

EFFECTS OF VIRTUAL TOUR CHARACTERISTICS ON PURCHASE INTENTION: EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE FROM KITCHEN AND HOME APPLIANCES VIRTUAL STORES IN SRI LANKA

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1. Introduction

Although virtual tours have emerged as a potent marketing weapon in recent years, most of the kitchen and home appliances companies in Sri Lanka are still using traditional marketing practices. Further, how the use of virtual tours stimulates customers' intention to purchase online has not been adequately studied in the Sri Lankan context. Therefore, this paper fills this gap by identifying how virtual tour characteristics influence customers' purchase intention of kitchen and home appliances, referring to Generation Y customers.

2. Research Methodology

A conceptual framework is developed based on the stimulus-organism-response (S-O-R) model, and hypotheses related to causal relationships among the constructs are presented. Following the positivist research philosophy and deductive research approach, data was collected from a sample of 285 Generation Y customers who are aware of virtual tours using an online survey. Hierarchical regression analysis was used to test the hypotheses.

3. Findings and Discussion

Findings indicate that virtual tour characteristics (informativeness, effectiveness, and entertainment) positively impact customers' purchase intention of kitchen and home appliances. The effectiveness of virtual tours has been identified as the most influential factor. Further, it was revealed that virtual tour flow mediates the relationship between virtual tour characteristics and customers' purchase intention.

4. Conclusion and Implications

This paper provides an opportunity for kitchen and home appliances virtual stores in Sri Lanka to stimulate customers' desire to purchase kitchen and home appliances by implementing virtual tour options that are informative, entertaining, and effective.

Keywords: Generation Y, Kitchen and home appliances, Purchase intention, S-O-R model, Virtual tour characteristics.