

## Consumer Attitudes Toward an E – Mail Campaign to Durable Goods in Sri Lanka and Campaign Impact on Purchase Intention.

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### Abstract

The majority of Sri Lankans are closely connected to the globalized environment and market, with significant improvements in environmental processes attributed to widespread internet usage. Over the past five years, Sri Lanka has experienced substantial growth in internet literacy. The advancements in Information Technology have facilitated a global network, enabling users to communicate without geographical or temporal constraints through email, which has become the predominant medium of communication and promotional campaigns. This research aimed to achieve the following objectives: measure the nature of attitudes towards durable goods, and assess the impact of attitudes towards an email campaign on purchase intention, utilizing the Consumer Tricomponent Attitude Model. The findings indicate a notable prevalence of email account usage for over a decade among respondents, particularly within the age group of 2-4 years, who habitually check their email accounts daily. More than 65% of respondents regularly view and read email newsletters, appreciating the convenience of hyperlinks that facilitate easy online purchases. The research concludes that, as a result of email newsletters, 22% of respondents express an intention to purchase durable goods online. This suggests that email newsletter campaigns for durable goods have the potential to influence consumer attitudes positively, leading to improved purchase intentions.

**Keywords:** Durable goods, Email newsletters, online marketing, Tri component model

### Introduction

Most of the Sri Lankans are very close to the globalized environment and market. As a result of internet usage, the environmental process also highly improved. In the current situation Sri Lanka has rapidly grown in internet literature, during 2000- 2007. CAGR (compound annual growth rate) is 130.5%. Among those people the majority has an e-mail address. E-Mail is one of the most established and evidenced methods of communication in the new world. Major reason is that most E-mail use; it is a cost effective and time efficient method of communication. This opportunity earliest used persons are marketers. They used email as a direct marketing tool for their advertising

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process. That is very useful to understand which type of process effectively used to influence the consumer attitudes towards e-mail campaigns. Presently various kinds of email campaigns are in Sri Lanka. Eg: Promote durable goods (TV, laptop, Notebook Computers, Multimedia Projectors & Printers, etc).

Recently released a new market research report - "Sri Lankan ICT Market Analysis" that includes details of the ICT industry in Sri Lanka. It explains the current and future scenario of the IT and telecom sectors covering Personal Computer, Internet, mobile & fixed telephony, and broadband. The report highlights the key success factors and challenging issues for the Sri Lankan ICT industry and provides a rational analysis on its various aspects. The research findings will help the investors, financial service providers and global IT and telecom players to evaluate their success chances in the growing ICT market in Sri Lanka. Between 2001 and 2007, Sri Lanka experienced substantial growth in its digital landscape, with a 143.99% Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) for broadband subscribers and a 40.2% CAGR for total internet users from 2004 to 2007. Additionally, the country saw a notable 20% increase in its IT workforce in 2006 compared to 2005. Presently, Sri Lanka continues to exhibit rapid growth in internet literature, with a CAGR of 130.5% during 2000-2007, encompassing approximately 280,000 internet users between 2000 and 2007. The email audiences can be categorized into three primary groups as follows: Individuals (for leisure or business purposes), Intermediaries (such as travel agents and wholesalers), and Corporate clients.

Sri Lankan consumers have a variety of attitudes regarding promotion. The country's businesses promote their products using television, radio, billboard, banner, handouts, events, exhibitions, etc. But as a result of the widespread use of the Internet around the country, a new marketing communication tool has come to the market as an Email campaign. As a result of this tool E marketers promote different kinds of goods and services through e-mail campaigns. These days the

majority of e marketers promote durable goods through e-mail campaigns.

In the context of Sri Lanka, the country is rapidly increasing E Marketing, e.g., marketing eye, Roomsnet, 3ccs, Zee bells, Target, etc. Currently SL has an online purchasing web site also. e.g., singersl.com, abans.com, room service.lk, avent.lk, flowers.lk, me.lk, lassanaflower.lk, etc. These kinds of web sites are promoting their product using an email campaign. As a result of this, nowadays Sri Lanka has created a new cyber market. Those cyber market customers have a variety of expectations to fulfill their needs using cyberspace (web sites).

