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ISBN 978-624-6610-00-5

ESOFTE Metro Campus, No: 03, De Fonseka Place, Colombo 04

Published by

ESOFTE Metro Campus, No: 03, De Fonseka Place, Colombo 04, Sri Lanka.

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MESSAGE FROM THE EDITORIAL BOARD

It is indeed with great pleasure that we write this message as the editorial board for the proceedings of the second Business and ICT International Research Conference organized by ESOF T Metro Campus, Sri Lanka under the theme of “Bridging the Gap: Exploring the intersection of Technology, Business, and Law in Practicing Theories”. The outcome of the collective work carried out by both the local and international researchers in this turbulent time will contribute to alleviation of problems with a novel approach. The research papers published stem from a rich variety of research focusing on the global crisis situation and would induce the private sector and government to think about effective solutions to have a favorable impact on holistic human wellbeing.

The conference proceedings consist of 52 high quality extended abstracts of research carried out with respect to multiple aspects of business management and ICT.

We would like to extend our gratitude to all authors for their enthusiasm shown in the contribution of time and effort that made the conference and publication of the conference proceedings a success. Also, we would like to express our gratitude to all the reviewers of BIIRC for their insightful feedback and on time completion of review process. We also sincerely hope that the readers will share their insights with the authors of BIIRC 2024 to ensure further advance the level of research aiming at resolving the issues hindering growth of economy as a whole and uplifting human wellbeing.

Editorial Board | BIIRC 2024

ESOF T Metro Campus / Sri Lanka

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MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRMAN / GROUP MANAGING DIRECTOR

A research conference provides professionals and students with an opportunity to present their research findings, gain valuable experience in their field, receive input from colleagues to enhance their work, and share cutting-edge discoveries in their respective areas of study. I am honored and delighted to convey this message for the inaugural Business and ICT Research Conference (BIIRC) 2024, organized by ESOF Metro Campus (Pvt) Ltd. I would also like to take this moment to extend a warm welcome and express gratitude to all our visiting colleagues from London Metropolitan University, esteemed speakers, paper presenters, and participants. The conference theme, " Bridging the Gap: Exploring the intersection of Technology, Business, and Law in Practicing Theories," addresses the timely challenges faced by countries like Sri Lanka. This theme has garnered significant interest from the research community in both management and information technology sectors. I strongly believe this conference will lay the foundation for staff development and interdisciplinary research, with the support of our foreign partner universities and other state and non-state universities in Sri Lanka. As an educator and entrepreneur, I firmly believe that even in a rapidly changing world, the duty of a successful professional is to elevate human life standards while safeguarding them for the future through research and development initiatives. In my capacity as the Chairman / Managing Director of Sri Lanka's most widespread tertiary education institute, I am confident that this conference will serve as a platform for our academia, students, and fellow researchers to showcase their research endeavors and innovations in the fields of management and information communication technologies. On behalf of ESOF Metro Campus, I would like to express my sincere appreciation to our keynote speaker, Professor Keitaro Narusei, for accepting our invitation. Additionally, I want to acknowledge and commend all the participants for their dedication and hard work in contributing to the success of the Business and ICT Research Conference (BIIRC) 2024. Finally, I extend my compliments to the organizing committee of BIIRC for their efforts in arranging this event and making it a truly memorable occasion.



Dr. Dayan Rajapakse

Chairman / Group Managing Director| ESOF Group of Companies

MESSAGE FROM THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

As the CEO of ESOFTE Metro Campus, it is a great pleasure to welcome all delegates and participants to the 2nd Business and ICT Research Conference (BIIRC) 2024, coming from near and afar. The theme of the conference “Bridging the Gap: Exploring the intersection of Technology, Business, and Law in Practicing Theories” is very topical in the contemporary scheme of things. We are as a Nation looking forward to finding new solutions through business and ICT domains to realize Sri Lanka's aspiration to stabilize her economy and pave the pathway to sustainable development. Research in business and information communication technologies is exciting, as these fields encompass both traditional and innovative areas of study in business management and information and communication technologies. This conference will be a good platform for cross-disciplinary researchers from local and international universities to exchange knowledge and gain skills in a multitude of fields. I believe this annual conference will serve as an inspiring stage for academics, professionals, and research institutions to illuminate their research endeavors. It holds the promise of fostering groundbreaking knowledge that will enhance the quality of life for all.



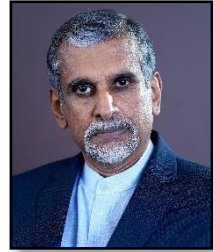
We look forward to an interesting and highly interactive technical session and invite all to take advantage to make new friends and contacts for future collaborations. Finally, I would like to salute the dignitaries from London Metropolitan University and Kingston University who have come all the way from United Kingdom to take part in this event, and the organizing committee and others who have worked hard to contribute to the success of this conference.

Mr. Nishan Sembacuttiaratchy

Chief Executive Officer | ESOFTE Metro Campus

MESSAGE FROM THE DEPUTY VICE CHANCELLOR

It is my pleasure to issue this message for the Business and ICT Research Conference (BIIRC) 2024, organized by ESOF Metro Campus. The BIIRC conference is a key step towards realizing our vision to be an academic and research institution of excellence in the region.



Conferences are the platform to discuss latest research findings critically in order to discover new knowledge as well as establish a fruitful and effective collaboration between universities and, local and international industrial organisations to address the key contemporary world issues. As such, I hope that this conference will also generate interesting discussions and new knowledge.

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to all committee members of the conference for their hard work, commitment and relentless effort. Finally, I would like to thank distinguished keynote speakers, reviewers, sponsors and participants.

Dr. Jayantha Rajapakse

Deputy Vice Chancellor | ESOF Metro Campus

MESSAGE FROM THE CONFERENCE CHAIRPERSON

It is with great pleasure I extend my warm greetings to all of you as we commence the proceedings of the 2nd Business and ICT International Research Conference 2024 (BIIRC). As the Chairperson of this significant milestone for ESOF Metro Campus, I am honored to welcome you to this distinguished platform for the exchange of knowledge, insights, and ideas. We embarked on establishing a research culture at ESOF with our 1st Business and ICT International Research Conference in 2023, where I had the privilege of



serving as the conference secretary. Conferences such as BIIRC serve as opportunities for scholars, researchers, and professionals from diverse fields to convene, deliberate, and collaborate on the latest advancements and discoveries within their respective domains. This annual event fosters thought-provoking discourse, allows for the sharing of groundbreaking research findings, and helps build connections that can shape the future of our industries.

Our chosen theme, " Bridging the Gap: Exploring the intersection of Technology, Business, and Law in Practicing Theories," emphasizes the critical need to explore the intersection of technology, business, and law. The discussions and presentations throughout this conference will undoubtedly shed light on these interconnected aspects, offering fresh perspectives that enrich our collective knowledge. I trust that BIIRC 2024 will be a truly rewarding experience for all participants. May it foster new connections, ignite creativity, and leave you feeling re-energized and inspired within your chosen fields. Additionally, this conference provides an excellent platform for academics to enhance their knowledge and research skills. I am pleased to see an increase in ESOF staff members' contributions to BIIRC 2024 compared to last year.

I extend my sincere gratitude to the key personalities enriching this event: our Chief Guest, Dr. Dayan Rajapaksha; our Keynote Speaker, Professor Keitaro Narusei; and our Guest of Honor, Chief Operating Officer of ESOF Metro Campus, Mr. Nishan Sembukuttiatchy. I am thankful for their valuable contributions, and I have no doubt that their presence will add great value to BIIRC 2024. Further, I acknowledge the invaluable contributions and guidance provided by Dr. Dillina Herath, Dean of the School of Business and Law, and Dr. Thilak Chaminda, Dean of the School of Business. Moreover, I extend my heartfelt gratitude to the organizing committee, distinguished speakers, session chairs, and all contributors who have dedicated their time and

expertise to organize a thought-provoking experience. Your efforts have enabled us to offer a diverse array of sessions and topics that will unfold throughout the conference.

Welcome to BIIRC 2024 and thank you for your participation.

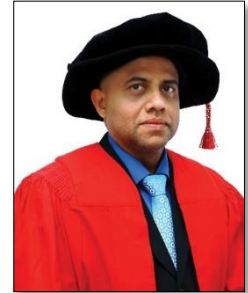
Dr. Hiranthi Rathnayake

Head of Department Undergraduate Programmes School of Business

Conference Chair BIIRC 2024 | ESOF Metro Campus

MESSAGE FROM THE ACADEMIC DEAN SCHOOL OF BUSINESS AND LAW

It is a great pleasure to send this message for the 2nd Business and ICT International Research Conference (BIIRC) 2024, as the Academic dean of School of Business and Law. This event serves as proof of our unwavering commitment to fostering intellectual growth, innovation, and collaboration within the realms of business, law and information and communication technology fields. The merging of these dynamic fields has the potential to reshape industries, drive economic growth, and address pressing local as well as global challenges. Through providing a platform for basic and applied research and open dialogue, BIIRC provides opportunity for local and internal students, staff and practitioners, to exchange ideas and explore new frontiers of knowledge.



I extend my heartfelt gratitude to the organizing committee, especially Dr. Hiranthi Rathnayake, Business and IT school staff, and students for their tireless efforts in bringing this conference to fruition. Your dedication is highly appreciated in making BIIRC a great success. As we embark on this intellectual journey together through the BIIRC 2024 theme “Bridging the Gap: Exploring the intersection of Technology, Business, and Law in Practicing Theories”, let us embrace the spirit of inquiry, challenge conventional wisdom, and contribute to a brighter future of academia as well as Sri Lankan economy as a whole.

Dr. Dillina Herath

Academic Dean-School of Business | ESOF Metro Campus

MESSAGE FROM THE ACADEMIC DEAN SCHOOL OF COMPUTING

I am thrilled to welcome you all to the Business and ICT International Research Conference 2024. This moment marks the beginning of a tradition, an annual gathering of scholars, thinkers, and innovators who will shape the future of knowledge and discovery within our academic community. This conference symbolizes the commitment of ESOF Metro Campus to fostering an environment of intellectual curiosity and scholarly exchange. It is a reflection of our dedication to nurturing talent, fostering interdisciplinary collaborations, and promoting the free exchange of ideas.



As the Dean of the School of Computing, I am incredibly proud of our management, faculty, researchers, and students for contributing to the development of a research-focused culture within our institution. Your dedication and passion for inquiry have made a profound impact. I also extend my gratitude to the conference organizers, reviewers, and volunteers who have worked tirelessly to make this event possible. Your efforts have ensured that our research community can come together to share ideas and inspire one another. This conference is not just an opportunity to share research findings; it is a platform for forging connections, sparking conversations, and inspiring future collaborations. It is a space where ideas are nurtured, challenged, and refined. Therefore, I encourage participants to fully engage in the conference and reap its benefits. As you share your research findings, remember the significance of your work. Your research has the potential to influence policy, transform industries, and improve lives. Therefore, it is important to apply your findings towards the betterment of society, beyond just publishing them. Thank you for your commitment to research. I wish you a productive conference full of enlightenment and inspiration.

Dr. Hapugahage Thilak Chaminda

Academic Dean | School of Computing | ESOF Metro Campus

A SHORT BIO OF KEYNOTE SPEAKER



Prof. Keitaro Naruse

Professor, Division of Information Systems Head of the Division

Professor Keitaro Naruse is a distinguished academic affiliated with the Department of Computer Science and Engineering, specifically the Division of Information Systems, at the University of Aizu. He currently serves as the Head of the Division. Professor Naruse's expertise spans a broad spectrum of computer science, encompassing both undergraduate and graduate levels. His undergraduate courses cover Robotics and Automatic Control, Introduction to Computer Systems, and Programming in C++. At the graduate level, he offers specialized courses in Modern Control Theory, Advanced Robotics, and Theory of Evolving Networks. His research interests primarily focus on intelligent robotics, and robotics. Professor Naruse has been a key contributor to the development of disaster response robots, where his team developed a robot system and joined a world-wide robot competition and won a prize at the world robot summit 2020. Prior to his current position, Professor Naruse held academic appointments at Hokkaido University, New Jersey Institute of Technology, and the University of Aizu. He obtained his Ph.D. in Engineering from the Graduate School of Hokkaido University in 1995.

Professor Naruse is an active member of several academic societies, including the IEEE (Robotics), the Robotic Society of Japan, the Society of Instrument and Control Engineering, and the Japan Society of Precision Engineering.

SHORT SUMMARY OF KEYNOTE ADDRESS

Robot Software Development Framework with Cyber-Physical System and Interactive Online Test System

It is an honor to stand before you as the keynote speaker of 2nd Business and ICT International Research Conference, organized by ESOF Metro Campus, Sri Lanka under the theme “Bridging the Gap: Exploring the Intersection of Technology, Business, and Law in Practicing Theories”. Today, I want to address a significant challenge in the field of robotics and software development. As we continue to advance technologically, the integration and reliability of software, particularly in robotic systems, have become paramount. When we develop software, rigorous testing with many test patterns is essential to ensure there are no bugs. However, in the realm of robot software, intensive testing poses unique difficulties. The primary challenges are twofold: firstly, the enormous cost associated with testing on actual robots, and secondly, the impossibility of encompassing all potential sensor noises and motion disturbances in a limited number of tests. These limitations result in robot software often remaining unreliable. To address these challenges, my team and I have been developing a comprehensive robot software development framework. This framework utilizes both actual robots, representing physical worlds, and simulated robots, representing cyber worlds. The introduction of cyber worlds offers a solution to the prohibitive costs associated with physical testing. By creating these simulated environments, we can extensively test robot software without the financial burden of using physical robots. Moreover, if we model the noises and disturbances in these cyber worlds to be greater than those found in the physical world, we can ensure that the software is stable when deployed in real-world scenarios. This approach not only enhances the reliability of robot software but also allows us to continually refine and update the cyber worlds, making them increasingly accurate representations of the physical world through iterative testing and feedback. I would like to present our current system, detailing how we have integrated these cyber and physical worlds to develop more robust and reliable robot software. Our framework is a testament to the potential of interdisciplinary

collaboration, where technology, business, and law intersect to push the boundaries of innovation and practical application. Looking ahead, we envision a future where cyber-physical systems become an integral part of the robot development lifecycle, enabling the creation of more reliable, intelligent, and safe robots. By bridging the gap between the digital and physical realms, we can overcome the challenges of robot software development and accelerate the adoption of robotic technologies across various industries. I believe that this approach holds the key to unlocking the full potential of robotics and driving innovation.

TECHNICAL SESSIONS- SESSION CHAIRS, SESSION CO-CHAIR, AND COORDINATORS

TRACK 01: DATA SCIENCE AND AI-I

Chairperson : Prof. S. Vasanthapriyan
Session Co-Chair : Dr. Manjula Sandirigama & Dr. M. W. P. Maduranga
Coordinator : Ms. Sasini Randunuge & Ms. Himaransi De Zoysa

TRACK 01: SOFTWARE TECHNOLOGIES- II

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DATA SCIENCE AND AI-I

DEVELOPMENT OF DEEP LEARNING MODELS TO DETECT ACUTE LYMPHOBLASTIC LEUKEMIA FOR MEDICAL DIAGNOSIS

D.M. Denuwan Harshana Disanayaka^{1*}, D.A Lasitha Ranawaka² and Iresha Jayarathna³

^{1,2}Department of Computing, ESOF Metro Campus, Kurunagala, Sri Lanka

*denuwan4427@gmail.com**

ABSTRACT

Acute lymphoblastic leukemia is a malignant disease that begins when healthy blood cells grow out of control and affect immature lymphocytes (ALL). The disease worsens quickly and requires immediate treatment. Acute lymphoblastic leukemia, which usually occurs in young children and adults over the age of 50, requires immediate attention. The primary objective of this research is to develop a deep learning model that can improve the efficiency and accuracy of leukemia diagnosis using artificial intelligence. To create this deep learning model, a Zeiss camera was used on a microscope image dataset, for which the dataset included 3256 images under 4 image categories. As a result, this Deep Learning Model has a very high-test accuracy of 98.86%. Accordingly, this research will be useful for efficient and accurate diagnosis of leukemia in the future. These encouraging findings suggest that this model could greatly improve the diagnosis of acute lymphoblastic leukemia, leading to more rapid and accurate treatment therapies.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence, Deep Learning, Leukemia Medical

INTRODUCTION

Adult acute lymphoblastic leukemia (ALL), sometimes known as acute lymphocytic leukemia, is blood and bone marrow malignancy. If not treated, this form of cancer generally worsens swiftly (National Cancer Institute, n.d.). According to Medical News Today, the life expectancy of Leukemia patients is as follows: -

Table 1: Life expectancy of Leukemia patients

Age Group	Deaths
Under 20	2.0%
20-34	2.4%
35-44	2.3%
45-54	4.8%
55-64	12.1%
65-74	23.9%
75-84	30.0%
Over 84	22.6%

(Source: Author Developed 2024)

It is very clear here that as the age of people increases, their deaths of presentation increase (Scott, 2023). According to the Cancer Council website, more than 5,200 people are expected to be diagnosed with the disease by 2023, and the average age of diagnosis is 65 (Cancer Council, n.d.). In addition, there are several forms of leukemia. Several other factors determine the type of white blood cells a person develops. Leukemia impairs the function of white blood cells and causes them to grow out of control. This overgrowth removes healthy blood cells and causes significant problems throughout the body. and may develop acute or chronic leukemia. When white blood cells are less mature, they grow faster and produce defective cells called blasts. Chronic means when the white blood cells grow slowly, symptoms may not appear for years (Scott, 2023). The main aim of this research is to find an answer using artificial intelligence to make leukemia diagnosis more efficient. To create this deep learning model, a Zeiss camera was used on a microscope photo dataset, for which 4 categories of photos were included in the dataset. As a result, this deep learning model received very high values for training accuracy: 99.69%, validation accuracy: 98.44%, and testing accuracy: 98.86%. Accordingly, this research will be very helpful in making leukemia diagnosis more efficient and accurate in the future.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Image Processing and Deep Learning Techniques

This study presents a computer-aided system for the diagnosis of acute lymphoblastic leukemia (ALL), a life-threatening disease. The system uses image processing and deep learning techniques to classify all subtypes and reactive bone marrow. The neural

network was trained on stained bone marrow images, achieving 97.78% accuracy. The results show that this approach can be used to diagnose all diseases and their subtypes, to assist pathologists (Amjad Rehman, 2018). Similarly, (Mustafa Ghaderzadeh, 2021) processing images from peripheral blood smears (PBS), ML methods have been asserted to achieve an average accuracy of over 97%. Machine learning (ML) has been used to revolutionize the early detection and diagnosis of leukemia. Deep learning (DL) has shown high accuracy and sensitivity in detecting various cases of leukemia. ML has many applications in the analysis of various types of leukemia images, but its use in the diagnosis of acute lymphoblastic leukemia (ALL) has attracted considerable attention in the fields of hematology and artificial intelligence. This approach can improve accuracy, reduce diagnostic time, and provide faster, cost-effective, and safer diagnostic services.

Automation of Diagnosis Processes

Leukemia diagnosis is crucial in the health sector, often performed through blood tests. Manual methods, such as the Haemocytometer, can be monotonous and time-consuming. A machine learning technique has been developed to automate this process, classifying various forms of leukemia using nursing platelet cells within blood samples. This method offers an accuracy of 92% (K et al., n.d.). Along with that (Min Zhou1, 2021) trained CNN on 1,732 bone marrow images to diagnose leukemia. The system mimics the workflow of a hematologist, identifying and discarding uncountable cells. CNN achieved 82.93% accuracy in WBC classification, 86.07% precision, and 82.02% F1 score. It also performed well in diagnosing acute lymphoid leukemia, lymphoma metastases, and neuroblastoma, achieving an average accuracy of 82.93%. This study shows high performance in real clinical situations.

Advancements in Diagnostic Accuracy

The (Elham Nazari, 2020) study focuses on accurate cancer diagnosis using DNA microarrays. The results show that new methods like deep learning can improve diagnosis accuracy and performance. The network, which includes a single-layer neural network and a deep learning network with three hidden layers, showed 63.33 and 96.67% accuracy, respectively. This suggests that new methods can be beneficial in cancer diagnosis and effective gene selection in various types of cancer. (Kokeb Dese a, 2021) The system showed high accuracy in classifying leukemia types using validated data sets with 97.69%, 97.86%, and 100% sensitivity and specificity and it also showed 94.75% accuracy for WBC count, with diagnostic accuracy ranging from 70% to 97%. Significantly improved. The literature review underscores the transformative potential of machine learning and deep learning in leukemia diagnosis. This research advances this field by focusing on leukemia stage identification with high accuracy: 99.69% training, 98.44% validation, and 98.86% testing. Building on prior studies, this work affirms deep learning's pivotal role in revolutionizing leukemia diagnosis. It emphasizes

not only enhanced diagnostic accuracy but also faster procedures and improved patient outcomes. This research highlights the immense possibilities at the nexus of advanced technology and healthcare.

Research Problem and Objectives

Acute lymphoblastic leukemia is a very dangerous disease, and there is a very low chance of saving a life after it is diagnosed. There is a chance of curing this disease by detecting it at the initial stage after it has been diagnosed. However, due to the delay in the diagnosis of diseases and some difficulties caused by the doctors in those cases, there may be cases of delay in treatment. How can we find a successful solution for this using artificial intelligence and deep learning through this research? and how can we find a successful solution for the delay in Acute lymphoblastic leukemia detection and make its diagnosis process more efficient?

Integrated Detection and Classification: the detection of Acute lymphoblastic leukemia in medical pictures and their subsequent classification into separate groups. A key focus is on developing a unified model that can easily move between various jobs.

Accuracy and Generalization: It is critical to achieve high accuracy in tumor detection and accurate multi-class categorization. The difficulty is to ensure that the model's accuracy applies to a variety of datasets and circumstances, allowing it to generalize far beyond the training data.

Clinical Relevance: The suggested framework must not only fulfill technical standards, but it must also be clinically relevant. Acute lymphoblastic leukemia categorization into relevant groups assists medical practitioners in making educated decisions about treatment options and patient care.

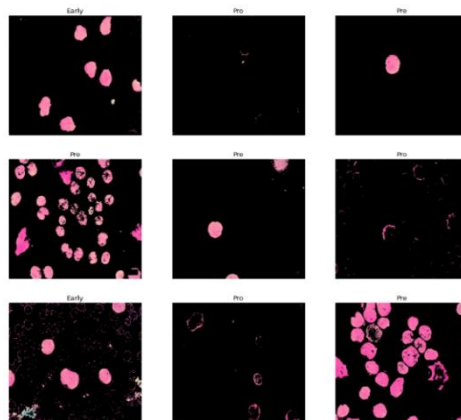
METHODOLOGY

Research Approach

The researchers utilized a qualitative research approach to create a deep learning model, utilizing images as data. This approach allowed for in-depth exploration of fine details and complex visual patterns, requiring subjective interpretation. Theoretical framework was chosen to connect the researchers to existing knowledge and ensure the study is supported by accepted theories. This approach enables a thorough analysis and interpretation of data, combining qualitative research techniques with a theoretical framework, contributing to the body of knowledge on the subject. This study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the correlations between variables.

Data Collection

At this time, the data set used for this research can be mentioned as the most important factor that needs attention. If a Numerical Data Set is used for certain research, then the Quantitative research method can be used for that, and if non-numerical data, such as text, images, or videos, are used for certain research, the Qualitative research method should be used for that. For this research, the researchers used a data set with blood samples taken with Zeiss cameras, a microscopic image prepared by the Bone Marrow Laboratory of Talekhani Hospital (Tehran, Iran) (ARIA, n.d.). This dataset consists of 3256 PBS photographs from 89 suspected patients, and the researchers decided to use the qualitative research method. Qualitative research methods, on the other hand, employ non-numerical data to answer questions about the world, such as text, photographs, or videos. The main objective of this research is to use artificial intelligence to make an accurate diagnosis of acute lymphoblastic leukemia. The researcher used microscopic images to continue this research. However, the main problem faced by the researcher was how to find those characters. It is a very difficult situation. Therefore, the researcher decided to use a previously processed microscopic image data set as the final decision. Therefore, searching for a data set on the Internet for this research was able to find a suitable image data set for this purpose. This image dataset can be described in 4 parts. They are Being: - Beginner - Level, Early: - Earlier - Level, Pre: - Dangerous - Level and Pro: - Most Dangerous - Level. The example has a Figure 1 image.



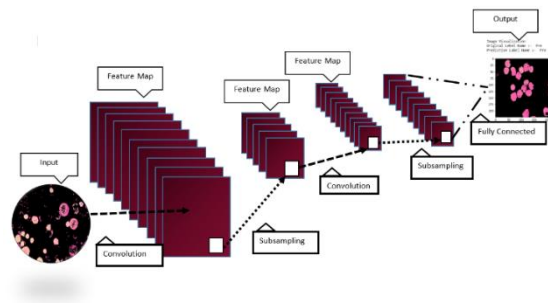
(Source: Author Developed 2024)

Figure 1: Represent of Dataset

Model Building

According to Figure 2, this model uses "Multi-Layer Architecture" Deep Learning Architecture and Convolutional Neural Networks. (CNN) is an interconnected numerical network that processes input data. The initial layer, often a closed instruction, filters the input and generates feature maps. Pools in fully connected sizes. To get better accuracy

for this deep learning model, researchers 5 Convolutional Layers and 5 MaxPooling layers are also used. Apart from this, 2 Dense layers have also been used along with a Flatten layer. The model is built over 250 epochs using 5 convolutional layers and activation functions "relu" for the activation function of the first dense layer and "softmax" for the activation function of the last dense layer. Also, Optimizer 'adam' and Loss 'SparseCategoricalCrossentropy' have been used to compile the model.



(Source: Author Developed 2024)

Figure 2: How to work Convolutional Neural Network

Import Dataset

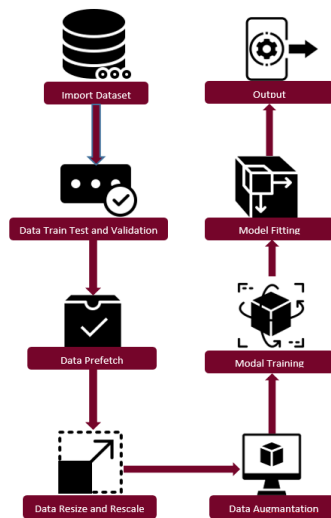
The conclusion of this research is determined by the data used for it. Therefore, it is important to import datasets as a first step.

Training and Testing

The training process of a machine learning model involves initial inputs into project parameters, including the model's problem, data type, and performance metrics. The model's components, known as neurons, are connected through a complex network, with initial parameters updated based on model performance. And *Using a validation dataset, and verifying a model's functionality is a crucial step in testing and validation. This process mimics real-world testing, providing metrics to enhance model performance, unlike a test technique that checks model functionality without hyperparameter modification.* (d'Archimbaud, n.d.)

Model Building Steps

Model Training : According to Figure 3 Deep learning model training is teaching a computer to comprehend relationships by feeding it massive amounts of data. In order to predict new data, this calls for the use of a neural network and iterative learning, which modifies weights and biases. The amount of data, the complexity of the task, and the power of the machine all affect how well a deep-learning model is trained.



(Source: Author Developed 2024)

Figure 3: Process of Research

Fully Connected Layers: From flattened input, the number of neurons in a fully connected layer with a "relu" activation function learns non-linear properties. Classification is made possible by the 'softmax' activation function, which produces class probabilities.

Model Fitting: A critical step in deep learning is called "model fitting," which involves changing parameters to reduce the model's error between predicted and actual outputs. A large amount of training data is used in this process, and parameters are changed to minimize the discrepancy between the model's predictions and actual outputs. It is an essential part of deep learning despite its computational costs. Figure 4 shows how it was used for this research.

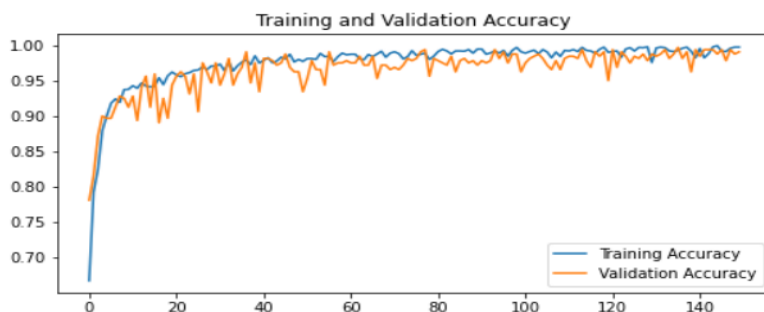
```
In [10]: Output = model.fit(
          train_data,
          epochs = Epochs,
          batch_size = batch_size,
          validation_data = validation_data,
          verbose = 1
        )
```

```
Epoch 1/150
81/81 [=====] - 89s 1s/step - loss: 0.7881 - accuracy: 0.6676 - val_loss: 0.5827 - val_accuracy: 0.7
812
Epoch 2/150
81/81 [=====] - 87s 1s/step - loss: 0.5239 - accuracy: 0.7926 - val_loss: 0.5513 - val_accuracy: 0.8
156
Epoch 3/150
81/81 [=====] - 87s 1s/step - loss: 0.4726 - accuracy: 0.8243 - val_loss: 0.3781 - val_accuracy: 0.8
719
Epoch 4/150
81/81 [=====] - 86s 1s/step - loss: 0.3295 - accuracy: 0.8793 - val_loss: 0.2930 - val_accuracy: 0.9
000
Epoch 5/150
81/81 [=====] - 94s 1s/step - loss: 0.2761 - accuracy: 0.8998 - val_loss: 0.2666 - val_accuracy: 0.8
969
Epoch 6/150
81/81 [=====] - 86s 1s/step - loss: 0.2412 - accuracy: 0.9180 - val_loss: 0.3470 - val_accuracy: 0.8
969
Epoch 7/150
```

(Source: Author Developed 2024)

Figure 4: Model Fitting

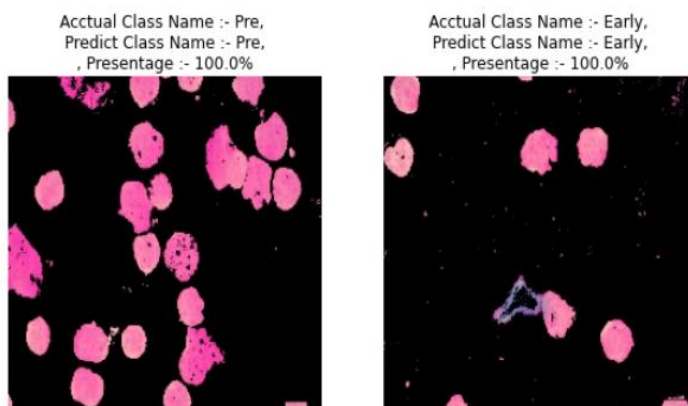
RESULTS AND DISCUSSION



(Source: Author Developed 2024)

Figure 5: Training and Validation Accuracy

Figure 5 Graphically represents the accuracy of the training and validation model numerically.



(Source: Author Developed 2024)

Figure 1: Prediction

Figure 6 represents how to show the final prediction result of this model. The actual class name' represents the images' real class name and 'predicted class name' represents that models' final prediction labels. In addition, as a matter to be mentioned, the levels mentioned here are Being:- "Beginner Level", Early:- "Earlier Level", Pre:- "Dangerous Level", and Pro:- "Most Dangerous Level".

RECOMMENDATIONS, FUTURE IMPROVEMENTS AND CONCLUSION

In comparison to previous AI-based diagnostic tools, the model's excellent accuracy rates—99.69% training, 98.86% testing, and 98.44% validation—showcase its resilience

and efficacy. These high rates imply that the model may be a useful diagnostic aid for acute lymphoblastic leukemia, helping medical practitioners make diagnoses more quickly and accurately. Studying the final results of this research shows that this is a great help for the future development of the medical field. And if we pay attention to the future development of this research, it will spread in a wide range. Most importantly, a very efficient and accurate diagnosis can be obtained. Moreover, even if someone has a Microscope Leukemia cancer cell image, that person may not know what stage the cancer is at. However, if this research is further developed and a mobile application or web application is created using it, it will benefit a person who does not have the medical knowledge to easily gain an understanding of the health conditions.

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pdq#:~:text=and%20treatment%20options.-
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f%20cancer,the%20blood%20and%20bone%20marrow.

Scott, J. (2023). *Medical News Today*. Retrieved from
<https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/322990>

ANALYSIS OF USER BEHAVIOR IN ONLINE GAMING THROUGH BIG DATA

I. Ginura N. Karunaratne^{1*} and Karishani M. Bamunawita²

^{1,2}School of Computing, ESOF Metro Campus, Colombo, Sri Lanka

*iamginurakarunaratne@gmail.com**

ABSTRACT

This study project used Big Data's robust analytical capabilities to investigate online gaming through extensive user analytics. Research aimed to understand the intricacies and the preferences that players expressed in their gaming experiences as online gaming platforms continued to expand. Artificial intelligence was utilized to improve experiences, analytical software was used to analyze behavior and sophisticated technologies like Hadoop and Spark were used to handle data. Potential cost savings and revenue growth were examples of concrete advantages. User pleasure and an improved gaming experience were examples of intangible benefits. Key users such as data scientists were identified and acquired by the company's services department. Stakeholders in the game development process, including players concurred. Its purpose was to offer insights that improved user experience, guided strategic choices and contributed to the gaming industry in a morally upright manner. Using machine learning modeling types in conjunction with the big data analytics developers were able to gain a deeper understanding of player behavior and better customize game mechanics and content to user preferences. This allowed developers to make real-time alterations to games in order to boost player engagement. The assessment also emphasized how crucial it is to take ethical factors into account when using data guaranteeing accuracy and impartiality in the analysis of player data. This strategy promoted a more responsible and sustainable game design in addition to increasing user enjoyment.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence, Big Data, Data Analytics, Online Gaming, User Behavior

INTRODUCTION

The focus of this study is the impact of big data on change which is a term that has acquired significant popularity in the last 10 years. Big data was first used to describe the creation of massive volumes of data from sources including social media posts, weather reports and internet searches. These days this is growing to encompass a wide range of information sources that can only be accessed through computers and are not compatible with conventional ways (Segal, 2024).

The research subject selected for this project is the analysis of online gaming consumers using big data—an intriguing nexus that blends data science, entertainment and technology. More user behavior data is a useful tool for bettering game design, understanding player preferences and raising overall game pleasure as online gaming grows more complex. The problem at the core of this research is effectively applied and interpreted in creating more user data in the online gaming sector. As online gaming systems continue to grow users the collection of detailed behavioral data has reached unprecedented levels. The challenge however is to turn this wealth of data into meaningful insights that can optimize player experience, inform game design decisions and improve investment strategies (McCombes, 2023). In the current context the gaming industry faces specific constraints related to user behavior data. Player retention the key to online gaming success requires nuanced understanding of engagement patterns and player preferences. Designing in-game ads to maximize revenue without compromising user experience requires accurate insight into individual in-game behaviors. Furthermore, the ultimate goal of increasing game satisfaction lies in the close relationship between user behavior, game performance and overall player happiness. This study seeks to unpack the challenges in online gaming contexts offer solutions to the current obstacles faced by the gaming industry. Identifying and solving these problems not online gaming contexts specifically not only for the research but also in the broader discourse of using big data for improved user experiences is to help users.

In order to improve the gaming experience by unlocking missions and giving marketers and developers insights from user activity data for developing immersive and tailored experiences this research critically examines the relationship between user behavior in online gaming and big data. It also contributes to broader big data analysis and offers a roadmap for creative exploitation.

This research purposefully focuses only on a few countries including Sri Lanka, the Philippines, and the UK. The intentional elimination of non-digital or online gaming activities highlights the importance of the expanding field of online gaming research. The study admits its bias and the need for further research in order to get a more complete picture of the gaming community overall including offline gaming behavior. This review aims to fill a significant gap in the current state of the application of big data analytics in online gaming.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Player Segmentation Models

By dividing players into groups according to their involvement, behavior, and preferences, player segmentation models significantly influence how each individual player experiences gaming. Studies conducted by Jichen Zhu, Santiago Ontanon, and Joseph Valls-Vargas illuminated the dynamic aspect of players' movements; players' play styles are always changing, necessitating a sophisticated approach to modeling (Valls-Vargas et al., 2021). Using a succession of episodic and machine learning data, Valls-Vargas, Ontanon, and Zhu offer a novel player modeling framework that captures these dynamic changes. Their experimental investigations of trace segmentation techniques for game style prediction attempt to modify gaming experiences in response to user preferences. Time-climate-based gaming takes these new systems into account using data (Valls-Vargas et al., 2021).

Real-time Analytics in Gaming

In the dynamic landscape of online gaming, real-time analytics plays a pivotal role in shaping player experiences, addressing challenges, and optimizing game content. Researchers Anton Smerdov, Andrey Somov, Evgeny Burnaev, and Anton Stepanov have significantly contributed to this domain by introducing an Artificial Intelligence (AI)-enabled solution for predicting eSports player in-game performance (Smerdov et al., 2022). Their research focuses on AI's capacity to forecast player performance utilizing sensor data such as physiological, environmental and smart seating information from both professional and amateur players. Researchers employ recurrent neurons to analyze player performance in a multiplayer game at every given time. As a result the usage of meditation techniques has become more important and evident features are now crucial for providing network generalization (Smerdov et al., 2022).

Personalization Algorithms in Online Gaming

Examining the domain of online game personalization algorithms reveals a constantly changing landscape where platforms employ advanced algorithms to tailor features, challenges and rewards to individual players. Outstanding contributions to the complexity of game personalization were made by scholars Lawrence Cavedon, Fabio Zambetta and Stephen Karpinski. They caught the light (Karpinsky et al., 2014). Personalization is fundamentally the process of automating goods and services using user preference prediction algorithms. This refers to developing systems for video games that may modify the rules and content to suit various player segments such as those with varying game preferences, play styles or skill levels. Ultimately, the objective is to build a gaming experience that can adjust in real-time providing effective entertainment, promoting learning or enhancing communication depending on the unique qualities of each player (Karpinsky et al., 2014).

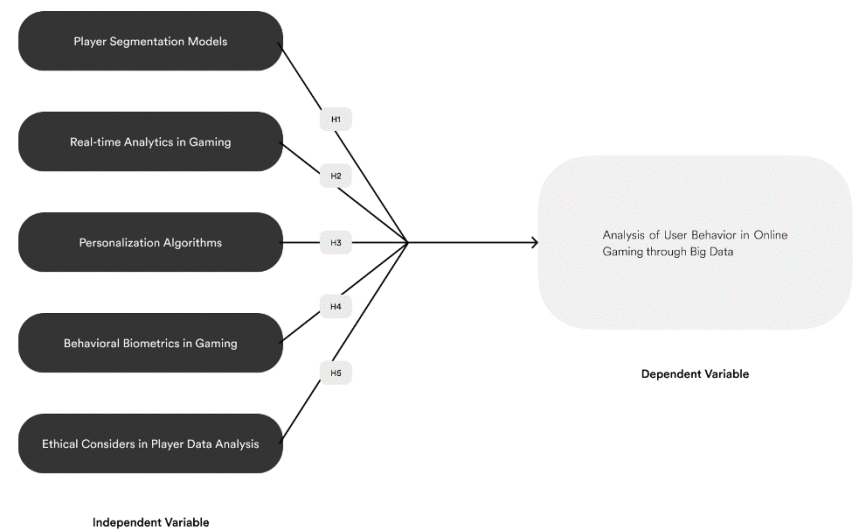
Behavioral Biometrics in Online Gaming

Completing the study of online gaming behavior with behavioral biometrics is a significant step forward in comprehending player interactions in virtual settings. The groundbreaking work of researchers Pezman Mirza-Babaei and Sebastian Long offers important insights into the utilization of biometric data to filter out complicated player behaviors (Mirza-Babaei et al., 2011). The study by Mirza-Babaei and Long demonstrates how the field of video game user research is becoming more and more interested in incorporating biometric data. Their work offers a nuanced view of the game production process and highlights the usefulness of biometrics as a tool to supplement conventional surveillance-based tactics (Mirza-Babaei et al., 2011).

Ethical Considerations in Analyzing Player Data

A new age of unparalleled comprehension of player behavior has begun with the advent of data-driven innovations in the gaming sector. The ethical ramifications of this paradigm shift have been examined by academics Maggie Seif El-Nasr and Erica Kleinman, who have illuminated significant factors that influence players' responsible use of statistics (El-Nasr & Kleinman, 2020). The study by El-Nasr and Kleinman emphasizes the moral dilemmas associated with employing player modeling and data analysis to inform governmental choices. The ways in which skewed data or the algorithm itself might induce biases into algorithmic decision making are a key area of interest. Black box algorithms' ambiguity coupled with the data's lack of representation of certain groups creates severe questions regarding the accuracy and openness of the findings (El-Nasr & Kleinman, 2020).

Conceptual Framework



(Source: Author Developed 2024)

Figure 2: Conceptual Framework

METHODOLOGY

The research onion model has been utilized to carry out the research study. For this investigation of online gaming activities the research onion model was used because it offers a comprehensive and methodical framework that directs research from philosophical underpinnings to particular data collecting and research techniques. This strategy made it possible to conduct a systematic review which started with the formulation of a research philosophy that placed an emphasis on objective measurement supported by empirical data. The study used a mixed methods strategy, combining qualitative observations and quantitative data to provide a thorough understanding of player interactions.

Data collection has been done through both primary and secondary sources. Data was gathered from online gamers from private institutions in Sri Lanka, the Philippines and the UK. Concentrating only on players, the focused strategy guarantees a more sophisticated comprehension of users' behaviors in online gaming and highlights the significance of big data analytics in revealing insights within predetermined parameters. A survey-style questionnaire was given out to the target audience in order to gather data and it may be used to gauge their opinions on online gaming. The questionnaire that was used for the survey has both closed-and open-ended questions, as well as Likert scales (1–5). For latent factors like academic accomplishment examiner attitudes toward assessment, online assessment tools, social identification methods evil and technical skill of researchers Likert scales were the best available for assessing the value of variables.

Secondary data had been collected from websites, articles and research papers. Secondary data had been collected to establish theoretical support in proving and defining literature and relationships between variables.

Data analysis has been done using IBM SPSS Statistics software. The data is analyzed through regression and descriptive statistical methods.

The study's limitations were limited to online players particularly friends and college students from the nations.

Survey Questions

To develop the questionnaire the questions were separated into 3 parts. In the first 10 questions demographic questions were asked and then Independent Variable questions were asked, and, in the end, Dependent variables were asked. Pilot testing was implemented using 10 participants to do the pretesting to make sure the survey has no issues.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Using Cronbach's alpha coefficient, the survey instrument's reliability was evaluated in this pilot research. The survey questions strong internal consistency as indicated by the obtained value of 0.823 led to the measuring instrument's initial validation with the top

10 participants. This indicates a positive level of confidence for upcoming studies examining user behavior in gaming environments.

Table 1: Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.823	6

(Source: Author Developed 2024)

The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) score of 0.648 in this study which looks at user behavior through games is within an acceptable range (0.5-0.8) suggesting that the data connection is appropriate for factor analysis. This demonstrated the data set's capacity to reveal underlying and causal laws. While the KMO value offers a trustworthy beginning point Bartlett's sphericity test should also be considered. An estimated chi-square value of 28.324 with 15 degrees of freedom and a significance level of .020 was obtained using Bartlett's test. This bolsters the findings dependability validates the data's eligibility for factor analysis and raises trust in the underlying variables influencing users' behavior in gaming environments.

Table 2: KMO and Bartells Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.648
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	28.324
	df	15
	Sig.	.020

(Source: Author Developed 2024)

The behaviors that are employed in games may be understood using descriptive statistics. Significant points emphasize user variability and ethical issues in games. Examples of concepts include "player categorization" (mean: 1.876, SD: 0.6816), "real-time analytics" (mean: 2.260, SD: 0.7570), "personalization algorithms" (mean: 1.789, SD: 0.6622) and "behavior biometrics" (mean: 2.114, SD: 0.6311) "ethical considerations" (mean: 2.502, SD: 0.7120), and "variable dependence" (mean: 1.895, SD: 0.7130). This realization aids in the interpretation of the study's results.

The Shapiro-Wilk and Kolmogorov-Smirnov tests for normalcy provide information on the distribution of the data. Shapiro-Wilk tests reveal substantial deviations from normalcy for "Player Segmentation" "Personalization Algorithm" and "Behavior Biometric" ($p = .006, .014$ and $.010$ respectively). Likewise non-normality is evident in "Dependent Variable" ($p = .014$). In the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test "Player Segmentation" shows significance at .003 while other variables do not. On the other hand, there is insufficient data to deny normalcy for "Real-time Analytics" "Ethical Consideration" and "Dependent Variable." Appropriate statistical analyses are guided by these findings.

Significant correlations between many characteristics of user behavior in gaming circumstances are revealed using Pearson correlation analysis. notably there are significant positive correlations between the "player split average" and the "dependent variable average" ($r = .652, p = .000$) and the "behavioral biometric average" ($r = .718, p = .000$), suggesting entangled linkages. Comparably the "average behavior biometric" ($r = .472, p = .004$) the "average real-time analysis" and the "average player categorization" ($r = .601, p = .000$). It is linked, as seen by the moderately positive correlation that it displays. On the other hand, there is little correlation between the "moral consideration average" and the other metrics. These statistics offer insightful information on how various facets of player behavior interact with one another in games which directs future study and exploration.

Table 3: Correlation

ANALYSIS OF USER BEHAVIOR IN ONLINE GAMING THROUGH BIG DATA			
VARIABLE	PEARSON CORRELATION	AS A PERCENTAGE	SIGNIFICANCE
PLAYER SEGMENTATION MODELS	0.652	65.2%	<.001
REAL-TIME ANALYTICS IN GAMING	0.148	14.8%	0.397
PERSONALIZATION ALGORITHMS	0.294	29.4%	0.087
BEHAVIORAL BIOMETRICS IN GAMING	0.485	48.5%	0.003
ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS IN PLAYER DATA ANALYSIS	0.074	7.4%	0.671

(Source: Author Developed 2024)

With an R-square value of .559 the regression model shows a substantial overall fit ($F(5, 29) = 7.340, p = .000$) suggesting that the dependent variables are used to compute the dependent variable (on average around 55.9%) in the variance of the "dependent variable". The model is significantly influenced by the "player segmentation average" ($\beta = .887, p = .000$) and the "real-time analysis average" ($\beta = -.413, p = .013$).

Table 4: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.747 ^a	.559	.483	.5129

(Source: Author Developed 2024)

The dependent variable shows a significant link with the regression coefficients "Player Split Average" ($B = .928, p = .000$) and "Real-Time Analysis Average" ($B = -.389, p = .013$). The dependent variable and the "real-time assessment average" have a negative connection. Nonetheless the model is much enhanced by the "personalization algorithm average" "behavioral biometric average" and "moral consideration average."

The survey instrument's internal consistency was assessed using Cronbach's alpha and a value of 0.823 indicated good reliability. The survey items appear to assess the same underlying concept successfully as indicated by the high degree of internal consistency. This gives future researchers confidence in the validity of the instrument.

The data may be able to reveal underlying structures as shown by the KMO value of 0.648 which shows that the sample is sufficient for factor analysis. By verifying that the variables are adequately correlated Bartlett's test of sphericity which yielded a significant chi-square value (28.324, $p = .020$) adds more evidence to the acceptability of the data for component analysis.

Utilizing the Shapiro-Wilk and Kolmogorov-Smirnov tests the normality of the data distribution was evaluated. In the Shapiro-Wilk test significant findings for "Player Segmentation", "Personalization Algorithm" and "Behavior Biometric" ($p = .006, .014, .010$) show departures from normalcy directing the choice of relevant statistical analyses.

Significant positive correlations between a number of variables including "player split average" and "dependent variable average" were found by Pearson correlation analysis ($r = .652, p = .000$). These connections show how many facets of user behavior are interrelated and shed information on how these elements interact in gaming environments.

With an R-square value of 0.559 the regression analysis shows that the model can account for around 55.9% of the variation in the dependent variable. "Player segmentation average" ($\beta = .887, p = .000$) and "real-time analysis average" ($\beta = -.413, p = .013$) are noteworthy predictors that highlight the influence of these parameters on the dependent variable.

CONCLUSIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS

With a good Cronbach alpha coefficient of 0.823 the pilot study's baseline indicates a promising level of internal consistency for the survey instrument. The top 10 participants validation gives you the confidence to investigate how users will behave in gaming situations in the future. Furthermore, the Bartlett's test yielded a significant chi-square value (28.324, $df = 15, p = .020$) and a Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) score of 0.648. boosting dependability underlying factors that depend on user actions.

Significant relationships between several aspects of user behavior in gaming environments are found in the primary research underscoring the interconnectedness of factors like player segmentation, real-time analytics and behavioral biometrics. These findings offer a comprehensive knowledge of the variables impacting user behavior especially when combined with a regression analysis that shows significant explanatory power. Frequency distributions further highlight the dataset's richness and

dependability for additional analysis by displaying a variety of response patterns across variables.

All things considered, this study clarifies the intricacy of consumer behavior on the play spaces and emphasizes the significance of considering a variety of aspects. In the future, focused interventions and a thorough examination of the interactions found present opportunities to improve the user experience and promote responsible gaming behavior. This work adds to a more thorough knowledge of the dynamics of user behavior in gaming environments and provides a foundation for future research.

The results of the poll have a lot of practical ramifications for marketers, game developers and other industry participants. In terms of game design to examine integrating player segmentation, real-time analytics and behavioral biometrics to help generate more tailored content and engaging gaming experiences the evaluation tool's good internal consistency (Cronbach alpha of 0.823) and substantial correlations on many elements of user behavior show that the results are robust and trustworthy. The sections with the players highlight the value of information storage and how technology and real-time analytics contribute to dynamic game changes.

With the use of these analytics marketers can develop player-specific ads that appeal to particular player demographics increasing player acquisition and retention. Stakeholders should also guarantee accuracy and openness when using player data and taking ethical considerations into account. All things considered, the results offer a thorough insight of how people behave in gaming contexts and lay the groundwork for further studies intended to optimize user experience and promote responsible gaming.

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SELF STYLISTA: A PERSONALIZED COLOR AND SKIN CARE ROUTINE RECOMMENDATION APPLICATION

Fathima Hamna Mohamed^{1*}, P.D.A.U. Akalanaka² and Malithi Algewatta³

^{1,2,3} School of Computing, Faculty of Computing, ESOF Metro Campus, Galle, Sri Lanka

*efhamnaem@yahoo.com**

ABSTRACT

This research investigates the requirement for the development of a responsive web system, Self Stylista, which provides personalized skin care and color recommendations. The study aims to address the challenges faced by individuals who have suppressed their desires, unable to access professional consultations due to high costs, time constraints, and geographical limitations in most cases. Hence, through this research, the author expects to provide a platform to the users where they can get their personalized color recommendations and skin care advice virtually, from one place. The platform not only offers personalized recommendations but also includes an admin panel for monitoring user interactions and managing the system effectively. This will cover the gaps of accessibility, reachability, efficiency and will provide an equal opportunity for the global community, which lacks existing systems. This study integrates a qualitative research methodology where data is collected through user interviews and descriptive surveys to evaluate the user requirement and effectiveness of the solution. The findings demonstrate that users significantly benefit from personalized recommendations for cosmetics, attires and skin care, with high satisfaction levels reported since these tailored recommendations are capable of uplifting an individual's style and enhance the personal growth with improved confidence. Implications for practitioners include the potential for broader adoption of similar technologies in other areas of personalized health and beauty consultations.

Keywords: Color Analysis, Human Face Detection, Personalization, Responsive Design, Skin Care

INTRODUCTION

Beauty is personal, and so is style. Hence it is always important for people to realize that they are beautiful the way they are and the reason they should get beauty consultation and products is to enhance their natural beauty and the unique style. Currently there are many beauty products and beauty consultants popping up from time to time. Therefore, people are constantly confused about what to choose and what suits them the best, since the advertisements and online influencers are promoting various products each time. There are also manual processes in few countries where people can consult experts in the industry with cosmetic and medical knowledge to obtain a customized list of the most suitable color codes for their cosmetics, and skin care routines for their prevailing skin complexions and conditions. But this opportunity is mostly limited to a specific region, costs and amount of money, and there is a demand for the bookings since there is only a limited number of professionals. (J Singh, 2021) Due to these geographical, availability, cost and time constraints many people have suppressed their desires to get reliable and personalized consultations. This research aims to democratize access and provide an equal opportunity to people all around the world to get personalized color and skin care recommendations virtually. Hence, as a solution Self Stylista application is developed with the objectives of analyzing the skin complexion & skin conditions, providing personalized recommendations for them, critically studying advanced technologies that can solve the problem and preparing documentation for better user experience. Accordingly, this responsive application is built using the Bootstrap framework, HTML, CSS and JS as the front-end technologies and PHP, SQL and Python as the backend technologies.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Since the research is related to two sectors, skin care and personalized color, the reviewing of literature is done in both areas and as a whole. Negligence of skin care can cause skin damage and skin diseases and that might result in mental stress and lower one's self esteem to appear confidently in a society. (Reese, 2022) Therefore, following a skin care routine is a significant practice to maintain a healthy, physical and emotional balance. At present there are many approaches to identify and practice numerous skin care routines. One of them is the typical way of getting manual consultations by making an appointment with the skin specialist or cosmetic doctor. It is considered as the most reliable and secure way especially if there are any peculiar skin conditions. But for random checkups, these face-to-face meetings could be troublesome because it requires a block of time out of the schedule for reservation procedures etc... It also entails additional costs associated with transportation and parking fees etc... (Riomed, 2023) However, nowadays there are emerging virtualized skin care recommendation systems. But they provide recommendations based on the answers given by the user for the quizzes. Most of them are collaborating with certain brands which makes the recommendations biased and limited too. So, what the researcher wanted to pinpoint is

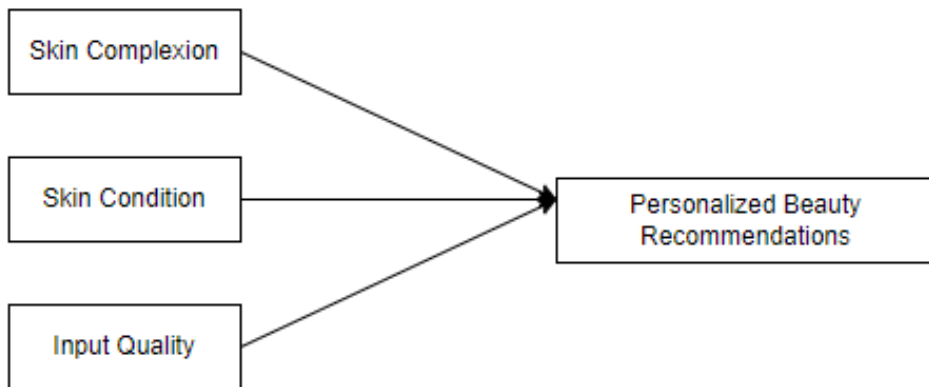
that, among them there could be people who don't have a clear idea of what category they belong to and situations where people find it difficult to understand the questions if technical terms or abbreviations are used. These motivated the author to research a solution that is efficient for everyone. This study builds on existing literature by addressing these gaps with a more personalized and unbiased approach.

Personal color analysis is a newly emerging trend in the beauty culture industry. According to Color Savvy Studio (Color Savvy Studio, 2020) It is the process of analyzing the natural color tones to discover the most harmonious colors that your unique beauty shines through. This means, certain colors blend well with a person's skin tone while some don't. The typical color guide method merely depends on the knowledge and view of the color analyst. As noticed by the researcher in video demonstrations the fabrics are draped on the customer and are swapped until the most suitable colors are determined. According to Dobkine, this approach requires proper professional guidance and consumes time. As a set of clothes are draped upon the person in this process, the analyst also has to put a lot of effort especially because she has to maintain the hygiene of the process as well. (Dobkine, 2023) Hence, this service is also considered to be expensive. However, with the advancement of technology these services seem to be getting automated currently. Some of them are hybrid, which means the bookings are facilitated online while the analysis is done physically, while in other applications recommendations are provided based on quizzes.

Also, most of these applications have either of the services but not on one platform. Another factor is that they are either mobile applications or web applications where the availability and accessibility of the applications are limited. Therefore, the author wanted to introduce an application that doesn't have those drawbacks. As the required technologies are reviewed the approaches used by other systems for image analysis and recommendations were evaluated. According to Suncraper's blog regarding the development of a recommendation system, it is a complex procedure which involves raw data collection, integration, processing, recommendation generation, post processing and end user delivery. (Niski, 2023) Therefore, as suggested in many sources, Python was chosen as the best approach to facilitate the analytical and recommendation requirements. In this way apart from understating the requirements through the users, and reviewing literature, more concerns were identified through the gaps of the existing applications and were taken into advantage when implementing Self Stylista.

METHODOLOGY

Following the literature review, the following conceptual framework is designed to effectively demonstrate the relationship between the variables of the study.

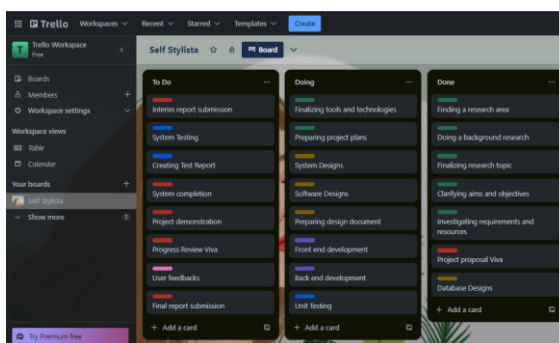


(Source: Author Developed 2024)

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

Here the skin complexion, skin condition and input quality are taken as independent variables while the personalized beauty recommendation is taken as the dependent variable. So, through this research, the relationship between these independent and dependent variables are analyzed. Adhering to a qualitative approach, the data are collected through interviews and open-ended surveys. Specially, interviews are carried out with few beauticians to obtain data from a professional viewpoint regarding the relevancy and accuracy of the recommendations provided while a survey is shared among a reachable community as in convenience sampling technique to obtain the general public's feedback.

Following the agile - Kanban approach the project was carried out where multiple phases of the SDLC were commenced simultaneously and was kept track using the Kanban board.

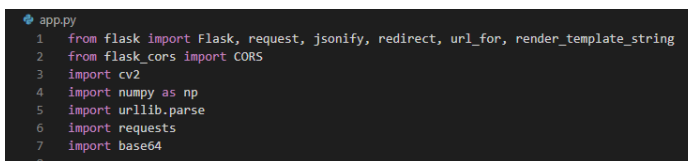


(Source: Author Developed 2024)

Figure 2: Kanban Board

The user requirements were gathered to meet with the identified research gaps and based on public opinions. The feasibility of the project was evaluated with respect to

time, cost and techniques. Project plans for scope, time and risk management were also created to organize the tasks appropriately. In the architecture design, use case diagrams, class diagrams, ERD and interfaces were designed. These designs are created in a way that the user is given the opportunity to maintain a profile and to obtain recommendations by inputting photos while the admin is responsible in managing the users, recommendations, and handling enquiries. As for the technologies, implementation is done in the VSCode IDE, and the MySQL database is used for data storing. Bootstrap version 5.2.3 has been used for the front-end development while PHP-version 8.2.12 and Python version 3.11.4 were used for the backend processes. Especially the research area of implementing the analysis of color and skin type of the images that are uploaded or captured are implemented using Python libraries.

A screenshot of a code editor window with a dark background. The file name 'app.py' is visible in the top left corner. The code consists of eight lines of Python import statements: 1. from flask import Flask, request, jsonify, redirect, url_for, render_template_string; 2. from flask_cors import CORS; 3. import cv2; 4. import numpy as np; 5. import urllib.parse; 6. import requests; 7. import base64; 8. (an empty line).

```
app.py
1  from flask import Flask, request, jsonify, redirect, url_for, render_template_string
2  from flask_cors import CORS
3  import cv2
4  import numpy as np
5  import urllib.parse
6  import requests
7  import base64
8
```

(Source: Author Developed 2024)

Figure 3: Libraries used for Development.

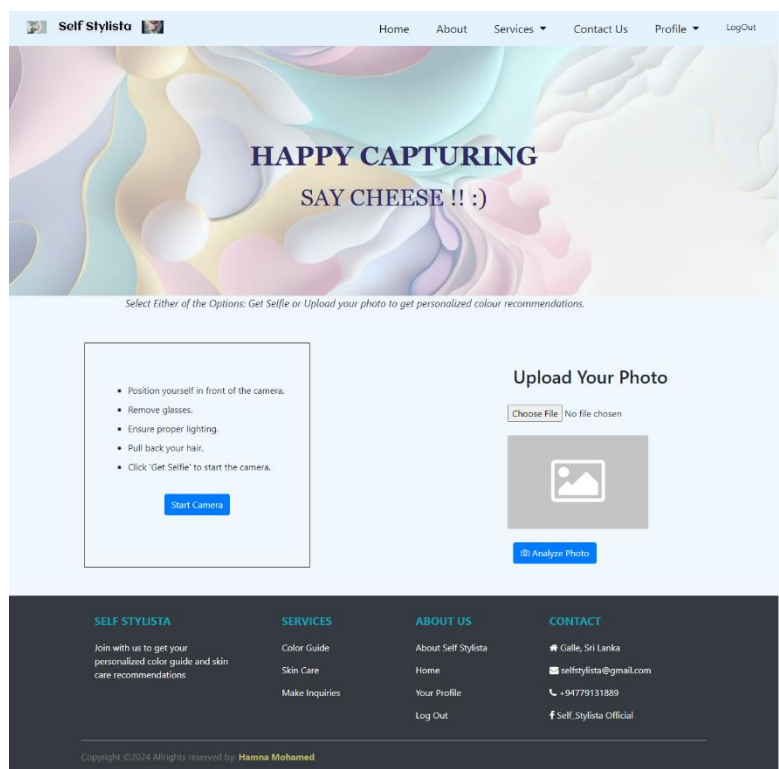
The Haar Cascade algorithm is applied to identify human faces in both cases to ensure accuracy. The image processing for the identification of color was facilitated mainly using cv2 in OpenCV features. The original image is masked, and the average color of the skin regions are obtained. Then these colors are categorized into four types namely, fair, medium, olive and deep to provide recommendations. The skin type analysis was done using an API from Face++ which determines the values for skin health, acne level, stain and dark circles. According to these values the skin types are also categorized into three main categories as normal skin, oily skin and dry skin. Then the recommendations are provided by retrieving the corresponding details from the database. Using these technologies and following those approaches the image processing and recommendations functionalities are implemented in Self Stylista. Meanwhile, testing was also carried out until the test status of all the test cases were a success and the user feedback required for research conclusion is gathered using open ended questions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

As the outcomes of the research, a responsive web application is developed with the identity 'Self Stylista' indicating that this application provides the individuals to style themselves. Providing answers to the research questions regarding the relationship between the beauty recommendations with the skin complexion, type and input quality, it was identified that an individual's appearance and personality can be enhanced by matching proper colors to their complexion. It was also understood that different skin care practices can give different results. Providing solutions to the geographical barriers, knowledge constraints, time consumptions and expensive service rates, this

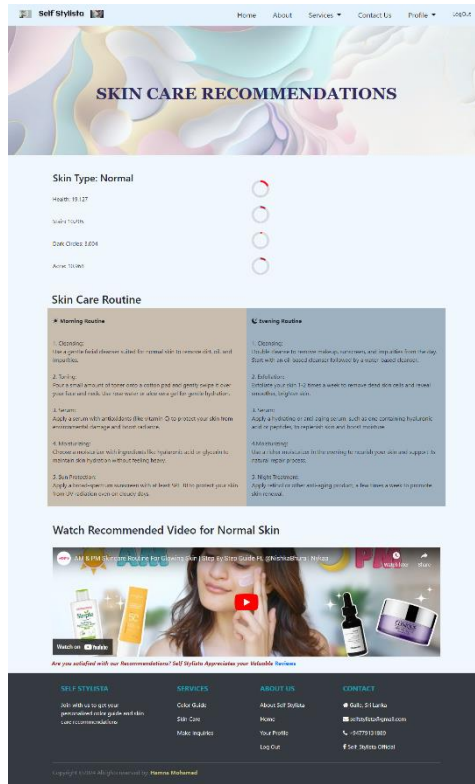
application facilitates a globalized service and fulfills the user requirements with a single button click. Here the user is given the opportunity to either capture the photo through the web camera or to upload a photo. Once it is done, the image is analyzed and the respective complexion and skin conditions are detected, and the user is redirected to the recommendations page. Since Self Stylista operates virtually, where face is detected and attributes are identified through a photo, it was also understood that the clarity of the input also has an impact on the recommendations. With this application people can clear their doubts regarding their undertone or the skin type and be confident about how they look. This is also an opportunity for the people who were hiding their desires due to the fear of being judged, as Self Stylista assures user privacy and security through the entire processes and of the saved data.

Following are the interfaces which facilitates those services in Self Stylsta.



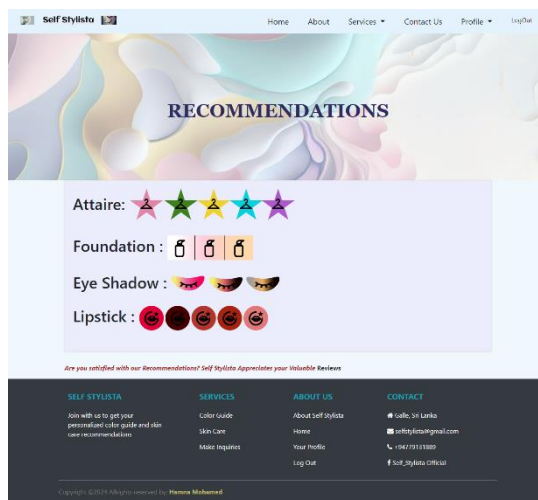
(Source: Author Developed 2024)

Figure 4: Photo Capturing/Uploading Interface



(Source: Author Developed 2024)

Figure 5: Skin Care Recommendation Interface



(Source: Author Developed 2024)

Figure 6: Color Recommendation Interface

Since descriptive responses were welcomed in data collection, the researcher was also able to identify more features and improvements that can be done to enhance the application in the future. So, with an idea obtained through them, it can be recommended to include an expanded list of recommendations considering climate and occasions. When providing video recommendations Self Stylista can collaborate with the professionals in the industry or can build a dedicated team for production as well. It is also expected to enhance the system to provide a virtual try-on feature on their input photos, where the users can experience how they will appear if the instructions are followed as recommended. A community environment can also be built where users can interact and share their beauty inspirations, fostering a sense of community among users with similar interests.

CONCLUSION

According to the research findings it can be concluded that one's natural beauty can be enhanced by properly matching one's outfits and makeup with their skin tone. The results also convey that different skin types require their specified care for good skin health. To avoid external factors affecting the recommendations, face detection mechanisms are used but the photograph should be of at least average quality and clarity for better results. The primary aim of this research is to bloom the suppressed dreams of getting beauty glow ups with proper guidance by identifying the relationships between the significant factors taken as variables. Hence it can be concluded that it has been achieved with the development of Self Stylista which provides a platform to get personalized color recommendations and skin care consultations virtually from one place. The success of the research is further demonstrated by achieving the intended goals within the predefined plans and constraints.

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AUTOMATED CRICKET BATTING & BOWLING TRAINING SUPPORT SYSTEM (iTrainer)

E. G. C. Sandeepa^{1*}, P. D. A. U. Akalanka², Niruni Fonseka³

^{1,2,3} School of Computing, ESOF Metro Campus, Galle, Sri Lanka

*chameensandeepa9@gmail.com**

ABSTRACT

Cricket has evolved into one of the most popular sports globally, with batting, bowling, and fielding being its critical components. Among these, batting holds particular importance in determining the outcome of matches. Despite advancements in technology across various sports, cricket training, specifically for batting and bowling, lacks automated, effective systems for performance analysis. Current solutions are limited, often relying on static images and necessitating human coaches for feedback, thereby not fully addressing the needs of modern trainee cricketers. This project introduces "iTrainer," an innovative solution designed to assist trainee cricket players in analyzing their performance autonomously during training. Unlike existing systems, iTrainer utilizes advanced technology to calculate body coordinates and angles, providing precise feedback on both batting and bowling techniques. The AI model developed for this system achieves an accuracy rate of 88%, ensuring reliable performance analysis based on user inputs. iTrainer allows users to upload a single video clip for analysis, eliminating the need for specialized recording equipment. The system is accessible globally via the Render platform, offering user-friendly interactions that require minimal guidance. The performance metrics are derived from top-performing cricketers, ensuring high standards in feedback. By removing the dependency on human coaches, iTrainer represents a significant advancement in cricket training technology, making professional-level performance analysis accessible to players worldwide.

Keywords: Analysis, Batting, Bowling, Cricket, Performance

INTRODUCTION

Cricket has become one of the most popular games in the world. Cricket can be called an outdoor game which is played between two teams of eleven players per side with bats, a ball and stumps. Cricket started in the late 18th century and has become one of the most popular sports in the 21st century. In cricket, there can be identified three important sections as batting, bowling and fielding. Among these three sections, batting takes a special stance because batting is the most important fact to win a match by scoring. With the technological advancement in the 21st century, technology has been applied to almost all sports throughout the world. With regard to cricket, technological techniques have been introduced for several areas of cricket. Nevertheless, the absence of a proper system for training aspects prevails according to the review of existing systems. Moreover, there is no consideration for automated training techniques specifically for Bowling and Batting. Most importantly, in practice sessions, a cricket coach is responsible for practicing the players to follow the correct batting shots owing to each type of shot and correct bowling poses to perform each type of bowling type. Therefore, there are important body movements that should be focused on in a player in order to teach the batting shots and bowling poses. Therefore, this process would be accelerated by using an automated system that assists the trainee players to verify each performance of the player.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Before starting the project, the author researched previously implemented similar systems regarding to this project idea and author found there is a gap between existing systems and the proposed system idea. Because there was not any system that calculates the performance/ accuracy from getting the body coordinates of the player.

The literature review has been done according to 2 modules. and those modules have been categorized based on the project tasks and development requirements. As for the first module, it includes background research about identifying cricket shots and existing systems for that module. Then the second module contains a literature review about existing systems in bowling poses identification domain.

Module 1 – Shot Identification

"Automated Cricket Shot Classification Using Machine Learning Techniques" research paper presents a systematic examination of the use of machine learning techniques for the automated classification of cricket shots. A methodology is proposed that employs spatiotemporal features extracted from cricket video footage to train a machine learning classifier. Additionally, an enhanced version of this methodology, which incorporates both spatiotemporal and trajectory features, is also presented. The performance of the proposed methodologies was evaluated using a dataset of cricket video footage, and the results were compared against traditional methods. The results

demonstrate that the proposed methodologies outperform traditional methods in terms of classification accuracy. (Faizan, Khan, & Khan, 2019). The research paper "A Deep Learning Framework for Cricket Shot Classification" presents a method for using deep learning techniques to classify different types of cricket shots. The authors proposed a framework that employs convolutional neural networks (CNNs) to extract features from cricket video footage and classify shots into different categories. The framework is designed to automatically classify cricket shots in real-time by analysing video footage of the game. The performance of the proposed framework was evaluated using a dataset of cricket video footage, and the results were compared against traditional machine learning methods. The results demonstrate that the proposed framework outperforms traditional methods in terms of classification accuracy. The authors also show that the proposed method can be used to improve the analysis and commentary of cricket games, by automatically generating commentary based on the type of shots being played. Overall, this research aims to enhance the efficiency of cricket analysis by automating the process of shot classification. (Raja & Suresh, 2019).

Module 2 – Bowling Identification

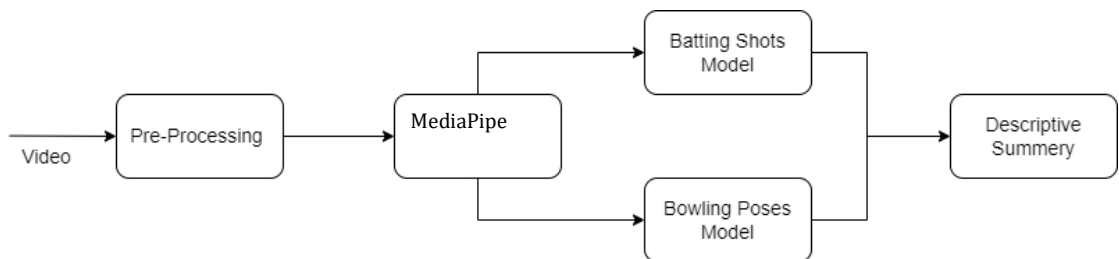
"Cricket Bowling Action Recognition using Deep Learning Techniques" describes a method for recognizing cricket bowling actions using deep learning techniques. The authors propose a two-stage approach, which involves extracting features from video sequences of the bowling action, and then using these features to train a deep learning model. They use a deep Convolutional Neural Network (CNN) to classify the bowling actions into one of five categories: legal, no-ball, throw, chuck, and suspect. The experimental evaluation was done using a dataset of cricket bowling actions, which includes video sequences of bowling actions from different bowlers. They report that the proposed method in the paper achieved an overall accuracy of 97.5%, which is an improvement over the previous state-of-the-art methods. They also found that the CNN model performed better than other machine learning models such as SVM and Random Forest. The results suggest that the proposed method is effective in recognizing cricket bowling actions and can be used to assist umpires in making decisions during a match. (Rizwan, Raja, & Anwar, 2018). "Real-time Cricket Bowling Action Recognition using Machine Learning Techniques" describes a method for recognizing cricket bowling actions using machine learning techniques. The authors propose a two-stage approach to recognizing bowling actions, which involves extracting features from video sequences of the bowling action, and then using these features to train a machine learning model. They used a Random Forest classifier to classify the bowling actions into one of five categories: legal, no-ball, throw, chuck, and suspect. In the experimental evaluation, the authors used a dataset of cricket bowling actions, which includes video sequences of bowling actions from different bowlers. They report that the proposed method in the paper achieved an overall accuracy of 92.5%, which is an improvement over the previous state-of-the-art methods. The results suggest that the proposed

method is effective in recognizing cricket bowling actions and can be used to assist umpires in making decisions during a match. (Nandakumar, S, & Srinivasa). The research paper "A Deep Learning Approach for Cricket Bowling Action Recognition" describes a method for recognizing cricket bowling actions using deep learning techniques. The authors propose a deep convolutional neural network (CNN) model for recognizing bowling actions. They used a dataset of cricket bowling actions which includes video sequences of bowling actions from different bowlers and trained the CNN model on this dataset. They report that the proposed method achieved an overall accuracy of 96.5%. The experimental results in the paper indicate that the proposed deep learning method is effective in recognizing cricket bowling actions and significantly outperforms the previous state-of-the-art methods. The authors suggest that the proposed method can be used to assist umpires in making decisions during a match and also in analysing the performance of players. (Kaur, Singh, & P, 2020)

METHODOLOGY

The author creates the problem statement and project proposal with necessary details to get permission to do such a project like that. After the validation processes the project has been started according to the project plan that is created with the project proposal. in the meantime, author starts to build the system while archiving the proposed system and user requirements. According to the proposed solution, the main user requirements were a descriptive analysis about the shot / pose performed, a mechanism to analyse each shot / pose and a platform to interact with those mechanisms.

Then, the development process has been narrowed to two major parts and they are Machine Learning model and the system itself. In the Machine Learning model, it includes all the AI implementations for this system and other system configurations such as connect Machine Learning model with web interfaces are included in the system category. So, the architectural diagram for this system has explained these identified domains.



(Source: Author Developed 2024)

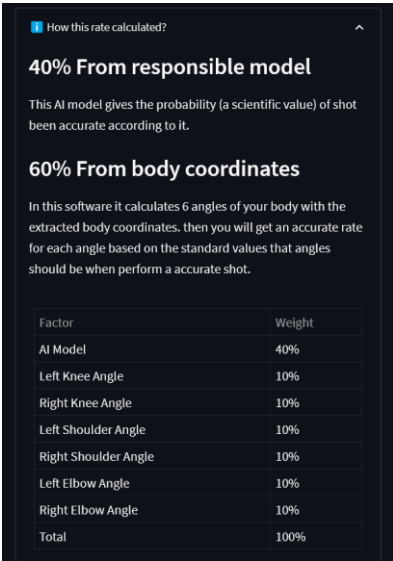
Figure 3: Architectural Diagram

The iTrainer system is designed according to this Architecture, and it mentioned the

major development processes of the system. First, user needs to upload a video clip including the shot / pose performed. Then the video clip will go on to the pre-processing stage. Which means the video clip will be separated into frames according to the FPS rate of the video. The created frames will be saved into a folder called “video_frames”. Then each frame will go through the MediaPipe Pose detection model and after the author extracted 12 Body key points from the player’s body included in the frame. Then there’s a function to calculate the angles from the provided key points and it could generate 6 angles from the left and right side of the player’s body. Those angles feed into the pre-created batting / bowling models to get the accuracy rate from the respective model. Finally, the user can view a summary of the shot / pose they performed. It includes an accuracy rate, best performed moment, a chart about the accuracy of each second (frame). After developing this system, the author tests the system in a development environment and also the operation environment because author believes to share the implemented system for users all over the world.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The prediction by custom AI model 6 angles to get the probability rate from the model. That probability rate should be different according to the selected mode of the system (Batting: Drive, Sweep). Then the final accuracy is calculated according to the 40% and 60% structure.



How this rate calculated?

40% From responsible model

This AI model gives the probability (a scientific value) of shot been accurate according to it.

60% From body coordinates

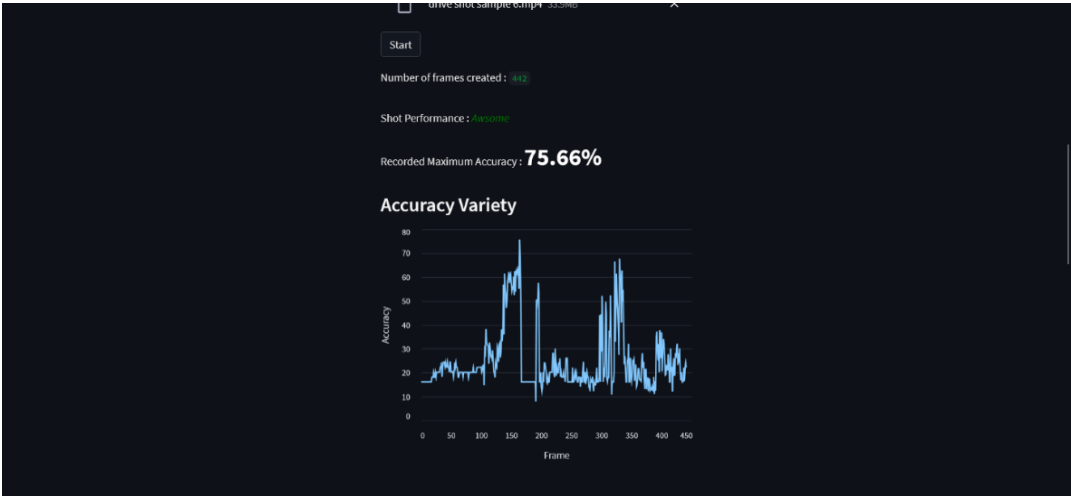
In this software it calculates 6 angles of your body with the extracted body coordinates. then you will get an accurate rate for each angle based on the standard values that angles should be when perform a accurate shot.

Factor	Weight
AI Model	40%
Left Knee Angle	10%
Right Knee Angle	10%
Left Shoulder Angle	10%
Right Shoulder Angle	10%
Left Elbow Angle	10%
Right Elbow Angle	10%
Total	100%

(Source: Author Developed 2024)

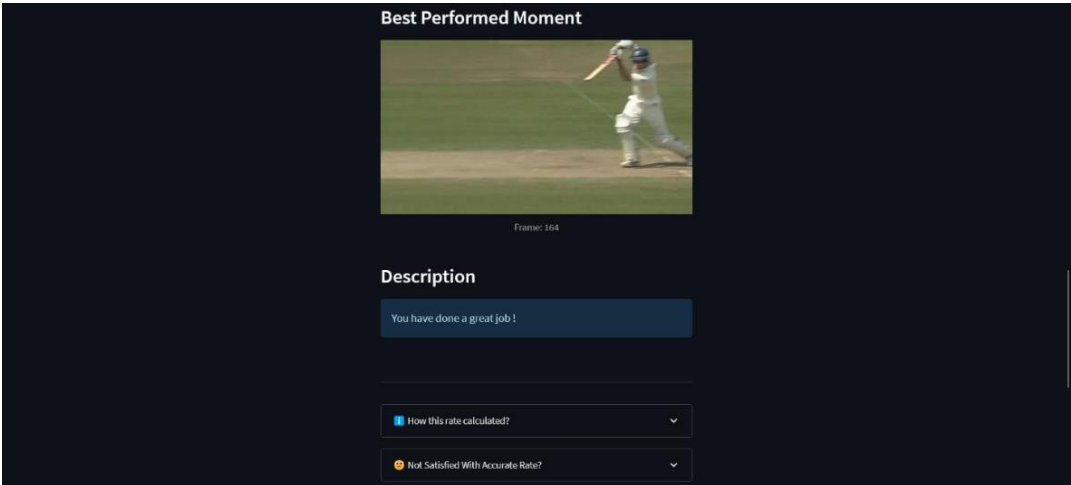
Figure 2: Accuracy Calculation Mechanism

Also, these details can be accessed by the end user after the user gets an accurate description of the uploaded video. The calculated final accuracy value is appended to an array to get the max accuracy value about their performance and draw a chart by using the details in that array. After the calculations, the description is saved to the database for reference by the admin as a log and validates the performance by using the past information for a specific user. The best performed moment is captured in the system by using the final accuracy values array's max value index. finding the index of max value can access to the image which separated from the video as frames in early steps. Then the index helps to find the best performed shot frame using that index number.



(Source: Author Developed 2024)

Figure 3: Accuracy Chart



(Source: Author Developed 2024)

Figure 4: Best Performed Shot

After uploading the user video, it will be pre-processed using the system mechanisms and feed the 6 body angles to the model created. Then the number of frames which have been created and shot performance value can be carried out as represented. Then the Maximum accuracy recorded and all the accuracy rates for each and every frame has been represented. The best performed shot frame has been represented at the end of the results as well as a short description about it.

CONCLUSION/RECOMMENDATIONS

The aim of this project was to provide a supportive solution for trainee Cricket players when they are analysing their performance while in the training stage. This solution is totally based on the problem of there being not any existing system to satisfy the performance analysing in using human body coordinates and angles. Existing systems used images to verify the accuracy of performance. and some of systems did not have both batting and bowling options in their systems. The other reason is to concern this solution is players needed a human trainer or coach to analyse their performance.

According to those problems the author created and developed the “**iTrainer**” solution to satisfy the user by removing all the above-mentioned problems. The solution has both batting and bowling analysing options and users can analyse their batting performance as well as the bowling performance using this solution. Then this system is calculating the accuracy of the performed option by using 6 angles of human body and the technology that used to find the body coordinates forget the angles is the most accurate option nowadays for pose detections. Also. They created an AI model for this solution got 0.88 of accuracy rate which means it gives 88% true results based on the user inputs. Also, this system uses a single video clip from the user as the input and even the user doesn’t need to have a camera or any video recording device to use this system. After the development of this system, it was hosted on the render platform and users can access to the system in anywhere around the world at any time. Also, this system is used verry a smaller number of user interactions and user can easily go through the system by provided options. So, there is no need for any guidance from an expert. and the information that used to analyse the performance is taken from the people who is the best at specific shot or poses. So, users don’t need any guidance from a cricket coach or trainer to analyse their performance.

There are some recommendations from the author to upgrade the developed system to avoid more problems and include more features. The recommendations are, create more options to Batting shots, create more options to Bowling possesses Implement a video recording option to input the video clip to the system, Improve the accuracy of AI model using different technologies and attach more sports to the system.

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A SMART LMS WITH STUDENT PERFORMANCE PREDICTION SYSTEM USING C# ASP.NET, PYTHON AND MSSQL SERVER

S. P. Piyumie Tharuka^{1*}, P.D.A.U. Aklanka² and Malithi Algewatta³

^{1,2,3}School of Computing, ESOF Metro Campus, Sri Lanka

*piyumiet96@gmail.com**

ABSTRACT

Advancements in information and communication technology have transformed educational learning, providing unique access to knowledge via the internet, anytime and anywhere. Open education platforms and learning management systems (LMS) have become crucial, especially highlighted during the COVID-19 pandemic, facilitating online education and training. However, existing LMS platforms face critical challenges, including the absence of student performance prediction systems and user-friendly interfaces. The APEX LMS project addresses these issues by introducing predictive analytics to forecast student performance both subject-wise and overall. This feature enables timely identification of students needing additional support, allowing educators to interfere effectively. Additionally, the project focuses on enhancing user-friendliness, ensuring a creative and attractive interface that improves user satisfaction. Current LMS platforms also suffer from the lack of real-time notification systems and poor navigation due to unstructured instructions. APEX LMS incorporates a real-time email notification system to enhance communication among students, lecturers, and administrators, ensuring users are promptly informed of updates and announcements. The system also features a streamlined flow of instructions, making navigation intuitive and efficient. The APEX LMS project represents a vital step towards a more effective and accessible educational future. By leveraging data-driven decision-making and advanced technologies, it removes barriers to high-quality education, allows students, and enhances overall educational standards. This project not only predicts academic performance but also fosters student engagement and institutional growth, making it an invaluable resource for educational organizations in the digital age.

Keywords: Apex LMS, LMS Prediction System Smart LMS, LMS Grade Forecasting

INTRODUCTION

Advancements in information and communication technology have created new opportunities for educational learning via the internet. According to the Research Gate (2020) With the continuous improvement of technology, internet connection speeds and the increasing availability of digital devices, education has become more open, allowing people to learn anytime and anywhere. Open education platforms on the internet have facilitated better interaction and knowledge-gaining methods. Over the years and due to the COVID-19 pandemic situation, learning management systems (LMS) have been developed to deliver learning materials and share resources via the Internet. Organizations have also used LMS to provide online training to their employees and customers. This has transformed traditional classrooms, as virtual learning has become prevalent in many parts of the world. The problem definition for the APEX LMS project is complicated and here addresses several critical challenges present in the currently used LMS systems. One of the critical challenges and the research section of this project is the absence of a student performance prediction system. Without such a feature, it becomes difficult for lecturers and administrators to identify weak students and provide them with the necessary support. This research project aims to introduce predictive analytics to the LMS, allowing for the forecasting of student performance subject-wise and overall, thereby enabling timely involvement and assistance for them, and also the students can predict their future performances by answering simple questions related to their personal and educational details. Furthermore, user-friendliness is an important concern. Many existing LMSs lack a user-friendly interface and clear procedural flows, which can be unsatisfying for users. Moreover, this project aims to create a more creative, user-friendly, and attractive LMS. Miller et al. (2019) highlighted two major disadvantages in existing LMSs. Firstly, the absence of a real-time notification system impacts communication among students, lecturers, and administrators, as users must log in to check for updates and announcements. Implementing a real-time email notification system could enhance convenience and engagement for all parties involved. Secondly, existing LMS platforms lack a structured flow of instructions and procedures, making navigation challenging for users. APEX LMS addresses these issues comprehensively, offering solutions to improve communication and streamline user experience.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Use of the LMS has become essential elements of the modern college experience. Whether distance or traditional student, residential or commuter campus, undergraduate or graduate, these systems have rapidly been accepted throughout higher education. According to Falvo & Johnson, (2007) past ten years, online course management systems have replaced other alternative means to deliver class contents such as live satellite or closed-circuit television. The introduction of LMSs along with increased computer use in the home and in business has brought an increasing number

of students and teachers to the online learning environment. Miah (2021) addressed student attrition in higher education and stressed the importance of early identification of stressed students. Traditional methods of identifying at-risk students are manual and time-consuming, disposed to bias and errors. To address this, the student proposes applying machine learning (ML) algorithms to predict student academic progress based on data from student interactions with the LMS. The research question focuses on the effectiveness of existing ML techniques in rapidly and accurately identifying threatened students. The article provides a brief review of ML algorithms suitable for predicting student performance using data from LMS databases. This article also describes how the dataset is used and what the techniques of pre-processing are, outlines the ML algorithms and classification techniques that can be used for this value prediction, and how conclusions can be drawn using the evaluation of the results from the tree-based classification algorithms. The implications of the research and future directions are also discussed. According to Kiran Fahd's (2017) research article, it addresses the issue of student attrition in tertiary educational institutes and explores the potential of using ML models on data generated from student interaction with LMSs in blended learning environments to identify at-risk students. The study aims to develop a new approach that connects the power of ML to a publicly available dataset relevant to student attrition. According to the Research Gate (2021) automatic prediction of students' data in e-learning environments is challenging due to a large amount of education data. This issue is addressed by educational data mining (EDM). EDM is essential in analysing and discovering a meaningful pattern in education data. These entire meaningful patterns are helpful in student performance enhancement and in making a prediction.

The researcher proposed a performance prediction model using data mining techniques. The student used an improved educational dataset with student behavioural features. These features show the learner's interactivity with the LMS. Students applied various classification algorithms to the selected data set, decision tree, random forest, and logistic regression. The student first trained the model using this classification algorithm, then obtained results of the models were compared. The model is evaluated based on performance, accuracy, precision, and recall values. The experiment results show that random forest classifier makes better than other tested models. Moreover, students demonstrate different visualization, which is helpful in the interpretation of the result. Furthermore, this study reveals that student behaviour features strongly correlate with student performance.

METHODOLOGY

According to Min et al. (2023), the student chooses the waterfall methodology in their research project for several key advantages. Firstly, the methodology offers clear and welldefined requirements, providing a structured framework for project development. Secondly, since only one individual was involved in the project, the linear and sequential nature of the waterfall approach suited the situation. Lastly, given that the project was

of medium size, the waterfall methodology facilitated easy project management by allowing the student to oversee the entire process efficiently. In here, C# (ASP.NET) and Python were used as backend languages; HTML, CSS, and JS were used as front-end languages; Various ML libraries were used such as Scikit Learn, Pandas, JobLib, Flask, Matplotlib, etc. The MSSQL server was used for database management. Random forest classifier was used as the development model for both prediction systems.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

When it comes to the final outcome of this project, there are two prediction systems available,

Table 1: Performance prediction systems in APEX LMS

Prediction System	Access level	Reason	Factors considering	Final outcome
1	Students	Predict upcoming examination result	Based on personal and educational data	Predicted result and visualizing (pie chart and feature imported bar chart)
2	Lecturers Administrator	Predict overall grade and subject wise results	Educational data available in LMS database	Predict subject-wise results and overall grade

(Source: APEX LMS Project)

First Predication System for Students

The procedure involved selecting the right dataset, preprocessing it, and utilizing a random forest classifier for predictive modelling. The trained model is saved using the JobLib Python package for efficient and accurate future predictions. This model is combined into the LMS, allowing students to receive personalized predictions based on their responses to a set of questions.

The system generates visualizations, including a pie chart displaying the percentage of students predicted to pass or fail and a feature importance bar chart highlighting the significance of each input feature. These charts, along with prediction results, are presented on an HTML page through a Flask web interface. The user-friendly application prompts students to input personal and educational information, enabling the pre-trained model to make predictions about their likelihood of passing or failing the upcoming examination.

The Flask application modernizes the prediction process, offering students quick access to valuable insights into their academic forecasts. The visualizations help students identify key factors influencing their exam outcomes, such as age, parents' education level, study habits, and more. This system serves as a valuable tool for students to make informed decisions about their study habits and significances, possibly enhancing their academic performance.

Second Predication System for Lecturers/ Administrators

Researchers focused on creating predictive models for overall and subject-specific grades outcomes. Targeted towards lecturers and administrators, the procedure involves preprocessing a dataset, training subject-specific models (subject wise), and an overall performance model using the scikit-learn library in Python. These models are saved as joblib files for future use.

The Flask web application serves as a user-friendly interface for educators and administrators to predict students' subject-wise and overall performance based on subject grades available in the LMS database. The application improves accessibility by displaying student lists of grades and providing visualizations, offering a comprehensive understanding of predictions and facilitating informed decision-making.

This effort is valuable for the educational system, letting personalized learning experiences. The system's focus on actual subject grades and comprehensive features enables educators to modify educational assistance to the unique needs of each student. The predictive models offer a practical tool for educators to identify at-risk students early, implement appropriate measures, improve efficiency, reduce dropouts, and enhance overall academic achievement. The concept is believed to be innovative, unlocking the potential of every student by leveraging the strengths of ML.

CONCLUSION/RECOMMENDATIONS

To sum up, the researcher's effort is an essential initial move toward an improved future for education. It highlights the importance of making decisions based on data and provides illustrations of how technologies may be used to promote academic achievement. This project removes barriers to high-quality education and expanding accessibility by providing solutions that are easy to use for educators as well as learners. This project's influence extended beyond grade prediction; it also giving students greater influence and improving the quality of education as a whole. It is an essential resource for every educational institution expecting to grow in the age of technology because of the huge advantage it offers in terms of academic achievement and organizational advancement.

Furthermore, this project's impact extends far beyond academic predictions. It's about improving students' abilities, giving them more authority, and improving the standard

of education on as a whole. It's like a gold mine for educational organizations hoping to make it in this age of rapidly evolving technology.

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DATA SCIENCE AND AI-II

A LIGHTWEIGHT AND ADAPTIVE DEEP LEARNING-BASED CHARACTER RECOGNITION SYSTEM FOR ENGLISH HANDWRITTEN TEXT

Jonathan T. S. Corera^{1*}, Vikum Jayasundara²

^{1,2}Faculty of Engineering, Computing and the Environment, Kingston University, United Kingdom

*jonathancorera@hotmail.com**

ABSTRACT

The use of deep learning has seen resurgence in the past two decades and greatly contributed to the automation of many fields previously considered too complex for machines. One such area is automated handwritten text recognition (HTR). While optical character recognition of printed text with engineered fonts has near-perfect accuracy today, this is not the case with handwritten text due to the higher complexity. This research explores how artificial neural networks could be applied for classification of handwritten English characters and the development of a lightweight, accurate, and adaptive model that would address existing limitations. Deep-learning operations like convolutions, sequence modeling and pre/post-processing algorithms were used to improve efficiency and accuracy. Existing techniques from literature were extended with lightweight and less computationally expensive neural network components while improving accuracy with similar datasets. Transfer learning techniques were utilized in provide adaptability with the ability to improve accuracy and performance on individual users' handwriting. The developed model found to be 60% more lightweight than the benchmarked models it was extended from, while still providing a higher character accuracy rate of 93.8%. Accuracy was also found to improve specific users' handwriting in subsequent rounds of training. The model could be scaled and expanded further for improved performance and has the potential to improve the automation of many processes in industry.

