

Deciphering Online Consumer Behaviour: Uncovering Factors Affecting Purchase Intentions for Electronic Items in Sri Lanka Using Ordered Probit Model

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journals.sagepub.com/home/gbr**Dharshana Rathnaweera^{1,2} and Ruwan Jayathilaka³** 

Abstract

This study identifies key determinants of Sri Lankan consumers' online purchase intention for electronic goods and quantifies their impact using an ordered probit regression model. The findings reveal that a 1% increase in online reviews is associated with a 0.33 percentage point increase in high purchase intention, while trust and word-of-mouth similarly exert strong positive effects (0.30 and 0.21 percentage points, respectively). Notable, delivery terms, although significant, play a lesser role compared to online reputation factors. These insights offer strategic implementation for e-commerce businesses, emphasizing the need for enhanced consumer trust mechanisms, proactive reputation management and optimized delivery strategies. Policy can leverage these findings to develop consumer protection frameworks that ensure reliability in online transactions, fostering long-term e-commerce growth in emerging markets.

Keywords

E-purchasing, online consumers, online consumer intention, online purchase intention, ordered probit

1. Introduction

Online shopping refers to the purchase of products or services over the internet. Unlike in physical markets, buyers and sellers do not interact in person during online transactions. On e-commerce websites, buyers (customers) engage in transactions with sellers, negotiate delivery terms and schedule deliveries based on predefined terms and conditions. Usually, consumers use electronic devices to peruse websites, choose items and complete transactions. Payment is often made using credit or debit cards upon confirming the final delivery. Rather than making immediate purchases, buyers often rely on available

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information, including feedback from previous buyers on social media platforms, before finalizing their purchase decisions.

The entry of the majority of consumers into the e-commerce market was largely prompted by the COVID-19 pandemic crisis. Mobility restrictions during the pandemic prevented consumers from accessing physical markets, leading them to turn to online shopping. Recognizing the advantages of online marketplaces, consumers swiftly transitioned from physical to online shopping. The convenience and ease of use of online platforms further facilitated this shift. Online retailing has revolutionized the way products are discovered, viewed and ordered, often entirely digitally (Akar, 2021; Ha, 2012; Wijesundara, 2008; Zarei et al., 2019). A noticeable shift in consumer behaviour towards online purchases was observed due to these factors. In 2022, internet penetration in Sri Lanka reached 52.6% (Erangi & Stecenko, 2024), driven by advancements in technology and increased awareness of the internet's benefits. On the demand side, this rise in connectivity enabled greater consumer access to digital marketplaces, influencing shopping preferences, increasing reliance on online reviews and reducing traditional retail dependency. Consumers, particularly younger demographics, prioritized convenience, product variety and price competitiveness, further reinforcing the shift towards online purchasing. Factors such as extensive connectivity options, broadband accessibility, the pervasive influence of social media and the popularity of e-commerce have contributed to this growth.

Online shopping is gaining popularity among consumers in Sri Lanka, not only in urban but also in rural areas. Young consumers are increasingly becoming familiar with computer tools, skills and online purchasing trends, making them more inclined towards online shopping. Advancements in computer technology cater to the evolving needs of users, enabling them to access a diverse range of innovative products through online platforms. Online shopping allows consumers to research products conveniently and compare them across different websites (Madugalle et al., 2023). Additionally, the convenience of online shopping, particularly in the face of busy lifestyles, appeals to young consumers who prefer hassle-free and time-saving shopping experiences.

Understanding the behaviour of Sri Lankan internet consumers is crucial for businesses to attract and retain customers effectively. Businesses may improve their offerings and cultivate enduring client relationships by determining the elements driving online buying behaviour. Online shopping has not yet reached its full potential, despite the quick growth of e-commerce options. Many customers have been hesitant to embrace online purchasing.

The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated the shift towards online shopping globally, with high-income households increasingly turning to online platforms for their shopping needs (Young et al., 2022). Consequently, the pandemic has underscored the importance of understanding the variables influencing online customer purchases.

Despite the increasing adoption of e-commerce, consumers remain concerned about delivery logistics, particularly in developing markets like Sri Lanka. Prior studies have extensively examined trust, online reviews and social influence in shaping online purchase behaviours, yet the role of delivery factors—including speed, reliability and cost—remains underexplored. While some research has acknowledged the importance of delivering customer satisfaction, it often fails to distinguish between general delivery factors (e.g., time, safety, convenience) and free delivery as a cost-based incentive (used as a marketing strategy). The latter plays a distinct role in consumer decision-making by reducing the perceived financial risk of online purchases.

Given this gap, this study investigates the impact of delivery, social media, electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM), trust, perceived risk, previous online purchase experience and country of origin on online purchase intentions (OPIs) for electronic items in Sri Lanka. Specifically, it aims to identify how these factors influence consumer trust, purchasing behaviour and willingness to engage in e-commerce.

Thus, the research seeks to answer the following question:

- How do delivery, social media, e-WOM, trust, perceived risk, previous online purchase experience and country of origin impact OPIs for electronic items in Sri Lanka?

By addressing this, the study provides practical insights for businesses optimizing delivery models and policymakers shaping e-commerce logistics regulations, ensuring consumer protection and market growth. This study stands out from others currently underway and holds potential benefit for society in various ways. Its local focus ensures a unique exploration of a model and its features not commonly utilized in similar research. By dividing online shoppers' purchase intentions into three types, this study offers readers a clearer understanding of consumer behaviour. Second, developing nations like Sri Lanka and its South Asian counterparts can leverage this research approach. Despite the familiarity of many consumers in Southeast Asia, including Sri Lanka, with online purchasing, understanding their needs and habits remains critical. This study addresses this gap and provides valuable insights for these regions. Third, this discovery holds significance for academic research in marketing and product development and enhances understanding of customer expectations and strategies for retaining customers over extended periods. Lastly, businesses engaged in online sales can benefit by closely tracking consumer demographics, developing strategic plans and fine-tuning marketing strategies. This proactive approach ensures staying ahead of the competition and gaining a competitive edge amidst shifting client expectations driven by technological advancements and cross-border marketplaces.

