

# Determinants of Online Purchase Intention in Fast Fashion Retail Industry: Sri Lankan Perspective

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## Abstract

*Online purchasing is one of the major trend emerging in e-commerce and it is important for the marketers to be aware and understand the factors effecting on online purchase intention especially pertaining to fast fashion retail industry. Currently, there is an intense competition in the fast fashion retail industry, and it has become a greatest challenge for fashion retailing organizations to build long term relationships with their customers. There is an increasing need for the fashion retailers to identify and evaluate the determinants of online purchase intension in order to gain and retain their market share in an ever increasing competitive environment. The study used both primary and secondary data where primary data was collected through a well-structured online questionnaire and it was consisted of five demographic type questions and twenty-one Likert scale type questions. A total of 300 respondents were surveyed to identify significant factors based on their online purchase experiences. The research hypotheses were tested by means of multiple regression analysis with R software. Results of the study indicated that online trust, website quality and prior experience positively and significantly influence online purchase intention while shopping orientation and consumer behavior has no significant impact on online purchase intension.*

**Keywords:** *Online Purchase Intention, Online Trust, Prior Experience, Consumer Attitude, Shopping Orientation, Website Quality*

## **1. Introduction**

Sri Lanka has a growing fast fashion retail industry. The fast-fashion retail industry can be considered as a developed version of the apparel industry. The late seventeenth century was the beginning period of the emergence of the apparel industry. The industrial revolution, took place in the period from 1760 to 1840, witnessed for major industrialization and revolution which no doubt enhance the performance of the apparel industry too. This revolution caused to enhance the buyer perception towards the ready-made garments.

Europe can be considered as the birth place of the fast fashion industry. Europe has developed the sector to meet the rapidly changing preferences of young women who were very interested in fashion trends and continuously followed trends but at a fraction of the cost (Linden, 2016).

When developed countries are moving along with the fast fashion retail industry, as a developing country Sri Lanka has also adopted the emergence of the fast fashion retail industry. New advances in the internet and its associated technologies are opening great avenues for the development in many low and middle income countries. As a result, developing countries are rapidly acquiring information technologies to increase internet access in many sectors, despite the several barriers that stand in the way. E-commerce sales in the Asian region too have been growing at a steady rate. The latest statistics indicate that nearly 42% of the entire world's internet users live in this region. More than more and more people are using smartphones and smart mobile devices to purchase goods from online platforms. This trend is applicable to the fast fashion retail industry as well. However, with the phenomenal growth of mobile broadband connections and a rapidly increasing fixed internet connections, Sri Lanka is fast establishing itself as a potential regional ICT hub in the region.

It has been evidences that, increasing number of Sri Lankan consumers research their products online prior to making purchases while millennial remain the main consumers of online e-commerce sites. Therefore this will be a greatest opportunity for the Sri Lankan fast fashion retail industry to enhance their online purchase platforms.

## **1.1. Research Objectives**

The primary objective of this study is to identify the determinants of online purchase intention. Specifically, the researchers sought to explore the relative importance of factors such as online trust, shopping orientation, consumer attitude, website quality and prior experience on online purchase intention in the fast fashion retail industry in Sri Lanka. Further step has taken to investigate the effect of several demographic factors such as age, level of education, gender and income level on online purchase intention.

## **1.2. Research Questions**

This study addresses the following research questions.

- Q1: What factors influence the online purchase intention in the fast fashion retail industry?
- Q2: What are the significant factors which may influence the online purchase intention in the Sri Lankan fast fashion retail industry?
- Q3: What would be the impact of demographic variables on online purchase intention?

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1. Online Business**

Businesses that generate their revenue directly from their website belongs to online business category. E-commerce could deliver a significant benefit to the market segment in developing countries by increasing their control over its place in the supply chain, thus improving its market efficiency (Molla and Heeks, 2007). According to Schneider (2014), 1990 can be considered as the turning point of the online business. At that time some organizations had moved towards online shopping establishments (Schneider, 2014). Online customers expect fast, friendly, and high-quality services. They may demand choice, convenience, and responsive services with a personal touch (Gurvinder and Zhaobin, 2005). With the rapid development of web-based businesses, traditional market places had been deteriorated at a similar rate. In that case, e-commerce businesses provide both advantages and disadvantages to the society (Abdul, 2016).