Keywords: artificial neural networks, deep learning, handwritten text recognition transfer learning

SPEECH TO GESTURE REAL TIME TRANSLATOR FOR HEARING IMPAIRED AND DEAF POPULATION

T. G. S. Maheshika^{1*}, P.D.A.U. Akalanka²

^{1,2}School of Computing, ESOF Metro Campus, Galle, Sri Lanka

*maheshikagamage1998@gmail.com**

ABSTRACT

Verbal communication plays a crucial role in online platforms, such as distance learning and remote work. The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the global shift to these modes of interaction, which continue to be popular post-pandemic due to their time-saving benefits and the ability to connect across geographical boundaries. However, these online options, along with traditional in-person meetings and classroom settings, pose significant challenges for the deaf and hearing-impaired population. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), over 5% of the global population, including 34 million children, experience hearing loss, a number expected to rise to 700 million by 2050. Deaf individuals primarily communicate using sign languages, of which there are more than 200 worldwide, each corresponding to different spoken languages. The lack of a universal sign language and general societal awareness of sign language exacerbate communication barriers. Current projects have made strides in translating voice to text and gestures, yet a comprehensive system integrating these functions for educational and professional settings remains needed. This study proposes a novel system to assist deaf individuals in comprehending spoken content during lectures, meetings, and TV programs. The system leverages AI to recognize human speech, translating it into relevant sign language gestures displayed via images and GIFs. This tool aims to enable deaf students to participate fully in mainstream educational environments and supports broader inclusivity in various communicative contexts. The system's offline functionality further enhances its practicality and accessibility, ensuring it can be used without an internet connection.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence, Deaf, Hearing Impaired, Sign Language, Voice Recognition

INTRODUCTION

Verbal communication is important in online communication such as distance learning and remote working. With the effect of the Covid 19 pandemic situation, the entire world adapted to move with online learning and working. Although the pandemic situation is end now, the remote working and distance learning is continuing. These options are easy for all because it saves time and students can learn from different geographically located universities and employees are facilitated to work for any county and at any time. But these online options as well as usual day to day physical meetings as well as classroom lessons are not user-friendly for the deaf population. There are some special places who heal for these people, and it is a barrier for them to work with normal society. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), having hearing loss means a person who is unable to hear thresholds of 20 dB or better in both ears. This hearing loss can be mild, moderate, severe or profound. Deafness means having profound hearing loss. So, this deaf and hearing-impaired population is over 5% of the world population. It includes 34 million children. Up to now the total population is around 430 million and WHO predicts that this number will increase to 700 million by 2050. These deaf people use Sign Language to communicate with each other. Based on these facts provided by WHO, it is useful to find a solution for the deaf and hearing-impaired population to make it easy to learn and work in online platforms as well as on day-to-day physical meetings and classrooms as well. But there are many problems with these Sign language communication methods. They are lacking proper sign languages and there is no any common sign language to use all over the world. The next problem is lack of sign language awareness of the society.

According to research conducted on the topic of "Voice to Sign Language Translation System for Malaysian Deaf People", Sign Language (SL) is the language that the deaf people used to communicate with each other. (Foong, 2009) Handshape, location of the fingers and palm and articulated movement will change one sign from another in sign language. (ResearchGate, 2012)

According to the International Journal of Computer Science & Engineering Survey (IJCSSES) Vol.6, No.4, August 2015, there are huge number of sign languages available all over the world. Most Probably every spoken language has its own sign language. So that there are more than 200 sign languages used all over the world.

According to Jhon McCarthy 2004, Introduction to Artificial Intelligence is as follows. " It is the science and engineering of making intelligent machines, especially intelligent computer programs. It is related to the similar task of using computers to understand human intelligence, but AI does not have to confine itself to methods that are biologically observable." (IBM Cloud Education, 2020)

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is one of the technological innovations that happened with the industrial revolution which is focused to replace the hard manual works by the technology.

Up to now, there are a few projects which have been created to help deaf people to communicate with others. Some of them are processing deaf peoples' gestures and translating them into text and voice. Some projects are recognizing voice and show relevant gestures from single Sign Language. Some other systems detect voice and convert them into text. All these systems are available for deferent sign languages.

Deaf people face a number of difficulties while they are participating in lectures and meetings which are conducted by normal people. Because they are unable to listen to voices and understand. Also, other people are not aware of sign language. So, there is a communication gap between these two categories. Due to these reasons most of the deaf crowd are not participating in the lectures on normal universities. Also, they are looking for special schools or institutes which are designed for deaf people. Researchers wanted to fill this gap and create an opportunity for deaf students to learn in the same university as other students.

LITERATURE REVIEW

There are a few techniques to use in Automatic Speech Recognition (ASR). They are Template Based Approaches Matching, Knowledge Based Approaches, Statistical Based Approaches, Learning Based Approaches and finally The Artificial Intelligence Approach (Arsan, 2015)

One research was conducted on artificial intelligence-based real-time speech-to-text to sign language translator for South African official language and it does not support on other countries and other sign languages. (Madahana, 2022) Also as a result of one research, a model and a tool (Deaf Chat) to communicate with hearing-impaired individuals based on AI was introduced. That Deaf chat used Android Studio IDE, java programming and XML (Extensible Markup Language) to develop that mobile application. (Shezi, 2022) A research was conducted under the topic of "Real-Time Sign Language to Text and Speech Translation and Hand Gesture Recognition using the LSTM Model" and this research has proposed to use "Media pipe platform" to record hand gestures of the sign language. After the recognition of the words and letters which were shown through sign language, the sentences are created by that system and converted into speech. (Goel,2023)

There is another research conducted based on India and it is developed to translate voice into Indian Sign Language (ISL). In that system, the researchers have removed the filler words like "a, an, the" because those filler words are not giving much contribution on sign language. Also, this system finds the root words and will show the gestures according to the root words, as an example, "Go, went, gone" all are shown with same hand gesture. Because the root word is gone. Also, that system allows users to upload

recorded audio and translate it into Indian Sign Language. But this system shows gestures with photos and small video clips which were taken as photos of a real person. (Ezhumalai, 2021). There is another similar type of research done by the same country which was developed using HTML, CSS and JavaScript and it uses google cloud Speech API. It is a web-based system, and it also has the same kind of process as previous. Signs show realistic avatars. (Kumaresan, 2021) Another research conducted under the topic of “Two-Way Sign Language Converter for Speech-Impaired” angina based on India and this research project captures gestures of the user and convert it into text and voice. (Shinde, 2020)

These systems are not created to help deaf people. They are specified for one country or one sign language. So, researcher has identified that it is better if a system can support for any sing language like British Sign Language (BSL), American Sign Language (ASL), and Sinhala Sign language (SSL) etc. Although There are some systems are available to give solutions for the above- mentioned problem. All those systems need internet connection to work. The second issue is they are translating voice to only one sign language. As a result of the conducted research, researchers have decided to develop an windows form application which can work properly without considering the availability of the internet. Also, a system allows users to change and select their preferred sign language. This project has provided some additional features than currently existing projects. First Feature is, in this system deaf person can see both text translation of the voice and the sign related to the input voice. Existing systems does not have this option. Also, in this project users can select their preferred Sign Language to see the translations. Existing projects do not allow us to select the language. Also, there are not any systems which can be used without internet connection. Because all other available systems are web- based systems or mobile applications. Also, this system can only run on user device and user can share the screen while user is doing online sessions or physical sessions.

METHODOLOGY

This research was conducted with agile methodology. Since it supports many languages, it is better to use agile methodology. Because the developer can develop the system for one language as the first phase and then developer can develop the system to support for other sign languages as next few phases. Also, this is a project which requires a huge data set, it requires adding more words with more signs and update with more words. So, it is not possible to move with other methodologies. The researcher has to research about each sign language deeply. Because there is not any proper dictionary for Sign Language. Sign Languages are different from county to another and in the same sign language, the gestures are different. After finalizing the signs for each sign language, the developer designed each sign as images and GIF using Adobe Illustrator. Then the developer started the development phase using Visual Studio and MS SQL. To make this system both online and offline tool, the developer developed this project as a C#

Windows Form Application. The developer first completed a sample set of words to recognize the voice, show the text and the relevant gesture and then applied the same to make the system responsive on other sign languages. Then after feeding more data to the system.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The following are some screenshots of the system.



(source: Author Developed 2024)

Figure 1: System interface which allows the user to Select a sign language



(source: Author Developed 2024)

Figure 2: System interface which shows the detected voice as text and relevant gestures.

The researcher conducted a survey on this system and researcher got positive feedback on this project. The researcher has selected a set of academic staff members of a non-state degree awarding institute, to find out whether this system will be useful for them to work with deaf students. The researcher got eleven responses for this survey. This survey contains 35 questions. Frist three questions are demographic questions and other questions are related to the system functions. The following table shows the questions and the received answers for each question.

Table 1: Survey results

Question	Strongly Agree	Strongly Disagree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
System is easy to use?	27.3%	72.7%	0	0	0
System is recognizing words effectively.	63.6%	18.2%	18.2%	0	0
System recognizes the correct word and shows as text.	27.3%	72.7%	0	0	0
System recognizes the correct word and shows relevant gesture.	90.9%	9.1%	0	0	0
Images and gifs show in this System are Clear and attractive	54.5%	18.2%	27.3%	0	0
Images and gifs show in this System are correct and understandable.	27.3%	63.6%	9.1%	0	0
Ability to use the system without internet connection is an advantage.	90.9%	9.1%	0	0	0
System shows relevant images or gifs continuously and efficiency.	36.4%	63%	0.6%	0	0
This system can recommend for online and offline lectures to facilitate deaf students.	63.6%	27.3%	9.1%	0	0

(source: Author Developed 2024)

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This project is developed to help deaf community to understand Tv Programs, Lectures, meetings etc. This system recognizes human voice and then shows the relevant words as well as shows relevant images and gifs which contains gestures of sign language. By using this system lecturers, teachers or Program presenters can translate their voice into selected sign language and show it in a projected screen, shared screen on online meeting platform. It does not need to be connected to the internet. That is the main advantage of this system.

According to the survey, there are not any bad reviews on this system and these respondents have confirmed that this system works effectively and accurately on its job. Then this project can be considered as a successful project.

There are some similar systems which facilitate users to capture the voice and show the relevant gesture using a sign language and these systems facilitate only for one sign language. But in this system, the user can select a preferred sign language, and the signs will show according to the selected language. As an additional feature, the system shows the voice as a text. So, if the preferred sign language of the user is not yet available in system, the user can still understand the speaker by reading the text. And it shows in paragraph format and user can read the text as a paragraph, after certain period of time.

As further improvement, researchers are willing to add 3D animations to show the gestures. Also, the system can improve select the 3D character as a male character or a female character. Also, researchers are willing to add a feature to increase or decrease the font size option and it will be a support for the elder citizens. Also, this system can be improved not only to capture the voice and translate into sign language, but also to capture the hand gestures and translate it into voice and text.

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OPTIMIZING PEST MANAGEMENT WITH PRECISION AGRICULTURE: INTEGRATING DATA SCIENCE AND AI INTO PRECISION AGRICULTURE FOR SUSTAINABLE FARMING IN BATTICALOA, SRI LANKA

S. Mayurie^{1*} and P. Nitharjan²

^{1,2}School of Computing, ESOF Metro Campus, Batticaloa, Sri Lanka

*shankarmayu5@gmail.com**

ABSTRACT

In Sri Lanka, agriculture plays a major role in the national economy and GDP. However, industry confronts difficulties as a result of insect infestations, climate change, and improper usage of chemical pesticides. In order to effectively control pests in Batticaloa, Sri Lanka, this study investigates the integration of machine learning, predictive modeling, and artificial intelligence (AI) into precision agriculture. The goal of the project is to develop sustainable farming methods that reduce environmental effects and increase agricultural yields by utilizing data science, artificial intelligence, and cutting-edge technology. The study employs quantitative methodology with a survey strategy, targeting graduates and postgraduates involved in farming. Data was collected from 153 respondents and analyzed using multiple regression analysis. The results highlight the significant influence of AI algorithms, predictive modeling, and machine learning on pest management. Findings indicate that AI-based systems can automate labor-intensive tasks, accurately identify pests, and optimize pesticide use, leading to improved pest control and resource management. This research underscores the importance of adopting advanced technologies for sustainable agriculture and offers recommendations for promoting investment in AI-integrated pest management systems. The study suggests comprehensive training programs for farmers and continuous research to develop localized AI solutions tailored to Batticaloa's specific climatic and environmental conditions. The integration of these technologies promises enhanced traceability, process control, and information transparency, ultimately supporting sustainable agricultural practices and contributing to the economic resilience of Sri Lanka's farming communities.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence, Machine Learning, Pest Management, Precision Agriculture

INTRODUCTION

In Sri Lanka, the agriculture industry significantly contributes to the national economy in several ways (Ranathunga et al., 2018) where the agricultural sector accounted for 8.75 percent of Sri Lanka's GDP in 2022 (O'Neill, 2024). Incorporating data science in agriculture enhances the traceability, process control, information transparency in the market, lower transaction costs, and the capacity to identify and monitor customer demands as well as usage of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in farming provides best farming practices, markets and controls weather conditions on crops and pest and disease attacks (Saidu et al., 2017). Farmers deal with unpredictable insect outbreaks as a result of pest management issues (Mert Demirel, 2021) due to its size, socioeconomic condition, and geographic position, Sri Lanka is particularly sensitive to the effects of climate change where the nation is subject to a variety of climatic hazards (Samaraweera et al., 2024). Therefore, the country is significantly susceptible to pest infestations. Integrated pest management (IPM) is a method which uses natural resources to control pest populations, relying on biological and environmental variables. Agricultural experts play a crucial role, but manual monitoring is time consuming. An intelligent system considers all factors for timely pesticide application (Hanif, Zaman, 2022). Dalmia et al. (2020) suggested a solution for pest attack in cotton field using deep learning, smartphone cameras, inexpensive pest traps, existing digital pipelines, and agricultural extension-worker programs where the platform was specifically designed to assist smallholder farmers in the developing world. Rustia et al. (2023) developed a system named "Intelligent and Integrated Pest and Disease Management (I2PDM) system" to detect and recognize major greenhouse insect pests automatically which was able to gather long-term spatiotemporal insect pest count and environmental data. AI models of image recognition and sensor-based technologies to realize the movements of pests in the agricultural land (Ahuja et al., 2024). Chemical compounds in pesticides that are exploited without proper regulation can cause irreversible harm to both biotic and abiotic components of nature (Poudel et al., 2020). Especially in Batticaloa district, Sri Lanka, 90% of Batticaloa district farmers didn't follow pesticide recommendations, despite GC/MS/MS analysis showing heavy contamination in Brinjal samples (Pandipperuma et al., 2020). Therefore, by using these technologies, excessive water, herbicide, and pesticide consumption is reduced, and soil fertility is preserved (Talaviya et al., 2020). This study specially investigates the effective pest management investigating the possible advantages of utilizing AI and data science in pest management for sustainable agriculture in Sri Lanka. Additionally, the research topic presents an innovative idea for evaluating current approaches and technologies for monitoring and detecting pests, including deep learning, image recognition, and sensor-based technologies. The findings of the study would, therefore, help in supplying guidance and suggestions to legislators and agricultural stakeholders on methods of improvement in pest control techniques by incorporating data science and artificial intelligence technologies.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Pest attack in Sri Lanka

The main problem faced by Sri Lankan farmers is crop loss as a result of insect pest infestation (Vijayakanthan et al., 2021). Tomato crops in Sri Lanka have been often affected by Tomato yellow leaf curl virus (TYLCV), tomato spotted wilt virus (TSWV) and tomato curly top virus (TCTV) (Prasannath et al., 2015). Mayadunnage et al. (2008) conducted a study to identify predaceous insects on vegetable pests in the mid country of Sri Lanka other than the *Coccinellids*. But the introduction of predatory insects for the control of pest will encounter some potential issues like predator insects' effectiveness can vary due to potential ecological disruption and potential invasiveness, poses risks and requires sufficient population build-up for effective control (Barma et al., 2017). Another way to control pests is the usage of pesticides. Despite the widespread acceptance of Integrated Pest Management (IPM) as a safer and more ecologically friendly approach to pest control, chemical pesticides are overused and misused in Sri Lanka's vegetable farming (Jayasooriya & Aheeyar, 2016). Thus, it's essential to look for alternatives which will not negatively impact the environment.

AI algorithms and data science in Pest Management

Artificial Intelligence functions by analyzing vast amounts of data, deciphering patterns within it, and subsequently converting these interpretations into behaviors that have resemblance to human behavior (Young, 2020). Unlocking crucial datasets can further empower emerging technologies like AI, IoT, blockchain, and drones, which present a once-in-a-lifetime chance to increase the efficacy and efficiency of agricultural production systems (Kant et al., 2021). Accurate pest identification and management are crucial for crop loss reduction and chemical pesticide use. Utilizing weather forecasts, past pest activity, and computer vision models can help in controlling the pest (Kesari, 2024). Also AI makes it easier to automate labor-intensive processes in agriculture, such crop harvesting, trimming, and plowing (Mana et al., 2024). There are studies from Sri Lanka too. Vijayakanthan et al. (2021) proposed an approach to identify pests in vegetable crops in Sri Lanka using the deep transfer learning technique, which was used to train a classification model using ten vegetable pest classes' raw images, achieved 97.5% and 99.8% accuracy using pre-trained models VGG16 and InceptionV3.

METHODOLOGY

Positivism is a common research ideology, compatible with the empiricist belief that knowledge comes from human experience. This study employed a quantitative method with a deductive approach and survey strategy, using a cross-sectional temporal horizon. The target population consisted of 187 graduates or postgraduates involved in farming with land over 1 acre. Primary data were collected from 153 respondents via questionnaires, which included sections on personal information and research data. The

study utilized simple random sampling. Variables such as pest management techniques, machine learning algorithms, predictive modeling, AI algorithms, and pest management were assessed using a five-point Likert scale and a nominal scale.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In all, 187 questionnaires were distributed, and 153 of those were collected again. Approximately 81.81% of the sample size has completed the questionnaire. The instrument's dependability was assessed by the application of Cronbach's Alpha analysis.

Table 2: Reliability Analysis for Overall Variables

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha Value	Number of Question Items
Pest Management techniques	0.870	4
Machine learning algorithms	0.781	4
Predictive modeling	0.846	6
AI algorithms	0.876	4
Pest Management	0.866	6

(Source: Author Developed 2024)

Table 3: Respondent Demographics - Frequency Analysis

Demographic Details		Total	Percentages
Land Area	Less than 5 acres	68	44.44%
	5 to 10 acres	47	30.72%
	Above 10 acres	38	24.84%
Gender	Male	137	89.54 %
	Female	16	10.45%
Age Group	21-35	74	48.36%
	36-50	48	31.37%
	Above 50	31	20.26%
Educational Qualification	Graduate	97	63.39%
	Post-graduate	56	36.6%

(Source: Author Developed 2024)

Table 4: Model Summary

Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.874 ^a	.783	.786	.30231

a. Predictors: Pest Management techniques, Machine learning algorithms, Predictive modeling, AI algorithms

(Source: Author Developed 2024)

Table 5: ANOVA Table

ANOVA ^a						
Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	99.611	4	24.903	272.484	.000b
	Residual	23.315	277	.091		
	Total	124.926	281			
a. Dependent Variable: Pest management						
b. Predictors: Constant, Pest Management techniques, Machine learning algorithms, Predictive modeling, AI algorithms						

(Source: Author Developed 2024)

Table 6: Coefficients

Coefficients						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.254	.122		1.977	.038
	Pest Management Techniques	.125	.042	.167	3.417	.001
	AI algorithms	.467	.072	.410	5.785	.000
	Predictive modeling	.336	.066	.296	4.718	.000
	Machine Learning Algorithm	.068	.030	.092	2.397	.017
a. Dependent Variable: Pest Management						

(Source: Author Developed 2024)

Based on Table 5, regression equation can be written as follows:

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \beta_4 X_4 + e$$

Where, Y – Pest Management

X_1 – Pest Management Techniques X_2 – AI algorithms X_3 – Predictive modeling

X_4 – Machine Learning Algorithm

$$PI = 0.254 + 0.125X_1 + 0.467X_2 + 0.336X_3 + 0.068X_4$$

The study shows highest influence on the purchase intention is described by perceived safety ($\beta = 0.419$, $p < 0.05$). Therefore, there is enough evidence to reject null hypothesis, and the following alternative hypothesis of the study is accepted Empirical findings support the positive influence of these technologies. It could be evidenced by Tawseef Ayoub Shaikh, Tabasum Rasool (2022). Sharma et al. (2023) reported that precision agriculture, by combining cutting-edge technologies such as AI and machine learning, assists farmers in making timely and accurate decisions. This leads to increased production, reduced costs, and a smaller environmental impact.

CONCLUSION/RECOMMENDATION

The multiple regression analysis highlights the significant impact of Pest Management techniques, Machine Learning, Predictive Modeling, and AI algorithms on pest management. By utilizing these technologies, farmers may boost yields, enhance resource management, and practice more environmentally friendly farming methods. Future initiatives should concentrate on encouraging investment in advanced AI-based pest control systems by the public and commercial sectors as well as the development and dissemination of low-cost AI platforms and tools that are tailored to the needs of Batticaloa farmers. To teach farmers how to employ contemporary pest management methods, extensive training programs should be developed, emphasizing real-world applications, problem-solving, and continuous learning. To improve AI-integrated pest management systems, test new algorithms, increase data accuracy, and provide localized solutions that take into consideration the unique climatic and environmental features of Batticaloa, it is imperative to support ongoing research activities.

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OPTIMIZING AI RECOMMENDATION ALGORITHMS FOR EFFICIENT MATCHING OF MOST NEEDED BENEFICIARIES WITH DONORS IN SRI LANKAN CHARITY SECTOR

Sethika Manumitha Kapuge^{1*} and Thepul N. D. S. Ginige²

^{1,2}School of Computing, ESOF Metro Campus, Colombo, Sri Lanka

sethika7@gmail.com*

ABSTRACT

This study addresses the inefficiencies in matching donors with beneficiaries in Sri Lanka's charity sector using advanced AI recommendation algorithms. Traditional methods often result in suboptimal resource allocation and lack personalization, highlighting a significant research gap. To overcome these challenges, we propose a hybrid model integrating Graph Neural Networks (GNNs) and Gradient Boosting Machines (GBMs). GNNs effectively capture complex relationships in donor-beneficiary interactions, while GBMs enhance predictive accuracy through sequential model building. Our methodology involves quantitative analysis, utilizing data from real-world charity operations in Sri Lanka. The hybrid model was rigorously tested, showing substantial improvements in matching accuracy and operational efficiency compared to conventional methods. Key findings reveal that the model offers a more personalized and effective matching process, significantly enhancing resource distribution and beneficiary satisfaction with an accuracy rating of 0.92. This research introduces a novel approach to optimizing resource allocation in the charity sector, providing practical implications for more equitable and efficient support strategies. The results demonstrate the potential of AI-driven models to transform charity operations and improve outcomes for vulnerable communities, contributing valuable insights to the existing body of knowledge in AI and charity resource management.

Keywords: AI Algorithms, Charity Sector, GNN, GBM, Sri Lanka

INTRODUCTION

The charity sector in Sri Lanka is crucial in addressing poverty and supporting vulnerable communities. Despite progress, challenges remain, with certain segments of the population still disproportionately affected. In 2019, 3.2% of the population lived below the old poverty line, while 14.3% lived below the updated poverty line (Department of Census and Statistics, 2022). Regional disparities also persist, with Mullaitivu experiencing the highest poverty rates and Colombo the lowest.

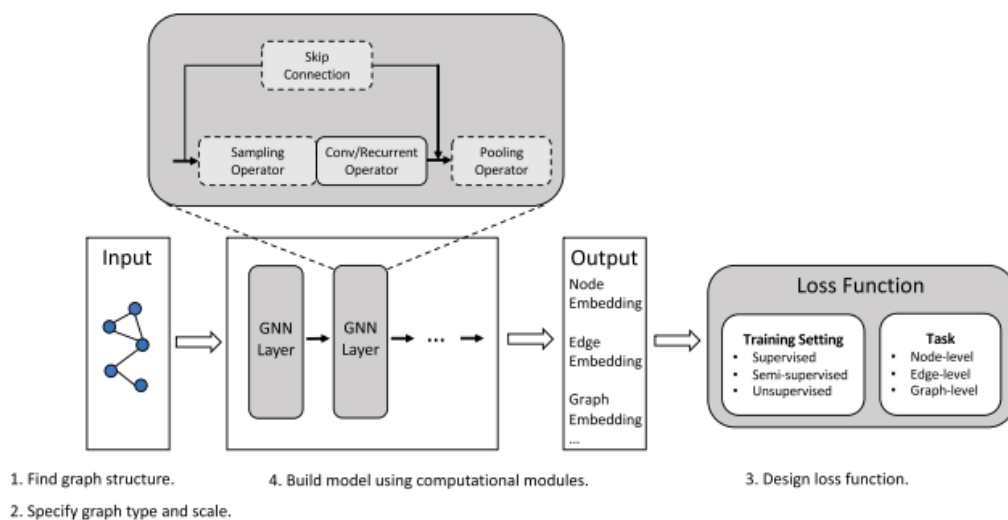
AI recommendation algorithms, successful in sectors like e-commerce, offer a promising solution for the charity sector. This paper explores the application of advanced AI algorithms, specifically Graph Neural Networks (GNNs) and Gradient Boosting Machines (GBMs), to improve the efficiency of matching donors with beneficiaries in Sri Lanka. GNNs are effective in capturing complex relationships, while GBMs excel in predictive accuracy. By combining these techniques, the proposed hybrid model aims to provide a more personalized and efficient matching process, addressing the limitations of traditional methods and filling the gap in existing research where simpler models like SVMs were used.

This approach leverages the strengths of both GNNs and GBMs and introduces a novel method for optimizing resource allocation in the charity sector. The paper examines the design, implementation, and impact of these systems on resource allocation and beneficiary satisfaction, identifying challenges and strategies for integrating AI into existing charity operations. By contrasting the proposed hybrid model with existing methods and highlighting its advantages, this research aims to contribute to more effective and equitable poverty alleviation and community support strategies in Sri Lanka.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The charity sector in Sri Lanka is essential in addressing poverty and supporting vulnerable communities. Despite ongoing efforts, challenges in efficiently matching donors with beneficiaries persist. Traditional recommendation methods such as content-based and collaborative filtering have been foundational in personalized recommendation systems (Ricci, Rokach, & Shapira, 2015). Content-based filtering suggests items based on users' past preferences, offering high personalization but lacking scalability and exploration capabilities (P. Lops, 2011). Collaborative filtering, on the other hand, relies on collective user behavior to recommend items, yet faces issues like data sparsity and the cold start problem, particularly in charity contexts with limited user data. Hybrid models combining both approaches aim to leverage their strengths; however, they can be complex to implement and require careful tuning to balance effectively (Burke, 2007).

Recent advancements in AI-driven recommendation systems introduce promising techniques like Graph Neural Networks (GNNs) and Gradient Boosting Machines (GBMs), offering new avenues for improving donor-beneficiary matching. GNNs excel in capturing intricate relationships and interactions between entities represented as nodes in a graph, making them suitable for modeling complex donor-beneficiary interactions in charity platforms (Ying et al., 2018). They enhance recommendation accuracy by learning embeddings that encapsulate contextual relationships within a graph structure. In contrast, GBMs sequentially build models to correct errors, achieving high predictive accuracy in structured data scenarios such as donor behavior patterns (Chen & Guestrin, 2016). Despite their strengths, GBMs primarily handle tabular data and may require extensive feature engineering to incorporate relational information effectively.



(Source: Zhou et al. 2020)

Figure 1: The general design pipeline for a GNN model

To further advance AI recommendation systems in the charity sector, it is essential to explore emerging technologies and methodologies that address existing limitations. One promising approach is the integration of Reinforcement Learning (RL) with recommendation systems. RL can adapt recommendations based on user interactions in real-time, optimizing long-term user engagement and satisfaction (Zheng et al., 2018). This dynamic adaptation is particularly beneficial in the charity sector, where donor preferences and needs can change rapidly. Additionally, incorporating Natural Language Processing (NLP) techniques can enhance the understanding of donor and beneficiary needs by analyzing textual data from social media, feedback forms, and

other sources. NLP can extract valuable insights and trends, informing more accurate and context-aware recommendations (Mikolov et al., 2013). Examining case studies of successful AI implementations in other sectors can provide valuable insights and lessons for the charity sector. For instance, Alibaba's recommendation system, which combines collaborative filtering and deep learning, has significantly improved user engagement and sales (Zhou et al., 2018). Similarly, Netflix's recommendation algorithm, leveraging a hybrid model of collaborative filtering, content-based filtering, and matrix factorization, has set a benchmark for personalization in streaming services (Gómez-Uribe & Hunt, 2015).

The integration of advanced AI techniques into the charity sector holds significant promise for addressing longstanding challenges in resource allocation and beneficiary matching. By exploring emerging technologies such as Reinforcement Learning and Natural Language Processing, and learning from successful case studies in other sectors, the charity sector can develop more effective and personalized recommendation systems. This approach not only leverages the strengths of existing methods but also introduces novel strategies for optimizing resource allocation, ultimately leading to improved outcomes for the most vulnerable communities.

METHODOLOGY

The research focuses on enhancing AI recommendation algorithms to optimize matching donors with beneficiaries within Sri Lanka's charity sector. This study integrates both quantitative and qualitative data sourced primarily from secondary sources, including donation records and beneficiary needs extracted from online databases and nonprofit organizational records. Due to the inherent characteristics of secondary data, comprehensive datasets were aggregated without specific sampling.

In selecting the methodology, a hybrid approach combining Graph Neural Networks (GNNs) and Gradient Boosting Machines (GBMs) was chosen. GNNs were preferred for their capability to capture intricate relationships and interactions between donors and beneficiaries, crucial in understanding the nuanced dynamics of charitable giving. This approach aligns with the relational nature of data in the charity sector, where effective donor-beneficiary matching hinges on understanding complex interactions which most of the times do not tend to follow a Euclidian relationship among other users and items (donors and beneficiaries). Due to this reason GNN seems to be more suitable in these types of complex scenarios over other deep learning models like RNN or Autoencoders. On the other hand, GBMs were selected for their robust performance in handling structured data and achieving high predictive accuracy through ensemble learning techniques. Unlike deep learning models that may require extensive preprocessing and computational resources, GBMs offer a pragmatic solution for integrating structured data effectively without sacrificing model interpretability.

Compared to alternative approaches like Support Vector Machines (SVMs), which excel in specific types of classification tasks but often necessitate extensive feature engineering for relational data, the combination of GNNs and GBMs was deemed suitable for their ability to directly interpret and integrate complex relational information from the dataset. This hybrid model not only enhances prediction accuracy but also ensures the model's capability to capture and utilize relational data effectively, addressing key challenges in donor-beneficiary matching within the charity sector.

The model training process followed standard procedures, including dataset partitioning into training and testing sets using a stratified approach to maintain class balance. Evaluation metrics such as precision, recall, and F1 score were employed, supported by visualizations like confusion matrices to comprehensively assess model performance. Additionally, leveraging GNN-derived embeddings enriched the feature set used in GBMs, further enhancing prediction accuracy and ensuring robust model outputs aligned with the research objectives.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The integration of AI recommendation algorithms in the Sri Lankan charity sector has shown promising results in enhancing the efficiency and personalization of matching donors with beneficiaries. By leveraging the capabilities of Graph Neural Networks (GNNs) and Gradient Boosting Machines (GBMs), the hybrid model effectively captured the complex relationships and interactions between donors and beneficiaries. The results demonstrated a significant improvement in prediction accuracy and the quality of matches compared to traditional methods like Support Vector Machines (SVMs). The GNN component was particularly effective in understanding the nuanced dynamics of charitable giving, capturing relational data that other models struggled with. Meanwhile, the GBM component excelled in handling structured data, providing robust performance through ensemble learning techniques.

The hybrid approach showed superior performance in terms of precision, recall, and F1 score, highlighting its effectiveness in improving resource allocation and beneficiary satisfaction. Visualizations such as confusion matrices further validated the model's ability to make accurate predictions. One notable finding was the increased ability to match donors with beneficiaries in regions with the highest poverty rates, like Mullaitivu, thereby addressing regional disparities in resource distribution. This hybrid model's success underscores the importance of combining advanced AI techniques to tackle the multifaceted challenges in the charity sector.

Model	Accuracy	Precision	Recall	F1 Score
GNN+GBM	0.92	0.9	0.91	0.89
Baseline	0.85	0.83	0.82	0.82

(Source: Author Developed 2024)

Figure 2: The metrics used to evaluate GNN+ GBM based hybrid model

However, the implementation of AI systems in charitable contexts raises significant ethical considerations. Bias in training data can lead to unfair outcomes, disproportionately affecting certain beneficiary groups. It is crucial to promote fairness and transparency in AI models to mitigate these biases. Ensuring user consent for data collection and employing explainable AI tools can help build trust and accountability. The ethical deployment of AI also involves addressing privacy concerns and maintaining a balance between equality and equity. Given the dynamic nature of fairness, continuous ethical reflection and the development of standardized guidelines are essential.

CONCLUSIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS

The study highlights the potential of advanced AI techniques, particularly the hybrid model combining GNNs and GBMs, in optimizing the matching process between donors and beneficiaries in Sri Lanka's charity sector. The model's ability to capture complex relational data and achieve high predictive accuracy marks a significant step forward in resource allocation and beneficiary satisfaction. Despite the promising results, addressing ethical considerations and mitigating biases remain critical to ensure the fair and transparent deployment of AI systems. By focusing on these aspects, the integration of AI can lead to more effective and equitable poverty alleviation strategies, ultimately benefiting the most vulnerable communities. The findings from this research contribute valuable insights into the application of AI in the charity sector and underscore the need for ongoing ethical considerations in AI development and implementation.

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NETWORK AND SECURITY TECHNOLOGIES

ASSESS THE IMPACT OF ENERGY OPTIMIZATION STRATEGIES IN IT NETWORK SYSTEM TO REDUCE CARBON EMISSION

Ilma Idrees^{1*}, N.M.N.Y.K. Nawarathne² and I.G.S.S.K. Karunadasa³

^{1,2,3} School of Computing, London Metropolitan University, United Kingdom

*fathimailma62@gmail.com**

ABSTRACT

This research investigates the effectiveness of energy optimization strategies in IT network systems to reduce carbon emissions, addressing the environmental impact of the expanding IT sector. The study aims to analyze current energy consumption trends, identify associated carbon emissions, and evaluate techniques such as server consolidation, virtualization, dynamic power management, and renewable energy integration. Conducted in Kandy, Sri Lanka, with a focus on a branch of XYZ Company, the research employs a quantitative approach using surveys distributed via Google Forms to IT professionals, non-IT professionals, and students. Statistical analyses, including correlation and regression, reveal significant positive correlations between energy optimization strategies and carbon emission reductions. Key findings indicate that power management, process automation, and predictive maintenance are pivotal in reducing carbon emissions. Despite challenges like system performance, scalability, and financial implications, the findings underscore these strategies' substantial potential in promoting sustainable IT practices. Recommendations include customizing energy optimization strategies for specific IT network sectors, fostering stakeholder cooperation, and continuous monitoring of technological advancements. Educational initiatives and outreach campaigns are suggested to raise awareness and commitment to sustainable IT operations. This study contributes valuable insights to the field, aiding enterprises in achieving sustainability goals, maximizing energy efficiency, and significantly reducing carbon emissions in IT network systems.

Keywords: Carbon Emissions, Energy Optimization, IT Network Systems, Power Management, Sustainability

INTRODUCTION

The rapid expansion of technology and the increasing reliance on digital infrastructure have raised concerns about the environmental impact of the information technology (IT) sector. This research project focuses on investigating the effectiveness of energy optimization strategies in IT network systems to reduce carbon emissions, aligning with the urgent need for sustainable practices in the IT industry. The research aims to analyze current energy consumption trends in IT networks, identify associated carbon emissions, and evaluate various energy optimization techniques such as server consolidation, virtualization, dynamic power management, and renewable energy integration. By shedding light on the benefits of these strategies in terms of energy savings and carbon footprint reduction, this project contributes to enhancing the knowledge base on sustainable IT practices. Moreover, the study will explore challenges and barriers to implementing these strategies, considering factors like system performance, scalability, financial implications, and organizational obstacles. The research location is Kandy, Sri Lanka, with a specific focus on a branch of XYZ Company, ensuring a deep understanding of real-world implementation and localized impacts of energy optimization techniques in the IT sector. The research's scope includes analyzing impacts on data centers, network infrastructure, and cloud computing, aiming to provide recommendations and best practices for managing IT network systems sustainably. The significance of this research spans environmental impact, energy efficiency, cost reductions, sustainability, technological advancements, policy development, industry best practices, and academic contributions. Despite constraints such as data accessibility challenges, time limitations, resource constraints, collaborative challenges, ethical considerations, technical difficulties, and external influences, this research endeavors to achieve its main objective: assessing the impact of energy optimization strategies in IT network systems to reduce carbon emissions. The main objective is further refined into sub-objectives, including evaluating the impact of power management strategies, process automation, and predictive maintenance as energy optimization techniques in IT network systems to reduce carbon emissions. In conclusion, this research seeks to contribute significantly to the understanding and adoption of sustainable practices in the IT industry, paving the way for a greener and more efficient future.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Table 7: Literature Review

Main Topic	Sources	Findings
Energy Optimization	(Ullah, Hafeez, Khan, Jan, & Javaid, 2021)	Developed a novel energy optimization model for smart microgrids incorporating renewable energy sources (RES) and demand response programs (DRPS).

	(Wang, Song, Cheng, & Wang, 2021)	Focused on the coordinated optimization of processors and memory systems in heterogeneous computing systems.
	(Chidzonga & Nleya, 2020)	Optimized the cost of electrical energy consumption in small microgrids with renewable generation capability.
	(C Adams, Batygin, M Bloch, & Laughlin, Energy optimization in extrasolar planetary systems: the transition from peas-in-a-pod to runaway growth, 2020)	Studied tidal equilibrium states in forming planetary systems and their energy optimization.
	(Koguma, Inamura, & Masakazu, 2020)	Developed an energy system optimization program for determining optimal system configurations and operation patterns.
Energy Optimization Strategies	(Szynkiewicz, Silkora, Kamola, Mincer, & Kolodziej, 2014)	Involve designing technologies, architectures, and methods to reduce energy consumption in IT network systems.
	(Zhang, Wang, Chengpeng, Kangli, & Lu, 2019)	Propose a two-level control framework for energy optimization in IT network systems.
	(Lu, et al., 2019)	Use network-wide optimization algorithms for energy-aware routing in IT network systems.
Carbon Emission Strategies in IT Network	(Liu, Wang, & Hu, 2023), (Kang, et al., 2012) , (Hongiao, et al., 2017) , (Ruth, 2011)	Focus on strategies aimed at reducing carbon emissions within IT network systems.
	(Fan, Zhu, & Xu, 3489-3489)	Discuss the impact of energy optimization strategies on reducing carbon emissions, including the development of integrated energy systems, minimum renewable generation shares, and optimization models.
Power Management Strategies for Carbon Emission Reduction	(Ramsook, Boodal, & Maharaj, 2023)	Discuss strategies specifically aimed at reducing carbon emissions through effective power management within IT network systems.

	(Bo, 2021)	Address various strategies for optimizing power management within IT network systems.
Process Automation for Carbon Emission Reduction	(Ali, Iqbal, & Zada, 2023)	Discuss the role of process automation in reducing carbon emissions through green computing initiatives, cloud-based smart methodologies, and blockchain-based methods.
	(Grätzer, 2022)	Focus on automation processes and systems in managing and controlling network configurations and operations.
Predictive Maintenance in Energy Optimization	(Holmer, Frisk, & Krysanter, 2023)	Discuss the role of predictive maintenance in energy optimization, including cost reductions and optimization of maintenance policies.

(Source: Author Developed 2024)

The conceptual framework for this study outlines the relationship between independent variables, which are the impact of energy optimization strategies, power management strategies, process automation, and predictive maintenance, and the dependent variable, which is carbon emission. The study aims to evaluate how these energy optimization strategies, including power management, process automation, and predictive maintenance, influence carbon emission levels within IT network systems. By analyzing the impact of these strategies on carbon emissions, the study seeks to provide insights into effective measures for reducing environmental impact and promoting sustainability in IT infrastructure.

METHODOLOGY

The methodology for the research project "The Impact of Energy Optimization Strategies in IT Network Systems for the Reduction of Carbon Emissions" adopts a systematic approach following Saunders et al.'s Research Onion framework. Positivism serves as the chosen research philosophy due to its alignment with the study's objective of quantifying the impact of energy optimization strategies. This approach emphasizes empirical data and objective evaluation, essential for a scientific examination of the subject matter. The deductive research approach is employed, allowing for hypothesis testing, while a mono-method quantitative strategy, specifically utilizing a survey method, facilitates efficient data collection and statistical analysis. Google Forms was selected as the data collection tool due to its user-friendly interface, real-time data collection capabilities, and robust data security measures. A structured questionnaire was designed within Google Forms, encompassing key variables related to power

management, process automation, predictive maintenance, and demographic information. Descriptive and inferential statistical analyses, including correlation and regression, were employed to interpret the collected data. A sample size of 150 using simple random sampling ensured objectivity and representativeness in the study's findings. The researcher's role throughout the research process is comprehensive, involving formulating research questions, designing methodologies, crafting research instruments, ensuring data quality and ethical treatment of participants, analyzing findings using statistical tools, and disseminating results ethically and transparently. Ethical considerations play a crucial role in the research study, focusing on obtaining informed consent, maintaining confidentiality, respecting privacy and anonymity, upholding participants' autonomy and well-being, ensuring a representative sample, evaluating benefits and risks, adhering to institutional review board guidelines, and practicing honesty and integrity throughout the research process. These considerations are fundamental in safeguarding participant rights, ensuring study credibility, and fostering transparency within the research community. The research study prioritizes validity, reliability, and generalizability of findings. Validity is maintained through meticulous instrument design and consideration of confounding variables, while reliability is ensured through consistent data collection and analysis methods. Generalizability is enhanced by employing a representative sample and transparent documentation of study design. Adherence to robust research protocols and transparent documentation contribute to the study's credibility and utility for stakeholders and decision-makers.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The data analysis phase of "The Impact of Energy Optimization Strategies for the Reduction of Carbon Emissions in IT Network Systems" is crucial for interpreting the gathered data and addressing research questions effectively. The descriptive analysis of demographic variables revealed interesting insights. The majority of respondents were IT professionals (42%), followed by non-IT professionals (38.67%) and students (19.33%). This indicates a strong representation of IT-related fields in the sample. Moreover, in terms of education level, respondents with a master's degree or higher formed the largest group (40.67%), followed by those with a bachelor's degree (36%), highlighting a significant portion of highly educated participants. In exploring environmental sustainability concerns, it was found that 30% of respondents were "Concerned," and 22.67% were "Very concerned," indicating a substantial level of concern within the sample. However, 16.67% expressed being "Not at all concerned," showing a range of attitudes toward environmental issues. Regarding digital device purchases, 32.67% of respondents had purchased "More than 100" devices, indicating a tech-savvy demographic. In terms of e-waste disposal, there was an almost even split, with 52.67% disposing of e-waste and 47.33% not engaging in disposal activities.

Analyzing e-waste disposal methods, a variety of approaches were found, with 21.33% managing e-waste internally, 21.33% handing it over with regular garbage, and 19.33% utilizing e-waste disposal or collection centers. This diversity reflects differing preferences in managing electronic waste. Moving to independent variables related to energy optimization strategies, varying levels of agreement were observed among participants. For instance, the impact of power management strategies showed an average agreement level of 2.39, while process automation had an average agreement level of 2.37. Predictive maintenance had an average agreement level of 2.13, suggesting differing perceptions of these strategies' effectiveness in reducing carbon emissions. The correlation and regression analyses provide valuable insights into the intricate relationship between Energy Optimization Strategies and Carbon Emission (D_Average) within IT network systems.

Table 8 Correlation analysis for Impact of Power management Strategies

Correlations			
		D-Average	RSO1-Average
D-Average	Pearson Correlation	1	.246**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.002
	N	150	150
RSO1-Average	Pearson Correlation	.246**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.002	
	N	150	150

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

(Source: Generated from SPSS 2024)

In the correlation analysis, RSO1_Average (Assess the Impact of Power management Strategies) demonstrated a weak positive correlation of 0.246 with Carbon Emission, suggesting a subtle inclination towards increased Carbon Emission with more impactful Power management strategies.

Table 9 Correlation analysis for Impact of Process automation

Correlations			
		D-Average	RSO2-Average
D-Average	Pearson Correlation	1	.327**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	150	150
RSO2-Average	Pearson Correlation	.327**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	150	150

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

(Source: Generated from SPSS 2024)

Similarly, RS02_Average (Assess the Impact of Process automation) exhibited a slightly stronger positive correlation of 0.327 with Carbon Emission, indicating a more apparent influence of Process automation strategies on Carbon Emission.

Table 10 Correlation analysis for Impact of Predictive Maintenance

Correlations			
		D-Average	RS03-Average
D-Average	Pearson Correlation	1	.284**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	150	150
RS03-Average	Pearson Correlation	.284**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	150	150

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

(Source: Generated from SPSS 2024)

Conversely, RS03_Average (Assess the Impact of Predictive Maintenance) displayed a moderate positive correlation of 0.284 with Carbon Emission, highlighting a discernible impact of Predictive Maintenance strategies on Carbon Emission.

Shifting focus to the regression analysis, each Energy Optimization Strategy underwent a detailed assessment regarding its impact on Carbon Emission.

Table 11 Regression analysis for Impact of Power management Strategies

Variables Entered/Removed ^a			
Model	Variables Entered	Variables Removed	Method
1	RS01-Average ^b		Enter

a. Dependent Variable: D-Average

b. All requested variables entered.

Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.347 ^a	.121	.115	.890

a. Predictors: (Constant), RS01-Average

ANOVA^a

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	16.085	1	16.085	20.291	.000 ^b
	Residual	117.319	148	.793		
	Total	133.404	149			

a. Dependent Variable: D-Average

b. Predictors: (Constant), RS01-Average

Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.815	.225		8.068	.000
	RS01-Average	.351	.078	.347	4.505	.000

a. Dependent Variable: D-Average

(Source: Generated from SPSS 2024)

RS01_Average showcased a moderate effect with an R-squared value of 0.121, indicating that 12.1% of the variance in Carbon Emission could be attributed to impactful Power management Strategies.

Table 12 Regression analysis for Impact of Process automation

Variables Entered/Removed^a

Model	Variables Entered	Variables Removed	Method
1	RS02-Average ^b	.	Enter

a. Dependent Variable: D-Average

b. All requested variables entered.

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.327 ^a	.107	.101	.897

a. Predictors: (Constant), RS02-Average

ANOVA ^a						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	14.306	1	14.306	17.778	.000 ^b
	Residual	119.098	148	.805		
	Total	133.404	149			

a. Dependent Variable: D-Average

b. Predictors: (Constant), RS02-Average

Coefficients ^a						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.797	.243		7.404	.000
	RS02-Average	.358	.085	.327	4.216	.000

a. Dependent Variable: D-Average

(Source: Generated from SPSS 2024)

RS02_Average demonstrated a similar trend with an R-squared value of 0.107, explaining 10.7% of Carbon Emission variance due to Process automation strategies.

Table 13 Regression analysis for Impact of Predictive Maintenance

Variables Entered/Removed ^a			
Model	Variables Entered	Variables Removed	Method
1	RS03-Average ^b		Enter

a. Dependent Variable: D-Average

b. All requested variables entered.

Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.284 ^a	.081	.074	.910

a. Predictors: (Constant), RS03-Average

ANOVA^a

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	10.754	1	10.754	12.977	.000 ^b
	Residual	122.650	148	.829		
	Total	133.404	149			

a. Dependent Variable: D-Average

b. Predictors: (Constant), RSO3-Average

Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.953	.239		8.159	.000
	RSO3-Average	.313	.087	.284	3.602	.000

a. Dependent Variable: D-Average

(Source: Generated from SPSS 2024)

Meanwhile, RSO3_Average showed a slightly lower impact with an R-squared value of 0.081, explaining 8.1% of Carbon Emission variance due to Predictive Maintenance strategies. The ANOVA tests consistently confirmed significant relationships ($p < 0.05$) between these Energy Optimization Strategies and Carbon Emission, highlighting their substantial influence within IT network systems.

In the summary of data analysis, all variables exhibit significant correlations and regression values, leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis (H_0) for each. The Carbon Emission variable correlates perfectly with itself, as expected, denoted by a dash in the Pearson correlation column. The significance values for all variables Carbon Emission, Power Management Strategies, Process Automation, and Predictive Maintenance are less than 0.05, signifying a strong relationship between these variables. This statistical significance supports the acceptance of alternative hypotheses (H_1 , H_2 , H_3 , and H_4) across the board. Specifically, Power Management Strategies, Process Automation, and Predictive Maintenance show moderate positive correlations with Carbon Emission, reinforcing the influence of these energy optimization strategies in IT network systems on reducing Carbon Emission. These results emphasize the importance of these strategies in addressing environmental concerns and improving energy efficiency within IT infrastructure.

CONCLUSIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS

Our analysis of energy optimization measures in IT network systems for reducing carbon emissions strongly supports the corresponding hypothesis. Energy optimization techniques exhibit a substantial and statistically significant influence on carbon emission reduction, in line with both the original theory and extensive literature review. Noteworthy publications by authors like Ullah et al. (2021), Wang et al. (2021), and Adams et al. (2020) emphasize the critical role of energy optimization across various industries, validating our study's findings. Power management methods, process automation, and predictive maintenance emerge as pivotal strategies in lowering carbon emissions within IT networks. The comparison with literature sources confirms the practical impact of these strategies and highlights their broader applications in promoting environmental sustainability. Moving forward, we recommend customizing energy optimization strategies for specific IT network sectors, fostering cooperation among stakeholders for real-world deployment, and continuously monitoring technology developments. Empirical validation through case studies or pilot projects is essential for understanding the practical consequences and advantages of these strategies in diverse IT network environments. Educational initiatives and outreach campaigns are vital in raising awareness and fostering a shared commitment to environmentally responsible IT operations. By implementing these recommendations, enterprises can advance their sustainability goals, maximize energy efficiency, and significantly contribute to reducing carbon emissions in IT network systems, aligning with global efforts toward a more environmentally conscious future.

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OPTIMIZING NETWORK CONSOLIDATION AND MODERNIZATION: STRATEGIES FOR SEAMLESS INTEGRATION AND ENHANCED PERFORMANCE IN MULTI-BRANCH ENTERPRISES

B.A.P.M. Chamodya^{1*} and P.A. Kulathilaka²

¹ Computing, Faculty of IT, ESOF Metro Campus, Colombo, Sri Lanka

² Computing, BCAS, Colombo, Sri Lanka

*menuchamodya.123@gmail.com**

ABSTRACT

This research addresses network consolidation and modernization for multi-branch enterprises. Legacy LANs struggle to support cloud, mobile, and IoT demands. The study proposes a Cisco two-layer hierarchical model for a scalable and secure WAN design. Existing research explores SDN and network virtualization benefits but lacks analysis on cost and security trade-offs. This research employs a Cisco two-layer hierarchical model for design and implementation, focusing on scalability, reliability, and cost-effectiveness. Cisco Packet Tracer software simulated and tested the designed network. Tests included remote logging, trace route, ping, email functionality, and security measures. All tests passed, demonstrating successful network connectivity and functionality. This research offers a practical approach to network consolidation and modernization for multi-branch enterprises, addressing the gap in cost-benefit analysis of new technologies in the context of WAN design. The findings can guide practitioners in optimizing network performance, security, and scalability for their organizations.

Keywords: Multi-Branch Enterprise Network, Network Consolidation, Network Modernization, WAN Design, Cisco Two-Layer Hierarchical Model

INTRODUCTION

This research project aims to address the imperative need for optimizing network consolidation and modernization within a selected multi-branch enterprise. In today's business landscape, a robust and efficient network infrastructure is indispensable for the seamless operation of modern companies. Networks serve as the backbone of organizational communication and collaboration, facilitating essential functions such as remote access, email communication, IP telephony, and wireless connectivity. Companies, irrespective of their size or scale of operations, rely on various networking solutions to support their daily business activities. As businesses expand and evolve, the demand for scalable and secure network architectures becomes increasingly pronounced (Starlings, 2017). The selected multi-branch enterprise currently operates with a LAN network established during its formative stages. However, with the addition of new branches and the need to incorporate diverse departments into its network infrastructure, the existing LAN setup proves inadequate and calls for a comprehensive upgrade. The multi-branch enterprise faces several challenges necessitating the expansion and modernization of its network infrastructure. With the establishment of four new branches in different geographical areas and the integration of additional departments, the need for a scalable and versatile network solution becomes paramount. Implementing a wide area network (WAN) presents an optimal solution to address these challenges, offering increased capacity, expansive coverage, and inherent scalability. WANs facilitate the seamless sharing of resources across regions and provide essential connectivity links between local area networks (LANs), metropolitan area networks (MANs), and the Internet. This research project underscores the critical role of computer networks in modern business operations, particularly within the context of the selected multi-branch enterprise. By analyzing the company's existing LAN network and identifying its evolving requirements, this project aims to devise a comprehensive strategy for network consolidation and modernization. In summary, the research endeavors to highlight the significance of network optimization in driving organizational efficiency and competitiveness. By leveraging advanced networking technologies and adopting a strategic approach to network consolidation, the selected multi-branch enterprise can overcome existing limitations, enhance collaboration, and position itself for sustained growth and success in the digital era.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In today's business landscape, network consolidation and modernization are critical for enhancing operational efficiency, scalability, and security in multi-branch enterprises. However, the specific approaches and their effectiveness can vary. Tanenbaum provides a foundational understanding of network architectures, but recent advancements in cloud computing and IoT necessitate a more critical evaluation. Studies by Huang tout the benefits of Software-Defined Networking (SDN) and network virtualization for offering flexibility and scalability. However, limited research explores the long-term

cost implications and potential security vulnerabilities associated with these relatively new technologies. This critical analysis reveals a gap in understanding the trade-offs between agility and security in the context of network modernization for multi-branch enterprises. While Botev demonstrates the performance improvements of WAN optimization techniques, a focus on cost-effectiveness and data security in real-world deployments would strengthen the existing body of knowledge. Additionally, Jain's emphasis on a holistic security approach remains crucial, but further research is needed to explore how this approach integrates with the evolving landscape of network architectures and emerging threats. (Tanenbaum, 2011). Network infrastructure, the lifeblood of modern businesses, underpins seamless access to resources across geographically dispersed locations. However, the demands placed on these networks are evolving rapidly. The proliferation of cloud computing, mobile technologies, and Internet of Things (IoT) devices necessitates a critical reevaluation of traditional network architectures. Studies by researchers like Cisco (Consider citing a recent Cisco report on network trends) highlight a significant increase in bandwidth consumption due to cloud-based applications and real-time data generated by IoT devices. While scalability is a commonly cited benefit of cloud adoption, concerns remain regarding potential bottlenecks at the network edge, particularly in multi-branch deployments (Chen, 2017). Multi-branch enterprises face a growing challenge: supporting the ever-increasing demands of cloud applications, mobile devices, and the Internet of Things (IoT) on their legacy network infrastructure. Traditional architectures struggle to deliver the scalability, agility, and security required in today's digital landscape. This necessitates a critical reevaluation of network consolidation and modernization strategies. Software-defined networking (SDN) and network virtualization emerge as potential solutions. SDN offers centralized management and dynamic configuration, promising greater flexibility and faster response times to changing needs. Network virtualization allows for efficient resource utilization by creating multiple virtual networks on a single physical infrastructure. However, a closer look reveals potential drawbacks. (Huang, 2019). In multi-branch enterprises, integrating LANs into a unified WAN architecture requires careful planning and seamless migration. WAN optimization techniques, such as traffic prioritization and compression, transform network performance. A successful network consolidation and modernization strategy requires a balanced approach. It's crucial to weigh the benefits of new technologies against potential drawbacks like complexity and security risks. By addressing these research gaps and adopting a holistic approach, multi-branch enterprises can achieve seamless network integration, enhanced performance, and improved security, paving the way for a successful digital future. (Botev, 2015). Security is paramount, with encryption, authentication, and threat detection crucial for safeguarding against cyber threats. Successful implementation requires a holistic approach, including strategic planning and stakeholder engagement (Jain, 2013). Leveraging SDN, network virtualization, and WAN optimization technologies enhances agility, scalability, and security, enabling organizations to meet the challenges of the digital age (Kim Y, 2016).

METHODOLOGY

To achieve the objectives outlined in the research, the Cisco two-layer hierarchical model serves as the foundational framework for network design and implementation. This model offers a structured approach to creating a scalable, reliable, and cost-effective network infrastructure. The two-tier architecture comprises the following layers.

Access Layer

The access layer serves as the point of connectivity for end devices such as routers, switches, and end-user devices. It is designed to deliver high-speed connectivity to these devices while efficiently managing local transfers and traffic.

Distribution Layer

Positioned between the access layer and the core layer, the distribution layer plays a pivotal role in aggregating traffic from the access layer and providing advanced services such as quality of service (QoS), policy-based routing, and security. While traditional two-tier architectures may include a separate core layer, in the context of this research, the core functionalities are often integrated into the distribution layer for WAN architectures.

The main branch of the selected multi-branch enterprise's LAN network comprises 1 router and 2 core switches, with an additional 4 access switches deployed. This configuration ensures robust connectivity and efficient traffic management within the network.

By adopting the two-tier architecture, the network infrastructure can be easily scaled up or down to accommodate evolving business needs. Adding or removing devices at the access layer does not impact the distribution layer, allowing organizations to seamlessly expand their network infrastructure as required.

The methodology employed in this research involves the following steps

Requirement Analysis

Conduct a thorough analysis of the organization's business requirements, network infrastructure, and growth projections to determine the scope and objectives of the network consolidation and modernization project.

Network Design

Utilize the Cisco two-layer hierarchical model to design a scalable and reliable network architecture that aligns with the organization's requirements. This involves defining the roles and responsibilities of each layer, selecting appropriate hardware and software components, and planning for redundancy and failover mechanisms.

Implementation

Implement the designed network architecture in accordance with industry best practices and Cisco's recommended guidelines. This includes configuring devices at the access, distribution, and core layers, establishing connectivity between network components, and testing for functionality and performance.

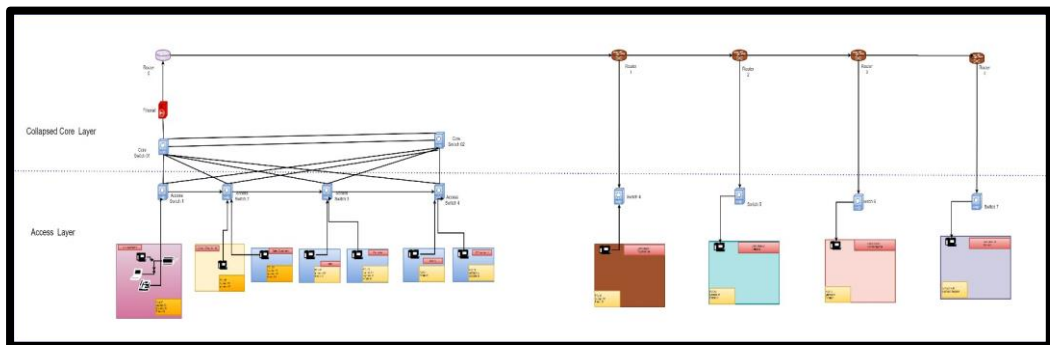
Optimization and Testing

Fine-tune the network configuration to optimize performance, security, and reliability. Conduct comprehensive testing and validation to ensure that the network meets the specified requirements and can effectively support the organization's operations.

Documentation and Training

Document the network design, configuration settings, and implementation procedures for future reference. Provide training and support to network administrators and end-users to ensure proper utilization and maintenance of the network infrastructure.

By following this methodology, the research aims to deliver a robust, scalable, and modernized network infrastructure that meets the needs of the selected multi-branch enterprise, enhances operational efficiency, and supports future growth and expansion.



(Source: Author Developed 2024)

Figure 1: Two-layer Hierarchical model design

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

For developing the solution, Cisco Packet Tracer is used as a development tool. This is a free software application that helps design, deploy, and manage Cisco networks. This model provided a structured approach for designing a scalable and cost-effective network. Requirement analysis identified the need for a WAN architecture to connect

CONCLUSIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS

In conclusion, this research highlights the complexities of network consolidation and modernization in multi-branch enterprises. By adopting systematic approaches and leveraging modern technologies, organizations can overcome challenges and achieve significant benefits. Recommendations include implementing QoS for traffic prioritization, enhancing security measures, and integrating hybrid cloud architectures. These steps fortify network infrastructure, bolster operational efficiency, and position organizations for success in the digital age. As network evolution is ongoing, continuous evaluation and refinement of strategies are essential to meet evolving demands and capitalize on emerging opportunities.

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ASSESSING THE INFLUENCE OF CLOUD COMPUTING ADOPTION ON DIGITAL BANKING SOLUTIONS, WITH EMPHASIS ON PRIVATE COMMERCIAL BANKS IN BATTICALOA CITY, SRI LANKA

N. Neelshiya^{1*} and P. Nitharjan²

^{1,2} School of Computing, ESOF Metro Campus, Batticaloa, Sri Lanka

*neelshiyasajieve@gmail.com**

ABSTRACT

This research investigates the transformative impact of cloud computing has an effect on digital banking solutions, focusing on private commercial banks in Batticaloa City, Sri Lanka. Employing a robust quantitative research methodology, the study collected and analyzed data through structured surveys from 26 managerial employees across nine distinct banks. The research is grounded in a positive philosophy and utilizes a deductive approach to test hypotheses derived from existing literature and theories about technological advancements in banking. It specifically examines how the adoption of cloud computing technologies enhances operational efficiency, effectiveness, and customer satisfaction in the banking sector. The study's findings indicate a significant positive impact of cloud computing has an effect on digital banking operations, demonstrating marked improvements in operational efficiency and heightened customer satisfaction. This is quantitatively substantiated by a regression analysis, which accounts for 92.7% of the variance in the performance of digital banking solutions ($R\text{-square} = 0.927$). These results highlight the critical role of cloud computing in banking, suggesting that banks leveraging these technologies can achieve considerable gains in operational performance. Additionally, the research provides strategic recommendations for banks, advocating for the enhancement of digital banking services through the strategic adoption of cloud technologies. By doing so, banks can not only improve their operational efficiencies but also better meet customer expectations in an increasingly digital world. This study significantly contributes to the strategic decision-making process regarding technology adoption in the banking industry.

Keywords: Cloud Computing, Digital Banking, Operational Efficiency, Customer Satisfaction, Banking Technology

INTRODUCTION

In 2021, the financial services and banking industry in the United States witnessed a significant milestone: cloud workload adoption surged to 54 percent (Vailshery, 2021). Amid this technological surge, private commercial banks find themselves at a critical juncture. While organizational aspects of cloud adoption have received due attention, the impact on digital banking solutions remains a mystery. This research embarks on an exploration of this uncharted territory, aiming to reveal the nuanced influence of cloud computing adoption on digital banking solutions, essential for navigating the future of banking technology. Incorporating TAM-DTM with trust, cost, and security/privacy, this research examines cloud adoption in banking and digital banking solutions. Surveying 162 Malaysian bank customers, it validates the model using PLS and SmartPLS (Shakala Asadi, 2016). Security/privacy positively impacts perceived ease, usefulness, and trust, influencing users' intent to adopt cloud computing significantly. These findings inform banks' prioritization of customer perspectives on cloud-based applications and aid in understanding attitudes toward adoption, enabling informed decision-making in banking technology's evolving landscape.

Cloud computing has become integral across industries, including banking, where Amazon Web Services, Google Cloud Platform, Alibaba Cloud, and IBM dominate. Synergy Research Group reports Q1 enterprise spending on cloud infrastructure services nearing \$53 billion, up 34% from Q1 2021. Amazon leads with a 33% global market share (RENO, 2022). Banks leveraging cloud technologies not only cut costs but also drive growth, facilitating innovative product introductions and institutional development, particularly in digital banking. In Russia, cloud advancements spur regional development, addressing disproportionate growth challenges by fostering financial center establishment (Elena P. satalova, 2021). Cloud computing offers unmatched agility, security, scalability, and enhanced data handling capabilities. Banks embrace it not just for cost-efficiency, but also for transformative business potential. The global financial sector began its cloud journey around five years ago, with a significant surge in adoption noted between 2016 and 2018. In China, the government's focus on technological progress, evident in initiatives like "Internet Plus," underscores cloud computing's pivotal role in banking modernization. Commercial banks are proactive in adopting new technologies, with a substantial portion already implementing cloud computing and more planning to follow suit, as indicated by a 2018 survey by the China Academy of Information and Communications Technology (Maoyong Cheng, 2022). The aim of this research is to investigate the influence of cloud computing adoption on digital banking solutions, with a specific focus on private commercial banks. In particular, the study seeks to address the following fundamental question. By empirically examining these implications, the research aims to contribute valuable insights into the evolving landscape of digital banking technology and its implications for banking operations, efficiency, and risk management. The Research

question is whether Influence of Cloud Computing Adoption on Digital Banking Solutions, with Emphasis on Private Commercial Banks in Batticaloa City, Sri Lanka.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Cloud Computing Adoption

Cloud computing revolutionizes industries with cost-effective solutions. This study examines factors shaping cloud adoption in banking, aiming to unlock innovation benefits. Quantitative analysis, based on responses from 2358 banking sector stakeholders, gauges opinions on cloud adoption (Mayank Singh, 2018). Cloud computing introduces new opportunities for banks, enabling applications like hosting servers, payment gateways, enterprise resource planning, and customer relationship management. It enhances banking operations significantly (Qu & Jiang, 2002). Based on that H1 Developed:

H1: Cloud computing adoption positively impact on digital banking solution.

Banking Operations Optimization

The global shift to a digital economy prompts banks to embrace cloud technology extensively. Research emphasizes identifying preferred cloud service models and features provided by outsourcing providers. Successful international practices highlight migrating critical banking functions to cloud infrastructure, underscoring the importance of optimizing operations through Digital Banking Solutions like cloud-based platforms (Elena P. satalova, 2021). Leading providers such as AWS, Microsoft Azure, and Google Cloud facilitate identifying specific banking use cases where cloud computing offers tangible advantages. Understanding these platforms' capabilities empowers banks to make informed decisions regarding cloud adoption (Muhammad Ehsan Rana, 2023). The emergence of digital transformation has resulted in a paradigm shift within the banking sector, transforming the conventional banking operations environment and the way financial institutions engage with their clientele (Bueno, 2024). Based on that H2 Developed:

H2: Banking operations optimization positively impacts on digital banking solutions.

Efficiency Enhancement through Cloud-Based Technologies

Current research explores bank efficiency determinants, including macroeconomic conditions and regulations. Favorable economic climates often enhance efficiency, while strict regulations may hinder it. Diverse factors, such as Digital Banking Solutions like cloud technologies, are crucial for optimizing performance (Maoyong Cheng, 2022). Cloud computing enhances data processing, aiding in efficiency and modernization in banking (Chunxia Jiang, 2022). Banks select cloud computing types such as public, private, hybrid, and industry-specific, balancing performance, security, compliance, and

costs, with large banks typically utilizing hybrid solutions (Zhao, 2022). Based on that H3 Developed:

H3: Efficiency enhancement through cloud-based technologies positively impact on digital banking solutions.

Risk Management in Cloud-Based Banking Operations

The proposed framework addresses challenges in cloud adoption within banking, aiming to reduce high failure rates. It outlines five crucial stages, including risk management, to enhance success (Abdelrafe Elzamly, 2016). Implementation promises to mitigate security issues, potentially boosting the effectiveness of cloud initiatives in banking and ensuring high-quality asset maintenance (Murugesan, 2019). cloud risk management framework is one of the banking security assessment tools used to mitigate threats, vulnerabilities, and security issues (Elzamly, 2016). Based on that H4 Developed:

H4: Risk Management in Cloud-Based Banking Operations Positively impact on digital banking solution.

Digital Banking Solution

In contemporary society and the business landscape, technology has evolved into an indispensable requirement, spanning from workflow automation to service digitization, and from cloud computing to data analytics, with virtual collaboration and smart home integration also becoming ubiquitous. Virtually every industry is undergoing continuous transformation owing to technological advancements. Over the past two decades, digitalization has revolutionized numerous sectors, presented new business opportunities, and fostered innovative systems. In the banking industry too, technology plays a pivotal role. The finance sector stands out as a prime example of an industry actively harnessing the potential of digitalization. It has adeptly embraced digitization, consistently exploring, and leveraging the transformative power of technology to innovate and evolve (Kofi Mintah Oware, 2023).Methodology

Cloud computing stands as a transformative force in the digital age, benefiting sectors like banking. Private commercial banks in Batticaloa City, Sri Lanka, increasingly adopt cloud solutions to bolster digital banking services. This research assesses cloud adoption's impact on digital banking in this locale, employing a positivist philosophy that emphasizes empirical investigation. Deductive in approach, it builds on existing theories and literature to formulate hypotheses. To achieve the research objectives, the chosen survey method efficiently collects data from managerial staff at private commercial banks, facilitating comprehensive analysis. This methodological choice allows researchers to statistically analyse the relationship between cloud adoption and digital banking effectiveness. Given the short duration of this research project, quantitative methods are most suitable. This study employs structured surveys to

collect numerical data from managerial staff at private commercial banks in Batticaloa City, Sri Lanka. The methodological choice is a quantitative research method, ensuring efficient data gathering from a sizable sample. The focus is on the influence of cloud computing adoption on digital banking solutions in this specific context. The research site is Batticaloa City, located in Sri Lanka's Eastern Province. The study's population comprises 26 managerial employees from 9 private commercial banks in Batticaloa City, selected through census sampling for comprehensive representation. Data collection involves surveys with managerial staff and reviewing existing literature, reports, and documents to provide a robust understanding of the topic. The questionnaire, based on sources including Kofi Mintah Oware, Yuliya Cherkasova (2023), Abdelrafe Elzaml (2016), and Maoyong Cheng (2002), is the primary instrument for data collection.

Table 14 Research Population Table

Private Commercial Banks	Branches Counts	Population/Sampling Amount
Commercial Bank	2	4
HNB	2	4
Sampath Bank	2	4
DFCC Bank	1	2
Pan Asia Bank	1	2
Nations Trust Bank	1	2
Union Bank	1	2
Seylan Bank	1	2
SDB	2	4
Total Sampling		26

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 15 Personal Information of Managers

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Male	18	69%
Female	8	31%
Age		
Below 40	10	38%
41 to 50	9	35%
Above 50	7	27%
Monthly Income		
Below 75,000	5	19%

75,001 to 100,000	6	23%
Above 100,000	15	58%

(Source: Author Developed 2024)

Table 16 Samples Correlation Analysis

Relationship	R value	Sig value
BOO → Cloud Computing	0.855	0.000
EE CT → Cloud Computing	0.950	0.000
RM CO → Cloud Computing	0.909	0.000
Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)		

(Source: Author Developed 2024)

Table 17 Data Analysis

Variable	B	Std. Error	Std. Beta	t	Sig.	R	Adj Rsquare	F	Sig.
(Constant)	.237	.224		1.061	.298	.963 ^a	.918	109.818	.000 ^b
BOO	.074	.103	.079	.723	.476				
EE CT	.597	.116	.633	5.147	.000				
RM CO	.260	.112	.284	2.309	.029				
. Dependent Variable: Digital Banking Solutions									
Predictors: (Constant), Banking Operations Optimization, Efficiency Enhancement through Cloud-Based Technologies, Risk Management in Cloud-Based Banking Operations.									

(Source: Author Developed 2024)

CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, this research examines the impact of cloud computing adoption (IV) on digital banking solutions (DV) through three hypotheses. The regression analysis reveals an R-square value of 0.927, indicating that 92.7% of the variation in digital banking solutions can be explained by banking operations optimization, efficiency enhancement through cloud-based technologies, and risk management in cloud-based banking operations. The beta values for each factor are as follows: banking operations optimization (0.79), efficiency enhancement through cloud-based technologies (0.633), and risk management in cloud-based operations (0.284). This indicates that future improvements in banking operational optimization are likely to significantly enhance commercial banking efficiency.

Recommendations

Based on the research results, it is recommended that commercial banks in Batticaloa City focus on enhancing their digital banking solutions through the adoption of cloud computing. The positive outcomes of the hypotheses indicate that this approach can significantly improve banking operations. Specifically, the hypothesis on banking

operational optimization shows the highest impact. Therefore, banks should prioritize this area to maximize their future benefits. By focusing on these improvements, commercial banks can achieve greater efficiency and effectiveness in their operations.

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ENHANCING CYBERSECURITY IN THE ERA OF BRING YOUR OWN DEVICE (BYOD): CHALLENGES, STRATEGIES, AND BEST PRACTICES

Fathima M.N.^{1*}

¹School of Computing, ESOF Metro Campus, Colombo, Sri Lanka

*fathima.naisar@esoft.lk**

ABSTRACT

The rapid adoption of Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) in the workplace, driven by the consumerization of IT, presents both opportunities and challenges for organizations. This paper examines the dual nature of BYOD, highlighting the increased employee mobility, satisfaction, and productivity it offers, while also addressing the significant security risks it introduces. Personal devices often lack the robust security measures of enterprise-grade devices, leading to heightened risks of data breaches, malware infections, and data leakage. The study reviews extensive literature, including classification of privacy and security requirements and the efficacy of various security policy technologies. It also explores employees' perceptions and practices regarding BYOD security mechanisms, based on survey data from Australian businesses. The analysis identifies critical security challenges and proposes mitigation strategies such as the implementation of Mobile Device Management (MDM) systems, virtualization techniques, and machine learning-based security solutions. Moreover, it emphasizes the importance of comprehensive BYOD policies, regular security updates, encryption, and user education. The findings suggest that while BYOD enhances productivity and reduces hardware costs, it necessitates robust security frameworks to protect organizational data. Future research should focus on developing innovative security solutions and further exploring employee attitudes towards BYOD security. By addressing these challenges proactively, organizations can leverage the benefits of BYOD while minimizing associated risks, thereby achieving a secure and flexible work environment. This comprehensive approach ensures that organizations can enjoy the benefits of BYOD while maintaining a strong security posture.

Keywords: BYOD, Cybersecurity, Data Protection, Employee Productivity, Mobile Device Management.

INTRODUCTION

Introduction The concept of Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) refers to the growing trend of employees utilizing their personal devices, such as smartphones, tablets, and laptops, to access organizational resources and services (Yacono, 2023), (Brook, 2022). This trend has been fueled by the consumerization of IT, a phenomenon where new technologies first emerge in the consumer market before being adopted by businesses (Yacono, 2023), (Brook, 2022).

BYOD policies aim to provide employees with greater flexibility and are often driven by motivations such as increased employee mobility (63 percent), employee satisfaction (56 percent), and productivity (55 percent). However, these policies also introduce significant security challenges (Yacono, 2023), (Brook, 2022). Despite the potential benefits of increased productivity and reduced hardware costs, the rise of BYOD has amplified concerns about data security (Yacono, 2023), (Brook, 2022). Personal devices often lack the robust security measures found in enterprise-grade devices, thereby increasing the risk of data breaches (Yacono, 2023), (Brook, 2022).

Security risks associated with BYOD include increased exposure to malware and infections due to lack of control and visibility into personal devices, and data leakage, which becomes a primary concern as these personal devices now have access to sensitive corporate data (Yacono, 2023), (BYOD Security, 2024). Furthermore, the general IT supportability of BYOD environments is difficult due to the large variation of personal devices, platforms, operating systems, etc. (BYOD Security, 2024).

In conclusion, while BYOD offers several advantages such as cost savings and increased productivity, it also presents significant security challenges that need to be effectively managed to protect organizational data (Yacono, 2023), (Brook, 2022).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Aljuaid et al. (Ayedh et al, 2023) conducted a systematic literature review focusing on privacy and security criteria in BYOD (Bring Your Own Device) security policies. Their study highlights several key points essential for effective policy design and implementation. The authors classified privacy and security requirements specific to BYOD policies. Understanding these requirements is crucial for creating policies that adequately address the unique challenges posed by employees using their own devices for work purposes. Additionally, the study analyzed proposed security policy technologies across three layers of BYOD policies (Ayedh et al, 2023). These technologies were evaluated based on their ability to satisfy privacy requirements, offering a comprehensive assessment that provides insights into effective security measures.

Furthermore, Aljuaid et al. explored emerging trends in BYOD security. Keeping pace with technological advancements is essential for maintaining robust security practices,

and the study sheds light on these developments. The research also investigated techniques to enhance privacy and security. Understanding the efficacy of these measures is vital for informed decision-making, enabling organizations to implement strategies that effectively protect sensitive information. The literature review identifies areas for future research, emphasizing opportunities in developing innovative security solutions and understanding employees' perceptions and practices related to BYOD security (Ayedh et al, 2023). This forward-looking perspective highlights the need for continuous improvement and adaptation in BYOD security policies.

Additionally, Downer and Bhattacharya (Downer & Bhattacharya, 2022) conducted a comprehensive survey-based study within Australian businesses to explore various aspects of BYOD security. Their research focused on employee awareness, responses to security mechanisms, and potential vulnerabilities within IT networks affecting BYOD security (Downer & Bhattacharya, 2022). By examining these factors, the study provides valuable insights that can guide the development of robust security frameworks for BYOD implementation.

In their narrative review titled "Security Issues Associated with Bring Your Own Device (BYOD)," Aguboshim, Udobi, and Otuu (Felix et al, 2023) explore the benefits, risks, and policy controls related to BYOD adoption. BYOD refers to the practice where employees use their personal devices (such as smartphones, tablets, and laptops) to access an organization's enterprise resources, including email, file servers, and databases. Notably, empirical evidence indicates that 82% of organizations have a BYOD program, with 68% reporting increased productivity after adopting BYOD (Felix et al, 2023). However, security remains a significant concern. Threats to data confidentiality, integrity, and availability are prevalent in the BYOD environment. The authors recommend implementing robust BYOD policies, guidelines, and practices, along with effective controls and management, to mitigate security breaches. Additionally, machine learning approaches can help address persistent threats, data leakage, denial-of-service attacks, and untrusted network issues in the BYOD context¹. These findings can inform organizations' security and risk management programs, fostering a healthy BYOD adoption environment.

Furthermore, emphasizing good BYOD policies, guidelines, and management practices can prevent security breaches on employees' devices and protect organizational resources. Finally, the 2021 BYOD Security Report offers fresh perspectives on securing mobility in the context of remote work and enterprise mobility. It delves into technological choices made by organizations and their responses to evolving security risks. By staying informed about the latest trends and challenges, businesses can adapt their security strategies effectively and safeguard sensitive data across diverse devices and networks (Enterprise.press, 2021).

In summary, a holistic approach to BYOD security involves understanding employee behavior, implementing robust policies, and staying informed through relevant reports and studies. These combined efforts will contribute to a safer and more secure BYOD environment for organizations worldwide.

METHODOLOGY

This study systematically examines existing literature on Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) practices and their associated cybersecurity challenges (Smith & Thomas, 2020). The methodology includes a comprehensive analysis of research papers (Johnson & William, 2019), case studies (Davis, 2021), and industry reports (Cybersecurity Ventures, 2022) to identify common security issues and effective countermeasures (Brown, 2020).

The study also evaluates various BYOD policies implemented by organizations to understand best practices (Taylor & Johnson, 2021) and potential gaps (Miller, 2023). This involves assessing the effectiveness of existing security measures (Clark & Thompson, 2022), identifying areas of vulnerability (White, 2023), and examining the impact of these policies on organizational security (Green, 2024).

The methodology is designed to provide a holistic view of the current state of BYOD security, offering valuable insights for organizations looking to enhance their BYOD strategies (Anderson & Jackson, 2023).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The study acknowledges that Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) practices offer several tangible benefits, including increased employee satisfaction, flexibility, and productivity. Employees appreciate the convenience of using their personal devices for work-related tasks, which can lead to enhanced job performance and overall satisfaction. However, these advantages come with significant risks that organizations must address.

One major concern is cybersecurity threats associated with BYOD. Personal devices can become vectors for malware, potentially compromising sensitive data and network security. Data leaks are another risk, as employees might inadvertently share confidential information through personal email or cloud storage services. Additionally, weak authentication mechanisms or lost and stolen devices can lead to unauthorized access to corporate resources. The exposure of both personal and professional data also increases the risk of identity theft.

To mitigate these threats, the study proposes several strategies. Implementing Mobile Device Management (MDM) systems allows organizations to centrally manage and secure personal devices. MDM solutions offer features like remote wipe, encryption enforcement, and app whitelisting, which help protect sensitive information (Taylor &

Johnson, 2021). Virtualization techniques can further enhance security by creating isolated environments for sensitive data, thus minimizing the risk of data leaks even if a device is compromised (Miller, 2023). Machine learning-based security solutions also play a crucial role, as they provide real-time threat detection by analyzing patterns, anomalies, and behaviors to identify potential threats promptly (Clark & Thompson, 2022).

However, technical solutions alone are insufficient. The study emphasizes the need for comprehensive BYOD policies. Organizations must ensure regular security updates to address emerging threats, enforce encryption for data both in transit and at rest, and provide user education. Awareness training on BYOD risks, best practices, and security hygiene is vital for employees to effectively manage and mitigate potential threats.

In conclusion, while BYOD practices present inherent challenges, organizations can achieve a balance by integrating technical measures with robust policies. By doing so, they can capitalize on the productivity gains of BYOD while safeguarding sensitive information and maintaining a secure environment.

CONCLUSIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS

In conclusion, while BYOD offers numerous benefits such as increased productivity and employee satisfaction (Smith & Thomas, 2020), it also introduces substantial cybersecurity challenges (Johnson & William, 2019). Organizations must adopt robust security frameworks to protect against potential threats.

Recommendations include implementing Mobile Device Management (MDM) systems, enforcing strict BYOD policies, conducting regular security training for employees (Anderson & Jackson, 2023), and utilizing advanced security technologies like machine learning and adaptive fingerprinting.

By addressing these challenges proactively, organizations can safely harness the advantages of BYOD while minimizing security risks.

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SOFTWARE TECHNOLOGIES

RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT OF A MOBILE APPLICATION FOR PLASTIC BOTTLE IDENTIFICATION AND RECYCLING PROMOTION

Praveera Arosh^{1*}, P.D.A.U Akalanka² and Malithi Algewatta³

^{1,2,3} School of Computing, ESOF Metro Campus, Galle, Sri Lanka

*aroshgunasena@gmail.com**

ABSTRACT

Plastic pollution poses a significant threat to ecosystems worldwide, with plastic bottles being a major contributor to this environmental crisis. Despite challenges in recycling infrastructure, the development of mobile applications offers a promising solution to mitigate plastic waste and promote recycling efforts. This project aims to address the issue by creating a mobile application capable of accurately identifying various types of plastic bottles, thereby incentivizing recycling. Leveraging image recognition technology, the app enables users to easily identify and properly dispose of plastic bottles. The Waterfall technique was employed for project management, ensuring systematic progress tracking and documentation. Furthermore, the app's functionality can be expanded to include other recyclable materials through innovative algorithms. Incorporating gamification elements is proposed to enhance user engagement and motivation. The efficacy of the app will be evaluated by assessing its impact on recycling rates within a specific target area. By harnessing mobile technology, this project seeks to raise awareness, educate users, and foster a sense of community involvement in combating plastic pollution.

Keywords: Image Recognition Technology, Mobile Application, Plastic Bottle Identification, Recycling Promotion

INTRODUCTION

In today's world, Plastic bottles are a typical waste found in landfills and seas, contributing to the global problem of plastic pollution and a serious environmental concern. This waste has a terrible effect on the ecosystem; it harms plants, animals, and marine life, causing asphyxia, entanglement, and digestive problems that eventually result in death. Despite the difficulties brought on by poor infrastructure, recycling is an important procedure that contributes to the reduction of plastic waste, protecting ecosystems, and lessening the environmental effects of plastic pollution. The substantial volume of plastic garbage, which is frequently disposed of incorrectly and contributes to pollution and climate change, is the source of major environmental contamination. With the increasing use of smartphones and mobile devices, people have access to a vast amount of information at their fingertips. Mobile applications can be developed to provide users with information on proper plastic waste management techniques, and recycling options, and even incentivize them for their efforts. Moreover, mobile technology can also play a role in creating awareness and educating individuals about the impact of plastic waste on the environment. Mobile technology can also be used to track the progress of plastic waste management efforts and share success stories, creating a sense of community and motivation for individuals to continue their efforts.

LITERATURE REVIEW

According to Our World in Data journal article, the health of the earth and its people must be preserved by reducing pollution globally and shielding them from more harm brought on by pollution and climate change. The amount of plastic that is discarded into landfills and seas in billions of tons is raising awareness of everyday activities worldwide. Over 450 million tons of plastic have been produced since the 1950s, a considerable rise in manufacturing. (Roser, 2023). According to advanced composites and hybrid materials research paper, the textile industry is also exploring the use of recycled plastic, particularly polyethylene terephthalate (PET), to create polyester fibers. These fibers are then used to manufacture clothing and carpets. This approach not only reduces plastic waste but also offers economic advantages and results in textiles with desirable properties like enhanced abrasion resistance and elasticity (Qin, 2019). According to chemosphere article, Plastic waste is finding applications in wastewater treatment through the development of membranes and adsorbent materials. For instance, ultrafiltration membranes made from waste polystyrene have been successfully used to treat river surface water. Furthermore, activated carbon nanofibers derived from plastic waste have shown promise in removing dyes from wastewater, highlighting the potential of plastic waste to address water pollution challenges (Manisha Kumari, 2022). According to science advance, Plastic waste can be harnessed as a feedstock for fuel production. Researchers have developed photocatalytic processes that can convert plastic waste into C2 fuels under conditions that mimic the natural environment. This innovative approach involves breaking down

plastic into carbon dioxide and then further reducing it into usable fuels. Additionally, another method involves selectively converting polyolefins, a common type of plastic, into liquid fuels like diesel, jet fuel, and gasoline through a process called hydrocracking (Vlachos, 2021). According to waste management journal article, Plastic waste can be transformed into valuable carbonaceous nanomaterials, such as fluorescent carbon dots (C-dots). This conversion is achieved through simple heating processes, making it a relatively straightforward method for upcycling plastic. The resulting C-dots have potential applications in various fields, including analytical chemistry, where they can be used for tasks like selective metal ion sensing (Savita Chaudhary, 2021). According to waste management article, plastic waste is being incorporated into construction materials as a replacement for traditional aggregates like sand and gravel. This approach not only diverts plastic from landfills but also presents a cost-effective alternative for building projects. Research has shown that using plastic aggregates in concrete, pavement, and masonry can meet building standards, demonstrating the viability of this application (Zifeng Zhao, 2020).

METHODOLOGY

When it comes to developing this mobile application, the project is being done by a single researcher. This is because the waterfall methodology provides a structured and systematic approach to this project development, which is crucial for projects with well-defined objectives and deliverables. Effective planning and execution of this project depend on having an in-depth understanding of its scope, which encourages careful documentation and phase-by-phase reviews that guarantee an exhaustive awareness of the project's outcomes. The following includes the steps that belong to this project following sequential phases.

Requirement gathering and analyzing

During this phase, the researcher collects data on different kinds of plastic bottles in order to comprehend consumer needs and project goals. To be able to comprehend the features of the current plastic bottle identification applications, this step entails performing market research. Working with subject-matter specialists guarantees a user-centric strategy and a smooth app launch, fulfilling all prerequisites for a successful plastic bottle identification procedure.

System design

After the gathering and analysis of user requirements, this phase involves the overall architecture, and the user interface (UI) mockups based on those requirements. Here, the UI mockups provide the visual representation of how the app will look and function for the users and this includes the layout, color scheme, and navigation of the app in a user-friendly way. Another important aspect of this phase is determining the functionalities of the app. For example, the main function would be scanning and

identifying different types of plastic bottles, providing information on recycling and proper disposal methods, and connecting users with local recycling facilities.

Development

The mobile app (front-end) and the AI model for plastic bottle image identification and categorization will be developed in two distinct phases during this phase. With an emphasis on the mobile application area, this software will be created to function on both Android and iOS devices, allowing a broad user base to access it. This phase also covers the functions for accessing the mobile camera and inserting images from the gallery. These features are employed to seize the plastic bottle in order to identify it. With the use of images, the model of AI is being created to precisely recognize and categorize plastic bottles. The model can distinguish between forms, colors, and labels by using an extensive number of images. Its accuracy will steadily increase over time, making it a trustworthy tool for identifying plastic bottles.

Testing

This software is required to be able to identify plastic bottles, and thorough testing allows for the detection of such problems. This involves scanning several kinds of bottles and comparing the findings with real data. Furthermore, the app's recycling information access feature makes sure users can quickly get pertinent details regarding recycling facilities for any kind of bottle.

Deployment and Maintenance

This app is put through an intensive testing process to make sure it satisfies all criteria before being deployed. Following launch, it's critical to keep an eye out for and fix any faults or glitches. This includes resolving customer comments, upgrading the software to support new devices or operating systems, and resolving technical difficulties.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The success of this mobile application depends on its reliability, which guarantees that different kinds of plastic bottles will be successfully identified. For users to receive a reliable and successful result, accuracy and usefulness are essential. To increase user engagement and encourage the recycling of plastic bottles, the app should have an intuitive user interface, eye-catching graphics, and reliable recycling information resources. Users are encouraged to use the app longer due to its visually appealing layout, which eventually has a beneficial environmental impact. The app provides a long-lasting and sustainable solution for recycling and identifying plastic bottles, with a well-documented codebase that makes upgrades simple and allows for future development. This mobile application requires a huge dataset for proper item identification and classification, which makes image recognition a time-consuming procedure. A strong dataset is essential for the accuracy of the model and the user

experience, but researchers may encounter difficulties in gaining access to it. To mitigate this challenge, the researcher can utilize publicly available datasets or partner with recycling facilities to gather labeled data. Publicly available datasets, although limited, can provide a good starting point for training the model.

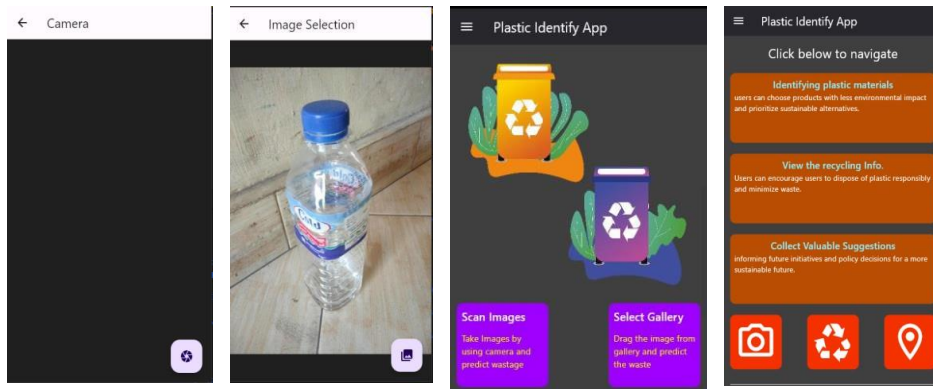


Figure 1: App creating part

The front-end application integration may prove to be a major issue for the researcher, as the AI model needs to function properly in order to process and evaluate data. Any issues with this integration can lead to delays in development and potentially impact the overall functionality of the application. To mitigate this challenge, the researcher may need to explore third-party customizing APIs that can help with integrating the AI model and front-end application. These APIs can provide pre-built solutions and tools that can make the integration process smoother and more efficient.

CONCLUSION/RECOMMENDATIONS

The project's goal is to create an application for mobile devices that can recognize various kinds of plastic bottles properly to encourage recycling. The app will have main features such as image recognition to accurately identify the type of plastic bottle. To this focuses project, the single researcher used the Waterfall technique to track progress, making sure that each step was thoroughly documented for efficient communication. By utilizing innovative image recognition algorithms, the app's functionality might be expanded to include additional recyclable materials including paper, glass, and metal. Adding gamification components to the app is a significant suggestion to increase user motivation and engagement. To assess the app's efficacy and pinpoint areas for development, it is essential to examine its influence on recycling rates in a particular target area.

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IMPLEMENTATION AND EVALUATION OF A HOTEL MANAGEMENT SYSTEM WITH INTEGRATED GUEST FEEDBACK COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS MODULE

H.A. Roshen Kingsley^{1*}, P.D.A.U. Akalanka² and Niruni Fonseka³

^{1,2,3} School of Computing, ESOF Metro Campus, Galle, Sri Lanka

*roshenkingsley@gmail.com **

ABSTRACT

This research efforts that to address the significant gap in the capacity of extant hotel management systems to efficiently collect and evaluate guest feedback. The study intends to improve the quality of hotel services by creating a novel solution with a chatbot. With an emphasis on agile development, the study used quantitative methodology. Smooth feedback collecting and analysis system was made possible using tools like Flask for web handling, NLTK for natural language processing, and PYODBC for database management. One of the most significant findings is the effective use of a chatbot for collecting feedback from guests on a range of hotel services, including food quality, room amenities, and employee performance. A dashboard that analyzes and presents the feedback gives real-time insights into guest preferences and highlights areas that require improvement. By providing useful information for decision-making, this strategy not only raises guest pleasure but also increases operational efficiency. This study is unusual in that it creates a comprehensive feedback management system by integrating modern technologies. This approach guarantees greater involvement and more precise data collecting than conventional techniques. The findings show a great deal of promise for enhancing hotel services and decision-making procedures by offering a versatile and adaptable tool for real-time feedback processing. The results highlight how crucial it is for the hospitality sector to implement contemporary technology to improve customer retention and raise service standards.

