Facebook User-Generated Content Towards Online Purchase Intention: Reference to Franchise Fast-Food Industry in Colombo District, Sri Lanka

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The rise of digital communication, particularly on social media, has led to a significant upwelling movement in user-generated content (UGC), impacting businesses' performance. The pace at which the fast-food industry is changing has been brisk and shows no signs of stopping while being extremely competitive and altering consumption patterns. However, the industry is experiencing substantial shifts in brand-switching habits and unequal buying patterns. Nevertheless, consumers seek greater value, suitable, and less risky options, which tend to rely more on the recommendations of others. Thus this study aims to understand the influence of UGC on Facebook on online purchase intention in the franchise fast food industry in the Colombo district, focusing on the reliability of others' references over advertisements. Based on the information adoption model and homophily theory, the vconceptualization of the study was developed. This followed a positivist research philosophy and descriptive design. This quantitative survey was conducted using a self-administered questionnaire concerning Facebook users in the Colombo district. 324 usable responses were collected under the purposive sampling technique and analyzed by using the multiple regression method of SPSS Statistics 21 software. The findings of the study revealed that information quality and perceived homophily significantly impact on online purchase intention while perceived usefulness and perceived credibility do not significantly impact online purchase intention. This study offers valuable insights for digital marketers, fast-food industry players, and aspiring entrepreneurs. In a fast-paced world where convenience matters, the research underscores the practical significance of user-generated franchise fast food content on Facebook in influencing online purchase decisions. Organizations can use content to understand customer preferences, enabling strategic decision-making and enhancing online presence. This knowledge can be leveraged to develop tactics that align with customer values and preferences.

Keywords: *Franchise fast food industry, Online purchase intention, User-generated content*