## **2.2. Fast Fashion Retail Industry**

The emergence of the apparel industry really began with a brief history of British colony, started in the late seventeenth century. The introduction of the ready-made garment was made possibly through Britain's enclosure movement and the Industrial Revolution (Durieu, 2006). The present fashion market is highly competitive and the consistent need to 'refresh' product ranges implies that there is an inescapable move by many retailers to extend the number of seasons. This means that the recurrence with which the whole merchandise within a store has changed (Christopher, Lowson and Peck, 2004). With the rise of Omni channel retail, online business is enhancing traditional retail by empowering businesses to reach out to customers at several touch-points. It is the same with regard to fashion-oriented businesses (Johnsen, Miemczyk and Howard, 2017).

## **2.3. Emergence of Internet and its impact on the fast fashion industry**

The traditional marketing and fast fashion industry experience a revolution because of the emergence of the internet. Wei and Zhou (2011) studied several well-known fast-fashion retailers such as Zara, H&M, and UNIQLO. Those brands used low cost promotions and positioning strategies to support their operations. Quick manufacturing at an affordable price is the main concept of those retailers (Wei and Zhou, 2011). Some studies showed that there were a lot of retailers in the world and some of them used a multichannel strategy to conduct their businesses; it means both online business and offline business (King, Sen and Xia, 2004).

## **2.4. Online purchase intention**

According to the findings of the previous studies, four key factors are based on the offline store operations and they are the key determinants of the online purchase intention too. Those operations were offline store service, offline store merchandise, offline store atmosphere, and offline store layout. In par with that, online store service, online store merchandise, online store atmosphere, and online store navigation have been identified as the factors which influence the online purchase intention (Verhagen and Van Dolen, 2009). Online search intention can be considered as the key predictor of online purchase intention. There are some main factors affecting online search. Some of them are the utilitarian value of internet information search, the hedonic value of internet information search, perceived benefits of internet shopping, perceived risk of internet shopping, and purchase experience. Prior studies showed that these

factors positively affect the online search intention and online search intention positively affects the online purchase intention (Kim, Lee and Kim, 2004).

## **2.5. Factors affecting online purchase intention**

### **2.5.1. Website Quality**

Website quality can be considered as one of the critical steps to drive business online. Some studies showed that website quality is a multidimensional construct. This is true whether website users or website designers evaluated the website or whether the site was selling or not. According to a prior study, website quality can be divided into three major dimensions as system quality, information quality, and service quality (Lin, 2007). Website quality influences consumers' perceptions of product quality and it also affects online purchase intentions. By considering the investigations of the previous results, website quality can be considered as one of the prominent determinant of online purchase intention (Hsu, Chang and Chen, 2012).

### **2.5.2. Shopping orientation**

The study conducted by Leo, examined the relationship between shopping orientations, product types, and consumer intentions in using internet for shopping (Vijayarathy, 2003). There was a significant difference in the shopping orientation according to each demographic characteristics (Vijayarathy, 2003). Vast number of research have been investigated the relationship between shopping orientation and online purchase intention. Those studies have clearly proved that shopping orientation is a strong predictor for consumers' online purchase intention (Chen and Hung, 2015; Nirmala and Dewi, 2011).

### **2.5.3. Online Trust**

Trust can be defined in various ways. Credibility, reliability, or confidence can be considered as the concepts of trust. Past study has been conducted considering that online trust is a multidisciplinary perspective (Wang and Emurian, 2005). Purchasing products online often involves various levels of risk/uncertainty, especially when consumers need to provide an online retailer with their personal information such as credit card numbers. In this vulnerable situation, consumer's trust of a company may reduce any uncertainty that consumers may have regarding online shopping (Gefen, Karahanna and Straub, 2003).