Keywords: Chatbot, Data Analysis, Guest Feedback, Hotel Management System, Natural Language Processing

INTRODUCTION

The hospitality industry is a fast-growing industry at present. There is a clear and overlapping relationship between the hospitality sector and tourism. Hotels take priority when talking about the hospitality and tourism industry. A hotel is a type of business that offers guests, travelers, and guests lodging, food, and other services. Hotels can vary in size from big international chains to tiny, family-owned establishments. Many services, including room service, laundry, and concierge, are listed in most hotels. Additionally, some hotels have spas, fitness centers, and meeting and conference spaces. (Clickblogger, 2022)

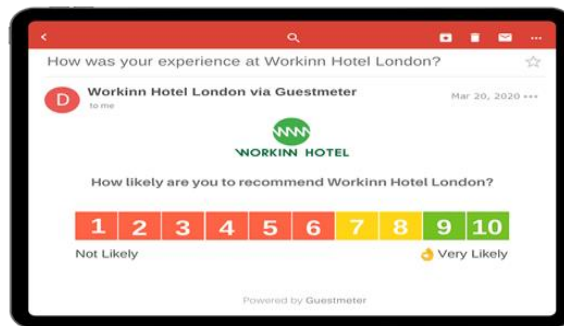
Understanding guests and their feedback is crucial for a hotel's market understanding and marketing strategies. It helps the hotel brand become more well-known among competitors. Hotels must request guest feedback to evaluate performance, identify areas for service enhancement, and assess if expectations are being met. Despite hotel management systems, there is no proper mechanism to gather and analyze guest feedback, leading to insufficient identification of areas for improvement. The hospitality industry is rapidly growing, necessitating effective guest feedback mechanisms to help management teams enhance services. This issue affects hotels of all sizes worldwide and is increasingly critical in today's competitive landscape. Analysis back collection and analysis are essential for maintaining high guest satisfaction and staying competitive.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Hotels collect data submitted by their guests through a variety of feedback systems. Comment cards, online questionnaires, online review sites, and social media are a few popular techniques. Comment cards are forms that guests fill out during or after their visit to share their impressions of the hotel. After a guest's stay, hotels send them electronic surveys asking for feedback on a variety of aspects of their visit. Guests can rate and review their hotel experiences on websites such as TripAdvisor, Google, and Yelp. They can be considered as online review sites. Social media is another well-known way to get guest feedback. On social media sites like Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter, guests frequently share their thoughts and experiences. (Importance of Guest Feedback in the Hotel Industry, 2024)

The figure below represents the Guest Feedback Master, an already implemented method for collecting guest feedback. This system allows guests to rate the hotel on a scale from 1 to 10. (Guest Feedback Management Software for Hospitality Industry - Guestmeter, 2020). In addition to this, some systems use star ratings to collect feedback, while others employ emoji ratings. These methods offer a straightforward and visual way for guests to express their satisfaction levels. However, there is a noticeable gap between the system the researcher implements and the already implemented systems. The researcher's approach aims to incorporate advanced features such as real-time

feedback analysis and personalized response generation, providing a more dynamic and interactive feedback experience.



Source: (Guest Feedback Management Software for Hospitality Industry - Guestmeter, 2020)

Figure 4: Already Implemented Guest Feedback Collection Techniques

Another study aims to improve hotel customer relationship management (CRM) by integrating it with a reputation mechanism that generates integrated customer reviews. It provides a framework for essential CRM components and demonstrates how a CRM system can facilitate hotel feedback and reputation. The empirical component uses online hotel reviews to investigate the impact of perceptions of hotel quality, which can be used to forecast value for money and influence hotel parameters. (Online Reviews as a Feedback Mechanism for Hotel CRM Systems, 2015)

According to this research, the researcher plans to incorporate a chatbot to gather guest feedback on hotel services and stay, enhancing data collection and providing detailed insights. This technology offers a more efficient alternative to traditional feedback systems, allowing real-time communication and detailed insights. However, the literature on integrating guest feedback into hotel management systems is limited, with most systems gathering basic functions. Future technologies should be used to evaluate feedback in-depth for better decision-making and operational enhancements. A comprehensive strategy involving modern technologies is needed to extract opinions and patterns from feedback data. The research gap highlights the need for hotel management systems to utilize AI, natural language processing, and advanced data analytics to gather guest feedback and extract insights in real-time, improving flexibility, responsiveness to guest needs, and long-term profitability.

METHODOLOGY

The researcher has focused on developing the system using agile development methodology. As this is an individual research project, the developer had created a kanban board using Trello project management software regarding tasks which are related with developing the hotel management system with guest feedback collecting and. It separates the tasks as To Do, Doing and Done. Research shows that working on multiple tasks simultaneously reduces productivity and effectiveness. Kanban, a process-oriented approach, allows developers to follow any schedule and ensures swift task movement without delay. This method prevents backlogs and delays, making it a suitable choice for implementation of the hotel management system with integrated guest feedback collection and analysis module.

Flask is a web framework that makes it possible to run Python apps online. According to the below code snippet, it serves HTML templates, handles web requests, and controls sessions. Within the chatbot scenario, Flask facilitates user interactions via an online interface where users may provide comments and responses can be created and presented dynamically. Tracking the flow of questions and answers in the chatbot session requires the administration of user sessions, which is made easier with Flask. Web routes (@app.route) may also be created more easily. NLTK (Natural Language Tool Kit) is used when handling data related to human language, NLTK is an extremely useful package. To facilitate the processing and comprehension of user input, this script is used to tokenize user messages. Tokenization specifically is required to recognize and retrieve numerical ratings from user responses, which are essential to the chatbot's ability to collect input regarding various hotel service aspects. Utilizing ODBC (Open Database Connectivity), this library is used to establish a connection to a database. A SQL Server database that stores and queries feedback ratings is accessed using pyodbc in this code. To calculate average ratings for various hotel services, for example, and to preserve user replies in the database and retrieve them for analysis, this feature is essential. These libraries were selected primarily because of their unique contributions to database management, text processing, and web handling; taken as a whole, they enable the creation of an engaging and useful chatbot that gathers and evaluates guest feedback on hotel services.

The code's data analysis section aims to provide a systematic view of hotel guest feedback using SQL queries. The analysis function `fetch_and_analyze_data` aggregates and calculates mean scores for each unique question in the Feedback Ratings table. The data is summarized by question using the AVG function and mapped to an average rating dictionary. The data is presented in an accessible manner via a Flask template, allowing hotel management to assess guest satisfaction and make decisions on service quality enhancements.

```

1 from flask import Flask, render_template, request, jsonify, session
2 import nltk
3 from nltk.tokenize import word_tokenize
4 import pyodbc
5
6 # Database connection
7 conn = pyodbc.connect('DRIVER={SQL Server};SERVER=DESKTOP-2FMR7AR;DATABASE=HotelDB;Trusted_Connection=yes;')
8
9 app = Flask(__name__)
10 app.secret_key = b'Shy2L74Q8zlnXecj/'
11
12 # Download necessary NLTK data
13 nltk.download('punkt')
14
15 # Questions list
16 questions = [
17     "How was the food quality and restaurant services? Please rate from 1 to 5.",
18     "How satisfied were you with the room facilities? Please rate from 1 to 5.",
19     "Did you receive satisfactory guest service? Please rate from 1 to 5.",
20     "How helpful were the staff members? Please rate from 1 to 5.",
21     "How satisfied were you with the swimming pool? Please rate from 1 to 5.",
22     "Did you receive satisfactory spa service? Please rate from 1 to 5.",
23     "How satisfied were you with the gym facilities? Please rate from 1 to 5.",
24     "How satisfied were you with the hotel concierge services? Please rate from 1 to 5."
25 ]
26
27 chat_history = []
28

```

(Source: Author Developed 2024)

Figure 5: Code Snippet- Chatbot

```

83 def fetch_and_analyze_data():
84     query = "SELECT Question, AVG(CAST(Rating AS FLOAT)) as AverageRating FROM FeedbackRatings GROUP BY Question"
85     data = {}
86     with conn.cursor() as cursor:
87         cursor.execute(query)
88         for row in cursor.fetchall():
89             data[row.Question] = round(row.AverageRating, 2)
90     return data
91
92 @app.route('/analysis')
93 def analysis():
94     analyzed_data = fetch_and_analyze_data()
95     return render_template('analysis.html', data=analyzed_data)
96

```

(Source: Author Developed 2024)

Figure 6: Code snippet- Analysing Ratings

All things considered, the combination of Flask for web handling, pyodbc for database interfaces, and NLTK for text processing creates an advanced system that not only gathers feedback effectively but also analyzes and presents it in a way that facilitates actionable insights. With this efficient method, researchers can be confident that guest feedback is not only gathered but also put to good use in creating a culture of ongoing development.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

As the result of the implementation of the hotel management system with integrated guest feedback collection and analysis module, the researcher developed a chatbot to collect guest feedback as ratings. The chatbot asks some questions regarding the hotel services such as food quality, restaurant services, spa services, gym facilities, guest service, staff members, swimming pool and hotel concierge services.

Guest Feedback Bot

Did you receive satisfactory guest service?
Please rate from 1 to 5.

1

How helpful were the staff members? Please rate
from 1 to 5.

2

How satisfied were you with the swimming pool?
Please rate from 1 to 5.

1

Did you receive satisfactory spa service? Please
rate from 1 to 5.

1

How satisfied were you with the gym facilities?
Please rate from 1 to 5.

1

How satisfied were you with the hotel concierge
services? Please rate from 1 to 5.

1

Thank you for your feedback!

Type your response...

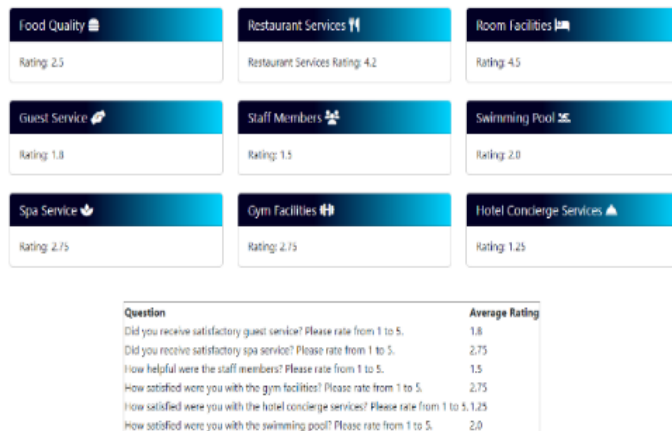
Send

(Source: Author Developed 2024)

Figure 4: Guest Feedback Collecting Chatbot

The analyzed feedback ratings are displayed as the feedback summary page. The ratings are stored in the Feedback Ratings table. Those ratings are taken for the analyzing purpose. Average ratings for food quality, restaurant services, room facilities, guest services, staff members, swimming pool, spa services, gym facilities and hotel concierge services are included as the feedback summary. Besides, the average ratings for related questions are shown below.

Feedback Summary



(Source: Author Developed 2024)

Figure 5: Analyzed Ratings through the chatbot

The project developed a web application using an interactive chatbot to collect and analyze guest feedback, improving hotel management systems. This solution integrated feedback mechanisms, enhancing accuracy and guest satisfaction. Key technical and management skills were refined, including data analysis, user experience design, and natural language processing. The project met objectives and improved guest interactions.

CONCLUSION/RECOMMENDATIONS

Through the implementation of the hotel management system with integrated guest feedback collection and analysis module, the researcher aims to offer a comprehensive technical solution that can improve the effectiveness of hotel services. Using an interactive chatbot to gather and evaluate guest feedback and show the assessed ratings on a dashboard. A significant flaw in the previously researched systems was addressed by this solution, the feedback mechanisms were disjointed and unable to return insightful data. The new technology integrates seamlessly with existing hotel operations, enhancing measurement accuracy and elevating guest satisfaction through the methodical gathering and assessment of guest feedback ratings. Throughout the development phase, critical management and technical skills were enhanced, particularly in data analysis for feedback rating analysis, user experience design for the dashboard, and natural language processing for the chatbot. The project's outcomes were satisfactory from start to finish, providing a useful user interface for communications with guests and a feedback ratings analysis module that successfully found trends and opportunities for growth. In summary, this project succeeded in

achieving its original goals and established an excellent foundation for future advancements. To enhance user experiences, it underscored how important it is for service providers to adopt modern technologies. Future directions could include predictive analytics, multilingual support, and closer connection with other hotel operating systems. The process's reflection demonstrates how systematic feedback management can improve service standards and improve guest retention and completely transform the hotel industry.

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MOBILE APPLICATION TO REPLACE WORLDWIDE MEAL PLANS WITH SRI LANKAN MEAL PLANS BASED ON DIETARY REQUIREMENTS

Chamupathi S. Jayathilaka^{1*} and Hiruni Wimalaweera²

^{1,2} School of Computing, London Metropolitan University, United Kingdom

*chamupathimedia@gmail.com**

ABSTRACT

A balanced meal is a crucial factor for a healthy lifestyle. A balanced meal plan always leads to a healthy and balanced life. Most of these meal plans have been developed based on international food availability and the preferences of people in Western cultures. This research deals with the deficit of personalized and culturally appropriate meal plans by creating a mobile application for the Sri Lankan community's dietary requirements and cultural tastes. This research shows the lack of Sri Lankan meal planners in the existing applications, stressing the necessity of culturally tailored tools. The implementation phase is laborious testing, where the application is tested for its reliability and functionality on different devices. The project is based on agile methodology and, therefore, it is highly efficient in development it uses user input, nutritional data, and various recipes from Sri Lanka. The application enables users to enter their dietary needs, allergies, and health aims, creating customized meal plans while at the same time, showing cultural exploration and healthy eating habits. Finally, as a result of this study, the "Ceylon Diet Hub" was developed. It is an online platform that helps users make better decisions about their diet and maintain a healthy life. It offers person-specific meal plans, BMI calculation, allergy filtering, and exercise recommendations. Thus, it fills the missing gap in the market and at the same time, it gives the users the practical tools for keeping their health in the optimum range and encourages people to explore Sri Lankan tastes.

Keywords: Meal Plans, Nutrition, Recipes, Sri Lankan Diet

INTRODUCTION

A balanced meal is always a crucial factor for a healthy lifestyle. Lack of suitable meal planning can lead to suboptimal nutrition, health issues, and dietary dissatisfaction. Therefore, a balanced meal plan always leads us to a healthy and balanced life. However, most of these meal plans have been developed based on international food availability and the preferences of people in Western cultures.

And the other factor that should be raised is that there is a lack of personalized meal plans. Almost all the time, meal plans are presented based on common requirements, considering basic parameters like weight, gender, age, height, etc. But still, there is an issue with the preferences of individuals. As a result, this research aims to address the lack of meal plans that can be customized based on individual preferences based on their health status and dietary requirements.

In further consideration, here in this application, which is going to be implemented, also consider the cultural requirements, especially. Owing to the scarcity of meal plans that are specifically designed for Sri Lankan meal patterns, this application will touch on the area of Sri Lankan food culture. The goal of this research is to create a technology that combines user input with an extensive database of nutritional facts and recipes from Sri Lanka. The application allows users to enter their dietary requirements, preferences, list of food allergies, and health objectives.

It then creates daily, weekly, or monthly meal plans that satisfy these requirements while introducing users to the wide and varied world of Sri Lankan cuisine. Additionally, this application can advise the user how many calories they should be consuming to maintain their health. This app would be able to encourage cultural exploration and healthy eating habits by providing a customized solution based on a particular culinary heritage, making it a novel and efficient way to solve the worldwide meal planning issue.

This report will include the background of the research area such as the Problem the recommended solution, positive and negative aspects, and a deep literature review conducted about the innovation. This will also describe the technologies and tools used in the UML diagrams and the completed percentage compared to the planned timeline.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The World Health Organization (WHO) asserts that nutrition is a critical factor in the prevention of heart disease, diabetes, and obesity, among other non-communicable diseases (Budreviciute et al, 2020). In the case of providing an individual with enough nutrition, a proper meal plan takes a special place. According to the Lancet (2019), an estimated 11 million deaths worldwide are ascribed to a lack of knowledge in nutrition and poor eating. To find solutions for that, meal planning is often recommended as a way to get around the greatest barrier to healthy eating, and it can also help people feel less stressed during mealtimes and eat more meals as a family (Fernandez et al. 2020).

Nowadays, meal planning and nutritional advice have been expanded with the help of technological usage. There are several web and mobile applications related to human nutrition, and they can assist in easing the difficult process of tracking consumption for self-monitoring and nutritional assessment. This makes it possible for people to regulate how much food they eat, encourage physical activity, and support leading healthy lives (Ulfa et al., 2022).

Consequently, there has been an increase in demand for customized meal plans. Mawroh et al., (2023), describe that there is an increasing interest in foreign cuisine, which reflects both the desire to learn about different culinary cultures and the effects of globalization. Customizable meal planning is still a new concept. However there have already been personalized health applications in the world of technology, and some of them are applications in personalized nutrition, smart kitchens, and applications to balance blood glucose levels, etc. (Boland, M. et al. 2019).

Dietary patterns have a major influence on general health and well-being; according to Bégin et al. (2020), it's important to accommodate dietary needs, allergies, and medical problems to improve people's health and gastronomic experiences. Therefore, developing an application to customize their meal plans based on their preferences and body conditions would be beneficial. As a part of that, it is suggested to create a mobile application to foster cultural appreciation and wellness that substitutes Sri Lankan meal plans based on dietary requirements for meal plans from other countries. People can make healthier food choices and discover the healthy world of Sri Lankan cuisine by using a mobile application that provides customized meal plans depending on specific dietary needs. It can encourage diversity in cuisine, increase cultural knowledge, and assist people in choosing foods that support their lifestyle and health objectives. Implementing applications that are similar or almost as good as human experts, such as decision-making and providing alternate solutions, can be accomplished through expert systems (Chen, 2004). Recently, expert systems have been explored as a potential solution to guide users to meet their personal nutrient needs within the domain of nutrition and balanced food (Alian, Li, and Pandey, 2018), (Marinchev and Agre, 2016).

Meal planning or recommending is a multi-dimensional problem that includes multiple constraints and objectives with several decision variables. Typically, meal-recommending studies focus on nutrition recommendations (Noah et al., 2004) while some recent studies have also considered the user's food preference. (Alian, Li, and Pandey, 2018). Personalizing nutrition is dependent on food preference, which is a crucial element. Personalized nutrition refers to an environment that empowers human autonomy to devise nutrition strategies that prevent, treat, and manage diseases, and improve health (Bush et al., 2019). Personalized nutrition is not only a disease prevention tool, but it also enables individuals to make healthy

choices based on their preferred foods and characteristics, as described in the reference. Numerous factors, such as culture, religion, knowledge, and food availability (Alian, Li, and Pandey, 2018) make it challenging to determine individual food preferences. Introducing foreign cuisine will lead to certain problems like economic problems, and lack of availability. As a result, a local food database is a vital element to include in the meal recommendation system. Information can be obtained from various sources such as experts, books, and documents. Prior studies have employed different techniques for knowledge acquisition, including interviewing domain experts, reviewing literature, documents, guidelines, and related websites, and observing. It is recommended to use a combination of interviews and observation to acquire both tacit and explicit knowledge (Bush et al., 2019). There are no prevailing meal recommendation systems for Sri Lankan cuisine. Additionally, it is expected to make use of the most recent developments in mobile app development. The experience in software development, which includes creating mobile applications, provides the technical abilities needed for this project. In addition, I greatly value Sri Lankan food and its extensive culinary history. It is a great opportunity to use this initiative to combine technical knowledge with personal interests to improve people's lives. As such, by combining technical expertise with cultural understanding and a dedication to health and wellness, an application that is specific to the Sri Lankan community and Sri Lankan food lovers would be created. Apart from all available applications this application directly routes to the Sri Lankan meal culture which is the innovative feature that will allow Sri Lankans to organize their meal in a proper nutritional way.

Table 01: Feature comparison

Feature	Weekly meal planner	LifeSum	My Dash Diet	Plan meals
Customizing the meal plan according to Sri Lankan cuisine	Not - Available	Not - Available	Not - Available	Not - Available
BMI calculation	Not - Available	Not - Available	Not - Available	Not - Available
Allergy filter	Not - Available	Not - Available	Not - Available	Not - Available
Non – transmitting disease filter	Not - Available	Not - Available	Not - Available	Not - Available
Adding favorite meals	Not - Available	Not - Available	Not - Available	Not - Available
Workout exercise recommendation	Not - Available	Not - Available	Available	Not - Available

(Source: Author Developed 2024)

A brief overview of the available features of meal planners currently available in the market. The research was conducted using four applications downloaded from the Play Store. Compared to the proposed meal planner, the following features were not available in the respective meal planning applications.

METHODOLOGY

Agile methodology is being used as the project management approach. This approach aims to learn the process and create minimum viable products through shorter development phases (Juillet, 2022). The integration of agile methodologies is believed to enhance communication between fields such as health and technology (Mustafa et al., n.d.). Depending on the background of the mobile application, having shorter development cycles with completing testing in shorter sprints made it easier to develop and come up with the product. Identifying errors and development areas was also made easier in the agile process. These factors influenced the selection of agile as the methodology. The proposed methodology included the following areas; Project initiation, Collecting and organizing data, Design, System Development, Testing , and Complete project delivery.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on results from the testing stage for the mobile application, the Ceylon Diet Hub was achieved, and it confirms its reliability and functionality. By conducting scrupulous tests that cover both the functional and non-functional perspectives, the product has shown that it meets certain expected standards which are beyond what was anticipated from how well it works. Importantly, the features of the system are very responsive and can be accessed on many different gadgets giving the user a great experience. I successfully assessed the application's compliance with its functional requirements using a comprehensive testing plan, ensuring confirmation of applicable standards, efficient error handling, and accurate access control mechanisms. Upon satisfactory completion of regression tests which validate such crucial functions as user registration, login as well as error handling, this software establishes itself as an efficient tool for managing diets. Furthermore, this extremely thorough form in which testing is conducted has helped in pinpointing and correcting likely problems to ensure that users have easy access to the site. The outcome is that it stands ready to go live with a well-analyzed as well as evolved architecture geared towards enhancing users' experience as much as possible.

CONCLUSIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS

In conclusion, this project aimed to create personalized meal plans specifically focused on Sri Lankan cuisine, to target the Sri Lankan community. The team noticed a gap in the market for Sri Lankan menus in globally available meal planners, which sparked the idea for this mobile application.

The app was designed to consider various dietary restrictions, including allergies and non-transmitting diseases, to ensure that users can safely enjoy their meals without any health concerns. The Ceylon diet hub is a remarkable online platform that has been created to promote and showcase the unique Sri Lankan cuisine while offering a host of benefits to the population. One of the most significant advantages of this platform is the provision of personalized meal plans that are tailored to individuals' specific needs, such as allergies and non-communicable diseases. This feature has been of tremendous help to many users who have been struggling with overweight issues, as it has enabled them to consume balanced meals and maintain a healthy BMI. Furthermore, the development of the Ceylon diet hub has been a great learning experience for the author, as it has provided practical knowledge in various aspects of software development, such as system designing, system architecture, and database management. The project has also taught the author about project management methodologies, such as agile methods and strategic planning. This experience has not only improved the author's technical skills but has also enhanced their skill set, preparing them for future challenges in technology and project management.

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RESQFOOD: SRI LANKAN BASED MOBILE APPLICATION FOR SURPLUS FOOD REDISTRIBUTION

Pawandi P. Wijegunawardane^{1*}

¹Faculty of Science, Engineering and Computing, Kingston University, United Kingdom

*pawandiwije@gmail.com**

ABSTRACT

This study focuses on ResQFood, a Sri Lankan-based mobile application for surplus food redistribution. Globally, food wastage and hunger are two ongoing issues, and Sri Lanka faces these as well. The research reviews international applications such as Flashfood and Too Good To Go, which have successfully tackled food wastage with promising results but these solutions have not been implemented in Sri Lanka. This gap highlights the need for a faster and easier solution for food redistribution, which ResQFood aims to provide. The application connects food services such as restaurants, hotels, catering services, etc. with those in need, including orphanages, elders' homes, not-for-profit organizations, and homeless individuals. Using the iterative incremental methodology a prototype was developed as a result of this research with initial implementation to be tested with a selected group of food services, institutes, and delivery riders in a focused area. Then, with the feedback received through this testing stage, the application will be fully implemented in the Colombo district and finally across Sri Lanka. Future enhancements to this solution include collaboration with supermarkets and other institutions that may have surplus items. This study highlights the potential of ResQFood to significantly reduce food wastage and tackle hunger in Sri Lanka, indicating the need for localized, technology-driven solutions.

Keywords: Food Insecurity, Food Redistribution, Food Wastage, Mobile Application, ResQfood

INTRODUCTION

Food wastage and food insecurity are two main issues that are related to each other from the inception of society. According to research done by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) in 2019, it was estimated that 931 million tonnes of food waste was generated. (UNEP, 2021) Amidst food waste happening in society State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World (SOFI) report reveals that 691 to 783 million people faced hunger in 2022 which is 9.2% of the population of the world. Through these statistics, it is predicted that almost 600 million people will be chronically undernourished in 2030 which will be a major social issue in the world. (FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP and WHO, 2023)

As a developing country, Sri Lanka also faces food wastage and hunger. When it comes to food wastage in Sri Lanka Western province produces 60% of Sri Lanka's municipal solid waste and the Colombo district contributes to half of this waste. According to the Colombo Municipal Council (CMC) through segregation of waste, it was found 146 metric tonnes of food is dumped as waste in Colombo. And food services are the main source of food waste producing 110 metric tons daily due to the surplus food. (Fernando & Santini, 2018) According to studies done by FOA on hunger in Sri Lanka about 3.9 million people (17% of the population) are estimated to be moderately acute food insecure, and 10,000 people to be severely acute food insecure. This is an improvement compared to 2022 yet malnutrition is still a longstanding concern in Sri Lanka. (FAO, WFP, 2023)

As a country that is currently undergoing an economic crisis, Sri Lanka has taken many initiatives to solve issues in society but currently, there is no proper solution that tackles food wastage and food insecurity together. The only solution implanted in Sri Lanka is also a manual process which is time consuming and may cause inefficiencies in implementation. Therefore, currently there is no fast and easy solution that is localised to Sri Lankan users where food services can donate their surplus food to people who are in need. Which gave rise to the project ResQFood which is a Sri Lankan-based mobile application with an aim to reduce food wastage and address hunger in the society. The application will connect food services such as restaurants, hotels, catering services, etc. with those who are in need including, orphanages, elders' homes, not-for-profit organizations, and homeless individuals.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Currently, few applications have been developed internationally to tackle food wastage. Through research, it was found that these applications were able to successfully address food wastage and food insecurity while promoting sustainability in society and below given is a brief description of them.

Flashfood

Flashfood, an innovative application connecting users with discounted grocery items approaching their best-before dates. It is Available across more than 1000 locations in

the US and Canada, Flashfood offers a platform for users to purchase quality groceries at reduced costs. Accessible through both the Google Play Store and Apple App Store. In 2022 alone, Flashfood was able to rescue 28,119,657 pounds of food from landfills, serving 2,937,157 users who shopped on the platform, and collectively saving a remarkable \$56,233,945 for its users. (Flashfood, 2016).

Too Good To Go

With Too Good To Go, users have access to a platform that connects users with restaurants, cafes, and stores offering surplus food through Surprise Bags. These Surprise Bags contain items that would otherwise be discarded at the end of the day, allowing users to purchase them at a discounted price. It is Available in numerous countries including Austria, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, and the United States, Too Good To Go has made significant strides since its launch in 2016. By November 2021, it had already saved its first 100 million meals, with nearly 79 million meals saved in 2022 alone. (Too Good To Go International, 2020).

Food Rescue US

Food Rescue US operates a web-based app that facilitates the participation of volunteers, food donors, and social service agencies in food recovery. Utilizing Food Rescue US's app, food donors register their surplus fresh food, while social service agencies communicate their specific food needs and delivery details. Once a match is established between a food donation opportunity and a social service agency, volunteers self-schedule to pick up the food from the donor and deliver it directly to local social service agencies serving the community. Food Rescue US's impact extends across 38 locations in 21 states and the District of Columbia. In 2022 alone, the network of sites facilitated the rescue of over 32 million pounds of healthy surplus food, translating to the provision of more than 26 million meals to individuals and families experiencing food insecurity. (Food Rescue US, 2011).

No Food Waste

No Food Waste, founded in 2014 in India, operates with a mission to repurpose surplus food from weddings, parties, and events to alleviate hunger among those in need. Despite lacking a technological platform, No Food Waste has established a highly successful manual process for food redistribution. In 2022 alone, No Food Waste made significant strides, recovering an impressive 3,125,515 plates of surplus food from 16 cities across the country. Through this effort, the organization provided sustenance to an astounding 1,964,780 individuals facing food insecurity. (No Food Waste, 2014).

Robin Hood Army

The Robin Hood Army operates as a volunteer-based, zero-funds organization dedicated to addressing food insecurity by redistributing surplus food from restaurants and the community to less fortunate individuals. Since its inception in 2014 in India, the organization has expanded its reach to 13 countries, including Sri Lanka, with a

cumulative impact of serving over 139,053,563 individuals in need. (Robin Hood Army, 2014)

Key findings indicated in this literature review show that these initiatives have made significant impact in rescuing surplus food, serving millions of individuals, and saving large amounts of food from landfills. However, challenges such as logistical constraints, scalability issues, and cultural considerations must be addressed to implement similar initiatives in Sri Lanka successfully. However, the success of these international initiatives proves the potential for developing localized solutions tailored to the Sri Lankan context. In conclusion, the literature review highlights the need for localized food waste reduction and redistribution solutions. By using insights and experiences of these international initiatives, ResQFood can be further developed which will impact the Sri Lankan community in a great manner.

METHODOLOGY

The methodology selected for the development of the project is the iterative and incremental methodology. This methodology divides the complete application into manageable small phases where each phase focuses on a feature or a requirement. The incremental aspect of this methodology allows the current phase to add new functionalities to the previous work, finally resulting in a complete application to the user. Following the development, testing the application will be done with a selected group of food services, institutes, and delivery riders in a focused area. This testing phase aims to gather feedback to improve features and address any initial issues in the application.

Each said increment has its own set of design, development, and testing stages which are performed repeatedly giving it an iterative nature. There are a few reasons for using this methodology for the development process of the project. Mainly it is flexibility in development. Since the project is used by people in the community, they won't have any fixed requirements, yet it is essential that the application will be able to provide new functionalities when needed. Which is possible through this technique.

With insights gained from the testing stage, improvements will be made to increase the user experience and functionality of ResQFood. Issues identified during testing will be addressed as soon as possible, and the application will receive updates when needed to optimize performance and usability. Once successfully implemented in the Colombo district, the application will be expanded across Sri Lanka to increase its impact nationwide.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

To evaluate the proposed system, ResQFood, a comparison with existing approaches is essential. Below is a summary table comparing the key features of ResQFood with other food waste management solutions.

Table 1: Comparison of ResQFood with Existing Solutions

Solution	Process	Purpose	Countries in Operation	Delivery Module
ResQFood (Proposed solution)	Mobile based	Donating surplus food.	Sri Lanka	Available
Flashfood	Mobile based	Reselling surplus food on a discount rate.	United States and Canada	Not Available
Too Good To Go	Mobile based	Reselling surplus food on a discount rate.	European countries and United States	Not Available
Food Rescue US	Web based	Donating surplus food.	Columbia	Available
No Food Waste	Manual	Donating surplus food.	India	Available
Robin Hood Army	Manual	Donating surplus food.	13 countries, including Sri Lanka	Available

(Source: Author Developed 2024)

This comparison clearly shows the strengths of ResQFood, as it not only addresses the manual processes currently used in Sri Lanka but also provides surplus food to those in need via delivery. Additionally, it uses a mobile application instead of a web platform to increase efficiency, allowing for smooth execution of the redistribution process. The prototype developed for ResQFood currently allows users to download the Android Package Kit (APK) and register themselves according to the user type and perform the donation addition, donation acceptance, delivery acceptance and delivery completion functions whilst the hosted web-based administrator module allows administrators to approve registrations. After deploying the ResQFood mobile application to the public regulatory challenges related to food safety regarding the handling, storage, and distribution of food may arise. Therefore, ResQFood has to take initiatives such as setting proper terms and conditions which require adherence to food handling protocols, proper storage facilities, correct transportation standards. In the future, there will be many ways that ResQFood can increase its impact on society. One such implementation is the collaboration with supermarkets to redistribute groceries to families in need. For this, collaboration with Gramsewaka divisions to identify families in need and teaming up with supermarkets to deliver soon to go bad products they have, to the identified families through the ResQFood application.

CONCLUSIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS

In conclusion, it is evident that Sri Lanka needs a fast and easy solution that is localised to Sri Lankan users where food services can donate their surplus food to people who

are in need and ResQFood provides perfect solution for the issue. Through the success of the discussed international solutions, it shows the potential impact ResQFood has for the society. To gain maximum impact it is recommended to first deploy the prototype in the Colombo district since the number of potential food donors and institutes in need is higher. Through this deployment issues withing the application and external parties can be identified and after troubleshooting them ResQFood can be implemented as a public application on App store and Play Store for all Sri Lankan users. In future ResQFood's scope can be expanded to not just food services but also to supermarkets and other institutions which may have surplus items. While the ResQFood project has its challenges and victories, the aim to use technology for social betterment remains unchanged.

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BIBLIOTHECA – A WEB-BASED ONLINE LIBRARY MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

H. Niruni Anjali Fonseka^{1*} and P.D.A.U. Akalanka²

^{1,2}School of Computing, ESOF Metro Campus, Galle, Sri Lanka

*nirunifonseka97@gmail.com**

ABSTRACT

Many libraries, particularly in underdeveloped countries, lack the resources to implement effective library management systems, relying instead on traditional manual methods. These manual systems are prone to errors, inefficiencies, and significant time consumption, hampering the library's ability to serve its community effectively. To address these challenges, this project proposes "Bibliotheca," a web-based online library management system designed to automate and streamline all essential library tasks. Bibliotheca enables librarians and administrators to manage book inventories, author and publisher details, member information, and book issuance efficiently. Additionally, Bibliotheca allows members to reserve books (with a limit of two books at a time), cancel reservations, and easily search for books by title, author, publisher, or genre. The user experience is further enhanced by Bibliobot, an interactive chatbot that provides suggestions for authors, books, genres, and publishers. The system, currently implemented as a web-based application, offers several future enhancements. These include developing a mobile application for both Android and iOS platforms, allowing users to access library services from anywhere using their mobile devices. Bibliotheca also plans to incorporate e-books into the inventory through a cloud server, making digital resources readily available. As the book collection grows, RFID technology will be introduced to automate inventory management, using radio waves to identify and count books effortlessly. Furthermore, cloud computing services will be utilized for data analysis, helping librarians understand usage patterns, such as popular books, genres, and authors, and peak borrowing times. This data-driven approach will enable continuous improvement of library services. Bibliotheca is a robust solution designed to address the limitations of manual library processes, ensuring seamless operation and enhanced user experience. By leveraging advanced technologies, Bibliotheca aims to transform library management, making it more efficient, user-friendly, and accessible, thereby significantly benefiting libraries that currently operate without automated systems.

Keywords: Library, Library Management System, Web-Based Library Management System

INTRODUCTION

Most libraries in different parts of the world, especially in underdeveloped countries, do not have library management systems mostly because they cannot afford them. Therefore, most of them use traditional manual systems for their work. Tasks such as keeping records of books, records of the borrowers, keeping records on the books that are issued etc. take place in a library. A manual library system is never reliable as humans tend to make errors and forget things as it is hectic. Furthermore, they are sluggish in function, and it is not capable of storing hefty capacities of data. The staff has to spend a lot of time carrying out these tasks rather than coordinating with library visitors. Also, it can be time consuming to locate a book in a manual library. This significantly affects the efficiency and effectiveness of achieving the objectives of maintaining a library and their proposed service to the community. The available systems are not user friendly or usable enough and are difficult to install and maintain. They are also not portable enough; this extremely affects ease of use.

To solve this problem, a web based online library management system can be built. An online library management system will automate all library tasks that have to be carried out manually and will make library management easier to handle and more efficient. This fully automated library system to be developed will be web-based with access to only registered users.

LITERATURE REVIEW

“Library is a primary supporting facility in any level of education spanning from elementary school, middle school and higher education i.e., university. The main aim of the library is to provide a facility in which it can improve educational quality and allow the members to advance their knowledge from various reference sources. Managing book circulation is a crucial aspect for library in which it further increases effectivity for its business process such as returning and borrowing books.” (D, Ar Raniri I, Setyawan, & Prasetya, 2021)

A library is a curated collection of sources which is rich in information. Libraries mainly focus on providing facilities which help in improving the quality of education. It also lets its members develop their knowledge with the numerous reference resources that are available in it. Libraries are known to be a facility that provides provisions primarily in any level of education extending from elementary to middle school to college or university.

“It is necessary to have good library management in order to help students and lecturers in finding sources of information. Surely, professional library management is needed in improving the quality of higher education. Because of that, it is necessary to have a system that makes library information management effective and efficient from

changing manual systems to systems using technology.” (Hamzah, Astri Ayu, & Ermina, 2019)

A library contains many sources of information such as newspapers, articles, books and these sources are arranged regularly in such a way that it is easy to find. As libraries are the heart of an institution it is important to have a improved way of managing all the tasks that are taken place in a library. Better library management makes it easier for the library users (lecturers, students) to find out the exact information they’re searching for. With the rapid advancement of technology, it is possible to make library management more proficient by moving from manually handling things to a system which in return will make managing library information more competent and effective. “The process of handling library activities manually is accompanied with time wastage and unnecessary stress. With regard to the aforementioned, the computerized system of handling library activities makes most effective use of existing library manpower and resources for the benefit of users.” (Iwayemi & Oyeniyi , 2019). Manually handling all the activities that are done in a library can be stressful for the librarian as well as its users. This also wastes one’s time unnecessarily. Also, it is no longer an approved method to handle library processes manually due to the weighty workload in a library. But when library management is caried out with the help of a system, all stressful library activities can be done effectively with less manpower. Automating library procedures will make it easy for both the librarians and its users to access the library effortlessly at the same time without any trouble or pointless pressure.

“With the advancement of technology, libraries need to be ready for change and bring the technology to the library in order to retain their customer's interest in visiting the library. Thus, in this situation, the library’s system should be improved as well to facilitate staff or the librarian in doing their work effectively. Introduction to Library Management System (LMS) in the library environment assists librarians in doing their work. Integration with all departments within the library shows how LMS is important in library environment and this conceptual paper will focus on the impact that the LMS brings to the library environment.” (Yunus, Kadir, Mansor, & Kadir, 2017). “Although this system provides electronic documents like books, magazines, newspapers, and other useful files that can give access for the users without any restrictions and help librarians keep track of library information. Designing a computerized library management system (LMS) that would support evacuating the problem encountered in the manual library. The physical library has many limitations to satisfy the user’s needs, and most hard copy documents are damaged after a limited time of usage. To eliminate the paperwork in the library, to reduce the high demand for the cost of books, and to avoid problems for missing files, we introduce a web-based LMS in ACCE.” (Araya, 2020).

A manual library equals a ton of paperwork which will result in causing stress unnecessarily. With a library management system, and all manual tasks being

automated, paperwork can be eliminated. Thus, problems such as files getting misplaced can be avoided as well. With technology advancing day by day, people have found a way to reduce the stress and paperwork caused by the old manual handling ways, which is automating the library processes. Thus, this will improve the library overall by making it easier for the staff to carry out the work in the library and also will affect the customer's interest in the library by retaining the customer interest. A library management system will help its users to keep track of the library information effectively and will curtail the difficulties that one will have to come across in a manual library.

Chatbots

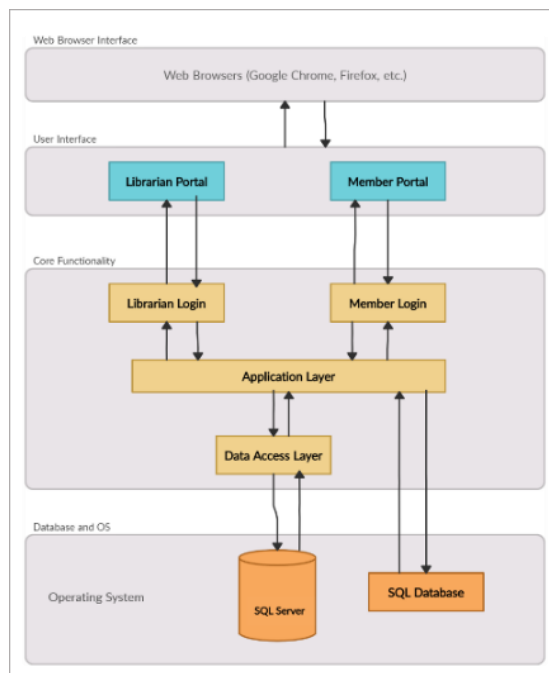
"At the most basic level, a chatbot is a computer program that simulates and processes human conversation (either written or spoken), allowing humans to interact with digital devices as if they were communicating with a real person." (Oracle, 2018).

A chatbot is an AI computer software which is capable of simulating human dialogs both vocal and written and processing them. They let humans interact with devices making it seem as if they're communicating with another fellow human. Chatbots can be simple program that are programmed to answer an easy question. Most of the time it can be a single line reply in this case. Also, chatbots can come as sophisticated digital assistants that over time learn about the user and gives out personalized information. "The chatbot answers questions from a variety of users from around the world. It has attracted an unexpected number of social chatters, which required some additional metadata to accommodate personal chatting and to guide questions back to the intent of the project. The majority of questions are directional or factual questions that Pixel can handle. The database proved to be practical to build and revise as library resources and personnel changed. The chatbot provides a 24-hour, seven day a week service that is consistent, can be enhanced as resources, services, or staff change, and provides a playful interface that engages users. It replaces complicated navigation systems and scrolling through search results with more targeted answers and has the ability to refer questions to librarians." (Allison, 2012). Chatbots are the best solution for this as chatbots are available 24/7 and can instantaneously answer queries by customers within a matter of seconds and engage with them. The chatbot is capable of answering questions posed by the users. This will require a proper training beforehand to guide the questions back to the intent of the program. Chatbots can become a substitute for complex navigation systems where the user has to scroll thoughtlessly in search of something. The chatbot, when trained properly, will have the capability to refer to questions and provide targeted answers which will save time for the customers.

METHODOLOGY

Most libraries are traditionally operated manually by a group of staff who handle records related to books and students (borrowers), manually check books, and maintain

issued book records. Manual record-keeping poses significant challenges, particularly for large libraries, due to their unreliability and the human tendency to forget or misplace information. This research aims to address these issues by developing an automated, web-based library management system named Bibliotheca. The development of Bibliotheca followed a structured and systematic approach. This approach ensured a comprehensive understanding of library management needs and facilitated the efficient implementation of the system within a limited timeframe. The project began with preliminary research to select a relevant topic. This phase involved exploring various issues in library management and reviewing existing systems. The goal was to identify gaps and opportunities for improvement. When selecting the topic, an in-depth study of library management activities was conducted. This included activities such as identifying key stakeholders and their requirements, analyzing the workflows and processes within a library, reviewing previously implemented library management systems to understand their strengths and weaknesses. The project idea was discussed with a supervisor to gain insights and guidance. Feedback from the supervisor was incorporated into the project proposal, which was then submitted to a panel for approval. The proposal outlined the system's objectives, scope, and expected outcomes. Upon approval, the system architecture was designed.



(Source: Author Developed 2024)

Figure 1: Design phases

The design phase involved creating entity-relationship diagrams to define the database structure, designing the system's user interfaces and user experience to ensure ease of use and planning the overall system architecture, including the integration of the front-end, back-end, and database components. The database was implemented first to establish a foundation for data management. During this stage activities such as defining database schemas based on ERDs and setting up relational databases using SQL and implementing necessary tables, relationships, and constraints took place to ensure data integrity. The front-end development began with creating a responsive and user-friendly interface. During this stage the author developed web pages using HTML, CSS, and JavaScript ensuring cross-browser compatibility and responsive design. The back end was developed to handle business logic and database interactions. During this phase server-side code was written using C#. Testing was conducted iteratively throughout the development process. Unit testing was carried out to validate individual components, integration testing to ensure smooth interaction between components and user acceptance testing was done to gather feedback and identify issues from a user perspective. Sufficient time was allocated for debugging and resolving identified issues. The structured approach adopted in this project ensured that the development of Bibliotheca was systematic and efficient. By adhering to the planned methodology, the project was completed within the given timeframe, providing a reliable and automated solution for library management.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Manually doing all the library process is hectic as we humans are prone to error making and forgetting. A library should be managed well as it is a source where people are able to find rich sources of information. Without proper management, it will lead to failure. The author came forward with Bibliotheca, a web-based online library management system, as a solution to this problem. Bibliotheca currently helps to complete almost all the basic library processes that has to be carried out manually, from registering a member to issuing books making library management easier to handle and efficient. In manual libraries, in order to register a member, the librarian has to manually enter details in a book or a sheet of paper and get the signature of the member as proof of becoming a member. Bibliotheca currently has given access to anyone who visits the Bibliotheca site to register themselves in the site and the administrator/librarian is able to check if the registered person has entered valid details and if so, grant permission by making the account an active account. In a manual library, the book issuing process is a little time consuming as the librarian has to enter all details in a book member by member. This is stressful for both the librarian and the members as well. With Bibliotheca, the admin/librarian can issue a book in a matter of minutes with a few clicks. Book details can be found by merely entering the ID of the book in the system. The same goes for the members. This process can be completed in a matter of minutes, and it is easy for both parties. Searching for a book in a manual library is hard and

stressful for a member as he/she has to go from rack to rack in search of a book. But in Bibliotheca, the author has made the book inventory accessible for both members of Bibliotheca and visitors to the site. This enables the users to find the desired book by merely searching in the inventory. The author has made it possible to search in either the title, the author, publisher and even the genre. Thus, locating a book in Bibliotheca is thousand times better and fast than in a manual library. Another problem in manual libraries is that with time, maintaining hefty amounts of data is difficult as the paperwork will be increased day by day. Bibliotheca completely eliminates all paperwork as all data in Bibliotheca will be stored safely in a database. It will be secured with a password and username to prevent unauthorized access. Thus, large volumes of data is no longer an issue as all data will be stored in the Bibliotheca database and there won't be a need to worry about losing data. Another feature in Bibliotheca is that, as the members are permitted access to the book inventory, they are capable of checking if a book is currently in stock in the library. Therefore, there is no need to visit the library just to know if a book is available at the moment. It can be done by merely checking the book inventory. The members of Bibliotheca are also given the facility to reserve a book so that the members can reserve it and collect it at a later time. The users are able to reserve books using any device which can be connected to the internet.

The special feature of Bibliotheca is the Bibliobot. Bibliobot is a chatbot integrated into Bibliotheca to help members of Bibliotheca with anything about Bibliotheca. Users are able to chat with Bibliobot to get help with book related information, reservations, author suggestions and genre suggestions. Main motive of introducing the chat agent Bibliobot, is to enhance the library experience of users.

Other than this, the Bibliotheca also helps to perform the tasks such as keeping records of books, records of the borrowers, keep records on the books that are issued with ease which are the main processes of a library. This helps librarians to get their usual manual work automated and also will help library members to have easier access to the different processes of the library.

CONCLUSION/RECOMMENDATIONS

Bibliotheca currently enables a librarian/admin to perform all basic library processes such as managing a book inventory, managing author and publisher details, managing member details, issue books and view issued book details. Additionally, Bibliotheca has given the members the ability to reserve a book if needed or cancel a reservation. However, there is a reservation limit of 2 books at a time per member. The librarian/admin is able to see reservations and manage them as needed. Searching for a book is made easy in Bibliotheca. The users only have to search for the book in the book inventory by typing a keyword. Users are able to search by book title, author, publisher and by genre as well saving time for all users of this application. The library experience is enhanced by the friendly chatbot of Bibliotheca, Bibliobot. Users are able

to chat with Bibliobot and get author suggestions, book suggestions, genre and publisher suggestions as well.

Currently, the application is built as a web-based application. The author hopes to implement a mobile application in the form of an app for both android and iOS users as a future enhancement. Bibliotheca in the form of a mobile application will enable users to access it from anywhere with their mobile phones. Furthermore, the author hopes to make e-books available in the inventory as well. The e-book feature can be brought to Bibliotheca with the help of a cloud server. Furthermore, as the book count gets increased, it will be a great hassle for the librarians to manage such a huge collection. Thus, in the future, RFID card readers can be added to the library. This technology uses radio waves and is capable of automatically identifying individual items. Thus, RFID card readers can be used to take the book count in the library. Another enhancement that the author believes will be helpful for Bibliotheca is using cloud computing services for data analysis. Cloud computing can be used to analyze data such as which books/genres/authors are more popular among the members of Bibliotheca, during which time of the year the highest number of books get issued etc. This will help to improve the services of Bibliotheca in the future. Bibliotheca is a good solution for the problems that arise when library processes are carried out manually. Bibliotheca is capable of carrying out almost all the library processes without any hassle therefore, the author has faith that the project Bibliotheca will be of great assistance to all manual libraries out there.

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“CELEVIBE” - KEEP IN TOUCH COLLABORATIVE PLATFORM FOR ARTIST TO INTERACT WITH FANS

R.M. Sandunika Nethmini Rathnayaka^{1*}, Thepul N. D. S. Ginige² and Sampa Withanachchi³

^{1,2,3} School of Computing, ESOFTE Metro Campus, Colombo, Sri Lanka

*sandunikanethminirathnayaka@gmail.com**

ABSTRACT

Celebrities face significant challenges due to fake gossip and scams that impact their personal and professional lives. Existing social media platforms often fail to provide secure environments conducive to meaningful fan engagement and reliable income generation. This study proposes "CeleVibe," a novel platform designed to address these issues by offering celebrities a secure space to interact with fans, share personal insights, and monetize their content. Built on open-source technologies like React and Python, "CeleVibe" ensures scalability, security, and adherence to industry standards. The platform supports diverse content types and customizable features tailored to the specific needs of celebrities, enhancing their ability to connect with global audiences and showcase their talents effectively. By prioritizing privacy and implementing robust monetization tools, CeleVibe aims to mitigate the harmful effects of false information while fostering a supportive community atmosphere. Future research will focus on evaluating the platform's impact on reducing fake gossip, enhancing fan relationships, and supporting sustainable income streams for celebrities.

Keywords: Celebrity Engagement, Fan Interaction, Monetization, Platform Development, Privacy

INTRODUCTION

About 0.000086% of the world's population of 7 billion earns their income by using their skills and innate ability to make people happy. These are people who make people happy in many fields such as music, acting, singing, modeling; known as celebrities. Celebrities are often victims of fake gossip and scams, which have a significant impact on their regular and professional lives. In addition, celebrities struggle to connect meaningfully with their fans, and may lose income opportunities if celebrities are unable to work or their work is interrupted. These are people too. They also have private lives. But as soon as they become popular, fans start searching for their personal information. Then some people in the society spread various rumors and gossip about them for the purpose of making money. Due to these reasons, the lives of famous people are turned upside down. Many people have lost their lives due to certain diseases under these conditions. A body of research has been conducted on the effects of false gossip and cheating on celebrities. For example, one study found that false gossip can lead to low self-esteem, depression and anxiety in celebrities. Another study found that cheating can cost celebrities millions of dollars. Robin Williams (1951-2014), Kurt Cobain (1967-1994), Jonathan Brandis (1976-2003), Michael Hutchence

(1960-1997), Boyer (1998-1978), Janis Joplin (1943-1970), Ruslana Korshunova (1987-2008), Lee Thompson Young (1984-2013) and so on, those celebrities have lost their lives due to many incidents [2]. Despite such a situation, sometimes celebrities need a website to show their identity to get verified on social media. Even if you hire a software development team to build a website like this, it costs a lot of money and in some cases; there is a possibility that celebrities don't create their website as they want. And with their busy lives, it is very difficult to maintain those websites. There is also research on the importance of celebrities connecting with their fans. A study found that fans that are associated with their favorite celebrities are more likely to purchase products and services endorsed by those celebrities. This study proposes a new platform for celebrity fans. The platform will provide a safe environment for celebrities to communicate with their followers, reveal their personal lives and earn money. The platform will also help reduce false rumors and scams.

A new platform is being developed for celebrities to connect with their fans, providing a safe and user-friendly space for sharing content. The platform is designed to reduce the spread of fake gossip and scams, which can have devastating effects on celebrities' lives and careers. Research is needed to evaluate the platform's effectiveness in reducing this type of content, assess its impact on celebrity relationships, and determine its feasibility in generating revenue for celebrities. The platform should also help celebrities connect with their fans in a meaningful way. This study proposes a new platform for celebrities to earn income even when they are unable to work or have their work interrupted. The platform aims to help celebrities overcome challenges like false gossip and fraud, connect with fans, generate income, and showcase their talents

globally. The research will evaluate the platform's effectiveness in achieving these goals. While there are many platforms for creating website portfolios globally, the facilities and features provided are limited. The platform would provide a solution to the challenges faced by celebrities and help them overcome these challenges. It is also difficult to change those websites when needed and to include new tools. This system 1 is known as a solution to all the problems mentioned above. This system is a Dashboard, and it can be accessed only by someone who has an Artist ID in any country. Accordingly, this Dashboard is divided into several categories.

Documentation, bibliography, editing [, ,]
Dance/choreography and performance [/ ∅]
Music /Singing/ Music Directing and Playing [/ /]
Art/Sculpture/Graphic Design/Background Design[/ /]
Acting/Directing/Assistant [/ /]
Directing/Writing/Scriptwriting [/ ∅ / ∅]
Acting/Creating/Announcement [/ /]
Cinematography/Camera
Direction/Photography [/ /]

According to these categories, each of these people can choose functions to suit their job and set up the website as needed.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Celebrities use various platforms for content distribution and audience engagement, including Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, TikTok, Snapchat, Twitch, Patreon, and OnlyFans. However, these platforms face societal degradation and moral anti-social reasons. A new system has been introduced to address these needs, adopting a modular framework that allows celebrities to tailor their online presence according to their personal preferences and professional needs. This system emphasizes privacy and security, potentially revolutionizing celebrity engagement, content monetization, and global talent showcase.

Table 1: Comparison table Existing Platforms vs. "CeleVibe" Platform

Feature	Existing Platforms (Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, TikTok, Snapchat, Twitch, Patreon, OnlyFans)	"CELEVIBE" Platform
Content Types	photo and video sharing, real-time communication, live streaming, long-form video content, short-form videos, ephemeral messaging	Comprehensive content options, adaptable to various domains (music, acting, dance, art, etc...), with tools for diverse content types.
Target Demographics	Broad reach, with platforms catering to different demographics (e.g., TikTok and Snapchat for younger audiences)	Adaptable to all demographics, with customizable features to suit individual celebrity needs and preferences.
Intimacy and Relatability	Platforms like TikTok and Snapchat excel in creating a casual and spontaneous connection with fans, promoting intimacy and relatability	Combines the casual engagement of TikTok and Snapchat with the comprehensive and professional features of other platforms, fostering a deeper and more personalized connection with fans.
Monetization Opportunities	Varied monetization options: advertising, sponsorships, subscriptions (Patreon, OnlyFans), direct fan support	Built-in monetization tools tailored for each celebrity, ensuring secure and reliable income streams, aligned with privacy and security standards.
Privacy and Security	Varies by platform, concerns over data privacy and security breaches	High emphasis on privacy and security, requiring Artist ID for access, ensuring a trust-based online presence.
Customization and Modularity	Limited customization options, often requiring technical skills or external assistance for personalized features	High level of customization with modular framework, allowing celebrities to tailor their online presence according to personal and professional needs, with user-friendly and intuitive interfaces.
Fake accounts	Lot of fake accounts can create	No one can create fake account. Only real person can create account.
Adaptation to Social Policies	Platforms are often subject to bans or restrictions in certain countries due to content policies or societal concerns (e.g., OnlyFans).	Designed to adapt to social policies of every country worldwide, ensuring compliant and accessible content distribution and engagement.

Global Talent Showcase	Platforms like YouTube and Instagram provide global reach but may not cater specifically to the needs of all types of celebrities.	Tailored specifically to showcase global talent across multiple domains, with tools to highlight creativity and professional work in a structured manner.
Exclusive Content and Perks	Available on platforms like Patreon and OnlyFans, but often subject to societal and legal restrictions	Provides exclusive content and perks securely, with a focus on maintaining a positive and respectful community, adhering to societal norms and legal requirements.
Technical Assistance and Support	Varies by platform; some offer extensive support while others rely on user knowledge.	Built-in support and resources, ensuring that celebrities can easily navigate and utilize the platform without external assistance.
Potential for Revolutionizing Engagement	Existing platforms provide robust engagement tools but often lack integration and coherence tailored specifically to celebrities' needs	High potential to revolutionize engagement, content monetization, and talent showcase by providing a cohesive, modular, and secure platform specifically designed for the unique needs of celebrities.

(Source: Author Developed 2024)

In time, the existing Platforms will be included in all these existing Platforms and the Scrum Methodology. Therefore, the SCRUM Methodology is also used to develop this platform.

METHODOLOGY

Initial Stage: Establishing Project Vision and Goals

Project Vision Statement: Define the purpose and overarching goals of the prestige platform.

Unique Features- Tailored celebrity profiles, secure authentication, monetization tools, real-time interaction, customizable templates, privacy features. **Target Audience:** Celebrities from various domains (music, acting, dance, art) and their fans. **Development Timeline:** Outline major milestones and expected delivery dates.

Objectives and Goals- Clarify specific, measurable outcomes the platform aims to achieve, such as user engagement levels, monetization targets, and security benchmarks.

Sprint Plans: Planning and Prioritization - Sprint Planning Meetings:

Product Backlog Creation- Compile a prioritized list of features, user stories, and technical tasks. [User stories could include: - As a celebrity, I want to customize my

profile so that I can showcase my brand. - As a fan, I want to subscribe to exclusive content so that I can support my favorite celebrity.]

Sprint Backlog Creation: Select high-priority items from the product backlog for the upcoming sprint. Detail specific tasks, estimated effort, and acceptance criteria for each item. **Task Assignment:** Assign tasks to team members based on expertise and capacity.

Iterative Development: Executing the Sprint - Daily Stand-Up Meetings

Synchronization- Team members discuss what they did yesterday, what they plan to do today, and any obstacles. **Facilitation by Scrum Master:** Ensure meetings are concise and focused on sprint goals.

Development Work

Task Execution-Team members work on their assigned tasks, coding, designing, and testing features. **Continuous Integration:** Regularly integrate and test new code to ensure functionality and compatibility.

Continuous Feedback: Engaging Stakeholders - Stakeholder Engagement

Regular Check-ins-Hold regular meetings with stakeholders, including celebrities, fans, and project sponsors, to gather feedback. **Sprint Reviews and Demos:** At the end of each sprint, present the shippable product increment to stakeholders. Gather feedback and refine the product backlog accordingly.

Feedback Incorporation

Adjustments-Integrate stakeholder feedback into future sprints to improve the platform based on real-world usage and preferences.

Increase in Production: Delivering Product Increments - Shippable Product Increment

Tangible Results- Deliver a functioning product increment at the end of each sprint, which may include new features, enhancements, or bug fixes. **Sprint Review Meeting:** Demonstrate the increment to stakeholders to validate progress and ensure alignment with the project vision.

Retrospective and Adaptive: Continuous Improvement - Sprint Retrospective Meetings

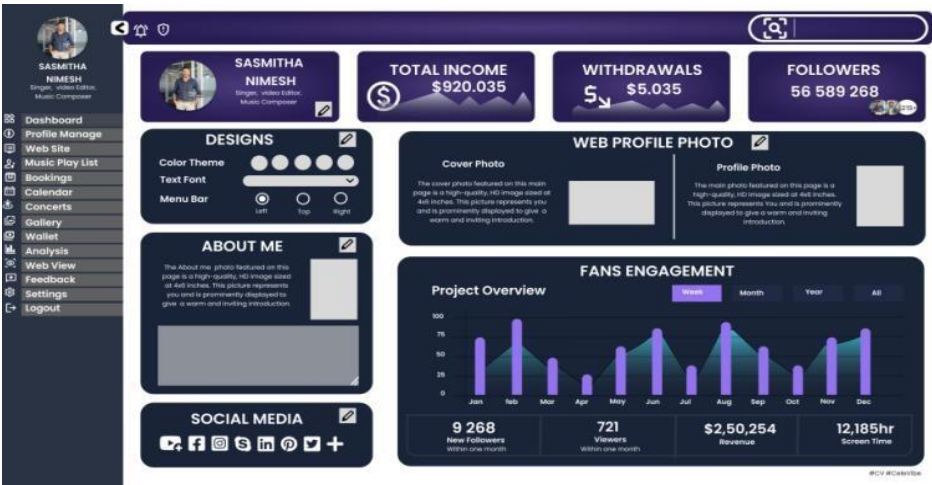
Performance Reflection- Discuss what went well, what didn't, and how processes can be improved. **Action Items:** Identify specific actions to enhance team practices, collaboration, and productivity.

Process Refinement

Implementation- Apply lessons learned from the retrospective to refine workflows and improve future sprints. Adaptation: Continuously adapt and evolve based on retrospective insights, maximizing value delivery and stakeholder satisfaction.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Celebrity platform development is improving the interaction between celebrities and fans using technologies like React and Python. The platform has improved scalability, security, and meets industry standards. The strategic choice to use open-source technologies aligns with the economic feasibility objective of minimizing software costs while maximizing benefits.



(Source: Author Developed 2024)

Figure 1: “CeleVibe” Platform Singer category dashboard Main page

This approach ensures cost-effectiveness and a solid foundation for future improvements. Open-source technology also contributes to greater academic collaboration and research outputs, improving the platform's economic viability and potential for academic advancement. The platform's architecture is adaptable to evolving industry trends and user needs, demonstrating its commitment to long-term financial sustainability. Effective monitoring and management of timeframes is essential in meeting project milestones and deadlines and demonstrates project commitment to on-time delivery and execution. Scope is intricately linked to feasibility, technical feasibility, and is addressed meticulously through careful selection of tools, technologies and frameworks. This approach not only sets the stage for effective execution, but also positions the platform for continuous improvement and adaptation to changing needs. The platform's potential for future additions and enhancements reflects its potential for sustained relevance and impact in the dynamic landscape of celebrity engagement. Critical examination of the prestigious platform project reveals a

well-grounded effort at the intersection of technological innovation, financial prudence, and industry progress. While significant progress has been made, continued focus, flexibility and collaboration are essential to successfully navigating the ever-evolving terrain of celebrity-fan interaction.

CONCLUSIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS

The completion of the celebrity platform marks an important milestone in addressing the challenges facing celebrities in today's digital age. The project, which began with a vision to bridge the gap between celebrities and their fans, has evolved into a comprehensive solution aimed at improving communication, fostering meaningful connections and promoting sustainable revenue streams within the celebrity community.

Through a meticulous literature analysis, feasibility study and analytical examination of existing challenges, the project has laid a solid foundation for addressing the unique needs and interests of celebrities. Leveraging state-of-the-art technologies and frameworks such as Python, Figma, and GitHub have resulted in the development and implementation phases laying the groundwork to create a smart, user-centric platform that prioritizes usability, security, and scalability. The iterative development process combined with rigorous software testing and end-user evaluation has ensured that the prestigious platform meets the highest standards of performance and user satisfaction. By embracing a user-centric strategy, the platform adapts to the evolving demands of celebrities and their fans, ensuring its continued relevance and success in the dynamic landscape of the entertainment industry. As we reflect on the achievements of the prestigious platform, it is important to recognize the dedication, innovation and collaborative spirit that led to its implementation. Going forward, prioritizing continuous adaptation and refinement is essential to ensure the continued relevance and success of the platform. This includes incorporating feedback from celebrities, fans and industry experts to identify areas for improvement and innovation. The celebrity platform represents not only technological progress, but also fosters authentic connections, empowers creativity and promotes financial sustainability within the celebrity community. Commitment. By combining features that facilitate communication, monetization and talent showcase, the platform has the potential to revolutionize the way celebrities connect with their fans and navigate the digital landscape.

As we look to the future, the integration of cutting-edge technologies and continued collaboration with stakeholders will be critical to maximize the platform's impact and ensure its sustainable success in the competitive entertainment world.

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ENHANCING ACCESSIBILITY AND SUSTAINABILITY THROUGH A DUAL-APPLICATION PWA-BASED DIGITAL WALLET FOR LOYALTY, MEMBERSHIP, AND ID CARDS

J M D Nimesh Asanka^{1*}

¹Computing and The Environment, Faculty of Engineering, Kingston University, United Kingdom

*jnimeshasanka@gmail.com **

ABSTRACT

The need for fully digital management of loyalty membership and identification cards is on the rise. This requires secure, convenient, and green solutions. In this regard, the present study proposes the dual-application Progressive Web Application-based digital wallet to remove the issues created by traditional digital wallet solutions due to device dependence, restriction in platform usage, and limited flexibility in management. PWAs enable cross-platform compatibility, provide offline access, and are easy to update, ensuring universal access to establishments and a superior user experience. This solution features an admin application for managing and publishing digital passes by businesses, and a Progressive Web App for the end-users to store and make use of their many digital cards. This will involve, from a methodology point of view, adhering to a user-centered design process for the development to ensure usability and functionality. The results show that the PWA-based digital wallet offers a function of improving operational efficiency, flexible administrative control, and environmental sustainability based on a reduction of plastic card production. Besides, it ensures the security of transactions through high-end techniques such as encryption and biometric authentication. It showcases the benefits at hand, including cost savings and real-time updates for businesses and universal accessibility with better user experience for users. One such integrated and flexible solution is the dual-application PWA-based digital wallet, which dramatically enhances the sustainability and access of the digital wallet ecosystem while ensuring robust security and user satisfaction.

Keywords: Digital Wallet, Progressive Web Application (PWA), Accessibility, Sustainability, Loyalty Membership

INTRODUCTION

The use of physical cards is still a hassle and somewhat harmful to the environment. Digital management of loyalty membership or identification cards has become imperative. Digital wallets provide a safe, easy way of storing and utilizing different cards, but most of them are restricted to platforms and countries, hence access issues. PWAs are applied in diverse platforms and offer offline access that ensures users can access their cards at any time. Indeed, various shortcomings are characteristic of existing digital wallet solutions, including Apple Wallet and Google Wallet: Device Dependency and Data Loss: Reinstalling and reconfiguring digital cards is required if a device is lost or broken (Putri & Qothrunada, 2023). Platform and Regional Restrictions: Limited to iOS and Android operating systems, and not fully functional in all geographic regions (Morrison et al., 2017). Administrative and Design Limitations: Current solutions rely on Apple/Google wallets, restricting flexibility for system administrators (Sedlmeir, Smethurst, Rieger, & Fridgen, 2021) (Singh & Narayan, 2021). PWAs offer a cross-platform mechanism, working on any device with a web browser without regional restrictions. They provide superior administrative access, are cheaper for businesses to create and control digital cards, and benefit from push notifications compared to SMS. The project also contributes to environmental sustainability by reducing plastic card production (Hamzah, Ramli, & Shaw, 2023) (Monash University, 2023).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

Loyalty, membership and ID cards are drastically improved by digital wallets. They offer a safe and comfortable way to store and have access to all types of cards without carrying them physically and without the possibility of losing them or damaging and environmental sustainability through reducing waste by decreasing plastic usage (Mathiraj, Geeta, & Rajendran, 2019). However, for all their promise, current solutions have strict limitations which impede user consumption and accessibility.

Table 1: Comparative analysis of existing digital wallet / admin solutions

Feature	Appl e Walle t	Googl e Walle t	Samsu ng Wallet	Pass Kit	Airship	Splio	Monash Univ.	Litecard
Platform Dependency	iOS only	Andr oid only	Samsu ng device s	Multi - platf orm	Multi- platfor m	Multi- platfor m	Univ.- specific	Multi- platfor m
Geographic Restrictions	Limit ed	Limit ed	Limite d	Limit ed	Limite d	Limite d	Univ.- specific	Limited
Offline Access	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No

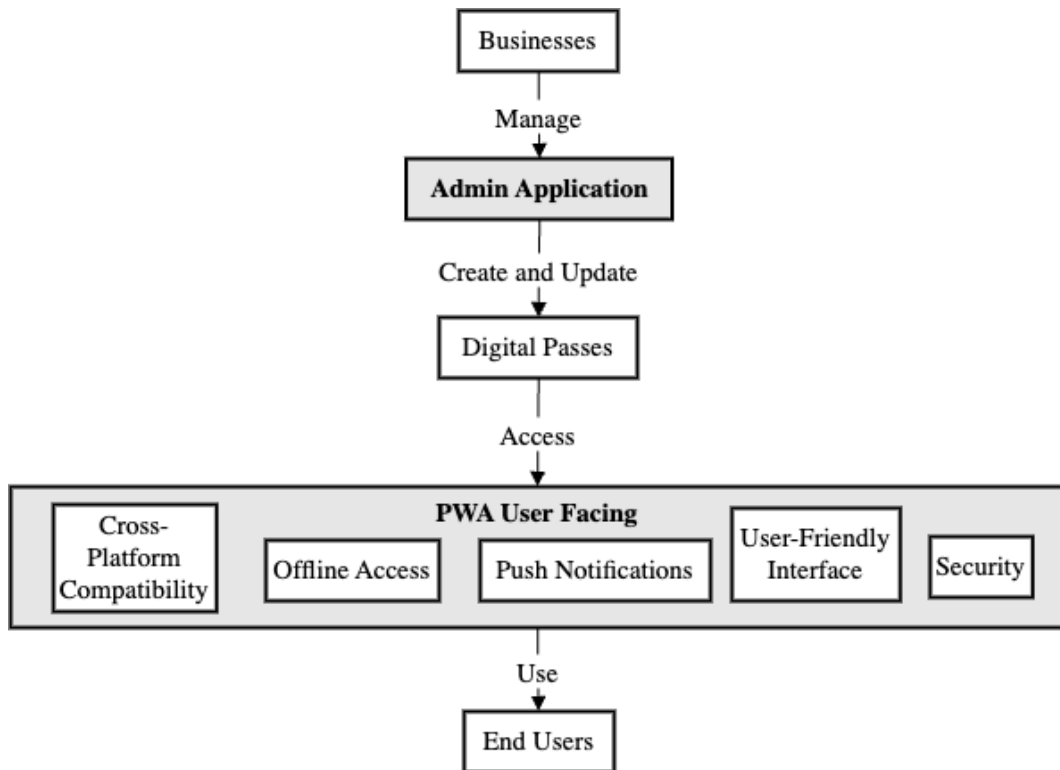
Push Notifications	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Administrative Flexibility	Limited	Limited	Limited	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Security Features	High	High	High	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	High	High
User Base	Large	Large	Large	Medium	Medium	Medium	Small	Medium
Admin App	No	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Digital Wallet App	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No	No

(Source: Author Developed 2024)

This table compares the key features, limitations, and strengths of existing digital wallet solutions, highlighting the need for a more comprehensive and universally accessible solution. Technological Advancements- Progressive Web Applications (PWAs) offer a promising alternative to traditional digital wallets. PWAs combine the best features of web and mobile applications, providing several advantages. Cross Platform Compatibility- PWAs are hosted on a web browser hence can be accessed on any device that supports the internet irrespective of the OS. This is preferable to printing and maintaining different applications on the different platforms, so it saves cost for the development (Singh & Narayan, 2021). Offline Functionality- With service workers in PWAs, your app can have offline access, so its users are able to access their digital card data locally even without a network (Singh & Narayan, 2021). Push Notifications- With the PWA project, it supports push notifications, enabling you to send timely reminders to users, thereby promoting increased user interactions (Morrison et al., 2017). Ease of Updates-Unlike native apps, PWAs can be updated very easily without requiring the user to download the latest version of the app from an app store (Singh & Narayan, 2021).

METHODOLOGY

Following the approach of dual applications for the development of a PWA based digital wallet guarantees flexibility, security, and cross-platform compatibility. It will consist of an admin application where businesses can publish digital passes to be reused while having a user-centric PWA, so end-users have an easy-to-use place to store/use their digital cards.



(Source from Singh and Narayan 2021)

Figure 2: PWA based digital wallet

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

By considering the identified gaps and limitations of existing digital wallet solutions, a dual-application approach is proposed for the development of a PWA based digital wallet that addresses the limitations and creates new possibilities.

Universality: The PWA-based solution that we build solves platform dependency and makes the digital wallet can be used on any device that is equipped with a web browser. This imposes a requirement of universal accessibility, which makes user loyalty simpler to obtain and user base more extensive (Singh & Narayan, 2021) (Hamzah, Ramli, & Shaw, 2023). **Flexible Administration:** The admin application is a full set of tools which enable the businesses to create, maintain and update digital passes independently. This flexibility results in more op-erational efficiency and a more engaging user experience, and businesses are more flexible to be able to create passes, able to adapt quickly to changes (Monash University, 2023) (PassKit, n.d.). **Environmental Sustainability:** The PWA-powered digital wallet also promotes environmental sustainability by lowering the usage of physical cards.

The digital option also allows us to reduce our footprint and retrieve the number of plastic cards that are produced and then disposed of (Putri & Qothrunada, 2023).

CONCLUSIONS

The PWA-based digital wallet with a dual-application approach effectively addresses the gaps and limitations found in existing solutions, offering significant benefits for businesses and users.

Perceived Value for Businesses

Customization: Businesses can easily create and update digital cards, enhancing customer engagement (PassKit, n.d.).

Real-Time Updates: Digital cards can be updated instantly, avoiding the cost and inconvenience of replacing physical cards (Monash University, 2023).

Improved User Experience

Universal Accessibility: The wallet is accessible on any device with a web browser, providing a consistent user experience (Singh & Narayan, 2021) (Hamzah, Ramli, & Shaw, 2023).

Enhanced Security: Features like biometric authentication and encryption ensure user data is protected (Cole, McFaddin, Narayanaswami, & Tiwari, 2009) (Sedlmeir, Smethurst, Rieger, & Fridgen, 2021).

NFC, QR Codes, and Barcodes: Integration of these technologies into a single platform simplifies user interactions (Hamzah, Ramli, & Shaw, 2023).

Cost Efficiency and Convenience

Lost Device Mitigation: Users can access their digital cards from any device, minimizing disruption from lost devices (Singh & Narayan, 2021).

Push Notifications: Cost-effective communication with users, supporting multimedia content for better engagement (Morrison et al., 2017).

Recommendations

Regular Security Upgrades: Update daily to high level of security standards (Cole, McFaddin, Narayanaswami, & Tiwari, 2009) (Sedlmeir, Smethurst, Rieger, & Fridgen, 2021). **Integration of User Feedback:** Gather and integrate user feedback for the continuous enhancement of the wallet features (Mathiraj, Geeta, & Rajendran, 2019). **Expand features:** Find ways to facilitate the added value that the other digital services, like payment gateways, loyalty programs, or e-commerce platforms, offer on the experience (Bramantyo, Syukur, Pramono, Dewabroto, & Gunadi, 2023). **Promote Environmental Benefits:** Highlight the environmental advantages of using digital wallets over physical cards to attract eco-conscious users (Putri & Qothrunada, 2023).

In conclusion, the PWA based digital wallet solution is secure, efficient, and eco-friendly that can enable faster adoption & business innovation in the digital wallet space.

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LEARNING GEOMETRY USING A MOBILE APPLICATION: A SUITABILITY AND ACCEPTABILITY STUDY IN THE SRI LANKAN CONTEXT

Hiruni H.Y. Hansika^{1*}, Udara M. Anupama² and Hansani E.H. Charika³

^{1,2,3} Department of Information Communication Technology, Faculty of Technology, University of Sri Jayewardenepura, Gangodawila, Nugegoda

*hirunihansika196@gmail.com **

ABSTRACT

“Geometry” which focuses on foundational concepts and practical applications has been identified as the area of the mathematics syllabus in the Sri Lankan education system that is the most difficult and less preferred for students. By studying the background environment and the people involved, we have identified the issues in the existing teaching and learning methods, and based on that, we have proposed a solution by introducing a new method to replace the current method. We proposed a geometry learning mobile application that gives a better understanding of geometric theorems and concepts to students through animated video lessons with the expectation of changing students' attitudes towards geometry in future generations. Also, in the era of the COVID-19 pandemic, online learning and the use of computer devices in the learning process have become more widespread. Therefore, these current circumstances around the globe further confirm that learning through an educational mobile app can be efficient and relevant to the current learning process and in the future. As part of this research, a survey was conducted to evaluate the performance of students who learned geometry through the proposed Education Geometry Mobile application. The results of the survey were based on data collected from the distribution of test papers to twenty Grade 11 students. The survey results indicate that the mobile application helps students to remind their existing knowledge about theories.

Keywords: Animated Videos, Geometry, Mobile Application

INTRODUCTION

Education plays a significant role in human life and the development of a country. The established educational system of Sri Lanka was brought about during the 19th century by the British Empire. Currently, education falls under the control of both the Central Government and the Provincial Councils. The high failure rate of students in subjects such as mathematics is one of the major issues that the Sri Lankan education sector faces. This is in an environment where Mathematics is a compulsory subject in the GCE (O/L) and many future opportunities in education and employment are predicated on a passing grade for this subject. Geometry, one of Mathematics' most important branches, plays a very important role in education. Geometry is an area of mathematics study which deals with forms and space. This study area has a significant role in improving the students' critical thinking and problem-solving skills. They may also express the abstract symbols from the perspective of the forms for a better understanding. They can understand the shapes around them in this context and can establish connections between everyday life and mathematics. (Serin, 2018). This research aimed to focus on both learning and teaching geometry by using visual aids such as animated videos with narrated audios as well as their effects on a learning/teaching process. Since mobile applications have the potential to provide better learning and teaching experience to students as well as teachers.

The overall objectives of this research are to:

Identify the best learning methods to teach geometry by referring to journal papers related to it.

Develop a Mobile application that includes narrated and animated videos to teach geometry in both Sinhala and English languages.

Evaluate the performance of the designed mobile using the performance of students who learn through it.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature presents informative literature that discusses the visual aids for learning/teaching and the advantages of web-based vs. app-based approaches for learning/teaching mathematics. Gambari, Falode & Adegbenro (2014) studied the impact of computer animation and geometry instructional models on the achievement and retention of mathematics in Minna, Nigeria. However, it also investigated the gender impact on student performance and engagement. In post-test and retention tests, students taught geometry using computer animation performed significantly better than their peers taught geometry using an instructional model and a conventional approach, respectively. Nonetheless, there was no significant gap in the post-test results ratings of male and female students taught geometry using computer animation and an instructional model, respectively. The findings demonstrated that geometry definitions

in mathematics could be meaningfully taught and studied through computer animation. The solution to the low-performance issue seems to be groundbreaking technologies for teaching mathematics using computer animation modules. The computer animation kit has shown to be more useful in teaching the mathematical concept of geometry, increasing learner performance and retention while remaining gender neutral.

Wood & Petocz (2014) have prepared six video-based mathematics-related teaching packages with several people on the scripting and filming side, and they have prepared six video-based teaching packages to date. They were conscious, according to students' feedback, the video compressed learning time, and many commented on the benefits of that. Several students also thought that they had more control over the speed. Video helps link component pieces of understanding into a whole. Students see videos as part of the learning cycle of mathematics, along with teacher feedback, the Internet, textbooks, peers, and themselves. Video is a low-tech way to transform mathematics perceptions and inspire the students. In secondary school, it works well because the technology is available, and it fits into the formats of the lessons.

Ansari & Tripathi (2017) distributed an online standardized questionnaire to students from various Indian universities to investigate the knowledge and usability of elearning apps by Indian students and their effect on the learning process. It has also been shown that students are aware of the new technology and the Internet that could be useful in their learning environment. They both concluded that access to mobile learning applications is important for their research and research purposes. The preceding study has presented solid evidence of the student's comprehension of mobile learning applications.

Zhu & Grabowski (2004) performed a longitudinal analysis to explore the impact of various animation techniques on guidance. Three therapy classes involved static images, the animation used as a technique to attract interest, and animation used as a tool for attracting interest and elaboration. There were 115 university student volunteers as participants. The data were analyzed using two-way multiple variability analysis (MANOVA). Research results suggest that there are significant performance correlations between participants' previous experience. In this report, attempts were made to explore in-depth the effect of animation strategies on the accomplishments of students with less prior experience, as well as to investigate various animation strategies than previous studies. Minor differences existed between the groups that used animation techniques and the control group that used static graphics. The findings revealed that the static graphics community and the community with animation strategies worked equally well. This outcome adds to the debate about the value of animation over simulation alone.

Dissanayake, Karunananda, and Lekamge (2007) have developed a computer-based framework for mathematics teaching. Sixty eighth-grade students were included in

their forensic studies. They also used David AusubVs Subsumption Theory to provide the framework for the programming package, which is part of the cognitive theory of education. A logical framework has been proposed that allows for expert system features through a three-layer architecture, namely visual level (supports comprehension through virtual objects in the real world), conceptual level

(promotes understanding through a visual model in the real world), and abstract level (leads to abstract reasoning, which is at the core of mathematics). Before progressing to the next level, each level of their programming kit includes a teaching and evaluation module. Students' success improved significantly after using this programming kit. The computer-based method mentioned in this study could be used as a structured platform for teaching abstract mathematical principles meaningfully at the elementary school level. After the report, they mentioned that if there were more interactive elements such as sound and animation, their method would have been more appealing to the students, and if the language used was Sinhala, it would have been more successful for the students because they are studying the subject in their native language.

Lynn and Glen L (2010) published a study on Digital Video and Teaching, Technology Contemporary Issues, and Teacher Education. Videos can be made and displayed on portable devices such as mobile phones. Hence, its use becomes casual and sociable. Even though digital video is easier to capture and more readily available, it also has some affordances that extend its usefulness beyond the transmission of information. Despite the digital video affordances, learning through digital video requires effective pedagogy. A video can become an analytical object, sometimes even in association with other interactive measuring technologies. As the students can also produce their videos as a means of presentation of information, they can synthesize and share what they have learned. Though this is not generic in the case of video pedagogy. How teachers may engage students with digital video most effectively is unique to the material being learned.

Michal and Oshrat (2004) conducted a study to explore the possibility of using the mobile (smart) phone for educational purposes, for teaching and learning mathematics. This explores how the mobile phone's features, capabilities, and functionality can be implemented effectively in educational environments and used in them. Hence considering statistical data concerning use and distribution, cultural attitudes and needs, existing functions, and technical aspects. Since mobile phones are an easily accessible device that is already part of every teacher and student's culture and everyday life and is likely to become highly useful to teachers and students alike. They have stated that mobile phones and mobile learning will allow students to learn with any media, anytime, anyplace. And the main purpose of their study is to learn about the effects of the mobile world on the learning of human beings. The theoretical framework encompasses psychological dimensions of cognition, perception, concepts of human

nature as well as theories of learning. This knowledge will outline the practical design of the mobile phone for educational applications.

Halloluwa, Vyas, Usoof, and Hewagamage (2017) examined how gamified mobile educational apps affect the teaching/learning experience in a South Asian developing country's primary school classroom. For this study, a tablet-based application for learning mathematics was created for primary school students in Sri Lanka. The study participants were 130 grade 3 students, and four teachers from two primary schools in the capital region of Sri Lanka. And they found that the use of tablet technology along with specifically designed applications can provide students with a better learning experience. They described the usability problems and difficulties faced by the point of view of interaction design and noticed a transition in a classroom setting where it changed from a conventional teacher-centered setting to a student-centered learning environment. Students were found to collaborate freely throughout this learning process without being forced to do so. Besides, they observed an improvement in the students' educational performance by gamifying the curriculum. The results of this research provide clear evidence in the HCI sector through the design, implementation, and assessment of primary school children's learning / teaching experience integrating technology into their everyday classroom activities.

METHODOLOGY

We achieved our first objective of the research through the literature review section by studying past research literature that was related to our research area. Based on that it can be concluded that the visual learning methods were more effective than the other methods. To achieve our second and third research objectives of the research, we followed the below designs as a methodology to implement this project and to achieve the objectives as outlining the research objectives section. The participants were newly promoted grade 11 students (assumed as grade 10), and the grade 11 students who sit GCE O/L in March 2021, from government schools in Sri Lanka. The acceptability and suitability of the developed mobile application will be evaluated by observing the two different samples from the target group. The target groups are grade ten and eleven students with a sample size of 20 students. The experiment control was divided into two stages, which were labeled as stage 1 and stage 2. The exams that will be administered to students at the two levels have been designated as test 1 and test 2. At both tests, time was registered, and marks were assigned based on the steps taken to solve the problem.

The following are the design assumptions used to carry out the proposed experimental design.

All the students in the two classes are similarly capable of using mobile phones.

The two tests offered at each point are of equivalent quality.

Each test paper has three problems based on the geometry lesson that had been taught.

Each Test paper has a time limit of forty minutes to complete.

The time allocated for viewing the video lessons was fifteen minutes.

Stage 1:

All the students (sample size 20) used their existing knowledge that was gained through the traditional teaching methods to face test one. This test was conducted to check their preknowledge about geometry.

Stage 2:

All the students were given an equal opportunity to interact with the animated videos and test two were given to them to check their performance after interacting with the animated videos. The performance of the sample of students was noted before and after they interacted with the animated videos. And some feedback was collected from the students about the videos and using mobile phones for their learning process.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Marks are a type of continuous data. The paired t-test is used to compare the results of two samples of similar data. Continuous data are often summed by giving their average and standard deviation (SD), and the paired t-test is used to compare the means of two samples of related data. The paired t-test measures the values' mean-variance to zero. It is determined by the mean difference, uncertainty of the deviations, and the number of data points.

Hypotheses:

*Null hypothesis - **H₀**: There is no difference in mean 1st test and 2nd test marks.*

*Alternative hypothesis - **H₁**: There is a difference in mean 1st test and 2nd test marks.*

T-Test Observe the t coefficient, $t = -6.764$, and $p = 0.001$ from this row; i.e., there is a very slight likelihood of this outcome happening by chance under the null hypothesis of no difference. The null hypothesis is ignored since $p < 0.05$ (actually in fact $p = 0.001$). There are significant indications ($t = -6.76$, $p = 0.001$) that learning through a mobile device with visual aids enhances marks. This data collection increased marks by around 3 points on average.

CONCLUSIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS

This research initiative is intended to promote the learning process using emerging technology rather than conventional methods. Some of the key objectives of this project are to investigate the best approaches for teaching students' subjects such as geometry that make them difficult to carry out in exams and to assess the ease with which a mobile

application would promote the learning process. While the number of students we used to measure the suitability of the mobile app we developed was not statistically high, we think the survey was able to validate what we predicted. After seeing the videos we prepared, we could see a definite change in the marks of certain students considering the marks obtained in the second question paper and the marks obtained in the first question paper. Also, reviewing the input forms that we sent them to mention learning about using the mobile app, we found that they were involved in using the app.

Finally, if we had been able to reduce the limitations, we would have been able to conduct this survey more extensively for a larger number of students, and then we would have been able to produce a more successful data report and a more accurate result.

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INNO COOK – AN IMAGE RECOGNISED RECIPE GENERATOR

Zainab N. Khan^{1*} and Sasini Randunuge²

¹Faculty of Computing, Kingston University, United Kingdom.

²ESoft Metro Campus, Colombo, Colombo, Sri Lanka

*zainawaz17@gmail.com**

ABSTRACT

This research focuses on AI-driven culinary solutions by developing InnoCook, an application that integrates image recognition with personalized recipe generation. Current systems lack seamless integration for enhanced user experience, which this study addresses through a unique combination of convolutional neural networks (CNN) and user-centric design. The methodology involves quantitative research with comprehensive data collection and preprocessing of food images, followed by the development of CNN models for food classification. Two CNN architectures were evaluated to determine the optimal model. The application interface was designed iteratively, incorporating user feedback to refine functionality and usability. The system was tested for reliability across devices. Findings reveal that the developed CNN model achieved a percentage classification accuracy of 71% on the test dataset. The integrated mobile application enables users to generate personalized recipes from images of available ingredients, simplifying meal planning and enhancing culinary creativity. This research contributes to existing knowledge by offering a novel, user-friendly solution that combines advanced image recognition with practical culinary applications. Implications for practitioners include the potential for InnoCook to revolutionize meal preparation, making it more accessible and tailored to individual dietary preferences. The findings highlight the application's capability to transform the cooking experience, demonstrating significant advancements in the field of AI-driven culinary innovation. This study fills a critical gap in the current technology landscape and sets a new standard for future developments in AI-enhanced cooking solutions.

Keywords: Convolutional Neural Networks (CNN), Image Recognition, Personalized Recipe Generation, User-Centric Design

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the culinary landscape has undergone a profound metamorphosis, catalyzed by technological advancements and evolving consumer preferences. Among these transformative developments, the integration of image recognition and artificial intelligence (AI) has emerged as a pivotal force driving innovative culinary solutions (Jones, 2023). At the forefront of this culinary revolution stands InnoCook, a pioneering project poised to redefine the cooking experience through the seamless integration of AI-driven recipe generation (Brown E., 2022). By harnessing cutting-edge convolutional neural network (CNN) models, InnoCook empowers users to effortlessly generate personalized recipes with nothing more than images of ingredients (Gracia, 2021).

Research Gap and Objective

Despite the significant advancements in AI and image recognition, there is a notable gap in leveraging these technologies to simplify and enhance the culinary experience for everyday users. This research aims to bridge this gap by developing and evaluating InnoCook, an AI-driven platform that transforms ingredient images into customized recipes. This paper embarks on a journey to explore the core principles and methodologies that underpin InnoCook's innovative approach. By delving into the intricate workings of InnoCook, we aim to illuminate its potential to bridge the gap between visual content and culinary creativity, ushering in a new era of culinary exploration and experimentation (Taylor R. &, 2020). Furthermore, this paper endeavors to scrutinize the transformative impact of InnoCook on the culinary landscape. Through a comprehensive analysis, we will delve into how InnoCook is not only revolutionizing how we cook but also redefining how we conceptualize food creation and innovation (Roberts, 2023). Through the lens of InnoCook, we aim to shed light on the evolving relationship between technology and gastronomy, offering profound insights into the trajectory of cooking innovation and convenience. The primary objectives of this research are to develop a robust food image classification model using CNN architectures. To integrate this model into a user-friendly application that facilitates personalized recipe generation based on visual input. And to evaluate the performance and usability of the developed system, identifying potential areas for improvement.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The exploration of AI-driven culinary innovations has garnered significant attention in recent literature, with a particular focus on leveraging image recognition techniques for recipe generation and meal planning. (Smith, 2020) conducted a study on the feasibility of using CNN models for food recognition and recipe generation, demonstrating promising results in terms of accuracy and usability. Similarly, (Wang, L., et al., (2022)) conducted a comprehensive survey on deep learning approaches for food recognition and recipe generation, providing valuable insights into the current state-of-

the-art techniques in the field. These studies lay the groundwork for the development of InnoCook, showcasing the potential of AI-driven culinary solutions to simplify and enhance the cooking experience for individuals of all culinary backgrounds. Building on this foundation, (Liu, 2021) explored the integration of AI in personalized meal planning, highlighting the importance of user preferences and dietary restrictions in the development of effective culinary solutions. Furthermore, (Kim, 2019) examined the role of user interface design in the adoption of AI-driven cooking applications, emphasizing the need for intuitive and user-friendly interfaces to maximize user engagement. These insights underscore the multifaceted nature of AI-driven culinary innovations, necessitating a holistic approach that combines advanced image recognition algorithms with user-centric design principles. By building upon the insights gained from previous research, InnoCook aims to push the boundaries of culinary innovation and accessibility, offering users a transformative platform for culinary exploration and creativity.

METHODOLOGY

The INNOCOOK was developed using the following methodology: Firstly, developing food image classification models involves gathering a dataset of food images, and organizing them into training, validation, and testing sets. These images were then preprocessed, resized, and normalized to ensure consistency in the input data. The dataset was then split into the aforementioned sets using predetermined ratios, with 70% for training, 20% for validation, and 10% for testing. Two convolutional neural network (CNN) architectures were explored and compared: one with three convolutional layers and another with six convolutional layers, both including max-pooling layers for downsampling and dense layers for classification.

$$A^{[l]} = f \sum_{i=1}^{n^{[l]}} W^{[l]} * X^{[l-1]} + b^{[l]}$$

Here:

$A^{[l]}$ represents the output feature map

f denotes the activation function (in this case ReLU)

$W^{[l]}$ signifies the filter weight

$X^{[l-1]}$ denotes the input data or the previous layer's output

$b^{[l]}$ represents the bias terms

$n^{[l]}$ is the number of filters in the layer l

$*$ denotes the convolution operation

After architectural exploration, we compile the models using the Adam optimizer and Sparse Categorical Crossentropy loss function, with accuracy as the evaluation metric. We train over multiple epochs, with validation data used to monitor performance and prevent overfitting.

Additionally, the formula for the Sparse Categorical Crossentropy loss function used in the model can be expressed as :

$$L(y, \hat{y}) = -\frac{1}{N} \sum_{i=1}^N \sum_{j=1}^C y_{ij} \log(\hat{y}_{ij})$$

In this equation:

N represents the number of samples

C signifies the number of classes

y_{ij} is a binary indicator of whether class j is the correct classification for the sample i

$\hat{y}_{ij}$ denotes the predicted probability that the sample i belongs to class j

After training, the models are evaluated on the testing dataset to assess their generalization performance. The models' performance was analyzed based on evaluation metrics obtained from testing, and potential areas for improvement and future research directions were identified.