The remaining sections are organized as follows: Section 2 reviews the existing literature, discussing findings, underlying variables and the conceptual framework developed for this study. Section 3, Materials and Methods, outlines research methodology, including data collection and analysis methods. Section 4, Results and Discussions, evaluates empirical findings and their alignment with research objectives. Finally, Section 5, Conclusion and Policy Implications, presents recommendations and conclusions.

2. Literature Review

For this study, researchers referred to research articles related to OPI, consumer purchase intention, e-purchase, tele-purchase, consumer purchase, online purchase, delivery and delivery methods published from 2005 to 2024. Figure 1 depicts the flow diagram related to the literature, and a total of 78 full publications were identified as helpful resources for this study. After careful examination of titles and abstracts, 29 articles were excluded, leaving 64 articles selected for the present study.

Previous studies have identified several factors related to OPI as shown in Table 1. These factors vary mainly based on the culture and customer segmentation of each country. This study's proposed research framework focuses on the role of delivery terms in influencing consumer OPI for electronic items. Appendix A contains a summary of the literature search flow diagram.

2.1. Preserved Usefulness

Personal ingenuity and perceived utility have similar effects on attitudes and OPIs for men and women. Customers believe the seller is trying to present accurate, comprehensible and relevant information on the website (Matute et al., 2016). This effect is subtly created through perceived utility and trust. However, the subjective norm has a negligibly small impact on shopping behaviour. It is surprising to see how perceived utility marginally affects consumers' online purchase decisions and customers' intentions on the advantages of implementing e-commerce are influenced by their perceptions of the benefits

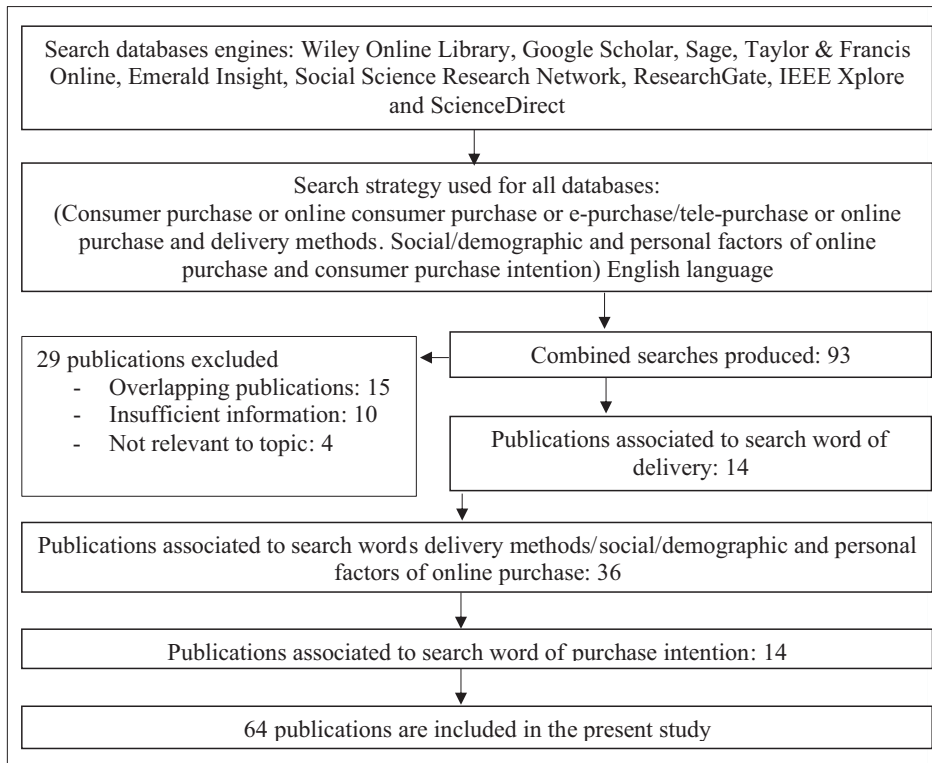


Figure 1. Literature Search Flow Diagram.

Table 1. Literature Review Table.

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Constructs</i>
<i>Purchase intention</i>	Preserved usefulness Preserved ease of use Attitude towards the behaviours Requirement fulfilment/repurchase
<i>Delivery</i>	Delivery term
<i>Social factors</i>	Social media Social influence Word-of-mouth
<i>Demographic factors</i>	Country of origin
<i>Personal factors</i>	Online reviews Trust Prior online purchase experience Risk

of online buying (Chiu et al., 2005; Dutta & Bhat, 2016; Lim et al., 2016; Matute et al., 2016; Raza et al., 2023; Tedjakusuma et al., 2023).

2.2. *Perceived Ease of Use*

A study was done in Sri Lanka to pinpoint the elements influencing consumers' plans to make online purchases from a technological and social commerce perspective. It was found that the relationship between perceived usability and purchase intention, as well as the connection between website content and purchase intention, is fully mediated by trustworthiness. Regarding attitudes and intentions for online purchases, men are more significantly affected by personal security awareness than women, whereas women are more influenced by perceived ease of purchase than men. When consumers participate in online auction marketplaces, trust and enjoyment with user convenience are important indications of satisfaction, which is perceptibly the most significant predictor of loyalty purchase intention (Akar, 2021; Schlaegel, 2015; Zarei et al., 2019). According to a study conducted in Vietnam, perceived ease of use is a small mediating factor in the association between mindfulness and Vietnamese customers' inclination to purchase this technology-based service (Hoang et al., 2024). Additionally, the relationship between perceived utility and purchase intention is partially mediated by trust (Athapaththu & Kulathunga, 2018; Cho & Sagynov, 2015), and the same study revealed, among other things, that consumers' intention to shop online is positively connected with how they perceive it is simple to utilize online stores.

