

The Impact of Electronic Word of Mouth Communication on Online Purchase Intention: Mediating Effect of Brand Image with Special Reference to E-Retailers in Sri Lanka

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The present study investigates the impact of electronic word of mouth (eWOM) communication on online purchase intention and whether this relationship is mediated by the brand image concerning e-retailers in Sri Lanka. The researcher applied the quantitative approach with deductive reasoning as the primary research method. An electronically administered questionnaire was used to collect primary data from a sample of 250 e-retail customers. The data was analyzed using SPSS version 26 and Andrew F Hayes process procedure for SPSS version 3.0. This study revealed that the predictor variable, electronic word of mouth (eWOM) communication, positively affects the mediator variable, brand image, and the outcome variable, online purchase intention. The mediator variable, brand image, positively affects the outcome variable, online purchase intention. However, the direct effect of electronic word of mouth (eWOM) communication on online purchase intention is higher than the indirect effect through brand image. Hence, the researcher has concluded that the brand image works as a partial mediator between the predictor and outcome variables. The present study contributes practically important directions, especially to e-retailers to recognize how they can win a more significant number of customers by changing their purchasing behavior through effective eWOM communication. The researcher suggests that since the present study is confined to e-retailers, future studies should be conducted concerning other industries to further investigate the research issue.

Keywords: *Brand Image, Electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM) Communication, Online Purchase Intention, Retailers*