Next, the INNOCOOK's interface was developed using a comprehensive approach that combined innovative technology with user-centric design principles and evaluated for performance. The interface development process involved conceptualization, planning, design, prototyping, implementation, and testing. Wireframes and mockups were created for the app interface, and iterative prototyping sessions were conducted to refine the design and user experience. Advanced image recognition algorithms were integrated to enable ingredient recognition and pantry management. The app incorporates features such as recipe generation, Proportion Pro for achieving macronutrient goals, and a meal planner for scheduling meals. Rigorous testing procedures were conducted to ensure the app's reliability and performance across different devices and operating systems. Through iterative development, testing, and refinement, both the classification models and the app's features were optimized to enhance user experience and functionality.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

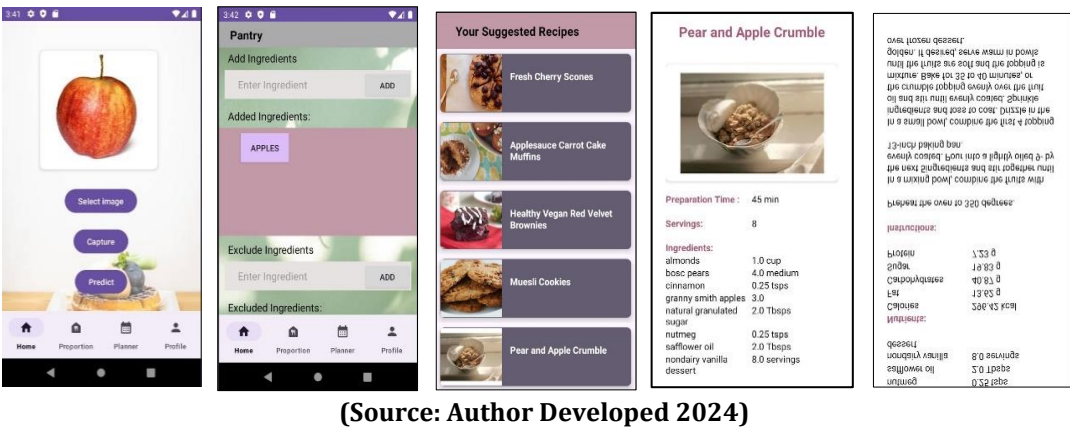


Figure 1: INNO COOK Interface with Key Features

Model Performance Evaluation: Accuracy and Loss: The trained convolutional neural network (CNN) model achieved an accuracy of 0.74 on the test dataset, with a corresponding loss of 1.91. This performance metric demonstrates the effectiveness of the model in classifying food images into their respective categories.

Confusion Matrix: The confusion matrix provides insights into the model's performance across different food categories. It illustrates the number of correct and incorrect predictions for each class, aiding in identifying any patterns or areas of improvement (Figure 3).

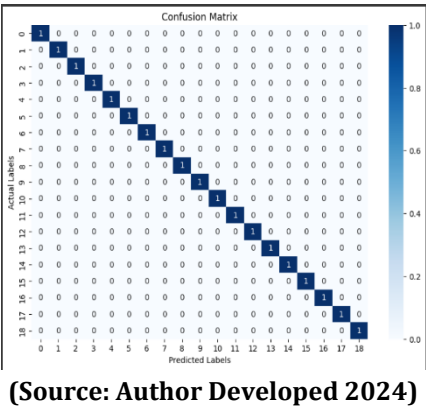
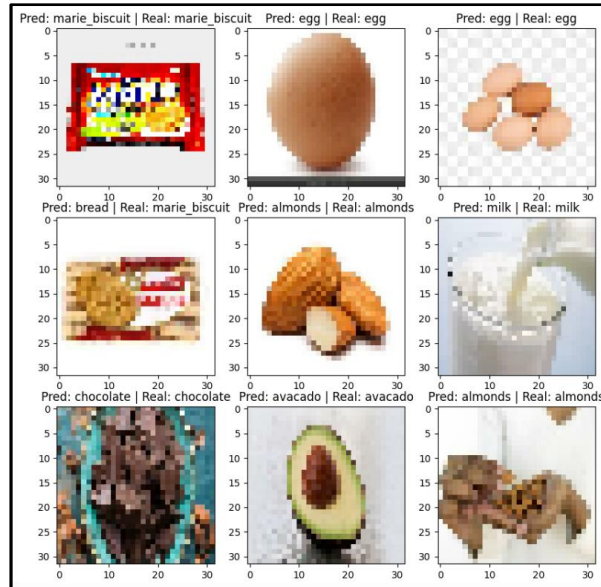


Figure 2: Confusion Matrix



(Source: Author Developed 2024)

Figure 3: The Real and Predicted Image

CONCLUSIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS

In conclusion, InnoCook represents a significant advancement in culinary technology, leveraging artificial intelligence (AI) and image recognition to revolutionize the cooking experience. Through the integration of convolutional neural network (CNN) models, InnoCook demonstrates promising accuracy in classifying food images and generating personalized recipes, showcasing the effectiveness of the platform in bridging the gap between visual content and culinary creativity. The seamless integration of AI-driven recipe generation and meal planning tools enhances user engagement and satisfaction, catering to individual preferences and dietary requirements. By empowering users to explore new recipes and culinary combinations based on their preferences and available ingredients, InnoCook enhances creativity in the kitchen while streamlining the cooking process, saving time and effort for users.

However, the performance of the InnoCook system is contingent upon the quality and diversity of the training dataset. Continued efforts to expand and diversify the dataset will be essential to improving model robustness and generalization. Additionally, integrating user feedback and iteratively refining the platform based on user interactions are crucial for enhancing the accuracy and relevance of recipe recommendations. Future iterations of InnoCook could explore integration with smart kitchen appliances to automate cooking processes and further enhance user convenience. Furthermore, optimizing the CNN architecture and exploring advanced

machine-learning techniques can enhance the accuracy and efficiency of the InnoCook system.

Recommendations for future research include the incorporation of nutritional analysis tools into InnoCook to enable users to make informed dietary choices and align recipe recommendations with their nutritional goals. Continuously updating and expanding the culinary content within InnoCook, including international cuisines and regional specialties, will cater to a broader audience and enrich the user experience. InnoCook embodies the convergence of culinary tradition and technological innovation, offering a glimpse into the future of cooking. By harnessing the power of AI and image recognition, InnoCook empowers individuals to explore their culinary creativity and enjoy personalized cooking experiences tailored to their tastes and preferences.

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IT STRATEGIC INNOVATION AND LAW

COUNTERING TRADE-BASED MONEY LAUNDERING: AN ANALYTICAL APPROACH TO TECHNOLOGICAL SOLUTIONS

Chamodya Bandara^{1*}

*93chamodya93.cb@gmail.com**

ABSTRACT

Trade-based money laundering (TBML) is a significant financial crime that has been covered in the shadow of traditional money laundering and terrorist financing for a long time, until it reveals itself alarmingly with the rigorous anti-money laundering and counter-terrorist financing regulations imposed worldwide. The purpose of this paper is to analyze the deterrent impact TBML has on different sectors and identify the challenges experienced by financial institutions and regulatory bodies in combating TBML. The primary objective is to evaluate how emerging technologies can address these challenges effectively. Based on an in-depth literature review, this study examines the capabilities of novel technologies, such as AI, Distributed Ledger Technologies, Big Data Analytics, Automation, and Machine learning, to combat TBML. Research data was collected and analyzed using secondary quantitative research methodology in order to identify trends, patterns, and insights about TBML, its impact, challenges in detecting and investigating it, and the role of technology in addressing it. This paper emphasizes the importance of incorporating novel technologies to counter TBML effectively while providing practical recommendations to solve the hindrance confronted with the digitalization of the counter TBML sphere. The findings affirm that the application of novel technologies can considerably enhance the efficacy of detection and prevention strategies in enhancing the anti-TBML framework. This study also highlights the necessity of continuous innovation and collaboration among financial institutions, regulatory bodies, and technology providers to stay ahead of evolving TBML tactics.

Keywords: AI and Machine Learning, Anti-Money Laundering, Financial Crime Detection, Novel Technologies, Trade-Based Money Laundering

INTRODUCTION

“The front door of money laundering is the banking system... the government has done a pretty good job of closing the front door, but the back door- international trade- is wide open”- Kimberly Cane (Caine, 2015). Trade-based money laundering (TBML) is not a new concept of crime, and it has existed since the raise of trade (Butt et al., 2023). As stated in the above quote, the strict measures taken globally to counter money-based money laundering and counter terrorism (ML/FT) have made TBML an easy and appealing option for perpetrators seeking under regulated methods to launder their illicit proceeds. With the alarming number of TBML cases around the world, it was observed that the adverse effects of TBML are multifaceted, not only on a domestic scale but also globally. Thus, preventing TBML effectively has been a pivotal subject recently, and it is not without its own obstacles. With these challenges and given the complex nature of international trade, the world has become more attentive to the potential of novel technologies as an aid in the battle against TBML. This study aims to analyze the deterrent impact of TBML, its impact, and the challenges faced by financial institutions (FIs) and regulatory bodies and examine how the new tech solutions can be of help in combating TBML effectively by addressing those challenges. In particular, the objectives of this research are to provide an overview of TBML and its methodologies; analyze the impact of TBML on various sectors; identify the challenges in identifying and detecting TBML; evaluate the potential of novel technologies to address TBML effectively; assess the challenges of incorporating novel technologies into TBML; and finally, provide actionable recommendations for the implementation of these technologies.

LITERATURE REVIEW

When examining the literature written on this area, it was observed that there is a lack of academic articles written on both the TBML and the use of technology in combating TBML compared to the academic literature available on traditional money-based ML/FT. Most of the available sources on this subject area are the reports published by Financial Actions Task Force (FATF), international and regional finance organizations, and articles written by major tech companies that have developed related new technological solutions. The FATF defined TBML as *“the process of disguising the proceeds of crime and moving value through the use of trade transactions in an attempt to legitimate their illicit proceeds”* and includes misrepresenting the quantity, quality, and price of trade commodities as a few methods of this complex process of laundering (FATF, 2006). Given the complexity of this concept, this definition is not without criticism. Soudjin (Soudijn, 2014) points out that FATF has missed domestic trade as well as circumstances where TBML commits without any misrepresentation of trade data, and Cassara (Cassara, 2016) critiques FATF has solely focused on trade goods as an overall risk, and it has missed the risk involved with misrepresentations and fraudulent documents by trade legal, accounting, and marketing as well. Despite the disagreement over the definition, the deterrent impact and the recent increase of TBML

has been unanimously agreed upon and it has been explicitly shown in the works of Umar et al. (Umar et al., 202) and Iyer (Iyer, 2017). The report published by BAFT (BAFT, 2017) illustrates how the impact of TBML is not congested in an individual sector or individual country and the challenges faced in countering TBML. Sharif (Sharif, 2023), in his work and the published report on the MENA region (GCFFC MENA Chapter, 2022), have discussed the potential of novel technologies in combating TBML and have discussed a few novel technologies that could be of help in this regard. Further to this work, Wijesinghe (Wijesinghe, 2019) states in her article that trade finance faces challenge and suggests technology as a solution while emphasizing the ability of blockchain technology, among other solutions she has mentioned, to play a main role against TBML. FATF (FATF, 2021) has also discussed the potential of new technologies to combat TBML and the general challenges faced by these new technologies when incorporated with the existing system. The drawback here is that this work focuses especially on traditional money-based ML/FT and not TBML.

METHODOLOGY

Secondary quantitative research has been conducted in this research by mainly incorporating both primary and secondary sources in the relevant field. To gather and analyze the data, official reports, publications, journal articles, and articles have been collected by library research as well as through relevant official online platforms. The data gathered is examined to identify trends, patterns, and insights about TBML, its impact, challenges in detecting and investigating and the role of technology in addressing it.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Trade- Based Money Laundering

The FATF defines TBML as *“the process of disguising the proceeds of crime and moving value through the use of trade transactions in an attempt to legitimize their illicit origin.”* (FATF, 2006) As opposed to other trade-related offenses where the motive is to move the goods, the aim of TBML is to move the ill-gotten money through trade. In addition to the intricate nature of trade, the adoption of liberal policies regarding international financial markets and the rigorous implementation of rules and regulations to combat traditional money-based ML/FT have made criminals more attracted to TBML recently (Sivaguru & Tilakasiri, 2023).

TBML Typologies

Criminals and terrorist organizations have employed various methods to launder money through trade. Among those, below is a list of typologies that have been recognized and commonly used by the perpetrators. An understanding of these main methods of TBML is imperative to evaluate the challenges faced by financial institutions (FIs) and regulatory bodies.

Table 1: overview of TBML typologies: description and supporting data

Typology	Description	Supporting Data
Trade mis-invoicing	TBML through trade mis-invoicing occurs when importers and exporters deliberately falsify the stated value, quantity, quality or type of goods in invoices for trade transactions as a way to illicitly transfer value across international borders, evade tax or custom duties, hide profits, and to launder the money gains from criminal activities. The trade mis-invoicing majorly happens in two ways: (a) Under Invoicing – Invoicing a good or service below the fair market price, (b) Over Invoicing- Invoicing a good or service above the fair market price.	Trade mis-invoicing accounts for over 20% of international trade value between developing and developed countries and as per FATF this is the most common TBML method.
Multi invoicing	Criminals issue more than one invoice to the same international transaction. This enables the launderer to justify multiple payments for the shipment of same goods or delivery of services. To thwart detection, launderers use several banks to make the payments with the intention of making the whole process more complex.	In 2015, the Chinese anti-corruption authorities found that certain Chinese enterprises were using several invoices to mask their money outflows.
Fraudulent description of Trade Goods	Launderers misrepresent the quality or quantity of the goods or services. Ex: Exporter may ship a relatively inexpensive goods and invoice it as expensive good or an entirely different good.	Motor vehicle importers in Kenya and Uganda employed this method: the scam entailed bringing in brand-new luxury cars and filing import paperwork classifying them as second-hand in order to avoid paying import fees.
Phantom shipments	Criminals invoice a buyer for goods that are not sent. The buyer colludes and makes the payment as if the goods were shipped and received by creating and sending false documents.	In the well-known "Russian Laundromat" case involved phantom shipping along other fraudulent practices.
Black market Peso shipment	This was originally used to circumvent restrictive policies on PESCO exchange in some jurisdictions. A broker brings together willing sellers of large amount of USD with companies that have large demand for USD to launder the proceeds of criminal activities. It is a typology that combines an informal value transfer system with international trade transactions to achieve TBML.	Case Study: In 2019, US authorities revealed charges against a BMPE network that was assisting in the transfer of value from narcotics sales in the United States to Colombia via the export of electronics; the following sales of the

		electronics were then used to pay drug trafficking gangs.

Sources: (Global Financial Integrity, Fedesarrollo, TIK and ACODE, 2023), (FATF- Egmont Group, 2020), (The East African, 2016), (AML Watcher, 2023)

Impact of TBML

The influence of TBML has significant adverse effects on numerous parties, including but not limited to financial institutions (FIs), the governments, corporations, and societies at large (TraCCC, 2019). Further, given TBML's complex characteristics and the interconnected nature of international trade, the repercussions of TBML extend beyond an individual economy; they cut across national borders. When discussing the detrimental impact placed by TBML on the economy, TBML changes natural pricing in the market, and as a result, this will not only damage the integrity of financial systems, but it may also disrupt international trade flows or change fair competition. Thus, the growth of the economy is affected. Further, TBML threatens the stability of FIs by subjecting them to the laundering of illegal funds through trade finance. Apart from the damage caused to national security through the whole TBML process, it also poses a source for other illegal activities that threaten national security. Finally, since the proceeds of TBML are mostly used to promote many other illegal activities that could increase crime rates while affecting the whole society by making communities insecure and unstable.

Table 2: Adverse impact of TBML on various sectors

Sector	Impact	Quantitative Evidence
Financial Institutions (FIs)	Significant penalties, reputational damage, increased compliance costs	Global FIs have spent \$ 206.1 billion on financial crimes compliance.
Governments	Reduced revenue through tax evasion, weakened public trust in regulatory frameworks	Governments lose an estimated \$500 billion annually due to TBML-related tax evasion.
Corporations	Unfair competition, market distortions, potential business closures	TBML distorts international trade worth approximately \$1 trillion annually.
Societies	Increased crime rates, creation of insecure, unstable communities	Proceeds from TBML often finance organized crime, costing societies an estimated \$2.1 trillion annually.

Sources: (LexisNexis Risk Solutions, 2023), (Global Financial Integrity, 2021), (The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime), (World Economic Forum, 2021)

Challenges to prevent TBML

With its inherent complexity and its adoptability to exploit various sectors in an economy, TBML causes many adversities when it comes to its detecting and investigating it (PwC, 2016). Among the many challenges faced by FIs as well as regulatory bodies, a lack of awareness and understanding of TBML could be listed as one of the most discussed obstacles when it comes to preventing TBML. With regard to the lack of understanding of TBML, it is a well-known fact that FIs are only one actor, and there are many institutional actors involved in the trade transactions and these other actors are not bound by the same regulations imposed on FIs by FATF recommendations (except that they fall within the specific scope of business addressed by FATF, such as dealers in precious stones or metals) and their respective domestic regulatory systems. Second challenge is the volume of trade transactions (GCFFC MENA Chapter, 2022). With the high volume of trade transactions that happen through FIs daily, FIs do not possess the required resources and time to divulge each and every detail of a trade transaction in order to detect if there is any discrepancy in that particular trade transaction. The verification of details provided by non-resident customers related to trade transactions poses as the third challenge (IIF, 2017). An absence in a public registry makes it difficult, mainly for FIs, to verify address, business scope, income, and other customer-based details, making the due diligence process challenging. Apart from customer verification, another major issue arises is with the verification and authenticity of trade-related documents such as letters of credit, invoices, and copies of contracts. Mis-invoicing plays a major role in TBML, which arises from the difficulty faced by FIs in assessing the “fair price” of trading goods, which is the fourth challenge faced in the battle against TBML. Establishing a fair price for traded goods when FIs are handed over an indistinct description of the goods requires a significant resource, and the assessment mostly depends on open-source information, even though some trade commodities are not traded in public markets. Lastly, the lack of a universally accepted format or language imposed on trade transactions poses another major obstacle, as international trade involves many languages and many different formats of trade documents (PwC, 2016).

Role of technology in countering TBML

The potential of digital innovations in combating TBML has been recognized by the FATF, the global AML/CFT standard setter. As per them, the FATF is very keen to stay updated with the latest innovative technologies and business models in the financial sector and to make sure that the global standards are always up-to-date so that they can be used for "smart" financial sector regulation that both addresses risks and promotes responsible innovation (FATF, 2021).

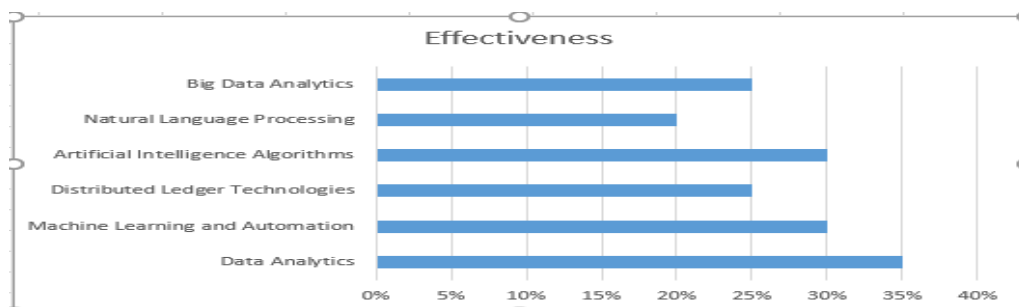
Tech trends in combating TBML

Data analytic technology coupled with automation and machine learning helps heavily in improving the detection of TBML addressing the challenge face through large volume of transactions and data (IIF, 2017). Smart algorithms are able to process this data, which includes trade documents, finances, deliveries, and emails. These algorithms also

have the ability to draw hidden patterns and anything else that the human eye might not come across. Automation with machine learning and real-time processing are the keys to the quick and proper handling of potential TBML incidents.

Distributed Ledger Technologies (DLT) provide an irreversible and transparent 'ledger' in which all the trade transactions are recorded. The DLT brings a decentralized platform for trade documentation making the processes more transparent and reducing the risk of fraud and misrepresentation in trade-based money laundering schemes (GCFFC MENA Chapter, 2022). Utilizing this DLT, we could effectively minimize the many challenges, such as evaluating "fair pricing", the cross-border nature of transactions, the extended trade cycles and verification of traded commodities. Blockchain technology, a type of DLT, aids in detecting false documents and documented details by allowing verification of trade-related documents, including contracts, in order to check their authenticity. The authenticity and integrity of trade documents have been achieved through blockchain technology's decentralized and encrypted ledger system, which makes the documents more transparent to all the parties involved in that specific trade transaction. This makes it easy for FIs and other regulatory bodies to verify the authenticity of the trade-related documents and thus detect potential TBML instances (Wijesinghe, 2019).

By using the potential of AI algorithms to go through a heavy volume of trade data to inspect any TBML red flags without deep human interaction to detect any TBML scenarios, FIs and regulatory bodies could effectively minimize the impact of the lack of resource persons issue (GCFFC MENA Chapter, 2022). Moreover, Generative AI aids in mitigating the lack of awareness and understanding of TBML by simulating various TBML cases, and thus, they will be able to improve training programs and enable personnel to detect the new patterns of financial crime more efficiently. Natural Language Processing (NLP) has the capability to understand the terms used in trade-related documents and emails through its algorithms, and it provides an automated analysis of trade-related documents, which makes it easy for FIs and regulatory bodies to verify the authenticity of the trade documents (IIF and Deloitte, 2019). Further, NLP has the ability to extract relevant information from various languages and formats, which helps streamline the due diligence process and makes it easy to detect any possible TBML cases. In the fight against TBML, stakeholders' efforts are addressed by big data analytics on a range of issues, such as the verification of trade-related information and details, the identification of mis-invoicing, and the analysis of diverse trade document formats and languages (IIF, 2017). In order to combat TBML cases effectively, big data analytics help FIs and regulatory bodies analyze TBML-related risk by processing a larger volume of trade data in a short time period.



Sources: (IIF, 2017), (IIF and Deloitte, 2019), (GCFFC MENA Chapter, 2022)

Figure 1: The advancement of novel technologies significantly enhances the effectiveness in combating TBML

Challenges in implementing novel technologies in anti-TBML systems

Despite the fact that novel technologies have the full potential to aid the fight against TBML, their implementation is not without challenges. First, the high costs associated with novel technologies pose one of the major challenges in this regard. These novel technologies are not only difficult to develop and buy but also to maintain, which results in creating barriers for some FIs as well as some third-world countries' regulatory bodies. Second, there are still some regulatory barriers, such as handing over physical documentation and paper-filled documentation, which make it difficult to integrate these novel technologies into the existing systems and utilize them effectively. Third, there is a lack of a proper experimenting environment in order to make FIs comfortable regarding their transformation to novel technologies and to reduce the associated risks. Fourth, since most of these technologies engage with sensitive personal and transactional data, there are some concerns regarding privacy and data protection. Fifth and finally, the challenge we face in integrating the novel technologies to combat TBML is the legal and ethical concerns that arise with these integrations, such as algorithmic bias, discrimination, and data privacy.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

From the above discussion, it can be seen that along the timeline, TBML has not received the attention it deserves compared to traditional money-based ML/FT. The discussion regarding the fight against TBML ascent strongly only very recently with the alarming rise of financial crimes occurring through trade transactions as a result of the deviation of money launders attraction to trade avenues with the implementation of rigorous measurements to battle ML/FT around the globe. With the complex nature of trade itself mixed with its international nature, the adverse effects of TBML can't be limited to individual jurisdictions or sectors. Thus, there is no doubt that TBML must be aggressively combated in order to minimize its negative impact, and from the above analysis, it can be concluded that the novel technologies have the required potential to address the challenges that FIs and regulatory bodies face to combat TBML effectively. As is often the case, the assistance provided by technology in the fight against TBML is not without its own set of challenges. Thus, addressing the challenges and risks involved with the efficient integration of novel technologies to combat TBML productively is a

task that falls upon all the global standard setters, international organizations, individual governments, FIs, and regulatory bodies.

In order to address the challenges mentioned in this paper with regard to the intergrading of novel technologies, below have been suggested as recommendations:

Shared investment may help reduce the cost factor associated with the application of novel technologies. This could be achieved domestically with private entities and government authorities, among regional governments or international organizations. Existing legislation and regulations must be reformed in order to facilitate digitalization efforts. Implementing a “sandbox” approach when integrating novel technologies so that FIs could test the new technologies without a risk of non-compliance for technical reasons. Novel technologies must ensure that they fully incorporate international standards of privacy, data protection, and cyber security. Legal and ethical dilemmas could be minimized by being transparent on how the algorithms are being used to combat TBML and establishing a mechanism for the purposes of auditing and accountability of algorithms, as well as implementing an ethical guideline and best practice on the usage of novel technologies in the combat against TBML.

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**THE IMPACT OF E-WASTE RECYCLING PROGRAMS ON ENVIRONMENTAL
SUSTAINABILITY: A STUDY ON URBAN RESIDENTS' AWARENESS AND
PARTICIPATION**

ABSTRACT

Electronic waste (e-waste) poses significant environmental challenges due to the rapid obsolescence of electronic devices. This study explores the impact of e-waste recycling programs on environmental sustainability by assessing urban residents' awareness and participation in Sri Lanka. It addresses a research gap by examining the effectiveness of recycling initiatives and public awareness campaigns. Adopting a positivist philosophy, this study employs a deductive approach and a case study strategy, focusing on data collected through surveys from medical faculty lecturers, doctors, and hospitality industry professionals, where e-waste is a significant concern. The cross-sectional design provides insights into current behaviors and attitudes towards e-waste recycling. Results show positive correlations between the adoption of e-waste recycling, investment in recycling infrastructure, public awareness campaigns, and environmental sustainability. Regression analysis indicates that these factors account for 35.6% to 37.1% of the variance in environmental sustainability. Key recommendations include implementing targeted public awareness campaigns through social media and community workshops and developing recycling infrastructure such as collection centers and mobile recycling units. These findings are crucial for decisionmakers and environmental advocates aiming to enhance e-waste management. Limitations include the study's cross-sectional design and focus on urban residents, which may limit generalizability. Future research should explore e-waste recycling in rural areas, long-term trends in recycling behavior, and the effectiveness of various awareness campaigns. This study contributes to the discourse on sustainable e-waste management by offering valuable insights and practical recommendations for improving e-waste recycling programs.

Keywords: E-Waste Recycling, Environmental Sustainability, Urban Residents, Public Awareness, Recycling Infrastructure

INTRODUCTION

Electronic waste, or e-waste, has become a significant environmental problem due to increasing electronic device consumption and rapid technological advancements. As people frequently upgrade their gadgets, discarded electronics pile up in landfills,

leading to environmental risks such as soil and water pollution from hazardous substances. This research explores how e-waste recycling programs can help manage this growing problem, focusing on the awareness and participation of urban residents in Sri Lanka.

The improper disposal of e-waste contributes to global environmental challenges. The rapid pace of technological change results in shorter device lifespans, leading to more waste. Traditional waste management systems often can't handle e-waste's unique composition, which includes valuable materials alongside hazardous ones. Addressing e-waste sustainably is crucial to prevent resource depletion and further environmental damage. This research aims to understand the complexities of e-waste management and identify sustainable solutions.

E-waste's environmental impact goes beyond local boundaries, affecting the entire planet. The problem has evolved as technology has advanced, highlighting the need for better waste management practices. This study delves into the historical context of e-waste and its implications for environmental sustainability. By understanding the behaviors and motivations of urban residents, the research seeks to find effective ways to encourage e-waste recycling and contribute to a broader discourse on sustainability and environmental health.

LITERATURE REVIEW

E-Waste Recycling and Sustainability

E-waste recycling adoption is a critical factor in sustainable e-waste management. A study by Adanu, Gbedemah, and Attah (2020) investigates the challenges of adopting sustainable e-waste management technologies in Agbogbloshie, Ghana. This research highlights the difficulties faced by the community in adopting sustainable practices and the barriers to recycling e-waste effectively.

Jain (2011) explores the adoption of need-based solutions for managing e-waste in India, emphasizing the importance of tailored approaches to address the specific challenges in Indian contexts. Through a combination of qualitative interviews, surveys, and case studies, the research offers insights into strategies that encourage stakeholders to adopt more sustainable e-waste management practices. A study by Ghisellini, Quinto, Passaro, and Ulgiati (2023) examines circular economy management of Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE) in Italian urban systems. It explores circular economy principles applied to urban e-waste management, providing practical lessons and best practices from Italian urban contexts. This research underscores the potential of circular economy approaches to drive sustainable e-waste management.

Recycling Infrastructure Investment (Independent Variable)

Investing in recycling infrastructure is crucial for sustainable waste management. Lakhan's study (2014) in Ontario, Canada, examines the link between municipal investments in promotion and education and recycling rate performance. By focusing on Ontario's proactive waste management, this study highlights how educational initiatives can improve recycling behaviors, demonstrating the significance of strategic investments. Another study by Bandhauer, Harrison, and Mouw (2021) discusses the economic benefits of investing in recycling infrastructure. The research explores how such investments can yield financial dividends, such as job creation and cost savings. By combining quantitative analysis and economic modeling, the study underscores the economic rationale for prioritizing recycling infrastructure.

The World Economic Forum's 2017 report, "Recycling our Infrastructure for Future Generations," emphasizes the importance of incorporating recycling practices into infrastructure development. The study advocates for a shift toward sustainability, demonstrating the benefits of a circular economy approach. Through case studies and policy recommendations, the report encourages industry leaders and policymakers to embrace recycling as a core principle in infrastructure planning and development.

Public Awareness Campaigns (Independent Variable)

Public awareness campaigns play a vital role in promoting sustainable practices. Borawska's study (2017) investigates their impact on driving sustainable development. The research focuses on the effectiveness of awareness campaigns in raising public awareness, changing behaviors, and fostering community engagement. Through a combination of theoretical analysis and empirical evidence, Borawska shows how these campaigns can be transformative in addressing environmental and social challenges. Sedek's study (2020) explores how social media platforms can be used to conduct plastic pollution awareness campaigns. This research examines the effectiveness of these campaigns in influencing public perception and behavior. Sedek's work provides insights into how social media can be a powerful tool for environmental advocacy and offers practical guidance for designing impactful campaigns. The study's methodology involves a combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches, including content analysis, surveys, and interviews.

From the above mentioned studies highlight the significance of public awareness campaigns in driving sustainable practices. They offer valuable insights into the strategies and practices that can make these campaigns successful, providing a framework for further research and application in the field of e-waste recycling and environmental sustainability.

Environmental Sustainability (Dependent Variable)

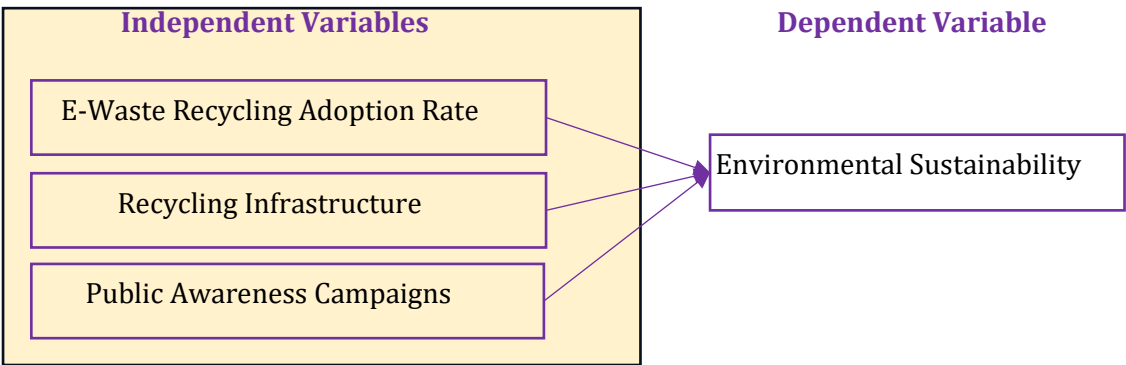
Environmental sustainability is a crucial factor in e-waste management. The study "E-waste Management for Environmental Sustainability: an Exploratory Study" by Mor et

al. (2021) explores the relationship between e-waste management practices and their impact on environmental sustainability. This research emphasizes the need for effective e-waste management strategies to mitigate environmental harm and foster sustainability. Another study, "A Global Perspective on E-waste Recycling" by Liu et al. (2022), provides a global view of e-waste recycling practices and their implications for environmental sustainability. The researchers analyze e-waste management across different regions, identifying successful approaches and areas for improvement. This global perspective offers valuable insights into the broader challenges and opportunities in e-waste management.

Tran and Salhofer's study (2016) titled "Analysis of Recycling Structures for E-waste in Vietnam" focuses on the recycling systems in Vietnam, highlighting the complexities and operational frameworks of the e-waste management sector. By examining the recycling structures in a developing country context, the study provides valuable information about the challenges and opportunities in building robust recycling systems.

The mentioned studies together underscore the importance of effective e-waste management for environmental sustainability. They offer valuable insights into the diverse challenges and potential solutions, guiding policymakers, practitioners, and researchers in their quest for sustainable e-waste management practices.

Conceptual Framework



(Source: Author Developed 2024)

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

METHODOLOGY

The methodology for this study adheres to the research onion framework, providing a structured approach to research design, data collection, and analysis. This methodology includes key elements such as research philosophy, approach, strategy, choice, time horizon, and data collection techniques, ensuring a comprehensive and systematic approach. The research philosophy guiding this study is positivism. This approach is characterized by a belief in empirical observation and statistical analysis to generate objective and generalizable knowledge. Given the goal of the study to quantify relationships between e-waste recycling programs and environmental sustainability, a positivist philosophy aligns well with the need for structured data collection and validation through statistical methods.

For the research approach, the study employs a deductive method. This approach begins with pre-established hypotheses regarding the relationship between e-waste recycling programs and environmental sustainability. Data collection is then directed at testing these hypotheses, allowing the researcher to confirm or refute the underlying theories. This deductive approach provides a clear framework for data analysis and interpretation. The research strategy is a case study, focusing on a specific urban context to explore the impact of e-waste recycling programs. This strategy is particularly useful for examining complex phenomena in real-world settings, providing a rich understanding of e-waste recycling behaviors and patterns. In terms of research choice, the study uses a mono-method approach, concentrating solely on quantitative data collection through surveys. This choice ensures consistency in data collection and simplifies the analysis process, allowing for straightforward interpretation of results.

The study uses a cross-sectional time horizon, which means that data is collected at a single point in time. This approach is appropriate for assessing the current state of e-waste recycling programs and their immediate impact on environmental sustainability and urban residents' behaviors. However, it is acknowledged that a longitudinal study could offer more comprehensive insights into long-term impacts. The primary data collection technique is the survey method, supplemented by qualitative interviews. Questionnaires are distributed to a diverse group of respondents, including medical faculty lecturers, doctors, professionals from the hospitality industry, and other industry experts. Interviews provide additional context to the quantitative findings, addressing potential response biases and enriching the overall analysis. Following above structured methodology, the research aims to offer statistically valid insights into the relationships between e-waste recycling programs and environmental sustainability. The consistent use of the research onion framework ensures a coherent approach, contributing to the broader discourse on sustainable practices and guiding policy development in the realm of e-waste management and environmental sustainability.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The study's results and discussion section summarizes the key findings from the descriptive analysis, correlation analysis, and regression analysis, focusing on the relationships between the independent variables (e-waste recycling adoption rate, recycling infrastructure investment, and public awareness campaigns) and the dependent variable (environmental sustainability).

Descriptive Analysis

The descriptive analysis offers an overview of the dataset's characteristics, including measures of central tendency and dispersion. Here's a summary of the descriptive statistics for the independent and dependent variables:

Table 1: Descriptive Analysis

Variable	Mean	Median	Mode	Standard Deviation	Variance	Skewness	Kurtosis
E-Waste Recycling Adoption Rate	4.13	4.00	5	1.13	1.28	-1.45	1.49
Recycling Infrastructure Investment	3.86	4.00	5	1.44	2.08	-1.12	-0.21
Public Awareness Campaigns	4.34	5.00	5	0.93	0.87	-1.77	4.78
Environmental Sustainability	4.18	4.00	5	1.03	1.06	-1.14	-0.24

(Source: Author Developed 2024)

The data shows a generally positive attitude towards e-waste recycling and environmental sustainability, with high mean and mode values. The skewness and kurtosis suggest asymmetry and peakedness, indicating a skew towards higher response values.

Correlation Analysis

The Pearson correlation coefficient was used to examine the relationships between the independent variables and the dependent variable. The results indicate moderate to strong positive relationships, with all p-values less than 0.01:

Table 2: Correlation Analysis

Independent Variable	Correlation with Environmental Sustainability	p-value
E-Waste Recycling Adoption Rate	0.604	0.000
Recycling Infrastructure Investment	0.616	0.000
Public Awareness Campaigns	0.616	0.000

(Source: Author Developed 2024)

Correlations			
		QM	SM
QM	Pearson Correlation	1	.604**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	77	77
SM	Pearson Correlation	.604**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	77	77
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).			

(Source: Author Developed 2024)

Figure 2: Correlation Analysis - QM/SM

Correlations			
		IM	SM
IM	Pearson Correlation	1	.616**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	77	77
SM	Pearson Correlation	.616**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	77	77
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).			

(Source: Author Developed 2024)

Figure 3: Correlation Analysis - IM/SM

Correlations			
		AM	SM
AM	Pearson Correlation	1	.605**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	77	77
SM	Pearson Correlation	.605**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	77	77
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).			

(Source: Author Developed 2024)

Figure 4: Correlation Analysis - AM/SM

The significant positive correlations suggest that higher e-waste recycling adoption, more recycling infrastructure investment, and effective public awareness campaigns are associated with increased environmental sustainability.

Regression Analysis

Linear regression analysis assessed the predictive power of the independent variables on environmental sustainability. The results indicate a moderate to strong proportion of variance explained by these independent variables:

Table 3: Regression Analysis

Independent Variable	R-squared	Adjusted R-squared	Standard Error of the Estimate
E-Waste Recycling Adoption Rate	0.604	0.356	0.555438
Recycling Infrastructure Investment	0.616	0.371	0.549016
Public Awareness Campaigns	0.605	0.357	0.554994

(Source: Author Developed 2024)

These results suggest that these independent variables can explain between 35.6% and 37.1% of the variance in environmental sustainability. The lower standard errors indicate reasonably accurate predictions. These results underscore the importance of promoting e-waste recycling, investing in recycling infrastructure, and conducting effective public awareness campaigns to enhance environmental sustainability. These findings can guide policymakers and environmental advocates in formulating strategies

to improve environmental sustainability through targeted e-waste management practices.

CONCLUSION/RECOMMENDATIONS

This study has explored the impact of e-waste recycling programs on environmental sustainability, focusing on key factors such as e-waste recycling adoption rate, recycling infrastructure investment, and public awareness campaigns. The findings from the descriptive, correlation, and regression analyses suggest significant positive relationships between these independent variables and environmental sustainability.

A strong correlation between e-waste recycling adoption and environmental sustainability highlights the importance of promoting recycling practices. Investments in recycling infrastructure were also shown to have a positive impact, indicating the need for continued support for developing robust recycling systems. Additionally, the relationship between public awareness campaigns and environmental sustainability underscores the value of effective communication in driving eco-friendly behaviors.

Based on these findings, the following recommendations are proposed

Enhance Public Awareness Campaigns: Increase investment in public awareness campaigns through specific initiatives such as targeted social media campaigns that provide educational content and updates on recycling opportunities, and community workshops that educate residents on proper e-waste disposal and the environmental benefits of recycling. These campaigns can also include school programs and local events to engage different demographics.

Invest in Recycling Infrastructure: Prioritize the development of accessible recycling infrastructure by establishing convenient e-waste collection centers in urban areas and deploying mobile recycling units to reach underserved communities. These infrastructures should be designed to handle a wide range of electronic items and provide clear instructions on how to recycle various types of e-waste.

Promote E-Waste Recycling: Implement incentives such as tax rebates or discounts for individuals and businesses that actively participate in e-waste recycling programs. Community engagement programs can also include e-waste recycling drives, where residents can drop off their old electronics at designated locations, and competitions to encourage participation and raise awareness.

These recommendations provide a roadmap for promoting environmental sustainability through improved e-waste management, offering practical solutions for policymakers, stakeholders, and environmental advocates.

This study is limited by its cross-sectional design, potential response biases, and its focus on urban residents in Sri Lanka. These limitations should be considered when

interpreting the results, and future research should aim to address these gaps. Future research could explore the impact of e-waste recycling in rural areas, examine long-term trends in recycling behavior, and investigate the effectiveness of different types of awareness campaigns.

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INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES (ICT) RELATED FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH ORGANIZATIONAL PERFORMANCE: A STUDY OF SRI LANKAN INSURANCE SECTOR

W. Asanga K. Muneendradasa^{1*} and Thepul N.D.S. Ginige²

¹ Faculty of Graduate Studies, University of Colombo, Colombo, Sri Lanka

² ESOF Metro Campus, Colombo, Sri Lanka

*asanga88@hotmail.com**

ABSTRACT

This study examines the impact of ICT factors on the organizational performance of Sri Lankan insurance companies. Focusing on suitable ICT resources, ICT competency of employees, and ease of access/user-friendliness of existing setups, it analyzes employee perceptions within the sector. The primary objectives of this study were to identify ICT-related factors influencing organizational performance, to assess the perceived impact of these factors by employees, and to study the relationship between the ICT related factors and the organizational performance. The study uses a quantitative approach, utilizing data from structured questionnaires collected from employees of major insurance firms in Sri Lanka. Multiple regression analysis revealed a moderately strong correlation between ICT factors and organizational performance, with significant relationships observed for ICT resources and system usability, but not for employee competency. The study acknowledges limitations, including potential biases from convenience sampling and the sole reliance on quantitative data, which may not fully capture the complexity of ICT impacts. Practical recommendations include implementing tailored ICT training programs, prioritizing user-friendly systems, and establishing feedback mechanisms for continuous improvement. These steps are essential for optimizing ICT integration and enhancing organizational performance. The findings contribute to the understanding of ICT's role in the insurance sector, offering guidance for stakeholders and suggesting directions for further research on the long-term effects of ICT integration and emerging technologies. This study emphasizes the need for continuous learning and development to maximize ICT benefits, aligning with positive perceptions of its influence on organizational performance.

Keywords: ICT Integration, Organizational Performance, Sri Lankan Insurance Sector

INTRODUCTION

Information And Communication Technologies (ICT), a crucial and evolving domain, encompasses technologies facilitating information storage, retrieval, manipulation, and transmission electronically. It includes hardware, communication devices, and applications like computer hardware, software, and network infrastructure (Government of Western Australia, 2016). Fadun (2013) highlights the critical role of information and communication throughout history, noting their transformational impact on personal and business communications. In the insurance sector of Sri Lanka, where organizations are transitioning from paper-based operations, understanding the ICT factors influencing organizational performance is vital. The primary research objective was to study the effect of ICT related factors on the organizational performance of the Sri Lankan insurance sector companies. Thus, the study attempted to address the following research key questions: What ICT-related factors impact organizational performance? How do employees in the Sri Lankan insurance sector perceive these ICT factors and their influence on organizational performance? Is there a significant relationship between the identified ICT factors and the organizational performance of Sri Lankan insurance organizations? These objective and questions guide the investigation into the role of ICT in enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of insurance firms in Sri Lanka. This study's significance lies in its potential to reveal the relationship between ICT factors and organizational performance in Sri Lanka's insurance industry, potentially leading to cost-saving ICT adoptions. Moreover, it will aid stakeholders in making informed investment decisions and empower insurance holders to select organizations with secure and efficient information and communication systems, thus benefiting businesses, investors, the public, and academia.

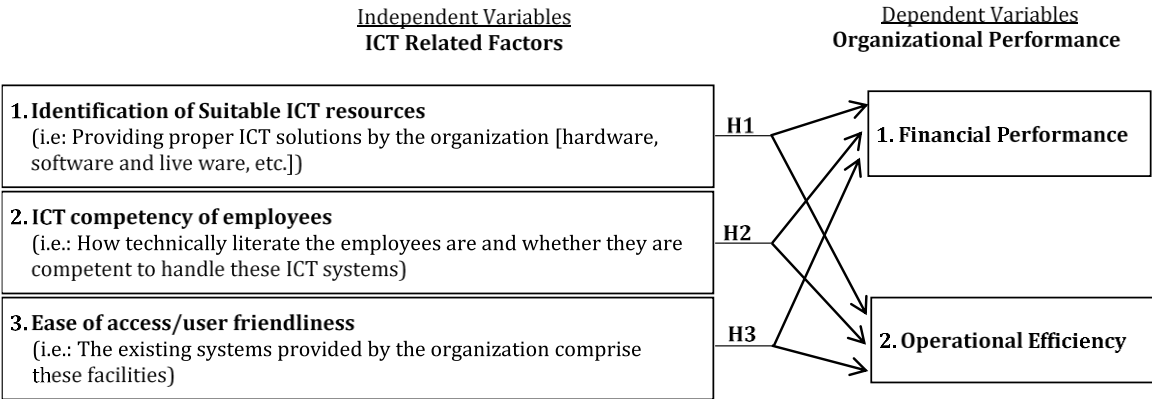
LITERATURE REVIEW

The rise of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has transformed global business operations, emphasizing communication as vital for organizational survival. The University of Nairobi (2017) emphasizes the importance of secure communication methods, highlighting the potential impact of data loss on organizations. Since its inception in the late 1800s, the insurance industry has heavily relied on meticulous ICT management for its functioning. In today's digital era, information is critical for insurance organizations, driving the need for efficient management and secure communication channels. Traditional paper-based methods often led to delays in claim processing and resource wastage, but with ICT, processes have been streamlined, enabling quicker access to information and improved customer service. Sapa, Phunde & Godbole (2014) underscore ICT's role in enhancing living standards within the insurance sector, particularly through e-insurance, which streamlines interactions with customers. ICT also facilitates Customer Relationship Management (CRM), crucial for insurers aiming for market dominance, as noted by Bazini & Madani (2015).

Sri Lanka's insurance sector has witnessed technological advancements, as major players like Sri Lanka Insurance Corporation Ltd and Janashakthi Insurance Co. Ltd. embrace advanced technology to navigate evolving market conditions, signifying the industry's digital transformation (Perera, 2017). Empirical studies by the University of Nairobi (2017), and Fadun (2013) confirm ICT's positive impact on organizational performance within the insurance sector. While ICT adoption requires a balance between security measures and organizational performance, breakthrough technologies like Artificial Intelligence and Internet of Things promise to revolutionize industry practices (Institute of International Finance, 2016). However, realizing ICT's full potential relies on human resources, with regular training essential to ensure employees maximize ICT's benefits (Neirotti & Paolucci, 2007).

Conceptual Framework and Hypothesis Development

Past literature shows that ICTs used in insurance organizations impact organizational performance. This study’s conceptual framework explains the relationship between the selected independent variables (ICT related factors) and the dependent variable (organizational performance). Based on the literature, three independent variables; identifying the suitable ICT resources, ICT competency of Insurance sector employees, and the ease of access/user friendliness of the existing technology setup, were selected. Organizational performance was measured using “financial performance” and “operational efficiency” (Kimani, 2015). Figure 1 illustrates the Conceptual Model adopted in this study.



(Source: Author Developed 2024)

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

The following hypotheses were developed based on that assumption.

H1: A significant relationship exists between identifying the suitable ICT resources and the organizational performance of the Sri Lankan insurance organizations

H2: A significant relationship exists between the ICT competency of Insurance sector employees and the organizational performance of the Sri Lankan insurance organizations

H3: A significant relationship exists between ease of access/user friendliness of the ICT solutions used in the organization and the organizational performance of the Sri Lankan insurance organizations

METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a quantitative approach to gauge employee perception regarding selected ICT factors and their impact on organizational performance within Sri Lankan Insurance Sector Organizations. Categorical data from Sri Lankan insurance firms were collected and analyzed for this purpose. Similar research by Fadun (2013) examined the Nigerian and Maltese insurance sectors, respectively. The sample selection and data collection process mirrored the approaches by Kimani (2015) and Sapa, Phunde & Godbole (2014). Primary data were gathered directly from respondents (Fadun, 2013; University of Nairobi, 2017). The entire workforce of Sri Lanka's Insurance Sector Organizations under the IBSL registry was considered as the population. This mirrors Kimani's (2015) methodology of considering all Kenyan Public Serving employees as the population. Convenience sampling was employed due to the absence of a clear total population count. Following the KPMG report (2018), twelve insurance organizations, selected based on market share, served as sample sites. The method aligns with Bazini & Madani's (2015) approach in Albania. Electronically administered structured questionnaires were used to collect data from respondents, a method also employed by Fadun (2013) and University of Nairobi (2017). Multiple regression analysis, facilitated by SPSS software, was carried out to elucidate relationships between independent and dependent variables.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Descriptive Statistics: The majority of respondents were aged 40-59, with 90% being male. Most organizations had over 10 branches island-wide and their frequently used communication methods included company web platforms, email, and internet facilities.

Analysis of Employee Perception: As per Table 1, the mean values for employee perception towards suitable ICT resources, ICT competency among insurance sector employees, and ease of access/user-friendliness of existing setups, were respectively 3.90 (± 0.09), 3.81 (± 0.08) and 4.00 (± 0.06), which indicates a positive outlook. The employees' perception towards the dependent variables also are positive.

Table 1: Employee perception towards the effect of ICT related factors has on the operational efficiency of the organization

Variable		Mean	SD
Independent Variables	▪Identifying suitable ICT resources	3.90	0.09
	▪ICT competency of Insurance sector employees	3.81	0.08
	▪Ease of access/user friendliness of the existing setup	4.00	0.06
Dependent Variables	▪Financial performance	3.63	0.06
	▪Operational efficiency	4.05	0.09

(Source: Author Developed 2024)

Hypothesis Testing: Figure 2 depicts the regression analyses results. In Figure 2(a) of financial performance, the correlation coefficient (R) is 0.750 indicating a moderately strong relationship between dependent and independent variables. The R^2 value, at 0.563, signifies that 56.3% of the variance in financial performance is explained by employee perception of ICT-related factors. Through ANOVA testing, a significant relationship ($p = 0.000$) was found between financial performance and ICT-related factors, with individual variable analysis confirming the impact of ICT resources and ease of access/user-friendliness. However, there was no evidence of a significant relationship between financial performance and ICT competency of employees.

Based on Figure 2(b) for operational efficiency, a strong relationship between the dependent and independent variables was observed, with R being 0.868. Additionally, the R^2 value of 0.753 suggests that 75.3% of the variance in operational efficiency is explained by employee perception of ICT-related factors. The ANOVA table, using a p-value approach, confirms a significant relationship between the dependent variable and the independent variables at a 95% significance level. Further analysis of individual variables using the coefficients table reveals that perception of ICT resources and ease of access significantly affect operational efficiency, while perception of ICT competency does not. At a 5% significance level, the p-values indicate a significant relationship between operational efficiency and ICT resources as well as ease of access, but not with ICT competency.

Model Summary			
Multiple R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Apparent Prediction Error
.750	.563	.529	.437

Dependent Variable: Financial Performance
Predictors: ICT Type, ICT Competency of Employees, Ease of Access

ANOVA					
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	56.277	7	8.040	16.916	.000
Residual	43.723	92	.475		
Total	100.000	99			

Dependent Variable: Financial Performance
Predictors: ICT Type, ICT Competency of Employees, Ease of Access

Coefficients					
	Standardized Coefficients		df	F	Sig.
	Beta	Bootstrap (1000) Estimate of Std. Error			
ICT Type	.288	.143	3	4.029	.010
ICT Competency of Employees	-.045	.212	1	.046	.831
Ease of Access	.567	.156	3	13.228	.000

Dependent Variable: Financial Performance

(a)

Model Summary			
Multiple R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Apparent Prediction Error
.868	.753	.740	.247

Dependent Variable: Operational Efficiency
Predictors: ICT Type, ICT Competency of Employees, Ease of Access

ANOVA					
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	75.274	5	15.055	57.234	.000
Residual	24.726	94	.263		
Total	100.000	99			

Dependent Variable: Operational Efficiency
Predictors: ICT Type, ICT Competency of Employees, Ease of Access

Coefficients					
	Standardized Coefficients		df	F	Sig.
	Beta	Bootstrap (1000) Estimate of Std. Error			
ICT Type	.369	.079	1	21.539	.000
ICT Competency of Employees	.062	.102	1	.369	.545
Ease of Access	.731	.089	3	67.587	.000

Dependent Variable: Operational Efficiency

(b)

(Source: Author Developed 2024)

Figure 2: Categorical regression results for (a) Financial Performance of the insurance sector organizations and (b) Operational Efficiency of the insurance sector organizations

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that insurance firms should implement regular, customized training programs that focus on both basic and advanced ICT skills tailored to address the actual needs. Organizations must prioritize user-friendly systems to optimize performance and regularly updating and maintaining ICT infrastructure to ensure it meets current technological standards is essential. Furthermore, establishing a feedback mechanism where employees can report issues and suggest improvements can help in continuously refining ICT systems. Organizations should also develop clear ICT usage policies and provide resources for continuous learning and development.

Limitations & Further Studies

This study acknowledges several limitations that must be considered. The sample size and the convenience sampling method employed may limit the generalizability of the findings, as it may not accurately represent the broader population of the Sri Lankan insurance sector. Potential biases in the sample selection could have influenced the results. Furthermore, this study solely relies on quantitative data, and there is a chance that crucial factors which only could be identified through a qualitative approach may have been unknowingly neglected by the researcher. Additionally, the study's focus on

the specific context of the Sri Lankan insurance sector means that the findings may not be applicable to other sectors or regions.

In order to mitigate the limitations discussed, future research should adopt a more rigorous sampling method, such as stratified or random sampling, to enhance the representativeness of the results. Also, it is recommended to incorporate qualitative data, such as interviews and focus groups, to provide deeper insights into the nuances of ICT implementation and its effects. Moreover, there are potential gaps that future studies could explore, such as the long-term effects of ICT integration and the role of emerging technologies in enhancing organizational performance. By addressing these areas, future research can strengthen the academic field's understanding of ICT's influence on organizational performance and provide more comprehensive guidance for practitioners.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study examines the impact of ICT factors on the performance of Sri Lankan insurance organizations. It identifies key factors—ICT resources, employee competency, and system usability—and analyzes employee perceptions. Findings suggest a positive correlation between suitable ICT resources and organizational performance. However, there is inconclusive evidence regarding employee competency's impact.

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EFFECTIVENESS OF REMOTE WORKING ON REDUCING CARBON EMISSION WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO ABC BANK IN KURUNEGALA

Rakeeb Rizvi^{1*}, N.M.N.Y.K. Nawarathne², and I.G.S.S.K. Karunadasa³

^{1,2,3} Information Technology, University of Moratuwa, Sri Lanka

*2rizvirakeeb@gmail.com**

ABSTRACT

This study investigates the impact of remote work on carbon emissions reduction at ABC Bank in Kurunegala, Sri Lanka, focusing on sustainability in the banking sector. Using a positivist approach and deductive methodology, primary data was collected via surveys from 53 employees. The research examines how remote work policies influence environmental outcomes, revealing significant reductions in carbon emissions through decreased commuting costs, changes in employee food choices, and implications for digital infrastructure. Statistical analyses, including correlation and regression, demonstrate weak but statistically significant positive relationships between remote work practices and reduced carbon emissions, explaining a 20% variance. The findings underscore remote work's effectiveness in mitigating environmental impact within organizational settings. The study concludes with recommendations for ABC Bank and similar institutions to optimize remote work policies, enhance digital infrastructure, and promote eco-friendly practices among employees. These strategies aim to advance sustainability goals in the banking sector, emphasizing the role of remote work in achieving environmental stewardship and corporate responsibility. By leveraging remote work to reduce carbon footprints and foster sustainable practices, organizations can contribute meaningfully to global sustainability efforts. This research contributes insights into the practical implementation of remote work policies to achieve environmental benefits, thereby setting a precedent for sustainable practices within the banking industry.

Keywords: Banking Sector, Carbon Emissions Reduction, Remote Work, Sustainability

Introduction

The rising popularity of remote work, especially in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, presents a significant opportunity to reduce carbon emissions. This study focuses on evaluating the impact of remote work on carbon emissions reduction at ABC Bank in Kurunegala (ABC), situated in Sri Lanka. By examining remote work policies, analyzing emissions data, and understanding employee attitudes, the research aims to contribute valuable insights into promoting sustainability and environmentally friendly practices, particularly within the banking industry.

The banking sector plays a vital role in the economy and can significantly influence environmental outcomes. Banks, with their extensive office networks and substantial employee commutes, offer a unique opportunity to assess the impact of remote work on carbon emissions. As a prominent institution in Kurunegala, ABC Bank serves as an ideal case study to explore sustainable practices that can be applied broadly within the financial sector.

The rationale for selecting ABC Bank in Kurunegala as the research subject stems from several key factors. Firstly, the banking sector plays a vital role in the economy and can influence environmental outcomes significantly. Studying how remote work affects carbon emissions in this setting can uncover best practices and potential challenges for other financial institutions. Additionally, Kurunegala's unique geographic characteristics may influence the impact of remote work on carbon emissions, making it an ideal location for investigation.

Current data shows Kurunegala's significant carbon emissions, driven by transportation and urbanization, with notable per capita levels compared to Colombo and Kandy. This highlights the potential of remote work policies to reduce transportation-related emissions, making Kurunegala an ideal study location.

ABC Bank's prominence within the community and its size make it an excellent case study, with findings likely to have broader industry implications. By exploring how remote work can lower carbon footprints and align with global sustainability targets, this research can aid ABC Bank in developing targeted strategies for environmental responsibility while complying with sustainability goals.

The study's significance extends beyond ABC Bank, contributing to broader environmental sustainability efforts, setting an example for the banking industry, informing policymakers, enhancing employee well-being and job satisfaction, improving public perception and loyalty, realizing long-term cost savings, and aligning with global sustainable development goals.

The research location, Kurunegala, Sri Lanka, specifically focuses on ABC Bank's branch in the city. The scope encompasses examining remote work policies and implementation, analyzing carbon emissions data, understanding employee

perspectives, and assessing sustainability implications. While the research faces constraints such as data availability, sample size limitations, time and resource constraints, organizational cooperation, geographical considerations, subjective responses, external factors, and validity concerns, careful planning and methodological rigor aim to mitigate these challenges.

Overall, the research objectives center on understanding the effect of remote work on reducing carbon emissions, including its impact on employee food and accommodation, commuting costs, and digital infrastructure. The sub-objectives of this research include examining the effect of remote working on reducing carbon emissions via employee food and accommodation, commuting costs, and digital infrastructure. These aspects are integral to understanding the broader impact of remote work practices on environmental sustainability and can provide actionable insights for ABC Bank in Kurunegala and similar organizations aiming to adopt eco-friendly work policies.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Table 18: Literature review

Main Topic	Source	Findings
Carbon Emission	(Hickman, 2012)	Telecommuting reduces vehicle emissions and traffic congestion, potentially lowering carbon emissions.
	(E.D.V, et al., 2020)	The net effect of remote work on carbon emissions requires comparing decreased commuting time vs increased use of digital resources, essential for promoting eco-friendly practices.
Effect of remote working	(Longqi, et al., 2020)	Remote work has the potential to reduce carbon emissions, but its impact on digital tools must be considered for a comprehensive understanding.
	(Hickman & Banister, 2012)	Widespread telecommuting could significantly decrease transportation-related carbon dioxide emissions.
Effect of remote working on reducing carbon emission	(Bradley, Eric, & Samuel, 2019)	Remote work policies can affect employee commute patterns and office space consumption, impacting emissions.

via employee food and accommodation	(Meier, et al., 2020)	Remote work can significantly decrease the carbon footprint associated with employee food and lodging, contributing to sustainability.
	(Suman K. & Jean-Daniel M., 2018)	Remote work reduces commute-related fuel use, aligning with environmental goals and reducing the organization's carbon footprint.
via employee commuting cost	(Ma, 2015)	Remote work's alignment with environmentally friendly goals reduces the organization's carbon footprint, especially through decreased fuel use.
Digital Infrastructure and Transformation	(Satish & Mike, 2023)	Digitization, facilitated by remote work, reshapes traditional processes and outcomes, requiring interdisciplinary approaches to understand its implications.

(Source: Author Developed 2024)

The conceptual framework of this study examines the relationship between carbon emissions as the dependent variable and three independent variables: remote working's effects on employee food and accommodation, commuting cost, and digital infrastructure implications. It seeks to understand how remote work influences carbon emissions through changes in employee sustenance and housing, reduced commuting-related fuel use and vehicle emissions, and the environmental consequences of digital tools and technologies. By analyzing these factors, the study aims to quantify the potential reduction in carbon emissions, offering insights into promoting eco-friendly work models and sustainability practices in organizations adopting remote work.

This study explores how remote work impacts carbon emissions at ABC Bank in Kurunegala through employee food and accommodation choices, commuting costs, and digital infrastructure implications. It theorizes potential changes in these areas based on literature, without direct measurements. Commuting costs are inferred from existing research on remote work's transportation effects, while digital infrastructure implications are discussed using secondary data and models. Carbon emissions, the dependent variable, are estimated based on these factors to inform sustainable practices within organizational contexts.

METHODOLOGY

The research methodology employed a multi-layered conceptual framework known as the Research Onion, developed by Saunders et al., to guide the creation and execution of empirical studies by delineating the complexities inherent in research. This framework incorporates philosophical assumptions like positivism, interpretivism, and realism, which significantly influence research design, methodologies, and data processing. For this study, positivism was chosen as the research philosophy due to its emphasis on empirical observation, quantifiable data, and statistical analysis, aligning well with the research question on the impact of remote working on reducing carbon emissions. The choice of positivism facilitated the identification of clear patterns and correlations from numerical data related to variables such as carbon emissions, employee food choices, commuting costs, and digital infrastructure implications.

In terms of the research approach, a deductive methodology was selected to validate existing theories and hypotheses related to the research topic. This approach provided a structured method for hypothesis testing, ensuring a systematic investigation of predefined variables and their relationships. The research methodological choice involved a mono-method quantitative approach using surveys conducted through Google Forms, allowing for precise data collection, statistical analysis, and pattern identification from a diverse participant pool, effectively addressing the study's objectives.

Data collection was carried out using primary data obtained through Google Forms surveys, enabling direct engagement with participants and tailored information relevant to the research objectives. Secondary data was collected from internet sources, offering up-to-date information pertinent to the study. Google Forms was chosen as the primary data collection method due to its accessibility, cost-effectiveness, user-friendliness, real-time capabilities, data security features, integration capabilities, and overall versatility. The population for this study consists of ABC Bank staff in Kurunegala, with a total population size of 200 and a sample size of 53, justified through calculations ensuring a representative subset for robust statistical analysis and inference.

The research methodology encompassed several crucial components for understanding the impact of remote working on carbon emissions at ABC Bank in Kurunegala. Descriptive and inferential analyses were employed for data analysis, providing insights into data features, predictions about the broader population, and relationships between variables. A meticulously designed sampling framework ensured representative subsets for analysis using simple random sampling. The data collection instrument, a Google Forms survey, was selected for its adaptability, ease of use, and data validation features. Variables were operationalized using Likert scale questions, and ethical considerations were prioritized to maintain a respectful research environment.

Validity, reliability, and generalizability were addressed through rigorous methods such as reliability analysis, validity checks, and considerations for broader applicability of findings. These methodological approaches aimed to enhance the credibility, trustworthiness, and relevance of the research outcomes in the context of sustainability and remote work practices in banking institutions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The data analysis phase of our research study delved into key demographic variables, revealing insightful patterns and trends. Among the respondents, the age group of 18 to 25 years constituted the majority, comprising 55.7% of participants, followed by individuals aged 46 to 55 years and those between 26 to 35 years, each representing 11.4% of the sample. Gender distribution showed a predominance of males at 66.67%, while females accounted for 33.33% of respondents. In terms of educational qualifications, 29.8% of participants held a bachelor's degree, 21.1% had a master's degree or higher, 26.3% pursued some college or vocational training, and 22.8% completed high school or lower. These demographic insights provided a foundational understanding of the study's participant characteristics and their relevance to the research objectives.

Moving to the analysis of independent variables, the impact of remote working on employee food choices showed varying levels of agreement among respondents. Statements related to this impact ranged from mean values of 2.68 to 3.19, indicating a moderate level of agreement overall. Similarly, the impact of remote working on commuting costs demonstrated mean values ranging from 2.95 to 3.26, signifying a tendency towards agreement among participants. Additionally, the impact of remote working on digital infrastructure implications exhibited mean values ranging from 2.65 to 3.16, again indicating a general agreement with these statements. These descriptive analyses provided nuanced insights into how respondents perceived and experienced the impacts of remote working on different aspects.

The independent variables were measured using Likert scale questions, with responses ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The analysis revealed that the impact of remote working on employee food choices had mean values ranging from 2.68 to 3.19, indicating a moderate level of agreement. The standard deviations for these statements varied, reflecting the diversity of responses. For instance, the standard deviation for the impact on employee food choices ranged from 0.85 to 1.02, highlighting variability in participant opinions. This approach ensures that the data accurately reflects the range of perspectives within the sample.

Correlations			
		D- Average	RSO1- Average
D- Average	Pearson Correlation	1	.326*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.013
	N	57	57
RSO1- Average	Pearson Correlation	.326*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.013	
	N	57	57

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

(Source: Generated from SPSS)

Figure 7: Correlation analysis for Impact of Remote Working via Changes in Employee Food

The correlation analysis between the Impact of Remote Working via Changes in Employee Food (RSO1) and Carbon Emission shows a Pearson correlation coefficient of 0.326*, indicating a weak positive relationship.

Correlations			
		D- Average	RSO2- Average
D- Average	Pearson Correlation	1	.423**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.001
	N	57	57
RSO2- Average	Pearson Correlation	.423**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	
	N	57	57

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

(Source: Generated from SPSS)

Figure 8: Correlation analysis for Impact of Remote Working via Changes in Commuting Cost

Similarly, the correlation between Impact of Remote Working via Changes in Commuting Cost (RSO2) and Carbon Emission reveals a Pearson correlation coefficient of 0.423**, suggesting another weak positive relationship.

Correlations			
		D- Average	RSO3- Average
D- Average	Pearson Correlation	1	.321 [*]
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.015
	N	57	57
RSO3- Average	Pearson Correlation	.321 [*]	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.015	
	N	57	57

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

(Source: Generated from SPSS)

Figure 9: Correlation analysis for Impact of Remote Working via Changes in Digital Infrastructure Implications

Additionally, the correlation between Impact of Remote Working via Changes in Digital Infrastructure Implications (RSO3) and Carbon Emission displays a Pearson correlation coefficient of 0.321*, indicating a weak positive relationship.

Regarding the regression analyses, the relationship between Carbon Emission and Remote Working explains 20% of the variation in Carbon Emission, with a significant relationship denoted by a significance value of 0.008.

Variables Entered/Removed ^a			
Model	Variables Entered	Variables Removed	Method
1	RSO1- Average ^b	.	Enter

a. Dependent Variable: D- Average

b. All requested variables entered.

Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.326 ^a	.107	.090	.751

a. Predictors: (Constant), RSO1- Average

ANOVA^a

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	3.693	1	3.693	6.556	.013 ^b
	Residual	30.986	55	.563		
	Total	34.679	56			

a. Dependent Variable: D- Average

b. Predictors: (Constant), RSO1- Average

Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients	Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.568	.490		3.199	.002
	RSO1- Average	.416	.163	.326	2.560	.013

a. Dependent Variable: D- Average

(Source: Generated from SPSS)

Figure 10: Regression analysis for Impact of Remote Working via Changes in Employee Food

Similarly, the relationship between Carbon Emission and Impact of Remote Working via Changes in Employee Food (RSO1) explains 10.7% of the variation in Carbon Emission, with a significant relationship indicated by a significance value of 0.013.

Variables Entered/Removed^a

Model	Variables Entered	Variables Removed	Method
1	RSO2-Average ^b		Enter

a. Dependent Variable: D- Average

b. All requested variables entered.

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.423 ^a	.179	.164	.719

a. Predictors: (Constant), RSO2- Average

ANOVA^a

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	6.219	1	6.219	12.019	.001 ^b
	Residual	28.460	55	.517		
	Total	34.679	56			

a. Dependent Variable: D- Average

b. Predictors: (Constant), RSO2- Average

Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients	Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.445	.401		3.599	.001
	RSO2- Average	.441	.127	.423	3.467	.001

a. Dependent Variable: D- Average

(Source: Generated from SPSS)

Figure 11: Regression analysis for Impact of Remote Working via Changes in Commuting Cost

Likewise, the relationship between Carbon Emission and Impact of Remote Working via Changes in Commuting Cost (RSO2) explains 17.9% of the variation in Carbon Emission, with a significant relationship highlighted by a significance value of 0.001.

Variables Entered/Removed^a

Model	Variables Entered	Variables Removed	Method
1	RSO3-Average ^b	.	Enter

a. Dependent Variable: D- Average

b. All requested variables entered.

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.321 ^a	.103	.087	.752

a. Predictors: (Constant), RSO3- Average

ANOVA^a

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	3.584	1	3.584	6.340	.015 ^b
	Residual	31.095	55	.565		
	Total	34.679	56			

a. Dependent Variable: D- Average

b. Predictors: (Constant), RSO3- Average

Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.731	.435		3.984	.0
	RSO3- Average	.357	.142	.321	2.518	.0

a. Dependent Variable: D- Average

(Source: Generated from SPSS)

Figure 12: Regression analysis for Impact of Remote Working via Changes in Digital Infrastructure Implications

Lastly, the relationship between Carbon Emission and Impact of Remote Working via Changes in Digital Infrastructure Implications (RSO3) explains 10.3% of the variation in Carbon Emission, with a significant relationship indicated by a significance value of 0.015. The study's hypotheses were supported, affirming that remote working indeed has a measurable effect on reducing carbon emissions at ABC Bank in Kurunegala. Overall, the data analysis phase provided comprehensive insights into participant

demographics, perceptions, and the interplay between remote work practices and environmental sustainability, contributing significantly to the study's objectives and broader research domain.

The analysis of significance levels and hypothesis acceptance for each variable revealed the following results: Carbon Emission had a significance value in regression of 0.008, leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis (H0) and acceptance of the alternative hypothesis (H1). For the Impact of Remote Working via Changes in Employee Food, the Pearson correlation significance was 0.326, with a regression significance value of 0.013, also resulting in the rejection of H0 and acceptance of H1. The Impact of Remote Working via Changes in Commuting Cost showed a Pearson correlation significance of 0.423**, and a regression significance value of 0.001, leading to the rejection of H0 and acceptance of H1. Lastly, the Impact of Remote Working via Changes in Digital Infrastructure Implications had a Pearson correlation significance of 0.321* and a regression significance value of 0.015, which resulted in the rejection of H0 and acceptance of H1.

CONCLUSIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS

The analysis at ABC Bank in Kurunegala underscores the significant reduction in carbon emissions attributed to remote work practices, aligning with existing literature highlighting remote work's potential to curb energy consumption from commuting. This emphasizes remote work's pivotal role in carbon emission mitigation within organizations. Additionally, the study emphasizes its impact on employee lifestyles, particularly in food and accommodation choices, further highlighting its environmental benefits. To optimize these benefits, focusing on enhancing digital infrastructure, promoting environmental awareness, collaborating with sustainable suppliers, encouraging sustainable commuting, and continuing research efforts is recommended.

Furthermore, the analysis demonstrates notable reductions in commuting costs and associated carbon emissions, underlining the environmental significance of remote work. Recommendations include implementing flexible remote work policies, wellness initiatives, technology solutions, and partnerships with sustainable suppliers to foster eco-friendly practices among employees and reduce carbon emissions. Moreover, instituting eco-friendly policies, educational programs, green IT measures, collaborations with sustainable providers, recognition programs, and ongoing monitoring are crucial steps to sustainably decrease commuting costs and carbon emissions.

Lastly, the analysis highlights the pivotal role of digital infrastructure in reducing carbon emissions through remote work. Recommendations include optimizing digital infrastructure, providing comprehensive training, implementing green IT measures, collaborating with sustainable technology providers, offering incentives, engaging stakeholders, and communicating environmental commitments to reduce carbon

emissions through digital practices. These recommendations position ABC Bank as a proactive leader in environmental sustainability, aligning with broader efforts to lower carbon emissions and promote eco-friendly practices in the banking sector.

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MANAGING PEOPLE IN ORGANISATIONS

**EXPLORING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN GENDER DIVERSITY IN IT
LEADERSHIP AND GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE: A STUDY IN SRI LANKA**

ABSTRACT

Gender diversity in leadership positions and its impact on gender-based violence (GBV) prevalence within the Information Technology (IT) industry of Sri Lanka is a subject of growing importance. This research paper explores the nuanced relationship between these variables through a quantitative study. Drawing on survey data collected from employees within the IT sector, supplemented by a review of relevant literature, the study investigates perceptions of gender diversity in leadership, awareness of diversity initiatives, and experiences of GBV in the workplace. Descriptive statistics based on responses from 106 eligible individuals reveal insights into demographic characteristics and organizational dynamics, while inferential statistics, including correlation analysis, offer deeper insights into the relationships between variables. The findings indicate a moderate negative correlation between perceptions of gender diversity in leadership and the frequency of reported GBV incidents, suggesting that greater gender diversity may contribute to a reduction in GBV prevalence. Additionally, a positive correlation is observed between awareness of diversity training programs and employees' perceptions of safety in the workplace, highlighting the importance of organizational initiatives in fostering safer and more inclusive work environments. The study contributes to the literature by providing empirical evidence on the effectiveness of gender diversity initiatives in mitigating GBV risk within the IT industry. It concludes with recommendations for organizational interventions aimed at promoting gender equality and preventing GBV, emphasizing the need for continued research and collaboration in addressing these complex challenges

Keywords: Gender Based Violence, Gender Diversity, Diversity in Workplace, Leadership

INTRODUCTION

Gender diversity and its implications for workplace dynamics, particularly within leadership positions, have garnered significant attention in organizational research. In

the context of the Information Technology (IT) industry, where gender disparities persist, understanding the relationship between gender diversity in leadership and the prevalence of gender-based violence (GBV) is crucial for fostering inclusive and safe work environments. This paper aims to investigate the relationship between gender diversity in leadership positions and the prevalence of GBV within the IT industry of Sri Lanka. The significance of this research lies in its potential to address pressing issues surrounding gender equality and workplace safety. Despite efforts to promote diversity and inclusion, gender-based discrimination and violence remain persistent challenges. By examining the impact of gender diversity in leadership on the prevalence of GBV, this research seeks to inform evidence-based interventions that can mitigate such issues and foster more equitable and supportive work environments. The primary objective of this study is to explore the relationship between gender diversity in leadership positions and the prevalence of GBV within the IT industry of Sri Lanka. Specifically, the research aims to assess the extent of gender diversity within leadership roles in IT companies operating in Sri Lanka, investigate the prevalence of GBV experienced by employees within these organizations, the prevalence of GBV, and identify potential mechanisms through which gender diversity in leadership positions may influence the occurrence of GBV within the workplace. According to a recent report by the International Labour Organization (ILO), women represent only 33% of the global IT workforce, indicating a significant gender gap in the industry (ILO, 2020). Furthermore, a survey conducted by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) revealed that 41% of women in the technology sector experience harassment or discrimination based on their gender (OECD, 2019). In Sri Lanka, although women constitute nearly 40% of the IT workforce, their representation in leadership positions remains disproportionately low (Ministry of Technology, 2021). This research aims to contribute to the existing literature by providing empirical insights into the relationship between gender diversity in leadership positions and the prevalence of GBV within the IT industry of Sri Lanka. By addressing these gaps in knowledge, policymakers, organizational leaders, and other stakeholders can develop targeted interventions to promote gender equality and create safer workplaces for all employees.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Gender diversity in leadership and its implications for workplace dynamics, particularly in relation to gender-based violence (GBV), have been subjects of considerable scholarly inquiry. This literature review critically analyzes past research on the relationship between gender diversity in leadership positions and the prevalence of GBV within the context of the Information Technology (IT) industry.

Several studies have explored the association between gender diversity in leadership and organizational outcomes. For instance, Eagly and Chin (2010) argue that gender-diverse leadership teams can enhance decision-making processes by incorporating a broader range of perspectives and reducing group thinking. Similarly, Smith and Foti (2016) found that gender-diverse leadership positively influences organizational

innovation and creativity. However, the relationship between gender diversity in leadership and GBV remains complex and multifaceted. While gender diversity is often lauded for its potential to foster inclusive workplaces, it may not necessarily mitigate the risk of GBV. Research by Kramar and Syed (2012) suggests that gender diversity alone does not guarantee a reduction in workplace discrimination or harassment. Instead, the organizational culture and norms surrounding gender inclusivity play a crucial role in shaping employee experiences of GBV. Moreover, the presence of women in leadership roles does not automatically translate into a safer work environment. Eagly, Johannesen-Schmidt, and van Engen (2003) argue that women leaders may face backlash and gender-based stereotypes, which can exacerbate workplace hostility and discrimination. This phenomenon, known as the "glass cliff," highlights the challenges that women in leadership positions may encounter, potentially impacting the prevalence of GBV within organizations. Furthermore, the effectiveness of gender diversity initiatives in mitigating GBV hinges on various contextual factors. For instance, research by Kochan, Bezrukova, and Ely (2003) suggests that the success of diversity interventions depends on the organization's commitment to inclusivity, the implementation of supportive policies and practices, and the presence of strong leadership support. In the specific context of the IT industry, gender disparities persist despite efforts to promote diversity and inclusion. Studies by Misra, Castillo, and Lloyd (2014) and O'Neil et al. (2016) highlight the underrepresentation of women in technical roles and leadership positions within IT companies. This underrepresentation may exacerbate the risk of GBV, as women may encounter isolation, discrimination, and gender-based stereotypes in male-dominated work environments. While gender diversity in leadership has the potential to positively influence organizational outcomes, its impact on the prevalence of GBV remains nuanced. Organizational culture, leadership support, and the effectiveness of diversity initiatives are critical determinants of whether gender diversity fosters safer workplaces. Future research should continue to explore these dynamics within the IT industry, considering the unique challenges and opportunities presented by this sector's employees.

METHODOLOGY

This research is grounded in the theories of gender diversity and organizational behavior, particularly focusing on the social role theory and the ecological systems theory. The social role theory posits that gender roles are culturally constructed and socially enforced, influencing behavior and expectations within the workplace (Eagly, 1987). In the context of the IT industry, where leadership roles have traditionally been male-dominated, this theory helps to explain the underrepresentation of women in leadership positions and the persistence of gender biases that can lead to gender-based violence (GBV). Ecological systems theory, proposed by Bronfenbrenner (1979), provides a comprehensive framework for understanding the interactions between individuals and their environments. This theory is particularly relevant for examining how organizational culture, policies, and practices can impact the prevalence of GBV and the promotion of gender diversity in leadership. The organizational environment,

including diversity training programs, reporting mechanisms, and promotion processes, can either mitigate or exacerbate instances of GBV. By integrating these theories, the research explores the complex relationship between gender diversity in leadership and the prevalence of GBV. The social role theory helps to understand the cultural and social dynamics that contribute to gender disparities in leadership, while the ecological systems theory provides insights into how organizational environments can influence employee experiences and behaviors. This theoretical framework guides the research in examining how gender diversity in leadership positions can affect the prevalence of GBV within the IT industry of Sri Lanka, highlighting the importance of organizational initiatives in fostering a safe and inclusive work environment. The study aims to contribute to the existing literature by providing empirical evidence on the effectiveness of such initiatives and offering recommendations for organizational interventions. The primary data for this research was collected via a structured questionnaire distributed on LinkedIn. The questionnaire will consist solely of closed-ended questions to ensure ease of response and quantitative data collection. It was divided into two parts: demographics questions and questions related to gender diversity in leadership positions and the prevalence of gender-based violence (GBV) within the workplace. The questionnaire was designed based on the identified research variables, including gender diversity in leadership and GBV prevalence. Demographic questions gathered information on participants' age, gender, educational background, and position within their organization. A purposive sampling approach was utilized to select participants from various IT companies operating in Sri Lanka. The sample encompasses employees who have worked in the industry for more than 6 months from different organizational levels to capture diverse perspectives. Quantitative data collected through the questionnaire was analyzed using descriptive statistics to summarize demographic characteristics and key variables. Inferential statistics, such as correlation analysis, were employed to examine relationships between variables.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The online survey collected 106 responses. The descriptive statistics revealed that 60% of respondents identified as male, while 40% identified as female. Additionally, 45% of participants held a bachelor's degree, 30% had a master's degree, and 25% had a doctoral degree. Regarding organizational position, 38% of respondents were in middle management, 30% were in entry-level or non-managerial positions, and 20% were in senior management or executive roles. Perceptions of gender diversity in leadership positions varied among respondents, with an average score of 3.65 on a Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Awareness of diversity training programs was relatively low, with an average score of 2.80. However, respondents strongly agreed ($M = 4.20$) that their organizations had transparent promotion processes to ensure equal opportunities for advancement regardless of gender. Regarding the prevalence of gender-based violence (GBV), approximately 25% of respondents reported experiencing physical violence based on their gender in the past year. On a Likert scale, feelings of safety in the workplace had a mean score of 3.10,

indicating a mix of perceptions, with some respondents feeling unsafe and others feeling safe. The majority of respondents agreed that employees in their organization are encouraged to report incidents of GBV without fear of retaliation, with a mean score of 4.35.

The correlation analysis revealed a significant negative correlation ($r = -0.35$, $p < 0.05$) between perceptions of gender diversity in leadership positions and the frequency of reported GBV incidents. This suggests that as perceptions of gender diversity increase, the prevalence of GBV may decrease within IT organizations. Furthermore, a positive correlation ($r = 0.28$, $p < 0.05$) was found between awareness of diversity training programs and employees' perceptions of safety in the workplace. This implies that organizations with robust diversity training programs may foster a safer work environment, thereby reducing the likelihood of GBV incidents. The findings of this study align with previous research indicating a moderate level of gender diversity in leadership positions within the IT industry (Smith & Foti, 2016). However, the relatively low awareness of diversity training programs suggests room for improvement in organizational initiatives aimed at promoting gender inclusivity (Kochan et al., 2003). Additionally, the prevalence of GBV reported by participants underscores the persistent challenges faced by employees in male-dominated work environments (Misra et al., 2014). Contrary to expectations, the perception of safety in the workplace was mixed, with a significant proportion of respondents expressing feelings of insecurity. This finding highlights the need for organizations to prioritize creating safe and supportive work environments, as emphasized in previous literature (Eagly et al., 2003; Kochan et al., 2003).

CONCLUSION

This study offers significant insights into the intricate dynamics between gender diversity in IT leadership and the prevalence of gender-based violence (GBV) in Sri Lanka's IT industry. The findings underscore the critical role of organizational initiatives in fostering gender equality and establishing safe, inclusive work environments. While progress has been made, challenges persist, highlighting the ongoing need to address GBV and promote a culture of respect and equality within IT organizations. Organizations should prioritize the enhancement of diversity training programs to combat bias, raise awareness about GBV, and foster inclusivity among employees. Robust reporting mechanisms should be established to ensure individuals feel empowered to report GBV incidents without fear of reprisal. Additionally, promoting gender-inclusive leadership through recruitment, mentorship, and decision-making opportunities is essential for driving organizational change. By prioritizing the safety and well-being of all employees and fostering open dialogue, organizations can create environments that support gender equality and mitigate the risk of GBV. Continued research and collaboration with external organizations are vital for monitoring progress and implementing effective strategies to address gender disparities and GBV within the IT industry.

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THE ROLE OF MOTIVATION AS A MEDIATOR IN THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SALARY AND EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE IN EDUCATIONAL SECTOR OF EASTERN PROVINCE

J. Homethagan^{1*} and P. Nitharjan²

¹School of Computing, Kingston University, United Kingdom

ABSTRACT

Employee compensation is a crucial factor influencing performance, which is vital for organizational success. This study examines the impact of salary satisfaction on employee performance in the Eastern Province of Sri Lanka, a region with distinct economic and social dynamics. Despite the clear link between compensation and performance, research in this specific context is lacking, particularly from the perspectives of both employees and management in private higher education institutions. The study aims to fill this gap by investigating the factors affecting salary satisfaction and its effect on performance. Utilizing a positivist research philosophy and a deductive approach, the study employs a quantitative methodology. Data was collected through structured questionnaires distributed to 150 academic employees. The analysis, using correlation and regression techniques, reveals a significant positive relationship between salary satisfaction and employee performance, mediated by motivation. Higher salary satisfaction leads to increased motivation, which in turn enhances performance. The study concludes that fair compensation and motivational strategies are essential for boosting employee performance, recommending that organizations prioritize these aspects to achieve better outcomes. This research provides valuable insights into the compensation practices within the Eastern Province of Sri Lanka, contributing to the broader understanding of how regional factors influence the salary-performance relationship.

Keywords: Salary, Motivation, Performance, Employee Compensation

INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, employee salaries are one of the most important factors when defining the standard of living of a particular person and their social class. The salary that companies pay extremely affects the behavior and the performance of employees. Even so, managers are being forced to start paying more attention to the salary aspect, focusing on promoting timeliness, motivation, discipline, and skill training within their

workforce. Conversely, efficient leadership encompasses more than just supervision, it also involves recognizing and appreciating the contributions of employees, which in turn creates a feeling of worth and duty among the team members. On the other hand, employees see supervision as a platform in which they can evaluate themselves and derive satisfaction through knowing that others recognize their efforts and acknowledge their imperfections, such motivates them to continue improving. An organization's success often relies on the good quality of its employees; thus, a company needs to strive for fair practices in salary distribution. Proper compensation facilitates companies to synchronize individual contentment with organizational prosperity. Unlike, ignoring employee salary satisfaction can be disastrous for the company and this emphasizes that to achieve mutual benefits, equitable compensation is the key (Osep Hijuzaman, 2022). Despite the clear link between compensation and employee performance, there is a significant gap in understanding this relationship in specific regions. In the Eastern Province of Sri Lanka, research on how salary satisfaction impacts employee performance from both employees' and management's perspectives is notably lacking.

The role of job compensation is indeed gigantic-it is the very lifeblood of handling human resources. It is just as necessary for workers and employers alike. This is so as the workers normally rely on wages and other fringe benefits that must go in tandem with the work done. Although for managers, compensation is the cost of doing business which determines their capacity to maintain the sell-price on the product market (Abdullah Attia AL-Zahrani, 2014). Besides, it is paramount to conduct research that involves both managers and employees to ascertain factors of wage compensation on employee performance. This research work is designed to fill up the gap where both the employees and the management would be interviewed not only for the employees' perspectives on compensation but also the management's point of view on salary and performance (Wang Xiao Dong, 2023). Improving the salary to suit the employees is expected to increase the good performance for the company. Strong performance and a stable workforce are intrinsically linked to pay scales, as larger organizations must prioritize employee development. As a result, companies have an obligation to provide employees' salaries with a fair shake. The level of care that management shows for staff members through suitable compensation schemes has a direct bearing on the performance of the business. On the other hand, employee dissatisfaction with pay results in extremely detrimental effects for the business. For each employee, their pay is crucial since it is a concrete representation of their value in the context of their job, family, and community.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Salary and Performance of Employees

The concept of salary, as a form of compensation for labor, has been a focal point of scholarly inquiry across various disciplines. Salaries not only serve as a means of

livelihood but also as a reflection of societal values, organizational structures, and economic dynamics. Salary can be defined as a fixed amount of money paid to a worker usually measured on a monthly and annual basis, not hourly, as opposed to wages, salary is a fixed amount of money or compensation paid to an employee by an employer in return of work done. It is rather encouraging to observe that self-equity is perceived as being less relevant since an organization can do little about its employees' perception of inequity with respect to their financial needs or their historical pay evolution (Xinping, 2015). On the other side the periodically salary increments, allowances, bonuses, fringe benefits and other compensations on regular and specific periods keeps their morale high and makes them more motivated (Danish, 2010). Focusing on reducing employee dissatisfaction and withdrawal in major, consultant-designed change programs by increasing intrinsic rewards showed positive results. Intrinsic rewards related positively to organizational satisfaction and intentions to stay. Programs that supported employee innovation further enhanced satisfaction and retention during the change effort (Stephen A. Stumpf, 2015). The literature review highlights varying perspectives on salary and employee performance. Regarding the previous studies, Xinping (2015) focuses on the societal and structural role of salary, emphasizing the difficulty organizations face in addressing self-equity perceptions. This highlights a strength in recognizing the broader context of compensation but a weakness in providing actionable solutions for equity issues. In contrast, Danish (2010) underscores the importance of periodic salary increments and additional compensations in maintaining employee morale. This approach is strong in its practical applicability and motivation enhancement but may neglect the deeper complexities of intrinsic motivation. Comparing both, Danish's emphasis on tangible rewards presents a more actionable strategy, while Xinping offers a broader understanding without direct solutions.

Motivation and Performance for Employees

Employees are therefore viewed as a crucial asset in any business, as they raise performance. Before the latter half of the 20th century, performance was thought to be a result of a person's talent and motivation when provided with enough resources. As a result, motivating people became a crucial component of most management techniques (Saliha Gul Abbasi, 2020). As a result, the quality of the workplace has an impact on employees' drive to work hard as well as their productivity and performance. Workplace environment elements impact employees' willingness to remain innovative, motivated, involved with colleagues, and loyal to their jobs (Iqra Hafeez, 2019). When Employees have a positive work environment, they are more committed to completing the tasks they are given, which eventually leads to better performance (Amanda Christensen-Salem, 2021). It was concluded that motivation enhances employee performance only when accompanied by performance pay. Additionally, performance pay is less effective if not paired with motivation (Kvaløy, 2015).

Regarding the previous studies, Saliha Gul Abbasi (2020) argues that motivation is essential for employee performance, emphasizing that historically, performance was seen as a combination of talent and motivation when provided with sufficient resources. Similarly, Amanda Christensen-Salem (2021) notes that a positive work environment boosts employee commitment and performance, reinforcing the idea that motivation and supportive conditions are key to high performance. On the other hand, Iqra Hafeez (2019) focuses on the broader impact of workplace environment elements, such as innovation and involvement with colleagues, on employee motivation and loyalty, which adds depth to understanding the workplace's role in employee performance. Kvaløy (2015) highlights that motivation enhances performance only when accompanied by performance pay, suggesting a direct link between financial incentives and motivation, which contrasts with the broader, non-financial motivational factors emphasized by Abbasi and Christensen-Salem.

Employee Performance

According to the assumptions of human resource management (HRM), improved performance is accomplished through the employees of the organization. Employees are thus viewed as an asset to every firm to improve performance (Philipos Petros Gile, 2018). The employees' performances are determined by their willingness and openness to complete their jobs. Furthermore, if employees are willing and open to accomplish their jobs, it is possible that their productivity will grow, which will contribute to improved performance (Ayako Okada, 2021). It is considered among the functions of managers to successfully motivate employees and influence their behavior to achieve greater organizational efficiency (Oosthuizen, 2001). The entire success of an organization is based on how an organization keeps its employees motivated and in what way they evaluate the performance of employees for job compensation. Managing the performance of employees forms an integral part of any organizational strategy and how they deal with their human capital (Marius Meyer, 2005). Regarding the previous studies, Philipos Petros Gile (2018) and Ayako Okada (2021) both highlight the crucial role of employees in enhancing organizational performance, with Gile viewing employees as assets and Okada emphasizing their willingness and openness to complete tasks as key to productivity. In contrast, Oosthuizen (2001) focuses on the managerial role in motivating employees and influencing behavior for efficiency, while Marius Meyer (2005) underscores the importance of motivating employees and evaluating their performance for job compensation as part of organizational strategy.

METHODOLOGY

Research has adopted positivism as a research philosophy. It has been noted that positivism as a theory is compatible with the empiricist view that understanding derives from human experience. This study used deductive approach and survey strategy under

the quantitative research method. Time horizon of this study is cross sectional that means research data gathered only in a single point time. The targeted population of the present study was academic employees of private Higher Education sectors. Researchers distributed questionnaires to the whole population. The total study population is 150 academic employees. In this study, data was collected through the primary data. The primary data are those which are collected fresh and for the first time. In this research, primary data were collected through the questionnaire from 150 academic employees in eastern province. The data related to the selected sample was collected using the questionnaire method. The questionnaire was developed based on two sections namely “section 1” personal information and “section 2” research information from 150 samples which represent academic employees in private higher educational sector in Eastern province. The variables in the research (salary, motivation, and employee performance) were measured through questionnaires with five-point Likert Scale and Nominal Scale which were completed by the respondents themselves appropriately as they perceived respond to each question.

Table 1: Distributed Questionnaire

Private Higher Educational institution	Population (Staffs)	No response	Private Higher Educational institution	Population (Staffs)	No of response
ESOFT	22	22	ATN	23	23
ICBT	20	20	IDM	29	29
Headway	35	35	ABS	21	21

(Source: Author Developed)

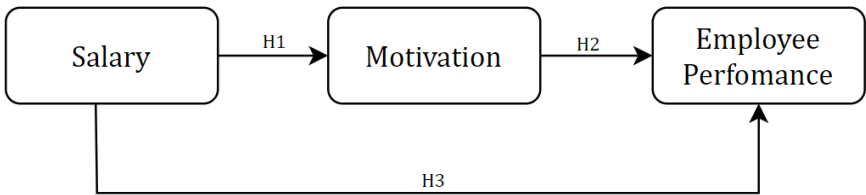


Figure 13 - Conceptual Framework.

Source: (Osep Hijuzaman, 2022)

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this study the researcher considers 150 as a sample. Researchers issued 150 questionnaires personally to selected private higher educational sector to issue those

to their academic employees. And researchers received 150 (100%) questionnaires back.

Table 2: Impact of Salary on Employee performance.