2.3. *Attitude Towards the Behaviours*

Attitudes are defined as an individual's pleasant or bad feelings connected to a given behaviour. The construct of online buying intention was presented as a predecessor to online purchasing behaviour, among others (Herrando & Martín-De Hoyos, 2022; Peña-García et al., 2020). Trust in third-party assurances and a culture of trust have the greatest positive effects on intentions to continue making online purchases. Karpagam and Rajakrishnan (2022) studied consumers' attitudes towards online shopping and its impact, focusing particularly on the factors that influence these attitudes and identifying barriers that affect the online shopping experience. In contrast, trust in online merchants and a tendency to trust were both insignificant (Bianchi & Andrews, 2012; Cheah et al., 2015; Chiu et al., 2005). An individual will have a positive attitude towards a particular conduct if he assumes that the behaviour's execution will lead to primarily favourable outcomes.

2.4. *Requirement Fulfilment/Repurchase Intention*

Consumer happiness and repurchase intention are influenced by e-service quality, while repurchase intention is negatively impacted. Product price also affects the likelihood of repeat purchases but does not affect customer satisfaction. In Indian online repurchase intentions with e-satisfaction as a mediator, a study on Gen Y found that security, privacy concerns and trust are significant positive associations with repurchase intention (Trivedi & Yadav, 2018). According to Sembiring and Nisa's (2024) perceptions of the worth of online reviews, trust and perceived risk can all boost the intent of online shoppers and have a beneficial impact on actual purchases. Moreover, consumer happiness and repurchase intention are influenced by e-service quality, while repurchase intention is negatively impacted (Kautish & Sharma, 2019; Ma et al., 2021; Tandon & Kiran, 2018).

2.5. Delivery

There has been evidence for the past 10 years that the delivery mode or technique impacted consumers' intentions to make online purchases. Studies conducted in various regions of the world, such as the United States (US), the United Kingdom (UK), Greece, Pakistan and the Philippine territories, provided conclusive proof that the manner, particulars, timing and cost of delivery directly affect online consumers' intentions to make purchases (Figueroa, 2022; Khan & Faseeh, 2020; Ma, 2017; Milioti et al., 2021; Page-Thomas et al., 2006; Youn et al., 2014). Delivery is becoming increasingly important in developing countries, as many consumers are price-sensitive and may be discouraged from making online purchases if delivery fees are too high, especially in lower-income areas. Offering free delivery can help overcome logistical challenges and attract customers in rural areas, where other delivery options may be expensive or limited. Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that a similar impact is evident in all areas regarding online buying intention.

Sri Lankan origin of the online seller, selling of specialized products by the online seller, availability of a wide choice of payment methods, offering a wide assortment of foreign products by the online seller and the lack of trust in online payments have been identified as the key factors influencing online customers' choice of the 'cash on delivery' method in Sri Lanka (Karunaratna, 2021; Tandon & Kiran, 2018). Assuming that online purchasing is a novel concept in Sri Lanka, the present research must investigate the relationship between delivery and trust when using an online payment option in the Sri Lankan context.

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused a significant shift in online spending habits, with many internet users purchasing essentials such as food, beverages, cosmetics and medications. Amid health crises, customers' priorities shifted, leading to increased concerns about safety. This prompted them to seek out businesses that adhered to proper safety protocols, especially during this period (Grashuis et al., 2020; Movarrei et al., 2022; Zhao et al., 2023). Several scholars contended that perceptions of sanitary quality are a tactical and strategic factor that influences consumers' propensity to continue using alternative home delivery methods after the pandemic.

2.6. Social Media

Online sales can be significantly increased by using social media. Customers can be directed to another shopping website, but it can also entice them to stay on the platform longer and complete their entire purchase, thanks to its evolving features. If consumers believe that their needs for incentives can be easily satisfied, they are more likely to purchase products and services on social media (Irshad et al., 2020). Especially, female consumers paid substantially more attention to negative remarks than to good ones. In addition, the study found a strong link between customers' visual browsing habits and their propensity to buy, and the significance of habit in influencing purchase intention is demonstrated by its role in moderating the impact of social media advertising (Chen et al., 2022; Tirtayani et al., 2024). Additionally, consumers were unable to recognize fraudulent remarks. This is also supported by the notion of social sensitivity, which contends that other pertinent factors mitigate the effect of social media use on engagement in buying decisions.

2.7. Social Influence

Consumers can share their personal experiences by sharing their experiences using social platforms and chit-chatting with other members in web-based social groups that are actively promoted by e-commerce

businesses with a trustworthy environment. Social interaction and influences have an impact on customers' purchasing decisions and the possibility exists for impulsive purchases to be a formidable factor that shapes consumer behaviour and social media decision-making (S. Wang, 2024; Yin et al., 2019). Through the opinions of the existing customers, potential customers can have a better idea about the product quality, features and others via social influence. This is valid especially for electronic items with technology advancements, where products have a shorter lifespan in terms of their customer appeal. Most consumers increase the number of visits to retail websites and establish themselves as a hub for online consumers (Huang, 2012; Wu et al., 2022; Yin et al., 2019).

2.8. *Word-of-mouth (WOM)*

Online buying involves abundant e-WOM communication. Consumer trust is positively correlated with information quality. Additionally, their relationship is mediated by social psychological distance. The intention to buy is positively impacted by consumer trust. Constructs for the indirect effects via e-WOM and social value positively and significantly modify the relationship between two motivational types and OPI in social commerce (Akram et al., 2021). One of the most potent variables influencing brand image and purchase intention in consumer markets is e-WOM, and it has a direct influence on purchase decisions. e-WOM has a direct influence on purchase intention (Akram et al., 2021; Hasan & Utami, 2024; Jalilvand, 2012; Liao et al., 2021). Corporations must tread cautiously to address the aspects that significantly impact consumers' intentions while marketing their products on social networking sites like Facebook.

