increase their likelihood of making an online purchase, live streaming enables them to get more detailed product information.

Based on the above discussion, overall past researchers have stated that live streaming e-commerce is impacting on purchasing decision of online consumer. Therefore, hypothesis four is developed assuming that.

H4: There is a significant positive impact between live streaming e-commerce on online consumer purchase intention.

### **Purchase Decision**

When considering the Pakistan authors view, Palalic et al. (2020) stated according to research, 49% of consumers completed their purchases after visiting social media websites for product information, and 60% of them chose to share that knowledge online with other users and shoppers. Only 7% of consumers made a purchase during the process. Tanprajna and Ellyawati (2021) stated that one of the psychological effects that results from desire-related emotions and thoughts is intention to purchase. A consumer's decision to purchase anything is frequently influenced by the attitude of another individual. Furthermore, users prefer online purchasing to traditional shopping due to aspects like variety, quick service, cheaper costs, and customer feedback.

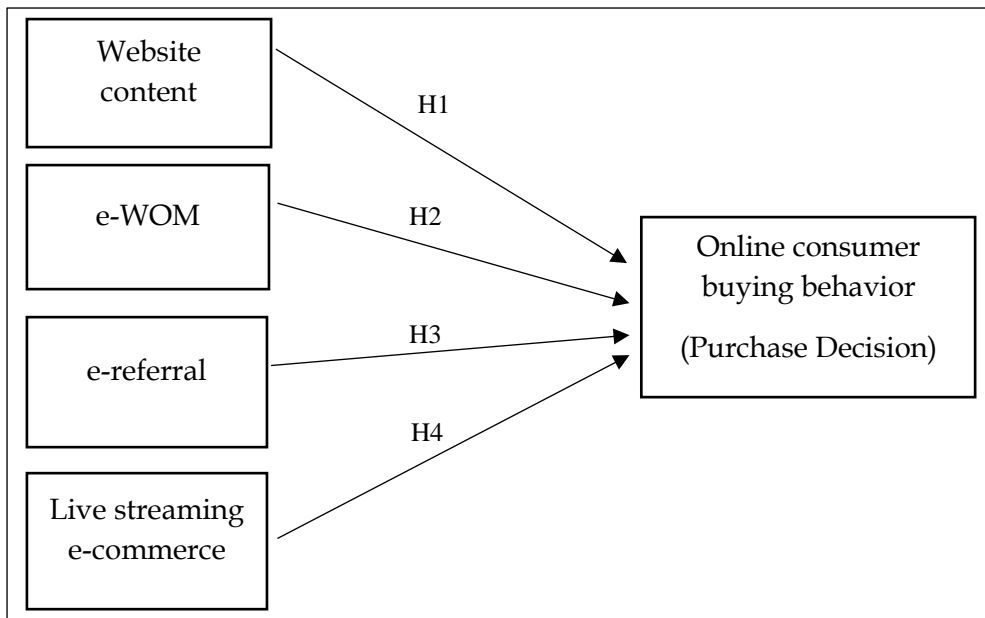
Online shopping intention refers to the results of consumers' evaluations of web site quality, information search, and product appraisal. It is a crucial predictor of actual purchasing behavior (Ku, 2012). In the context of e-commerce, it has been discovered that the more user-friendly and navigable a website is, the more a buyer will assume that the online store works in good faith, hence enhancing the perception of trust among customers (Dachyar and Banjarnahor, 2017). Study from Malaysia highlighted that the time spent on online



shopping and reading product reviews activities have increased more among younger persons (18–34) than among older adults, raising the possibility that this trend will continue. According to Harris Poll data, Americans are spending more time researching goods and purchasing online, and many are feeling the social repercussions of spending so much time in front of a screen (Jusoh and Ling, 2012). Based on the study done by Pandey and Parmar (2021), there are other aspects besides website quality that may influence a consumer's decision to buy.

Based on the literature and grounded model, UTAUT model was discussed previously, authors came up with self-developed conceptual framework. (Figure 1)

**Figure 1: Conceptual Framework**



Source: Authors' compilation

**Methodology**

The research study was conducted using a deductive approach. It deployed an online self-administered questionnaire which was developed after critically reviewing through the past literature to get a clearer picture of customer behavior of recently introduced online shopping tactics in Sri Lanka. The questionnaire comprised of

questions of online buying intention which is the dependent variable of the study and website content, e-WOM, e-referral and live streaming e-commerce which are the independent variables of the study. The questions were developed with a five-point Likert scale to measure each variable ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree will use to quickly gauge the participants' level of agreement or disagreement with a statement. In terms of the time horizon of the research, this is a cross-sectional study as the data was collected based on a specific period, 6 months period.