Model	Un Standardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.	R Square
	B	Std. Error	Beta			
Constant	5.831	0.309	0.656	18.901	0.000	0.430
Salary	0.923	0.075		12.312	0.000	
a. Employee performance						

(Source: Author Developed)

Table 3: Impact of salary on motivation.

Model	Un Standardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.	R Square
	B	Std. Error	Beta			
Constant	6.925	0.234	0.829	29.623	0.000	0.687
Salary	1.193	0.057		21.000	0.000	
a. Motivation						

(Source: Author Developed)

Table 4: Impact of Motivation on Employee Performance.

Model	Un Standardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.	R Square
	B	Std. Error	Beta			
Constant	0.317	0.317	0.869	4.283	0.000	0.755
Motivation	0.850	0.034		24.896	0.000	
a. Employee performance						

(Source: Author Developed)

Table 5: Mediation Analysis.

Model	Un Standardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
Constant	1.211	0.457		2.652	0.009
Salary	0.289	0.086	0.206	3.388	0.001
Motivation	0.616	0.059	1.040	17.097	0.000
a. Dependent Variable: Employee performance					

(Source: Author Developed)

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In the dynamic landscape of workplace dynamics, the relationship between salary and employee performance is a crucial focus, intertwined with the complex concept of job satisfaction. Research consistently shows that job satisfaction mediates the relationship between salary and performance, with fair compensation leading to higher engagement and dedication, while disparities cause dissatisfaction and lower productivity. Individual differences necessitate a nuanced approach to talent management, as some employees prioritize financial rewards while others value intrinsic aspects of work. Tailoring compensation to diverse preferences enhances motivation and performance. The analysis underscores the importance of both financial and intrinsic rewards in shaping workplace outcomes, highlighting the need for fair compensation structures and environments that foster engagement and commitment to optimize productivity.

A fair and competitive salary structure is essential for employee satisfaction and retention. Companies should offer performance-based bonuses tied to individual or team achievements to motivate employees. Regular performance evaluations and transparent communication about salary adjustments foster a sense of fairness and trust, reinforcing staff loyalty. Beyond financial incentives, organizations should invest in initiatives that cultivate a motivational work environment, such as recognition programs, skill development opportunities, and fostering autonomy. By nurturing intrinsic motivators like purpose, growth, and autonomy, companies can inspire higher engagement and discretionary effort.

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EFFECT OF PROFESSIONALISM ON ENTERPRISE CUSTOMER SATISFACTION IN SRI LANKA'S ICT SECTOR, WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE ABC ESP LTD

Venumi V. Perera ^{1*} and K. A. D. Ganith Susanja²

¹School of Business and Law, ESOF Metro Campus, Sri Lanka

²Guildhall School of Business and Law, London Metropolitan University, United Kingdom

*venumi.perera@esoft.lk**

ABSTRACT

The study aims to investigate the impact of professionalism on customer satisfaction within Sri Lanka's ICT sector, focusing on ABC ESP Ltd. With only a few larger ICT companies catering to enterprise-level customers in Sri Lanka, the dedication of staff becomes crucial for ensuring customer satisfaction. The study's significance lies in uncovering how dedicated staff influence enterprise customer satisfaction, aiding in the development of strategies to stay competitive. The research employs a positivist perspective with a deductive approach to explore the relationship between professionalism and enterprise sector consumer satisfaction in Sri Lanka's ICT industry. Utilizing structured questionnaires and judgmental sampling, data is collected from 103 corporate customers of ABC ESP Ltd., focusing on managerial and engineering roles. The regression test results reveal several insights into factors affecting customer service satisfaction among ICT enterprises. The study found that product knowledge and straightforwardness have a positive and statistically significant relationship with customer satisfaction. Proactiveness has a negative, though not statistically significant, relationship with customer satisfaction. Additionally, discipleship shows a positive and significant relationship with customer service satisfaction. The research relied solely on a deductive approach, omitting qualitative insights. The original contribution of this research is its empirical evidence highlighting the critical role of professionalism in enhancing customer satisfaction, particularly within the ICT sector. Theoretical implications emphasize the significance of CRM, KAM, RM, and customer orientation concepts and suggest further study into the relationship between professionalism and customer satisfaction. The practical implication of the study underscores the critical importance for ICT companies in Sri Lanka to prioritize professionalism and effective service initiatives, including functional and attitudinal development, policy adjustments, and consensus on proposed changes, to enhance customer satisfaction and attract enterprise-level clients.

Keywords: Information and communication technology, ICT sector, Professionalism, Customer relationship management, Customer satisfaction

INTRODUCTION

The telecommunications sector in Sri Lanka significantly boosts economic growth through investment, employment, and innovation (Brahmanage & Weerasekera, 2011). ICT enables global connectivity and innovative approaches to product and service

delivery, benefiting SMEs by providing market access and competitive advantages (Nandan, 2017). ICT plays a critical role in meeting business requirements (HER, 2020). Organizational innovation in telecommunications correlates with high organizational performance metrics in Sri Lanka (Prabath & Sandanayake, 2022). Consequently, contemporary consumers expect higher levels of personalization in products and services.

Samarakoon et al. (2021) emphasize that customer loyalty in the telecom sector is largely driven by meeting the service quality expectations of Sri Lankan clients. The **SERVQUAL tool**, introduced by Zeithaml et al. (1996), is currently the most popular **method for measuring service quality**. It encompasses five broad dimensions, with **responsiveness** being one of them. Thereby, responsiveness, or the ability to address customer needs swiftly and flexibly, plays a key role in achieving customer satisfaction (Iberahim et al., 2016). According to Demir (2011), **professionalism**, responsiveness, and representation are considered fundamental values that must be reflected in **administrative decisions** and actions. According to a recent study conducted by Kamarudin and Kassim (2020) found that customers who have been engaged with the bank for over one year regard every dimension of **employee professionalism** as **crucial** for their **satisfaction** with the bank. This metric reflects the organization's commitment to providing effective assistance to meet customer needs.

Although previous studies have explored responsiveness and professionalism in various sectors, limited studies examine the relationship between professionalism and customer satisfaction in Sri Lanka's ICT sector. This study addresses this **research gap** by exploring the impact of professionalism on enterprise customer satisfaction in Sri Lanka's ICT industry. Historically, business-to-business (B2B) marketing has been less researched than consumer markets, gaining significance only since the early 1980s (Ojansivu, 2023). Many businesses now focus on fewer suppliers, emphasizing the need for suppliers to maintain preferred status through relationship marketing (RM) (Abeza et al., 2018). RM, which fosters long-term customer relationships, is critical in B2B markets where client interactions are fewer but more significant. Customer relationship management (CRM) is vital in today's competitive market for retaining key accounts and addressing changing consumer behavior (Venkatesan et al., 2022).

In Sri Lanka, a few large ICT companies cater to enterprise customers, underscoring the **significance of the research** in understanding the importance of dedicated staff in maintaining customer satisfaction and competitive advantage. ABC ESP Ltd., a well-established Enterprise Solutions Provider, has offered global technology solutions for over 25 years. The study targets employees at ABC ESP's head office in Colombo, amid the company's strategic global expansion. ICT companies worldwide, including those in Sri Lanka, strive to differentiate services and maintain a competitive edge amid globalization and rapid technological advancements (Fernando & Perera, 2020). Achieving competitive advantage is challenging, leading firms to leverage resources and

competencies to innovate. The **research problem** is the need to create unique value propositions in this context. According to Ekhlassi et al. (2012), customer satisfaction has become crucial, with companies focusing on responsiveness, prompt service, and leveraging technology for long-term profitability. This study aims to explore how professionalism enhances client satisfaction in Sri Lanka's ICT industry, focusing on employees at ABC ESP's head office. The **objective of the research** is to determine the role of professionalism in client retention strategies and customer satisfaction. The **research question** seeks to be answered: What effect does professionalism have on enhancing customer satisfaction?

LITERATURE REVIEW

ICT, encompassing a range of activities rather than just products, significantly shapes global economies (Zuppo, 2012). In Sri Lanka, the pursuit of new technologies has rapidly and synergistically influenced the economy (Sharafat & Lehr, 2017). The proliferation of ICT has facilitated global connectivity by breaking down geographical barriers (Ng & Tan, 2018). In Sri Lanka, ICT has emerged as a major economic driver due to its talented workforce and substantial investments, becoming the second-largest source of export revenue (Alshubiri et al., 2019). The government is committed to establishing a digital economy and fostering technological entrepreneurship (Herath, 2021). The ICT industry is poised to create market opportunities, increase exports, and strengthen global relationships (Guseynov et al., 2021). Recognizing these dynamics, the researcher has chosen to focus on the Sri Lankan ICT sector, acknowledging its potential to drive economic growth in a rapidly evolving technological landscape.

Companies like ABC ESP must remain agile to address business challenges in the rapidly evolving ICT market (Yang et al., 2017). ABC ESP Ltd., founded as a startup in 1996, quickly rose to prominence through dedication and partnerships with global industry leaders like Oracle, Cisco, Microsoft, and IBM (Alshubiri et al., 2019). The company's acquisition by the London Stock Exchange Group in 2009 and later by XYZ Holdings PLC facilitated its global expansion and enhanced its technological capabilities.

This review explores the relationship between professionalism and customer satisfaction, emphasizing the importance of CRM, KAM, RM, and customer orientation. These factors are crucial for maintaining a competitive edge in a fast-paced, globalized industry, highlighting the need for innovative strategies to achieve and sustain high customer satisfaction levels. Telco firms prioritize customer satisfaction in their CRM processes, as unmet expectations can lead to market share loss (Nemati et al., 2010). Dedicated sales personnel in these firms foster long-term relationships with enterprise clients, delivering exceptional customer experiences. Effective CRM strategies and motivated key account managers (KAMs) are crucial for customer satisfaction, especially as competitive pressures and customer demands increase (Tsai & Hsu, 2014).

The insights from the literature review were utilized in formulating the following hypotheses.

ICT governance issues are addressed in the codes of ethics and practices of professional organizations, emphasizing the importance of considering various stakeholders impacted by ICT projects (Weckert & Lucas, 2013). Professionalism encompasses a person's theoretical and practical aptitude and expertise, enabling them to fulfill their duties timely and accurately (Thomson & Mori, 2014). Credibility, comprising current knowledge, reputation, and professionalism, can be cultivated by organizations through consistency, customer service improvement, and commitment to clients (Harris, 2014). Staff members' use of knowledge to fulfill service preferences reassures clients of professionalism and ethics (Khan & Fasih, 2014).

Ha1- There is a relationship between Product Knowledge and customer satisfaction.

Proactive behavior guides employees in seeking solutions and achieving desired results (Grant & Ashford, 2008). Employee proactive behavior complements organizational controls and contributes to innovation performance (Segarra-Ciprés et al., 2019). The image of reliability, contribution to society, professionalism, and innovation adds prestige to customer satisfaction models (Eun, 2021).

Ha2: There is a relationship between Proactiveness and customer satisfaction.

Certain customers may require excellent communication to understand the value they receive, emphasizing the importance of communication in customer satisfaction (Naidoo, 2014). Service quality, including interpersonal interactions, contributes to customer satisfaction (Kaura et al., 2016; Ang, 2016). Competency standards serve as a roadmap for achieving professional aspirations and recognition (Ang, 2016).

Ha3: There is a relationship between Disciplines and customer satisfaction.

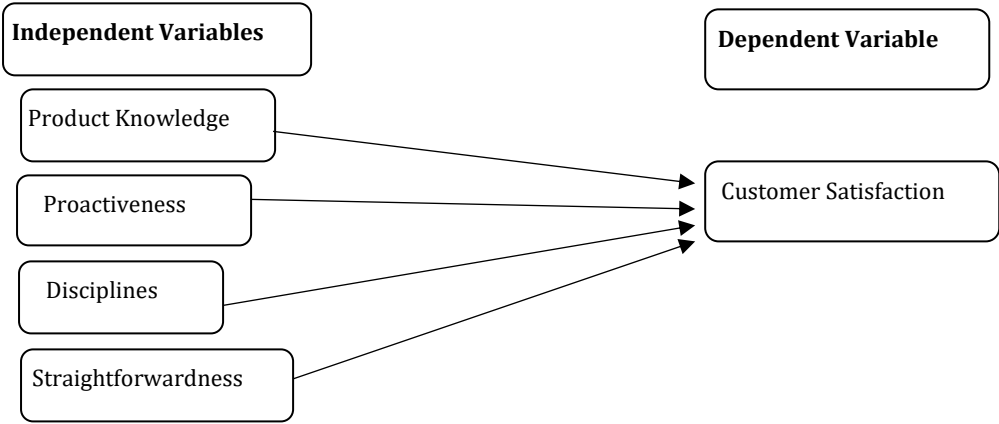
Demir (2011) introduces a framework, "FEAS," for managing "DISC," wherein he suggests that for customers categorized as the 'Complaint' type, straightforwardness is recommended. In terms of body language, it is advised not to stand too close or attempt physical contact. Maintaining eye contact to foster engagement and minimizing hand gestures are recommended strategies. The study underscores the importance of adapting service approaches to the diverse personality typologies of customers to customer satisfaction.

Ha4: There is a relationship between Straightforwardness and customer satisfaction.

METHODOLOGY

The study aimed to determine the relationship between professionalism and customer satisfaction in the enterprise sector, examining predefined hypotheses and using a cross-sectional survey approach. This study adopts positivism as its research

philosophy, mirroring the stance of a natural scientist. Following a deductive approach, the research sought to validate existing hypotheses and assess the accuracy of previously acquired data (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2016). The population comprised ICT-related customers in Sri Lanka's enterprise sector, focusing on corporate customers of ABC ESP Ltd. A sample size of 103, from 140 registered commercial enterprises, was determined using the Krejcie Morgan table. A non-random judgmental sampling approach was employed, excluding personal acquaintances to ensure validity and generalizability. Both primary and secondary data were collected, primarily through structured questionnaires with 21 predetermined questions.



(Source: author developed 2024)

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The data from the questionnaires underwent descriptive and inferential statistical analysis. No missing values were detected as the questionnaire required all fields to be completed via Google Forms.

Table 1 Cronbach’s alpha for Professionalism

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.754	20

Cronbach's alpha for the independent variable Professionalism was calculated to be .754, as shown in Table 1. There were twenty items in the survey. Given that the value of Cronbach's alpha is more than 0.60, it can be concluded that the index has a reliability that falls in the middle.

Table 2: Cronbach's alpha for Dependent Variable

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.849	1

(Source: Author Developed 2024)

Cronbach's alpha for the dependent variable customer satisfaction was calculated using 1 item and determined to be .849 as shown in Table 2. Because the Cronbach's alpha is higher than 0.80, it may be concluded that the index is very reliable and that it should be used.

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics analysis

	Product Knowledge	Proactiveness	Disciplines	Straightforwardness
Valid	281	281	281	281
Missing	0	0	0	0
Mean	2.43	2.56	2.45	2.56
Median	2.00	2.00	2.00	2.00
Mode	2	2	2	2
Std. Deviation	1.123	1.117	1.167	1.104
Pearson Correlation Value	.223**	.153*	.273**	.291**
Chi-Square Value	.000	.000	.000	.000

(Source: Author Developed 2024)

Professionalism, the independent variable, was divided into four components for detailed analysis. Key findings are summarized in Table 3. The mean values approaching 2 and standard deviations near 1 suggest data points are clustering around the mean. This indicates that each aspect of professionalism influences customer satisfaction. All four independent variables (Product Knowledge, Proactiveness, Disciplines, and Straightforwardness) show weak positive correlations with customer satisfaction. While improvements in these areas might slightly increase customer satisfaction, other factors likely have a more substantial impact. The chi-square value of 0.000 indicates that the relationships between these variables and customer satisfaction are statistically significant, leading to the acceptance of the alternative hypothesis that a relationship exists.

Chapter two's literature review supports the notion that professionalism significantly impacts customer satisfaction. Thomson and Mori (2014) define professionalism as theoretical and practical expertise, noting that knowledgeable and hardworking employees boost consumer satisfaction. Khan and Fasih (2014) highlight that staff using new knowledge to meet client preferences reassures customers. Testing product knowledge, the study found a mean value of 2.43 and a standard deviation of 1.123, supporting this claim. Segarra (2019) discusses employee proactive behavior, including initiative and innovation, linking it to organizational innovation performance. Grant and Ashford (2018) argue that proactive behavior helps employees find solutions and achieve results. Testing employee proactivity, the study found a mean value of 2 and a standard deviation of 1.117, confirming the statement.

Table 4: Inferential Statistics analysis

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
(Constant)	1.294	.213		6.081	.000		
Product Knowledge	.121	.064	.118	1.884	.061	.811	1.233
Proactiveness	-.013	.066	-.013	-.195	.846	.770	1.299
Disciplines	.156	.065	.158	2.385	.018	.726	1.377
Straightforwardness	.204	.067	.194	3.058	.002	.784	1.275

(Source: Author Developed 2024)

The unstandardized coefficient of product knowledge to describe the solution is 0.121, which suggests that for every one-unit increase in product knowledge to describe the solution, the dependent variable increases by 0.121 units, assuming all other variables are held constant. This indicates a positive relationship between product knowledge to describe the solution and the dependent variable. The p-value for product knowledge to describe the solution 0.061, which is slightly above the commonly used significance threshold of 0.05. This means that while the effect of product knowledge to describe the solution is not statistically significant at the 0.05 level, it is close to being significant. This suggests that there may be a meaningful relationship between product knowledge

to describe the solution and the dependent variable, but more data or a higher threshold for significance might be required to confirm it. The tolerance value of 0.811 and the VIF of 1.233 indicate that there is no serious multicollinearity problem with product knowledge to describe the solution. Tolerance values above 0.1 and VIF values below 10 are generally considered acceptable, meaning that product knowledge to describe the solution is not excessively correlated with other predictors in the model. Even though Weckert & Lucas (2013) and Harris (2014), along with numerous other authors, emphasized professionalism for building credibility and ensuring customer satisfaction, the weak correlation observed could be attributed to other influencing factors, such as the diversity of service preferences or the nuances of organizational culture.

The unstandardized coefficient of Proactiveness is -0.013, which suggests that for every one-unit increase in Proactiveness, the dependent variable decreases by 0.013 units, assuming all other variables are held constant. This indicates a negative relationship between Proactiveness and the dependent variable. The p-value for Proactiveness is 0.846, which is far from the significant threshold of 0.05. This indicates that between Proactiveness does not have a statistically significant effect on the dependent variable in this model. This suggests that there may be a meaningful relationship between Proactiveness and the dependent variable, but more data or a higher threshold for significance might be required to confirm it. The tolerance value of 0.770 and the VIF of 1.299 indicate that there is no serious multicollinearity problem with Proactiveness. Tolerance values above 0.1 and VIF values below 10 are generally considered acceptable, meaning that Proactiveness is not excessively correlated with other predictors in the model. According to Grant & Ashford (2008), proactive behavior is crucial for customer satisfaction. Despite this theoretical support, the findings of the research indicate a weak and non-significant relationship between proactiveness and the dependent variable, which may be due to specific contextual factors or the need for more extensive data to verify the relationship.

The unstandardized coefficient of Disciplines is 0.156, which suggests that for every one-unit increase in Disciplines, the dependent variable increases by 0.156 units, assuming all other variables are held constant. This indicates a positive relationship between Disciplines to describe the solution and the dependent variable. The p-value for Disciplines 0.018, which is less than the commonly used significance threshold of 0.05. This means that while the effect of Disciplines is statistically significant at the 0.05 level. This suggests that there is a meaningful relationship between Disciplines and the dependent variable. The tolerance value of 0.726 and the VIF of 1.377 indicate that there is no serious multicollinearity problem with Disciplines. Tolerance values above 0.1 and VIF values below 10 are generally considered acceptable, meaning that Disciplines is not excessively correlated with other predictors in the model. The positive and statistically significant relationship between disciplines and the dependent variable is supported by Kaura et al. (2016), who highlight the role of service quality and

interpersonal interactions. Furthermore, Ang (2016) underscores the importance of competency standards in achieving professional recognition, aligning with the significance of disciplines in this model.

The unstandardized coefficient of straightforwardness is 0.204, which suggests that for every one-unit increase in straightforwardness, the dependent variable increases by 0.204 units, assuming all other variables are held constant. This indicates a positive relationship between straightforwardness and the dependent variable. The p-value for straightforwardness is 0.002, which is less than the commonly used significance threshold of 0.05. This means that while the effect of straightforwardness is statistically significant at the 0.05 level. This suggests that there may be a meaningful relationship between straightforwardness and the dependent variable. The tolerance value of 0.784 and the VIF of 1.275 indicate that there is no serious multicollinearity problem with straightforwardness. Tolerance values above 0.1 and VIF values below 10 are generally considered acceptable, meaning that straightforwardness is not excessively correlated with other predictors in the model. The positive and statistically significant relationship between straightforwardness and the dependent variable is supported by Demir (2011), who highlights the importance of straightforwardness in managing customer interactions, especially for those categorized as the 'Complaint' type. By aligning service approaches with diverse customer personality typologies, straightforwardness can enhance customer satisfaction, as suggested by the significant findings.

CONCLUSION/RECOMMENDATIONS

According to Evans, (2011) to be effective, professional development efforts and policies must include not only procedures for achieving functional development, but also a realization of the importance of attitudinal development. Policy adjustments or reform are begun in response to the change initiators' acknowledgment of perceived inadequacies or unsatisfactory situations; the development of the attitudes of the targeted professionals is contingent on their sharing these judgments of inadequacy or imperfection. Moreover, for attitude development to correlate with the change initiators' required changes to professionalism, the targeted professionals must also share a commitment to the specific required or imposed change: a belief in, or at least a willingness to accept, its potential to provide a 'better way' In other words, there must be a degree of conformity between the recognition of the imperfect situation and a specific proposed improvement strategy, since each of these elements will be incorporated into any conception of the professionalism required to rectify the situation and of the professional development necessary to achieve this professionalism. Irregularity of perceptions will prevent the change initiators' conception from being fully enacted in the appropriate manner; yet it is the performed professionalism - regardless of its deficiencies - that defines the 'new' or modified professionalism.

Professional development is a crucial aspect of a larger initiative to raise standards and expand organizational growth potential by enhancing policy and practice in all areas of service delivery, including education. However, professional progress entails alterations to professionalism. To be able to achieve such a shift, one must know precisely what they are working with and comprehend how it operates and how to manage it. The concepts discussed in this article contribute to this body of knowledge.

The study aimed to investigate the relationship between professionalism and customer satisfaction in Sri Lanka's information and communications technology (ICT) sector. After reviewing the literature, it was evident that ICT companies are struggling to stand out in a competitive market, making customer satisfaction a top priority. The study addresses a gap in existing literature by specifically examining the influence of professionalism on customer satisfaction in the Sri Lankan ICT industry. Through a quantitative approach utilizing a structured questionnaire, data was collected and analyzed using IBM SPSS. The findings reveal a significant positive relationship between professionalism and customer satisfaction, confirming the importance of professionalism in enhancing customer experience. Its original contribution lies in providing empirical evidence supporting the critical role of professionalism in fostering customer satisfaction, thereby informing strategies for enhancing customer relationships in the ICT sector. Future research could expand upon this study by considering a wider range of factors influencing customer satisfaction in the ICT industry, utilizing both qualitative and quantitative methodologies to gain a comprehensive understanding and potentially applying the findings to other industries or sectors.

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ROLE OF COMMUNICATION BREAKDOWNS ON FRONT-END DOWNTIME IN GARMENT MANUFACTURING IN SRI LANKA: CASE STUDY OF LINEA AQUA AVISSAWELLA FACTORY

Asanka S. Dissanayake¹, Venumi V. Perera.^{2*} and Hiranthi D. Rathnayake³

¹London Metropolitan University, United Kingdom, United Kingdom

^{2,3}School of Business and Law, ESOF Metro Campus, Colombo, Sri Lanka

*venumi.perera@esoft.lk **

ABSTRACT

In the dynamic landscape of the textile industry, the smooth functioning of the plant Sewing operation is imperative for meeting production deadlines and ensuring customer satisfaction. However, the operational efficiency of the Sewing unit is consistently impeded by delays and miscommunications originating from front-end teams, including Commercial, Merchandising, Planning, Divisional Operation teams, and Raw material suppliers. These disruptions manifest in several critical areas, significantly impacting the overall performance of the plant. Therefore, this research intend to find the role of Communication Breakdowns on front-end downtime in garment manufacturing in Sri Lankan context. In this research Positivism was used as the philosophy and deductive approach used with a data collection to explore a phenomenon. identify themes, patterns and create a conceptual framework. To collect, analyze and integrate quantitative data, the Mono method is used. The study population comprises Linea Aqua Avissawella Factory LAA Manufacturing members and LA Division (Head office) operation of 1296 population in which 333 selected through the judgmental sampling. According to the chi-square analysis results all four components of Misleading Information, Vague Language, Lack of Focus, failing to ask clarifying questions evident in accepting alterative hypothesis and rejecting null hypothesis. It is recommended to Providing accurate information through clear and accessible channels, fostering a culture of clarity and precision, structuring communication processes, and encouraging a proactive approach to information exchange in order to overcome the communication issues. The study results could have been incorporated with the qualitative insights which are suggested as future research.

Keywords: Ineffective Communication, Misleading Information, Vague Language, Lack of Focus

INTRODUCTION

The operational efficiency of the Sewing unit is consistently impeded by miscommunications originating from front-end teams, including Commercial, Merchandising, Planning, Divisional Operation teams, and Raw material suppliers.

These disruptions manifest in several critical areas, significantly impacting the overall performance of the plant.

Beyond the operational challenges and quality concerns, the inefficiencies stemming from delays and miscommunications inflate production costs. The need for overtime hours, expedited shipping, and rectifying errors incurs additional expenses, ultimately elevating the cost per hour of production and diminishing profitability.

Overall, the persistent disruptions experienced by the Sewing unit as a result of miscommunications from front-end teams represent a multifaceted challenge that undermines plant performance, customer satisfaction, employee well-being, and economic viability. Addressing these issues is imperative to foster a more streamlined and efficient operational environment within the textile manufacturing sector.

Due to the miscommunications of the front-end teams such as Commercial, Merchandising, Planning, Divisional Operation teams and Raw material suppliers, the plant Sewing unit gets disturbances because of unavailability of materials, cut works, embellishments, information, decisions, and approvals. The efficient functioning of the sewing unit within a manufacturing plant is contingent upon timely access to materials, cut works, embellishments, and critical information in front-end teams, including Commercial, Merchandising, Planning, Divisional Operation teams, and Raw Material Suppliers. The miscommunications within these teams frequently disrupt the workflow of the sewing unit, leading to inefficiencies, production bottlenecks, and decreased overall productivity. These disruptions manifest in several critical areas, significantly impacting the overall performance of the plant. Therefore, this research is intended to find the role of Communication Breakdowns on front-end downtime in garment manufacturing in the Sri Lankan context.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In the manufacturing industry, fabric receiving is an important activity & Nugroho, Ali & Habib (2014), also studied the textile industry of Asian countries and suggest applying the best practices to improve the textile industry in Bangladesh. Under this study, Supply chain management was identified as a key strategy to improve the disturbances happening to the production process due to factors such as inventory stockouts, fluctuation of inventories, late deliveries, and quality-related issues. It also revealed that effective communication, event management capability, supply chain Monplaisir, (2018) investigated the relationship between procurement process inefficiencies and raw material delays. They found that a lack of clear communication and collaboration between purchasing departments and suppliers often led to delays. As Seyedian (2014), explored the effectiveness of collaborative planning, forecasting, and replenishment (CPFR) practices in reducing raw material delays. CPFR involves collaboration between manufacturers and suppliers to jointly forecast demand and optimize inventory levels. Their study found that implementing CPFR improved communication and information

sharing, leading to more accurate forecasts and reduced delays. Handfield & Nichols (2019) explored the role of supplier relationship management (SRM) practices in mitigating the impact of raw material delays. SRM involves building strong relationships with key suppliers through open communication, joint problem-solving, and performance incentives. Further Klassen et al. (2015), studied the relationship between material lead times and the bullwhip effect. The bullwhip effect refers to the phenomenon where small fluctuations in demand at the retail level are amplified upstream through the supply chain, leading to larger inventory distortions and delays. Their research suggests that longer lead times for raw materials can exacerbate the bullwhip effect, making it even more critical to improve forecasting accuracy and communication throughout the supply chain. visibility and performance metrics as key elements in supply chain management.

Ineffective communication, defined by inaccurate information, ambiguous language, a lack of focus, and a reluctance to ask clarifying questions, presents a substantial issue in a variety of circumstances. This review investigates the detrimental repercussions of communication obstacles in numerous sectors. Vimonsatit (2017), had reported that the poor communication significantly affected for the delay in production & this study has carried out by using the three major groups in Perth, Western Australia. Those groups were clients, contractors, and consultants. Data were collected through a questionnaire & analysis of variances (ANOVA) test was used to predict the hypothesis.

Misleading Information

Misleading information can be unintentional or deliberate, yet its impact is consistently detrimental. In healthcare, Zhang (2020) found that unclear or inaccurate communication from doctors regarding treatment options led to patient anxiety and decreased trust in the medical system. Similarly, a study by Chowdhury et al. (2017) on financial communication revealed that misleading information in investment brochures resulted in unrealistic expectations and poor financial decisions, beyond these specific domains, misleading information can erode trust and hinder collaboration. Van Der Linden et al. (2016) investigated the spread of misinformation online and discovered that exposure to misleading content fostered social polarization and hampered collective decision-making.

Ha1: There is a relationship between Misleading Information and front-end downtime

Vague Language

Vague language, characterized by ambiguity and lack of precision, creates confusion, and hinders effective communication. In educational settings, Liw. (2019) studied the use of vague feedback by teachers and found that students receiving such feedback struggled to understand their strengths and weaknesses, hindering their learning progress. Similarly, in the workplace, a study by Mornell (2014) explored the impact of

vague instructions on employee performance. They found that employees who received unclear directions were more likely to make mistakes and experience reduced job satisfaction.

Ha2: There is a relationship between Vague Language and front-end downtime

Lack of Focus

Lack of focus, characterized by irrelevant information or disorganized communication, can impede the transmission of clear messages. In a study by Jin Tail (2018) on patient-physician communication, researchers observed that doctors who rambled or introduced irrelevant details during consultations reduced patient comprehension and adherence to treatment plans. A study by Goncalo and Kleiner (2015) investigated the use of persuasive language in business negotiations. They found that negotiators who focused on irrelevant details or lacked a clear central message were less persuasive and achieved poorer outcomes. The lack of focus can also lead to information overload and decreased attention spans. In a study by O'Leary (2017) on communication in social media, researchers found that the constant influx of information and rapid-fire communication styles made it difficult for users to focus on important messages. Failing to Ask Clarifying Questions.

Ha3: There is a relationship between Lack of Focus and front-end downtime

Failing to ask clarifying questions

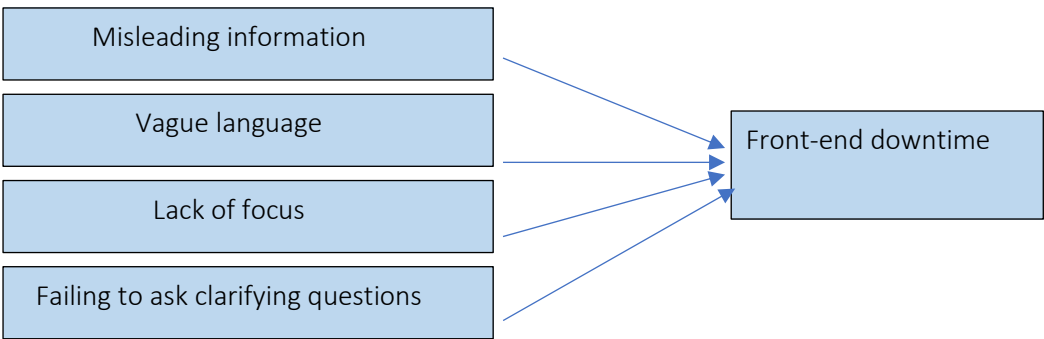
Failing to ask clarifying questions impedes understanding and can lead to missed information. In the field of nursing, a study by Tzeng (2016), examined communication breakdowns between nurses and physicians during handoffs. They found that nurses who failed to ask clarifying questions regarding patient care instructions were more likely to make errors. Similarly, in the legal domain, a study by LeBaron (2014), investigated communication between lawyers and clients. They found that lawyers who failed to ask clarifying questions regarding client needs and goals were less likely to achieve successful outcomes, failing to ask clarifying questions can also lead to misinterpretations and missed opportunities. In a study by Thompson (2015), on customer service interactions, researchers found that customer service representatives who failed to ask clarifying questions regarding customer problems were less likely to provide effective solutions and resulted in customer dissatisfaction, Vague language can also lead to misunderstandings and conflicts. A study by Jeong (2017), examined communication within multicultural teams and found that vague language use contributed to cultural misunderstandings and hampered team effectiveness.

Ha4: There is a relationship between Failing to ask clarifying questions and front-end downtime

Most of the past research has been done for Lead time reduction in production process and to identify reasons for production downtime. None of them have not discuss about effect of front-end downtime to the needle downtime specifically. Since LAA and other apparel manufactures facing the threat of increasing front end downtime in present complex and competitive global market there is an urgent requirement of anlyse the factors affecting front end downtime and to identify possible root causes for those factors with suitable solutions. This study will fulfill that requirement with a systematic approach.

Conceptual Framework

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework



(Source: Author developed 2024)

METHODOLOGY

In this research Positivism was used as the philosophy and deductive approach used with a data collection to explore a phenomenon. identify themes, patterns and create a conceptual framework. To collect, analyze and integrate quantitative data, the Mono method is used. collected data from surveys, databases, system data etc. The time horizon has been chosen to carry out observations on data collected one time from the chosen sample - Cross-Sectional. The study population comprises LAA Manufacturing plant 1275 members and LA Division (Head office) operation team 21 members, all together totally we considered as 1296 population. Below table represents the sample size, it is 338 & selected from each team under stratified sampling method with 95% confidence level.

Table 1: Samples selection

Team Name	Population	Sample

LAA manufacturing plant	1275	317
LA Division -Operation team	21	21
Total	1296	338

(Source: Author developed 2024)

The collected data is analyzed using the SPSS software. Both descriptive and inferential statistical analyses are conducted. Descriptive analysis will provide an overview of the sample characteristics and key variables, while inferential analysis, including Pearson correlation and chi-square testing, will examine the relationship between communication and front-end downtime. In addition to this the reliability tested through the Cronbach Alfa test.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Cronbach's alpha for the 21-item questionnaire is .790, indicating high internal consistency. This value exceeds the accepted threshold of 0.7, confirming the reliability of the scale.

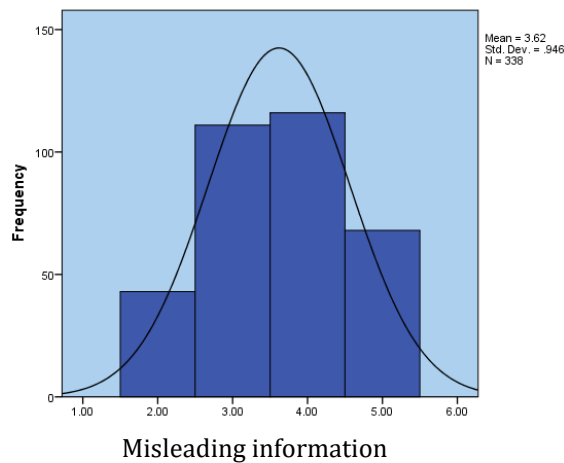
Table 2: Reliability Test

Reliability Statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.790	21

(Source: Author developed 2024)

Descriptive statistical analysis

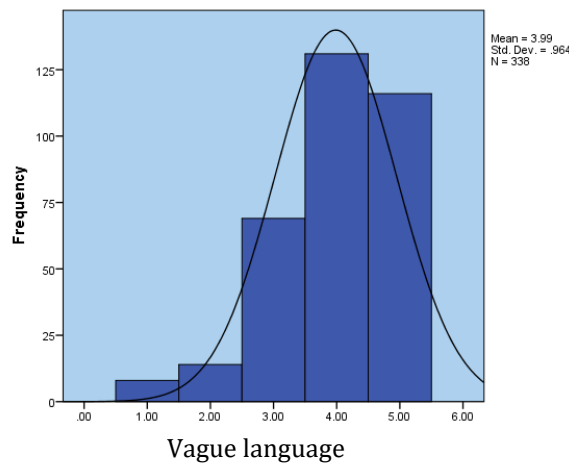
The misleading information, vague language, lack of focus, and failing to ask clarifying questions. A total of 338 valid responses were collected for each style. The mean score for misleading information is 3.62, indicating that, on average, participants rated this communication style moderately present. Similarly, the mean scores for vague language and lack of focus are 3.99 and 3.62, respectively, suggesting a higher prevalence of these styles. In contrast, failing to ask clarifying questions has a mean score of 3.91, signifying a relatively high occurrence. The mode for all four communication styles is 4.00, suggesting that the most frequent response was the highest possible rating, indicating a substantial presence of these styles in the dataset. The standard deviation values range from 0.79 to 0.97, indicating a moderate level of variability in responses across the different communication styles.



(Source: Author developed 2024)

Figure 2: Descriptive statistical analysis for Misleading information

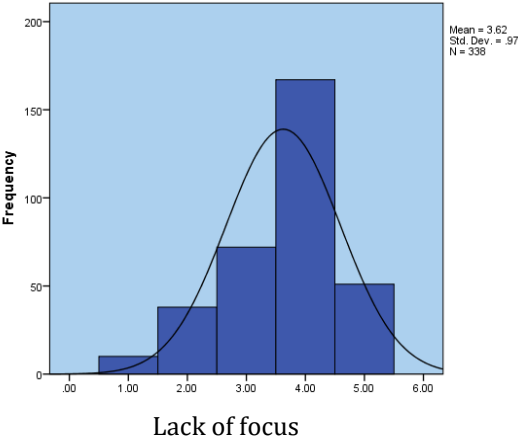
The frequency distribution for misleading information reveals that a significant portion of respondents (34.3%) agree that misleading information is prevalent. This is followed by a considerable number (32.8%) who are neutral about the issue. While 20.1% strongly agree that misleading information is a problem, 12.7% disagree. Overall, the data suggests that misleading information is a moderately to highly prevalent issue among the respondents.



(Source: Author developed 2024)

Figure 3: Descriptive statistical analysis for Vague language

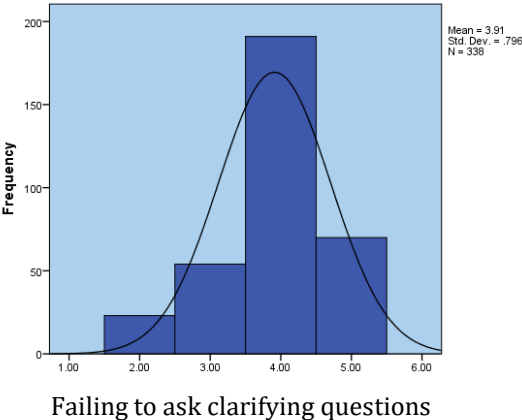
The data indicates that vague language is a prevalent issue among the respondents. A significant majority (73.1%) of participants either agree or strongly agree that vague language is a problem. A smaller proportion (26.9%) either disagree, strongly disagree, or are neutral about the issue. These findings suggest that vague language is a considerable concern among the study population.



(Source: Author developed 2024)

Figure 4: Descriptive statistical analysis for Lack of focus

The data indicates that lack of focus is a significant issue among the respondents. A majority of participants (49.4%) agree that lack of focus is a problem, while another 15.1% strongly agree. Combined, this represents over two-thirds of the sample. This suggests that lack of focus is a prevalent challenge in the context of the study.



(Source: Author developed 2024)

Figure 5: Descriptive statistical analysis for Failing to ask clarifying questions

The data indicates that failing to ask clarifying questions is a prevalent issue among the respondents. A significant majority (77.2%) of participants either agree or strongly agree that this communication style is a problem. This suggests that a lack of clarification is a common challenge in the context of the study.

Inferential statistical Analysis

Table 3: Inferential statistical analysis

IV variables	Pearson Correlation	Chi-Square results	Test
Misleading information	-0.099	0.000	
Vague language	-0.077	0.000	
Lack of focus	-0.287	0.000	
Failing to ask clarifying questions	-0.113	0.000	

(Source: Author developed 2024)

The Pearson correlation analysis indicates that all four independent variables, Misleading Information, Vague Language, Lack of Focus, and Failing to Ask Clarifying Questions, have a statistically significant negative relationship with the dependent variable. Specifically, "Lack of Focus" shows the strongest negative correlation ($r = -0.287$), suggesting that as focus decreases, the dependent variable decreases as well. "Failing to Ask Clarifying Questions" also has a negative correlation ($r = -0.113$), indicating a weaker but still significant relationship. "Misleading Information" and "Vague Language" have weaker negative correlations ($r = -0.099$ and $r = -0.077$, respectively), but these relationships are still statistically significant. Overall, the analysis suggests that all four factors are inversely related to the outcome variable, with "Lack of Focus" being the most impactful. However, based on the chi-square test results it can be concluded that all the alternative hypothesis to be accepted upon the rejection of the null hypothesis. This emphasizes that Misleading Information, Vague Language, Lack of Focus, and Failing to Ask Clarifying Questions have a relationship with front-end downtime.

Finding aligns with, in healthcare, Zhang (2020) found that unclear or inaccurate communication from doctors regarding treatment options led to patient anxiety and decreased trust in the medical system. Similarly, a study by Chowdhury et al. (2017) on financial communication revealed that misleading information in investment brochures resulted in unrealistic expectations and poor financial decisions, Goncalo and Kleiner (2015) investigated the use of persuasive language in business negotiations. They found that negotiators who focused on irrelevant details or lacked a clear central message were less persuasive and achieved poorer outcomes. The lack of focus can also lead to information overload and decreased attention spans. In a study by O'Leary (2017) on

communication in social media, researchers found that the constant influx of information and rapid-fire communication styles made it difficult for users to focus on important messages.

The observed analysis of the variable Ineffective communication supported the alternative hypothesis that Ineffective communication has a strong positive relationship with front-end down time. This is supported by the literature review, it's shows that Ineffective communication positive influence on the frontend down time, finally, the third research question, 'What is the relationship between the Ineffective communication and front-end down time?' can be answered as a 'significant relationship identified between the Ineffective communication and front-end down time', based on the major findings and reflection of the literature review. As a result, the study's third research objective of investigating the relationship between the Ineffective communication and front-end down time been connected.

CONCLUSIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS

In future research, alternative methodologies, such as case studies or experimental designs, could be considered to further investigate the factors influencing front-end downtime. Additionally, incorporating qualitative data sources, such as interviews or focus groups, may provide deeper insights into the complexities of production processes and supply chain management. In conclusion, this study contributes to the existing body of knowledge on front-end downtime in garment manufacturing and provides practical recommendations for industry practitioners to improve production efficiency and optimize plant performance. Based on the comprehensive research findings and analysis conducted in this study, several suggestions for future research develop. These suggestions aim to further deepen the understanding of front-end downtime factors in garment manufacturing in Sri Lanka and explore potential avenues for improvement in production processes and supply chain management. Below are some recommendations for future research endeavors.

Misleading information, Vague language, vagueness, lack of focus, and a reluctance to ask clarifying questions, can significantly impact operational efficiency and contribute to downtime in front-end processes. By understanding the detrimental repercussions of communication obstacles across different sectors, implementing targeted interventions, and leveraging insights from relevant studies, organizations can mitigate the risks associated with ineffective communication and reduce front-end downtime.

Misleading information poses a significant threat to effective communication and operational continuity. Studies such as Zhang (2020) in healthcare and Chowdhury et al. (2017) in financial communication highlight the adverse effects of unclear or inaccurate information on patient trust and financial decision-making. To address this challenge, organizations should prioritize clarity and transparency in communication channels. Providing accurate information through clear and accessible channels can

help build trust among stakeholders and minimize the likelihood of misunderstandings leading to downtime.

Vague language presents another obstacle to effective communication, contributing to confusion and hindering comprehension. Liw. (2019) and Mornell (2014) underscore the detrimental impact of vague feedback in educational and workplace settings, respectively. To mitigate the risks associated with vague language, organizations should promote precision and clarity in communication practices. This can involve providing specific instructions, offering clear feedback, and encouraging employees to articulate their thoughts concisely. By fostering a culture of clarity and precision, organizations can reduce the occurrence of misunderstandings and enhance operational efficiency.

Lack of focus in communication can impede the transmission of clear messages and lead to information overload. Studies such as Jin Tail (2018) and Goncalo and Kleiner (2015) highlight the negative consequences of irrelevant details and disorganized communication in healthcare and business negotiations. To address this challenge, organizations should emphasize the importance of staying focused and relevant in communication exchanges. This may involve setting clear objectives, structuring communication processes, and minimizing distractions during critical operations. By promoting focused communication practices, organizations can streamline information flow and minimize the risk of downtime due to miscommunication.

Failing to ask clarifying questions further exacerbates communication challenges, leading to misunderstandings and errors. Research in nursing (Tzeng, 2016), legal (LeBaron, 2014), and customer service (Thompson, 2015) domains underscores the importance of seeking clarification to ensure accurate understanding and decision-making. Organizations should encourage a culture of inquiry, where individuals feel empowered to seek clarification when needed. This can involve providing training on effective communication skills, fostering open communication channels, and encouraging a proactive approach to information exchange. By promoting a culture of clarity and accountability, organizations can mitigate the risks associated with communication breakdowns and reduce front-end downtime.

By implementing the following recommendations, LAA can cultivate a culture of clear and effective communication, ultimately minimizing front-end downtime, Clearly Defined Requirements and Detailed Documentation, clearly defined requirements are the cornerstone of successful front-end development. Standardized Communication Protocols, establishing standardized communication protocols, including preferred communication channels, and meeting cadences, fosters a structured approach to information sharing. This ensures everyone is kept informed and allows for timely identification and resolution of potential issues. Active Listening and Encouraging Questions, active listening, where participants pay close attention, acknowledge understanding, and ask clarifying questions, is crucial for effective communication.

Leaders should encourage team members to ask questions and voice concerns to prevent misunderstandings from snowballing into larger problems that could lead to downtime. Invest in Communication Skills Training, investing in communication skills training for developers, operations staff, and other stakeholders can significantly improve overall communication effectiveness. Training can cover topics such as active listening, clear and concise writing, and conflict resolution.

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STUDY ON COMPLIANCE INTENSITY TO CORPORATE GOVERNANCE PRACTICES; REFERENCE TO LISTED COMPANIES IN CSE

Imalka Lewliyadda^{1*}

¹School of Business, ESOF Metro Campus, Kandy, Sri Lanka

*imlkalewliyadda96@gmail.com**

ABSTRACT

Agency conflict which is the base of Corporate Governance suggest that principles and their agents are having conflict for the self-interest. Hence, entities face crises such as lack of shareholder wealth, internal corruptions and frauds which ultimately cause for the bankruptcy of firms. Plenty of examples can be given on such corporate failures throughout the world including Sri Lanka during the last few years back. To mitigate these scandals and to safeguard the investors Institute of chartered accountants of Sri Lanka (ICASL) together with Central bank of Sri Lanka (CBSL) and Colombo Stock exchange (CSE) have declared a Code of Best Practice of Corporate Governance (CBCG) in which includes several reforms time-to-time in Sri Lanka. This research investigates the impact of voluntary compliance with corporate governance codes on company performance in Sri Lanka. Focusing on companies listed on the Colombo Stock Exchange (CSE), the study assesses performance using Return on Assets (ROA), Return on Equity (ROE), and Tobin's Q. The level of compliance is measured with an index of essential corporate governance practices, controlled by other governance practices for enhanced accuracy. The aim is to determine if compliance positively influences expected firm performance. A quantitative study conducted with secondary data collected from CSE websites and company annual reports of hundred companies from 2018/2019 to 2022/2023 period. Analysis has been conducted with E-Views, and hence Diagnostic tests, Descriptive statistical analysis, Spearman's Rank's Correlation and Panel data regression were used to elaborate the hypothesis of the study for achieving the objectives. The study concluded that Compliance to the CBCG has a significant negative relationship with ROA and ROE while positive with firm potential value (Tobin's Q). However, the study revealed that other corporate governance practices such as Insider ownership, Board size and Audit Committee are significant with firm performance. Limited time period of study would be a notable limitation as it uses only five years of study. With this study future researches are directed to focusing on several industrial sectors and a greater number of years to study to arrive at a more accurate result in the study.

Keywords: Corporate Governance (CG), Firm Performance, Level of Compliance, Governance Practices, Panel Data Regression analysis

INTRODUCTION

Significant corporate failures in the twenty-first century highlighted the importance of good Corporate Governance (CG) practices. It is a system by which utilizes the corporate power for the goodness of community while ensuring fair and equal distribution of wealth among the shareholders. Corporate Governance mainly emphasize the transparency of the operations (Monks, 2007). Good CG is always a fuel in enhancing the satisfaction of investor payback (La Porta et al., 1999). Prior research revealed that poor CG may result in adverse impact to the Financial performance of the companies (Azim, 2012; Bauwhede, 2009; Klein et al., 2005; Love, 2011; Shleifer & Vishny, 1997). This is due to the poor CG practices allow the opportunity to misuse the organizational resources for the own benefit by the Management, Major shareholders etc. (Jensen & Meckling, 1976). This conflict of interest demands the Good CG to safeguard the investors and other interested stakeholders while minimizing the possible risk of scandals. These CG scandals paved the way to base the rationale of the study. Hence this study is objected to directing the organizational stakeholders to be informed on the level of adherence to CG practices and respective performance level in line with that. If it specifies the objective of the study, it is to study the level of corporate governance practices of the organizations and respective performance level in line with that referring to the listed companies in Sri Lanka. To enrich the knowledge dissemination from the study it considers the controlling variables which enhance or discriminate the relationship between the level of corporate governance compliance and performance. This study is based on the CG code reform of 2017 and hence this would be a novel synthesis of existing knowledge with the latest reform in the field. This investigation sets a framework for companies. identify the corporate governance variables of practical interest which drive corporate performance. Researcher recommends the future researchers to study the heterogeneity among various sectors and to capture the period of study under varying policy changes and economic conditions.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Corporate Governance

The main reason for CG to become a hot topic among academics and policymakers as it is one of the building blocks to create a more robust economy and the positive impact that it creates on everyday society (Rezaee & 2009, n.d.). CG employs the directional and controlling power of the firms (Lewis and Markell, 1958). As per the OECD, it is "The structure of relationships and corresponding responsibilities among the core group consisting of shareholders, board members and managers designed to achieve the desired objective through performing well in the competitive markets" (OECD, 1999). The structure of relationships also spells out how to set the objectives and way to achieve them (Manawaduge, 2012). However, the practical significance of the CG has been revealed by the numerous corporate failures around the globe due to inefficiency in its operations and capital market instability (Heenetigala and School, 2011). This significance may include achieving business performance, accountability and

transparency in ensuring fair wealth distribution among all the stakeholders (Lewis and Markell, 1958).

The implications of CG extend to the countries' economic growth through financial stability and firm performance (Rezaee, 2009). Thus, efficient CG systems, mechanisms, and compliance became much debated issues in past years (John and Senbet, 1997). These issues were addressed to developed and developing economies as corporate failures commonly occurred in both economies. Therefore, as members of the global village, many governments tend to make incremental changes to their CG codes (Kirkpatrick, 2009)

With globalization in the 1980s, open economies emerged to attract foreign investors to diversify their investment portfolios as a risk reduction mechanism. However, global financial crises always encouraged to have better CG mechanisms in every economy to safeguard their investors. Responding to all the considerations, Local firms also restructured their firms to ensure maintained returns to the shareholders (Heenetigala and School, 2011). This close supervision by the investors leading the CG to adopt the world standards by emerging markets (Lewis and Markell, 1958).

CG consists of mechanisms to ensure that suppliers of finance to corporations will get a return on their investment, stated clearly that governance and performance are related to each other (Shleifer and Vishny, 1997). Extending this argument, Love (2010) stated that if better governance practices are practised within the entity, the investor funds will be optimized and produce higher profits. Further, CG may impact several aspects, including financial performance determined by the profitability using measures such as ROA and ROE and value measurement by Tobin's Q (Wiwattanakantang, 2001; Bauwhede, 2009; Azim, 2012).

Organizational Performance

Organizational performance may have an impact on CG practices (Love, 2011). Firm performance is the value of the firm, and this value may increase because of the controlled behavior of the insiders and the expected cash flow from the investments (Claessens and Fan, 2002; Gompers et al., 2003; Black, Jang and Kim, 2006; Love, 2011). Qureshi & Willem Te Velde, (2007) have identified four approaches to evaluate firm value. They are financial management approach, capital structure approach, resource-based approach and sustainable growth approach. This explains the firm value creation based on efficient management of cash flows and evaluating the financing sources, the impact of capital structure changes and debt and equity component of the firm's capital structure, and the firm's value as an outcome of the firm's resources and summary of first three approaches respectively. This study gives an overall and comprehensive cover for the firm performance, but apart from these, there may be some other determinants of the firm performance.

Problem Identification and Objectives

Corporate Governance practices can be studied from several aspects. This is not limited to the Board characteristics including audit committee independence and remuneration committee independence (Mapitiya, 2015). Even though there is a growing body of literature on corporate governance practices and company performance, there is a diversity of results due to the different theoretical perspectives applied, selection of methodologies, measurement of performance, conflicting views on board involvement in decision making and the contextual nature of individual firms (Kakabadse, Kakabadse & Kouzmin 2001). Kakabadse et al. (2001) also found that political opportunity, structure, stakeholder interest, social infrastructure and mobilization have an influence on corporations and corporate stakeholders, demanding attention for good corporate governance practices. In addition, most research in the area of corporate governance has been conducted in the developed economies. Therefore, this study extends the knowledge by including several aspects of Corporate Governance such as Board diversity, block-holding, Insider ownership etc. This study attempts to answer the main research problem of, "What is the Compliance Intensity to the Corporate Governance system by the listed companies and the particular compliance benefits to the company performance legitimacy?" By answering the research problem researcher expects to achieve the main research objective of, "To examine the Compliance Intensity CG practices by the listed firms in Sri Lanka"

Secondary Objectives

To investigate the level of compliance to CG practices.

To determine the strength of relationship between effective CG practices Compliance and financial performance Legitimacy.

To examine how adoption of institutionalized CG practices affected effective performance.

METHODOLOGY

Total population of the study would be all the listed firms in the CSE and sample was drawn from the population, based on best representation to generalize the results of the study i.e., 100 of listed companies representing twenty (20) industrial sectors in CSE eliminating the companies which were presented incomplete financial statements and the companies which were not published the finalized and approved financial statements for the year 2022/2023 period yet. This study employs the secondary data collected from the CSE website and the Monthly digest (LMD 50) and company-specific websites and publications. The years of study would be from the 2018/19 period to 2022/23 period. Mainly the CG data such as Board size, Board committees, CEO duality, Board composition is considered to measure the level of compliance measured in CG INDEX; and its effect to performance is measured using ROA, ROE and Tobin's Q. The study engages control effects of eight CG factors, Block-holding, Insider ownership,

Board size, Non-Executive/Independent Directors, Board diversity, Audit Committee and Firm Size (Figure 01).

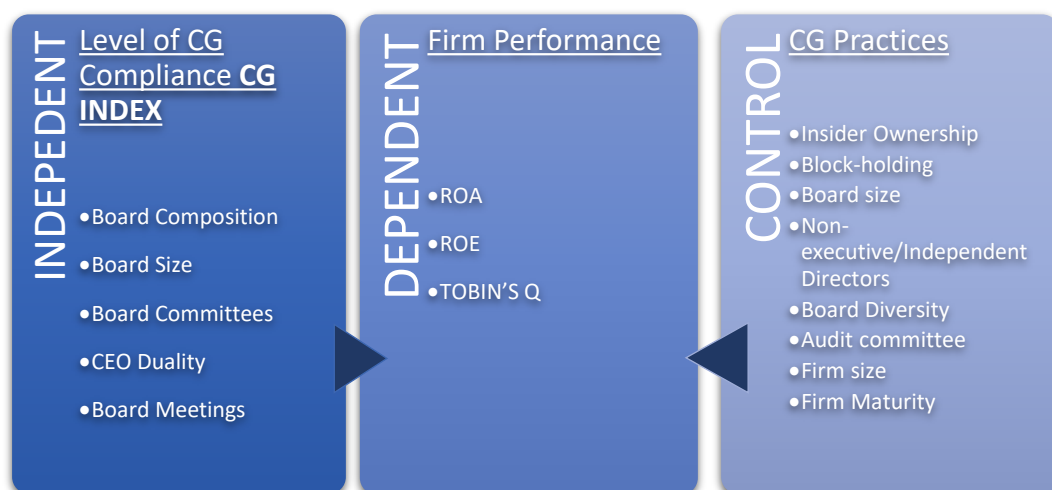


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework
(Source: Developed by the researcher)

The study adopts panel data model, notably Fixed Effects model, with the inclusion of control variables and time effects. The fixed effects model is selected for all the three models below given the Hausman test results. The regression models of the study are as follows,

Model 01

$$ROA_{it} = \beta_1 CG\ INDEX + \beta_2 IOWN + \beta_3 BLHD + \beta_4 BSZ2 + \beta_5 NED + \beta_6 BDIVE + \beta_7 LnTA + \beta_8 FMMA + \beta_9 ACOM + \pi_i + Y_t + \varepsilon_{it} \quad (1)$$

Model 02

$$ROE_{it} = \beta_1 CG\ INDEX + \beta_2 IOWN + \beta_3 BLHD + \beta_4 BSZ2 + \beta_5 NED + \beta_6 BDIVE + \beta_7 LnTA + \beta_8 FMMA + \beta_9 ACOM + \pi_i + Y_t + \varepsilon_{it} \quad (2)$$

Model 03

$$TOBIN'S\ Q_{it} = \beta_1 CG\ INDEX + \beta_2 IOWN + \beta_3 BLHD + \beta_4 BSZ2 + \beta_5 NED + \beta_6 BDIVE + \beta_7 LnTA + \beta_8 FMMA + \beta_9 ACOM + \pi_i + Y_t + \varepsilon_{it} \quad (3)$$

Where the symbols denote, CG INDEX – CG index, IOWN – Insider ownership, BLHD – Block-holding, BSZ2 – Board size, NED – Non-executive/independent directors, BDIVE – Board diversity, LnTA – Natural log of total assets which denote Firm size, FMMA – Firm maturity, ACOM – Audit committee, π_i denotes individual firm specific effects, Y_t are the dummy variables representing the time effect, ε_{it} is the error term, i are cross sectional units, t denotes the time arguments.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Assumptions in Ordinary Least Square to be satisfied with a good regression model are, non-availability of the correlation, Homoscedastic and normality. When analyzing the study data, researchers have conducted the diagnostic tests to determine the validity and appropriateness of each model the test results and the summary statistics would be as follows.

Table 1: Diagnostic tests summary

Model	Normality	Heteroscedasticity/ Homoscedasticity	Serial Correlation
ROA	Not distributed normally	Homoscedastic	No Serial Correlation
ROE	Not distributed normally	Homoscedastic	No Serial Correlation
TOBIN'S Q	Not distributed normally	Homoscedastic	Negative autocorrelation

(Source: Developed by the researcher based on E-Views output)

The main research objective of the study is “To examine the Compliance Intensity CG practices by the listed firms in Sri Lanka.” The results, obtained by E-views software, revealed that CG index has a statistically significant negative relationship with ROE at 90% confidence level. When compared to the correlation coefficient of ROA and CG INDEX, it is a much lower value as ROA has statistically significant negative relationship with CG INDEX at 95% level. A statistically significant positive relationship between CG INDEX and Tobin's Q, which is a measure of the value of the firm, is observed at 90% confidence. It can be concluded that the level of compliance not positively impact on the firm performance but able to impact positively in enhancing the value of the firm.

As per the secondary objective which is “To investigate the level of compliance to CG practices by the listed firms in Sri Lanka”; this study level of CG compliance as an index which measured using Board Meetings, Board composition, Board Committees, Board size and CEO duality. The mean index value is around 3, the maximum score is 5 and the minimum is 1 which conclude that compliance to CG Code by the Listed firms during the period of 2018-23 is more than 50% and it complies with the major Governance Practices which were tested under this study. Companies are moving towards adopting the good governance mechanisms stipulated in code issued in 2013 and reformed by the reform issued in 2017 by ICASL and SEC, hence the above secondary objective has been achieved. When determining the strength of relationship between effective CG practices Compliance and financial performance Legitimacy of the listed firms in CSE, the study engages several CG practices and examined the impact of these governance practices towards firm performance legitimacy. According to the observations, insider ownership proportion in which the proportion of shares held by the BOD including the

chairman is at a mean of 4%. To contrary, in a study conducted by a sample of 100 listed firms covering all the sectors showed that proportion as around 26% (Andradi D M A M A V, Jayasinghe W S N, Gunathilaka M L M et al., 2012). Therefore, the companies have a lower insider ownership allowing more external shareholder proportion. Insider ownership shows statistically negative coefficient with both ROA and ROE whereas a positive with the Tobin's Q. A finance advisor explains that if there is more insider ownership percentage company can have stable economy as insiders holds larger proportions of shares if the company economy is bright (Mccure, 2015).

But in this sector the insider ownership proportion is low as well as negatively related to performance, but it is positively related in firm potential value which will be more critical than short term performance measures. Despite the Block-holding proportion, the percentage of shares held by the 20 largest shareholders, at an average of 93% there is lower possibility of minority issues as insiders themselves represent only 4% of mean insider shareholding. Block-holding is negatively correlated with ROA, but it is positive with ROE in which the block-holders are able to effect on the equity than the assets of the firm. Again, it is negative with value creation and it is better to be positive with that as to eliminate the majority minority issues (Reddy & Sharma, 2014). All of the Block-holding coefficients are insignificant with ROA, ROE and Tobin's Q at 95% confidence.

This study also proved that board size is positively related with ROA, ROE and Tobin's Q; although it significant with ROE only (at 95% level). However, the CBCG issued in 2013 by ICASL specifies that the board should consist of a minimum of two directors. This condition has been satisfied by the all the listed firms under this study as the minimum value of BSZ2 is 2 and the largest board comprised 12 directors in the study sample. Furthermore, Board size may affect adversely as the companies trying to have larger board without considering the effectiveness (Reddy & Sharma, 2014).

Non-Executive/Independent director proportion which measure the board independence also may able to enhance the firm performance (Andradi D M A M A V, Jayasinghe W S N, Gunathilaka M L M et al., 2012). But as per this study, board independence depicted a statistically significant negative relationship ROE and the relationship is insignificant yet negative with ROA and Tobin's Q<Table 01>. This would be an indication that optimum independence of the boards has not been achieved by the firms under study. Board diversity of the sector represented by the female participation is not at a satisfactory level as the proportion of females in the board is at 6% although it positively impacts on the firm performance in accounting-based measures (ROA/ROE) but the impact is statistically insignificant.

Table 2: Regression Model Summary (Fixed Effects model)

Variable	ROE		ROA		Tobin's Q	
	Coefficient	Prob.	Coefficient	Prob.	Coefficient	Prob.
C	34.221	0.865	-10.240	0.842	1290.765	0.000
CG INDEX	-10.880	0.095	-1.088	0.012	1.349	0.051
IOWN	-98.337	0.078	-15.419	0.044	26.809	0.062
BLHD	0.012	0.892	-0.008	0.721	-0.008	0.086

BSZ2	4.456	0.043	0.851	0.083	0.291	0.657
NED	-62.720	0.063	-3.403	0.847	-4.875	0.681
BDIVE	55.368	0.532	8.521	0.707	-2.840	0.852
ACOM	70.691	0.003	19.112	0.001	2.195	0.591
FMMA	-2.568	0.381	0.300	0.089	3.067	0.000
LnTA	0.475	0.956	-0.198	0.929	-61.678	0.000

(Source: Developed by the Researcher based on the E-Views Output)

Audit committee availability is adopted by almost all the companies as the average adoption is at 93% in the selected sector of study. Furthermore, Firm maturity measure also impact on firm value as it depicts a statistically significant positive relationship with Tobin's Q. Assets of the firm which represent the firm size in this study negatively correlated with Tobin's Q suggesting that liquidity is much important in achieving those. Effective Governance mechanisms can be identified as a strength of the organization as it can impact for the risk reduction of the investments with safeguarding the investors; which will ultimately benefit in enhancing the long-term value of the firm and its' performance (Rezaee, 2009)

Some countries like Saudi Arabia it is necessary to adopt the CG practices for effective financial, operational and market performance. In Sri Lanka it is the discretion of the firm to adopt CG code as it is principle-based. However, the mandatory adherence to CG code is built into listing rules, thus directly applicable for listed companies. Firms have identified the importance of adopting the code requirements for sake of the benefits that had been proven by some previous researches (Manawaduge, 2012). But some of the governance practices had negatively impacted firm performance indicating there are practical issues in adopting certain practices. As a result, such practices should be revisited and bring necessary amendments to the code itself. The results of this study facilitated the satisfactory accomplishment of the major research objective.

CONCLUSION

Corporate scandals and failures in the past primarily demanded the necessity for a regulated Corporate Governance structure. To mitigate such scandals and to safeguard investors Institute of Chartered Accountants of Sri Lanka (ICASL), together with the Central Bank of Sri Lanka (CBSL) and Colombo Stock Exchange (CSE), have declared a Code of Best Practice of Corporate Governance (CBCG) in which includes several reforms time-to-time in Sri Lanka. The agency problem, which basically demanded a CG framework, can minimize via effective adaptation of CG practices. The main objective of the Study was to understand the level of compliance to the Governance code by the selected firms and therefore to identify the effectiveness of adoption of CG practices and their implications on the firm-specific performance.

The study is intended to identify the Compliance Intensity to Corporate Governance Practices and their impact on firm performance.

This study was conducted with a particular regard to 100 companies representing twenty (20) industrial sectors as per the CSE listings for the period from 2018 to 2023.

The performance of an entity is measured by return on Assets (ROA), Return on Equity (ROE) and Tobin's Q. The level of compliance is used as an index for the purpose of modelling. The index, particularly the level of compliance is measured by Board meetings, Board composition, Board committees, Board size and CEO duality. This was followed by control variables such as Insider Ownership, Block-Holding, Firm maturity, Directors proportion, Firm size, Board size and Board diversity. Analysis was subjected to Diagnostic tests, Descriptive statistical analysis, Spearman's Rank's Correlation, and Panel data regression. The results revealed, through Fixed Effect model, that Compliance with the CBCG has a significant negative relationship with ROA and ROE while positive with firm potential value (Tobin's Q). In addition, the study revealed that other corporate governance practices such as Insider ownership, Board size and Audit Committee are statistically significant and correlate with firm performance. This investigation sets a framework for companies to identify the corporate governance variables of practical interest.

The output suggested that better adaptation Corporate Governance practices may lead to higher performance while some practices are not adequately adopted by the listed firms in Sri Lanka. Hence the policymakers and regulatory bodies in the country such as SEC, ICASL and CBSL can consider the results of this study to bring further reforms into CG code to ensure better firm performance, ensuring good governance and stakeholder interests at large.

Thus, the output may use to create a favorable Sri Lankan investment environment to the local as well as foreign investors to invest in and its lead to sustainable economic growth. Further, the finding of the study is supported to the management body of listed companies to enhance corporate governance guideline to growing harmony between management and shareholders and signal to the stakeholders from effective decision making.

Future researchers may use the study and its output to conduct an extended study to compare international stocks for their CG using other governance characteristics and novel insights such as Corporate social responsibility and Balanced Scorecard Performance. Further researchers can extend the current study specifically for banking sector which is a sector where CG used as a hot topic.

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EVALUATING THE EFFECT OF JOB ROTATION ON EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE IN ABC BANK IN SRI LANKA: THE MEDIATION ROLE OF JOB SATISFACTION

R.D.P.P. Dilrukshi Fernando^{1*} and R.A. Manjula Maduwanthi²

¹Guildhall School of Business and Law, London Metropolitan University, United Kingdom

²School of Business, ESoft Metro Campus, Kurunegala, Sri Lanka

*dirukshifernando91@gmail.com**

ABSTRACT

The banking sector is the most important and significant industry in the world, and it is playing a vital role in the financial industry in economical phenomena which leads to the development of the economy in the country by managing financial instruments. In covid 19 situations the banking industry faces a major problem of job rotation. some employees were specialized with one task without rotation practices therefore banks and employees also faced some difficulties. In the current situation of the country, human resources are also utilized efficiently job rotation also helps to be a multi-tasking employee to the bank. Based on finding in past research were several conflicts and arguments among different research studies & In Sri Lankan context has a limited number of research relating to the effect of job rotation on the performance of banking sector employees with mediating role of job satisfaction and many types of research were found in a foreign context. It clearly represents Research gap comparing with past research. Therefore, it has given the opportunity to study the effect of job rotation on employee performance with mediating factors of job satisfaction. 210 of the employees were selected as a sample. Positivism research philosophy and deductive approach used to study. Researcher used data collection instrument as structured questionnaire with a 5-point Likert Scale. SPSS statistical tool used to analyze data with relationship between variables and getting result of the research. According to the result regression analysis, Correlation, mean, standers deviation helps to analysis to getting conclusion of the research.

Keywords: Employee Performance Job Rotation, Job Satisfaction

INTRODUCTION

The banking sector is the most important and significant industry in the world, and it plays a vital role in the financial sector in economic phenomena which leads to the development of the economy in the country by managing financial instruments (Faizan Mohsan, 2012). Banks in Sri Lanka represent a crucial role in the economic system including Licensed Commercial banks and Licensed Specialized Banks which dominate the highest share of the total assets in the financial system (Central Bank, 2021). Most bank institutions worldwide including Sri Lanka tend to practice job rotation of owned employees to uplift job satisfaction, involvement, commitment, and overall job performance with the expectation of developing multi-role job skills in the banking sector (Adjei, 2012). Job rotation refers to "A lateral transfer of an employee between different jobs in the same organization without a change in the hierarchical rank or salary grade, is often considered a key instrument for management development, as lateral assignments typically coincide with a change in job content and necessary skills" (Kampkotter et al, 2016). Most banks practice job rotation through cross-training and redeployment, rotational assignment, transfer, job change, and lateral moves to upgrade the ultimate job performance with higher satisfaction of the employees (Bhuvaneswari, 2021). In a few years, the employee retention rate also decreased in 2021 compared with 2020 and employees were leaving their job. In covid 19 situations banking industry face a major problem of job rotation. some employees were specialized with one task without rotation practices therefore banks and employees also faced some difficulties. In the current situation of the country, human resources are also utilized efficiently job rotation also helps to be a multi-tasking employee to the bank. Based on finding in past research were several conflicts and arguments among different research studies & In Sri Lankan context has a limited number of research relating to the effect of job rotation on the performance of banking sector employees with mediating role of job satisfaction and many types of research were found in a foreign context. It clearly represents Research gap comparing with past research. Therefore, it has given the opportunity to study the effect of job rotation on employee performance with mediating factors of job satisfaction. 210 of the employees were selected as a sample. Positivism research philosophy and deductive approach used to study. Researcher used data collection instrument as structured questionnaire with a 5-point Likert Scale. SPSS statistical tool used to analyze data with relationship between variables and getting result of the research. According to the result regression analysis, Correlation, mean, standers deviation helps to analysis to getting conclusion of the research.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Human resources are one of the most important resources in the firm to get a competitive advantage and build success for the organization. The performance of the employee in an organization is most important in managing human resources. According to Torrington Derk (1991), employee rotation is a systematic shift from one

task to another task within the organization. There are many reasons for implementing job rotation practices within an organization such as increased product quality, allowing employees to explore alternative career paths, and most importantly, preventing job boredom (Adjei and Dora, 2012).

Job rotation

According to Beatty et.al ,1987 cited in Fernando, Dissanayaka 2019 explained job rotation is described as an excellent way for the organization to develop its employees. It is necessary for employees to work in different organizational departments to acquire organizational knowledge to accomplish future responsibilities and duties. (Fernando and Dissanayaka ,2019) Job rotation is also known as the multi-tasking lateral transfer of employees to the company. Job Rotation refers to “A lateral transfer of an employee between different jobs in the same reduces fatigue and boredom. Mohan and Gomathi (2015) defined job rotation practices as activities that involve mobilizing employees across functional departments in an organization.

Employee performance

According to the HO et al ,2009 cited in Fernando,Disanayaka ,2019 explained job rotation practices contributed to enhance employee capabilities and their perspectives, they examined job rotation helped human resource managers to determined who can be replaced by whom and create a suitable and useful fit for the organization. Another researcher explained the employee. Another researcher Fernando and Dissanayake (2019) explained employee performance was how employees carry out the tasks assigned to them within stipulated deadlines. It defined employee how performed their duties by reducing costs and improving customer services.

Job Satisfaction

Job satisfaction refers to an integral part of organizational health and an important element in industrial relations (Girisha,2019). It helps to relate to different aspects of work behaviors, turnover, and productivity. In the study of Al-Ahmadi,2009 cited in Shmailan, (2016), productivity shows that satisfied employees exhibit higher job performance and are less likely to quit their job than those who are not happy with their job. According to the study of Halcomb et al, (2018) that is imperative to measure job satisfaction positively related to employee job performance, forward-looking organizations need to ensure their employees are satisfied with their working conditions and arrangements

With the economic bankruptcy in Sri Lanka, the banking system endeavors to get the maximum contribution from an individual covering several job roles in the bank at one time within limited resources such as electricity, labor power, and more. Based on findings in past research were several conflicts and arguments among different research studies & In the Sri Lankan context is a limited number of research relating to the effect of job rotation on the performance of banking sector employees with mediating role of job satisfaction and many types of research were found in a foreign context. Therefore, it has allowed studying the effect of job rotation on employee performance with

mediating job satisfaction factors. The findings in both local and international studies were not enough to address the current problematic situation in the banking sector in Sri Lanka. Thus, this research study helped to fulfill the knowledge deficiency at a considerable level about the effect of job rotation on performance with the mediating role of job satisfaction of the employees in the Sri Lankan banking sector.

METHODOLOGY

Research Philosophy, method, and sampling framework.

SPSS Statistical Package was practiced in analyzing the collected data with bivariate analysis to interpret the impact of job rotation on performance. Regression, correlation analysis, and descriptive statistics are used to interpret the impact of the independent variable on the dependent variable, the relationship between variables, and a better explanation of data, respectively. This research was executed as explanatory research that used limited knowledge that is available to investigate why something occurs and it assisted research in deepening our understanding of a certain subject, figuring out how or why a specific phenomenon is occurring, and making predictions. The conceptual framework for this research is designed from the above literature review. It includes a dependent variable and an independent variable with a mediating variable.

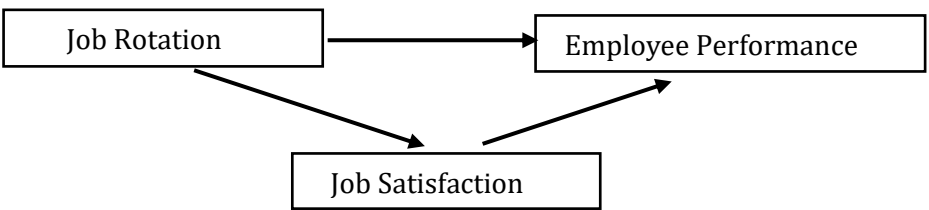


Figure 14 : Conceptual Framework

(Source: Author Developed,2022)

In this research study positivism research philosophy will be used and deductive approach will be used to study, and the survey strategy is most appropriate research strategy to this study in deductive approach. In time horizon, this study is a cross-sectional study under quantitative approach which data are collected within limited time. primary data collection method using a self-administrated questionnaire from northwestern region employees and Questions based on the literature review and knowledge of the researcher questionnaire will use with a 5-point Likert Scale. This research data will be collected from Northwestern region employees of the ABC Bank through a self-administrated questionnaire. The theoretical population of the study is 460 employees (Annual report,2021) in the northwestern region of ABC bank branches will be the study population. The sample size is 210 staff in Northwestern region in ABC Bank through random sampling technique under probability method under Morgan chart. Researchers will be used data collection instruments as structured questionnaire.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Table 19 : Descriptive Statistical Analysis for Independent and Dependent variable

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness		Kurtosis	
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Std. Error
Job Rotation	210	1	5	4.09	.826	-1.686	.168	4.563	.334
Employee Performance	210	1	5	4.00	.854	-1.572	.168	3.805	.334
Job Satisfaction	210	1	5	4.10	.869	-1.717	.168	4.153	.334
Valid N (listwise)	210								

(Source: Author Developed,2022)

Table 20 : Reliability Analysis

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.945	3

(Source: Author Developed,2022)

Table 21: Correlation Analysis

		Job Rotation	Employee Performance	Job Satisfaction
Job Rotation	Pearson Correlation	1	.856**	.836**

	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000
	N	210	210	210
Employee Performance	Pearson Correlation	.856**	1	.863**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000
	N	210	210	210
Job Satisfaction	Pearson Correlation	.836**	.863**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	
	N	210	210	210
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).				

(Source: Author Developed 2024)

Correlation measures can be used to assess the relationship between variables. From this analysis, we can identify whether there is a possible association between the dependent variable and the independent variables. There was significance of 0.000 value (p-value) among the dependent and independent variables. Because that value is below 0.01 (Standard alpha value). It says that there is a strong positive relationship between the dependent variable of employee performance and the independent variables of job rotation and job satisfaction. Independent variable changes are highly affected by the dependent variable.

Correlation coefficient (r) of job rotation and employee performance of 0.856. Further, the test flagged has indicated a strong positive linear significance between the two variables. If the r value is closer to +1 it's a perfect positive linear relationship and the r value is indicated between 0.8 to +1. Therefore, a strong Positive correlation suggests Job rotation and Employee performance. Further, it was observed that Pearson Correlation (r) lies between $0.8 < |r| < 0.5$ This result shows us that Job rotation and Employee performance are correlated and have a Strong positive linear relationship. And the P value has very strong evidence against the null hypothesis of there is no relationship between Job rotation and Employee performance.

The correlation coefficient (r) of job satisfaction and employee performance is also between 0.863. Further, the test flagged has indicated a strong positive linear significance in between the two variables. If the r value is closer to +1 it's a perfect positive linear relationship and the r value is indicated between 0.8 to +1. Therefore, a strong Positive correlation suggests that Employee performance and job satisfaction Further it was observed that Pearson Correlation (r) lies between $0.8 < |r| < 0.5$ This result shows us that job satisfaction and employee performance are correlated and have a Strong positive linear relationship. And the P value has very strong evidence against the null hypothesis of there is no relationship between job satisfaction and employee performance.

The correlation coefficient (r) of job rotation and job satisfaction is also between 0.836 Further, the test flagged has indicated a strong positive linear significance in between the two variables. If the r value is closer to +1 it's a perfect positive linear relationship and the r value is indicated between 0.8 to +1. Therefore, a strong Positive correlation suggests that Employee performance and job satisfaction Further it was observed that Pearson Correlation (r) lies between $0.8 < |r| < 0.5$ This result shows us that job satisfaction and employee performance are correlated and have a Strong positive linear relationship. And the P value has very strong evidence against the null hypothesis of there is no relationship between job rotation and job satisfaction

Table 22 : Regression Analysis for job rotation and job satisfaction

Mod el	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.836 ^a	.699	.698	.478

(Source: Author Developed 2024)

Table 23 -Regression Analysis of Job satisfaction and Employee performance

Mod el	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.863 ^a	.746	.744	.432

(Source: Author Developed 2024)

Table 24 -Regression Analysis of Job rotation and employee performance

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate

1	856 ^a	733	731	442

(Source: Author Developed 2024)

The empirical findings and analysis of the study using SPSS software. Descriptive statistics and infernal analysis were done through SPSS and mean median. Standard deviations were described with infernal analysis and democratic analysis of the respondents graphically presented to the best understanding of the research result indicating the reliability of this test. It shows a high level of internal consistency of the data sample. descriptive analysis for all variables of the research and it indicated mean value around 4 which was “Agree” in the statements and skewness and Kurtis indicated dependent variable of employee performance shows a significant positive kurtosis value by implying an approximately normal distribution. Q-Q plot also normally distributed data appears as roughly a straight line. it describes to dependent variable of employee performance, and it can be seen in normally distributed. According to the correlation analysis variables are corelated and that can be seen strong positive relationship between the variables. Analysis of correlation, the researcher was able to conclusion the null hypothesis can be rejected and alternative hypothesis can be accepted in the three variables hypothesis.

Zobel Z test for find mediating effect of Job satisfaction.

Table 25 -Model summary for mediating effect of job satisfaction

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.897 ^a	.805	.803	.379

(Source: Author Developed 2024)

Table 26 - Coefficient table

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardize d Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.146	.135		1.082	.280

	Job Rotation	.461	.058	.445	7.959	.000
	Job Satisfaction	.482	.055	.491	8.775	.000
a. Dependent Variable: Employee Performance						

(Source: Author Developed 2024)

Table 27 - Coefficient table

Coefficients						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.497	.167		2.982	.003
	Job Rotation	.881	.040	.836	22.001	.000
a. Dependent Variable: Job Satisfaction						

(Source: Author Developed 2024)

According to the Zobel test job satisfaction mediates job rotation and employee performance. As a result, the null hypothesis has been rejected that asserts the two variables are independent of each other. Therefore, it can be concluded that a relationship between job satisfaction mediates the effect of job rotation on employee performance. The mediated effect divided by its standard error yields a z-score of the mediated effect. This value is compared against a standard normal distribution to test for significance. If the z-score is greater than 1.96 we conclude that the effect is larger than would be expected by chance and call the effect significant. The standard error can be used to obtain confidence intervals around the mediated effect. (Abu-Bader and Jones, 2021).

CONCLUSIONS/RECOMMANDATIONS

The study is based on the research results /findings, objectives, conclusions made by the study, recommendations made by the researcher, and areas for further studies. The general objective of this study is to establish the evaluation of the effect of job rotation on employee performance with the mediating factor of job satisfaction. Specifically, the study aimed to evaluate the effect of job rotation on employee performance to determine the mediating effect of the variables. According to the findings, job rotation is most important to the organization for enhancing employee performance and work efficiency. Job rotation should be implemented at a suitable time, the bank also prevents fraud and errors from employees as well as employee performance in any task relating to the bank. Some employees have more knowledge, different educational backgrounds, and skills but the bank does not use its efficiency and suitable department. As a result, the employee was bored with their job. The bank has mentioned that every six months employees rotate one task to another. However, the bank was not successfully implemented in a suitable time and some tasks couldn't rotate in a short time because the work procedure was also too long. According to the findings in this study, job rotation affects employee performance and job satisfaction mediates with job rotation and employee performance. In that situation null hypothesis can be rejected and an alternative hypothesis can be accepted in the study. Therefore, successful implementation of the job rotation directly affects the employee performance and job satisfaction of the employee mediates with the job rotation and employee performance.

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PSYCHOLOGY IN BUSINESS & LEISURE MANAGEMENT

FROM BRAND TO BOND: THE ROLE OF PERSONALITY IN CREATING LASTING IMPRESSIONS TO ATTRACT TOURISTS IN SRI LANKA'S HOSPITALITY HAVEN

Mike D. Weerasuriya^{1*} and Hiranthi D. Rathnayake²

¹Country Guildhall School of Business and Law, London Metropolitan University, United Kingdom

²School of Business, ESOF Metro Campus, Colombo, Sri Lanka

*deshakamike@gmail.com**

ABSTRACT

The hospitality sector creates a tapestry of experiences that satisfy and fulfill customers' needs for leisure, ranging from opulent resorts to intimate cafes. In this industry, a brand's personality is conveyed through various touchpoints, including visual appeal, customer interactions, and overall perception. Any business, the client, is essential to its success; without them, it is impossible to conceive success. Working closely with one's consumer is essential. Customer attraction refers to the strategies and actions taken by a business to draw in potential customers to its products or services where it is necessary for identifying the effect of brand personality on it. This study aims to examine the influence of brand personality on customer attraction in the hospitality industry in Sri Lanka. The research is based on a case study survey of regular customers and second-time visitors to the Kingsbury Hotel Colombo 01 during 2023. The research conducted through the epistemological standpoint of positivism, the study involved 150 customers, with 108 selected through judgmental sampling based on Morgan's table. Data analysis using the chi-square test supported the alternative hypothesis, indicating that service quality, location and accessibility, and environmental sustainability affect customer attraction. Recommendations include developing a strong sustainability brand identity, creating targeted marketing campaigns, and implementing and promoting eco-friendly practices in Sri Lankan hotels. Future research should also incorporate insights from respondents, which was not achieved in this study.

Keywords: Service Quality, Environmental Sustainability, Location and Accessibility

INTRODUCTION

From luxurious resorts to cozy cafes, the hospitality industry weaves a tapestry of experiences that cater to customer's desire for leisure and satisfaction. According to Hallak, Rob, and Etal (2019) also highlighted the distinctive feature of the hospitality sector, which centers on the idea of luxury, pleasure, and experience rather than meeting basic needs for sustenance and core values. Additionally, they highlighted three subsectors of the hospitality sector, such as restaurants, bars, and accommodations.

The idea of a brand's personality encompasses more than just its actual goods or services; it also refers to the attributes, ideals, and qualities that it represents. A brand's personality in the hospitality sector is communicated through a variety of touchpoints, including visual appeal, message, customer interactions, and general perception. According to O'Neill and Xiao (2006), Hotel guests also rely on brand names to reduce risks that arise while staying at an otherwise unknown property. Any business, the client, is essential to its success; without them, it is impossible to conceive success. Working closely with one's consumer is essential. The customer is a vital component of the market and the business. Businesses that want to survive must consistently provide high-quality goods and services that result in incredibly happy and devoted clients (Fecikova, 2004).

However, contentment is a personal sense of pleasure or disappointment. People's degree of satisfaction increases when their level of desire is met, when it isn't, dissatisfaction sets in. Whether a company is in the private or service sectors, customer happiness is important to them all. It is impossible to please every single customer. After using the product, the customer will indicate their happiness with it if they enjoy it (Yao et al., 2019). It is focused in this study is to learn how consumers' expectations and attitudes towards an action plan can be generated and how hotel branding strategies can cope with customer satisfaction and attraction to a hotel which the research aim of the research study is to find the effect of Brand personality on Customer attraction in hospitality industry Sri Lanka, with a focus on the prestigious Kingsbury Hotel in Colomb o1.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review provides a critical framework for understanding the complex interplay between customer attraction and brand personality in the rapidly changing hospitality industry. This section examines the impact of brand personality on consumer behavior and preferences in the context of the hospitality industry by conducting a thorough analysis of previous academic works, empirical studies, and theoretical frameworks. The American Marketing Association describe the term of the brand as a "name, term, symbol, or design, intended to identify the goods and services of the seller and to differentiate them from other competitors". In addition, according to Huang and Cai (2014) concept of brand has been represented as a useful tool for both

the supply and demand sides in the marketplace. For example, according to the hotels, brands are used to take a competitive advantage, and consumers usually rely on brands to make purchase decisions. Customer attraction is vital for hotels seeking to thrive in the competitive Sri Lankan hospitality industry. There for understanding of intricate interplay between brand personality dimensions including location and accessibility, service quality, and environmental sustainability are very important. According to Becheur (2017) Brand personality affects brand love, brand trust, brand commitment and purchase intention of the customer. It encompasses the process through which customers are enticed, engaged, and ultimately choose to patronize a particular establishment.

Service quality

A key component of the hospitality sector, service quality is crucial in determining the opinions, loyalty, and satisfaction of patrons. According to Kotler and Keller (2009) customer satisfaction is the extent of feeling following a clash between expectations and reality regarding a good or service. Also, Akbar and Parves (2009), customer satisfaction is an appraisal of the goods or services that meets the desires or aspirations of either the customer or the service provider. According to Vilkaite-Vaitone and Papsiene (2016) satisfaction is an immediate response to service consumption. Nevertheless, service efficiency is implied in the mind of customers in the food industry in a comprehensive picture of a business. The perceived interest and planned demand influence the standard of service.

Also, Berry & Bendapudi, (2007) the intangible character of services in the hospitality sector emphasizes the importance of staff members in providing services. Frontline staff members are tasked with representing the brand's personality and providing customer-satisfied service experiences because they are frequently the face of the company. Thus, maintaining consistent and high-quality service delivery requires staff empowerment, motivation, and training. In addition to increasing guest satisfaction, providing excellent service also generates positive word-of-mouth and becomes a powerful source of brand advocacy within the industry. According to Karamata (2017), The price of the service is derived from the well-known idea that the quality of service, happiness of consumers is a foundation of a prosperous future for the economy and a profitable sector.

As stated by Wilkins (2009), The significance of service quality for business success has been recognized in the hospitality industry as well as in broader business contexts. The degree of service is commonly recognized in terms of customer satisfaction, although customer satisfaction does not equate to customer loyalty. The outcome of meetings between the client and the service provider, during which the client evaluates quality and expresses satisfaction or dissatisfaction, is the perceived level of service. According to Dutta, Parsa and Bujisic (2014), Three primary administrative components have been

used in the analysis to gauge the effectiveness of restaurant/hotel service, according to These three components are used in the food quality, atmosphere, and staff services.

Also, Saleem and Raja, (2014) Service quality has long been known as one of the most important constructs in the hospitality industry. Numerous studies have linked service quality to high customer satisfaction rates, the likelihood of positive word-of-mouth (WOM) recommendations, repurchase intention, customer loyalty, and other outcomes that are of critical importance for the sector.

According to Prideaux e, (2006) Its significance largely depends on the customers' perceptions of how employees, such as hotel guides or waiters, behave around them and whether they seem sincerely committed to the goal of providing customers with the highest possible quality of service based on their unique needs and preferences. And the research by Rather and Sharma (2017) revealed that customer satisfaction, which largely depends on the perceived quality of services, might boost both customer commitment and loyalty in the hotel industry. Finally, according to Hernon & Altman, (2010) tangibility represents the tangible aspects of service quality and refers to facilities, equipment, technology, and other similar constructs Even if behavior and competence of the staff comply with the highest possible standards, evident gaps in tangibility might translate into low customer satisfaction rates owing to low perceived quality of customer service.

In summary, customer satisfaction, brand advocacy, and loyalty are all influenced by the quality of the services provided, making service quality a crucial component of the hospitality sector. In the Sri Lankan hospitality context, it is critical for hotels such as the Kingsbury Hotel to pay close attention to service quality to draw in and keep guests. In a highly competitive sector, the capacity to continuously provide outstanding customer service sets successful businesses apart from their competitors and guarantees their long-term survival and growth.

Location and Accessibility

Location is another factor that is typically leveraged to enhance hotel brand recognition, customer satisfaction, and loyalty. According to Getz (2008), the strategic positioning and accessibility of a hotel are critical factors that significantly influence customer attraction in the competitive landscape of the hospitality industry. Location serves as a fundamental determinant of a hotel's success, impacting its visibility, convenience, and proximity to key attractions and business centers. Also, according to Shoval (2011), Guest's enjoyment of the experiences and utility embedded in hotel stays is heavily contingent upon hotel location. Although both business and leisure travelers consistently rate hotel location as one of the top attributes affecting hotel selection and satisfaction. The significance of a strategic location in Sri Lanka's thriving hospitality sector cannot be overemphasized. As the capital of the country and a bustling economic center, Colombo is at the heart of the hospitality industry. According to Li (2015), the

city's strategic positioning along international trade routes and its rich cultural heritage make it a prime destination for both leisure and business travelers.

According to Wu and Liang (2009) discover that the nature of service experience, which incorporates atmosphere and environment is a critical indicator of customer satisfaction and loyalty. Also, Canny 2014), says Different investigations additionally presumed that environment is one of the factors that highly affects customer satisfaction. Han and Ryu (2009) say that location or environment is another crucial factor to consider in ensuring customer satisfaction. Their study explored the impact of actual environmental factors, such as layout and amenities, on customer satisfaction and loyalty, and found that the environment was a significant factor with a substantial impact. And as stated by Xiang and Krawczyk (2016), An ideal location is associated with larger accommodation demand, better firm performance and guest satisfaction, and a lower failure rate. And Dong- Soo Lee (2010) confirmed that easy accessibility to transportation portals and tourist attractions are the defining factors for guest satisfaction with location.

Moreover, as noted by Choi and Chu (2000), the integration of location and accessibility into a hotel's brand personality is paramount in attracting and retaining guests. Studies have consistently shown that guests often prioritize convenience and ease of access when selecting accommodation. This prime location along Galle Face Green offers a distinctive advantage for hotels, like the Kingsbury Hotel in Colombo, providing visitors with unparalleled access to the city's main business districts and tourist attractions. Finally, a hotel's Location and Accessibility in the hospitality industry cannot be overstated. Strategic positioning and accessibility are critical factors in influencing customer attraction, satisfaction, and loyalty.

Environmental sustainability

The hotel industry is a major contributor to environmental problems because it consumes a substantial number of natural resources such as energy, water, and other non-durable resources (Manaktola and Jauhari 2007). As stated by Millar and Baloglu (2011), A green hotel is defined as “an environmentally sensible operation that provides hotel guests with an eco-friendly, hygienic and healthy product and practices energy conservation and recycling at the same time’. According to Font (2002), in recent years, environmental sustainability has emerged as a critical dimension in the hospitality industry, gaining recognition for its impact on brand personality and customer attraction. Environmental sustainability encompasses a range of practices aimed at reducing the ecological footprint of hotels and promoting responsible resource management. According to Wan, Shen, & Choi (2014), in the dynamic landscape of the Sri Lankan hospitality industry, environmental sustainability plays a pivotal role in shaping the brand identity of hotels. Sri Lanka's rich natural heritage and diverse ecosystems render it a prime destination for eco-conscious travelers seeking authentic

and environmentally responsible experiences. Jang, Kim, and Lee (2015) suggest that when an individual feels attached to a green/eco-friendly product, they are likely to continue buying and consuming the product. According to Chan et al. (2014), environmental knowledge is a vital precondition of customer sustainable intention/behavior for a hospitality/tourism product. Environmental knowledge indicates a patron's ability to comprehend environmental concepts, issues, problems, and model their activities. Another recent study by Esparon (2014) found that nature as an aesthetic experience was the most important factor for visitors in hotel selection. Apart from the above selection factors, sustainable practices are now observed as one of the essential factors in customers' hotel selection decisions and could help businesses and stakeholders in the elimination of unsustainable choices to conserve the environment (Kopnina 2014).