Research problem identified as; Consumer attitudes toward an e – mail campaign to durable goods in Sri Lanka and its impact on purchase intention. So with this problem the research intended to measure the nature of attitude towards the durable goods and the impact of attitude towards an email campaign on purchase intention.

## Literature Review

An attitude is like a learned inclination, a tendency to consistently respond positively or negatively to something specific. Even though we can't directly see attitudes, we can figure them out from what people say or do (Dufrene, 2005). Now, it gets interesting when we dive into understanding why people feel a certain way about emails. Vriens (1998) was the to observe how people respond to direct mail offers, emphasizing that the content of the mail affects how likely someone is to notice it, and the appeal of the offer increases the chance of getting a response. Now, an attitude, according to psychology terms, has three parts: what the people think (cognitive), how people feel (affective), and what the people are likely to do about it (conative) which is called as the Tricomponent attitude model.

Cognitive component

Tricomponent attitude model consists of a person's cognitions, that is the knowledge and perceptions that are acquired by a combination of direct experience with the attitude object and related information from various sources. This knowledge and resulting perceptions commonly take the form of beliefs. That the attitude object possesses various attributes and that specific behavior will lead to specific outcomes.

**Knowledge:** Consumers vary in their knowledge about products and brands, depending on their personal experiences. For example, an individual might be highly knowledgeable about computers but not dishwashers, or about pet grooming but not broker services. These differences in knowledge have important implications for consumers' pre-purchase information search activities (Alba and Hutchinson, 1999). A large number of studies have found a negative relationship between knowledge and information search (Moore and Lehman, 1980; Anderson, 1979), suggesting that prior knowledge increases the consumer's confidence in his/her own evaluations.

**Perception:** Perception is the process by which people select, organize, and interpret information to form a meaningful picture of the world. Although Nagle and Holden (2002) believe that price merely represents the monetary value a buyer must give to a seller as part of a purchase agreement. Related to price perceptions, Goldsmith and Newell (1997) found shopping innovators to be less price sensitive than laggards whereas Korgaonkar and Smith (1986) reported no associations between purchase behavior and price consciousness. However, earlier Korgaonkar (1984) had concluded that non-store shopping would be most appealing to price-oriented individuals.

**An affective component:** A consumer's emotions or feelings about a particular product or brand constitute the affective component of an attitude. These emotions and feelings are frequently treated by consumer researchers as primary evaluative nature; they capture an individual's direct or global assessment of the attitude object.

**Feelings / Emotions:** Specifically, consumption emotions have been conceptualized as distinct categories of emotional experience and expressions, such as joy, anger, fear; or as a limited number of dimensions underlying emotional categories, such as pleasantness/unpleasantness, relaxation/action, or calmness/excitement (Izard, 1977; Plutchik, 1980). In the satisfaction literature, there has been a debate as to whether satisfaction is itself an emotional construct or a cognitive construct which includes an emotional component (Babin and Griffin, 1998; Bagozzi, 1991). Indeed, Wirtz and Bateson (1999) have suggested that satisfaction is a partly cognitive and partly effective (emotional) evaluation of a consumption experience and that separating the two is both valuable and necessary for modeling consumer behavior in service settings.

**Conative component:** This concerned with the tendency that an individual will undertake a specific action or behave in a particular way with regard to the attitude object. According to some interpretations, the conative component may include the actual behavior itself. This is frequently treated as an expansion of the consumer's intention to purchase.

**Purchasing Intention:** Purchase intention, a multifaceted phenomenon, is influenced by an array of factors ranging from individual beliefs and attitudes to external influences such as cultural, social, and environmental factors. As the market landscape evolves, ongoing research is essential to unravel new dimensions impacting consumers' intentions to purchase (Lu et al., 2016).

Lu, B., Fan, W., & Zhou, M. (2016). Social presence, trust, and social commerce purchase intention: An empirical research. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 56, 225–237.