2.9. *Country of Origin*

Overall, the nation of origin indicates how the location of the product's manufacturing affects consumer opinions of it. As such, it is one of the crucial variables that may affect a consumer's buying intention (Bao et al., 2022; Huang et al., 2022; Nguyen et al., 2019). Customers could be concerned with the product quality and the reputation of the country of origin. It improves knowledge of how the country of origin affects e-commerce by narrowing the focus on culture and dependability. By addressing a high-level uncertainty avoidance culture inside the study framework, it broadens the already existing collection of examined cultures in the e-commerce environment. Moreover, the brand image of a product's quality from its country of origin is influenced by how that country is perceived (Tikhomirova et al., 2021; Zhou & Gao, 2024). Using these signs, customers can assess the reliability of the country and the products before deciding whether to purchase or not.

2.10. *Online Reviews*

Positive reviews typically encourage customers to develop emotional trust and boost confidence and trust in the product, which can have a powerful persuasion effect. Researchers from Bangladesh, South Korea, Taiwan, Thailand and Vietnam concluded that online reviews directly affect online shoppers' intentions to make purchases (Miah et al., 2022; Park et al., 2021; Tran, 2020). Positive internet reviews can increase consumers' purchase intentions, as they are perceived as more influential than negative reviews. On the other hand, brand competence (in contrast to brand warmth) can reduce purchase intention when customers come across negative online reviews (Li & Nan, 2023; Traore, 2024). Reviews

containing images are more useful and enhance trust. In particular, online reviews with outstanding ratings and images produced the strongest feelings of confidence among consumers.

Practitioners should closely monitor negative consumer feedback and promptly respond by personalizing product/service information and accounting for consumer factors like gender (Chen et al., 2022). Online reviews motivate using positive internet reviews as a marketing strategy to support consumers' purchasing decisions. Additionally, trustworthy celebrity endorsements and positive online reviews are variables that motivate consumers to make purchases on social media.

2.11. Trust

The available empirical findings show how trust traits have a sizeable impact on young customers' purchasing inclinations. Trust in websites and pleasant past interactions with an online store, in particular, have a direct beneficial impact on intentions to undertake online transactions; moreover, purchase intention effects are mediated by consumers' conceptual fluency and trust (Abdel Karim, 2021; Athapaththu & Kulathunga, 2018; Irshad et al., 2020; Park et al., 2021; R. Wang, 2024). It is noteworthy that men are more likely than women to shop online. Additionally, the brand's sense of loyalty, which is communicated by projecting an air of durability, strength, confidence and trust, usually influences the consumer's decision to purchase. Among the factors influencing purchase decisions is brand trust. Customers are less inclined to abandon or quickly replace a product when they are satisfied and have faith in it (Gupta & Kumar, 2023; Parasari et al., 2024; Thamizhvanan & Xavier, 2013). This means that the customer's buying intention is significantly influenced by factors such as impulse purchase orientation, prior online purchasing experience and online trust.

2.12. Prior Online Purchase Experience

Customers typically will not buy anything via the internet until they have previously made online purchases. Additionally, clients who have made purchases online in the past are more inclined to do so than those who have not purchased online. The amount of previous online shopping experience was also an excellent indicator of how mature consumers perceived the risks and benefits of online shopping (Kwon & Noh, 2010; Pappas, 2018). Furthermore, even though low experience demands a happy and high-trust combination, high experience can probably help people overcome low trust or negative emotions, in addition to prior online shopping experience and intention to make another purchase, with an emphasis on the impact of e-satisfaction (Chellaiah, 2024; Thamizhvanan & Xavier, 2013). By providing exclusive discounts or deals as a token of appreciation for sticking with the website for purchases, online retailers can also entice one-time customers to make repeat purchases. Online sellers should constantly have accurate and reliable information on the products sold on their website.

2.13. Risk

The most important exogenous factors that could influence purchase completion directly and sequentially through shopping incentives are decision ease and promotions. Although impulsivity is greatly slowed down by risk perception, it can nevertheless result in actual purchases being made (Kamalul Ariffin et al., 2018; Liao et al., 2021; Rejikumar & Asokan-Ajitha, 2021). Even when social risk was proven to be low, perceived risk variables dramatically lowered customers' intention to make online

purchases, and perceived risk can boost intentions to make online purchases, which will benefit actual purchases (Sembiring & Nisa, 2024). The primary concern among those that prevent buyers from making online purchases is the security risk. Consumers' perceptions of the hazards associated with online buying can have a detrimental impact on whether or not electronic commerce is accepted, but these perceptions are influenced by cultural factors that may have a variety of effects on various consumers as discussed in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. Additionally, the rise in online shopping also decreases the likelihood of purchase the more risk the consumer perceives.

3. Materials and Methods

The study's data and methodology are highlighted in this section, which contains subsections categorized regarding the data set used for the entire study and questionnaire design. These provide information about the questionnaire design, research framework and hypothesis, describing the basis for creating the conceptual framework, the study's hypotheses and the methodology used.

3.1. Materials

Based on quantitative information acquired through an online survey, the study examines the variables influencing consumer OPI for electronic devices in Sri Lanka. To choose respondents at random from a vast pool of email addresses that included all segmentations, an online questionnaire was issued to each one using the quantitative probability sampling approach. As this study concentrates on the quantitative component, the cross-sectional deductive research approach was taken into account. The online survey targeted people who make purchases online. Prior to the official online interview, each participant in this study gave their verbal consent. To gather the necessary data and other information, the researcher used a random sample strategy (out of online consumers), primarily online and focusing on users who make purchases online, specifically electronic items. A sample size calculator was used to determine the sample size using goodcalculators.com. In addition, an acceptable level of a 5% margin of error and a 95% confidence level were used to derive the sample size. According to the findings, a sample size of at least 385 would be necessary. The sample size was established in line with Digital Markets Insights eCommerce—Sri Lanka reports (Erangi & Stecenko, 2024). In accordance with these, 4.9 million online consumers were expected in 2022, and the suggested number of participants was 385. However, the collected sample of 501 data played a significant role in the study's validity and reliability. A threshold of significance of 0.05 was taken into account. This sampling method ensured that no bias existed in the data gathered. The clarity, understandability and relevancy of the questions were pretested with a pilot survey of 50 respondents (25 in online Google Forms and the remaining 25 in physical interviews). The researcher used Google Forms to disseminate questionnaires, performed online one-on-one interviews, carried out direct observations and acquired more trustworthy data.