Moreover, as noted by (Dong (2020), Therefore, for the last few decades, eliciting environmentally sustainable consumer behavior has been a vital topic that has an increasing attention in the consumer marketplace and academia. Also Bridges & Wilhelm (2008), say Environmentally-sustainable consumer behavior whose alternative term is environmentally-responsible consumer behavior is hard to pin down when defining it, but the term is broadly utilized and employed as an umbrella concept that highlights an individual's various actions saving natural resources (e.g. water, energy), reducing environmental harm (e.g. waste decrease), meeting the green needs of society, and improving his/her life quality.

In the context of the Sri Lankan hospitality sector, and with reference to the Kingsbury Hotel, environmental sustainability is a crucial factor in defining brand identity and attracting consumers. By implementing sustainable practices, hotels distinguish themselves as socially and environmentally conscious businesses in addition to adhering to international environmental regulations. Hotels in Sri Lanka may attract environmentally conscious tourists and support the country's and the industry's larger sustainability goals by deliberately incorporating environmental sustainability into their brand identities.

The research is based on a case study survey of regular customers and second-time visitors to the Kingsbury Hotel Colombo 01 during 2023. The research conducted through the epistemological standpoint of positivism, the study involved 150 customers, with 108 selected through judgmental sampling based on Morgan's table

METHODOLOGY

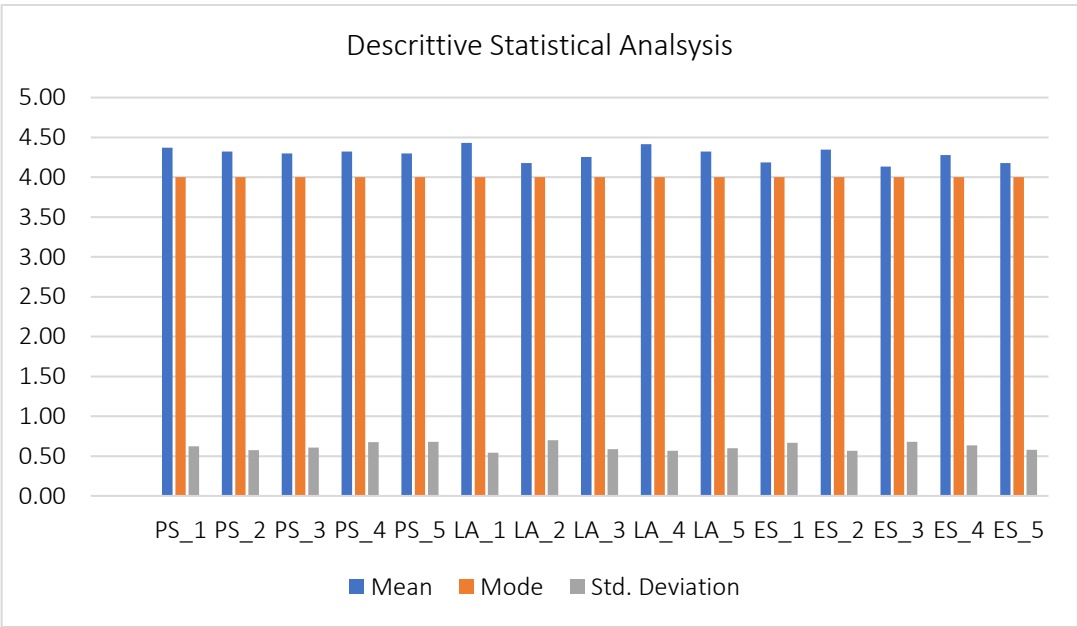
This research adopts a positivist philosophy, emphasizing a structured and objective approach to understanding the "Influence of Brand Personality on Customer Attraction in the Hospitality Industry in Sri Lanka: Special Reference to Kingsbury Hotel." A deductive research strategy is employed, testing pre-established hypotheses about brand personality and customer attraction. A quantitative survey instrument will be

used to collect data from respondents. The survey will consist of mono (single) quantitative choice questions designed to measure brand personality dimensions and customer attraction. A judgmental sampling technique was employed to select 108 from 150 respondents. The sample comprised a combination of regular customers and second-time visitors to the Kingsbury Hotel Colombo 01 during the year 2023. Selection criteria focused on variables such as frequency of visits, length of stay, and spending habits to gather insights relevant to the research objectives. The collected data is analyzed using the SPSS software. Both descriptive and inferential statistical analyses are conducted. Descriptive analysis will provide an overview of the sample characteristics and key variables, while inferential analysis, including Pearson correlation and chi-square testing, in order to examine the relationship between brand personality and customer attraction.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis was conducted with the statistical analysis of descriptive and inferential which the results are as given below.

Figure 01: Descriptive statistical analysis



(Source: Author developed 2024)

Customers rated all five service quality dimensions favorably on a scale of 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). Mean scores ranged from 4.30 to 4.37, indicating a strong overall agreement that these aspects are important for attracting guests. Tangibility (physical facilities) and Reliability (consistent service delivery) received the

highest mean scores (around 4.37 and 4.32), suggesting these are especially crucial customer considerations. Responsiveness, Assurance, and Empathy (all around 4.30) were also rated highly, implying that prompt attention to requests, a sense of security, and staff understanding are important factors as well. The mode (most frequent response) for all categories was 4, further supporting the positive customer perception of these service quality dimensions. Standard deviations ranged from .574 to .678, indicating some variation in individual responses but not a large spread within each category.

Convenience received the highest mean score (4.43), indicating a strong agreement that convenience is important for attracting customers. Safety (4.42) and Visibility (4.32) were also rated highly, suggesting these aspects are crucial for attracting guests. Accessibility (4.18) and Transportation (4.25) had slightly lower mean scores, but still fell within the "Agree" range, implying they are important considerations for customers as well. The mode (most frequent response) for all categories was 4, further supporting the overall positive perception of these service quality dimensions in attracting customers. Standard deviations ranged from 0.542 to 0.698, indicating some variation in individual responses but not a significant spread within each category.

Eco-Friendly Products (4.35) received the highest mean score, suggesting customers value hotels that offer environmentally friendly options. Waste Reduction (4.28) and Energy Efficiency (4.13) were also rated favorably. Resource Efficiency (4.18) and Sustainable Supply Chain (4.18) had slightly lower means, but still indicate a positive perception. The mode (most frequent response) for all categories was 4, further supporting this overall positive view. Standard deviations ranged from .567 to .680, indicating some variation in individual responses but not a significant spread within each category.

Table 01: Inferential statistical analysis

IV variables	Pearson Correlation	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Service quality	.395**	0.000
Location and Accessibility	.500**	0.000
Environmental sustainability	.352**	0.000

(Source: Author developed 2024)

The analysis reveals moderate positive correlations between all three independent variables (service quality, location & accessibility, and environmental sustainability) and the dependent variable (attracting customers). Location & Accessibility (0.500) has the strongest correlation, suggesting a clearer link between a hotel's location and ease of access and its ability to attract customers. Service Quality (0.395) shows a moderate positive correlation, indicating that while good service quality is important for attracting customers, it might not be the single most influential factor. Environmental

Sustainability (0.352) also has a moderate positive correlation, suggesting that customers are increasingly considering a hotel's eco-friendly practices when making their choice. Since all three main independent variables received positive correlation that can be concluded by increasing the service quality, location and accessibility and environmentally sustainable activities conduct by hotel effect on increasing the more customer attraction.

The Chi-Square test results, with all asymptotic significance (p-values) being 0.000, indicate a statistically significant relationship between all three independent variables (service quality, location & accessibility, and environmental sustainability) and the dependent variable (attracting customers). A Chi-Square test doesn't tell you the direction or strength of the relationship, but a p-value of 0.000 suggests a very strong association between the variables. It confirmed that all the hypotheses be accepted by rejecting the null hypothesis. The service quality, location and accessibility and environmental sustainability has a relationship with attracting the customer to the hotel.

CONCLUSIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS

This research investigated the role of personality in creating lasting impressions to attract tourists to Sri Lanka's hospitality sector. The findings highlight the importance of three key factors, 1) Service Quality- Across all service quality dimensions, customers indicated a strong preference for staff reliability, responsiveness, empathy, assurance, and tangible facilities. High mean scores and a mode of "4" suggest overall satisfaction with these aspects. Investing in staff training and maintaining well-maintained facilities are crucial for building positive perceptions. 2) Location and Accessibility- While service quality is important, location and accessibility emerged as the strongest factor influencing customer decisions. A convenient location, coupled with ease of access and safety considerations, is a top priority for tourists. Hotels should strategically leverage their location and ensure easy access from transportation hubs and tourist attractions and 3) Environmental Sustainability- Tourists are increasingly prioritizing eco-friendly practices. Customers favorably rated hotels that offer environmentally friendly products, waste reduction initiatives, and energy efficiency measures. Implementing sustainable practices throughout the hospitality chain can enhance Sri Lanka's appeal as a responsible tourist destination. It is to be recommended for the hotels to Balance standardized service delivery with opportunities for personalization to create memorable experiences. Empower staff to connect with guests and cater to individual needs. Collaboration between the hospitality sector and local authorities can enhance accessibility and promote tourist destinations with high potential. Develop a strong brand identity that reflects Sri Lanka's commitment to environmental sustainability. Implement and promote eco-friendly practices throughout hotel operations. Develop targeted marketing campaigns that highlight Sri Lanka's unique blend of exceptional service, convenient locations, and commitment to environmental responsibility. The

areas for further research to be considered as cultural sensitivity training on staff-tourist interactions and overall customer satisfaction, digital marketing strategies on attracting tourists from specific demographics and geographic regions and Long-term sustainability practices within the Sri Lankan hospitality industry and their potential impact on attracting environmentally conscious. tourists.

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PARENTAL ROLE MODEL'S INFLUENCE ON ENTREPRENEURIAL INTENTION AMONG BUSINESS MANAGEMENT UNDERGRADUATES: A CASE OF PRIVATE HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTES IN KANDY

S. Lasitha Rajapaksha^{1*}

¹School of Business, ESOF Metro Campus, Kandy, Sri Lanka

*lasitha.rajapaksha@esoft.lk**

ABSTRACT

This study examines the influence of parental role models on entrepreneurial intentions among business management undergraduates in private higher education institutes in Kandy, Sri Lanka. Recognizing the crucial role of entrepreneurship in economic growth, this research aims to understand how parental entrepreneurship impacts students' aspirations to become entrepreneurs. The theoretical framework is grounded in the Theory of Planned Behavior and social learning theories. Using a quantitative approach, data was collected through structured surveys from a sample of 300 students across various private institutes. The study investigates six hypotheses related to the nature, duration, and success of parental entrepreneurship, along with parental involvement, support, and modeling of business skills and values. Regression analysis reveals significant positive correlations for all hypotheses, indicating that diverse and sustained exposure to parental entrepreneurship, perceived success, active involvement, and support significantly enhance students' entrepreneurial intentions. The findings underscore the importance of family influence in shaping entrepreneurial aspirations and provide valuable insights for educators and policymakers. Recommendations include integrating family business contexts into curricula, encouraging parental engagement through events and mentorship programs, and supporting practical entrepreneurial experiences. These measures aim to create a conducive educational environment that nurtures future entrepreneurs, contributing to regional and national economic development. This study fills a research gap by focusing on a non-Western context, offering critical insights into the role of parental role models in entrepreneurial intention formation among undergraduates in Kandy.

Keywords: Parental Entrepreneurship, Parental Involvement, Perceived Success, Active Involvement

Introduction

Entrepreneurial activities are seen as the single most critical vehicle of growth and invention in developing countries (Schumpeter, 1934; Shane, 1993). This is an insight after a series of studies to establish the factors that influence entrepreneurial intention among people, with parental role model being the most important determinant (Krueger, Reilly, & Carsrud, 2000; Laspita et al., 2012). It is within this context that this study is designed to determine the impact of parental entrepreneurship on students' intentions to be entrepreneurs in Kandy, more so because of the proliferation of the private higher education sector, the vibrancy of the education industry in the city, and the economic activities that rise by the day in the city and environs. In many parts of the country, including Kandy, private higher education institutions make a significant contribution to the skills and aspirations of young adults. Higher education institutions serve also as a venue for academic learning but as well as a hotbed for potential entrepreneurs. Exploring factors that influence entrepreneurial intentions in this type of setting is crucial to developing educational programs that will well help raise entrepreneurial competencies contributing to regional and national economic development (Audretsch & Keilbach, 2004). The research problem centers on examining the influence of parental role modeling on entrepreneurial intentions among business management undergraduates in private higher education institutes in Kandy.

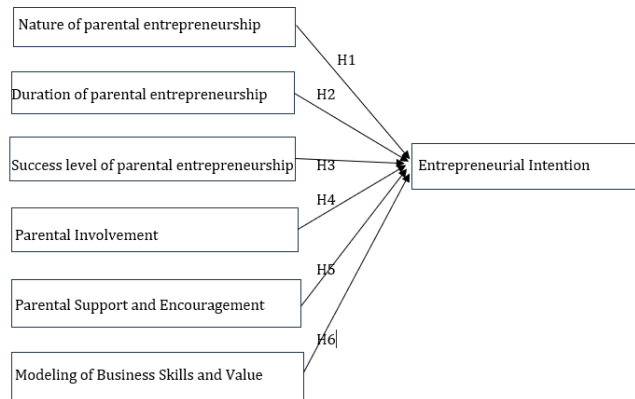
The primary purpose of this study is to investigate how parental role modeling influences entrepreneurial intentions among undergraduates pursuing business management courses in private higher education institutions in Kandy. More specifically, main objective is to assess whether having entrepreneurial parents plays a role in influencing undergraduates' intentions to become entrepreneurs. There are some sub objectives of the research such as, to Evaluate the Influence of the Nature of Parental Entrepreneurship, success level of parental entrepreneurship, parental involvement, parental support and encouragement, modelling of business skills and values on Entrepreneurial Intentions. This is an important study in the overall context as it contributes to the theoretical frameworks of forming entrepreneurial intentions and is rather practical for educators and policymakers at the same time (Fayolle & Gailly, 2015). Such information can be used to enhance the curriculum and the support structures in the educational institutions towards the encouragement of entrepreneurial activities. In addition, this may be helpful for policymakers devising interventions aimed at making an educational setting conducive to entrepreneurship (Stam, 2015).

Literature Review

The influence of parental role models on entrepreneurial intentions has been a well-explored area in entrepreneurship research, with early studies consistently pointing to the significant impact of family background on shaping entrepreneurial aspirations (Laspita et al., 2012). The foundational theories such as Ajzen's Theory of Planned

Behavior (1991) and Bandura's Social Learning Theory (1977) have provided the basis for understanding how parental influence operates. Ajzen's theory suggests that intentions precede behavior and are shaped by attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control. Parental role models influence these components, thereby shaping the attitudes and perceived norms regarding entrepreneurship. Bandura's theory supports this by positing that individuals learn behaviors by observing and imitating role models, with parents often serving as the first and most influential role models. Recent studies have built upon these theoretical frameworks to further explore the importance of parental influence on entrepreneurial intentions, especially within different cultural and socio-economic contexts. Laspita et al. (2012) and Obschonka et al. (2011) have shown that individuals with entrepreneurial parents are more likely to develop entrepreneurial intentions due to the self-efficacy and business skills instilled by their parents. These findings are further supported by research from Minola, Criaco, and Obschonka (2016), who argue that the success of parental business practices provides a prominent example of entrepreneurial success that motivates offspring to pursue similar paths.

The research gap identified in this study is crucial due to the predominant focus of existing literature on the influence of parental role models on entrepreneurial intentions within Western contexts. Western socio-cultural environments, which often emphasize individualism, self-reliance, and risk-taking (Hofstede, 2001), differ significantly from the more collectivist, community-oriented, and risk-averse cultures found in South Asia, particularly in Sri Lanka. The specific impact of parental role models on students' entrepreneurial intentions in private higher education institutions within emerging markets, such as Kandy, Sri Lanka, remains significantly underexplored. This gap is important as the socio-cultural, educational, and economic dynamics in Sri Lanka influence entrepreneurial intentions differently compared to Western countries. For instance, Chlosta et al. (2012) found that parental entrepreneurial background positively influences entrepreneurial intentions in Western settings. These findings may not fully translate to the Sri Lankan context, where factors such as family expectations, societal norms, and economic conditions may play a more significant role (Perera, 2016). Addressing this gap by incorporating more recent research, particularly from non-Western contexts, will not only provide a more accurate and current perspective on the subject but also enhance the relevance of the findings for developing educational programs and policies tailored to foster entrepreneurial competencies in Kandy, Sri Lanka. This approach underscores the need for context-specific research that can inform policy, and educational interventions aimed at nurturing entrepreneurship in emerging markets (De Clercq, Honig, & Martin, 2013). Based on the literature, the figure 1 presents this study's conceptual model where the nature of parental entrepreneurship, duration of parental entrepreneurship, success level of parental entrepreneurship, parental involvement, parental support and encouragement, modelling of business skills and values influence the entrepreneurial intention among business management undergraduates.



(Source: Autor Developed, 2024)

Figure 1: Conceptual framework

METHODOLOGY

The study employed a quantitative research design to gather data for testing the proposed hypotheses regarding the relationships between identified variables and entrepreneurial intentions. Adopting a positivist philosophy, the research relied on a structured survey method to collect data. The target population consisted of undergraduate students pursuing business management degrees at various private higher education institutions in Kandy. A power analysis determined that a sample size of 300 students was appropriate for the study. To ensure representativeness, stratified random sampling was employed. The strata were formed based on specific criteria related to the institutions. Each stratum represented a unit of application, such as different private higher education institutions. The sample was proportionally represented within each stratum, ensuring that the final sample accurately reflected the distribution of students across the selected institutions. For instance, if a particular institution had a larger population of business management students, a proportionally larger number of participants from that institution was included in the sample. Data collection was conducted through the administration of a self-administered questionnaire, developed in alignment with the survey method. This approach facilitated a balanced distribution of the sample across the various educational contexts and backgrounds that characterize private higher education in Kandy. The stratified sampling approach ensured that each subgroup was adequately represented, providing robust and generalizable results that reflected the entrepreneurial intentions of business management undergraduates across the different private higher education settings.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The sample characteristics of the business management undergraduates at private higher educational institutes in Kandy: sample size is 300, of which 55% are female and 45% are male; hence, there are no raw data limitations based on gender distribution. There is also good spread of students across all years of study: 25% first year, 30% second year, and 45% third year; there is therefore only slight overrepresentation of relatively more advanced students who could have comparatively fuller ideas and experiences about entrepreneurship. Against this background, an important characteristic relates to the fact that 60% of the students have entrepreneurial parents. The remaining 40% of the students do not have parents who are entrepreneurs. This sizeable representation of students with entrepreneurial individual backgrounds provides a good contextual point for the stating majority-versus-minority group and hence direct familial exposure associated with entrepreneurial activities. The results of the regression analysis are presented in Table 1, which illustrates the impact of each independent variable on the dependent variable, entrepreneurial intentions.

Table 1: Regression Analysis of Parental Role Modelling on Entrepreneurial Intentions

Independent Variables	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
Nature of Parental Entrepreneurship	0.15	0.05	0.18	3.00	0.003
Duration of Parental Entrepreneurship	0.20	0.04	0.25	5.00	0.000
Success Level of Parental Entrepreneurship	0.25	0.05	0.30	5.00	0.000
Parental Involvement	0.15	0.04	0.22	3.75	0.000
Parental Support and Encouragement	0.18	0.03	0.27	6.00	0.000
Modeling of Business Skills and Values	0.22	0.04	0.28	5.50	0.000

(Source: IBM Statistics (Version 22))

Hypothesis 1 (H1): Exposure to a diverse range of parental business types and industries positively influences entrepreneurial intentions among business management undergraduates by broadening their understanding of different market dynamics and business strategies]. The analysis strongly supports this, with the diversity in business types and industries significantly enhancing students' entrepreneurial intentions ($\beta = 0.18$, $p < 0.003$). This suggests that exposure to a variety of business contexts plays a crucial role in fostering an entrepreneurial mindset.

Hypothesis 2 (H2): A longer duration of exposure to parental entrepreneurship activities positively correlates with higher entrepreneurial intentions among business management undergraduates, fostering a deeper understanding and familiarity with

the entrepreneurial process. This is emphatically confirmed by the data, showing a strong positive correlation ($\beta = 0.25$, $p < 0.000$). This indicates that sustained exposure to entrepreneurship significantly influences students' aspirations to pursue similar paths.

Hypothesis 3 (H3): The perceived success of parental entrepreneurship (measured by business growth, profitability, or market impact) positively affects entrepreneurial intentions among business management undergraduates, providing a motivational benchmark and success framework. Students who perceive their parents' entrepreneurial ventures as successful exhibit the highest levels of entrepreneurial intentions ($\beta = 0.30$, $p < 0.000$), underlining the motivational impact of successful role models.

Hypothesis 4 (H4): Active parental involvement in entrepreneurship (through mentorship, guidance, or direct collaboration) enhances entrepreneurial intentions among business management undergraduates by providing real-world experience and insights into business operations. This hypothesis is validated by the significant results ($\beta = 0.22$, $p < 0.000$), supporting the notion that practical engagement with entrepreneurship through parental involvement is critical for developing entrepreneurial skills and intentions.

Hypothesis 5 (H5): Parental support and encouragement, both emotional and resource-based, positively impact entrepreneurial intentions among business management undergraduates by fostering an environment conducive to risk-taking and innovation. The analysis strongly supports ($\beta = 0.27$, $p < 0.000$). This underscores the role of emotional and resource-based support from parents in fostering an entrepreneurial mindset among students.

Hypothesis 6 (H6): The modeling of business skills and values by parents boosts entrepreneurial intentions among business management undergraduates through the transmission of essential entrepreneurial skills, ethics, and values. This too is confirmed with a significant positive effect ($\beta = 0.28$, $p < 0.000$), emphasizing the importance of role modeling in entrepreneurial education.

CONCLUSIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings of the present research study confirm that various aspects of role modeling by parents provide strong support for entrepreneurial intention among private higher education business management undergraduates in Kandy. It has satisfactorily confirmed the hypotheses that the nature, duration, and success of parental entrepreneurship, including the parent's involvement, support, and encouragement as well as modeling business skills and values, have a significantly positive influence on students' entrepreneurial intentions. Subsequently, the study also confirmed the fact that varied exposure to various businesses, longer duration of parental

entrepreneurship, and observation of the success of parents in business ventures are stronger predictors of entrepreneurial intentions. The active involvement of students in their parents' businesses, parental support, and encouragement along with the transmission of business skills and entrepreneurial values play key roles in molding the students' entrepreneurial mindset. Such findings therefore support the case for the importance of family influence in the development of entrepreneurial aspirations among future business leaders.

Based on the findings of this study, several strategic recommendations are proposed to enhance the entrepreneurial education framework within private higher education institutes in Kandy. Firstly, educational institutions should integrate family business contexts into their curricula by incorporating case studies and projects that reflect the diverse nature of family businesses, helping students understand the complexities and rewards of entrepreneurship experienced within their family contexts. Secondly, institutes should encourage parental engagement by organizing regular events like "Entrepreneurship Days," where parents who are entrepreneurs can share their experiences and insights, thereby motivating students and strengthening their practical understanding of business operations. Additionally, the development of mentorship programs that connect students with successful local entrepreneurs could provide vital support and guidance, enhancing the positive effects of parental encouragement. Supporting practical experience is also crucial; encouraging students to engage in internships or part-time roles in family businesses or other entrepreneurial ventures can significantly enhance their skills and intentions towards entrepreneurship. Regular workshops focused on essential business skills and entrepreneurial values should also be established to reinforce the skills and values observed in successful entrepreneurial role models. Finally, educational policymakers should consider these findings to bolster support for entrepreneurship-focused education, aiming to support educational initiatives that integrate family business dynamics and entrepreneurial skills training more robustly into business management programs. These recommendations aim to foster a more dynamic and supportive educational environment that nurtures future entrepreneurs effectively.

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CRITICAL FACTORS AFFECTING EMPLOYEE STRESS IN THE FINANCE INDUSTRY OF SRI LANKA (WITH EMPHASIS ON MARKETING OFFICERS AT ABC LEASING AND FINANCE PLC COLOMBO DISTRICT)

Hiruni M. Weerakoon^{1*}

¹School of Business, ESOF Metro Campus, Kandy, Sri Lanka

*hiruni.weerakoon@esoft.lk**

ABSTRACT

Study investigates the critical factors contributing to employee stress among marketing officers in the finance industry, specifically focusing on ABC Finance PLC in Colombo, Sri Lanka. High stress, exacerbated by privatization and competitive pressures, leads to employee turnover and reduced productivity. Utilizing a positivism approach, the research employs quantitative methods, including a structured survey of 151 marketing officers from 10 branches. The study emphasizes a hypothesis-deductive method to identify trends and correlations. The data was collected overusing simple random sampling, with a sample size calculated for a 95% confidence level and a 5% margin of error. The approach combines cross-sectional and longitudinal analyses to provide a comprehensive understanding of stress factors in this context. The study's demographic analysis reveals a young, predominantly male population with a high level of education. Regression analysis identified insufficient salary, long working hours, and lack of supervisory support as significant contributors to employee stress among marketing officers. Insufficient salary and long working hours, especially, showed strong correlations with increased stress. Factors like work overload and role ambiguity were not significant predictors. To reduce stress, organizations should focus on adjusting working hours and enhancing managerial support. The findings suggest the need for salary adjustments tied to KPIs, better workload management, and enhanced support from supervisors. Recommendations include implementing stress reduction programs and improving communication. The study's results provide valuable insights for financial institutions aiming to improve employee retention and organizational efficiency by addressing stress-related issues. Future research should expand to include diverse demographics across Sri Lanka for a more comprehensive understanding.

Keywords: Employee Stress, Insufficient Salary, Long Working Hours, Lack of Supervisory Support, Finance Industry

INTRODUCTION

Many employees who are working in financial institutions are subjected to high levels of stress and employee stress has become a key issue in the financial growth of many organizations. This study is mainly based on discussing the critical factors which effects on employee stress within the finance industry. This study targets 210 marketing officers at ABC Finance PLC in Colombo district, spread across 10 branches, aiming to address factors contributing to employee stress.

The leasing industry in Sri Lanka comprises commercial banks, specialized leasing and finance companies, focusing primarily on financial leasing. Research indicates that 95% of leasing volumes are for consumer vehicles, with additional investments in infrastructure, IT, plant, and office equipment. Studies by (Abeysekara, 2022), correlate work-life balance, career development, and supervisor support with stress levels among marketing executives in leasing companies. Privatization has intensified competition, increasing stress levels for workers striving to meet organizational targets. Gampaha Ayurvedic Teaching Hospital reports that 32% of patients receiving treatment experience anxiety, depression, and stress attributed to work-related pressures (Udayanga, 2019). High workload contributes to stress among marketing officers, leading to a significant turnover rate. Despite efforts, ABC Leasing and Finance PLC notify a reduction in employee retention, with voluntary turnovers attributed to work stress. Complaints about employee commitment affect organizational productivity, reducing profit after tax per employee.

The primary aim of the research is to identify critical factors contributing to employee stress among marketing officers at ABC Leasing and Finance PLC. By gathering feedback, the study aims to enhance employee retention through recommendations. Secondary objectives include analyzing the importance of identifying stress factors, understanding steps to alleviate stress, and implementing programs for stress reduction. Recommendations will be formulated based on data analysis and HR department input, aiming to create a supportive environment and monitor program effectiveness. This research aims to identify the critical factors contributing to employee stress in the finance industry, recognizing its significant impact on organizational performance and profitability. While existing studies have explored this issue globally, this study uniquely focuses on marketing officers within the finance sector, a group particularly susceptible to work-related stress. By addressing this gap, the research aims to uncover key stress factors and develop hypotheses to guide future investigations and stress management strategies, benefiting both established and emerging financial institutions.

This research contributes toward two aspects such literate and to the organization (Internal) or the society (External). Considering about contribution toward literate research will focus on a new model as well as the below study will be helpful for students for their future references when studying about work stress since there is only

few research performed for the work stress in finance industry. The above study and research will help to identify and understand what the major factors which effects in employee stress are in the financial industry of Sri Lanka. Externally, organizations should tailor workloads to employees' capacities and adopt management styles that prioritize employee well-being (Khan, Gulzar, & Yahya, 2013). Furthermore, understanding stress factors enables firms to enhance operational efficiency and reduce recruitment costs, as highlighted by (Jayasinghe & Mendis, 2017). Internally, aligning sales targets with realistic expectations alleviates stress among marketing personnel, leading to increased motivation and productivity, as argued by (Hazzard, Teoh, & Visokaite, 2017), identifies common stressors in financial services and underscores the importance of stress reduction for enhanced productivity and cost-effectiveness. Ultimately, addressing stress issues contributes to an organization's long-term competitive advantage while also benefitting society by mitigating workplace stressors for future generations.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Occupational Stress

Stress, defined as a physical and psychological condition arising when individual resources are insufficient to meet situational demands, affects well-being, attitudes, and moods (Lops, 2021). Researchers categorize stress definitions into three types: environmental stimuli, physical responses to stressors, and interactions between environmental events and body reactions (Cantula, Brangth, & Vidal, 2022). Work-related stress, often termed occupational stress, arises from mismatches between individual capabilities and job demands, leading to physiological and psychological reactions. Stress impacts both individual health and organizational performance. High stress levels can cause physical issues such as cardiovascular and respiratory diseases, reduce job satisfaction, and lower productivity (Ongori, 2003). For instance, a study in Romania showed that 69% of managers reported stress negatively affecting their performance.

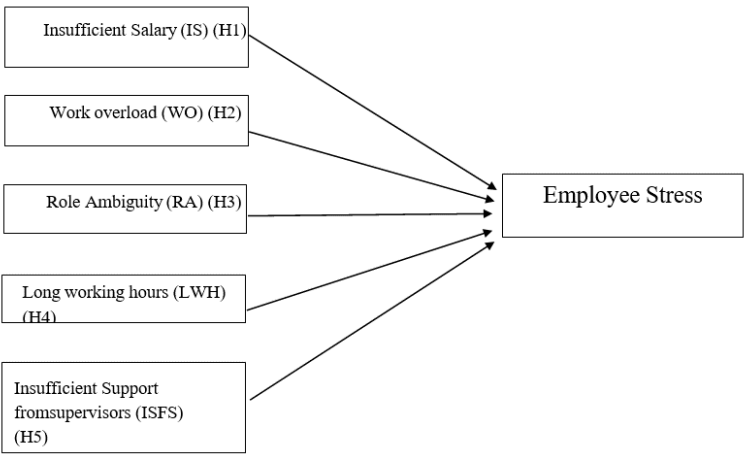
Theoretical Analysis

Theoretical models such as the Diathesis-Stress Model, Effort-Reward Imbalance (ERI) Model, and Job Demand-Resource (JD-R) Model are crucial for understanding work-related stress. The Diathesis-Stress Model posits that psychological problems are triggered by the interplay between intrinsic vulnerability and environmental stressors. The model of diathesis helps to identify why some individuals face disorder while others do not and the greater the vulnerability of a person to a disorder, the less stress required to cause the development of that disorder (Broerman, 2012). The ERI model argues that work-related stress is conceived as a lack of equity in the efforts reciprocity and the reward obtained at work consequently, the model concerns social reciprocity and represents distributive justice at work (Siegrist, 1996). However, Demerouti (2007),

argue that job demand is about psychological, social, physical and organizational aspects which required to sustain the emotional effort of an employee

Empirical Evidence

Empirical evidence highlights that modern workplace stress is exacerbated by technological changes, competition, and job insecurity, affecting employee well-being and increasing job dissatisfaction (Ghaani, Memon, & Han, 2022). A study done by COMSATS Institute of Information Technology (2017), about the impact of pay satisfaction for job stress among finance industry employees in Pakistan by using 100 sample in public and private sector finance employees in Vehari emphasis that salary plays a major role within employee which influencing their mental stress which led them toward turnover intention. According to Meyerson (2002), says that there may be uncertainty within the organization and that there may also be confusion within individuals' own cultural background and in the same situation, different people in the organization can also experience different types of ambiguity. According to the research done by Oke & Downson (2008), study of 10 banks in Nigeria with 250 employees about to understand the contextual dimensions of work stress and however they understood that the structure and the culture of an organization is the main reason for work stress by more than 50% respondents as well as 11 factors which contribute towards stress which includes with the long working hours. According to Siyambalapitiya (2016), in Sri Lanka 130 occupations understand as a more stressful jobs and bank tellers as well as sales officers includes in the list. Another previous study by Giorgi (2015), shows that the health of the leader/ supervisor relationship with the employee stress since the mental health of leaders are low as well as the support from them are low which critically effect on occupational stress.



(Source: Author Developed 2024)

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

METHODOLOGY

Through the empirical evidence from LR it can be emphasis that different countries have different factors effect on their employee stress and different models has been used. However, based on the differences of culture, geographical situations factors can vary. According to the research done by Siyambalapitiya (2011), to identify the factors effecting employee stress in the finance sector.

This study was adopted by epistemology to data collection and study about the research problem since accurate data collection is necessary to understand about the factors effecting employee stress. The study of the researcher follows by positivistic philosophy which is a quantitative method of conducting surveys which believes that through experiments or logically everything can be verify and in addition; to assess the correlations, it tends to identify trends and patterns between variables. Hence study adopts with the positivism approach respondents and researchers have less interaction since the researcher is independent with neutral emotions. To develop the hypothesis study used hypothesis deductive method and collect data through a survey with well-structured questioner that have better statistical and reliable analysis. Based on the study descriptive survey design is suitable to data collection and conducting the study. The research follows mono method which follows a positivism approach since using quantitative collection of data to understand and analyze the critical factors affecting employee stress. Study is undertaken only for three months to complete the whole study due to academic reasons. Hence study complete and divided as cross – sectional approach and longitudinal approach.

The research study only focusing on 10 branches operates in Colombo district of Metropoliton, Ward Place, Wellawatta, Pettah, Union Place, Moratuwa, Nugegoda, Collpity, Grand Pass and Maharagama with 225 marketing officers of ABC Finance PLC. Sample size of 143 calculated based on the creative research system and the sample proportion to be 50% and the 95% of confidential needed to contain accurate population and the 5% of margin error and however study received more than the expected sample size such as 151 of responses from marketing officers to analyze the data. The sampling technique employed is Probability Sampling, specifically Simple Random Sampling, which ensures that every member of the population has an equal chance of being selected. For data collection, a survey method was utilized, leveraging the British Online Survey (BOS) platform. This approach allowed for the efficient and systematic collection of data from a randomized subset of the population, ensuring unbiased and representative results.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The demographic profile indicates a predominantly young population, with 67.3% aged 18-29, followed by 22.6% aged 30-39, 8.2% aged 40-49, and only 1.9% aged 50 and above. The gender distribution is heavily skewed towards males, who constitute 78.6%

of the group, compared to 21.4% females. Marital status shows that over half of the population is single (54.1%), while 44% are married, and a small fraction (1.9%) is divorced. In terms of educational attainment, a significant portion holds a Diploma (37.7%), followed by those with a degree 31.4%), Advanced level education (25.2%), and a minority with a Master's degree (5.7%). This data suggests a youthful, predominantly male group with a relatively high level of education, where most individuals are either single or married, and few are divorced.

Coefficients from a regression analysis investigating the impact of various factors on Employee Stress. The independent variables include Insufficient Salary, Work Overload, Role Ambiguity, Long Working Hours, and Insufficient Support from Supervisors, with Employee Stress as the dependent variable. According to the regression analysis, the intercept is 0.863, indicating the baseline level of Employee Stress when all predictors are zero. Based on the findings Insufficient Salary significantly increases Employee Stress, as indicated by its p-value ($p < 0.05$) as its coefficient value reported as 0.109. The regression analysis table reveals the impacts of various factors on Employee Stress. Work Overload, with a B value of 0.062 and p-value of 0.309, does not significantly affect Employee Stress, indicating that increased workload does not statistically correlate with higher stress levels. Similarly, Role Ambiguity, with a B value of 0.024 and p-value of 0.655, is not a significant predictor, showing that unclear job roles do not substantially influence stress. In contrast, Long Working Hours, with a B value of 0.311 and a highly significant p-value of 0.000, significantly increase Employee Stress, making it the strongest predictor as indicated by the highest Beta (0.422). This suggests that reducing working hours could effectively mitigate stress. Inefficient Support from Supervisors, with a B value of 0.196 and a p-value of 0.002, also significantly increases Employee Stress, highlighting the importance of supportive management. These findings suggest that to reduce employee stress, organizations should focus on managing working hours and improving supervisory support, while factors like workload and role clarity might be less critical.

CONCLUSIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS

The study highlights the significant impact of insufficient salary on marketing officers' mental health, leading to high stress levels. The dissatisfaction stems from a misalignment between pay structure and key performance indicators (KPIs), prompting a need for salary increments directly tied to KPIs rather than an unfair forced ranking system. Additionally, the uniform basic salary disregards educational qualifications, necessitating a more equitable system. Work overload positively correlates with stress, suggesting the implementation of monthly or weekly action plans, meditation programs, and workload delegation to alleviate stress. Role ambiguity (RA) and long working hours (LWH) also contribute to stress. Recommendations include extending induction programs, improving communication, organizing regular meetings, and allowing employees to manage their workloads effectively. Enhanced support from

supervisors through performance dashboards, daily scorecards, and regular meetings is crucial for emotional stability. Future research should extend beyond marketing officers in Colombo to encompass various age groups and demographics across Sri Lanka, ensuring broader insights and increased validity. The research cannot be narrowed down to focus on the employees of a single branch due to the small number of employees. Instead, the research is based on 10 branches within the Colombo District. However, this presents challenges, such as the high transport costs required to visit these branches and the difficulty in distributing online questionnaires across multiple locations. This study could be expanded to include the entire population, considering different age groups and branches across Sri Lanka. Additionally, future research could explore various demographic factors to further address work-related stress. The study can also serve as a foundation for future research, helping to reduce errors, increase validity, and develop the conceptual framework.

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THE IMPACT OF ECOLOGICAL SUSTAINABILITY ON TOURIST ENGAGEMENT IN BATTICALOA: A STUDY ON ECO-TOURISM

M.S. Rizny Ahamed^{1*}, and P. Nitharjan²

^{1,2} School of Business, ESOF Metro Campus, Batticaloa, Sri Lanka

*rizniahamed99@gmail.com**

ABSTRACT

The paper examines the relationship between conservation practices and sustainable tourism on tourist interaction in Batticaloa District, Sri Lanka. Sparse empirical evidence exists to establish this fact, and even fewer studies have tried to explain how such practices may influence tourist interaction and thereby their impacts on the economy and the ecosystem. This study used a quantitative design with a cross-sectional survey targeting a population of 250 tourists, with an 80% response rate, and the data gathered were subject to multiple regression analysis. The novel methodology of this study underlines the specificity of Batticaloa and offers a model for other destinations with similar regional specificities. Key findings: sustainable tourism practices related to driver impact ranked highest, followed by community involvement, while conservation initiatives had a narrower yet positive effect. These findings contribute theoretically to ST discourse by illustrating through site-based practices how tourist experiences can be enhanced to bring about repeat visits. As a matter of practice, this study proposes that guided conservation tourism be carried out with transparent operations in sustainable practices, coupled with enhanced involvement of local communities in tourism activities. These are some of the critical strategies for stimulating tourist activity, support for environmental conversation, and improvement of the quality of livelihoods at the local level. The supplied useful empirical evidence on the effectiveness of sustainable tourism practices gives practical recommendations on the development of tourism, thereby adding significant value to existing knowledge.

Keywords: Community Involvement, Conservation Initiatives, Eco-Tourism, Sustainable Tourism, Tourist Engagement

INTRODUCTION

Imagine a coastal paradise where eco-conscious tourism not only preserves nature but also transforms local communities. This research explores how sustainable practices in Batticaloa, Sri Lanka, can revolutionize tourist engagement and benefit the environment.

Ecological sustainability practices, also known as eco-friendly practices, play a crucial role in preserving natural resources and promoting environmental health. These practices ensure long-term ecosystem stability and contribute to human well-being by reducing environmental impact and fostering sustainable development (Ocon & McFarlane, 2020).

While public interest is increasing in eco-tourism, how sustainable practices actually engage tourists has been a field of empirically established evidence, which is very limited, at best; even more so that which demonstrates how this affects local economies and ecosystems in biodiversity-rich areas like Batticaloa (Ahmad, et al., 2019). Understanding these dynamics is essential to developing successful tourism strategies that protect conservation without economic growth (Qian, Shen, & Law, 2018).

The aim of this study is to investigate the effectiveness of sustainable tourism practices in encouraging tourist participation, benefiting the local economy, and being environmentally friendly in Batticaloa. Eco-tourism's effects on tourist satisfaction, local economic benefits, and environmental outcomes are investigated in this study. By identifying visitor preferences, behaviors, and responses with the natural environment, this research will provide information for the development of sustainable tourism (Mikhaylyuk, 2022).

Previous research suggests the balance between the tourism industry and the protective measures that the environment requires should be very well observed by the pertinent authorities (Ahmad, et al., 2019) and calls for sustainable tourism entailing the involvement of local communities. The present study has focused on whether eco – friendly practices significantly affected tourist engagement in Batticaloa, and if such eco-tourism would lead to the preservation of the environment and economic gains. Whether eco-friendly practices significantly impact tourist engagement in Batticaloa? Researchers evaluate how sustainable practices impact tourist conversations, satisfaction, and engagement to determine whether eco-tourism can preserve the environment and produce funds.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Eco-friendly Practices

Eco-friendly Practices is one of the primary areas that have radically influenced tourism management in a way that the approach has turned into environmental-friendlier. Qian,

Shen, and Law (2018) review the studies conducted on sustainable tourism from 2008 to 2017 and find that the dimensions of tourist sustainability studies have increasingly become complex over time. They further suggest that the concept of sustainability should be combined with economic, social, and ecological wherein innovative methodologies must be given prominence considering the visitor's evolving needs and the environment also keeps changing over time (Qian, Shen, & Law, 2018). Based on that hypothesis developed.

Hypothesis 1: Eco-Friendly practices positively impact tourist satisfaction.

Conservation Initiatives

Promotions of conservation contribute positively to ecotourism; they protect the natural landscape and biodiversity. Meanwhile, Zhang et al., in 2020, confirm that a perception of a landscape among tourists influences attitudes toward the environment's conservation.

The same goes for Coghlan, 2012, who claims that conservation gives place interest and provides for its enjoyability (Coghlan, 2012). Based on that hypothesis developed.

Hypothesis 2: Conservation initiatives significantly enhance tourist engagement and pro-environmental attitudes.

Sustainable Tourism Practices

Importance-performance analysis with importance-performance analysis, Sörensson and von Friedrichs (2013) say that they determined the values on sustainability for the groups of tourists (Sörensson & von Friedrichs, 2013). They state that sustainable practices were related to increased happiness and involvement. Camisón (2020) further observes that through appropriate, tailored sustainable practices, tourist happiness and engagement, as well as the competencies of the tourist area, can improve as economic, social, and environmental objectives are in harmony (Camisón, 2020). Based on that hypothesis developed.

Hypothesis 3: Tailored sustainable practices improve tourist happiness and engagement.

Community Involvement

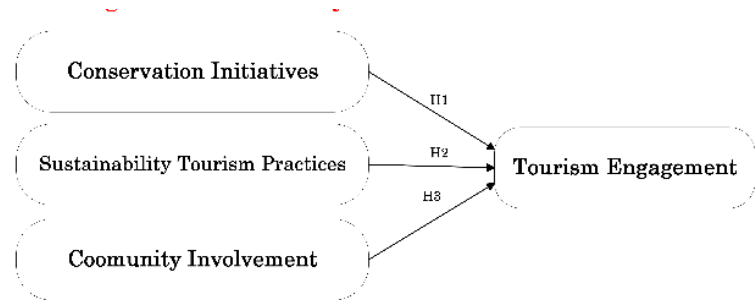
The study by Zhou et al. (2021) showed that community-based eco-tourism generates revenue to encourage local conservation efforts. Community involvement promotes cultural richness and environmental conservation (Zhou, et al., 2021). Based on that hypothesis developed.

Hypothesis 4: Community involvement in eco-tourism enhances tourist engagement and conservation efforts.

Tourist Engagement

Research indicates that sustainable tourists are more likely to enjoy ecotourism. Hedlund (2011) and Sörensson and von Friedrichs (2013) demonstrate that meeting sustainability expectations boosts tourist enjoyment and involvement (Holden, 2016), (Sörensson & von Friedrichs, 2013). Dvarskas (2017) emphasizes that ecological health significantly influences tourism, engaging visitors through effective ecological management (Dvarskas, 2017).

Conceptual Framework



Source: (Zhang, et al., 2020); (Coghlan, 2012); (Camisón, 2020).

Figure 15: Conceptual Framework

METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a positive research ethic to analyze how eco-friendly practices affects visitor participation in Batticaloa, utilizing empirical data to evaluate environmental practices’ impact on tourism (Holden, 2016). The deductive strategy ensures alignment with sustainable tourism theories (Bramwell, 2015). A quantitative survey developed based on prior studies and expert feedback. This cross-sectional survey efficiently gathers data on tourists’ attitudes and behaviors related to ecofriendly practices (Tsiotsou & Goldsmith, 2016).

The population consists of tourists who have visited Batticaloa in the past year. Batticaloa hosts 44 tourist hotels with an annual influx of approximately 250 tourists. A simple random sampling method was employed, targeting 110 tourists to enhance the accuracy. Out of 110 distributed questionnaires, 80 were collected, yielding an 80% response rate. Demographic data such as age and gender were also collected to provide a comprehensive understanding of the sample. The survey included respondents across various age groups and genders to ensure diverse representation. This approach ensures that the findings are reflective of the broader tourist population in Batticaloa.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Correlation

Correlations		CONCERVATIONINITIATIVES	SUSTAINABLETOURISMPRACTICES	COMMUNITYINVOLVEMENT	TOURISTENGAGEMENT
CONCERVATIONINITIATIVES	Pearson Correlation	1	.792**	.816**	.835**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.000
	N	80	80	80	80
SUSTAINABLETOURISMPRACTICES	Pearson Correlation	.792**	1	.856**	.866**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000	.000
	N	80	80	80	80
COMMUNITYINVOLVEMENT	Pearson Correlation	.816**	.856**	1	.872**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		.000
	N	80	80	80	80
TOURISTENGAGEMENT	Pearson Correlation	.835**	.866**	.872**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	
	N	80	80	80	80
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).					

(Source: Survey Data 2024)

Figure 16: Correlation Table

Table shows the results of Pearson correlation between Conservation Efforts, Sustainable Tourism Practices, Community Involvement and Tourist Engagement. The correlation coefficient (r) value is 0.835, 0.792, 0.866, 0.872 between Conservation Efforts, Sustainable Tourism Practices, Community Involvement and Tourist Engagement at the 0.01 significance level (2-tailed) is 0.000. Moreover, the value is falls under the coefficient range of 0.5 to 1.0.

Regression

Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.914 ^a	.836	.830	.30510
a. Predictors: (Constant), COMMUNITYINVOLVEMENT, CONSERVATIONINITIATIVES, SUSTAINABLETOURISMPRACTICES				

(Source: Survey Data 2024)

Figure 17: Model Summary of Tourist Engagement

Multiple regression test was performed to examine the influence of Community Involvement, Conservation Initiatives, and Sustainable Tourism Practices and Tourist Engagement. Based on Figure 3 Illustrate that 'R Square' statistic value is 0.836 which means 83.6% of the variation in Tourist Engagement is explained by the community involvement, conservation effort and sustainable tourism practices.

ANOVA ^a						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	36.091	3	12.030	129.239	.000 ^b
	Residual	7.074	76	.093		
	Total	43.165	79			
a. Dependent Variable: TOURISTENGAGEMENT						
b. Predictors: (Constant), COMMUNITYINVOLVEMENT, CONSERVATIONINITIATIVES, SUSTAINABLETOURISMPRACTICES						

(Source: Survey Data 2024)

Figure 18: ANNOVA for Tourist Engagement

As per Figure 4, the proposed model was adequate as the F statistic (F =129.239) were significant as the 5% level since the p-value is less than 0.05.

Coefficients ^a						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.163	.205		.794	.430
	CONCERVATIONINITIATIVES	.267	.083	.273	3.228	.002
	SUSTAINABLETOURISMPRACTICES	.335	.090	.351	3.720	.000
	COMMUNITYINVOLVEMENT	.332	.095	.349	3.494	.001
a. Dependent Variable: TOURISTENGAGEMENT						

(Source: Survey Data 2024)

Figure 19: Coefficients Table

The accompanying table displays the .163-unit unstandardized consent statistics Conservation Initiatives' b coefficient is .267, which equals. This indicates that the average increase in Tourist Engagement will be .267 units if the Conservation Initiatives Scale is raised by 1 point. The Sustainable Tourism Practices b coefficient is .355. Sustainable Tourism Practices Consequently, if the Sustainable Tourism Practices scale

is raised by 1 point, on average, Tourist Engagement will advance by .335 units. The Community Involvement b coefficient is .332. The Community Involvement, if the Community Involvement scale is raised by 1 point, on average, Tourist Engagement will be advanced by .332 units.

CONCLUSION / RECOMMENDATIONS

This study identified that conservation initiatives, sustainable tourism practices, and community involvement significantly enhance tourist engagement in Batticaloa, with sustainable practices having the highest impact. The research contributes to sustainable tourism theory by validating the positive relationship between eco- friendly practices and tourist engagement. Limitations include the cross-sectional design and a small sample size, suggesting future research should use longitudinal studies and larger, diverse samples, and explore digital and social media's role in promoting sustainable tourism. According to the above conclusion, the following recommendations are proposed by researchers.

Enhancing Tourist Engagement through Conservation Initiatives: Develop guided tours that actively involve visitors in conservation activities. This hands-on approach can significantly improve their engagement by providing them with a deeper understanding and appreciation of the conservation efforts in place. Introduce educational activities in tourist destinations to educate people about the significance and consequences of conservation efforts. Engaging visitors via educational programs and interactive exhibits helps cultivate a feeling of environmental responsibility.

Boosting Tourist Engagement through Sustainable Tourism Practices: When visiting tourist places, it is important to showcase sustainable practices, such as using renewable energy sources, implementing effective waste management strategies, and promoting water conservation efforts. Exhibiting transparency in these practices increases tourist engagement by demonstrating the destination's dedication to sustainability. Allocate resources towards the development of environmentally conscious infrastructure and facilities that actively support and encourage sustainable practices. Offering facilities such as recycling stations, sustainable accommodation choices, and environmentally friendly transportation may appeal to visitors who prioritize the environment and enhance their overall satisfaction.

Increasing Tourist Engagement through Community Involvement: Promote the active participation of local communities in tourist initiatives. Tourism programs that include the participation of local guides, facilitate cultural exchanges, and focus on community-driven conservation initiatives have the potential to provide visitors genuine and immersive experiences, hence increasing their level of involvement. Implement volunteer efforts that enable visitors to engage in community-driven ecological endeavors, including afforestation, habitat rehabilitation, and environmental

education projects. These options enhance visitor involvement and also contribute to significant conservation efforts.

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EFFECT OF EMOTIONAL LABOR ON TURNOVER INTENTION AMONG AIRLINE CABIN CREW: A CASE STUDY OF SRI LANKAN AIRLINES

Nadeesha G. Perera¹, Nethmee S. Wijesinghe^{2*} and Janaka R. Gamlath³

¹Guildhall School of Business and Law, London Metropolitan University, UK

^{2,3}School of Business, ESOFT Metro Campus, Colombo, Sri Lanka

*nethmee.wijesinghe@esoft.lk**

ABSTRACT

Cabin crew members working at airlines face many difficulties while on duty and for many reasons, emotional labor plays a crucial role in cabin crew turnover intentions in airlines. This study aims to evaluate the effect of emotional labor on turnover intentions among airline cabin crew members referring to Sri Lankan airlines by evaluating the effect of display rules, emotional dissonance, emotional regulation and emotional exhaustion. The research adopted positivism philosophy with deductive approach and quantitative method. The sample has been selected using a simple random sampling technique and a total of 260 cabin crew members were surveyed using a self-administered questionnaire. Based on the correlation statistical results, the study revealed that there is a strong positive relationship between emotional labor (display rules, emotional dissonance, emotional regulation and emotional exhaustion) and cabin crew turnover intentions. The study has also revealed that emotional labor which comprise of display rules, emotional dissonance, emotional regulation and emotional exhaustion have a significant effect on cabin crew turnover intentions in airlines. This study provides a significant contribution to understanding the emotional labor and its effect on airline cabin crew turnover intentions which is useful for airlines to develop strategies in minimizing cabin crew turnover. The future researchers can expand this research to other geographical areas not limiting to Asian context and considering other aspects of emotional labor not restricting to display rules, emotional dissonance, emotional regulation and emotional exhaustion.

Keywords: Cabin Crew, Emotional Labor, Turnover Intentions,

INTRODUCTION

Employees in any industry regardless of the job role face work-related stress on a daily basis, which impairs their job performance. Airline cabin crew are no exemption, and it is considered as one of the most stressful jobs (Görlich & Stadelmann, 2020). Factors like excessive workload, heavy responsibilities, inadequate compensation, a lack of incentives, job satisfaction, and recognition can contribute to job-related stress among airline cabin crew. Emotional labor (EL) can be defined as the efforts employees put to manage their feelings and expressions in order to contribute to the profit earning process of the company, they are employed at (Yang & Chen, 2021). In hospitality industry including the airlines, in order to meet the customer expectations and satisfaction the employees need to pay a lot of emotional labor (Fu, Shen, & Wei, 2020) and this might lead to high employee turnover intentions among cabin crew. With this, the research problem is identified as “what is the effect of emotional labor on turnover intention among airline cabin crew members?” Therefore, this research aims to explore the effect of emotional labor (EL) on turnover intention among cabin crew members referring to Sri Lankan airlines by evaluating the effect of display rules, emotional dissonance, emotional regulation and emotional exhaustion.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Display Rules

According to Stark and Bettini (2021), display rules are the informal norms of a social group or culture regarding how to effectively convey emotions. The accepted practices of a group determine not only when and where it is appropriate to express emotions, but also the intensity of these expressions. According to Liu (2023), within an organizational setting, emotion display norms pertain to the expectations around suitable emotional manifestations in the workplace and also explains that, in certain circumstances, social norms prescribe those emotional displays be repressed. On the other hand, Dashutin (2023) explains display rules have a specific function. Research has shown that they have the ability to enhance the overall satisfaction of certain client segments or target audiences, while also contributing to the establishment of a desirable emotional atmosphere. The need for workers to consistently exhibit happy emotions, regardless of their own feelings, may impose a burden, necessitating the employee to engage in emotion management, sometimes referred to as emotional labor.

Emotional Dissonance

According to Al-Adamat and Atoum (2022), emotional dissonance is the conflict between felt emotions and those conveyed in accordance with display norms. Emotional dissonance was theorized to increase attrition intentions through either job dissatisfaction or both job dissatisfaction and decreased organizational commitment. Further, Stark and Bettini (2021) also emphasizes that difference between the two conceptualizations is based on the fact that organizational commitment is included in the causal chain from emotional dissonance to turnover intentions. Further, Chang

(2020) explained that unpleasant encounters with customers may aggravate workers' emotional dissonance.

Emotional Regulation

Emotion regulation is the management and modulation of emotional experiences. According to Ermolova (2023), emotional regulation entails a variety of techniques, such as cognitive reappraisal and mindfulness practices, that help people deal with challenging situations and maintain emotional control. Further, Rashid et al. (2021) elaborated that, The process involves the identification, assessment, and regulation of affective encounters. According to Stark and Bettini Stark and Bettini (2021), Emotional regulation involves modifying emotional responses and adopting beneficial behavioral strategies to achieve a desired emotional state. Studies have shown that emotional regulation is a crucial topic for both workers and leaders. This is because their emotional state and responses may have an impact on themselves, as well as on the moods, attitudes, and behavior of their subordinates in various working situations.

Emotional Exhaustion

According to Winkler et al. (2023), emotional exhaustion is the condition of feeling emotionally spent and exhausted as a consequence of personal or professional stress, or a combination of the two. Emotional exhaustion constitutes one of the symptoms of burnout. According to the explanation of Yang (2023), when individuals use their emotional resources in dealing with difficult circumstances such as excessive expectations, conflicts, or lack of support in their professional or personal lives, their overall feeling of well-being and ability to take care of themselves and others is reduced. Furthermore, Fan and Wang (2022) emphasized that the presence of low energy levels, inadequate sleep patterns, and diminished drive all pose challenges in effectively addressing emotional tiredness which ultimately influence employee turnover intention.

Conceptual Framework

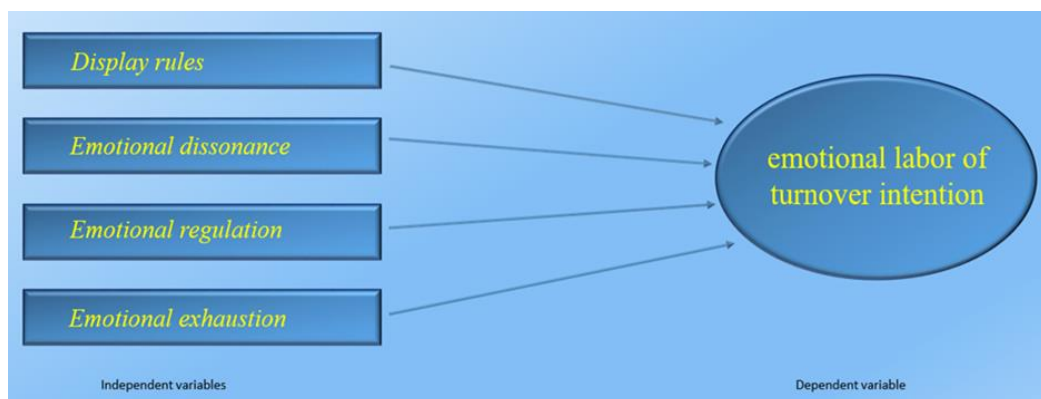


Figure 1: Conceptual framework

Hypothesis Development

H01 – There is no significant relationship between display rules and cabin crew turnover intentions.

H02 – There is no significant relationship between emotional dissonance and cabin crew turnover intentions.

H03 – There is no significant relationship between emotional regulation and cabin crew turnover intentions.

H04 – There is no significant relationship between emotional exhaustion and cabin crew turnover intentions.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted the positivism philosophy with a deductive approach and the research strategy has been selected as a case study. Quantitative research conducted. There are about 800 junior and senior cabin crew members working at Sri Lankan airlines and the study was conducted with a sample of 260 (based on the Morgan table) cabin crew members selected by simple random sampling technique. The primary data has been collected through a self-administered survey questionnaire which was developed after carefully reviewing the literature and then distributed to sample cabin crew members. Data analysis has been conducted using SPSS software and both descriptive and inferential statistical analysis were conducted. Hypothesis were tested using the Chi-Square test.

DATA ANALYSIS

Reliability Test

Table 1: Reliability test for independent and dependent variables

Reliability Statistics		
Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	No. of Items
Display Rules	0.973	4
Emotional Dissonance	0.971	4
Emotional Regulation	0.976	4
Emotional Exhaustion	0.968	4
Turnover Intention	0.985	4

(Source: author developed 2024)

According to the Cronbach's Alpha values, all independent variables and dependent variable indexes are highly reliable and can be accepted as Cronbach's Alpha values for all independent and dependent variables are greater than 0.8 value which is at the accepted level.

Pearson Correlation Analysis

Table 2: Pearson Correlation Analysis

IV	Correlation
Display Rules	0.733
Emotional Dissonance	0.953
Emotional Regulation	0.975
Emotional Exhaustion	0.981

(Source: author developed 2024)

The Pearson correlation analysis demonstrated a significant correlation between all the independent variables and employee turnover intentions supporting a strong positive relationship as the Pearson correlation value for all independent variables (display rules – 0.733, emotional dissonance – 0.953, emotional regulation – 0.975 and emotional exhaustion – 0.981) are greater than 0.7 value.

Hypothesis Testing

Chi-square tests conducted for the independent variables suggested that there are significant relationships with employee turnover intentions and emotional labor.

Table 3: Summary of Chi-square tests

IV	Pearson Chi-square		
	Value	p-value	Null hypothesis status
Display Rules	324.757 ^a	<.001	Rejected
Emotional Dissonance	1005.091 ^a	<.001	Rejected
Emotional Regulation	1560.000 ^a	<.001	Rejected
Emotional Exhaustion	1316.800 ^a	<.001	Rejected

(Source: author developed 2024)

DISCUSSION

Display rules and cabin crew turnover intentions: According to the data analysis, display rules represented a significance value of 0.001 which is less than the 0.05 significance level supporting there is a significant relationship of display rules on cabin crew turnover intentions in airline sector. This finding is also consistent with the findings of Dashutin (2023) where he claimed that the display rules can either satisfy or dissatisfy the employees and have a direct effect on employee turnover.

Emotional dissonance and cabin crew turnover intentions: According to the data analysis, emotional dissonance showed a significance value of 0.001 which is less than 0.05 significance level supporting there is a significant relationship between emotional dissonance and cabin crew turnover intentions as supported by Chang (2020) in his research that emotional dissonance can be influenced by unpleasant encounters with customers which will lead to the turnover intentions of employees.

Emotional regulation and cabin crew turnover intentions: As per the data analysis, emotional regulations showed a significance value of 0.001 which is less than 0.05 significance level demonstrating there is a significant relationship between emotional regulations and cabin crew turnover intentions supported by Stark & Bettini (2021) mentioning that emotional regulations can influence employee turnover intentions.

Emotional exhaustion and cabin crew turnover intentions: According to the data analysis, emotional exhaustion represented a significance value of 0.001 which is less than the 0.05 significance level supporting there is a significant relationship of emotional exhaustion on cabin crew turnover intentions as claimed by Fan & Wang (2022) stating that emotional exhaustion will ultimately lead towards employee turnover intentions.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that emotional labor has a significant influence on airline cabin crew turnover intentions. Though this study had some limitations like it only considered the cabin crew members from one airline in south Asia so the result might not be the same for airline cabin crew from other parts of the world and the data provided by sample respondents may be subjected to personal bias. Further, this research only focused on few aspects of the emotional labor area and future researchers can expand the research to a wider area not limiting to display rules, emotional dissonance, emotional regulations and emotional exhaustion considering other geographic areas as well. Since this study provides practical significance to airlines, especially Asian airlines can use this study to get insights and develop strategies to minimize their cabin crew's turnover intentions concerning the emotional labor.

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ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND INNOVATION MANAGEMENT

FACTORS INFLUENCING WOMEN ENTREPRENEURIAL SUCCESS IN JAFFNA, SRI LANKA

T. Haimypremila^{1*}

¹School of Business and Law, ESOF Metro Campus, Jaffna, Sri Lanka

*haimy.thanushan@esoft.lk**

ABSTRACT

The research intends to investigate the motivating factors towards entrepreneurial success of women entrepreneurs in Jaffna. The involvement of women entrepreneurs in the economy today is crucial. However, the civil conflict in the northern region of Sri Lanka stifled entrepreneurial development, and women entrepreneurs in particular confront many obstacles to the effective continuation of their businesses. Therefore, this study focuses on finding the relationship between the pull and push factors of entrepreneurship and the success of entrepreneurs. The study followed an epistemological positivist stance and a deductive approach. A random sample of 25 was chosen from the population of 60, who have been in the business for more than five years. A self-administered, structured questionnaire with a five-point Likert scale was used to collect data. Data were analysed using SPSS version 23. Descriptive analysis revealed that majority of the successful women entrepreneurs are within the age range of 45-54 and with A/L educational qualification. Reliability analysis revealed that data are reliable as the Cronbach's alpha values are around 0.7 and above. Pearson correlation analysis disclosed that there is a significant relationship between the Pull factors of the entrepreneurship and the entrepreneurial success at 0.01 level. The Push factors, on the other hand did not show any significant relationship. Future research with a mixed method incorporating many other Pull and Push Factors and Traits of entrepreneurs using a representative increased sample size across island will give a generalizable outcome and may influence the policy makers of entrepreneurs.

Keywords: Pull Factor, Push Factor, Women Entrepreneurs, Entrepreneurial Success

INTRODUCTION

A vital part the development of the rural economy is played by women entrepreneurs, particularly in microbusinesses (Umma & Selvaratnam, 2012). According to recent research performed by (Safaraz, 2014), women may contribute significantly to the broader phenomenon of entrepreneurship and economic growth. In any nation, women will inevitably play a part in entrepreneurship. These days, women work in practically every sector and are just as eager to start their own businesses and advance the country's development as men are. As a result, efforts are being made to empower and encourage female entrepreneurship and to acknowledge their significance. According to (World Bank, 2017), women entrepreneurs need to be appropriately shaped with entrepreneurial attributes and abilities in order to adapt to changes in global trends and be competent enough to thrive for excellence in the entrepreneurial arena.

Due to the civil conflict in the North and East of Sri Lanka over three decades, many displaced, many lost their spouses and many disappeared (Asian Development Bank, Women in Sri Lanka, 1999). In addition to the report of Asian Development Bank, (Selvamalar & Sohail, 2006) quoted that, with a population of about 1.8 million, women make up slightly more than 40% of the overall population and have been instrumental in both the economic growth and the liberation movement of Sri Lanka's northeast province. According to (Ummah & Selvarathnam, 2012), households of missing elderly male member or differently able male members looked at different start-ups. Most of these women started with nothing in their hands (Asian Development Bank, Women in Sri Lanka, 1999). According to (Selvamalar & Sohail, 2006), the North East's socioeconomic development has been aided by donor agencies, international non-governmental organisations (INGOs), local non-governmental organisations, and foreign government intervention since a ceasefire agreement was struck in February 2002. Hence, the research questions are is there any significant relationship between the identified pull factors and push factors with the entrepreneurial success.

Therefore, this study aims to find the factors contributing significantly to the success of female entrepreneurs in Jaffna District. The research objectives consisted of finding out the significant relationship between the Pull Factors and Push Factors with Entrepreneurial success.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Drivers of Women Entrepreneurship

Women entrepreneurs may be defined any individual or group of women who start, plan, and run a business (Goyal & Prakash, 2011). Motivations for entrepreneurs are frequently classified into "push" or "pull" categories (Umma & Selvaratnam, 2012). According to the Push and Pull Factor theory of entrepreneurship, people choose to become entrepreneurs for two fundamental reasons. According to the notion, some

people are driven into entrepreneurship by their circumstances, while others are attracted to it by their knowledge and abilities or a business opportunity that arises (Mkubukeli & Cronje, 2018).

The Relationship Between Pull Factors and Entrepreneurial Success

According to (Uddin, Bose, & Ferdausi, 2014), challenge was identified as the major pull factor. In addition to this own interest, autonomy and freedom are the major factors too. However, similar research held by (Mkubukeli & Cronje, 2018) revealed that it is not clear as to whether push factors or pull factors predominate or whether these influence entrepreneurs equally. Moreover, age and gender influence entrepreneurial success.

Hypotheses 1 H1: There is a significant relationship between Pull factors and entrepreneurial success of women entrepreneurs in Jaffna district

The Relationship Between Push Factors and Entrepreneurial Success

It has been discovered that psychological elements including self-satisfaction, the need for independence, and a source of funding might serve as catalysts for female entrepreneurs to launch their businesses (Nordin, 2005). Furthermore, goals, self-efficacy, and stated vision had a direct impact on venture growth, and new resource skills had an impact on subsequent growth, according to Robert B. Jet al.'s 2004 research, "The relationship of entrepreneurial traits, skills, and motivation to subsequent venture growth." Moreover, goals were associated with self-efficacy and expressed vision, whereas perseverance was associated with newly acquired resource skills (Hasni, 2012). However, the research held by (Umma & Selvaratnam, 2012) revealed that, women entrepreneurs are equally inspired by a blend of pull and push elements. Push factors, on the other hand, showcased more significant impact compared to Pull factors.

Hypotheses 2 H2: There is a significant relationship between Push factors and entrepreneurial success of women entrepreneurs in Jaffna district

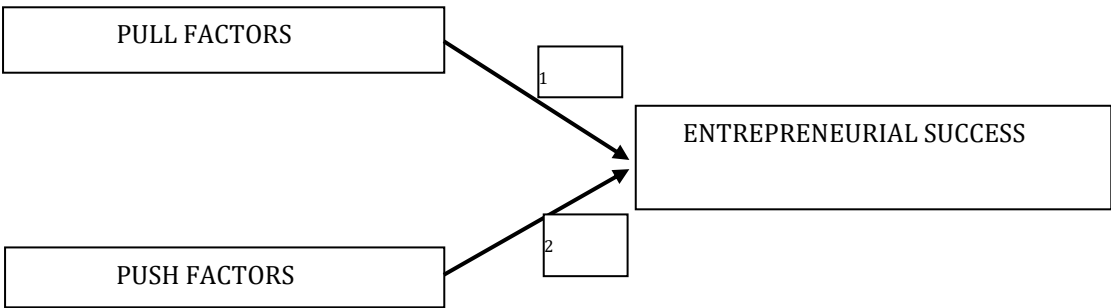


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

Study Area : The study area is Jaffna District. Jaffna is located in the Northern region of Sri Lanka where Northern Province is predominantly rural, with only Jaffna as an urban center. It has poverty head count index of 8.3%. Post ethnic conflict local economy in the North had severely reduced productive capacities and livelihoods, destroyed infrastructure and other community services, collapsed markets, widespread unemployment and underemployment, and a low level of social cohesion (International Labour Organization, 2020).

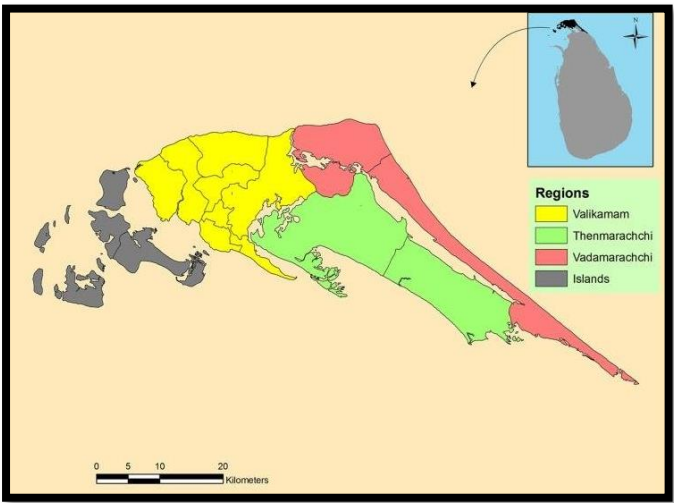
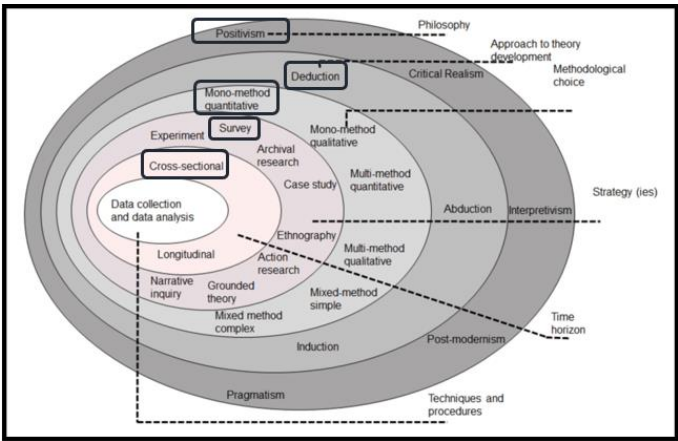


Figure 1: Jaffna District

METHODOLOGY



(Source: Saunder et al., 2020)

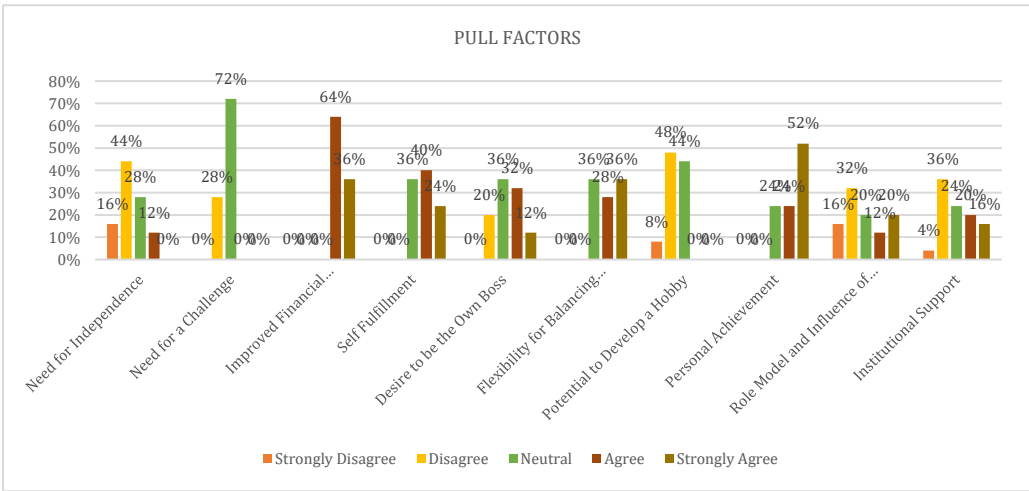
Figure 2: Research Onion

An epistemological positivist philosophical stance was adapted in the research. The study was mono quantitative research as it is convenient for a cross-sectional study. Research followed a deductive approach. Sampling frame consisted of the women entrepreneurs of Jaffna district. From the population of 60 active entrepreneurs who are in the entrepreneurial activity for a minimum of 5 years in Jaffna district (the list obtained from the Chamber of Commerce), 25 have been chosen randomly from Jaffna and Nallur Divisional Secretariat divisions for the data collection. A survey questionnaire was developed to collect data which consisted of closed ended questions. Further, the questionnaire consisted of demographic questions and statements related to Pull factors, Push factors and Entrepreneurial Success which are in five-point likert scale. Collected data were analysed using SPSS and the analysis consisted of descriptive analysis, reliability analysis, Pearson Correlation analysis and regression analysis.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

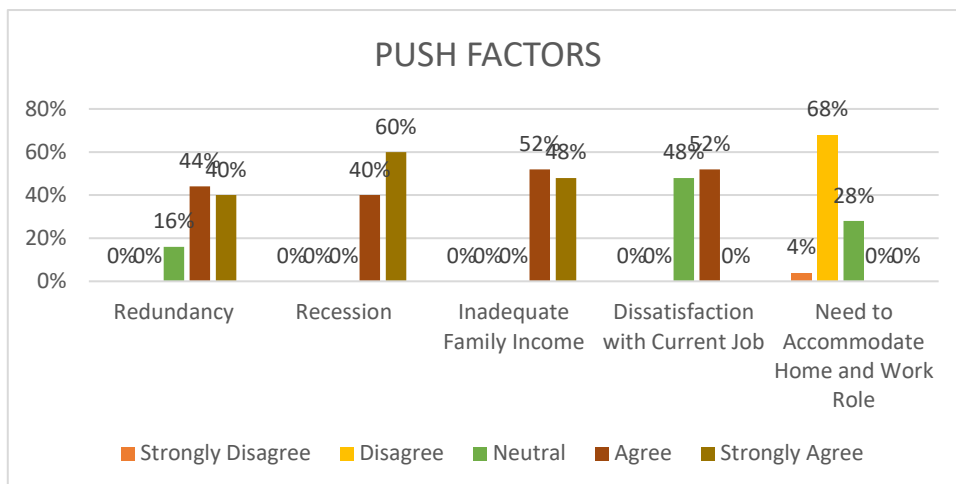
Descriptive Analysis

Majority (52%) of the sample represent 45-54 years age and then 35-44 years age follows with a 44%. Major proportion are with A/L whereas 48% are with O/L.



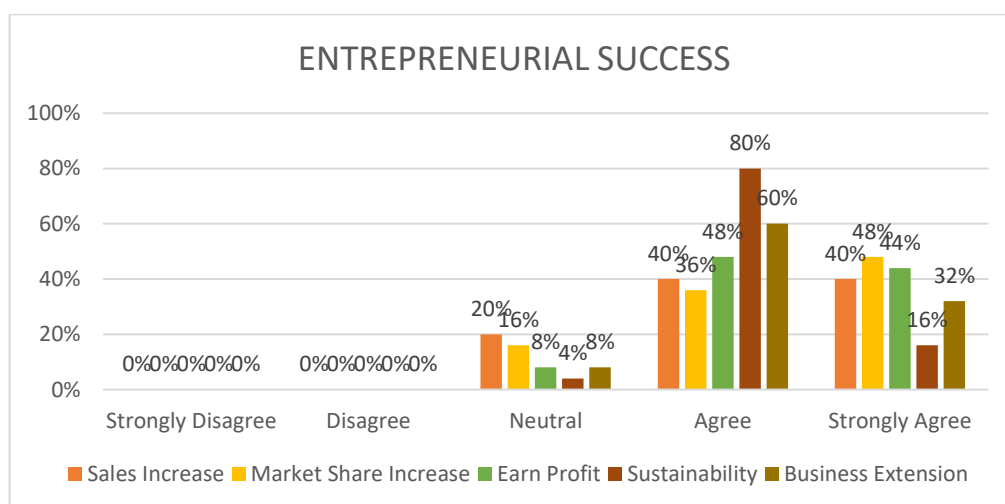
(Source: Author developed 2024)

Figure 5: Descriptive analysis of Pull Factors



(Source: Author developed 2024)

Figure 6: Descriptive analysis of Push Factors



(Source: Author developed 2024)

Figure 7: Descriptive analysis of Entrepreneurial success

Table 1: Inferential Analysis

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha
Pull Factors	0.689
Push Factors	0.723

Entrepreneurial Success	0.767

(Source: Author developed 2024)

Reliability analysis revealed that data collected are reliable as the values of Cronbach's alpha are greater than 0.7 except for Pull factors, however the value approximates to 0.7 and thus that was considered.

Table 2: Correlation Analysis

Correlation	Coefficient
Pull Factors and Entrepreneurial Success	0.680**
Push Factors and Entrepreneurial Success	0.046

(Source: Author developed 2024)

Pearson correlation analysis revealed that there is a significant correlation between pull factors and entrepreneurial success at 0.01 level with a correlation coefficient of 0.680 and there is no significant correlation between push factors and entrepreneurial success. Regression analysis also revealed that, there is a significant relationship between pull factors and entrepreneurial success at 0.01 significant level where as there is no significant relationship between push factors and entrepreneurial success. The findings are supported by the researches conducted by (Uddin, Bose, & Ferdausi, 2014). However, these are not supported by the research conducted by (Mkubukeli & Cronje, 2018) as there is no clear cut demarcation whether these factors influence. (Umma & Selvaratnam, 2012), on the other hand concluded that, both factors contribute and push factors contribute more.

CONCLUSIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS

Among the pull and push factors which influence entrepreneurial success, pull factors influence the success of women entrepreneurs, push factors on the other hand do not influence the success. Among the pull factors Personal Achievement is the main reason for the entrepreneurial success. However, the outcome of this research cannot be generalized as it was conducted in Jaffna and Nallur DS divisions only. A generalizable outcome will be possible by taking more samples from different regions of the Island. Further, more factors such as demographic variables and personality traits could be incorporated as the determinants of entrepreneurial success. Moreover, a mixed method of the research would generate valid findings.

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UNVEILING THE IMPACT OF DIGITAL DISRUPTION ON ENTREPRENEURIAL PERFORMANCE IN AMPARA DISTRICT

M.S.M. Fathih Fasarath ^{1*} and P. Nitharjan ²

^{1,2}School of Business, ESOF Metro Campus, Batticaloa, Sri Lanka

*fathihfasarathmsm@gmail.com**

ABSTRACT

The research aims to explore how digital disruption affects entrepreneurial performance in Ampara District, focusing on technological innovation, market dynamics, and business model transformation. Conducted among 162 SMEs registered within five years, the study employs a positivist, deductive approach using surveys for data collection. A stratified random sampling method ensures representativeness across sectors and sizes. Findings highlight that technological innovation enhances efficiency and competitiveness, while market dynamics and business model adaptation are crucial for maintaining relevance. Statistical analysis, including regression, elucidates these relationships, offering actionable insights for SMEs to leverage digital disruption effectively. Recommendations include prioritizing digital investments, enhancing digital literacy, and fostering collaborative ecosystems to navigate and capitalize on digital changes. This research contributes new perspectives on enhancing entrepreneurial resilience and growth in the face of technological shifts, informing strategic decisions and policy formulation in Ampara District.

Keywords: Business model transformation, Digital disruption, Entrepreneurial performance, Technological innovation, Market dynamics

INTRODUCTION

In an era of rapid technological advancements, the landscape of entrepreneurship is continually evolving. Digital disruption has fundamentally transformed how businesses operate, presenting both challenges and opportunities. Understanding its impact on entrepreneurial performance is crucial for fostering innovation and sustainability. Digital disruption, involving technologies like AI, data analytics, block chain, and IoT, reshapes market dynamics, consumer behavior, and competitive landscapes, prompting entrepreneurs to adapt their strategies.

This research aims to explore the multifaceted impact of digital disruption on entrepreneurial performance in Ampara District. By examining various dimensions of this phenomenon, we seek insights to inform strategic decision-making, resource allocation, and policy formulation, ultimately providing actionable recommendations for entrepreneurs in a digitally disrupted marketplace. While digital disruption is not new, it has gained significant attention in recent years. This research aims to investigate the multifaceted effects of digital disruption on entrepreneurial performance in the Ampara District. By exploring various dimensions of this phenomenon, the study seeks to provide insights that inform strategic decision-making, resource allocation, and policy formulation. Ultimately, the goal is to develop actionable recommendations to help entrepreneurs navigate the digitally disrupted marketplace. Although digital disruption is not a new concept, its significance has grown in recent years. Studies like Steve Elliot's on strategic business networks and Jinqi Su's on environmental efficiency highlight its broad impact. Research on MSMEs, such as Lavinia Javier Cueto's work on young entrepreneurs, emphasizes digital innovations' role in resilience. Jun Wang's study on financial implications and Zhenfan Liu's quantitative analysis of engineering enterprises further illustrate digital transformation's effects. This research aims to determine whether digital disruption significantly affects entrepreneurial Performance in Ampara District through literature review, empirical data collection, and statistical analysis. Studies by researchers such as Steve Elliot on strategic business networks and Jinqi Su on environmental efficiency have highlighted its broad impact. Additionally, research on MSMEs, such as Lavinia Javier Cueto's work on young entrepreneurs, underscores the role of digital innovations in enhancing resilience. Similarly, Jun Wang's exploration of financial implications and Zhenfan Liu's quantitative analysis of engineering enterprises further illustrate the transformative effects of digital technologies.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In the dynamic Ampara District, traditional industries intersect with technological advancements, making the impact of digital disruption on entrepreneurial performance critical to explore. This review synthesizes research to understand how Digital

Disruption, through Technological Innovation, Market Dynamics, and Business Model Transformation, influences Entrepreneurship Performance.

Digital disruption, driven by digital technologies, reshapes industries like agriculture, tourism, and manufacturing in Ampara. Innovations in ICT, automation, and e-commerce play pivotal roles, as noted by Christensen (1997) and McGrath (2013), who highlight its transformative effects on industry structures and opportunities. Technological innovation is crucial, with advancements like mobile apps for agriculture and online booking for tourism boosting entrepreneurial value and competitiveness, as discussed by Teece (2018) and Chesbrough (2003). Market dynamics, influenced by consumer preferences, regulations, and global trends, affect demand, competition, and entrepreneurial viability. Porter (1980) and Barney (1991) emphasize navigating these complexities to maintain a competitive edge. Business model transformation, essential for adapting to digital disruptions, involves redefining value propositions, revenue streams, and customer strategies.

Osterwalder and Pigneur (2010) and Zott et al. (2011) advocate for agile models to leverage digital technologies for sustainable growth. Overall, this review elucidates the interconnectedness of digital disruption, technological innovation, market dynamics, and business model transformation in enhancing entrepreneurial performance in Ampara, laying a foundation for further research and practical interventions. Technological Innovation: Technological innovation, particularly in ICT, automation, and e-commerce, plays a pivotal role. For instance, mobile apps tailored for agriculture and online booking platforms for tourism have significantly enhanced entrepreneurial competitiveness (Teece, 2018; Chesbrough, 2003).

H1: Technological innovation positively impacts on Entrepreneurship performance

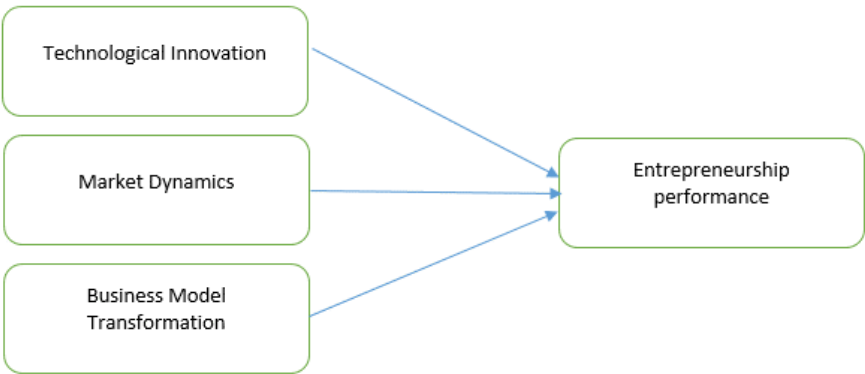
Market Dynamics: Market dynamics are heavily influenced by shifts in consumer preferences, regulatory changes, and global trends, impacting demand, competition, and entrepreneurial viability (Porter, 1980; Barney, 1991). Navigating these complexities is crucial for maintaining a competitive edge.

H2: Market dynamics significantly influence on Entrepreneurship performance

Business Model Transformation: Adapting to digital disruptions requires significant changes in business models, including redefining value propositions, revenue streams, and customer strategies. Osterwalder and Pigneur (2010) and Zott et al. (2011) advocate for agile business models that leverage digital technologies for sustainable growth.

H3: Business model transformation impact on Entrepreneurship performance

Conceptual Framework



(Source: Author Developed 2024)

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

METHODOLOGY

This study investigates the impact of digital disruption on entrepreneurial performance in the Ampara District, focusing on 162 SMEs registered in the past five years. Grounded in positivism, the research adopts a detective approach and employs a survey method for systematic data collection. The cross-sectional design captures a snapshot of the relationship between digital disruption and entrepreneurial performance at a specific time. To ensure a representative sample, a stratified random sampling method is used, selecting 115 SMEs based on industry sector and business size. With the sample size decision informed by statistical data from the Industrial Development Board. The unit of analysis is individuals within these SMEs, allowing for detailed examination of their perceptions and behaviors. Both primary and secondary data are collected, with surveys administered to SME owners or managers and additional context provided by existing research and reports. A standardized structured method ensures consistency across responses, capturing key variables related to digital disruption and entrepreneurial performance. Statistical analysis techniques, including regression analysis, will be applied to the data. This rigorous methodology aims to uncover the nuanced dynamics in the Ampara District, providing insights to inform strategic decisions and policy formulation for SMEs. Through this approach, the study seeks to guide SMEs in leveraging digital disruption for enhanced performance.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Reliability Analysis of the Questionnaire

Table 1: IV1 Reliability Statistics, IV2 Reliability Statistics and IV3 Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.860	3
.750	3
.795	3

(Source: Author Developed 2024)

Reliability statistics (Cronbach's Alpha) for three independent variables (IVs) in a research study. IV1, IV2, and IV3 demonstrate high internal consistency with alphas of .860, .750, and .795 Respectively. Each IV comprises three items, indicating robustness in measurement reliability across all variables.

Correlation

Table 2: Correlation analysis

Correlations							
		TIMEA N	EPMEA N	MDMEA N	EPMEA N	BMDM EAN	EPME EAN
TIME AN	Pearson Correlation	1	.825**	1	.817**	1	.838**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000		.000		.000
	N	115	115	115	115	115	115
EPME AN	Pearson Correlation	.825**	1	.817**	1	.838**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000		.000	
	N	115	115	115	115	115	115

(Source: Author Developed 2024)

Table 2 Correlation of coping with Technological Innovation with Entrepreneurship performance, Market Dynamics with Entrepreneurship performance and Business Model Transformation with Entrepreneurship performance.

Correlations between coping with technological innovation, market dynamics, business model transformation, and entrepreneurship performance. Significant positive correlations exist between coping with technological innovation and entrepreneurship performance, market dynamics and entrepreneurship performance, as well as business model transformation and entrepreneurship performance, based on Pearson correlation coefficients.

Regression

Table 3: Regression analysis

Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.893a	.797	.792	.31194
a. Predictors: (Constant), BMDMEAN, TIMEAN, MDMEAN				

(Source: Author Developed 2024)

Table 4: Anova Summary for Regression

ANOVA						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	42.413	3	14.138	145.291	.000b
	Residual	10.801	111	.097		
	Total	53.214	114			

(Source: Author Developed 2024)

Table 5: Coefficients Summary for Regression

Coefficients						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.101	.196		.516	.607
	TIMEAN	.358	.072	.359	4.948	.000
	MDMEAN	.267	.077	.275	3.485	.001
	BMDMEAN	.319	.081	.330	3.928	.000
a. Dependent Variable: EPMEAN						

(Source: Author Developed 2024)**Table 6: ES Summary for Regression**

ES					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Small	100	87.0	87.0	87.0
	Medium	15	13.0	13.0	100.0
	Total	115	100.0	100.0	

(Source: Author Developed 2024)

The regression model exhibits a strong overall fit ($R = 0.893$, $R^2 = 0.797$), explaining 79.2% of the variance in the dependent variable. Predictors include BMDMEAN, TIMEAN, and MDMEAN. The standard error of the estimate is 0.31194. The regression model is significant ($F = 145.291$, $p < 0.001$), indicating that the predictors collectively contribute to the model's variance. The regression explains a substantial proportion of variance (42.413) compared to residual variance (10.801). Have significant positive standardized coefficients ($\beta = 0.359, 0.275, 0.330$, respectively, $p < 0.001$), indicating their importance in predicting the dependent variable. The intercept is not significant. Most effects sizes fall within the small category (87.0%), with a smaller portion categorized as medium (13.0%). These results suggest a predominantly small

but notable effect of the predictors on the Abstract. The regression model exhibits a strong overall fit ($R = 0.893$, $R^2 = 0.797$), explaining 79.7% of the variance in the dependent variable. Predictors in the model include TIMEAN, MDMEAN, and BMDMEAN. The standard error of the estimate is 0.31194. Furthermore, the regression model is highly significant ($F = 145.291$, $p < 0.001$), indicating that the predictors collectively contribute significantly to the variance in the dependent variable. Specifically, TIMEAN, MDMEAN, and BMDMEAN demonstrate significant positive standardized coefficients ($\beta = 0.359, 0.275, 0.330$, respectively, $p < 0.001$), underscoring their importance in predicting the dependent variable. Notably, the intercept was not found to be significant. Effect sizes predominantly fall within the small category (87.0%), with a smaller proportion categorized as medium (13.0%). These results suggest a strong explanatory power of the predictors on the dependent variable.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

This research comprehensively elucidates the impact of digital disruption on entrepreneurial performance within the Ampara District, highlighting critical insights and actionable strategies. Digital disruption, characterized by the transformative influence of digital technologies, has fundamentally reshaped the entrepreneurial landscape in the district. Our findings reveal that technological innovation, market dynamics, and business model transformation are pivotal in mediating this impact. Technological innovations, such as mobile applications and e-commerce platforms, empower entrepreneurs by enhancing operational efficiencies and creating new value propositions. Market dynamics, influenced by shifting consumer preferences and regulatory changes, demand agile strategies from entrepreneurs to capitalize on emerging opportunities and mitigate threats. Moreover, the transformation of business models to incorporate digital technologies is essential for sustaining competitive advantage and fostering resilience in a rapidly evolving market.

The empirical analysis underscores that digital disruption significantly affects entrepreneurial performance by driving efficiency, expanding market reach, and facilitating innovative business practices. SMEs that effectively leverage digital technologies demonstrate improved performance metrics, including increased revenue, customer acquisition, and operational efficiency. However, the extent of this impact varies across different sectors, with technology-intensive industries experiencing more pronounced benefits. The study also highlights the challenges faced by entrepreneurs, such as the need for digital literacy and the initial investment required for digital transformation. Based on these findings, several recommendations are proposed. First, entrepreneurs should prioritize investment in digital technologies and continuous learning to stay abreast of technological advancements.

Policymakers should support this transition by providing training programs, financial incentives, and infrastructure development to facilitate digital adoption. Additionally,

fostering collaborative ecosystems where businesses can share knowledge and resources can enhance collective resilience against digital disruption. Tailoring these initiatives to the specific needs of different sectors within the Ampara District will ensure more targeted and effective support. This research contributes valuable insights into the dynamics of digital disruption and offers practical recommendations to enhance entrepreneurial performance, driving innovation and sustainable growth in the Ampara District. Furthermore, our research highlights the nuanced implications of digital disruption on entrepreneurial dynamics in the Ampara District. By addressing the identified challenges such as digital literacy and initial investment costs, entrepreneurs can better harness digital technologies to achieve sustainable growth. This includes fostering a culture of continuous adaptation and innovation, where SMEs not only survive but thrive in an increasingly digital economy. Moreover, policymakers can play a pivotal role in facilitating this transition by tailoring support measures to the unique characteristics of different sectors within the district. By integrating these insights into policy frameworks and fostering an ecosystem that supports digital innovation, stakeholders can collectively bolster the district's resilience and competitiveness in the face of ongoing digital transformations.