### 2.5.4. Prior Experience

Many researchers have investigated that prior experience is one of the important factor affecting online purchase intention. Previous studies examined the relationship between internet shopping experience and the perceived risk associated with the use of the internet and making purchases online. The results shows that the internet users with no prior online shopping experiences, perceived higher risk than internet users with prior online shopping experiences (Liebermann and Stashevsky, 2002).

### 2.5.5. Consumer Attitude

Consumer attitude towards online purchasing can be determined in various ways. One of the prior research has found that website design, website reliability/fulfillment, website customer service, and website security/privacy are the four dominant factors that influence consumer perceptions with relating to online purchasing. There are different types of buyers and they have different evaluations of website design and website reliability/fulfillment but similar evaluations of website security/privacy issues. That finding showed that security/privacy issues are important to online buyers (Shergill and Chen, 2005).

### 2.6. Conceptual Frame work

Based on the prior studies, five determinants of online purchase intention were identified and used for the purpose of this study: website quality, online trust, prior experience, shopping orientation and consumer attitude (Figure 1).

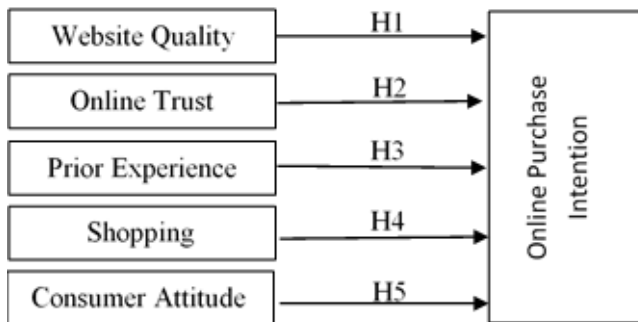


Figure 1: Conceptual Frame work

The following research hypotheses were formed with the purpose of addressing the identified research objectives. Each hypothesis accompanies a null hypothesis which states a no relationship between the said two variables.

H1: Website quality is positively associated with online purchase intention

H2: Online trust is positively associated with online purchase intention

H3: Prior Experience is positively associated with online purchase intention

H4: Shopping orientation is positively associated with online purchase intention

H5: Consumer attitude is positively associated with online purchase intention

### **3. Research Methodology**

#### **3.1 Population and sample**

The population of this study includes all the current and potential internet users in Sri Lankan context. The sample consists of 300 respondents who were chosen randomly to the extent possible. The 300 respondents were selected in different age groups and different areas to represent the country as a whole.

#### **3.2 Survey Instrument**

The primary data were collected via an online questionnaire. The measures, used to operationalize the constructs in this study, were mainly adopted from previous related studies. The questioner is consisted of two parts with twenty-six questions all together. The first part includes five questions mainly focusing on the demographic information of the participants. The second part includes 21 items on 5-point Likert scale (from 1-strongly disagree to 5-strongly agree). In order to measure the online purchase intention, this study used three survey questions. Website quality and online trust were measured using three and five survey questions respectively. Three survey questions were used for measuring each of prior experience and shopping orientation. Consumer attitude was measured using two survey items. Cronbach's Alpha was used to measure the reliability of the items. The questionnaire which has been adopted for this study is an established survey instrument and has been used in several research studies and has well established content validity. Therefore, the validity of the measurement was tested.

### 3.3 Data Analysis

First, a statistical reliability test was performed for evaluating the internal consistency of survey items. Descriptive statistics for each demographic variable and final scores for the Likert-style format items were calculated. A correlation analysis was used to examine the relationship among the variables. Finally, multiple regression analysis was conducted to identify the determinants of online purchase intention.

## 4. Data Collection and Analysis

The questionnaire was developed using online Google Docs and made available for the participants in the sample. Of the 300 participants in the sample, a total of 277 submitted responses to the online survey. The majority of the participants were female ( $n=175$ ) and 112 participants aged between 18 and 27. All responses received (277) were used for the subsequent analysis since none of them are consisted of missing values and invalid responses.