The nine variables listed in the conceptual framework were sufficiently covered by the questionnaire (Appendix B). One dependent variable and nine independent variables were addressed by a minimum of two questions and a maximum of four questions in the conceptual framework. Selective variables were tested for their effects using the ordered probit model, and the mean value of the resulting variables was used to analyze the results. Explanations of the regression formula and the procedure of creating the questionnaire are provided in the below sections.

3.2. Questionnaire Design

The study draws on consumer ideas, knowledge and resources. Ethical considerations are crucial when collecting data from human participants. Authors of key research should be properly credited through citations. Before distributing the questionnaire, it is important to provide relevant information and clarify priorities. Participants should feel encouraged to raise any concerns, and researchers must be open to addressing their questions. The sample consisted of 501 respondents who had made an online purchase (electronic items), representing all 25 districts in Sri Lanka. The study's goal was to examine the variables influencing the respondents' intention to make an online purchase. This poll was conducted between January and March 2023. Considering the research participants' language proficiency, the questionnaire was made available in English, and verbal assistance was provided if requested by the participants. The questionnaire consisted of two sections: the respondent's personal information and elements that enabled respondents to intend to make purchases online, respectively. The final component of the survey utilized a five-point Likert scale with the extremes Strongly Disagree—1 to Strongly Agree—5. Since the survey was based on primary data, the data obtained underwent validity and reliability evaluations.

3.3. Research Framework and Hypotheses

Based on the literature review, the research framework was developed and indicated in Figure 2.

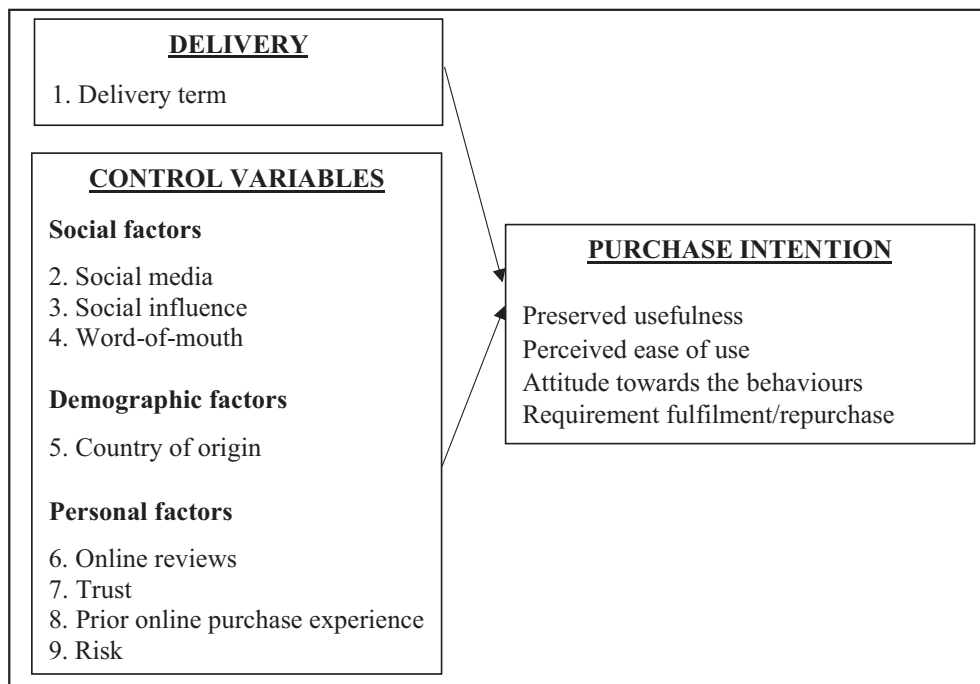


Figure 2. Research Framework for Adoption of Purchase Intention.

- H_1 : Delivery has a positive impact on the purchase intention of consumers.
 H_2 : Social media has a positive impact on the purchase intention of consumers.
 H_3 : Social influence has a positive impact on the purchase intention of consumers.
 H_4 : WOM has a positive impact on the purchase intention of consumers.
 H_5 : Country of origin has a positive impact on the purchase intention of consumers.
 H_6 : Online reviews have a positive impact on the purchase intention of consumers.
 H_7 : Trust has a positive impact on the purchase intention of consumers.
 H_8 : Prior online purchase experience has a positive impact on the purchase intention of consumers.
 H_9 : Risk has a positive impact on the purchase intention of consumers.

The research framework, which is a construct of the researcher, served as the foundation for the aforementioned hypotheses.

3.4. Method

The internal consistency of the responses was assessed using Cronbach's alpha method, and the results were tabulated. Prior to conducting a hypothesis test, descriptive statistics were computed for the dependent variable and the nine independent variables. According to previous studies and existing literature, the researchers employed the ordered probit regression model. This model has been used in many prominent literatures (Bianchi et al., 2023; Huang et al., 2021; Jayathilaka & Keembiyahetti, 2009; Kanchana & Jayathilaka, 2023; Luong, 2022; Richartz & Abdulai, 2022), which Aitchison and Silvey first developed in 1957, to model categorical response data. As such, it can be inferred that the model is effective in this investigation and that the validity of the results is solid.

For more than two outcomes of an ordinal dependent variable, ordered probit regression is a generalization of the frequently used probit analysis (Spector & Mazzeo, 2014). The likelihood of three different consumer purchasing intentions is also examined in this study. So, taking into account the equality of data for each group based on consumer purchase intention, online consumer buying intention is separated into three categories, the ordered probit model was created with three category groups ($k = 3$) as follows:

Group 0 ($y = 0$): low = Less than 3.17 is the mean of the online consumer's purchasing intentions (the mean of the consumer's purchase intentions is less than 3.17).

Group 1 ($y = 1$): moderate = Greater than or equal to 3.17 and less than 5 is the mean value of the online consumer's purchase intentions (≤ 3.17 is the mean value of the consumer's purchase intentions < 5).