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EFFECT OF FINANCIAL GOALS ON THE INVESTMENT DECISIONS AMONG TEACHERS IN THE SECONDARY EDUCATION SECTOR IN THE WESTERN PROVINCE OF SRI LANKA

Chulanganie L. Fernando^{1*} and Sachinthani N. Abeyasekera²

¹ London Metropolitan University, United Kingdom

² School of Business, ESOF Metro Campus, Colombo, Sri Lanka

*sachinirandha@gmail.com**

ABSTRACT

Effective investment decisions are essential for financial well-being. The lack of investment advice has led teachers to focus on basic options like bank savings and fixed deposits, neglecting wealth maximization opportunities. This research was conducted to understand and identify if the investment decision making is driven by the financial goals of the teachers in the western province of Sri Lanka. Empowering teachers with financial knowledge can positively impact the country's economic growth. Although research has been carried out in Sri Lanka investigating the demographic factors, culture and financial literacy on investment decisions of the teachers, no research is carried out to investigate the relationship between their financial goals and investment decisions. This research bridges this gap in literature. The research is quantitative taking a positivism paradigm. Data was collected using online questionnaires and the analysis was carried out through the SPSS software. The main findings of this research are that there is a relationship between investment time horizon, liquidity requirements, retirement plan, emergency fund and investment decisions. There was no established relationship between the variable taxation. This was unique and add to the literature as it was the first time in Sri Lanka such a context being studied in detail. The knowledge contribution of the study provides insights for investment opportunity providers and advisors, offering customized advice to help teachers achieve their financial goals.

Keywords: Investment decisions, time horizon, liquidity, retirement plans, emergency funds, taxation, teachers

INTRODUCTION

Financial goals, such as saving for retirement or purchasing a vehicle are crucial for individuals and depend on factors like income, dependents, and marital status. In Sri Lanka, financial stability and wealth maximization are the ultimate goals, achieved through investing. Investments play a significant role in the quality of life of teachers globally, and they must invest their money to achieve a higher return in the future. Teaching is a popular profession globally, with teachers playing a crucial role in education. However, due to their moderate income, teachers face financial challenges. Effective investment decisions are essential for their financial well-being. The lack of investment advice has led teachers to focus on basic options like bank savings and fixed deposits, neglecting wealth maximization opportunities.

Shrivastava (2023) highlights the importance of savings and investments in a country's economic development. In Sri Lanka, rising living costs have negatively impacted middle and low-income earners' investment patterns. Teachers are working to improve their standard of living and become financially stable.

Although research has been carried out in Sri Lanka investigating the demographic factors, culture and financial literacy on investment decisions of the teachers, no research is carried out to investigate the relationship between their financial goals and investment decisions. Therefore, the rationale of this study is to shed light on the diversified financial goals within this specific population which will enable investment advisors to provide effective investment advice that cater to their requirements and to achieve wealth maximization at a minimum opportunity cost.

Therefore, the aim of the research is to understand and identify if the investment decision making is driven by the financial goals of the teachers in the secondary education sector in the western province of Sri Lanka. Empowering teachers with financial knowledge can positively impact the country's economic growth, as they may pass on this information to their students which will lead them towards investments which will impact the economic growth of the country.

LITERATURE REVIEW

As identified by Feyen, Gispert, Kliatskova & Mare (2021) the financial sector in Sri Lanka provides a vast range of products and services such as capital formation, intermediation, risk management, monetary policy transmissions, as well as payment and settlement systems and a diversified range of investment and savings platforms to the individuals. Corporates Banks are the largest and most important component of the Sri Lankan financial system. Capital market is another major investment opportunity providing sector in a country. Components of the capital market include government securities, stocks, and corporate bonds. The primary dealership companies provide the opportunity to its investors to increase their wealth through investing in government bills and bonds. Which are considered risk-free investments & are not tax liable. Sachdeva & Lehal (2023) also refer to stock markets as an important unit in a country which contributes towards the development and growth of the economy.

The five independent variables identified in this study are time horizon, liquidity needs, tax implications, retirement plans and emergency funding, will be discussed further.

The influence of time horizon on investment decisions

The time horizon refers to the investment time an investor plans to hold before selling or liquidating assets. Research shows that investors often rely on time horizons to make decisions, as they are concerned about the timing of returns. Factors such as age, wealth, productivity, and necessity affect the time taken for gaining a return, ultimately affecting investment decisions.

According to Levy (2022) long time horizons involve increased environmental uncertainty that inhibits precise expectations. It was suggested that investors should invest more in equity as the time horizon increases.

Short-term investments can have negative consequences due to economic, environmental, and social systems. Economic conditions, such as GDP, inflation, unemployment rate, and interest rates, affect investment decisions, making investors more cautious. Additionally, fees associated with investments, such as transaction fees and ongoing fees like account maintenance fees, can negatively impact investment efficiency.

The influence of liquidity needs on investment decisions

Liquidity needs refer to the ability of individuals to have free cash, which can impact their investment decisions. Marketability refers to the speed at which a security can be converted into cash or near cash, while marketability allows investors to be more flexible. Financial constraints and free-cash-flow problems can also affect investment decisions, particularly for middle-economy individuals. Income stability, which ensures regular cash inflows, can also influence investment decisions.

Fireld and Mkrtchyn (2022) state that high liquid investments provide more opportunities due to low capital costs, while others prefer short-term investments for cost-effectiveness and high returns. Overall, liquidity needs, and income play a significant role in investment decisions.

The influence of tax implications on investment decisions

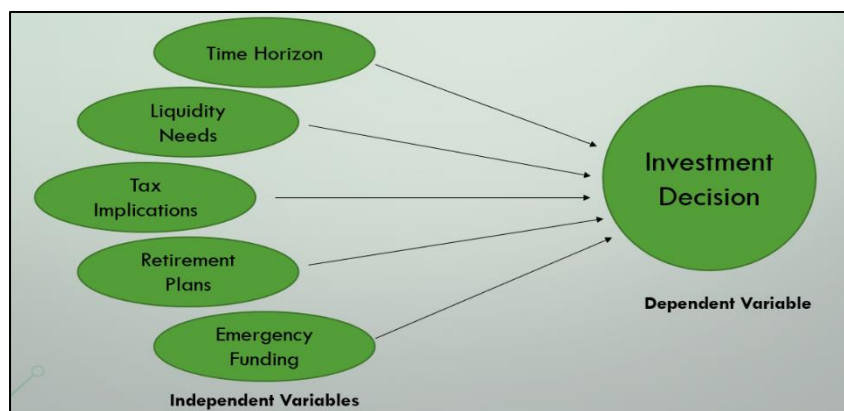
Taxes are a significant source of income and economic influence. Investments are more sensitive to tax rates, with growth-inducing policies encouraging investments and reducing income tax rates. Taxes also influence spending patterns and private investment control. High tax rates can reduce after-tax investment returns, and investors often anticipate future tax rates. In Sri Lanka, different investment incomes are taxed, with capital gains at 10%, interest earned on Fixed Deposits at 5%, and dividend income at 15%. Lower capital gains tax rates can encourage capital investment. Tax credits are criticized for being costly and affecting savings and investment behavior in developing countries.

The influence of retirement plans on the investment decisions

Private sector individuals often start investing at a younger age to prepare for their financial requirements after retirement. However, many individuals do not make active retirement savings decisions due to their risk aversion towards loss, resulting in wealth reduction rather than increase. Age plays a role in investment decisions, as older investors prefer to preserve capital and choose less risky options. Financial literacy plays a role in investment decisions, but retirement has an insignificant impact. Risk attitude is a psychological variable that affects an individual's investment decisions, and the level of risk acceptance and response varies from investor to investor. Income needs also influence investment decisions, with low-income earners being more affected than high-income earners. However, income needs do not necessarily influence investment decisions. Employer matching contributions significantly influence retirement savings and having an employer-funded retirement plan influences saving behavior and investment portfolio choices. Overall, age, risk tolerance level, income level, and financial goals of retirement planning influence investment decisions.

The influence of emergency funding on investment decisions

Emergency funding is a strategy where investors save for unexpected cash needs, often investing in risk-free assets. However, this can lead to unnecessary wealth reduction. Diversifying investments towards equity can help reduce funding inadequacy. Traditional strategies involve holding a large amount of cash in risk-free high liquid assets, but this can lead to opportunity costs. Accessibility to emergency funds is crucial for asset accumulation and purchasing securities. High-income individuals prioritize safety when trading on equity stocks, while low-income individuals may prioritize quick wealth accumulation. Diversification involves investing in various assets to reduce market fluctuations, but investors often lack diversity due to their perception of risk. The below diagram shows the relationship of the 5 factors time horizon, liquidity needs, tax implications, retirement plans and emergency funding have on investment decisions. This will be tested throughout the research.



(Source: Author Developed 2024)

Figure 1: Conceptual framework

The hypothesis developed for the above is as follows.

H1: There is a relationship between investment time horizon and investment decisions among teachers in the secondary education sector in Sri Lanka.

H2: There is a significant relationship between liquidity needs and investment decisions among teachers in the secondary education sector in Sri Lanka.

H3: There is a significant relationship between tax implications and investment decisions among teachers in the secondary education sector in Sri Lanka.

H4: There is a significant relationship between retirement plans and investment decisions among teachers in the secondary education sector in Sri Lanka.

H5: There is a significant relationship between emergency funding and investment decisions among teachers in the secondary education sector in Sri Lanka.

METHODOLOGY

The research philosophy used is “positivism” as researchers have tried to find the relationship between financial goals and its effect on the financial decision of the teachers engaged in secondary education in the Western province of Sri Lanka. A deductive approach was used starting with a theory and deriving hypothesis from it and revising the theory. The research method is mono method quantitative. Data collection was done cross sectional. An online questioner was used as the data collection tool for this research. The population is 39,987 and a sample with the use of **random sampling technique**, consists of 381 with 325 from the government sector and 56 from the private sector.

A pilot study tested internal consistency by administering a questionnaire to a selected group, aiming for 80% consistency. External consistency was achieved by circulating the questionnaire online, ensuring neutrality and data collection happened in an unbiased manner with the use of online questionnaire no personal information disclosed to the researcher.

The data analysis was carried out through the SPSS software. And the statistical analysis technique is hypothesis testing and descriptive statistics like mean, median and mode were discussed. The research's validity was ensured by creating a questionnaire covering all five hypotheses and referencing literature published after 2013. The results can be generalized to the whole of western province and Sri Lanka.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

To measure the validity and reliability of the variables Cronbach's alpha was used and time horizon, liquidity requirements, tax implications, retirement plan and emergency fund was all found to be reliable. To measure the influence of time horizon on investment decisions attributes like investment length, economic conditions, fees and charges relevant to investment and salary of the investor were analyzed.

Table 1: Summary of key findings – Investment Time Horizon

N	Valid	287		
	Missing	0		
		Economic Condition	Fees and Charges	Investment Length
				Salary
Mean		1.71	2.16	1.80
Median		2	2	2
Mode		2	2	2
SD		0.553	0.908	0.592
Pearson Correlation Value		0.375		
Chi-Square Value		0.000		

(Source: Author Developed 2024)

According to the above table the Pearson correlation coefficient value of .375 indicates a positive relationship between Investment time horizon and Investment decision. This further supports the literature as Alzoubi et al, (2021) clearly states that individuals make inconsistent investment decisions based on differing investment time horizons.

Another variable identified is the influence of tax implications on investment decisions. Overall, 78.4% agree to the factor that tax rate of the country influence the investment decisions. Further factors like influence of tax credits, tax efficiency, income tax influence too impact investment decisions.

Table 2: Summary of key findings – Tax Implications

N	Valid	287		
	Missing	0		
		Tax Rate	Tax Credit	Income Tax
			Tax Efficiency	
Mean		2.1	2.44	2.36
Median		2	2	2
Mode		2	2	2
SD		0.813	1.019	0.837
Pearson Correlation Value		0.006		
Chi-Square Value		0.003		

(Source: Author Developed 2024)

The Pearson correlation coefficient value of .0006 which is very close to zero indicates that there is a very minimal/ no relationship between tax implications and investment decision of teachers. While the findings of the chi-square test of independence show a insignificant relationship between taxation and Investment decision, with a p-value of .003, rejecting the alternative hypothesis and accepting the null hypothesis.

Another variable that was tested is the relationship between emergency funding needs of teachers and its impact on the investment decisions.

Table 3: Summary of key findings – Emergency Funding

N	Valid	287			
	Missing	0			
		Safety	Diversified Investments	Accessibility	Fund Size
Mean		1.61	1.85	1.85	1.94
Median		2	2	2	2
Mode		2	2	2	2
SD		0.542	0.528	0.497	0.509
Pearson Correlation Value		0.323			
Chi-Square Valu		0.000			

(Source: Author Developed 2024)

The Pearson correlation coefficient value of .323 indicates a positive relationship between emergency funding needs and investment decision. The research carried out by Despard et al. (2020) states that easy access to affordable savings enables asset accumulation among individuals. The same argument is done Nguyen (2023) by stating that accessibility is important for purchasing securities and financial products. He further states that by not having accessibility will prevent the low-income earning individuals from maintaining emergency funds. So, the results are in line with the literature.

In summary, the results of the hypothesis testing were that there is a relationship between investment time horizon and investment decisions. It was subsequently found that there is a relationship between liquidity requirement, retirement plan, emergency fund and investment decisions. However, it was identified there was no relationship between taxation and investment decisions.

CONCLUSIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS

Aim of the research is to understand and identify if the investment decision making is driven by the financial goals of the teachers in the secondary education sector in the western province of Sri Lanka. The literature review enables to identify five financial goals of the teachers, which were considered as independent variables, and four attributes were selected to identify the relationship between the financial goals and the investment decisions of the teachers.

Based on the analysis carried out it can be concluded that all five variables have an impact on the investment decisions. However, the impact of taxation on investment decisions is minimal when compared to the other four variables.

The knowledge contribution of the study provides insights for investment opportunity providers and advisors, offering customized advice to help teachers achieve their financial goals. The researcher studied Western Province teachers in Sri Lanka, revealing how financial goals influence investment decisions. This understanding will benefit investment opportunity providers and advisors, offering customized advice to help teachers achieve their financial goals. This bridged the gap between literature and real-world application.

The research faced several limitations, including significant data collection from government sector teachers due to time and access limitations, a monomethod quantitative approach that forgoes qualitative data, and sampling based on easy-access schools. The questionnaire was presented in English and Sinhala only, potentially limiting responses from Tamil teachers, potentially resulting in a less diverse population and not generalizable findings. Additionally, financial goals and investment decisions may change over time, and the study would have captured participants' current attitudes and behaviors.

The recommendations for the research are for teachers to be informed about economic conditions through financial literacy programs, transparent fees structures, and online calculators. Salary plays a significant role in investment time horizons. The ministry of education should conduct budgeting, financial planning, and salary progression awareness programs. Financial advisors can provide personalized investment advice, and employment stability is crucial for emergency funding investments. Staying informed about tax law changes, assessing income needs, and evaluating retirement expenses are essential. Having a diversified portfolio and consulting with investment advisors can help teachers achieve their retirement goals.

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EFFECT OF ELECTRONIC WORD OF MOUTH CHANNEL CHARACTERISTICS UPON CUSTOMER LOYALTY IN THE BANKING SECTOR OF SRI LANKA

Dulakshi T. Perera^{1*} and Sachini S. Kariyawasam²

¹ Guildhall School of Business and Law, London Metropolitan University, London, United Kingdom

² School of Business and Law, ESOF Metro Campus, Colombo, Sri Lanka*

*sachinika@gmail.com**

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to investigate the relationship between the channel characteristics of e-WOM and customer loyalty in Sri Lanka's banking sector, which is a relatively under-explored domain today. The study has been designed with the epistemological standpoint of positivism and with deductive approach. The mono method was chosen as the research method where the statistical data analytical methods and tools were used to analyze data in order to test the set hypotheses. This was conducted selecting the National Savings Bank Head Office customers using an online questionnaire with a sample of 383. Descriptive statistics were used to describe the data. With the findings of the study, it was determined that there exists a strong positive correlation and a significant association between the channel characteristics of e-WOM and customer loyalty. Sri Lankan banks have the opportunity to harness the potential of e-WOM channels in order to augment customer loyalty by implementing a comprehensive and consistent e-WOM strategy, effective moderation of message, enhancement of the quality and credibility of the content, increase of active community engagement, monitoring e-WOM trends and collaboration with e-WOM influencers.

Keywords: Banking Sector, Customer Loyalty, Electronic Word of Mouth, Social Networking Sites.

INTRODUCTION

In the realm of the service industry, the establishment and maintenance of competitive advantages heavily relies upon the invaluable concept of customer loyalty. In the present era, characterized by unprecedented technological advancements and the widespread use of online communication channels, the banking sector in Sri Lanka finds itself at a crucial moment where comprehending and harnessing the influence of electronic word of mouth (e-WOM) is paramount (Samarawickrama Ruwini & Ganegoda Pushpika, 2024). The aim of this research study is to identify the effect of e-WOM channel characteristics upon customer loyalty in the banking sector of Sri Lanka. As financial institutions compete for market share in an increasingly competitive environment, the ability to foster and maintain customer loyalty has emerged as a pivotal factor for success (Rasheed et al., 2015).

Table 1: Social Media Users Statistics as of April 2024

Description	Global Statistics		Local Statistics	
	Count	% of the Total Population	Count	% of the Total Population
Internet Users	5.44 billion	67.1%	12.34 million	56.3%
Social Media Users	5.07 billion	62.6%	7.50 million	34.2%

(Source: Statista, 2024; Digital 2024: Sri Lanka, 2024)

Based on the data presented in Table 1.1, it is possible to deduce and draw conclusions that a significant proportion, precisely 34.2%, are active users of various social media platforms. The above facts do not only support valuable insights into the digital presence and technological advancements but also reveal the significance of utilizing internet and social networking sites to strengthen customer loyalty in the banking sector. The banking sector in Sri Lanka has observed noteworthy transformations due to the integration of digital technology and the widespread utilization of social media platforms, according to the Central Bank of Sri Lanka (2024). In light of this, customers are now given the unique opportunity to openly express their opinions, share their experiences, and provide recommendations regarding banks and their services through various online platforms.

Existing studies have predominantly concentrated on developed countries, thereby necessitating the acquisition of additional empirical evidence that is specifically tailored to the Sri Lankan context. Consequently, investigating the effect of electronic word of mouth channel characteristics upon customer loyalty in the banking sector of Sri Lanka is poised to bridge a significant gap within the current body of literature, consequently augmenting the comprehension of consumer behavior within this distinctive market. Therefore, the primary research problem investigated is, *“What is the effect of electronic word of mouth channel characteristics upon customer loyalty in the banking sector of Sri Lanka?”*

The main research objectives of the study are as follows:

To investigate the relationship between the e-WOM channel reach and customer loyalty in Sri Lanka's banking sector.

To investigate the relationship between the e-WOM channel trustworthiness and customer loyalty in Sri Lanka's banking sector.

To investigate the relationship between the e-WOM channel interactivity and customer loyalty in Sri Lanka's banking sector.

To investigate the relationship between the e-WOM channel accessibility and customer loyalty in Sri Lanka's banking sector.

To investigate the relationship between the e-WOM channel relevance and customer loyalty in Sri Lanka's banking sector.

To investigate the relationship between the e-WOM channel familiarity and customer loyalty in Sri Lanka's banking sector.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Social Information Processing Theory

The Social Information Processing Theory (SIPT) elucidates the mechanisms by which individuals utilize computer-mediated communication to cultivate interpersonal impressions and facilitate relational communication in the online realm. It is imperative to note that cultural factors wield considerable influence within the domain of online interactions, and the SIPT possesses the potential to foster communication between individuals hailing from disparate cultures, thereby facilitating the development of trust and bolstering group cohesion in virtual teams (Olaniran, et al., 2012). Although relationships may develop rather slowly in the computer-mediated environment, users tend to find ways to disclose personal information. It is even believed that disclosure of self and personal information is more frequent in computer-mediated communication compared to face-to-face communication (Keep, et al., 2012). SIPT assumes a paramount role in the realm of e-WOM, as it expounds upon the intricacies of how individuals process and interpret social information in the vast expanse of online environments. This theory can be seamlessly applied to e-WOM, as consumers heavily lean on online platforms, such as customer review sites, blogs, and social networks, to acquire information and make well-informed decisions pertaining to products or services.

Customer Loyalty

Customer loyalty can be defined as the unwavering commitment and dedication exhibited by individuals in consistently purchasing a preferred product or service, regardless of any situational factors or marketing endeavors that may potentially tempt

them to switch their allegiance. Most of the researchers who have studied the effect of e-WOM on consumer loyalty have primarily focused on comparing different media sources or evaluating overall consumer loyalty (Balakrishnan, et al., 2014; Chu, et al., 2019; Sharma, et al., 2022). As cited by Matthews, et al. (2014), loyalty can be defined as a deeply ingrained commitment to consistently repurchase or patronize a preferred product or service in the future, regardless of situational influences or marketing efforts that may prompt switching behavior. Oliver (1999) introduced a highly influential framework of loyalty that encompasses four distinct phases. These four layers of loyalty are categorized into two groups: attitudinal loyalty and behavioral loyalty (Han, et al., 2011).

Electronic Word of Mouth

The shift in the paradigm of consumer culture has resulted in a profound and substantial transformation in how individuals engage in communication, exchange information, and acquire knowledge through the sharing of online experiences (Ma, et al., 2019). The emergence and development of SNSs have played a pivotal role in the manifestation and proliferation of WOM in the digital realm (Tsao, et al., 2015).

By actively exchanging opinions, ideas, and information about brands, products, and companies within online brand communities, consumers possess considerable influence in shaping the purchasing decisions of fellow members within these digital communities (Zhu, et al., 2016). Consequently, according to Perera et al. (2019), most companies' SNSs strive to foster the generation of e-WOM by consumers, as information generated by consumers endows potential consumers with a sense of credibility, quality, and usefulness. In the current era, where social media and online reviews have become ubiquitous and information sharing is rising, e-WOM can enhance customer perceptions and effect their loyalty towards banking institutions (Al-Somali et al., 2009).

Relationship between the Channel of e-WOM and Customer Loyalty

Cheung and Thadani (2012) have conducted a comprehensive investigation in which they have successfully identified numerous platforms that serve as mediums for e-WOM communication. These platforms encompass a wide range of digital channels, such as social networking sites, online brand and shopping platforms, online consumer review sites, online discussion forums, and blogs. In addition to this, Rani and Shivaprasad (2018) have also acknowledged the existence of numerous e-WOM platforms, and they have further emphasized that these platforms can be broadly classified into two distinct categories, namely provider-generated and third-party platforms. Based on these literature the following proxies have been identified to measure the message of e-WOM.

Reach

The reach of the e-WOM channel holds significant importance as it determines the potential influence it can have on customers. When considering the broader scope of social media platforms, online forums, and customer review sites, which boast a

substantial user base, the dissemination of e-WOM messages becomes highly effective, reaching a wider audience and thereby increasing its potential effect on customer behavior (Hafez, 2021).

Hypothesis 01

Ho: There is no relationship between the e-WOM channel reach and customer loyalty in Sri Lanka's banking sector.

H1: There is a relationship between the e-WOM channel reach and customer loyalty in Sri Lanka's banking sector.

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness is another critical factor in influencing customer loyalty through the e-WOM channel. Channels that have established a reputation for credibility and providing reliable information are more likely to be trusted by customers. Consequently, the e-WOM messages shared through these trusted channels carry more weight and are more likely to shape customer attitudes and behaviors (Nasution, et al., 2023; Cheung & Thadani, 2012).

Hypothesis 02

Ho: There is no relationship between the e-WOM channel trustworthiness and customer loyalty in Sri Lanka's banking sector.

H1: There is a relationship between the e-WOM channel trustworthiness and customer loyalty in Sri Lanka's banking sector.

Interactivity

Interactivity is a crucial aspect of e-WOM channels that contributes to their effectiveness in influencing customer loyalty. Platforms like social media and online forums allow for two-way communication between customers and the channel characteristics of e-WOM. This interactivity promotes engagement and provides an opportunity for direct feedback, which can significantly enhance the effect of e-WOM on customer loyalty (Balakrishnan, et al., 2014).

Hypothesis 03

Ho: There is no relationship between the e-WOM channel interactivity and customer loyalty in Sri Lanka's banking sector.

H1: There is a relationship between the e-WOM channel interactivity and customer loyalty in Sri Lanka's banking sector.

Accessibility

The accessibility of e-WOM channels also plays a pivotal role in their effectiveness. Channels that are easily accessible and user-friendly are more likely to be utilized by

customers. Platforms with simple navigation, clear interfaces, and compatibility with various devices encourage active participation, thus amplifying the effect of e-WOM on customer loyalty (Lam & Shankar, 2014).

Hypothesis 04

Ho: There is no relationship between the e-WOM channel accessibility and customer loyalty in Sri Lanka's banking sector.

H1: There is a relationship between the e-WOM channel accessibility and customer loyalty in Sri Lanka's banking sector.

Relevance

The relevance of e-WOM channels to the specific interests and needs of customers in the banking sector is another critical consideration. Platforms dedicated to financial topics, customer reviews, or industry discussions can attract a targeted audience, ensuring that e-WOM messages resonate with their intended recipients. This targeted approach increases the potential effect of e-WOM on customer loyalty (Rani & Shivaprasad, 2018).

Hypothesis 05

Ho: There is no relationship between the e-WOM channel relevance and customer loyalty in Sri Lanka's banking sector.

H1: There is a relationship between the e-WOM channel relevance and customer loyalty in Sri Lanka's banking sector.

Familiarity

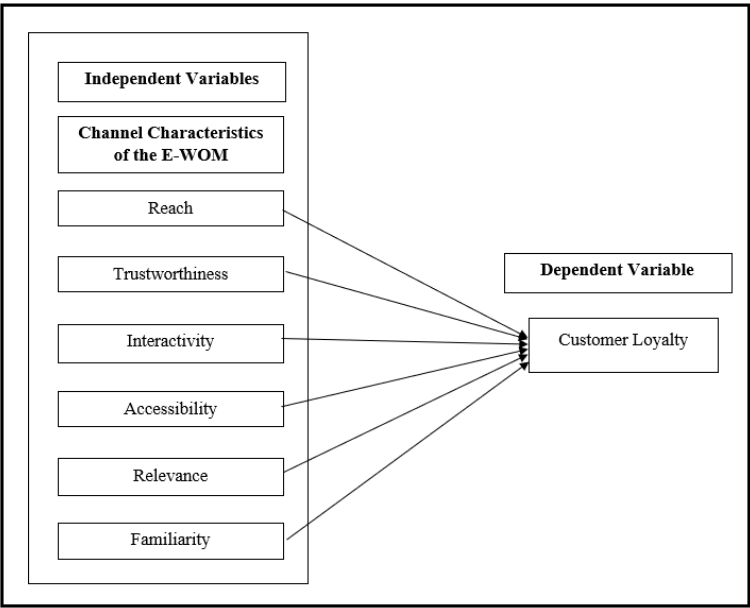
Familiarity with e-WOM channels is an essential driver of customer engagement. Customers are more likely to engage with channels that they are already familiar with and regularly use. By integrating e-WOM strategies into platforms that customers already frequent, such as social media or online banking portals, companies can leverage existing familiarity, optimizing the effectiveness of e-WOM in shaping customer loyalty (Chu, et al., 2019).

Hypothesis 06

Ho: There is no relationship between the e-WOM channel familiarity and customer loyalty in Sri Lanka's banking sector.

H1: There is a relationship between the e-WOM channel familiarity and customer loyalty in Sri Lanka's banking sector.

The conceptual framework below is a comprehensive model that can capture all the essential characteristics of the e-WOM channel and their relationship with customer loyalty in Sri Lanka’s banking sector.



(Source: Author Developed 2024)

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of the study is to examine *the effect of electronic word of mouth channel characteristics upon customer loyalty in the banking sector of Sri Lanka* where the study has been designed with the epistemological standpoint of positivism and with deductive approach. The mono method was chosen as the research method where the statistical data analytical methods and tools were used to analyze data in order to test the set hypotheses.

The study was conducted as a case study selecting the National Savings Bank (NSB) Head Office customers registered for online banking. NSB being a leading and trustworthy banker in Sri Lanka, it was used to generalize the findings for the whole banking sector in accordance to the “The Institutional Isomorphism” which is the process of homogenization in organizations, where a unit (organization) in a given population is forced to resemble other units that face the same environmental conditions (Hambrick et al., 2004).

Therefore, the study population consists of approximately 7,500 customers registered for online banking at the Head Office branch of NSB. The online questionnaire was distributed using a simple random sampling method (under probability sampling techniques), which provides an equal chance for each customer to be selected for the

sample data collected (Noor & Golzar, 2022). The sample size was determined as 383 based on the Krejcie & Morgan (1970) model. The IBM SPSS (29 version) software was used to complete the statistical analysis. Descriptive statistics were used to describe the data, including the mean, median, mode and standard deviation. Spearman rank correlation was calculated to ascertain the strength of the relationship between each independent variable and the decision to choose. Finally, the chi-square test of independence was used to test the hypothesis and confirm whether to reject the null hypothesis.

A structured electronic survey questionnaire, based on existing scholarly articles and knowledge, was developed to collect primary data from bank customers. The questionnaire, consisting of five main sections (Sections 2-6), focuses on the constructs and employs a 5-point Likert scale for measurement. The validity of the questionnaire was checked with two experts from the bank before it was disseminated to customers through an electronic link, which was emailed to those who had registered for online banking services. This structured questionnaire was distributed using the bank's customer database, with prior approval obtained from the bank management. Furthermore, for the confirmation of the findings, the sample validity will be ensured at a 95% confidence level with a 5% error margin. This rigorous approach is necessary to ensure the generalizability of the findings.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Reliability Testing

Table 2: Reliability Statistic for the e-WOM Channel Characteristics

Reliability Statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.920	6

(Source: SPSS Output)

According to Table 4.1., the Cronbach's alpha for the independent variable "channel characteristics of e-WOM" with six (06) items is 0.920. Therefore, the index is deemed to be good and exceptionally reliable, thus suitable for further analysis.

Chanel Characteristics

Table 3: Descriptive Statistical Analysis

Descriptive Statistical Analysis						
Channel of e-WOM	N		Mean	Median	Mode	Std. Deviation
	Valid	Missing				

Reach (C1)	383	0	3.72	4.00	4	.952
Trustworthiness (C2)	383	0	3.73	4.00	4	.889
Interactivity (C3)	383	0	3.88	4.00	4	.904
Accessibility (C4)	383	0	3.80	4.00	4	.930
Relevance (C5)	383	0	3.82	4.00	4	.881
Familiarity (C6)	383	0	3.73	4.00	4	.945

(Source: SPSS Output)

Reach (C1)

The statistical portrayal of the data, characterized by a mean value of 3.72 and a mode of 4.00, implies that the majority of respondents concurred with the notion that the extent of the reach of E-WOM channels can affect customer loyalty in Sri Lanka's banking sector. Moreover, the standard deviation of 0.952 denotes that the data points are dispersed in close proximity to the mean.

Trustworthiness (C2)

The table exhibits the collected responses pertaining to the second attribute associated with the channel of e-WOM. The mean value of 3.73 and mode statistic of 4.00 provide further evidence of the prevailing agreement among the majority. The standard deviation value of 0.889 enables us to infer that the data points do not exhibit significant dispersion from the mean.

Interactivity (C3)

The descriptive statistics, with a mean value of 3.76 and a mode of 4.00, indicate that the majority of participants agreed with the notion that interactive e-WOM channels, such as social media and online forums, can affect customer loyalty in Sri Lanka's banking sector. Furthermore, the standard deviation of 0.890 indicates that the data points are closely dispersed around the mean.

Accessibility (C4)

The mean value of 3.80 and mode statistic of 4.00 provide further evidence of the prevailing agreement among the majority. The standard deviation value of 0.930 enables us to infer that the data points do not exhibit significant dispersion from the mean.

Relevance (C5)

The descriptive statistics, with a mean value of 3.82 and a mode of 4.00, indicate that the majority of participants agreed with the notion that e-WOM channels catering to customers' specific interests and needs in the banking sector can affect customer loyalty

in Sri Lanka. Furthermore, the standard deviation of 0.881 indicates that the data points are closely dispersed around the mean.

Familiarity (C6)

The statistical portrayal of the data, characterized by a mean value of 3.73 and a mode of 4.00, implies that the majority of respondents concurred with the notion that integrating e-WOM strategies into customers' platforms can affect customer loyalty within Sri Lanka's banking sector. Moreover, the standard deviation of 0.945 denotes that the data points are dispersed in close proximity to the mean.

Correlations

Relationship between the Channel of e-WOM and Customer Loyalty

Table 4: Relationship between the Channel of e-WOM and Customer Loyalty

Correlations			
		Channel of e-WOM	Customer Loyalty
Channel of e-WOM	Pearson Correlation	1	.750**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	383	383
Customer Loyalty	Pearson Correlation	.750**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	383	383
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).			

(Source: SPSS Output)

The tabular representation provided above (Table 4) demonstrates that the value of the correlation coefficient is 0.750 and it possesses statistical significance with a positive direction. Given that the correlation coefficient exceeds 0.6, it signifies a strong correlation between the two variables under examination. Thus, it can be confidently affirmed, from a statistical standpoint, that there exists a robust positive correlation between the channel of e-WOM and customer loyalty.

Chi-square Testing Summary – Channel of e-WOM

Table 5: Chi-square Testing Summary – Channel of e-WOM

Chi-Square Tests			
	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2- sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	2481.170 ^a	400	.000
Likelihood Ratio	1040.445	400	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	214.807	1	.000
N of Valid Cases	383		
a. 432 cells (98.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .02.			

(Source: SPSS Output)

The table mentioned above, which is labeled as Table 5, demonstrates that there is a total of 383 valid cases and no instances of missing cases were included in the Chi-square test. The outcomes of this test indicate a statistically significant correlation between the variables under investigation. This correlation is supported by the Pearson Chi-square value of 2481.170, which was computed with 400 degrees of freedom and yields an extremely small p-value of approximately 0.000 (significant at a level of less than 0.01). As a result, it can be inferred that there is a highly significant association between the channel of e-WOM and customer loyalty.

Furthermore, the results of the likelihood ratio and linear-by-linear association also provide evidence for a significant linear relationship between the variables. The p-values obtained from these analyses are similarly exceedingly small, around 0.000 (significant at a level of less than 0.01). Consequently, we can conclude that the Chi-square test strongly suggests that customer loyalty is dependent on its likelihood and that there is a significant connection between the channel of e-WOM and customer loyalty.

According to a body of scholarly literature, when examining the broader landscape of social media platforms, online forums, and consumer review sites, all of which boast a sizable user base, it becomes evident that the dissemination of e-WOM messages assumes a highly effective role in reaching a wider audience and thereby augmenting its potential impact on consumer behavior (Hafez, 2021). It is important to underscore that channels that have managed to establish a reputation for credibility and reliability in terms of providing accurate and trustworthy information tend to enjoy a greater degree of trust from customers. Accordingly, e-WOM messages disseminated through these

esteemed channels carry more weight and are more likely to shape the attitudes and behaviors of consumers (Nasution et al., 2023; Cheung & Thadani, 2012).

The interactive nature of communication not only fosters engagement but also affords an invaluable opportunity for receiving direct feedback, thereby significantly enhancing the impact of e-WOM on fostering customer loyalty (Balakrishnan et al., 2014). It is worth noting that platforms characterized by user-friendly interfaces, intuitive navigation, and compatibility with a plethora of devices encourage active participation, thereby amplifying the effects of e-WOM on customer loyalty (Lam & Shankar, 2014). By integrating e-WOM strategies into platforms that customers frequently utilize, such as social media or online banking portals, companies can leverage the preexisting familiarity and comfort of their target audience, thus optimizing the effectiveness of e-WOM in molding and shaping customer loyalty (Chu et al., 2019).

Hence, drawing from both statistical and empirical evidence, one can deduce that the wider the scope of the e-WOM medium, the greater the potential influence it can exert on customers. This is particularly evident in the context of social media platforms, online forums, and customer review sites, which boast substantial user bases and possess the ability to effectively disseminate e-WOM messages to a larger audience. Furthermore, it is imperative to recognize the significant role played by the perceived trustworthiness of the e-WOM channel in shaping customer loyalty. Channels that have established themselves as credible and reliable sources of information are more likely to gain the trust of customers, thereby amplifying the impact of the e-WOM messages shared through them.

Finally, it is important to acknowledge that customers are more inclined to engage with e-WOM channels that they are already familiar with and regularly use. By integrating e-WOM strategies into platforms that customers are already accustomed to, such as social media or online banking portals, one can leverage this existing familiarity and enhance the effectiveness of e-WOM in shaping customer loyalty.

CONCLUSIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations

With the findings of the study, it was determined that there exists a strong positive correlation and a significant association between the channel of e-WOM and customer loyalty. Consequently, it was identified that the channel of the e-WOM plays a significant role in influencing the relationship between e-WOM and customer loyalty in the banking sector of Sri Lanka. It is worth noting that a majority of the respondents in the study either agreed or strongly agreed to the statements suggesting that reach, trustworthiness, interactivity, accessibility, relevance, and familiarity (all of which are considered as the six proxies under the channel of e-WOM) have a profound impact on the relationship between e-WOM and customer loyalty. Based on these findings, several recommendations were put forth.

Banks in Sri Lanka have the opportunity to harness the potential of e-WOM channels in order to augment customer loyalty. This can be achieved by implementing a comprehensive e-WOM strategy that encompasses specific channels designed for customer feedback and reviews. Such dedicated platforms facilitate open and honest communication, thereby increasing the effectiveness of e-WOM messages in influencing customer loyalty. Furthermore, the moderation practices employed in these e-WOM channels play a crucial role in enhancing the quality and credibility of the information shared. By effectively moderating the content, misleading or false information can be prevented from spreading, thus making e-WOM messages more reliable and impactful in terms of customer loyalty.

In addition to moderation, the community of users within these e-WOM channels also plays a significant role in amplifying the impact of e-WOM messages. Active and engaged communities foster a vibrant environment that encourages diverse perspectives and discussions. This, in turn, increases the visibility of e-WOM messages and further influences customer loyalty.

Moreover, the alignment of these e-WOM channels with the bank's branding and messaging is of utmost importance. By ensuring consistency across e-WOM channels and other marketing efforts, banks can establish a cohesive brand experience that reinforces the bank's image. This alignment enhances the impact of e-WOM messages and contributes to strengthening customer loyalty.

To leverage the power of e-WOM channels and enhance customer loyalty, banks in Sri Lanka should establish a clear e-WOM strategy that encompasses defined goals, target audience, and preferred channels. This focused approach ensures that efforts are directed towards achieving the desired outcomes. Furthermore, actively engaging with customers on e-WOM channels is essential. By encouraging customer interactions, responding to feedback, and participating in discussions, banks can foster engagement and build trust. These actions contribute to the overall effectiveness of e-WOM messages in influencing customer loyalty.

Monitoring and analyzing e-WOM trends is another key aspect. Regularly tracking e-WOM conversations allows banks to identify key trends and address recurring issues. By addressing these concerns, banks can improve customer satisfaction and loyalty. Additionally, banks can utilize e-WOM feedback for product and service development. Gathering insights from e-WOM feedback enables banks to make informed decisions regarding product innovations, service enhancements, and improvements in customer service. This proactive approach ensures that banks are meeting the evolving needs and expectations of their customers.

Collaborating with e-WOM influencers is yet another strategy that banks can employ to amplify positive e-WOM messages and reach a wider audience. By partnering with influential individuals or organizations in the banking sector, banks can leverage their influence to further enhance the impact of e-WOM messages and increase customer loyalty.

Limitations of the Study

The limitations of a study may arise from various factors such as the methodology used for data collection, the criteria used for measuring variables, the techniques employed for data analysis, and the selection of the study sample. An important consideration is that the sample under study may not accurately represent the entire population. In the case of the banking sector in Sri Lanka, there are 30 licensed banks, including 24 LCBs and 06 LSBs, all of which are regulated by the Central Bank of Sri Lanka under the provisions of the Banking Act No. 30 of 1982. For the purposes of this study, the National Savings Bank (NSB), one of the LSBs in Sri Lanka, was selected as a case study. Consequently, the sample consisted of customers registered for online banking at the head office branch of NSB. It should be noted, however, that this selected sample may not fully represent the total population under study. Additionally, it is possible that there are traditional customers who are not familiar with technological advancements. As the survey was conducted using an electronic questionnaire, there is a possibility that customers without technological literacy were automatically excluded from the sample.

In order to quantify qualitative actions and reactions, a questionnaire was utilized, employing a Likert scale. This scale required customers to rate their responses to each question on a 5-point Likert scale. The questions presented practical scenarios, and the desired responses were the reactions of the customers to these scenarios, which, in certain cases, could be challenging to quantify. These attempts at quantification may lead to biased responses due to various reasons, such as misunderstandings of the questions, low literacy levels, mental instability during the response process, or interruptions to responses due to busy schedules.

A major limitation of the study was the inability to conduct in-person interviews with the customers to collect data. Face-to-face interviews are generally regarded as a more efficient method for gathering accurate data and information. However, circumstances prevented the researcher from conducting interviews for data collection. The option of virtual meetings was also not feasible due to the busy schedules of the customers and the large sample size ($n=383$) under study. If the researcher had the opportunity to meet with the customers in person, it would have been possible to ask follow-up questions, seek clarifications, and observe facial expressions, all of which would have provided valuable insights for the study.

Furthermore, it is important to consider the physical and mental state of the respondents when they are responding to the questionnaire. If the respondents are not in an optimal physical or mental state during the response process, their answers may not accurately reflect their true opinions. Therefore, the results obtained must be carefully scrutinized in light of the data collected from the respondents.

Contributions to the Knowledge

The primary aim of the study was to offer valuable insights into the banking sector in Sri Lanka, enabling organizations to develop effective strategies for leveraging e-WOM

in order to enhance customer loyalty. This objective was achieved by examining the relationship between the channel characteristics of e-WOM and customer loyalty. One of the authors, currently employed at the managerial level of the Marketing Division of NSB with over a decade of experience in the marketing field, possesses extensive knowledge of current marketing trends and recognizes the significance of e-WOM in establishing and maintaining relationships with both existing and potential customers.

In the contemporary consumer landscape, comprehending the decision-making processes of buyers holds great importance (Hasan, et al., 2020). Within this context, one of the most intriguing aspects of consumer behavior is the role played by word-of-mouth (WOM) communication in shaping attitudes and behaviors. With the rapid growth of online communication, brand choices, and personal influences, WOM is increasingly occurring within computer-mediated environments (Yang, 2017). Consequently, e-WOM marketing has become a significant feature on the internet, providing consumers with numerous channels through which they can share their experiences and exchange information.

During the literature survey, the author discovered several articles that confirm the increasing use of online tools (e.g., social media, blogs, etc.) by customers to express their opinions about the products and services they consume, as well as to conduct research on the companies that provide these offerings. Furthermore, e-WOM provides companies with an advantage over traditional WOM by allowing them to gain insight into the motivating factors behind consumers posting their opinions online, as well as to assess the impact of those comments on others.

However, the use of technology by consumers to share opinions about products or services (e-WOM) can pose a challenge for companies, as it introduces an element that they do not have full control over. Numerous scholars have reported that e-WOM has an impact on the profitability and performance of companies. Tang et al. (2016) found that higher firm profitability was associated with higher star ratings, more expressed positive sentiments, and increased e-WOM.

In today's service industry, particularly in the banking sector, there is significant global competition, necessitating the adoption of innovative and effective methods to promote services. Given the importance of Sri Lankan commercial banks and the challenges they currently face from large competitors, understanding the influence of e-WOM on consumer decision-making has garnered considerable attention from marketing scholars worldwide. Indeed, the Sri Lankan banking sector is currently experiencing a notable trend of customer retention, as customers switch their bank accounts from one institution to another due to the high level of uncertainty in the financial sector.

Hence, the discoveries of this investigation will furnish significant insights for the industry to capitalize on their e-WOM marketing approaches in a manner that will sway consumer decisions. The authors will furnish an avenue for future researchers to delve into additional factors and examine the true influence of e-WOM on customer loyalty. Furthermore, the authors will reap further benefits from the findings, as they will be able to practically implement the discoveries and recommendations into their own

formulation of digital marketing strategies. Ultimately, the research experience of the author, encompassing data collection, evaluation, presentation with critical analysis, and decision-making, will pave the way for future research endeavors in the banking industry, benefitting all stakeholders in Sri Lanka.

Suggestions for Future Research

The principle aim of this investigation was to explore the correlation between the role of the channel characteristics of e-WOM and customer loyalty in the banking sector of Sri Lanka. In order to accomplish this objective, the researcher employed six independent proxy variables that were identified through an extensive review of the literature as factors that influence the relationship between e-WOM and customer loyalty. However, it is important to note that there may exist additional factors/proxies that were not tested by the author yet have an impact on this relationship. Consequently, future research endeavors could concentrate on a diverse range of factors that exert influence on the relationship between these two variables. Furthermore, the research model could be enhanced by examining the mediating or moderating effects of variables such as perceived ease of use, perceived usefulness, and intention to use, which have been examined by numerous scholars using the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM).

Additionally, it is worth mentioning that the research was conducted primarily using deductive methods and quantitative approaches, which represents a limitation of this study. Consequently, further investigations on the same topic will be necessary, utilizing inductive approaches and qualitative methods. Conducting in-depth interviews with a focus group could provide a deeper understanding of participants' attitudes, thoughts, and beliefs regarding purchase intentions and customer behavior. This would allow for a more comprehensive presentation of the true factors that influence the relationship between the channel characteristics of e-WOM and customer loyalty. Shifting the focus from hypothesis testing to theory building would yield greater insights for organizations. Therefore, for future research, an inductive approach with a longitudinal time-horizon is recommended.

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GREEN SUPPLY CHAIN PRACTICES AS DETERMINANTS OF ACHIEVING GREEN PERFORMANCE IN SRI LANKAN SMES (WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO KURUNEGALA DISTRICT)

S.L Jayasinghe.^{1*} and Manjula Maduwanthi²

¹Guildhall School of Business and Law, London Metropolitan University, United Kingdom

²School of Business, ESOF Metro Campus, Sri Lanka.

*shamini0316@gmail.com**

ABSTRACT

This study investigates Green Supply Chain Management (GSCM) practices in Sri Lankan SMEs, focusing on the Kurunegala District. GSCM has gained global attention for its potential to mitigate environmental impacts and improve business outcomes. However, adoption in Sri Lanka remains under researched, highlighting a gap in understanding its influence on organizational performance. The research aims to investigate relationships between green supplier selection, green production, green purchasing, reverse logistics, green design, green distribution, and overall green performance in SMEs. The study highlights the critical role of SMEs in global economies, constituting over 95% of businesses worldwide and employing 60% of the private sector workforce. Challenges like capital scarcity and technological limitations hinder SME growth in Sri Lanka. Prospects, including digital initiatives, aim to bolster their resilience and contribution to national development. The research adopted a positivist approach, utilizing deductive reasoning and quantitative methods. Data was collected through a structured questionnaire distributed in both English and Sinhala, examining hypotheses derived from existing theories. Key recommendations included promoting green production practices, emphasizing green design, and integrating environmental factors into decision-making processes. Legislative impacts on reverse logistics were highlighted as significant. Despite limitations, the study lays a foundation for future research on green supply chain practices among SMEs in Sri Lanka, recommending expanding variables, considering industry-specific characteristics, increasing sample size, extending data collection periods, and incorporating both qualitative and quantitative approaches for comprehensive insights into firm performance.

Keywords: GSCM, Kurunegala District, Green Performance, SMEs Incorporating Both Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches for Comprehensive Insights Int

INTRODUCTION

Green Supply Chain Management (GSCM) is a burgeoning trend in modern business, focusing on reducing environmental impact within supply chain operations. This approach encompasses practices such as green supplier selection, purchasing, production, reverse logistics, design, and distribution, aiming to minimize waste and pollution while prioritizing economic benefits. However, there remains a gap in understanding the adoption and impact of GSCM practices, particularly among Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in Sri Lanka.

This research aims to bridge this gap by investigating the influence of GSCM practices on SMEs in the Kurunegala District of Sri Lanka. The study utilizes empirical data gathered through surveys and interviews with SMEs to evaluate the adoption and effectiveness of these practices. The findings will offer insights into the feasibility and advantages of integrating sustainable practices into SME operations, providing recommendations for policymakers and business owners to enhance sustainability and competitiveness in the local market. Through a comprehensive analysis of GSCM practices and their implications for SME performance, this research seeks to contribute to the existing body of knowledge on sustainable business practices. By illuminating the challenges and opportunities associated with GSCM adoption in the Sri Lankan context, the study aims to offer valuable insights for policymakers, practitioners, and academics striving to promote environmentally sustainable business practices among SMEs.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview of the Industry

Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) are crucial to global economies, contributing significantly to GDP, employment, innovation, and social inclusion. In the EU, they represent 99.8% of businesses, employ 76 million people, and account for 67.4% of the workforce. In the US, SMEs generate 75% of net new jobs, fostering economic growth and resilience. They also drive innovation and entrepreneurship, responding quickly to market demands and enhancing productivity. In developing countries, SMEs play a vital role in poverty reduction and inclusive growth, particularly in rural areas. Governments can support SMEs through targeted policies and initiatives aimed at driving sustainable development and improving living standards for marginalized communities.

Definitions of SMEs in Sri Lanka

The classification of Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) in Sri Lanka varies across different government bodies and institutions, resulting in diverse criteria for identification. These definitions typically depend on factors such as the number of employees, capital investment, turnover, and the sector of operation (formal or informal). Various terms are used interchangeably to refer to this sector, including

micro-enterprises, smallscale industries, and cottage industries (Central Bank of Sri Lanka, 1998).

Financial institutions in Sri Lanka, under World Bank-financed schemes, define SMEs based on investment in fixed assets excluding land and buildings. The Sri Lanka Export Development Board (SLEDB) defines SMEs for export-oriented enterprises as those with an annual export turnover of less than Rs. 50 million (approximately US\$ 525,000) or a capital investment excluding lands and buildings of less than Rs. 8 million (Hewaliyanage, 2001).

In contrast to Sri Lanka, developed nations like Japan and the European Union have established clear and uniform definitions of SMEs, which serve as benchmarks for policy frameworks and regulatory measures (Central Bank of Sri Lanka, 1998).

History and current Development of the SMEs in Sri Lanka

Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) in Sri Lanka have long been pivotal to the country's economic fabric. Similar to other developing nations, they constitute a substantial portion of industrial and commercial establishments, contributing to economic growth through the supply of goods, services, and employment opportunities. Historical data highlights their prevalence, with a significant number of SMEs identified through various industrial surveys over the decades. Despite their numerical strength, their contribution to GDP and overall economic output has been modest compared to larger enterprises. Moving forward, enhancing SMEs' capabilities through improved access to finance, innovation, and market opportunities is crucial for unlocking their full potential in Sri Lanka's economic development landscape.

Challenges associated with the development of SMEs in Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka's Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) face significant challenges hindering their development and sustainability. Key issues include limited access to capital due to high interest rates and insufficient collateral, a shortage of managerial skills affecting strategic decisionmaking, and the use of outdated technologies leading to low productivity and competitiveness. Moreover, the sector lacks robust institutional support and tailored policies, exacerbating vulnerabilities during economic shocks such as the COVID-19 pandemic and previous disruptions. Addressing these challenges through enhanced financial access, skill development, and supportive policies is crucial for fostering SME resilience and enabling them to contribute more effectively to Sri Lanka's economic growth.

Future outlook for the SMEs in Sri Lanka

Looking ahead, Sri Lanka's SME sector faces a transformative path shaped by several strategic initiatives. In response to the challenges posed by COVID-19, the Central Bank introduced financial and tax relief measures in 2020 to support SMEs across various

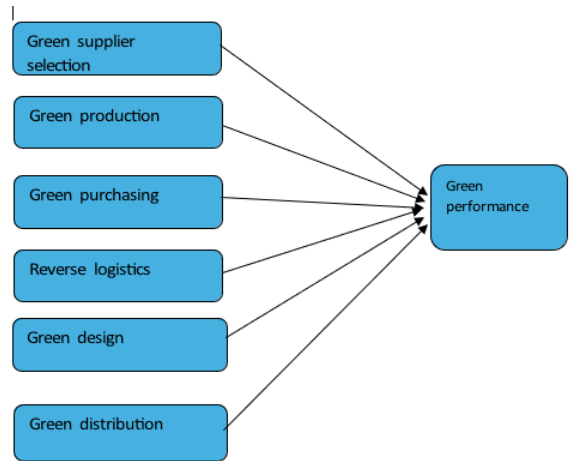
sectors. Additionally, the establishment of "Empower" by the Colombo Stock Exchange aims to enhance SME financing options and credibility, attracting new investors.

The country's ongoing infrastructure development presents opportunities for SMEs to engage in diverse industrial activities. Recognizing the pivotal role of SMEs in the digital economy, Sri Lanka launched the "Digicon 2030" program to develop a national digital economy policy. This initiative, supported by the World Bank, includes "DigiGo," which aims to bridge digital education gaps among SMEs across all districts by 2030, enabling them to harness digital platforms effectively for growth.

METHODOLOGY

The research on factors influencing customer perceptions towards Green Supply Chain Practices (GSCP) in Sri Lankan SMEs adopted a positivist approach, utilizing deductive reasoning and quantitative methods. A simple random sampling technique was employed to select 384 SMEs from Kurunegala District, based on a population of approximately 41,150 registered SMEs. Data were primarily collected through a structured questionnaire distributed in both English and Sinhala, using hard copies and Google Forms. The questionnaire encompassed demographic details, business characteristics, and opinions on Green Production, Supplier Selection, Purchasing, Distribution, Design, Reverse Logistics, and Firm's Green Performance using Likert scale questions. This methodological framework ensured comprehensive data collection to examine hypotheses derived from existing theories, aiming to elucidate the relationship between GSCP adoption and Green Performance in Sri Lankan SMEs. The collected data were descriptively analyzed using SPSS software.

Conceptual frameworks



(Source: Author Developed 2024)

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

This is a crucial analytical tool for researchers, presenting independent and dependent variables in studies, and are a key component of research design.

DATA ANALYSIS

Correlation analysis determines the change in one variable due to another's change, inferring similar impacts. It highlights connections between multiple measures or metrics, providing fresh perspectives and highlighting interdependencies across various business departments.

Table 1: Correlations Analysis

Correlations								
		Green production	Green supplier selection	Green purchasing	Green distribution	Green design	Reverse logistics	Firm's performance
Green production	Pearson Correlation	1	.586**	.524**	.377**	.512*	.452**	.328**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0	0	0	0	0	0
	N	384	384	384	384	384	384	384
Green supplier selection	Pearson Correlation	.586**	1	.330**	.340**	.484*	.513**	.402**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0		0	0	0	0	0
	N	384	384	384	384	384	384	384
Green purchasing	Pearson Correlation	.524**	.330**	1	.433**	.525*	.488**	.508**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0	0		0	0	0	0
	N	384	384	384	384	384	384	384
Green distribution	Pearson Correlation	.377**	.340**	.433**	1	.263*	.333**	.330**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0	0	0		0	0	0

	N	384	384	384	384	384	384	384
Green design	Pearson Correlation	.512**	.484**	.525**	.263**	1	.561**	.560**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0	0	0	0		0	0
	N	384	384	384	384	384	384	384
Reverse logistic	Pearson Correlation	.452**	.513**	.488**	.333**	.561*	1	.550**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0	0	0	0	0		0
	N	384	384	384	384	384	384	384
Firm's performance	Pearson Correlation	.328**	.402**	.508**	.330**	.560*	.550**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0	0	0	0	0	0	
	N	384	384	384	384	384	384	384
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).								

(Source: Author Developed 2024)

The analysis shows a strong positive relationship between Green Supply Chain Practices and green performance in Sri Lankan SMEs, with a high multiple correlation coefficient and a regression model explaining 67% of data variability

Table 2: Model Summary

Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.847 ^a	.670	.840	.29055

a. Predictors: (Constant), Reverse logistic, Green distribution, Green production, Green purchasing, Green supplier selection, Green design

(Source: Author Developed 2024)

The study reveals that all independent variables are significant, except for green distribution, which has p-values greater than 0.05. Green purchasing, design, reverse logistics, and supplier selection significantly affect green supplier chain practices by approximately 14%, 7%, 22%, 10.1%, and 25.6%, respectively. The regression equation for predicting green supply chain practices as determinants of achieving green performance in Sri Lankan SMEs can be calculated using the available data.

$$y = 1 + (0.143) X_1 + (0.079) X_2 + (0.225) X_3 + (0.104) X_4 + (0.256) X_5 + (0.213) X_6$$

After accounting for the effects of the uncontrolled independent factors, an ANOVA is used to examine differences in the mean values of the dependent variable related to the impact of the controlled independent variables.

Table 3: ANOVA test

ANOVA ^a						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
	Regression	103.109	6	17.185	51.074	.000 ^b
	Residual	126.849	377	.336		
	Total	229.958	383			

(Source: Author Developed 2024)

The appropriate significance of 0.00 value in the ANOVA table implies that the model suitably fits this study. That means, the result from this study is statistically accurate.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study investigates the impact of Green Supply Chain Management practices on the green performance of small and medium enterprises in Kurunegala District, Sri Lanka. The majority of respondents were men aged 21-30, with 193 having a diploma or certificate-level education and 40% earning between Rs 50,001 and Rs 100,000. Most

were engaged in manufacturing, with 30% producing primary products from coconuts. The study found the data sample highly reliable and recommended various strategies to enhance green supplier selection and overall environmental performance. Key recommendations include promoting green production practices, emphasizing green design, and prioritizing quality, cost, delivery, and environmental considerations. Legislative factors, particularly in reverse logistics, significantly impact performance.

The researcher gained valuable experience conducting a quantitative research study, focusing on ethical and socially conscious recommendations for the future of companies or industries. The study encompassed data collection methods, SPSS software for data analysis, business decisionmaking, report writing under supervisory guidelines, and project proposal presentations. This experience facilitated skill development, exploration of strengths and interests, and assessment of motivation for future studies or careers.

However, the study encountered limitations such as unfinished surveys, a constrained timeframe for data collection, and the challenge of locating prior studies. The study's sample was confined to specific sectors of the Sri Lankan economy, limiting the generalizability of findings to diverse business groups. Additionally, the complexity of learning and interpreting SPSS software for data analysis was noted. Nonetheless, the study lays a foundation for further research on Green Supply Chain Practices and achieving green performance among Sri Lankan SMEs.

The study suggests expanding by incorporating new variables and considering source-based characteristics and multiplicity. Future research should explore the effects of Green Supply Chain Management practices across different industries. Improvements are recommended for enhancing sample size and data collection duration. Incorporating both qualitative and quantitative approaches in future research would deepen understanding of how these variables influence firm performance.

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MARKETING AND VALUE CREATION

THE ROLE OF NEGATIVE EMOTIONS IN COMPULSIVE BUYING BEHAVIOUR: A REVIEW ANALYSIS

Jeevana Kalla^{1*} and Dr. Chetna Rajput²

¹PhD Scholar, National Institute of Technology Raipur, India.

²National Institute of Technology Raipur, India.

*jeevana412@gmail.com**

ABSTRACT

Compulsive buying behavior, also known as shopping addiction, is a complex phenomenon characterized by an overwhelming urge to shop and make purchases, often resulting in negative consequences such as financial problems, relationship strain, and emotional distress. Despite its prevalence, research on compulsive buying behavior has predominantly focused on depression and anxiety, overlooking other negative emotions that may contribute to this behavior. This systematic review aims to fill this gap by examining the relationship between negative emotions and compulsive buying behavior. Our findings suggest that depression and anxiety play a significant role in driving compulsive buying, but other emotions such as anger, helplessness, and loneliness also play a crucial role in understanding this complex behavior. Moreover, cultural differences and socioeconomic factors can significantly impact the prevalence and manifestation of compulsive buying behavior, with certain demographics being more susceptible to the allure of impulsive purchases. This review highlights the importance of considering a broader range of emotions and cultural perspectives in understanding compulsive buying behavior and its implications on mental health and well-being. Future research should incorporate a mixed-methods approach, utilize multiple databases, employ longitudinal research designs, and consider the role of individual differences in personality traits such as impulsivity and sensation-seeking to provide a more comprehensive understanding of this phenomenon.

Keywords: Compulsive Buying Behaviour, Negative Emotions, Shopping Disorder

INTRODUCTION

Compulsive buying behavior, also known as compulsive shopping or shopping addiction, is a behavioral disorder marked by an uncontrollable urge to shop, often leading to significant negative consequences such as financial difficulties, strained relationships, and emotional distress. Individuals affected by this disorder frequently indulge in excessive shopping, purchasing items they neither need nor can afford. This behavior typically provides only short-term relief or satisfaction, ultimately harming their overall well-being. Several factors contribute to compulsive buying behavior. Genetic predisposition can play a role, as can psychological factors such as low self-esteem or feelings of inadequacy. Additionally, environmental influences—such as aggressive advertising and societal pressures to consume—can exacerbate the problem. People with this condition often use shopping as a coping mechanism to manage stress, anxiety, or other negative emotions, finding temporary solace in material possessions. Unfortunately, this temporary relief often perpetuates a cycle of compulsive buying. The consequences of compulsive buying can be severe. Financially, individuals may accumulate significant debt, face bankruptcy, or struggle with hoarding. Interpersonally, strained relationships with family and friends can result from excessive spending and secrecy. Emotionally, individuals may experience guilt, shame, and regret over their shopping habits. Addressing compulsive buying behavior is crucial for mitigating these adverse effects and improving overall life quality.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The relationship between a lack of control, loss of possessions, and stress is well-documented, revealing how these factors can significantly impact emotional well-being. When individuals feel a loss of control or experience the loss of their possessions, it often leads to heightened stress levels, manifesting as anxiety, worry, and overall unease (Zadka et al., 2016). This stress, in turn, can directly influence the development of depressive states. Stressful events or situations are known triggers for depression, a severe mental health condition that profoundly affects one's quality of life and overall well-being. Depression often manifests through impulsive and compulsive buying behavior, where individuals may turn to shopping as a means to cope with their emotional distress (Sneath et al., 2009; Kyrios et al., 2013). Research has shown that anxiety, stress, and depression significantly influence purchasing behaviors, and the emotions associated with these purchases. Individuals experiencing high levels of anxiety are more prone to impulsive buying and compulsive spending as a temporary escape from their anxious feelings (Gallagher et al., 2017). Conversely, stress and depression are predictive of post-purchase guilt, indicating that while shopping might provide short-term relief, it is often followed by remorse or guilt over the purchases made (Williams et al., 2012). This cycle of temporary relief followed by guilt can perpetuate negative emotions, reinforcing impulsive buying behavior and creating a vicious cycle that exacerbates stress and depressive states. Understanding these dynamics is crucial for addressing the underlying issues and breaking the cycle of emotional spending.

METHODOLOGY

This study used a research methodology that involved a systematic approach to identify and examine articles relevant to the research topic. The methodology includes a structured review of paper contents for analysis and synthesis, ensuring uniformity, transparency, accountability, and integrity in the review process. Scopus, a reputable academic database, was used due to its high-quality indexed journals and conference papers. Key search terms included “compulsive buying,” “compulsive buying behavior,” “negative emotions,” “compulsive buying behavior and negative emotions,” and “compulsive buying disorder.” The initial search yielded a large number of articles, which were then refined by eliminating unrelated titles, removing duplicates, and assessing abstracts. This process ensured that only relevant and high-quality articles were included in the review.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

When examining compulsive buying behavior, research predominantly focuses on depression and anxiety as the primary negative emotions influencing this condition. However, there is a significant gap in exploring how other negative emotions—such as anger, helplessness, fright, and loneliness—affect compulsive buying. These emotions also play crucial roles in understanding the underlying factors that drive compulsive buying behavior and its complexities.

Anger, for example, can lead individuals to engage in impulsive purchases as a means of coping with their emotional state. When someone is angry, shopping can serve as a form of emotional release or distraction from their distress, potentially leading to impulsive and excessive spending. Helplessness, on the other hand, may drive individuals to seek temporary relief through shopping, as they attempt to regain a sense of control or comfort in their lives. Similarly, feelings of loneliness or fright can result in excessive shopping, with individuals seeking to fill emotional voids or escape from unsettling emotions by acquiring material possessions. These alternative emotional triggers are often overlooked in existing research, which tends to concentrate on depression and anxiety. By neglecting these other negative emotions, current research may miss important aspects of compulsive buying behavior. Understanding how anger, helplessness, fright, and loneliness contribute to compulsive buying can provide a more comprehensive view of this complex behavior. For instance, research that includes these additional emotions may reveal new patterns or insights into how various emotional states influence shopping habits, leading to more effective interventions and support strategies.

Moreover, the majority of research on compulsive buying behavior has been conducted in first-world countries, creating an imbalance in understanding this phenomenon on a global scale. This focus on developed nations often overlooks second and third-world countries, where different socio-economic, cultural, and environmental factors may significantly impact the prevalence and nature of compulsive buying behavior. Cultural attitudes toward consumerism and materialism, for example, can vary widely between

regions and influence how compulsive buying is experienced and manifested. Research from first-world countries may not be directly applicable to individuals in different cultural or economic contexts, limiting the generalizability of findings. Incorporating a broader range of negative emotions into research and considering cultural differences are essential steps toward a more nuanced understanding of compulsive buying behavior. Exploring how diverse emotional triggers and cultural factors affect compulsive buying can enrich our understanding and improve the effectiveness of interventions. Tailoring research and treatments to address these varied influences can lead to more effective strategies for managing compulsive buying behavior and its impact on mental health and well-being.

Expanding the scope of research to include these additional negative emotions and cultural perspectives will provide a more comprehensive view of compulsive buying behavior. This approach will not only enhance our understanding of the psychological and emotional factors involved but also contribute to developing more inclusive and effective solutions for individuals struggling with compulsive buying across different global contexts.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Compulsive buying behavior, often referred to as shopping addiction, represents a complex disorder characterized by an uncontrollable urge to shop, which leads to severe financial and emotional repercussions. While research has identified key factors contributing to this behavior—such as genetic predisposition, low self-esteem, and societal pressures—the predominant focus has been on depression and anxiety. These emotional states are indeed crucial in understanding compulsive buying, as individuals frequently resort to shopping as a coping mechanism for their distress. However, a significant gap exists in exploring how other negative emotions, such as anger, helplessness, and loneliness, impact compulsive buying behavior. These emotions also play a pivotal role in shaping shopping habits yet remain underexplored in current literature.

Moreover, the majority of studies have been conducted in first-world countries, leaving a gap in understanding how compulsive buying manifests in second and third-world countries. Cultural attitudes towards consumerism and materialism can substantially influence compulsive buying behaviors, and incorporating these cultural differences is essential for a more comprehensive understanding. The current focus on first-world contexts limits the applicability of findings to diverse global populations and may not fully capture the nuanced ways in which compulsive buying behavior is influenced by socio-economic and cultural factors. One notable limitation of this study is its reliance on a single scholarly database for examining compulsive buying behavior in relation to negative emotions. This restriction may introduce bias or result in incomplete data, thereby limiting the generalizability of the findings. To address this limitation, future research should incorporate additional databases, such as Web of Science, IEEE, and PubMed, to ensure a more diverse and comprehensive analysis of the topic. Utilizing

multiple sources can help overcome potential biases and provide a richer, more nuanced understanding of compulsive buying behavior.

Additionally, adopting a mixed methods approach in future studies could offer deeper insights into the complexities of compulsive buying. By combining quantitative data, such as statistical analyses of purchasing patterns, with qualitative data from individual experiences and perceptions, researchers can gain a more holistic view of how negative emotions contribute to compulsive buying. This approach would allow for a more detailed exploration of both the numerical and experiential aspects of the behavior. Longitudinal research designs would also be valuable in tracking changes in compulsive buying behavior over time. Such studies could provide insights into how emotional states fluctuate and influence the development and persistence of compulsive buying habits. By following individuals over extended periods, researchers can better understand the dynamic relationship between negative emotions and shopping behavior. In summary, while this study has contributed valuable insights into compulsive buying behavior, there is significant potential for further research. Expanding the scope to include a wider range of negative emotions, considering cultural differences, and employing diverse research methodologies will enhance our understanding of compulsive buying. These efforts will not only enrich the academic discourse but also inform more effective interventions and treatments for individuals struggling with compulsive buying tendencies across different contexts.

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IDENTIFYING THE FACTORS AFFECTING TERTIARY-LEVEL STUDENTS' PERCEPTION WHEN CHOOSING A NON-STATE DEGREE AWARDING BODY IN SRI LANKA

Wageesha Amarajith^{1*}, Jeewanthi Marasinghe² and Anushka Jayasekara³

^{1,2,3} School of Business, ESOF Metro Campus, Kurunegala, Sri Lanka

*shamenwageesha2003@gmail.com **

ABSTRACT

This study's main purpose is to identify the factors affecting tertiary-level students' perception when choosing a non-state degree awarding body in Sri Lanka, since there is a high demand for private higher education due to the state institutions' inability to cater for the ongoing demand. This study's research philosophy is positivism, focusing on quantitative data and a deductive approach. A questionnaire was circulated among the total population of 250,000 and collected 384 responses from the sample using simple random sampling using the Likert scale of data measurement. The collected data was analyzed through SPSS software, and findings showed that recognition, employability, flexible payment plans, program content and structure, and recommendations all affect the students' perception when choosing a non-state awarding body. Non-state awarding bodies must offer UGC-recognized qualifications, which are accepted worldwide. Further, they should focus more on foreign degrees that are offered by highly ranked universities around the world. Moreover, private institutions must focus on employability, flexible payment plans, program content and structure, and recommendations to attract the target market, such that the students who are planning to migrate will start their higher education in Sri Lanka, which mitigates the foreign reserve drain. Though this study was limited to Sri Lanka, it offers a theoretical framework for strategic decision-making related to the private higher education industry to get equipped to handle the ongoing demand effectively and capitalize on that opportunity.

Keywords: Employability, Non-State Degree Awarding Body, Private Higher Education, Recognition, Recommendations

INTRODUCTION

Annually, about 250,000 students sit for the Advanced Level Examination (AL) (Sri Lanka Business, n.d.). Out of that, only around 20% enroll in universities due to Z-score-based selection systems and aptitude tests. Nearly 8% of Sri Lankan students move abroad each year for higher education, while about 20,000 students look for opportunities through the private sector education system that is available locally (Team & Lanka, 2022). Accordingly, there is a huge demand for higher education in Sri Lanka annually. However, the State Institutions (SIs) are not able to fulfil that demand, which has become a huge problem in Sri Lankan educational industry. According to the data estimated by the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (2020), Students are more interested in migrating abroad for their higher education than studying at a non-state degree awarding body (NSDAB) though they offer foreign degree programs. Due to this cause, the loss of foreign exchange is forecasted to be \$50 million annually (FT, 2017). Because of the economic crisis there is only a small foreign exchange reserve in the CBSL. For example, in October 2022 foreign reserve of Sri Lanka was USD 170 million (Trading Economics, 2023). Accordingly, the main purpose of the research is to identify the factors affecting tertiary-level students' perception when choosing a non-state degree awarding body in Sri Lanka. Research aim is to find ways to cater to ongoing demand and mitigate foreign reserve drain. Further the main objective of the research is to identify whether there is an effect of independent variables on Students' Perceptions when choosing a NSDAB.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In contrast to many other nations where the private sector helped to expand higher education, Sri Lanka's tertiary education industry is still dominated by SIs. State capacity, on the other hand, is severely constrained and unable to satisfy market needs (Team & Lanka, 2022). This is happening because SIs are not able to expand their capacities due to existing budgetary restrictions; Sri Lanka allocates only around 1.2% of its GDP to education (FT, 2017). Selection of the NSDAB is highly based on the students' perception (Maresova, et al., 2020). To meet the growing demand for higher education, several NSDABs have popped up throughout the nation and students' perceptions are positive since many students are studying at NSDABs (Team & Lanka, 2022).

Recognition

The ranking of its partner university and recognition are strongly correlated and affect each other. University rankings are used by parents and students when selecting a NSDAB out of many alternatives available in the Sri Lankan private higher educational industry (Altbach, 2007). To add to that point, recognition is the most significant factor influencing student university choice (Qasim, et al., 2021).

Employability

Most students are drawn to college education because of the career chances it may give (Khan, et al., 2016). According to Paulsen (1990), students' college choices are frequently influenced by the availability of professional options. Employment opportunities and university internships were identified as institutional factors that influence students' perceptions (Anam, 2019). Students are interested in outcomes, they are influenced by what graduates are doing, what graduate schools they attend and the contributions that they make to society. Similarly, students are frequently drawn to post-secondary education because of the potential professional options to build their careers (Sevier, 1998). The findings of Italian research confirm the presence of many criteria that influence students' perception; career possibilities in the region are a major criterion (Azzone & Soncin, 2020).

Flexible Payment Plans

According to data based on primary family survey information that was gathered by the World Bank's country divisions and governmental statistics agencies, Sri Lanka is a lower-middle-income country (World Bank Open Data, n.d.). Unfortunately, the Average monthly education-related expenditure is increasing annually which is unbearable for Sri Lankan households (Team and Lanka, 2022). Such that, the Payment Plans must be flexible for Sri Lankan students to attract more students to the programs offered by the NSDABs (Holdsworth & Nind, 2006).

Program Content and Structure

Program content and structure are highly affecting the student's perception when selecting a NSDAB (Khan, et al., 2016). Academic programs were identified as an institutional factor that influences students' perception regarding university education (Anam, 2019). It was also shown that program concerns such as program structure, degree program flexibility, major change flexibility, and degree content are the most essential variables for students when choosing higher education institutions. Flexible program structure and manageable content lead to balancing work life and education (Fuente, et al., 2021). Course content is an element which directly influences the prestige of an institute since it portrays Educational Quality.

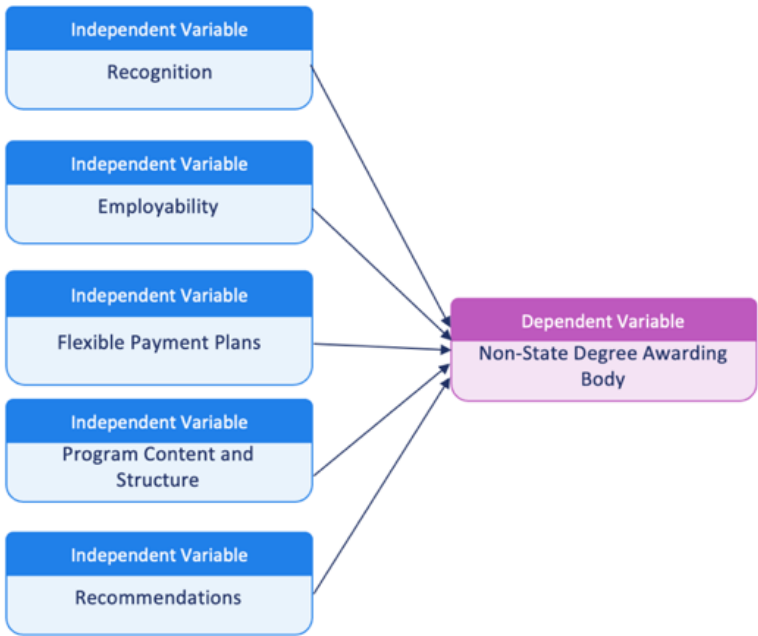
Recommendations

It is viewed that today's college students differ greatly from those who attended school in the past, and they tend to get the feedback of previous students when choosing a NSDAB for their higher studies because it is a reliable source, which is extracted from the past experiences (Haron, et al., 2017). Students may be persuaded by powerful individuals to change their minds about which NSDABs to attend. Students who perform well academically frequently receive additional encouragement from their parents, instructors, and counsellors to continue their education since they have a better chance

of winning scholarships. While advice from classmates and friends may substantially influence young kids, parents' counsel is the most powerful among these groups and directly influences students' NSDAB choice decisions (Chapman, 1981). This precise literature proves the direct and positive relationship between the independent variables and students' perception when choosing a NSDAB.

Research Hypothesis

The effects of Recognition, Employability, Program and Content Structure, Flexible Payment Plans, and Recommendations are tested by the hypotheses. The influence of each aspect on the perceptions of the participants is investigated; alternative hypotheses (H_a) propose an effect while null hypotheses (H_o) imply no effect. The purpose of the study is to determine which factors have a major impact on students' decision-making while choosing an NSDAB. Accordingly, there is a significant effect of independent variables on the dependent variable, which results in acceptance of all alternative hypotheses (H_a).



(Source: Author Developed 2024)

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

METHODOLOGY

The research philosophy utilized in this study is positivism, which thinks that reality is constant and can be viewed and described objectively, not interfering with the events

being researched. This quantitative study was conducted using a deductive approach to come to conclusions referring to the previous research. Questionnaires were used as the strategy to collect primary data using the Likert scale as the data measurement technique. Further, a cross-sectional time horizon is used to collect data from a sample of 384 representing the total population of 250,000 using simple random sampling. Collected data was analyzed through SPSS software using descriptive and correlations data analysis techniques to come to conclusions (Saunders et al., 2009).

Analysis, Findings and Discussion

Descriptive Statistics												
	N Statistic	Range Statistic	Minimum Statistic	Maximum Statistic	Mean Statistic	Std. Error	Std. Deviation Statistic	Variance Statistic	Skewness		Kurtosis	
									Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Std. Error
Recognition	384	4	1	5	3.92	.045	.878	.771	-.767	.125	.954	.248
Employability	384	4	1	5	3.98	.044	.855	.731	-.666	.125	.445	.248
Flexible_Payment_Plans	384	4	1	5	3.84	.047	.921	.848	-.557	.125	-.079	.248
Program_Content_and_S tructure	384	4	1	5	4.01	.044	.863	.744	-1.105	.125	1.858	.248
Recommendations	384	4	1	5	3.91	.046	.894	.798	-.880	.125	1.031	.248
Student_Perspective	384	4	1	5	3.84	.047	.922	.849	-.726	.125	.520	.248
Valid N (listwise)	384											

(Source: Author Developed 2024)

Figure 2: Descriptive Statistics

The mean value represents the average feedback given by the selected sample. As per Figure 1, the feedback was distributed from 1 - 5 on the Likert scale and the mean values are greater than 3.5 in every variable. This means the majority of the respondents have responded positively to the questions in the questionnaire; again, proven by the range which is 4 in every variable. The mean value of Program Content and Structure is 4.01, which shows that the variable is directly and positively affecting the Students' Perceptions. Employability, Recognition, Recommendations, and Flexible Payment Plans have mean values of 3.98, 3.92, 3.91, and 3.84 respectively. That depicts these independent variables affect Students' Perceptions at a moderate level. It can be concluded that every independent variable here affects the dependent variable (Students' perception).

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.956	6

(Source: Author Developed 2024)

Figure 3: Reliability Test

Cronbach's alpha is the most often used internal consistency metric. It is most typically used in Likert scale surveys/questionnaires to measure reliability. Whether the respondents complete the questionnaire once or twice, respondents should provide the same score. Cronbach's Alpha levels less than 0.60 are considered poor, values in the 0.70 range are considered good, and values more than 0.80 are considered exceptional. According to Figure 2, Cronbach's alpha is 0.956; which means the data set is 95% statistically correct which is a decent amount. This indicates a high level of reliability in the data set. So, this can be used for further analysis as well.

		Correlations					
		Recognition	Employability	Flexible_Pay ment_Plans	Program_Con tent_and_Str ucture	Recommend ations	Student_Pers pective
Recognition	Pearson Correlation	1	.812**	.790**	.715**	.852**	.742**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	384	384	384	384	384	384
Employability	Pearson Correlation	.812**	1	.845**	.687**	.893**	.877**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	384	384	384	384	384	384
Flexible_Payment_Plans	Pearson Correlation	.790**	.845**	1	.706**	.826**	.788**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		.000	.000	.000
	N	384	384	384	384	384	384
Program_Content_and_S tructure	Pearson Correlation	.715**	.687**	.706**	1	.632**	.683**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000		.000	.000
	N	384	384	384	384	384	384
Recommendations	Pearson Correlation	.852**	.893**	.826**	.632**	1	.886**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000		.000
	N	384	384	384	384	384	384
Student_Perspective	Pearson Correlation	.742**	.877**	.788**	.683**	.886**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	
	N	384	384	384	384	384	384

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

(Source: Author Developed 2024)

Figure 4: Correlation Analysis

Pearson Correlation bivariate assesses the direction and strength of linear correlations between two continuous variables. Here all variables show a significant 0.000 value (p-value). Since the value is below the significant alpha value (0.001) all the independent variables highly affect the dependent variable. A correlation close to -1 or 1 indicates a definite relationship between the variables. Here, all the variables show a Pearson correlation of 1, which depicts the strong relationship between the dependent and independent variables. Accordingly, a strong and substantial correlations (p-value < 0.001) have been found in this study between the dependent variable (students' perception) and the independent variables. Strong associations are indicated by Pearson correlations, and data reliability is confirmed by a high Cronbach's alpha greater mean values indicate that participants gave positive answers, which justifies the secondary data findings.

CONCLUSION AND CONTRIBUTION TO KNOWLEDGE

According to the precise literature that the researcher has given it is proved that there are mainly five factors (Recognition, Employability, Flexible Payment Plans, Program Content and Structure, and Recommendations) affecting tertiary-level students' perception when choosing a non-state degree awarding body in Sri Lanka. Accordingly, NSDABs must offer UGC-recognized qualifications which are accepted worldwide. Further, they should focus more on foreign degrees which are recognized by the UGC and offered by highly ranked universities around the world, since those qualifications are demanded by the target market (Team & Lanka, 2022). Similarly, NSDAB may prioritize academic achievement, faculty quality, and research output. Invest in modern facilities, become active in the community, and build global relationships. Create a solid online presence, employ sensible marketing, and actively contact alumni. Maintain a dynamic leadership team while continuously analyzing and changing programs and services to ensure a diverse and successful student body (Benito & Scott-Milligan, 2011). The study makes a theoretical and knowledge-based contribution to our understanding of the elements that tertiary-level students in Sri Lanka take into consideration while choosing non-state degree awarding bodies (NSDABs). It highlights the significance of recommendation, employability, payment plan flexibility, program content, and recognition while emphasising how these factors affect institutional tactics and student decision-making. The sample's geographic concentration on Sri Lanka, potential biases in self-reported data, and the dynamic nature of educational preferences are some of the limitations that should be addressed in future research (Team & Lanka, 2022). Incorporating longitudinal data and extending the study to various situations may yield a more thorough knowledge of these elements throughout time.

Recommendations

NSDABs must offer qualifications which are accepted by employers and must organize job fairs to give talented students the chance to be employed quickly. Further, NSDABs could offer internship opportunities to students since they are expecting those opportunities from the university. Given the above, to increase employability; NSDAB may prioritize professional readiness through curriculum revisions and co-op programs. Build strong industry links and offer career assistance and opportunities for skill development. Encourage entrepreneurship and innovation while regularly modifying courses to stay up with industry demands (Cranmer, 2006). NSDAB may consider introducing choices such as deferred payment systems and sliding-scale pricing structures. To meet a wide range of financial situations, offer online payment gateways and accept a wide range of payment methods. Provide financial guidance and support programs such as scholarships and grants to alleviate financial stress (Budur, et al., 2018). Also, program content must be up-to-date, and an assignment-based structure should be promoted since students demand that. Further practical sessions

and presentations must be conducted to give students corporate exposure and to develop their soft skills. In addition, NSDAB could launch a complete curriculum review process that includes academics, students, and industry experts to enhance a university's program content and organization (Lotkowski, et al., 2004). NSDABs may create a systematic mentorship program that connects experienced students with newcomers. Encourage mentors to share their expertise, advice, and positive experiences to foster a feeling of community and support. Provide tools and places for mentor-mentee interaction, such as workshops, online forums, or peer-led seminars, to promote the exchange of important knowledge and support that can help incoming students adjust (Tomlinson, 2017). To sum up, NSDABs should host job fairs, offer internships, and offer recognised qualifications to improve employability. They can update curricula, create industry connections, and encourage entrepreneurship by placing a high priority on professional preparedness. A mentorship program and flexible payment choices will also help students both socially and financially, fostering a friendly learning environment (Cranmer, 2006).

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THE INFLUENCE OF ATTENTION TO SOCIAL COMPARISON INFORMATION ON IMPULSE BUYING TENDENCY AMONG YOUNG ADULTS

Leandra M. Joseph^{1*}

¹School of Business, ESOF Metro Campus, Colombo, Sri Lanka

*leandra.joseph@esoft.lk**

ABSTRACT

In recent years, research on impulse buying tendencies has increased, with a shift of focus from external to individual factors which are psychologically driven. This study was aimed at investigating the association between attention to social comparison information (ATSCI) and impulse buying tendency (IBT) among young adults. This research specifically analysed the influence of ATSCI on cognitive and affective IBT. This research was carried out in the form of a cross-sectional study that incorporates a web-based survey method. Data was collected from young adults residing in Sri Lanka. Sri Lankan males and females between the ages of 18 and 35 participated in the study. A total of 140 participants were gathered using the convenience sampling method. Data was collected using Attention to Social Comparison Information (ATSCI) Scale and Impulse Buying Tendency (IBT) Scale, both of which were rated on a Likert scale. The findings confirmed that attention to social comparison information had an influence on the cognitive and affective factors of impulse buying tendency. Further, it was revealed that high ATSCI individuals scored higher for affective than cognitive IBT. This study was limited to 140 participants, and it could be difficult to generalise findings. A mono-method of data collection was used due to time restraints. This research is among the first to analyse the association between the two individual differentiating factors ATSCI and IBT. The study depicts high reliability of results. The two variables of ATSCI and IBT can be analysed in relation to a brand or product category. These variables could also be tested in individualistic cultures.

Keywords: Affective Impulse Buying Tendency, Attention to Social Comparison Information, Cognitive Impulse Buying Tendency, Impulse Buying Tendency, Social Comparison

INTRODUCTION

With the rise in online connectivity and materialistic ideals, the comparison of product choices has become increasingly popular among young adults (Liu et al., 2019). Moreover, Suls et al. (2002) justified that customers use cues to compare product choices. In addition, products act as symbols of social identity (Luna-Arocas, 2008). Subsequently, Rucker and Galinsky (2008, pp. 257–67) presented that products fulfil self-enhancement motive by deviating consumers from the fear of social interaction. Researchers distinguished that high attention to social comparison information (ATSCI) individuals are inclined to perceive that others evaluate their product choices, foster concerns in purchasing branded items and conform to social preferences (Tandoc et al., 2015). Moreover, Deval et al. (2013) argued that high ATSCI individuals are motivated by social approval (pp. 1185–1201). Additionally, Lucas and Koff (2017) concluded that negative emotions surface as a result of frequent social comparisons. Further, when consumers feel deprived, they engage in compensatory shopping behaviour, associated with the fear of missing out (Ridgway et al. 2008). With over 50% of retail income generated by impulse purchases and 70% of grocery items bought impulsively, such behaviours reduce negative emotions and boost self-esteem (Verplanken et al., 2005, pp. 430-431). In addition, Attiq and Azam (2015) reveal that ATSCI has a significant link with compulsive buying. Moreover, a recent study by Liu et al. (2019) concluded that upward social comparison on social media influences impulse buying. In spite of years of research, impulse buying remains an unsolved mystery to consumer behaviour theorists.

Problem statement: With the increasing significance of impulse buys, marketers struggle to comprehend what drives irrational buying decisions. Despite researchers having investigated such behaviour, individual attributes such as ATSCI have not received adequate prominence.

Aim: To investigate the association between attention to social comparison information (ATSCI) and impulse buying tendency (IBT) among young adults in Sri Lanka.

Objectives:

To examine the influence of ATSCI on the cognitive factor of IBT (C-IBT).

To examine the influence of ATSCI on the affective factor of IBT (A-IBT).

To identify the difference in IBT factors of high vs. low ATSCI individuals.

To analyse the influence of ATSCI on IBT among young adults in Sri Lanka.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In order to measure the individual differences in social comparison, the present study takes into consideration a construct known as 'attention to social comparison information' (ATSCI). Importantly, ATSCI measures a person's level of sensitivity to cues of social comparison. In order to bridge the gap between actual and desired self-image, high ATSCI individuals choose brands which are socially appealing and expect acceptance from reference groups (Coley & Burgess, 2003). Additionally, it is acknowledged that brands assist consumers in developing, modifying and

communicating self-identities through symbolic connotations (Bhattacharjee et al. 2014). Moreover, individuals have a universal desire to validate favourable self-perceptions and prominent brands assist them in doing so (Tandoc et al., 2015). On the contrary, according to social-evaluative theory, individuals with high ATSCI are unsure about social acceptance and try to maintain a low profile, evading brands that may attract attention (Ratneshwar et al., 2014). Hence, Baumeister (2002) ascertained the consumer conformity factor ATSCI to be driven by the desire to receive social rewards. Thereby, purchasing becomes a platform of elevating social status (Rucker & Galinsky, 2008).

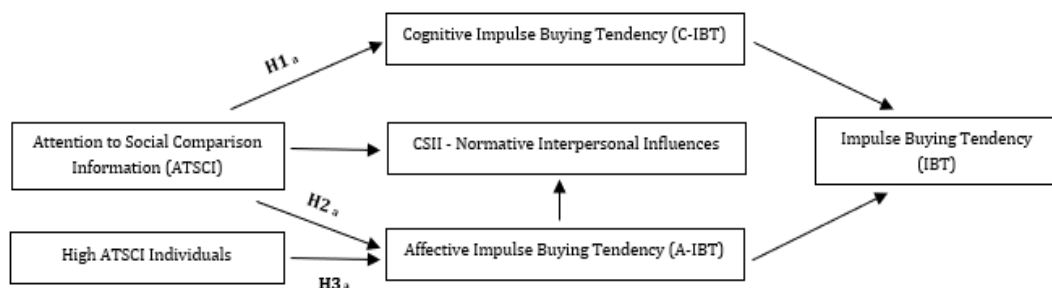
According to Verplanken (2005) impulse buying is described as irrational, unexpected purchase behaviour, driven by the intensity of emotions including pleasure and enthusiasm. Importantly, both cognitive and affective factors are required for a purchase to qualify as an impulse buy (Verplanken & Herabadi, 2001). On the other hand, Baek and Park (2018) highlight the post purchase impact on financial sources such as credit cards and the uncertainty driven negative emotions like guilt and dissonance. Nevertheless, more than 75% of Americans rely on impulse buys, while China reached its peak in e-impulse buying (Chen & Zhang, 2015). On the contrary, individualistic cultures display higher impulse buying, than collectivist cultures (Kacen & Lee, 2002). In recent times, researchers focussed on stimuli provoking impulse buying such as personality (Bratko et al., 2013), hedonism (Hausman, 2000), product varieties (Attiq & Azam, 2015) and self-control (Youn & Faber, 2000). Customers discover ways of self-expression, in addition to utility gain when making impulse buys (Gültekin & Ozer, 2012). Moreover, men impulsively purchase instruments and leisure accessories with higher cognitive impulse buying tendency, while women purchase cosmetics to boost social-image, giving prominence to affective impulse buying tendency (Coley & Burgess, 2003). Nevertheless, when exposed to the identical stimuli, two people of the same age, gender, ethnicity, social status and resources, may respond differently (Dittmar, 2005). This hedonic response implies that individual differences could be the basis of variations in impulse buying (Verplanken & Herabadi, 2001). Since both ATSCI and affective IBT are highly correlated with the normative factor of susceptibility to interpersonal influence scale (Bearden & Rose, 1990), this could be used to derive the strong association between ATSCI and affective IBT. Thus, the current study sought to investigate the following hypotheses:

H1_a: ATSCI has a significant influence on cognitive IBT.

H2_a: ATSCI has a significant influence on affective IBT.

H3_a: High ATSCI individuals have significantly greater affective IBT.

Hence, figure 1 below illustrates the conceptual framework for the research:



(Source: Author Developed 2024)

Figure 20: Conceptual framework of the research

METHODOLOGY

The present research was carried out under the cross-sectional method. Furthermore, it is a quantitative study conducted using closed-ended, multiple choice questionnaires. It is non-experimental research which analysed numerical data of the selected group of participants through web-based surveys. In addition, the confounding variables were gender, age, marital status, employment status and income level. The target population for the research consisted of males and females between the ages of 18 and 35 residing in Sri Lanka. The G power minimum sample size required for the study was 93, nevertheless the selected sample was 140 participants. Approximately 61 males and 74 females participated in the study, while 5 preferred not to mention their gender. The mode age of participants was 24-29. Participants were selected via the convenience sampling technique due to the limited time frame; whereby demographical data was collected through a demographic questionnaire. Also, the anonymity of participants was ensured throughout the study to reduce the experimenter effect. The inferential data was gathered using the Attention to Social Comparison Information Scale and Impulse Buying Tendency Scale. The ATSCI scale was founded by Lennox and Wolfe (1984) and consists of a total of 13 items. It is inclusive of a 6-point Likert scale. The Cronbach α for internal consistency reliability ranges from $\alpha = 0.86$ to $\alpha = 0.89$. Secondly, the IBT Scale proposed by Verplanken and Herabadi (2001) consists of the cognitive and affective factors of impulse buying tendency. This scale includes 20 items, with 10 items per factor and is rated on a 5-point Likert scale. High internal consistency reliability was found with Cronbach $\alpha = 0.84$ for C-IBT and Cronbach $\alpha = 0.87$ for A-IBT. Since the assumptions of normality were not met, nonparametric tests were conducted. For hypotheses 1 and 2, Spearman correlation and regression analysis were performed on SPSS. For hypothesis 3, a Mann-Whitney U Test was conducted to analyse the mean difference in C-IBT and A-IBT between ATSCI groups. Further, a MANOVA test was carried out to analyse the effect of confounding variables on the study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 28: Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.796	3

(Source: Author Developed 2024)

Initially, a reliability test was conducted to determine if the data obtained was valid (see *table 1*). The Cronbach’s Alpha value obtained was $\alpha = 0.796$ which depicted very good reliability and high consistency of results.