Furthermore, the population selected for the present study was full-time workers both in the government and private sector. As per the "Digital 2022 – Sri Lanka" which was published by Dk (2022), there are 8.2 million active social media users in Sri Lanka. However, a reliable number for social media users could not be found. Therefore, as an actual population size could not be determined the Morgan's table was referred to ascertain the sample size, which was 384. A convenience sampling method used as the sampling technique.

## **Results and Discussion**

### **Validity and Reliability**

The two most crucial tests for improving the quality of a research study are reliability and validity testing. Cronbach's Alpha is the most used test to measure the internal consistency of an instrument (Heale & Twycross, 2015; Rovai et al., 2014; Koonce & Kelly, 2014). A Cronbach Alpha of 0.7 or higher suggests that the instrument has high internal consistency (acceptable reliability) for the purpose of determining research tool dependability (Heale & Twycross, 2015; Bhatnagar et al., 2014; Koonce & Kelly, 2014).

To confirm the validity of the variables, the current study used exploratory factor analysis (EFA). The authors employed the Kaizer-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sample adequacy and Barlett's statistical significance test to establish validity. Results greater than 0.50 are considered appropriate as a prerequisite for KMO.

## Impact of FM on Purchase Intension Correlation Analysis

A correlation analysis was used to investigate the relationship between each independent variable. Correlation is a statistical measure that assess the strength of association and the direction of the relationship between two or more variables. Table 1 depicts the correlation results generated through the SPSS software.

**Table 1: Correlation Analysis**

Scales	Purchase decision	Website content	E-WOM	E-referral	Live streaming
Purchase decision	1				
Website content	.542**	1			
E-WOM	.420**	.575**	1		
E-referral	.676**	.759**	.547**	1	
Live streaming	.693**	.375**	.374**	.690**	1

Note: \*\*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed);

Pearson Correlation Coefficients (N = 384)

Source: Authors' compilation based on SPSS

As per the results interpreted in Table 1, the correlation between all the independent variables: Website content, E-WOM, E-referral, live streaming e-commerce with the purchase decision was statistically significant at the 0.01 level. Furthermore, it was identified that purchase decision had a moderate positive relationship with website content, e-referral and live streaming e-commerce and low positive relationship with E-WOM.

## Multiple Regression Analysis

Multiple regression analysis was performed to identify the most effective factors contributing to the model, which is to fulfil the main objective of the study. Model summary presents a summary of the

model in which the item of interest is the R square statistics, which is .578 with a statistical significance of  $P < 0.05$ . This suggests that 57.8% of the variants in the purchase decision (outcome) was predicted from level of fission marketing activities (predictors). The Durbin-Watson statistic was 1.986 and between +1 and +3 which means that, the independence of the observations has been met.

**Table 2: Multiple Regression Statistics**

<b>Independent Variable</b>	<b>Coefficients Beta</b>	<b>VIF</b>
<b>(Constant)</b>	1.056	
<b>Web content</b>	.209*	2.892
<b>E-WOM</b>	.047*	1.575
<b>E-referral</b>	.145*	4.330
<b>Live streaming</b>	.453*	2.137
<b>R-Squared</b>	.578	
<b>Adj. R-squared</b>	.574	
<b>Std. Error of the Estimate</b>	.517	
<b>Observation</b>	383	

Note: \*significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed);

Dependent Variable: Purchase Decision

Source: Authors' compilation based on SPSS

Regression analysis examines the relationship between two or more than two variables, where it measures the relationship between several independent variables and the dependent variable. In this study, online consumer buying behavior (purchase decision) is the dependent variable whereas website content, E-WOM, E-referral and live streaming e-commerce act as the independent variables. To assure that the considered independent variables are not strongly correlated to each other, multi-collinearity test was done having used the variance inflation factor (VIF). The VIF and tolerance was measured and was found to be low (VIF maximum level = 4.330), which interpreted that multicollinearity issue was not significant in the current study.

The findings of the study confirm that there is correlation between selected independent variables called fission marketing activities and the pre-purchasing decision through social media. Since social media

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allows free interaction and effective way of communication it is one of the most powerful and impactful tools. While social media outlets are growing, users tend to use multiple platforms and access different ways of information sharing. It creates pleasant emotions for users as well as business owners who can make two-way communication very easy.

As per the results derived from Sri Lankan consumers' perspective, this study's findings indicated there was significant positive impact with only three independent variables such as, website content, E-referral, and live streaming e-commerce against the dependent variable, purchasing decision. Out of four independent variables, E-WOM showed the lowest correlation which has weak correlation where other three variables, E-referral, website content and live streaming e-commerce showed high positive correlation. The highest correlation was live streaming e-commerce which had positive significant effect on purchase decision. Users are more concerned the live streaming e-commerce, which is the newest technology to reach customers quickly. Live casting led consumers to make their decisions very smoothly. Since each information is shared through the live digitalized platforms and live streamers are also available for the quick question and answer sessions with customers.