Group 2 ($y = 2$): high = Higher than or equal to the mean value of the online consumer's purchase intentions than 5 (mean value of consumer's purchasing intentions ≥ 5).

The ordered probit's general equation is described below:

$$y_i^* = x_i' \beta + \varepsilon_i \quad (\text{A1})$$

The y_i value represents the i th value of the dependent variable, online consumer's purchasing intentions, and x_i represents the i th common independent variable. The β value is a vector parameter, and ε_i is considered as the normally distributed random error term with a zero mean. The following ordered probit model has been developed by detailing the general equation:

$$Y(PIN = 1, 2, 3) = X_i(\beta_0 + \beta_1 \ln(DEL) + \beta_2 \ln(SME) + \beta_3 \ln(SIN) + \beta_4 \ln(WOM) + \beta_5 \ln(COO) + \beta_6 \ln(ORE) + \beta_7 \ln(TRU) + \beta_8 \ln(POP) + \beta_9 \ln(RIS)) + \varepsilon_i \quad (\text{A2})$$

The factors that affect consumers' intentions to make online purchases are listed in Table 2 along with definitions from earlier literature.

4. Results and Discussions

The statistical analysis of the gathered data was performed using analysis programmes like SPSS and Stata. Table 3 displays the response reliability data. Calculating dependability for internal consistency is essential because the analysis is dependent on primary data. A reliability coefficient of more than 0.6 is satisfactory and often denotes an acceptable level of reliability (Cho, 2016).

The model consists of one dependent variable and nine independent variables. The Cronbach's alpha was calculated for each variable that had more than one question. Data dependability is regarded as adequate when the Cronbach's alpha value exceeds .7 (Adkins, 2011; Hill et al., 2008; Mohajan, 2017; Norman, 2014; Studenmund, 1987). All Cronbach's alpha values are greater than .7, as shown in Table 3. This measurement indicates that the items in the data set are sufficiently consistent. Consequently, it showed that the survey data were trustworthy and could be used for higher-level analysis.

Appendix C lists descriptive statistics of nine independent variables and one dependent variable. To accomplish the main goal of the research, estimates of the results are based on the ordered probit regression model. The survey data used for this study's calculation include 501 Sri Lankan customers who made online purchases. All nine independent variables were used to estimate the first ordered probit model of Equation 2, and the results are provided in Appendix D.

Table 2. Variable Definitions.

Variable	Description	Expected Sign(s)
<i>PIN</i>	Dummy variable to capture the consumer purchase intention, where low is denoted by 0, moderate as 1 and high as 2	(+)
<i>DEL</i>	Delivery. Five-point Likert scale variable with extremes 'Strongly Disagree—1' to 'Strongly Agree—5' will be used	(+)
<i>SME</i>	Five-point Likert scale variable with extremes 'Strongly Disagree—1' to 'Strongly Agree—5' to measure social media	(+)
<i>SIN</i>	Social influence. Five-point Likert scale variable with extremes 'Strongly Disagree—1' to 'Strongly Agree—5' will be used	(+)
<i>WOM</i>	Five-point Likert scale variable with extremes 'Strongly Disagree—1' to 'Strongly Agree—5' to measure word-of-mouth	(+)
<i>COO</i>	Country of origin. Five-point Likert scale variable with extremes 'Strongly Disagree—1' to 'Strongly Agree—5' will be used	(+)
<i>ORE</i>	Five-point Likert scale variable with extremes 'Strongly Disagree—1' to 'Strongly Agree—5' to measure online reviews	(+)
<i>TRU</i>	Trust. Five-point Likert scale variable with extremes 'Strongly Disagree—1' to 'Strongly Agree—5' will be used	(+)
<i>POP</i>	Five-point Likert scale variable with extremes 'Strongly Disagree—1' to 'Strongly Agree—5' to measure past online experience	(+)
<i>RIS</i>	Risk. Five-point Likert scale variable with extremes 'Strongly Disagree—1' to 'Strongly Agree—5' will be used	(+)

The forward stepwise strategy was used for variable selection for the first ordered probit model by using probit regression, which has been commonly used in most prominent articles (Falk & Hagsten, 2023; Jayathilaka, 2007; Owusu Ansah et al., 2022; Qi et al., 2022; Weerasena & Jayathilaka, 2023). For the variable selection for the final ordered probit model, the forward stepwise technique was adopted with a p value of .10 and previously selected variables for removal with p value $\geq .15$. After creating the final ordered probit model, an irrelevant variable called past online experience and social influence were disregarded from the stepwise regression. Moreover, risk and country of origin variables were also removed from the final analysis due to the insignificant level (p value is larger than .05). Table 4 displays the expected outcomes of the final ordered probit regression model. The explanation of the significant

Table 3. Internal Consistency.

Item	Observation	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha	Corrected Items – Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha If Item Deleted
PIN	501	12	.931	.779	.820
DEL	501	3	.828	.655	.829
SME	501	3	.856	.678	.825
SIN	501	3	.725	.758	.819
WOM	501	3	.805	.785	.817
COO	501	3	.765	.636	.829
ORE	501	3	.806	.532	.839
TRU	501	3	.864	.662	.828
POP	501	3	.836	.083	.867
RIS	501	3	.707	.094	.875

Table 4. Final Ordered Probit Regression Results.

Variable	Marginal Effects (in Percentages)				
	Estimate	Robust SE	Low (Y = 0)	Moderate (Y = 1)	High (Y = 2)
ORE	0.8991***	0.1511	-0.2557***	-0.0707**	0.3263***
TRU	0.8746***	0.1358	-0.2720***	-0.0301*	0.3021***
WOM	0.6168***	0.1322	-0.2053***	0.0004**	0.2050***
SME	0.3890**	0.1258	-0.1220**	-0.0154	0.1374**
DEL	0.3547***	0.0865	-0.1109***	-0.0157*	0.1265***
Ancillary Parameters	Marginal Effects After Stepwise				
Low	1.9261	0.2679	0.2424	0.4393	0.3183
Moderate	3.0971	0.2943			
Pseudo R ²	0.8132				
Log-likelihood	-351.2585				
Number of observations	501				

Note: *** Significant at the 1% level, **significant at the 5% level and *significant at the 10% level.

impacts of independent variables is supported by marginal effects, which are calculated individually for low, moderate and high consumer purchase intention. The number of observations, the adjusted log-likelihood index ratio and a goodness-of-fit metric are also shown.