The sample consisted of 140 respondents from a cross section of the target population of young adults. The mean and standard deviation parameters of participants are computed in *table 2* below. 52.86% of the sample displayed high ATSCI with 47.14% having low ATSCI. 76 out of 140 respondents scored higher for A-IBT than C-IBT, while 64 scored higher for C-IBT.

Table 29: Descriptive Statistics

	N	Range	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance
ATSCI	140	59	6	65	38.31	12.715	161.682
C-IBT	140	40	10	50	29.71	10.143	102.882
A-IBT	140	37	13	50	31.48	9.257	85.690

(Source: Author Developed 2024)

H1: A Spearman’s correlation was conducted to identify the relationship between ATSCI and C-IBT. As per the Spearman’s correlation depicted in *table 3* below, it is observed that ATSCI and C-IBT indicate a moderately positive correlation, $r_s = 0.461$, $p < 0.001$, two-tailed, $N = 140$.

Table 30: Spearman’s Correlations between ATSCI and C-IBT

			C-IBT
Spearman's rho	ATSCI	Correlation Coefficient	.461**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
		N	140

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

(Source: Author Developed 2024)

Moreover, as per the above test (*table 3*), it can be observed that the p value for the Spearman's correlation is less than 0.05, at a 95% confidence interval. Hence, the evidence is inadequate to justify that ATSCI and C-IBT are not correlated at a 5% significance level.

Table 31: Model Summary of ATSCI and C-IBT

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.542 ^a	.294	.289	8.554
a. Predictors: (Constant), ATSCI				

(Source: Author Developed 2024)

Furthermore, a regression analysis was conducted to analyse the influence of ATSCI on C-IBT. Following this, it was found that the R Square value obtained was 0.294 (see *table 4*) which reveals that 29.4% of C-IBT is influenced by ATSCI among young adults in Sri Lanka.

H2: A Spearman's correlation was conducted to identify the relationship between ATSCI and A-IBT. As per the Spearman's correlation depicted in *table 5* below, it is observed that ATSCI and A-IBT indicate a strong positive correlation, $r_s = 0.602$, $p < 0.001$, two-tailed, $N = 140$.

Table 32: Spearman's Correlations between ATSCI and A-IBT

			A-IBT
Spearman's rho	ATSCI	Correlation Coefficient	.602**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
		N	140

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

(Source: Author Developed 2024)

Moreover, as per the above test, it can be observed that the p value for the Spearman's correlation is less than 0.05, at a 95% confidence interval. Hence, the evidence is inadequate to justify that ATSCI and A-IBT are not correlated at a 5% significance level.

Table 33: Model Summary of ATSCI and A-IBT

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.650 ^a	.423	.419	7.058
a. Predictors: (Constant), ATSCI				

(Source: Author Developed 2024)

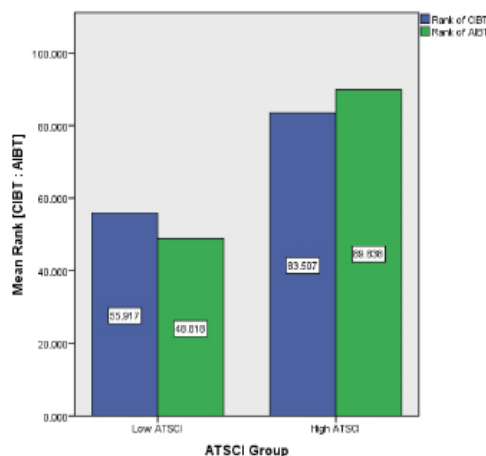
Furthermore, a regression analysis was conducted to analyse the influence of ATSCI on A-IBT. Following this, it was found that the R Square value obtained was 0.423 (see *table 6*) which reveals that 42.3% of A-IBT is influenced by ATSCI among young adults in Sri Lanka.

H3: Participants were categorised as high/low ATSCI based on a mean split. In consideration of the Mann-Whitney U Test (*table 7*), it can be observed that high ATSCI individuals scored more for both C-IBT and A-IBT. Importantly, high ATSCI individuals scored higher for A-IBT.

Table 34: Mann-Whitney U Test Ranks between ATSCI Groups

	ATSCI Group	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
C-IBT	Low ATSCI	66	55.92	3690.50
	High ATSCI	74	83.51	6179.50
A-IBT	Low ATSCI	66	48.82	3222.00
	High ATSCI	74	89.84	6648.00

(Source: Author Developed 2024)



(Source: Author Developed 2024)

Figure 2: Bar Graph for Mean Ranks of IBT for low vs. high ATSCI groups

As per the Mann-Whitney Test, the effect size on C-IBT $r = 0.34$, demonstrating a medium sized effect. In contrast, the effect size on A-IBT $r = 0.51$, which shows a large sized effect at a 95% confidence interval. According to *figure 2*, A-IBT displays a larger effect size than C-IBT, confirming that high ATSCI individuals scored higher for A-IBT than C-IBT. As per the MANOVA test, the significance of demographic factors <0.05 , indicating no significant evidence that confounding factors affected the study.

CONCLUSIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS

According to the findings of the study, it was confirmed that ATSCI has a positive influence on the cognitive and affective factors of IBT. However, the affective factor was influenced more as a result of ATSCI. Hence, high ATSCI groups showed greater affective IBT. Thus, the findings imply that the individual differentiating factor ATSCI is highly correlated with the emotional aspect, while moderately influencing the cognitive decisions. Nevertheless, the disparity in results between the two IBT subscales suggest that Verplanken et al.'s (2001) model is more applicable to the affective factor. Moreover, the constructs ATSCI and IBT could be examined as a longitudinal study. Also, future research can compare the effect of ATSCI on IBT for online vs. offline shopping. Likewise, marketers may create content targeting social comparison. The findings can also be applied by consumers to assess themselves and plan countermeasures.

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THE INFLUENCE FACTORS OF SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING ON CONSUMER DECISION MAKING PROCESS

Himaransi T. De Zoysa^{1*}

¹School of Computing, ESOFT Metro Campus, Colombo, Sri Lanka

*himaransidezoya@gmail.com**

ABSTRACT

There has been an increase in social media usage in recent years where it has changed the ways firms do marketing or business drastically, for instance firms use the most used social media platforms such as Facebook and Instagram for their marketing activities. Likewise, implementing social media marketing and understanding consumers' decision-making process is becoming crucial for businesses these days because it will facilitate to achieve competitive advantage and firms can easily target their customers which will help them to increase their performance. However, identifying consumers' buying behavior has been challenging for firms. Alternatively, a review of academic literature demonstrates that social media marketing changes the way consumers make decision. Therefore, this dissertation examines the influence of social media marketing on consumer decision making process. Further, the literature highlights those online advertisements, sharing, conversation and online presence are social media marketing factors that will affect the consumer decision making process. Moreover, this study explains that when these factors influence customers' buying behavior then firms will be able to gain benefits in terms of achieving competitive advantage. Furthermore, this study will analyse these concepts in relation to Jetwing Blue hotel. The research method used to analyse where these factors influence customers decision making is quantitative method where questionnaires were distributed to 55 customers. The results demonstrated that online advertising, sharing, conversation and online presence have significant positive relationship with customers' decision making. Moreover, this research identified certain limitations and provided recommendations to gain more reliable conclusions.

Keywords: Social Media Marketing, Consumer Decision Making Process, Social Media and Decision-Making Process.

INTRODUCTION

Social media (SM) usage is growing further than in the past and it is crucial in changing the way people communicate, work and do businesses (Hassan, 2018). In the background of Sri Lanka, the hotel sector has achieved a remarkable growth and there is fierce competition (Daily Ft, 2018). Also, there is an increase in social media where there are over 6 million social media users in Sri Lanka (Statcounter, 2020). Therefore, an increase in social media usage will be an opportunity for firms to exploit as it will lead to effective advertising which enables firms to identify their target customers, their key trends and grow their business (Evans, 2010). This means it can be an opportunity for hotels to exploit as it will help them to develop their corporate by doing effective social media marketing. Conversely, hotels faced a loss in 2019 due to a smaller number of arrivals, for instance tourists' arrivals to Sri Lanka has reduced by 18% from 2018 to 2019 (Jetwing Lighthouse Annual Report, 2019). As a result, this will be an opportunity for hotels to attract local and foreign tourists with the use of social media marketing (SMM).

Research Aims and Objectives

The aim of this research is to understand the influence SMM has on consumers in terms of decision making to Jetwing Blue customers. Moreover, the research objectives for this research are given below.

To define the term social media marketing, consumer decision making process, theoretical models and the variables identified in the research.

To identify the factors that influence social media marketing on consumer decision making process by conducting literature review.

To conduct primary research by using questionnaires.

To provide recommendations to Jetwing Blue hotel on how to improve their business performance through SMM.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Evolution and Overview of Social Media Marketing

Since the 1960s there have been many traditional forms of advertising thus the era of traditional marketing was over when technology began to change in the 20th century (Darley, Blankson & Luethge, 2010). Likewise, Anderson (2010) denotes that as the millennial changed, millions of people access to the internet consequently, the increase in internet usage has supported by the evolution of traditional sites (Web 1.0) that has shifted to interactive based sites (Web 2.0). Therefore, Reily (2004) explains that the term web 2.0 represents the technological foundation of social media (SM) and through the last period this technical revolution has drastically modified traditional promoting approaches. Alternatively, social media marketing (SMM) has been first started from publishing and the first SM site is six degrees which has been launched in 1997 which emerged to the era of instant messaging (Johnson, 2019). SMM has been outlined in

distinctive ways by various authors where Kalpan and Haenlein (2010) explain that SM is the way people gather online to share knowledge and information. Likewise, SMM means a form of internet marketing or a marketing tool that helps to gain customer attraction through SM platforms such as Facebook or Instagram (Chaffey, Smith & Smith, 2003; Keegan & Rowley, 2017).

Importance Social Media Marketing

Implementing SMM will be an advantage over rivals, therefore it will facilitate firms to obtain and retain profitable customers (Musa, Azmi, Rahim, Shibghatullah & Othman, 2016). For instance, there is an increase in SM where there are over 6 million users in Sri Lanka and globally there are more than 4.48 billion active users where China, UK and India ranked as the top in terms of internet users (Stat Counter, 2019). Further, the most used SM platforms in Sri Lanka are Facebook (82.46%) and Instagram (7.82%) (Department of Statistics and Census, 2019). This suggests that since the firms encounter high competition (Daily Ft, 2018) increase in SM usage will lead them to gain an opportunity where they will be able to increase their brand reputation (Hassan, 2018). Even so, Lee (2013) argues that the content available in SM will change fast and information will be faked yet SMM helps consumers to easily access information and make dynamic decisions.

Overview of Decision-Making Process (DMP)

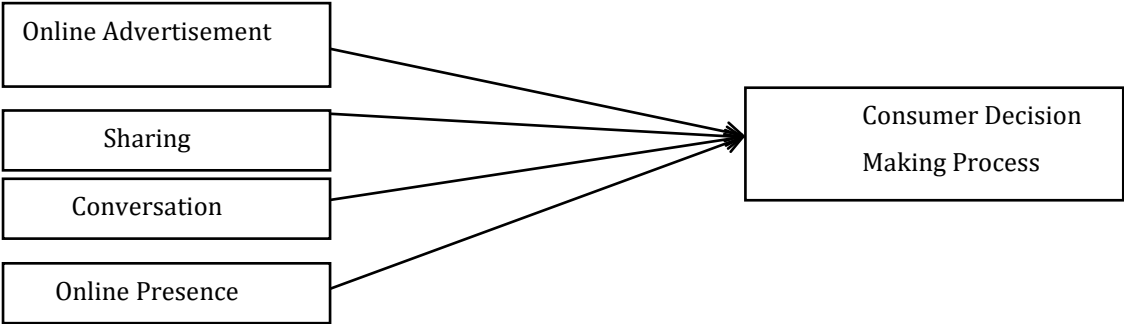
Businesses need to focus more on customers because they are really important to a business since without customer satisfaction they cannot increase their sales. Thus, Panwar, Anand, Ali and Singal (2019) denote that this is the reason why it is essential for firms to recognize the consumer's decision-making process (CDMP). Consequently, Hassan (2018) defines that consumer is a person who buys the product and decision-making process means where consumers make choices out of various alternatives. In contrast, Hussain (2017) convinces DMP as a process where consumers search, identify the benefits of the product, and evaluate the product that satisfies their needs. Likewise, Keeney (2000) indicates that consumer behavior means where people engage in search and purchase of a product that satisfies their needs.

Influence of SMM on Consumer Decision Making Process

SM will be a valuable tool as it will provide information that is important when making the decision. Therefore, it can be seen that SMM will have a direct influence on consumer DMP and the next topic will demonstrate the influence of SMM on CDMP. Online advertisement is one factor that influences CDMP thus, online advertisement means marketing or promoting products through internet (Hassan, 2018). Online advertising can be considered as a key determinant of purchase decision of the customers because advertising on SM page has developed a new customer behavior (Diaz, 2016). Likewise, Darley and Blankson (2010) denote that online advertising will affect the brand attitudes and buying intention of the customers. For instance, online advertising will help customers to outline their need to buy a product or service; this means when a person sees an online advertisement on Facebook then it will inspire them to use the

product. Therefore, Varkaris and Neuhofer (2017) demonstrate that online advertising will have an effect on consumers' behavioral intention. Another factor that affects consumer DMP is sharing which means exchanging content through social media (Briandana & Dwityas, 2017). Sharing has significant effects on CDMP this means SMM involves sharing content on SM platforms, thus these platforms have allowed firms and customers to share information about products and opinions (Hassan, 2018). Hence, this will be useful before making a decision. For instance, hoteliers have SM platforms such as Facebook and Instagram. Thus, when firms share stories and videos which are SMM trends then this will serve as supplementary information to customers which will directly influence the consumer DMP (Diaz, 2016). Conversation is another factor that influences consumers' DMP, thus conversation can be known as online reviews and recommendations (Evans, 2010). Conversation has significant effects on consumer DMP. This means SMM generate conversations in terms of online reviews and recommendations thus this will contribute to the purchase decision journey of the consumers (Hudson & Thal, 2013). For instance, information search and evaluation are phases of DMP thus firms have SM platforms where customers will use conversations such as Facebook reviews to gain information and evaluate the products. As a result, this will be helpful when making hotel decisions because hotel products have an intangible nature (Brown & Lee, 2011). One dimension of SMM that have an effect on consumer DMP is presence which means the availability and accessibility of the users (Power & Wren, 2011). Further, from a SMM perspective it is significant for firms to have a presence on social media (Diaz, 2016). Hence, marketers will be able to communicate their brand globally and improve their consumer purchasing decisions (Hassan, 2018).

In conclusion it can be seen that key factors that will influence DMP are online advertisement, sharing, conversation and online presence, thus these factors will influence DMP. In fact, Lee and Brown (2007) affirm that many studies have considered conversation and online presence as important elements of SMM, thus these factors will be highlighted from a conceptual framework.



(Source: Author Developed 2024)

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

H1o: - There is no significant relationship between online advertisement and CDMP

H1a: - There is a significant relationship between online advertisement and DMP

H2o: - There is no significant relationship between sharing and DMP

H2a: - There is a significant relationship between sharing and DMP

H3o: - There is no significant relationship between conversation and DMP

H3a: - There is a significant relationship between conversation and DMP

H4o: - There is no significant relationship between online presence and DMP

H4a: - There is a significant relationship between online presence and DMP

METHODS

In order to provide an effective conclusion for the study, the research onion was used. For the purpose of this research the researcher adopts a deductive approach since the research is focusing on testing an existing theory and the research explains the relationship between two variables. Further, with the aim of gathering quantitative information, a deductive approach will be used. It is evident that much research have used deductive approach to conduct the research (Brown & Lee, 2007; Briandana & Dwityas, 2017; Prasath & Yogananthen, 2018). However, the drawbacks of using deductive approach are it will limit the scope of creativity and conclusions derived from this approach are universally applicable (Walliman, 2011). Yet, this research approach will generalise the research findings to a certain extent and will help to compare the difference of understanding people through empirical data (Mohomad, 2015). In conducting this research, a survey has been used as the research strategy because this research is associated with deductive approach and will be used to identify the relationship between variables by using quantitative data (Kumar, 2011).

In conducting the study, the researcher has used quantitative technique as the research method where questionnaires are used to collect the data. The questionnaire includes two sections (Antonius, 2012) such as demographics and information related to the variables of SMM and CDMP where it contains Likert scale questions such as strongly agree. Also, a pilot test will be conducted for 10 customers before the final distribution of the questionnaire to identify the accuracy and reliability.

Table 1: Reliability test results

Variable	Cronbach Alpha
Online Advertisement	0.788
Sharing	0.408
Conversation	0.546
Online presence	0.776
Decision Making Process	0.975

(Source: Author Developed 2024)

For the aim of the study probability sampling method will be used and the researcher uses simple random sampling which means selecting a sample of individuals from a population. It is evident that previous research that have done their research on this topic have used this method sampling which is suitable in distributing questionnaires (Brown & Lee, 2007; Briandana & Dwityas, 2017; Prasath & Yogananthan, 2018). The researcher collected primary data by developing and distributing questionnaires for a sample size of 55 customers and researcher collected secondary data through websites, Google books, reports and journal articles.

Ethical Considerations

Throughout the research process, the researcher has remained mindful of the four key areas of potential risk that are commonly associated with social science research. This includes avoiding harm to all involved in or potentially affected by the research, ensuring the anonymity of all participants/ respondents, gaining informed consent from all the participants and avoiding deception. Accordingly, every effort has been made, with close guidance from the academic research supervisor, to eliminate or as a minimum ameliorate, these potential risks throughout the processes of research design, data generation, data analysis and dissemination.

Analysis, Findings and Discussion

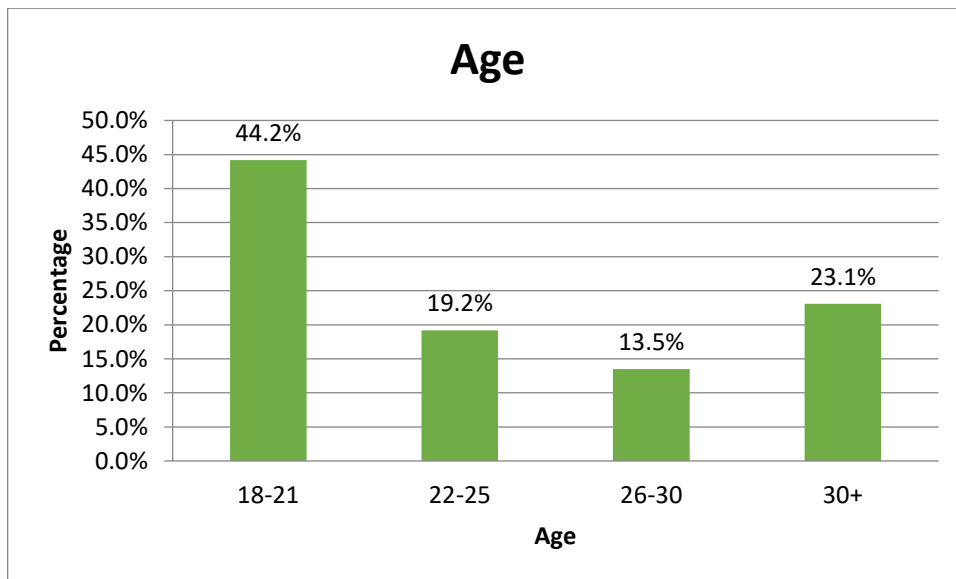
Table 2: Frequency of the Age of the respondents

Age	Frequency	Percent
18-21	23	44.2
22-25	10	19.2
26-30	7	13.5
30+	12	23.1
Total	52	100

(Source: Author Developed 2024)

Investigating factors that influence SMM on consumer DMP has become important and this research is clearly based on numerous studies. According to the research findings, four variables which include online advertisement, sharing, conversation and online presence affect consumer decision making process. Subsequently, the research findings demonstrate that the correlation value for online advertising is +0.783, sharing +0.363, conversation +0.884 and online presence +0.889. Therefore, by identifying the four factors it can be seen that two variables such as online presence and conversation have significant influence on consumer DMP. Hence, this has been helpful to provide useful information that answers a primary question of what the factors influences SMM on consumer DMP. According to the research findings, online presence is one independent variable of this study thus it has a correlation value of 0.889 and P value of 0.000. This indicates that online presence is a significant factor that influences CDMP and has a strong relationship between both variables. This is line with the previous research done

by Prasath and Yogananthan (2018) which states that consumers will look at the online presence before making a decision and having a strong online presence will lead firms to convince customers about their credibility which will affect their decision making. Likewise, the findings of this research aligned with previous research of Diaz (2016) and Zhao, Wang and Guo (2015) where the studies agreed that online presence has a significant relationship with consumer DMP. Further, based on the descriptive statistics it has a mean value of 4.21 which indicates that the respondents have agreed with the question.



(Source: Author Developed 2024)

Figure 2: Age of the respondents. Author Developed

On the other hand, conversation is another independent variable of this research, thus research findings highlight that it has a correlation value of +0.884 and P value of 0.000. This suggests that conversation is a significant factor that affects consumer DMP and has a strong positive relationship between two variables. This is consistent with previous study by Dissanayake & Malkanathie (2018) where they denote that customers will use conversations such as reviews and recommendations to gain information and evaluate the products before making a decision. Moreover, this finding is supported by research done on cosmetic industry where conversations such as online reviews have a Cronbach Alpha value of 0.925 and correlation value of 0.683. Hence, this indicates that conversation has a significant relationship with DMP. Also, based on descriptive statistics it has a mean value of 4.05 which specifies that respondents have agreed with the question. Another independent variable of this research is sharing thus the research findings show it has a correlation of +0.363 and P value of 0.008 which indicates that it has a positive relationship with DMP. As mentioned in the literature

review, SMM has led customers to share videos, images or stories through Instagram or Facebook and firms can share product or service information with customers through SM. Consequently, this affects consumers' DMP as it will help them to gain needed information when choosing a hotel. This is consistent with previous study by Lee (2013) which is conducted on hotel industry where 78% of the respondents use video and photo sharing as a source of information. Therefore, this will help hoteliers to recognise the content customers will be looking at and the SM pages they are frequent with (Athiyaman, 2002). As a result, they can engage more effectively with their customers. Similarly, the findings of this research aligned with previous research of Power and Wren (2014) and Prasath and Yogananthan (2018) where all agreed that sharing has a significant relationship with consumer DMP. In addition, the findings have been matched with the research Jayasuriya and Azam (2017), however they argued that if the information on SM are not updated and trustful then customers will keep away by using that information. On the other hand, based on descriptive statistics it has a mean value of 2.92 which indicates that respondents have agreed with that question, and it has a Cronbach value of 0.765.

Online advertisement is another factor that has a significant influence on consumer DMP and based on the research findings, it has a correlation value +0.783 and P value of 0.000. Hence, this indicates that online advertising has a strong positive relationship with DMP. This is in line with the previous research led by Darley and Blankson (2010) which states that online advertisement will affect the purchase intention where it will trigger customers to recognize a need. This means as mentioned in the literature review if a customer sees an online advertisement in Facebook about a hotel, then it will inspire them to pay a visit. Further, the findings of this research have been aligned with previous research of Hassan (2018) and Varkaris and Neuhofer (2017) who denote that online advertisement has a significant relationship with customers. On the other hand, based on descriptive statistics it has a mean value of 4.01 which indicates that respondents have agreed with the question. Therefore, it is important for hoteliers to focus on online advertisement as this will facilitate the marketers to plan their marketing strategies and will enable them to gain high sales.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

It is evident that the first two aims of this study have been successfully achieved through the literature review section. The researcher has clearly defined the terms SMM and consumer DMP through literature review. Further, the researcher has used two theoretical models which include honeycomb model for SMM and EKB model for consumer DMP in order to provide broad explanations for the above two concepts. On the other hand, it can be clearly identified in the literature review that SMM has a significant influence on CDMP. Thus, the researcher has defined four variables in the literature review where the author has identified the relationship and the influence these variables have on consumer decision making process. Likewise, one key significant finding was that conversation such as recommendations and reviews on social media had a significant positive effect on consumer decision making. Furthermore, findings from literature review demonstrate that when SMM influence

CDMP it will lead customers to gain benefits such as effective decisions regarding a hotel without any uncertainties and customers' time will be saved.

The third objective of this study is to conduct primary research by using questionnaires; hence the objective has been achieved by testing the chosen variables by conducting a questionnaire. The researcher has distributed 55 questionnaires to customers of Jetwing Blue hotel asking how SMM impacts consumer DMP thus gained responses from 52 respondents. Furthermore, the researcher has used SPSS software to statistically test and analyse the information gained, hence through the findings the researcher identified that online advertising, sharing, conversation and online presence are important factors that influence SMM on consumer DMP. Further, online advertising has a correlation of 0.783, sharing 0.363, conversation 0.884 and online presence 0.889. Finally, the last objective of this research is to provide recommendations to Jetwing Blue hotel on how to improve their performance through SMM and DMP. Hence, the researcher has achieved this objective by offering recommendations to each issue identified when conducting the research and how to improve the consumers' decision making. Subsequently, these provided recommendations help the Jetwing Blue hotel to increase their performance by increasing their sales and achieving competitive advantage.

Recommendations

SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time-limited) recommendations will be provided to improve the customers' decision-making process and Jetwing Blue hotel performance thus this would satisfy the final objective of the research. One issue identified when conducting the research is that many customers are not using SM to find data of a product or service due to lack of trust and integrity. According to Agag and Masry (2016), trust plays a significant role in decision making because customers will not book hotels through social media if the SM platforms and websites are not trustful. Hence, it is important for hoteliers to focus on trust and integrity of the SM platforms because if the content available is outdated or hacked then customers will not be able to gain effective information which will affect their decision making. Consequently, this gives strategic direction for Jetwing Blue Hotel where it is recommended that they need to focus on the development of the online hotel booking facilities. For instance, when they are sharing their product or service information, they need to focus on improving important aspects such as flexibility, security and trust, thus this will enhance the customers' confident adapt that information which will positively influence their decision making.

Another issue identified is that many customers do not pay attention to online advertisements on social media. Likewise, Srivastava (2008) denotes that if the advertisements in social media are not creative and attractive then customers will ignore them and if those advertisements are not trustful then customers will not pay attention. According to Agag and Masry (2016), when firms do online advertising, they can easily reach their target audience, and this plays a vital role in decision making because online advertising will affect consumers' brand attitudes and purchase

intention. Therefore, in responding to this issue it is recommended for Jetwing Blue hotel to focus on other ways of advertising, for instance the research findings demonstrate that 38.5% of the respondents prefer TV advertisements are more effective. Hence, they can use TV advertising as one of their promotional strategies to reach out to their audience who are not using SM. Further, it is recommended for Jetwing Blue hotel to focus on creating creative online advertisements because creative advertisements will attract customers. Alternatively, according to the 2018 annual report Jetwing Blue hotel faces high risk of competition. Also, Jetwing Blue has around 29860 Facebook likes and Cinnamon Grand which is one of their major competitors has more likes, namely it has 181224 Facebook likes. Lee (2013) denotes that SMM will help firms to gain competitive advantage hence it is important for Jetwing Blue hotel to invest greatly in their SMM strategy as it will help them to increase the sales and performance. Furthermore, customers use different social media platforms and if firms try to manage all the platforms, then they will not be able to yield positive results (Agag & Masry, 2016). Therefore, it is recommended for Jetwing Blue hotel to focus on determining which SM platform is suitable to carry out their marketing activities. As a result, advertising on SM platforms that customers are frequent will affect consumers' behavior and will help them to reach their target audience which leads them to gain competitive advantage. In contrast, not only the platforms, it is recommended for them to focus on generating effective content that will help them to increase the likes and win over the competitors. Moreover, it is recommended for Jetwing Blue to use sponsored social media influencers who will act on behalf of the hotel products and services and give positive reviews of the same which will appear on Facebook or Instagram. Thus, this will work to feed the consumers mind which is actively seeking to collect information as well as comparing alternatives resulting them to achieve competitive advantage.

Conclusion

This dissertation examined the influence of social media marketing on consumer decision making process in relation to Jetwing Blue hotel. As discussed, SMM plays a crucial role in decision making where it has helped customers to make effective decisions without any uncertainties. Further, beginning with evolution of social media marketing, the importance of SMM, definitions, models of SMM and how it affects CDMP has been highlighted.

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FACTORS AFFECTING CUSTOMER SATISFACTION ON ONLINE FOOD SHOPPING: BASED ON SRI LANKAN UNDERGRADUATES

J.H. Francke^{1*}

¹School of Business, Nawaloka College of Higher Studies, Sri Lanka

*judithharriet3@gmail.com**

ABSTRACT

This study aims to identify the factors affecting the Customer Satisfaction on Online Food Shopping and the relationship between identified factors and the Customer Satisfaction on Online Food Shopping among undergraduates in Sri Lanka. With the consideration of constructs such as Website Layout, Security, Information Quality, Payment Methods, Customer Support, and Product Quality, the survey was done among 200 undergraduates in Sri Lanka for the research. The model of the study was evaluated using Structural Equation Model (SEM). Smart PLS was used for the measurement model testing and structural model testing. The study showed the results as the factors such as Website Layout, Information Quality and Payment Methods have positive and significant influence on Customer Satisfaction on Online Food Shopping. Unexpectedly the results also showed that the factors such as Security, Customer Support and Product Quality do not have positive and significant influence on Customer Satisfaction on Online Food Shopping. The findings of the study provide information to the online food shopping websites on the factors that influence the Customer Satisfaction on Online Food Shopping. This also suggests and puts forward innovative ideas to be looking forwarded by the online food shopping websites to understand and improve customer satisfaction. The research did not investigate the satisfaction of undergraduates from all universities in Sri Lanka. Hence, it is recommended to include undergraduates from diverse geographical areas in future studies.

Keywords: Customer Satisfaction, Website Layout, Security, Information Quality

INTRODUCTION

Online shopping refers to the direct purchase of goods, services, or other products from a business through interactive, real-time transactions conducted over the internet, without the participation of market intermediaries. It involves consumers acquiring goods and services from merchants who perform their business functions online. In Sri Lanka, people shop food online because of the increased internet access, growth of cities, and convenient options available. With the advancement of the World Wide Web, businesses have aspired to reach out to internet users to sell their products. Shoppers have the convenience of browsing web stores from anywhere at any time and make purchases while seated at their computers or any other devices connected to internet. This method of shopping enables consumers to access a wide range of items from online retailers. At present, online shopping has become a rapidly an expanding trend. Increasingly, consumers are turning to digital platform performers to acquire goods and services, gather product details, or simply enjoy browsing. As a result, the online shopping landscape is assuming a more vital role in shaping the relationship between businesses and their consumers (KL Keller, 2022) The research suggests and put forward innovative ideas to be looking forwarded by the online food shopping websites to understand and improve about customer satisfaction.

Research Questions which would be addressed in the study are

What are the factors that affect Customer Satisfaction on Online Food Shopping?

What is the relationship between the above identified factors and Customer Satisfaction on Online Food Shopping?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Customer Satisfaction towards Online Shopping (CSOS)

Customer satisfaction stands out as the prime important and extensively studied concept. Within an online shopping context, customer satisfaction emerges as the pivotal factor influencing consumer attraction, retention, and the sustainable development and advancement of online stores (YC Lee, 2016).

Website layout (WL)

Prior research suggests that evaluating the performance of online websites can be based on specific functionalities, including user-friendly features (R Roy Dholakia, 2010) atmosphere and design (KC Gehrt, 2012) and usability or functionality (Karatepe, 2011).

Security (S)

Financial security emerges as the most pivotal factor influencing satisfaction among online shoppers (GS Shergill, 2005). Research investigated by (A Khare, 2011) (D Cyr, 2008) reveals that security concerns during online shopping significantly impact the satisfaction levels of customers.

Information Quality (IS)

The quality of information provided on a website pertains to the reliability and authentication of the data accessible to online shoppers. (G Carson, 2020) And (Islam, 2011) have demonstrated that information quality significantly influences consumer satisfaction in internet shopping.

Payment Methods (PS)

Online platforms provide various payment options, including Net Banking, Amazon Pay, and Cash on Delivery, debit cards, credit cards, and Paytm wallet, among others. Research by (RAJESWARI, 2015) indicates that Indian consumers show a preference for the Cash on Delivery option when shopping online.

Customer Support (CS)

Customer support entails the responsiveness of customer care personnel in assisting and addressing customer needs and inquiries. It has emerged as a crucial factor in fostering the growth of online platforms.

Product Quality (PQ)

The quality of the product, coupled with other factors such as discounts and associated gifts, plays a pivotal role in shaping consumers' purchase intentions for online shopping (G Cui, 2012). A study conducted by (Karatepe, 2011) revealed that perceived product quality directly influences perceived value, subsequently leading to higher levels of customer satisfaction.

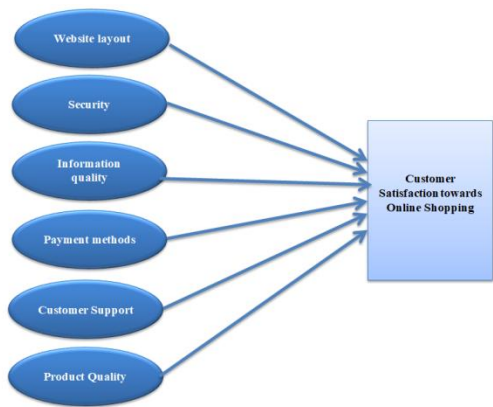
Structural Equation Model (SEM)

Using Structural Equation Model (SEM) to investigate the relationship between customer satisfaction, its determinants, and resulting outcomes is a robust methodology. SEM allows for the simultaneous evaluation of reliability and validity, as well as the examination of interrelationships among constructs.

The educators have extensive argument on the factors affect customer satisfaction on Online food shopping.

METHODOLOGY

The research used a quantitative approach, employing a questionnaire to collect data online from Sri Lankan undergraduates. A sample of 200 undergraduates was selected using stratified sampling from different faculties and universities. Smart PLS software analyzed the data, with descriptive statistics for respondent characteristics and inferential statistics like correlation and regression analysis for examining relationships between factors and customer satisfaction. Cronbach's alpha assessed measurement scale reliability.



(Source: Author Developed 2024)

Figure 21 : Conceptual Model

Analysis

Table 35 : Descriptive Analysis

	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Male	64	32%
Female	136	68%
University		
University of Sri Jayewardenepura	78	39%
University of Colombo	46	23%
University of Peradeniya	35	17.5%
University of Jaffna	12	6%
Eastern University of Sri Lanka	29	14.5%
Faculty		

Faculty of Management	86	43%
Faculty of Arts	16	8%
Faculty of Medicine	34	17%
Faculty of Engineering	42	21%
Faculty of Computing	22	11%
Year of study		
First Year	24	12%
Second Year	33	16.5%
Third year	51	25.5%
Fourth Year	92	46%

(Source: Author Developed 2024)

Table 2: Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis	Relationship	Path Coefficient	T Statistics	P value	Supported/ Not Supported
H1	WL -> CSOS	0.226	2.690	0.007	Supported
H2	S -> CSOS	0.045	0.357	0.721	Not Supported
H3	IQ-> CSOS	0.192	2.209	0.028	Supported
H4	PM -> CSOS	0.176	2.205	0.028	Supported
H5	CS -> CSOS	0.064	0.917	0.360	Not Supported
H6	PQ -> CSOS	0.059	0.908	0.440	Not Supported

(Source: Author Developed 2024)

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The survey comprised 136 female students (68%) and 64 male students (32%), primarily undergraduates from the University of Sri Jayewardenepura, with a majority from the Faculty of Management. Most respondents were final-year undergraduates. After filtering out variables with values below 0.7, the Average Value Extracted (AVE) for all constructs exceeded 0.5, establishing convergent validity. The model explained 18.4% of the variability in Customer Satisfaction towards Online Shopping (CSOS), with higher R Squared indicating a better fit.

Website Layout (WL) significantly influenced CSOS (t-value: 2.690, p-value: 0.007), affirming the hypothesis. However, Security (S) did not significantly affect CSOS (t-value: 0.357, p-value: 0.721). Information Quality (IQ) (t-value: 2.209, p-value: 0.028) and Payment Methods (PM) (t-value: 2.205, p-value: 0.028) positively influenced CSOS. Conversely, Customer Support (CS) and Product Quality (PQ) did not significantly impact CSOS, with t-values below 1.96 and p-values indicating lack of evidence for their influence.

CONCLUSION

The study aimed to understand factors influencing Customer Satisfaction on Online Food Shopping and their relationship. Results indicate Website Layout, Information Quality and Payment Methods significantly impact satisfaction. However, Security, Customer Support, and Product Quality do not show significant positive relationships. These findings offer valuable insights for online food shopping websites to enhance customer satisfaction, suggesting innovative approaches for improvement. This understanding benefits both online shopping websites and customers, fostering ease of use, efficiency, and overall satisfaction.

Limitations

The study, focusing on undergraduates from five universities, aims to delve into Customer Satisfaction on Online Food Shopping in Sri Lanka. To enhance understanding, it suggests exploring satisfaction across different age groups and geographical locations. This broader approach promises varied insights, with diverse perspectives and regional preferences.

Recommendations

Based on the research findings, recommendations include, increasing awareness of customer satisfaction, and developing feedback systems for assessment, implementing strategies to enhance satisfaction, and focusing on factors that positively influence satisfaction. Future studies should expand to include customers from various universities to ensure broader geographic representation. Future research can also focus on the different age categories of customers and determinants on online food shopping.

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INNOVATIONS IN EDUCATIONAL MANAGEMENT

A KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM FOR IMPROVE THE SUPERVISION QUALITY OF IT POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH IN SRI LANKA

W. M. Jeewanthi Hansani Fernando^{1*}

¹Doctoral Student of DBA Programme, University of Kelaniya, Sri Lanka

*jeewafdo91@yahoo.com**

ABSTRACT

In Sri Lanka's private sector higher education, there is a growing emphasis on knowledge-centric communities leveraging Knowledge Management (KM) and Knowledge Sharing (KS) principles to enhance postgraduate research supervision quality, particularly in IT. This study aims to introduce a tailored conceptual framework for postgraduate research supervision, focusing on a Knowledge Management System's role in disseminating supervision knowledge effectively to support junior supervisors. Methodologically, the study explores integrating Knowledge Management and Information Technology in Sri Lankan postgraduate research supervision, rooted in the Task/Technology Fit theory. It utilizes diverse data collection methods; surveys, interviews, and case studies to glean insights from experienced and junior supervisors in this setting. The analysis identifies critical Knowledge Management activities within supervision and assesses how implementing a Knowledge Management System can enhance model development in Sri Lanka's IT postgraduate research. This approach seeks to enhance understanding of synergies between KM, IT, and supervision expertise specific to Sri Lanka's higher education context, offering transformative insights into leveraging these tools for improving supervision quality and fostering collaborative learning environments in the private sector. It underscores KM's pivotal role in nurturing knowledge-centric communities within Sri Lankan higher education. By applying IT tools effectively, the study illustrates how a symbiotic relationship among supervisors and KM practices can boost junior supervisor development. The research's practical implication lies in guiding Sri Lankan institutions to optimize postgraduate research supervision through integrated Knowledge Management System and IT strategies, thus advancing educational practices in private-sector higher education.

Keywords: Knowledge Management System, Supervision Quality, IT Postgraduate Research, Knowledge Sharing & Sri Lanka

INTRODUCTION

In today's knowledge revolution, passing knowledge across generations is crucial. S. H. M. Amin (2011) emphasizes its critical role in global competitiveness, stressing the need for knowledge-sharing mechanisms and enhanced learning abilities (Rahman et al., 2018). Understanding knowledge's importance in universities is key for implementing sharing mechanisms and fostering learning skills across various entities (Wright, 2020).

Knowledge Sharing (KS) is vital in Knowledge Management (KM), facilitating both structural and individual progress (Gebreyohans et al., 2023). It involves disseminating information within the workplace and fostering exchange among postgraduate research students to generate new insights. This collaboration enhances objectives in higher education, particularly in IT research supervision, by strengthening communication between students and supervisors. The proposed Knowledge Management System (KMS) integrates technology to support knowledge creation, sharing, and application, aiding strategic planning for its implementation in research supervision processes at higher education institutions.

Education is a significant investment with lifelong impacts, crucial for exploring, safeguarding, and disseminating knowledge. In higher education, aligning with KM principles is essential for excellence. Challenges exist in postgraduate research supervision in Sri Lankan private sector institutions, including miscommunication and inefficiencies. Management must invest in platforms and support for effective knowledge sharing between supervisors and students to enhance supervision quality.

This study focuses on comparing state universities and private higher education institutions in Sri Lanka, highlighting state universities' superior performance in postgraduate research. It suggests that KM can enhance private institutions' capabilities, facilitating collective success through knowledge utilization and sharing. KS is vital for individual performance and effective supervision, ensuring the delivery of standardized education and postgraduate qualifications in private higher education.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Among the 47 government-approved universities and higher education institutes in Sri Lanka, 27 are private universities, authorized to grant degrees. These institutions operate under the Ministry of Higher Education's supervision (Meepage, 2024). Additionally, there are 18 public universities overseen by the University Grants Commission (UGC), with two directly managed by the Ministry of Higher Education. Private universities offer undergraduate degrees in IT and various postgraduate programs, including MPhil and Ph.D. programs. Some also provide postgraduate programs in affiliation with foreign universities.

Research inherently involves communication, requiring both social and theoretical competencies. In academia, universities play a managerial role, coordinating and guiding students towards Master's qualifications. Graduate students often face existing knowledge and research challenges, emphasizing the need for resource allocation and supervision (Phang et al., 2014).

Swanson & Watt (Chiappetta-Swanson & Watt, 2011) propose theoretical frameworks for research supervision to optimize research development and ensure effective oversight. They emphasize lifelong learning and continuous research advancement, grounded in a framework consisting of four main pillars of learning. These are Learning to know, Learning to do, Learning to live with others and Learning to do.

Yew & Ahmad (2011) assert that the efficacy of research supervisors is increasingly evaluated through protocols and procedures akin to those employed by education experts, which govern the provision of supervision services. Specifically, project supervisors leverage their expertise and experience in conjunction with research supervision knowledge to deliver comprehensive supervision services.

Gatfield (2005) have introduced the Supervisory Management Styles (SMS) model, which outlines a four-quadrant grid for supervisory style management. This model underscores the importance of comprehending supervisory styles and adjusting throughout the supervisory phase. The authors note that supervisors often presume familiarity with the aspects of the supervisory process and management styles conducive to success. Key elements highlighted by the SMS model include guidance provided by the supervisor, and development of students' research management skills and their capacity for effective communication and collaboration.

Maor & Currie (2017) propose the Blended Postgraduate Supervision (BPS) model, which combines traditional, virtual, and online elements. They emphasize personalized, face-to-face interactions between supervisors and students, aided by web-based resources. This approach utilizes various technologies to enhance research experiences and expand knowledge boundaries. Integration of IT-based communication and e-learning systems enables effective information gathering, processing, and dissemination by students. The BPS model assists supervisors in identifying key information sources for students and assessing learning outcomes through both face-to-face and online interactions. Therefore, the BPS model emphasizes the utilization of web technology, IT-based communication, and ongoing support from supervisors to facilitate postgraduate research endeavors.

The KM model for the supervision process stands out as a superior framework, specifically tailored for detecting the impact factors of knowledge sharing within research supervision. Unlike generic supervision models, the KM model is uniquely designed to address KM and KS within the supervision context. As advocated by Zhao (2003), the significance of the supervisory process cannot be overstated in ensuring the successful graduation of students, given its inherent complexity and nuance.

A systematic approach to knowledge sharing is essential to facilitate mutual learning between supervisors and students, enabling them to acquire, disseminate, and apply knowledge effectively. Zhao's (2003) proposed KS method highlights the supervisor's role in enhancing students' capacity for KS within research supervision. This involves proficiency in advanced technological resources for information management and strategic utilization of relevant information.

Zhao (2003) argues that integrating KM concepts into postgraduate supervision can improve its effectiveness. KM acts as an educational asset and financial resource, enhancing research supervision practices and a university's quality and reputation. It serves as a metric for evaluating academic prowess, highlighting the value of knowledge sharing in education. Zhao's (2003) KM model emphasizes knowledge sharing's role in academic success, promoting collaborative learning and innovation within educational institutions.

Previous studies reveal a gap in a comprehensive analysis of postgraduate research supervision dynamics, emphasizing the necessity of planning within a dynamic framework. To bridge this gap, researchers propose diverse methodologies and systems to manage supervision activities effectively.

METHODOLOGY

This study is a quantitative research endeavor, grounded in the author's compilation of data-based theories, hypotheses, and experiments. The analytical process employs both descriptive and inferential statistical methods. Given its nature, this research adopts a descriptive approach to elucidate occurrences or developments, explaining how something has happened or is currently unfolding.

Scope of the study

This study focuses on project supervisors in Sri Lanka's higher education institutions, including both state and private entities under the UGC. Specifically targeting the Faculty of Graduate Studies, its goal is to enhance communication between students and supervisors, especially in IT research, to improve research alignment and completion rates. Anticipated findings aim to streamline IT postgraduate research supervision for better effectiveness. Furthermore, the study seeks to create and validate a framework for evaluating supervisors' behavior in KM and KS with students, customized for IT postgraduate research supervision.

The study population and sample

This study focuses exclusively on IT postgraduate programs offered at state and non-state universities in Sri Lanka, comprising six state and approximately ten non-state institutions. State universities host nearly 300 academic staff, while each private university, totaling around ten, has about 60 academic staff, resulting in almost 300 non-state universities. With a target population of 300, the sample population was drawn from seven universities, two state and five non-state, using purposive sampling. The study encompassed 277 responses, with state universities (40%) represented by the University of Moratuwa and the University of Colombo and non-state universities (60%) by SLIIT, APIIT, ESoft, IIT, and ICBT campus.

Conceptual Framework

This study proposes that KM can effectively enhance the capabilities of private higher education institutions by leveraging supervisor perception and organizational culture, thus facilitating various pathways to success. The conceptual framework, derived from

the literature review, comprises two main domains: independent variables and dependent variables. The independent variables include supervisor's KS proficiency, university culture, supervisor support, learning strategy, and IT System. The dependent variable is quality of postgraduate research supervision.

DISCUSSION AND FINDINGS OF THE RESEARCH

This research aims to develop a tailored KM framework for supervising IT postgraduate research in Sri Lankan higher education institutions. It focuses on the supervision process, KM activities, and associated technologies to enhance communication between students and supervisors. The goal is to improve the alignment and completion of IT research endeavors. Anticipated outcomes include insights into supervisors' behavior regarding KM and KS, ultimately leading to a comprehensive framework ensuring quality project supervision, specifically in IT postgraduate research.

Findings of the study

Utilizing multiple regression analysis, the study assesses whether the supervisor's knowledge-sharing proficiency, university culture, supervisor support, and the IT system employed significantly impact the quality of research supervision in Sri Lanka. The findings derived from the regression analysis are detailed in Table 1.

The SPSS linear regression analysis shows p-values below 0.05 for the supervisor's KS ability, university culture, supervisor support, and the IT system (Table 1). Hence, postgraduate research supervision quality depends on these factors. The R-square value of 0.889 ($F = 85.694, p < 0.05$) suggests that these factors explain 9.665% of the variance in supervision quality highlighting their significant influence.

Table 1: The results from Regression Analysis

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
	(Constant)	.027	.103		.267	.790
	SSK	.281	.056	.280	5.074	.000
	CU	.184	.093	.205	1.980	.050
	SS	.741	.086	.692	8.600	.000
	LSU	.004	.047	.005	.082	.935
	ITS	.200	.077	.173	2.602	.010

(Source: Author Developed 2024)

In residual diagnostics, it was confirmed that the residuals are independent and normally distributed. Between university culture and supervisor support, resources recorded the highest beta value (beta = 0.741, $p < 0.05$). In the end, the findings of the multiple regression analysis align with the data, substantiating the study hypotheses: H1, H2, H3, and H5.

Table 2: Hypotheses results of Multiple Regression Model

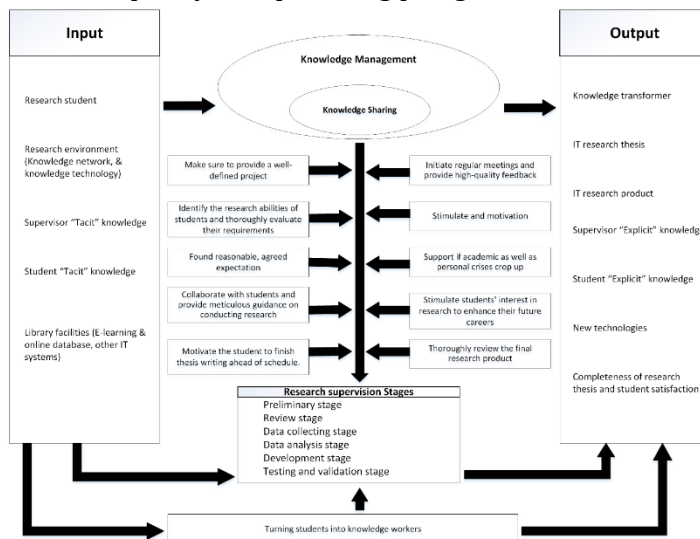
(Source: Author Developed 2024)

Hypotheses	Result
H1: Supervisor's Knowledge Sharing Proficiency in quality IT postgraduate research supervision.	Supported
H2: University culture has an important and positive effect on KS in quality IT postgraduate research supervision.	Supported
H3: Supervisor supports positive effects in KS in quality IT postgraduate research supervision.	Supported
H4: The learning strategy has an important and positive effect in KS in quality IT postgraduate research supervision.	Not Supported
H5: IT system has an important and positive effect in KS in quality IT postgraduate research supervision.	Supported

Stepwise regression analysis revealed the separate impacts of the supervisor's knowledge-sharing ability, university culture, supervisor support, and IT system on postgraduate research supervision quality. The model's R-square value explains 79% of the variability, while the R-value indicates that 88% of the variability is attributed to these factors combined. Table 2 summarizes the comprehensive results of the multiple regression analysis and the study hypotheses, illustrating the direct effect model.

Proposed framework

Private sector higher education institutions are increasingly drawing the attention of a knowledge-based community, which significantly relies on KM and KS initiatives to enhance the quality of supervising postgraduate research students (refer to Figure 1).



(Source: Author Developed 2024)

Figure 1: Proposed framework to improve the quality of IT postgraduate research supervision.

Results

This study employed standard techniques for systematically gathering factors and requirements, followed by a thorough analysis. Using prioritization techniques, it categorized and assigned priority to requirements while assessing statistical equivalence in user questionnaires. The resulting framework underwent validity evaluation and usability testing through post-implementation experiments, gathering feedback from 130 IT postgraduate research students. An impressive 83% expressed strong approval for the final framework and its features, designed to assess student responses regarding the quality of research supervision.

CONCLUSION

This research provides vital insights for universities and postgraduate supervisors, pinpointing crucial factors for effective knowledge sharing in research supervision. It proposes methods to boost supervisor performance and enhance overall supervision quality, with a focus on KS. By improving productivity and innovation in private higher education, the study aims to elevate postgraduate research training quality. KS also reduces costs and expedites MSc program completion. Findings might encourage universities to incentivize knowledge sharing among students and supervisors through rewards, recognition, or development initiatives.

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SIGNIFICANNCE STUDY TIPS AND STRATERGIES TO PREPARE FOR UNIVERSITY EXAMINTATIONS ON UNDERGRAUATES OF UNIVERSITY OF KELANIYA

Wathsala Dharmathilaka^{1*}

¹Nawaloka College, Sri Lanka

*wathsaladilrukshi31@gmail.com**

ABSTRACT

Undergraduates should attend the examinations in their academic lives. They need to be aware of the guidelines and examination instructions before the examination. Further, preparation for the examination is very important for undergraduates to conduct their educational life or study environment. But some of the students are aware of the preparation and some are not engaged with them. The research's purpose is to study usage of undergraduates' strategies and techniques for examination preparation. The Simple random sampling method is used for the study. There were 8 structured questions to take data from the university students. All undergraduate students of Kelaniya sociology faculty are included in the population of this research. As per the sampling method 30 questionnaires were shared with the sociology faculty students randomly. All 30 students were answers to the questionnaire. To analyze collected data in the research the Microsoft excel has been used. According to the analyzed data, it has been reported using chat and tables. As per the data the large number of students have mentioned "review past examination papers" as the better way to prepare for the examinations. The majority have mentioned that they are using note-taking techniques are more useful to prepare for the examinations. In the survey has found that most of Students are reading textbooks before examinations to find information for the examinations. But some students do not read exam guidelines properly before the examination. As the conclusion of the study, Students need to notify important of follow examination preparation strategies and tips. They are more valuable to empower their education success.

Keywords: Examinations, Undergraduates, Strategies, University of Kelaniya

EXPLORING THE INFLUENCE OF TECHNOSTRESS ON THE PERFORMANCE OF IT LECTURERS IN PRIVATE HIGHER EDUCATIONAL WORK ENVIRONMENTS IN SRI LANKA

W. M. Jeewanthi Hansani Fernando^{1*}

¹Doctoral Student of DBA Programme, University of Kelaniya, Sri Lanka

*jeewafdo91@yahoo.com**

ABSTRACT

Technostress, induced by the pressure and demands of technology, significantly affects the higher education sector, where IT lecturers are increasingly reliant on digital tools and platforms. This study aims to explore the concept, role, and implications of technostress within the work environments of higher educational institutions, particularly focusing on Sri Lanka's private higher education sector. Currently, the education sector in Sri Lanka ranks among the top industries experiencing occupational stress. For institutions, technostress among IT lecturers can lead to increased turnover rates, imposing substantial financial burdens. Therefore, mitigating technostress is crucial for institutions to maintain workforce stability and organizational effectiveness. The study conducted surveys and interviews with IT lecturers, revealing diverse perspectives and coping strategies regarding technostress. Key findings highlighted several critical factors including the frequency of technology use, perceived organizational support, workload implications, and perceived technological competence. These factors significantly influence turnover intentions among IT lecturers, thereby emphasizing the urgency for effective technostress management strategies in educational settings. In conclusion, this research contributes to understanding how technostress manifests in higher education and underscores the importance of proactive measures by institutions to address this issue for the well-being of their IT lecturers and the overall organizational health.

Keywords: Technostress, Information Technology, IT Lecturers, Turnover

INTRODUCTION

Stress is characterized as the sensation of mental strain and tension, which can potentially affect every individual throughout their life (*Stress*, 2023). According to Mohajan (2012), Occupational stress arises when employees cannot manage their responsibilities due to specific pressures they cannot overlook. Stress can lead to severe repercussions for both employees and their organizations. It can result in physical and mental health issues, lower job satisfaction, and decreased motivation, all of which can contribute to higher turnover rates and increased absenteeism (Anadkat et al., 2023). As a result, employers may encounter expensive ramifications of occupational stress. Organizations must devote greater attention to this issue to avert such outcomes.

Teaching professionals are more impacted than those in other industries, as the phenomenon was discovered to be particularly prevalent in the leading IT educational institutions in the Sri Lanka Colombo district. This assertion finds validation in global studies consistently highlighting significant correlations between stress levels and lecturers (Wang, 2024). Moreover, findings revealed elevated stress levels within larger organizations, indicating that stress might be more widespread in higher education institutions with larger staff sizes (Ranathunga & Rathnakara, 2022). When examining the workplace, stress can be caused by various factors, including technostress. Technostress pertains to an individual's capacity to adapt, remain flexible, and cope with changes in information technology (IT) within the workplace. The advancement of the IT sector has made this adjustment increasingly challenging for employees. Therefore, when employees struggle with this adaptation, their wellbeing is compromised, decreasing happiness and productivity.

Higher education working environment, IT modules lecturing and marking student assignments create stress for IT lecturers. Techno-exhaustion in higher education working environment can be caused by technostress, adversely affecting job happiness, employee retention, and overall employment performance. In the workplace, technology can have both negative and positive effects. However, this technostress is common for most Sri Lanka higher education institutions nowadays.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In the last few years, there has been a significant emphasis on the value of human resources within organizations. Higher education institutions or any other organization's mismanagement of the workers impacts the workforce, with stress taking a prominent role. Mostly this situation happens between the person and the working environment (Wang, 2024). The reason for this situation is a lack of resources. In this situation, a person cannot cope with it and how to manage things. As a result, a person experiences anger, frustration, and, in extreme cases, depression (Anadkat et al., 2023).

The Impact of Technostress in the Workplace

Iqra Mushtaque (2022) shows technostress is a modern adjustment disease caused by failure to address new technologies wellness. Using technology gadgets frequently or regularly failure causes fear and tension. These types of stressful things usually happen using IT. University IT lecturers play the lead role in incorporating technology into education. In the university, technostress "involves the active interpretation by the employee of their objectives." It usually happens that workers' job roles do not fit their skills and work needs (Efilti & Naci Çoklar, 2019). In the education sector, IT lecturers teach not interesting modules, are overloaded with assignment marking, one staff member leaves, hiring another person takes a long time, poor job evaluation, and criticism from management or peers are the main reasons for the techno-exhaustion (Gander et al., 2020). This form of stress influences IT lecturers' intentions regarding technology use and is linked to decreased levels of job satisfaction, job performance, and intentions to resign (Ranathunga & Rathnakara, 2022).

Exploring the Pros and Cons: Technology, Technostress, and Wellbeing in Education

Nowadays, technology is essential for economic development. Without technology, today's society can't live, and it contributes to enhancing productivity, efficiency, and space preservation. But other side using technology have stressful life because of the below factors (Perera, 2021),

Techno overload - A circumstance in which people using technology (ICT) are compelled to labor harder and longer.

Techno invasion - When people who utilize technology (ICT) believe they can always be accessible or are "connected," the lines between personal and professional situations get blurred.

Techno complexity - A circumstance where users of information and communications technology (ICT) feel their abilities are insufficient because of the complexity involved in using technology. They must, therefore, invest time and energy into learning and comprehending various facets of technology.

Techno insecurity - A circumstance in which people who use technology (ICT) feel threatened. They believed that either technology or other people who were more technologically advanced than they were would replace them and take their jobs.

Techno uncertainty - A circumstance in which users of information and communications technology (ICT) feel uneasy and apprehensive due to the rapid advancement of technology.

The causes may be different from company to company. It has a particular way of using what is mandated by the company. For example, in a daily life setting, there is an over-reliance on or excessive exposure to expanded digital services (Van Hootegeem et al., 2018).

METHODOLOGY

This study employs a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews, to comprehensively explore technostress's influence on IT lecturers' performance in the Colombo district, a leading private higher educational work environment in Sri Lanka.

The study population and sample

This study focuses on IT degree programs in Colombo, Sri Lanka, state and non-state universities. There are four state universities and around ten non-state universities offering IT degrees. State universities employ about 400 academic staff, while each private university typically has around 60 academic staff, totaling approximately 600 across non-state universities. The target population is about 1000 individuals. The study sampled 14 universities (four states, ten non-state) using probability sampling, collecting 720 responses. State universities contributed 40% of responses, including the University of Moratuwa, University of Colombo, University of Jayawardhanapura, and Open University. Non-state universities contributed 60% of responses, represented by institutions like SLIIT, APIIT, ESoft, IIT, NSBM, KDU, CINEC, Horizon Campus, ECU, and ICBT campus.

Conceptual Framework

This study focuses on exploring technostress's influence on IT lecturers' performance in private higher educational work environments in Sri Lanka. The conceptual framework derived from the literature review comprises two main domains: independent variables and dependent variables. The independent variables include frequency of technology use, frequency of technology use, technostress factors, workload, and perceived technological competence. The dependent variable is the performance of IT lecturers.

DISCUSSION AND FINDINGS OF THE RESEARCH

This research explores how technostress affects IT lecturers' performance in Sri Lankan higher education. It investigates the negative impacts of technological overload on teaching, research, and administrative tasks. By understanding these effects, the goal is to reduce turnover and enhance overall lecturer performance through strategies to alleviate technostress, ultimately improving the country's education quality.

Table 1: The results from Regression Analysis

		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
	(Constant)	1.840	.244		7.554	.000
	FTU	.225	.048	.244	5.074	.000

	POS	.316	.064	.259	4.991	.000
	TF	-.148	.073	-.094	-2.040	.002
	WL	.376	.070	.259	5.386	.000
	PTC	-.218	.069	-.165	-3.156	.002

(Source: Author Developed 2024)

Findings of the study

Utilizing multiple regression analysis, the study assesses whether the IT lecturer's frequency of technology use, perceived organizational support, technostress factors, workload, and perceived technological competence significantly impact the performance of IT lecturers. The findings derived from the regression analysis are detailed in Table 1.

The SPSS linear regression analysis shows p-values below 0.05 for the IT lecturers' frequency of technology use, perceived organizational support, technostress factors, workload, and perceived technological competence (Table 1). Hence, the performance of IT lecturers depends on these factors. The R-square value of 0.969 ($F = 85.694$, $p < 0.05$) suggests that these factors explain 9.767% of the variance in performance of IT lecturers, highlighting their significant influence.

In residual diagnostics, it was confirmed that the residuals are independent and normally distributed. The highest beta value between workload and perceived technological competence ($\beta = 0.376$, $p < 0.00$). In the end, the findings of the multiple regression analysis align with the data, substantiating the study hypotheses: H1, H2, H3, H4 and H5.

Table 2: Hypotheses results of Multiple Regression Model

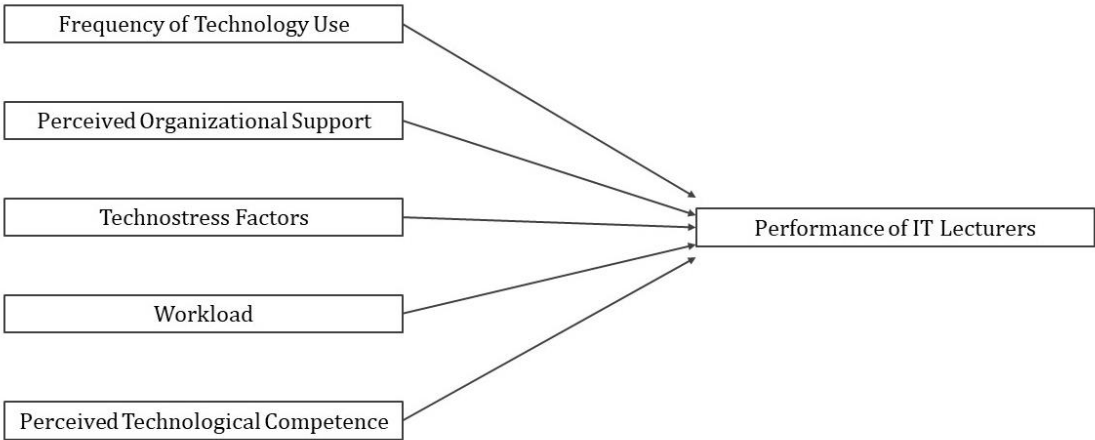
Hypotheses	Result
H1: Frequency of technology use in the performance of IT lecturers.	Supported
H2: Perceived organizational support in the performance of IT lecturers.	Supported
H3: Technostress factors in the performance of IT lecturers.	Supported
H4: Workload in performance of IT lecturers.	Supported
H5: Perceived technological competence in the performance of IT lecturers.	Supported

(Source: Author Developed 2024)

Stepwise regression analysis revealed the separate impacts of the frequency of technology use, perceived organizational support, technostress factors, workload, and perceived technological competence significantly impact the performance of IT lecturers. The model's R-square value explains 76% of the variability, while the R-value indicates that 84% of the variability is attributed to these factors combined. Table 2 summarizes the comprehensive results of the multiple regression analysis and the study hypotheses, illustrating the direct effect model.

Proposed framework

The proposed framework for exploring technostress's influence on IT lecturers' performance in private higher educational work environments in Sri Lanka seeks to provide a structured approach for investigating this relationship (refer to Figure 1).



(Source: Author Developed 2024)

Figure 1: Proposed framework to improve the performance of IT lecturers.

Results

The study systematically gathered and analyzed factors and requirements using standard techniques. Employing requirements prioritization methods, it categorized and assigned priority to gathered requirements while examining emerging trends and patterns. Statistical equivalence in user questionnaires was assessed using standardized validation techniques to produce a requirement specification anticipating future changes. The resulting framework underwent validity evaluation, considering usability through post-implementation experiments and feedback gathering. Online questionnaires, including the framework diagram, were distributed among 250 IT lecturers, with 88% expressing strong approval for the final framework and its features. The primary aim was to collect student responses regarding the proposed framework for exploring the influence of technostress on the performance of IT lecturers in private higher educational work environments in Sri Lanka.

CONCLUSIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS

The lecturers nowadays use digital resources to complete their daily activities. However, the current work environment does not consider the lecturer's stress in an online work environment. As a result, workers are not satisfied with their current place. Sometimes, workers leave the place. In this kind of situation, a university first must understand negative affective responses to technology use. Some levels of job instability and financial stress can be reduced.

This present study recommends conducting qualitative and quantitative approaches to get more effective results. Also, it reduces the technostress carried out by analyzing learning methods and studying students' behaviours regarding using different lecturing strategies.

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INFLUENCE OF FACILITATORS PEDAGOGICAL COMPETENCE UPON STUDENT'S SATISFACTION WITH MAJOR CURRICULUM, A STUDY BASED ON THE INSTITUTE OF ENGINEERING TECHNOLOGY, KATUNAYAKE

Isuri U. Pinnaduwa¹, T. Sandani Kumari^{2*} and Dillina Herath³

¹ Guildhall School of Business and Law, London Metropolitan University, United Kingdom

^{2,3} School of Business, ESOF Metro Campus, Colombo, Sri Lanka

*sandani.kumari@esoft.lk**

ABSTRACT

This study investigates the influence of facilitators Pedagogical Competence on student satisfaction with the major curriculum at the Institute of Engineering Technology (IET) in Katunayake, Sri Lanka, which specializes in awarding the National Diploma in Engineering Sciences. The research aims to understand how attributes related to Pedagogical Competence, of facilitators affect student satisfaction. Grounded in a positivist philosophical stance, the study employs a deductive methodology to test hypotheses derived from established theories. A case study approach is adopted to address the research problem in the context of higher education and engineering. Quantitative data were collected from a sample of 196 students out of a total of 400, using a structured questionnaire distributed via Google Forms. The results, analyzed using multiple regression, revealed that as a block, subject matter expertise, lesson planning skills, use of technology, assessment and feedback skills and reflective practice is responsible for 56% students' satisfaction with the course. The findings highlighted the critical role of facilitators' subject matter expertise and teaching methodologies in enhancing student learning experiences and satisfaction. The study concludes that improving facilitators' pedagogical and professional competencies can significantly boost student satisfaction among engineering education. These insights are valuable for educational institutions seeking to improve educational outcomes and student satisfaction. Future research could explore additional facilitator characteristics and their effects on student satisfaction across different educational settings.

Keywords: Engineering education, Facilitator characteristics, Pedagogical competence, Professional competence, Student satisfaction

INTRODUCTION

This study focuses on examining how facilitators pedagogical competence influence student satisfaction with the major curriculum at the Institute of Engineering Technology in Katunayake, Sri Lanka. The institute specializes in engineering education and is awarded the National Diploma in Engineering Sciences. The research is grounded in a positivist philosophical stance and utilizes deductive methodology to test hypotheses derived from accepted beliefs. The study employs a case study approach to effectively address the research problem within the complex context of higher education and engineering. Key variables include Pedagogical Competence, of facilitators, while student satisfaction with the major curriculum serves as the dependent variable as the objective of identifying the influence of facilitator characteristics upon students' satisfaction with major curriculum at Sri Lankan higher educational engineering institute. The literature review spans global higher education and specifically focuses on Sri Lanka's higher education sector, emphasizing the impact of facilitator characteristics on student satisfaction.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Sri Lankan higher education landscape also has undergone notable evolutions in recent years, with shifts in policies, institutional frameworks, and societal perspectives. This literature review explores the research, approaches, and policies that have affected engineering education in higher education, delving into the field's changing landscape.

Evolving Pedagogical Approaches in Engineering Education

Implementing active learning practices had a good impact on student performance, engagement, and happiness in engineering courses, according to research by Zappe et al. (2015). Ensuring and maintaining the quality of higher education has been a pressing concern. De Silva and Fernando (2015) provide a comprehensive analysis of the measures introduced for quality assurance. Their study highlights the initiatives by the University Grants Commission (UGC) to establish benchmarks, though they also underline the challenges in their consistent application in Sri Lankan context. Engineering education has widely embraced project-based learning as a successful pedagogical strategy. PBL encourages critical thinking, cooperation, and communication skills while involving students in the solution of actual engineering problems. Bell et al. (2016) found in their study that PBL boosted students' desire and interest in engineering projects while also having a favorable impact on their ability to solve problems.

Incorporating Industry- Academia Collaborations

Gunaratne (2014) elucidates the trend of private higher educational institutions proliferating, stressing their role in meeting the demand-supply gap in Sri Lanka. Over

time, a variety of collaborative models have arisen. According to Jones and Brown (2015), some schools create formal partnerships where business leaders participate as adjunct faculty or guest lecturers. Joint research initiatives, internships, and co-op programs are additional models (Camacho, 2019, p. 45). Pallegedara and Sisira Kumara (2020) argues that while private institutions offer opportunities, ensuring a standard quality remains a concern in Sri Lanka. Collaborations between business and academia benefit academic members in a variety of ways, including access to cutting-edge research and exposure to business best practices (Tucker, Waye, & Freeman, 2019).

Assessing Engineering Education Outcomes

The evaluation of engineering education outcomes has become a hot topic in the field of engineering pedagogy. These learning objectives frequently involve technical knowledge, problem-solving skills, and 'soft' skills in the context of engineering (Jonnaert et al., 2013). Biggs (2014) argued that assessment is essential to this strategy because it not only evaluates student performance but also directs how instruction is delivered. Recent study has focused in particular on the evaluation of problem-solving abilities. According to Jonassen (2014), problem-based learning (PBL) and the evaluations that go along with it offer a comprehensive understanding of students' capacity to apply conceptual knowledge to real-world situations.

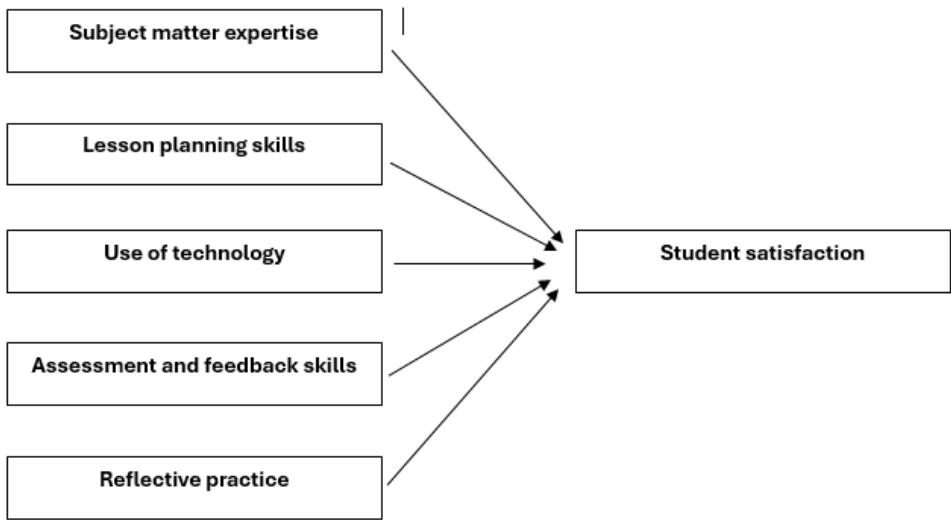
Student Satisfaction with major curriculum and Pedagogical Competence

Professional capabilities are classified into two types: academic and pedagogical. Academic competency is the understanding of a subject by a teacher. Green (2014) states that the goals of education are to empower individuals, change society, and increase equity. Teaching methods, the use of instructional resources, and learner assessment are used in this study to define teacher pedagogical competencies (Costa, Cardoso, Lima, Ferreira & Abrantes, 2015). Studies have shown a beneficial relationship between students' learning outcomes and instructors' subject matter knowledge. For instance, Smith et al.'s (2015) study discovered that lecturers with greater subject-matter competence had a favorable impact on students' academic performance and critical thinking skills. The term "pedagogical competence" is typically used to describe the minimal professional requirements for someone to perform various educational jobs. Recent educational research has mostly focused on creating classroom environments that are appropriate for teaching in the twenty-first century, where pedagogically qualified teachers may use their expertise to regularly and clearly motivate students to try new things. Professional capabilities are classified into two types: academic and pedagogical. Academic competency is the understanding of a subject by a teacher. Green (2014) states that the goals of education are to empower individuals, change society, and increase equity. Teaching methods, the use of instructional resources, and learner assessment are used in this study to define teacher pedagogical competencies (Costa, Cardoso, Lima, Ferreira & Abrantes, 2015). Studies

have shown a beneficial relationship between students' learning outcomes and instructors' subject matter knowledge. For instance, Smith et al.'s (2015) study discovered that lecturers with greater subject-matter competence had a favorable impact on students' academic performance and critical thinking skills. Furthermore, according to Johnson and Lee (2017), students who were taught by subject-matter experts displayed higher levels of engagement, motivation, and general happiness with their learning experiences. Setting specific learning goals, choosing effective teaching methods, creating pertinent materials, and evaluating student progress are all steps in the systematic process of lesson planning. It acts as a guide for lecturers to present organized, cogent content that improves students' comprehension and retention. Additionally, encouraging student participation, creating a positive learning environment, and making the most of class time are all benefits of effective lesson design (Fogarty, 2017). The importance of adopting a variety of assessment methodologies, including formative and summative evaluations, was underlined by Brown and Knight (2017). Early in the learning process, formative assessments assist in identifying students' strengths and weaknesses and encourage active learning. Summative tests, on the other hand, gauge how well students have learned during a course. In order to improve student engagement and performance, their study stressed the significance of lecturers adopting a balanced mix of evaluation methodologies. A variety of technological tools and platforms have arisen during the last ten years, enabling instructors to design interesting and interactive learning experiences. To manage course content, assignments, and communication with students, web-based systems like Learning Management Systems (LMS) have been widely utilized (Bolliger & Halupa, 2018). Hasiara, Surya, and Mersa (2018) assert that a variety of factors can influence students' performance in the classroom. The learning environment is improved by the employment of a variety of pedagogical tactics by a skilled teacher who attends educational conferences, workshops, and seminars, has strong classroom control, good communication skills, a firm grasp of the subject, and has great classroom management (McCune, 2018).

Students can participate more actively in the learning process when a teacher has strong pedagogical skills and understands how to manage learning activities. According to Murkatik, Harapan, and Wardiah (2020), pedagogical competency is the ability of a teacher to instruct a subject while following to principles such teaching from the familiar to the unfamiliar, concrete to abstract, and easy to difficult. The success of a teacher in the classroom is determined by his or her capacity to plan instructional strategies. According to Safin, Korchagin, Vildanov, and Abitov (2020), teacher pedagogical competency refers to a teacher's skills and personality as they manage the educational process through teaching tactics and resource usage. It is necessary to have an understanding of instructional strategies and learning preferences, as well as the capacity to use effective teaching approaches that enable students to acquire and apply knowledge.

Conceptual Framework



(Source: Author Developed, 2024)

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

METHODOLOGY

Research philosophy, method and sampling framework and data collection

As the research's philosophical stance, positivism has been adopted. positivism has been determined to be the philosophical position that fits the research the best. Deductive research methodology is suggested because the research is intended to examine hypotheses created based on accepted beliefs. Case study technique has chosen to change the research problem into an easily researchable topic. The Institute of Engineering Technology has been selected as the case study that can be applied to the Sri Lankan higher engineering education sector that awards diplomas. A single method of gathering data was employed for the study. As a result, the research method of choice is mono method. The use of quantitative data collection techniques and data analysis was suggested because the research conclusion was determined by the outcomes of the hypothesis's tests. Additionally, quantitative methods have been used to answer the stated research questions rather than qualitative ones. Cross-sectional time horizon has been chosen for the research. A sample of 196 students was considered out of 400 students according to the Krejcie and Morgan Table.

The selection of students from each batch was done proportionately as follows.

First-Year Students - 96 and Second-Year Students - 100

A Google form was used to collect data from participants and the questionnaire was given to first year and second-year students currently being studied at the Institute of Engineering Technology, Katunayake.

Reliability Test

Table 1: Cronbach's alpha for all five variables

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.966	18

(Source: Author Developed, 2024)

Cronbach's alpha for all the five independent variables with eighteen items is 0.966 as depicted in Table 1. Therefore, the index is highly reliable and can be accepted as the Cronbach's alpha is greater than 0.8.

Relationship between the Facilitator pedagogical competence and Student Satisfaction

Table 1 – Multiple Regression Test Results

A multiple regression analysis was carried out in order to test the hypotheses of the study and its result is reproduced in table 1.

Table 1: Results of multiple regression analysis

Variable	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
Constant	.489	.128		3.831	.000
Subject matter expertise	.384	.079	.388	4.847	.000
Lesson planning skills	.116	.072	.117	1.609	.109
Use of technology	.026	.069	.026	.370	.712
Assessment and feedback skills	.103	.061	.114	1.696	.091
Reflective practice	.246	.071	.229	3.476	.001
Adj. R Square – .558 F- Value - 50.187					

(Source: Author Developed, 2024)

DISCUSSION

The results, especially the adjusted r squared value of .558 multiple regression model, reveals that as a block, subject matter expertise, lesson planning skills, use of

technology, assessment and feedback skills and reflective practice is responsible for nearly 56% of students' satisfaction with the course.

Influence of subject matter expertise on Student Satisfaction

Subject matter expertise has a moderate positive impact on student satisfaction. The unstandardized coefficient ($B = 0.384$) indicates that for each unit increase in Subject matter expertise, student satisfaction increases by 0.384 units, holding other variables constant.

Influence of lesson planning skills on Student Satisfaction

Lesson planning skills also significantly and positively affects student satisfaction. However, the unstandardized coefficient ($B = 0.116$) suggests a weak positive relationship between Lesson planning skills and student satisfaction.

Influence of use of technology on Student Satisfaction

Use of technology shows a positive relationship with student satisfaction, it is marginally significant. The unstandardized coefficient ($B = 0.026$) implies a positive but very weaker effect compared to other predictors.

Influence of assessment and feedback skills on Student Satisfaction

Social Competence does not have a significant impact on student satisfaction. The unstandardized coefficient ($B = 0.103$) indicates a very weak relationship, and it is not statistically significant.

Influence of reflective practice

Social Competence does have a significant impact on student satisfaction. The unstandardized coefficient ($B = 0.246$) indicates a weak relationship, but it is statistically significant.

CONCLUSION

This study investigated the impact of attributes of facilitator pedagogical competence such as —on student satisfaction with the major curriculum at the Institute of Engineering Technology, Katunayake. The research adopted a positivist stance and employed a deductive approach to test hypotheses derived from existing literature and theoretical frameworks.

The results of the study reveal compelling insights into the factors influencing student satisfaction within the context of higher engineering education. Facilitators subject matter expertise and reflective practices emerged as significant predictors of student satisfaction, with higher levels of these competencies correlating positively with increased satisfaction among students. These findings underscore the importance of

instructors possessing strong subject matter expertise and employing effective teaching methodologies in enhancing student learning experiences and satisfaction. The implications of these findings are substantial for educational institutions aiming to improve student satisfaction and educational outcomes. Future research could explore additional dimensions of facilitator characteristics and their nuanced effects on student satisfaction across diverse educational settings.

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THE EFFECT OF PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS ON JOB SATISFACTION AMONG STUDENT COUNSELLORS A SYSTEMATIC REVIEW IN THE PRIVATE HIGHER EDUCATION SECTOR OF SRI LANKA- WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE ABC PVT. LTD

Sachini Nagahawatta¹ and W. Aruni S. Peiris^{2*}

¹ Guildhall School of Business and Law, London Metropolitan University, United Kingdom

^{2,3} School of Business, ESOF Metro Campus, Colombo, Sri Lanka

*aruni.peiris@esoft.lk**

ABSTRACT

The higher education industry is one of the most significant industries that contributes towards the rapid enhancement of the human capital in an economy. Especially in the private higher education companies which bridge the gap to access to quality education the need for successful counseling in education is important. The student counselors as the frontline in the company who ensure such is facilitated. However, in the context of Sri Lankan higher education industry it has been identified that less research knowledge exists within the field of assessing the effect of performance management systems on job satisfaction on the student counselors. Though former studies have conducted discussion on enhancement of job satisfaction a knowledge gap was identified in the context of identifying the key factors that affect the performance management systems on job satisfaction. The study therefore adopted on the systematic review of 21 journal articles of 16 quantitative, 4 qualitative and 1 mixed method research articles of authors it was analyzed that the key factors of fairness, clarity of expectations, feedback, opportunities for development and recognition to determine the relationship between performance management systems and job satisfaction. As a result, the research study was able to achieve its research objectives by identifying the fairness, Clarity of Expectations, Feedback, Opportunities of development, and Recognition as key determinants of performance management systems and the positive relationship of its effect on job satisfaction. Thus, through the focus on these key determinants it will enable higher education companies and the employers to provide a more comprehensive and commendable work environment for student counselors, enhance the field of counseling in education as well as facilitate the higher education industry as a whole in Sri Lanka.

Keywords: Counseling In Education, Higher Education, Job Satisfaction, Performance Management Systems

INTRODUCTION

Higher education across the world faces continuous transformations throughout the world which has significantly shaped the manner in which its industry, organizations and people perform. According to Camilleri and Camilleri (2018), A number of researchers suggested that educational institutions can measure their performance by using Kaplan and Norton's (1992) Balanced Scorecard analysis. However, according to Dasanayaka (2021) despite the significance of the performance appraisal process in the higher education sector to enhance the job satisfaction and productivity of their academic staff, and non-academic staff only a limited amount of research work has been reported so far pertaining to this research scope. The Student Counselors or Student recruitment officers in the private higher education system need to be satisfied with their jobs if they are to play their expected role. The implication is that without improving the working conditions of student counselors and making them satisfied. The probable result is that very few of the educational aims can be properly achieved. If student counselors or recruiters did not exist, private higher education Institutions would have large problems in obtaining new enrollments for their educational programs. This has required the need for current alignment of the need of knowledge on counseling in education and review of literature to identify the key determinants that effect the performance management system on job satisfaction.

Thus, the researchers have identified the current need for conducting an extensive study on the research area to address the existing knowledge gap. The aim in conducting a systematic literature review is to raise the level of awareness on performance management system and job satisfaction, identify the key elements that affect the performance management in higher education institutions by evaluating, summarizing and critical assessment through contrasting and comparing the available studies. The study was conducted through 20 different research publications following different research approaches within the period of 2010-2024.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Counseling in Education

According to Levitt et al (2015) stated that the educational counseling process is undertaken by a group of specialists at multiple levels in the administrative, supervisory and educational work. Furthermore, Haskins and Singh (2015) commented that an important task of the educational process is student counseling, which is often close to the student to assist and guide him. According to Al-khamaiseh (2021) stated that educational counseling is the advisory services provided by the academic advisor. Therefore, whoever does this work must have a great degree of professional competence in helping the student to overcome any difficulties that he may encounter and directing him/her to be distinguished in their respective higher education studies.

Performance Management Systems and Job Satisfaction

Pulakos (2014) stated that many researchers and experienced practitioners have identified several characteristics that are prerequisites for effective performance management systems, there are also many decisions that need to be made to design a system ideally suited for a given organization's needs. One such decision is what purposes the system will serve. Further according to Umair et al (2016), commented that effective performance management system is highly important for the survival of any organization and an ineffective system leads towards the organizational destruction and create dissatisfaction and confusion among employees whereas satisfaction with performance management system brings overall job satisfaction and it is also positively related with Job satisfaction. According to Paposa & Kumar (2016), Performance management is one of the most important human resources development practices and is crucial for every organization. Further according to Halim (2019), stated that Quality of work life is an important concept that determines happiness in human life as well as job satisfaction that supports increased motivation, organizational commitment, and work productivity. According to Awan et al (2020), Performance Management is a systematic process for improving organizational performance by developing the performance of individuals and teams. It is a means of getting better results by understanding and managing performance within an agreed framework of planned goals, standards, and competency requirements. According to Mphahlele et al (2022), the objective of a performance management system is essentially to ensure that employees of the organization deliver timely on what management expects of them. According to Almulaiki (2023) stated that Performance management is a collection of interconnected and integrated activities designed to make sure that people obtain their desired performance outcomes while also advancing the objectives of the business as a whole. Amarasena (2020), argued that Job satisfaction can be understood as the way employees feel about their jobs and the different aspects of their jobs. Most of the extant literature explains employee job satisfaction as a function of the employee's features and the features of the job itself. Hassan et al (2022) stated that Job satisfaction is a complex element of job appraisal faced by employees. Due to its complexity, job satisfaction is perceived differently by every individual. It is pivotal for employee attitude/behavior, which is beneficial for the behavioral outcomes at the workplace. According to Jayathilaka (2017), There is a significant number of research studies in the area of performance management system, but those are investigating the impact using different variables such as employee performance. The above knowledge gap is bridged through the systematic review conducted by this study.

METHODOLOGY

The study aims to provide a comprehensive knowledge contribution on the effect of performance management systems on job satisfaction and the method followed is a systematic literature review following the inductive approach in order to gather the

literature and provide detailed research findings to address the knowledge gap. Following Snyder (2019) the study has followed a proper research aim, conducted literature selection following inductive reasoning, followed a thematic analysis using studies between 2010-2024 and compare and contrast the findings.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings have reviewed 21 journal articles majority done on the Asia- Pacific and African region context, with additional research being done on other countries in different disciplines. The below table 1 presents the key findings from the review articles as provided below.

Table 1- A compendium of research articles on Performance management system on Job Satisfaction

Name of the Journal	Authors	Year	Research Method	Research Context	Research strategy
Journal of Education and Practice	Amotemaa & Kyeremeh	2016	Qualitative	Ghanaian Universities	Literature Review
International Journal of Education and Knowledge Management (IJEKM)	Amarasena	2020	Quantitative	State Universities in Sri Lanka	Survey
Journal of Educational and Social Research	Al-Khamaiseh	2021	Quantitative	Educational Counselors and Students' Jordanian ministry of education and Queen Rania Al-Abdullah foundation for educational excellence	Survey
International Journal of Management Studies	Abdin, Muhamed & Ismail	2020	Quantitative	Audit Agency, Peninsular Malaysia	Survey
Journal of Emerging Technologies and Innovative Research	Chahar & Hatwal	2018	Qualitative		Literature Review

International Journal of Business and Management	Danish & Ali	2013	Quantitative	employees of diverse type of organizations of Pakistan	Survey
Education Science Journal	Dasanayaka, Abeykoon, Ranaweera and Koswatte	2021	Quantitative	Academic Staff in Higher Educational Institutions	Survey and semi-structured interviews
Pertanika Journal of Social Science and Humanities	Eduwen, Aluede & Ojugo	2014	Quantitative	School counsellors of Secondary Schools Nigeria	Survey
Journal of Asia Pacific Management and Business Application	Halim, Patricia & Nugroho	2019	Mixed-Method	Organization in Indonesia	Survey Semi-structured interviews
Public Administration Review	Hassan	2013	Quantitative	Offices in state government agency	Survey
Applied Psychology Journal	Lam, Yik & Schaubroeck	2013	Quantitative	tellers at a large international bank in HongKong.	Survey
Counseling and Values Journal	Levitt, Farry & Mazzarella	2015	Qualitative		Literature Review
Journal Pendidikan Indonesia	Ling	2019	Quantitative	Lecturers, Polytechnic Malaysia	Survey
Sage Journal	Paposa & Kumar	2015	Quantitative	Technical Education Institutes of Nagpur	Survey
European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology	Barbier, Hansez, Chmiel & Demerouti	2013	Quantitative	Belgian Public organization	Survey
Middle East Journal of Scientific Research	Imran, Ahmad & Nisar	2014	Quantitative	Libraries in Pakistan	Survey

International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences	Kuzulu & Ivem	2016	Qualitative		Literature Review
Journal of Human Resource Management	Mphahlele, Anne & Dachappalli	2022	Quantitative	Telecommunication company in South Africa	Survey
Africa Development and Resources Research Institute (ADRRI) journal	Munyoro, Zivanayi & Guti	2016	Quantitative	private Christian university in Zimbabwe	Questionnaire & interview
International Journal of Research and Review	Widodo, B., Rostina, C.F., Syifuddin, S. & Hendry	2023	Quantitative	Labuhanbatu District Education Office	Survey

(Source: Author Developed 2024)

In order to conduct the analysis of data on the identification of the pattern of findings factors of performance management systems on job satisfaction is followed using 21 journal articles. The common pattern identified consists of five key themes namely, 1) fairness, 2) clarity of experience, 3) feedback, 4) opportunities for development and 5) recognition. The following table discusses the different themes identified.

Table 2- Similar themes presented in the research journal articles

Identified general theme	Studies
Fairness	(Paposa et al, 2015); (Eduwen, Aluede. & Ojugo, 2014) (Halim, Patricia & Nugroho, 2019) (Amarasena, 2020) (Abdin, Ismail, Muhamed, and Nor, 2020) (Mphahlele, Anne. & Dachapalli 2022)
Clarity of expectations	Eduwen, Aluede. & Ojugo, 2014) (Hassan, 2013) (Levitt, Jerry & Mazarelle, 2015)
Feedback	(Paposa et al, 2015) (Hassan, 2013) (Lam, Yik, & Schaubroeck, 2013) (Ling, 2019)
Opportunities for development	(Widodo et al, 2023); (Chahar & Hatwal, 2018); (Danish & Ali, 2013) (Eduwen, Aluede, & Ojugo, 2014) (Barbier, Hansez,

	Chmiel & Demerouti, 2012) (Munyoro, Zivanayi and Guti, 2016)
Recognition	(Chahar & Hatwal, 2018); (Danish & Ali, 2013) (Amoatema & Kyeremeh, 2016) (Imran, Ahmad, Nisar, & Ahmad, 2014)

(Source: Author Developed 2024)

DISCUSSION

The results of the research findings have frequently been provided common themes by qualitative, quantitative, mixed method and systematic review of literature where fairness, clarity of expectations, feedback, opportunities for development and recognition has been identified. Fairness has been identified by different authors under 6 quantitative and 1 mixed method research articles as a key factor of influence for performance management and job satisfaction (Paposa et al, 2015); (Eduwen, Aluede. & Ojugo, 2014) (Halim, Patricia & Nugroho, 2019) (Amarasena, 2020) (Abdin, Ismail, Muhamed, and Nor, 2020) (Mphahlele, Anne. & Dachapalli 2022). Fairness emphasized the need for providing equitable working environment and recognition to the employees (Halim, Patricia & Nugroho, 2019), and thus, it discuss based on the research findings of Chahar & Hatwal, (2018) fairness ensures the employees to perform better at work and help derive a sense of satisfaction.

Clarity of expectations has been discussed as a key areas as well by 2 quantitative and 1 qualitative articles as a key factor of influence for performance management systems Eduwen, Aluede. & Ojugo, 2014) (Hassan, 2013) (Levitt, Jerry & Mazarelle, 2015). Accordingly, as the authors Eduwen et al, (2014) further emphasized that the role clarity is an important area of concern in order for counselors as employees to perform better which will help achieve organizational objectives and the employee objectives as well. As the third theme; the feedback as an evaluation tool is considered as a key area as identified by 4 quantitative studies that discuss the necessity for the constant feedback regarding the work in order to enhance the job satisfaction (Paposa et al, 2015) (Hassan, 2013) (Lam, Yik, & Schaubroeck, 2013) (Ling, 2019). As Lam et al, (2013) discuss the need for such feedback is to allow employees to assess their past and present performance and allow to plan their future. Further all four studies has discussed it as an effective form of performance appraisal to enhance job satisfaction.

Opportunities for development is another key theme identified by authors of 5 quantitative and 1 qualitative research articles (Widodo et al, 2023); (Chahar & Hatwal, 2018); (Danish & Ali, 2013) (Eduwen, Aluede, & Ojugo, 2014) (Barbier, Hansez, Chmiel & Demerouti, 2012) (Munyoro, Zivanayi and Guti, 2016). Both in private and public sector higher education organizations the facilitation for career progression, opportunities for growth has been considered to enhance job satisfaction (Barbier et al, 2012). These opportunities for development has to be initiated within the internal context of the organization.

The recognition as the final theme has been discussed by 2 quantitative and 2 qualitative research articles (Chahar & Hatwal, 2018); (Danish & Ali, 2013) (Amoatema & Kyeremeh, 2016) (Imran, Ahmad, Nisar, & Ahmad, 2014). According to authors the need for continuous recognition and appreciation is considered as a key tool to boost performance and job satisfaction (Amoatema & Kyeremeh, 2016). The recognition is important in such context to improve the employees. Hence, as key areas of importance to enhance the effect of performance management systems on job satisfaction the focus on the fairness, clarity of expectations, feedback, opportunities for development and recognition has been identified through the above systematic review. There have been other dissimilar factors identified which has not been discussed further.

CONCLUSION

The comprehensive knowledge on the private sector higher education companies' performance management systems and the front-line student counselors' job satisfaction is a critical requirement as it might impact on customer satisfaction as well as on the overall organization and industry. In such a scenario the knowledge and awareness regarding performance management and job satisfaction in the context of a higher education organization is important. This knowledge has both theoretical implications and practical relevance to contemporary industry in enhancing personnel management and performance enhancement. The objective of this study was to identify the manner in which former studies on performance management systems discuss its impact on job satisfaction in the education industry through a literature review. From the research findings, the research objectives were achieved by identifying the determinants of performance management systems as fairness, Clarity of Expectations, Feedback, Opportunities of development, and Recognition as key determinants that causes job satisfaction. Therefore, performance management systems affect job Satisfaction. These two concepts and their factors should work hand in hand to ensure success and survival of the private higher education industry.

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