**E-mail:** According to the Oxford American Dictionary e-mail stands for "messages distributed by electronic means from one computer user to one or more recipients via a network." Hoffman (2000) argues that e-mail has become "the most important innovation

since the development of the printing press" able to "transform not just the way individuals go about conducting their business with each other, but also the very essence of what it means to be a human being in society." According to Messaging Online (2000) "e-mail is the fastest-growing communications technology in history.

**Email Campaign:** Email campaign is a form of direct marketing which uses electronic mail as a means of communicating commercial messages to an audience. In its broadest sense, every email sent to a potential or current customer could be considered email campaigning. However, the term is usually used to refer to send emails with the purpose of enhancing the relationship of a merchant with its current or old customers and to encourage customer loyalty and repeat business, sending emails with the purpose of acquiring new customers or convincing old customers to buy something immediately and adding advertisements in e-mails sent by other companies to their customers.

## Methodology

This research employs a descriptive approach, utilizing the Tricomponent attitude model for analysis. The primary goals of this descriptive study involve delineating various aspects, typically related to market characteristics or functions. The research investigates into the cognitive (knowledge, perception), affective (feelings), and cognitive (purchase intention) dimensions. The target population comprises executive-level customers in the Middle, Upper Middle, and High-income classes of Colombo district. The sample size consists of 100 individuals selected through quota sampling techniques. Information is gathered using survey questionnaires designed to measure the Tricomponent attitude model, employing a Likert Scale ranging from "Strongly agree" (1) to "Strongly disagree" (5). The collected data was entered into MS Excel software and converted into the Statistical Package of Social Science (SPSS-22) for further analysis.

## Results

Sri Lanka is experiencing rapid development, particularly in internet literacy. Almost 100% of respondents acknowledge the internet's positive impact on life. Internet users commonly engage with email, with over 75 individuals checking their email daily. The study reveals that more than 65% of respondents view and read email newsletters, while only 30% browse the stated website on newsletters. Notably, 90% of respondents refrain from reporting spam, presenting a significant opportunity for email campaigners. Only 10% of newsletters are reported as spam.

Respondents often delete newsletters without reading them, with a mean value of 3.33, indicating a lack of interest in reading the content. The study identifies the deletion of emails upon appearing in the inbox as a prevalent behavior, with a mean value of 3.48 and 27% of respondents engaging in this practice, negatively impacting email campaigns.

A majority of respondents can recognize durable goods through email newsletters, with over 60% being familiar with such campaigns. The perception of purchasing durable goods online is positive among respondents, with 2.63 indicating a notable inclination toward online shopping, a growing trend in Sri Lanka. Approximately 20% of respondents express a likelihood to buy durable goods online, particularly focusing on newsletters, laptops, and mobile phones and the behavior is influenced by factors like age, income, and gender.

Regarding communication and purchase facilitation, 45% of respondents agree that email newsletters provide an easy way to communicate about products and purchases. However, around 30% disagree with this notion. The study indicates a positive perception of email campaigns in Sri Lanka, emphasizing their cost-effectiveness and ease of promoting products, with a strong mean value of 1.55.

Notably, 97% of respondents view the internet as a beneficial aspect of life. A substantial number of cus-

tomers express an intention to purchase durable goods through the internet, reinforcing the significance of email newsletters in influencing consumer behavior.

## Conclusion

Developing cognitive attitudes is crucial for increasing consumer purchase intention, particularly in the context of durable goods. Durable goods email newsletter campaigns can enhance their effectiveness by employing diverse strategies to address consumers' cognitive needs. Companies can benefit from the provided data to refine their campaign processes. Despite customers expressing a desire to purchase durable goods online, there's some hesitation due to concerns about relevant details not being adequately provided in email newsletters. Improving this relevance can significantly advantage durable goods email campaigners, considering that 90% of respondents avoid reporting spam, presenting a favorable opportunity for email marketers. Managers should recognize the trend and explore creative options for other products like televisions, refrigerators, and air conditioners.

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