According to the marginal impacts of online reviews, a 1% rise in online reviews of consumer online buying intentions results in a 0.26 percentage point decrease in the likelihood of low acceptance for the low group. It also indicates a probability of a 0.07 percentage point drop in the purchasing intentions of online consumers and a 0.33 percentage point increase in higher categories, respectively. Marginal effects for the low group at a 1% significance level show that online reviews significantly contribute to the decline in low purchase intention and the increase in high intention.

When considering their attributes, online reviews are a significant element in predicting online consumers' purchasing intentions. These findings were similar to those conducted in China and Bangladesh regions (Chen et al., 2022; Miah et al., 2022; Qiu & Zhang, 2023). These findings remarked that good online reviews and trustworthy celebrity endorsements are additional elements that drive consumers to make purchases through social media. The data suggest that practitioners should pay special attention to unfavourable remarks and promptly respond to them. From these findings and past findings, it can be concluded that consumer intent will be significantly influenced by internet reviews. These findings support previous claims that the most significant and negative estimate values are found in internet reviews.

According to the marginal impacts, a 1% increase in online consumers' trust results in a 0.27% reduction in the likelihood that they will have poor buying intentions category. Also, according to results, a 1% gain in consumer trust increases the likelihood that a consumer will fall into the high purchase intention group by 0.30%. In the Sri Lankan context, the association between perceived usability and purchase intention as well as the relationship between website content and intention to buy are entirely mediated by trustworthiness (Athapaththu & Kulathunga, 2018; Gupta & Kumar, 2023). Further, it was found that the relationship between perceived utility and purchase intention is slightly mediated by trust. The consumer's security and the trustworthiness of a web vendor in e-commerce transactions positively contribute to their trust in adopting e-commerce in the Sri Lankan market (Hapuarachchi, 2024; Ilmudeen, 2019). It showed compensation and social reasons had positive direct and indirect trust-mediated effects on customers' OPIs (Irshad et al., 2020). Yet, trust served as the sole mediator in the relationship between customers' need for empowerment and their intentions to make online purchases.

Also, when considering how WOM affects the OPI, a 1% increase in online WOM results in a 0.21 drop in the likelihood of low purchase intention. As evidenced by marginal effects, WOM significantly affects the fall of OPI of consumers. Also, a 1% increase in WOM shows the likelihood of an increase in online purchases by 0.004 percentage points for the moderate category and by 0.21 percentage points for the high category. These results were proven in recent studies (Akram et al., 2021; Nadroo et al., 2024; Prasad et al., 2019). Additionally, Lakchan and Samaraweera (2024) identify e-WOM as a moderating factor that weakens the relationship between perceived risk and online purchases. There is a strong positive impact of e-WOM on purchase intention, with constructs such as e-WOM and social value positively and significantly influencing the relationship between the two motivational types and OPI in social commerce (Rathnayake & Jayasuriya, 2021). Both e-WOM and social value have a substantial impact on customers' motivation to make an online purchase.

In addition, a 1% increase in social media reduces the likelihood of low OPI by 0.12 percentage points. The marginal effects for the low group demonstrate that social media greatly reduces their impulsive purchasing intentions. Further, a 1% increase in social media for the high categories results in a 0.14 percentage point increase in the possibility of falling into the high purchase intention group. A study in Sri Lanka and Pakistan has found that customers are more likely to purchase goods and services on social media when they feel their reward needs can be easily met. Moreover, social media influencers are

perceived to have a significant impact on shaping customers' decisions (Irshad et al., 2020; Le & Ngoc, 2024). The findings indicate that social media marketing strategies, including freebies, competitions, sweepstakes and product discounts, are likely to build customer confidence in social media stores, raising consumers' intentions to make online purchases.

The possibility of low consumer purchases falls by 0.11 percentage points for the low category for every 1% increase in online consumer delivery. Moreover, a 1% rise in online delivery results in a 0.02 percentage point decrease in the probability of becoming a moderate online consumer purchase and a 0.13 percentage point increase for the high group, respectively. With a more reliable delivery method, online consumer buying intent is better (ranging from low to moderate to high). Online users are significantly concerned about delivery terms, which is highly significant at the 1% level in both the low and the high groups, according to marginal effects for the low group. The examinations confirmed the aforementioned findings by Grashuis et al. (2020), Hong et al. (2023), Ma (2017), Page-Thomas et al. (2006) and Youn et al. (2014), showing statistical significance for delivery. The findings highlighted the significance and the necessity of educating online consumers to improve their delivery terms so that they can progressively switch to higher levels of online consumption. Most customers demand prompt and secure delivery in this regard when considering the contexts of Sri Lanka and other emerging Asian nations, which indicate that online shoppers are unaware of the delivery period before making an online purchase.

In most underdeveloped nations, especially after the rapid spread of the COVID-19 pandemic, including Sri Lanka, online shopping is not a novel notion. Consequently, the purpose of this study was to identify the variables influencing Sri Lankan customers' intentions to make online purchases in the entire island nation. It is perceptible from the study findings that aspects like online reviews, trust, WOM, social media and delivery terms can have a significant positive impact on a consumer's decision to make an online purchase.