### **Discussion**

Based on the study, it is analyzed that the impact of four independent variables website content, e-WOM, e-referral and live streaming e-commerce on purchase decision of online consumers and come up with the outcomes of there is a significant positive impact of three independent variables where one independent variable has no impact on purchase decision. Under the first objective of the study, website content on online consumer purchase decision has significant positive impact and help to achieve the research question. This is aligned with the past study conducted by Hao and Yang (2022). As the second objective of the study, e-WOM, independent variable which failed to align with the research objective of the impact of the e-WOM with purchase decision. Based on the past literatures highlighted that there is an impact of e-WOM with purchase decision. But when comes to the data analysis of the study, it implies that e-WOM has no impact on purchase decision in Sri Lankan context. The rationale behind this

can be the nature of the Sri Lankans and they may have unsatisfied experience word of mouth in offline purchase decisions. Therefore, that kind of perception is more likely to remind them when it comes to digital purchasing decisions. But the study done by Hao and Yang (2022), was not align with the study. Third research objective was achieved, and it implies there is a positive impact of e-referral on purchase decision. Based on the past literatures confirms that there was an impact of e-referral with purchase decision. Also, it has been proved by the data analysis techniques. It aligns with the past research conducted by (A. Rahman et al., 2018; Hao and Yang, 2022). The final objective has been also achieved since there is a significant positive impact of live streaming e-commerce on purchase decision. This is also aligned with past research of Zhou et al. (2022) which support making more reliable of the objective.

### **Conclusions and Implications**

This work was mainly conducted to identify the fission marketing activities affecting the consumer purchase intention in the Sri Lankan digitalized platforms. Therefore, to find out the fission marketing activities which influence the purchase decision of the consumers, the study developed four sub-objectives by referring to prior research studies such as web site content, e-WOM, e-referral and live streaming e-commerce. By linking these sub-objectives, the author achieved three main objectives, that was to recognize the impact of these fission marketing activities with online consumer purchase decision in local digital industry. The study clears that there is a significant impact between all the variables except e-WOM with online purchasing decision. It is highlighted that fission marketing activities have a strong power of influence on consumers when they are deciding. When comes to the digital era, purchasing essentials is comparatively different than visit the physical shop. So that consumers should switch with kind of fission marketing activities to fulfil their need or want without wasting their time.

Contribution of the current study is that the authors initiated to bridge the empirical gap that was identified during the thorough review of literature that there are lack of research conducted in the research area. Furthermore, this study will also help the future E- marketers in enhancing their businesses by using fission marketing activities.

These fission marketing activities will encourage consumer as well as the entrepreneur or businessman. However, this study will help online sellers, entrepreneurs to develop a competitive advantage among other businessmen by understanding the fission marketing activities in the online industry. Consumers can be encouraged to purchase online goods and services while practicing fission marketing activities which lead to maximizing the trustworthiness among consumers on digital businesses. Also, it will be a good sign when people move to digital shopping where create a strong platform for young entrepreneurs/online businessmen to reach their goals as well.

### **Limitations and Future Research Suggestions**

As this is the first study in Sri Lanka as well as only few research have been done globally, it was quite challengeable to refer and collect information. The limited number of research articles that could give a wholesome knowledge of this area is another constraint to conducting the study. Also, the articles related to the Sri Lankan context in event planning have not yet been completely undergone. Therefore, there was a considerable gap to cover conducting many experiments and tasks. Though online users are more than 11 million, still author had to decrease the sample size to 384, due to the hardships of collecting responses online. Since this quantitative research covered every province in Sri Lanka, the results of this study can vary when large sample size is used to represent the entire country. There were no physical gatherings or data collection surveys due to the huge transport cost and current COVID-19 pandemic situation. Hence, all the information was gathered through online platforms and telephone conversations. In addition, time was another constraint when performing this study.

When considering the future research suggestions, this study focus on Fission marketing activities that influence online consumer buying behavior in Sri Lanka. To avoid the limitations mentioned above, it is possible to meet or gather people physically, and can identify the real customers or users in the sample as well. Future researchers can create a separate study that concentrates more on the behavioral stimulation of consumers when they make a purchase of a good or service relevant to this sector, considering the various segments of the population of Sri

Lanka. Other than website content, e-WOM, e-referral and live streaming e-commerce, future researchers should involve in variety of fission marketing activities which are new to the industry and let them go with future for a better result.

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