The researcher had to take into account that the delivery of electronic items is a significant aspect in online customer purchasing prior to beginning the investigation. However, the results of the study showed that, in the context of Sri Lanka, online reviews had a greater influence on consumers' inclinations to purchase electrical devices online than did delivery. The preference for traditional shopping and product inspection in the Sri Lankan online market is reflected in the finding that 'delivery' was less significant than expected. Many customers place greater importance on WOM, social media, online reviews and trust rather than on delivery. Lower expectations for fast delivery can also be attributed to inconsistent delivery services and inadequate logistics, particularly in rural areas. This suggests that the online market in Sri Lanka is still evolving, and businesses should focus on improving infrastructure and delivery reliability to better meet customer expectations. The results also draw attention to certain important problems, such as how important internet reviews are as influencing variables. The study's researchers, however, do not make this assumption. While not legally addressed, the majority of these factors are appropriately controlled by the appropriate authority. The hesitation will therefore hinder these powers from accomplishing their stated purpose. Along with monitoring and utilizing social media optimization tactics, implementing effective marketing strategies to enhance product image and generate positive WOM is also important. Ultimately, there should be greater focus on delivering desired goods or services to end users.

This idea will be helpful for any goods or services related to online sales. According to an online survey on agricultural product sales, farmers and agribusiness owners need to pay close attention to providing after-sales services, such as checking the items' quality and quickly resolving customer concerns (Alena & Hasanah, 2023; Thathong et al., 2023). In this manner, WOM would be more likely. Jordan's online real estate research indicates that e-WOM functions as a mediator in the interaction between buying intention and visual social media marketing. It gives Jordanian real estate firms

knowledge about how to use visual social media marketing to convince clients to make a purchase (Al-Gasawneh et al., 2023; Iqbal et al., 2024). The online review elements with the largest influence on developing countries' inclination to engage in e-commerce are review timelines. Moreover, important factors that influence consumers' purchasing intentions on digital marketplaces; manufacturers, online marketers and retailers can develop competitive advantage in the global marketplace by improving technology, developing smart marketing plans and enhancing their market tactics (Gelaw et al., 2023; Ramadhan et al., 2022).

5. Conclusion

The main objective of this study was to identify the factors affecting consumer OPIs for electronic items in Sri Lanka. The investigation covered potential consumers throughout Sri Lanka and revealed that the most crucial elements influencing online customer intentions for electronic items include online reviews, trust, WOM, social media and delivery terms and these are aligned with Cheong et al. (2020), Miah et al. (2022), Park et al. (2021) and Reza Jalilvand and Samiei (2012). Achieving this research goal offers valuable insights into the most relevant factors in technology- and productivity-driven sectors on global markets, such as electronic products.

5.1 Academic Implications

OPI has significant academic implications for understanding consumer behaviour, shaping marketing strategies and driving the growth of e-commerce. This study helps identify the factors that influence online purchasing decisions, such as WOM, social media, online reviews, trust and delivery methods, all of which can assist organizations in developing effective marketing strategies. Additionally, it provides insights into how social media and mobile apps affect consumer behaviour. Examining OPIs also highlights demographic and cultural differences, helping businesses tailor their strategies to a diverse range of consumers. The study further emphasizes the importance of consumer security and trust, underscoring the need for secure payment methods and transparent return policies. Overall, this research contributes to both theoretical understanding and practical applications in the online economy.

5.2 Managerial Implications

The findings of this study will assist responsible governments and businesses in determining the significance of each influencing factor and developing appropriate strategies by providing evidence for policy-making. Therefore, utilizing the study findings, government and consumer affairs authorities can establish well-defined rules for a wide range of initiatives. This revelation will be particularly beneficial to small-scale business owners with limited resources. By developing distinct tactics for each area of their clientele, these businesses will be better positioned to increase their profit margins and acquire more passive clients in the near future.

Policymakers can identify the factors that significantly influence important clients in each category by dividing the consumer base based on the types of purchases made in every given industry. After identifying, examining and developing a proper marketing strategy, the consumer base can be systematically expanded. Subsequently, sectors will have the ability to broaden their primary clientele, thereby strengthening their competitive edge and maintaining earnings in a demanding and unstable environment.

5.3 Limitations and Further Research

This study has certain limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the study employs a cross-sectional design, meaning that data were collected at a single point in time. As a result, it does not capture longitudinal shifts in consumer behaviour or potential changes in purchase intentions over time. Future studies should consider a longitudinal approach to track evolving online shopping patterns and measure how external factors (e.g., economic fluctuations and technological advancements) influence consumer decisions.

Second, the study relies on self-reported survey data, which may introduce social desirability bias or inaccuracies due to participants' subjective perceptions. Respondents may overestimate or underestimate certain behaviours, affecting the reliability of the findings. To mitigate this, future research could complement survey data with transactional data from e-commerce platforms, eye-tracking studies or behavioural experiments to obtain more objective consumer insights.

Third, sampling representativeness and external validity are potential constraints. The study's sample consists of 501 online consumers from Sri Lanka, which, while providing useful insights, may not fully capture the diversity of online shoppers, particularly those in rural areas or from different socio-economic backgrounds. Additionally, the study focuses exclusively on electronic product purchases, limiting the generalizability of the findings to other e-commerce categories such as clothing, groceries or services. Future research should aim for broader demographic inclusion and conduct cross-industry and cross-country comparisons to assess whether the identified factors hold across different markets and product types.

Finally, while this study distinguishes between delivery (speed, reliability, security) and free delivery (a cost-based promotional incentive), including social media, e-WOM, trust, perceived risk, previous online purchase experience and country of origin, further exploration is needed on how these elements interact with different consumer segments. Future research could employ experimental methods to compare consumer responses to different delivery pricing models (e.g., free delivery with slower shipping vs. paid expedited delivery) and evaluate their impact on purchase decisions.

By addressing these limitations, future studies can enhance the robustness, applicability and strategic value of research on online consumer behaviour in e-commerce.

Authors' Contributions

Dharshana Rathnaweera conceptualised the study, conducted the literature review, designed the methodology, performed the data analysis and interpretation, and drafted the manuscript.

Ruwan Jayathilaka contributed to the methodological design, data interpretation, provided critical revisions to enhance the manuscript, and supervised the entire study.

Both authors reviewed and approved the final version of the manuscript.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The authors declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship and/or publication of this article.

Ethical Declaration

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