### 4.1. Analysis of Demographic Variables

The demographic variables of the study were analyzed by means of frequency and cumulative frequency distributions as given in Table 1. According to the sample information majority of the respondents are female (175, 63%). The study employed five age groups and majority of the respondents (112, 40%) belong to 18-27 group while just 4 (1.4%) participants were over 58 years. Most of the participants have passed at least the advanced level examination while 84 (30%) of them have either a degree or similar qualification. Majority of the participants do not belong to either fairly low income category (less than 25,000 LKR per month) or fairly high income category (above than 100,000 LKR per month).

### 4.2. Reliability Test

To determine the internal consistency of the survey items used in the instrument, the Cronbach alpha coefficient was used. The total scale reliability is high (0.77) and greater than the required threshold limit (0.7). The subscale reliability was high for all six dimensions: (a) 0.87 for website quality, (b) 0.79 for online trust, (c) 0.91 for prior experience, (d) 0.85 for shopping orientation and (e) 0.78 for customer attitude.



### 4.3. Correlation Analysis

Variables with a correlation coefficient between 0.6 and 0.8 are considered to have a strong relationship while variables with a correlation coefficient over 0.8 have nearly a perfect relationship. Prior experience (0.44), online trust (0.42), and website quality (0.36) indicate a moderate positive correlation between the dependent variable. Shopping orientation (0.3) and consumer attitude (0.31) indicate a fairly low correlation with the dependent variable. This provides some preliminary evidences regarding the determinants of online purchase intention. Thus, based on the correlation analysis, website quality, online trust and prior experience tend to impact on online purchase intention significantly.

**Table 1: Analysis of Demographic Variables**

		Frequency	Cumulative Frequency	%	Cumulative %
<b>Gender</b>	Female	175	175	63.18	63.18
	Male	102	277	36.82	100.00
<b>Age</b>	18-27 years	112	112	40.43	40.43
	28-37 years	78	190	28.16	68.59
	38-47 years	47	237	16.97	85.56
	48-57 years	36	273	13.00	98.56
	58 or above	4	274	1.44	100.00
<b>Education</b>	GCE O/L or below	20	20	7.22	7.22
	GCE A/L	76	96	27.44	34.66
	Diploma or Similar Qualification	59	155	21.30	55.96
	Degree or Similar Qualification	84	239	30.32	86.28
	Post Graduate ,Similar qualification	38	277	13.72	100.00
<b>Income</b>	Below 25000 LKR	9	9	3.25	3.25
	25,001 – 50,000 LKR	131	140	47.29	50.54
	50,001 – 75,000LKR	72	212	25.99	76.53
	75,001 - 100,000LKR	37	249	13.36	89.89
	Above 100,000LKR	28	277	10.11	100.00

### 4.4. Multiple Regression Analysis

Multiple regression analysis was employed in order to identify the underlying predictors of online purchase intention. Based on the results of the regression analysis, hypotheses were tested and Table 2 presents a summary of the findings. P-values for shopping orientation and consumer attitudes are greater than 0.05, such that the null hypotheses are accepted, concluding that there is no significant impact of shopping orientation and consumer attitude

on online purchase intention, with a 95% level of confidence. P-values for website quality, online trust and prior experience are less than 0.05, such that the alternative hypotheses are accepted, concluding that there are significant impact of website quality, online trust and prior experience, with a 95% level of confidence. Therefore website quality, online trust and prior experience, Online Trust and Website Quality are statistically significant in predicting the dependent variable; online purchase intention.

**Table 1: Hypothesis Testing Table**

Hypothesis		Estimate	P-value	Status of Null Hypothesis
H1: Website Quality	→ Online Purchase Intention	0.265273	0.00477 **	Rejected
H2: Online Trust	→ Online Purchase Intention	0.343302	3.88e-05 ***	Rejected
H3: Prior Experience	→ Online Purchase Intention	0.362302	5.36e-06 ***	Rejected
H4: Shopping Orientation	→ Online Purchase Intention	0.023865	0.71142	Accepted
H5: Consumer Attitude	→ Online Purchase Intention	0.058146	0.33495	Accepted

The estimated statistical model is given below based on the results of the multiple regression analysis ( $\epsilon$  denotes the error term).

$$\text{Online Purchase Intention} = 0.565 + 0.362* (\text{Prior Experience}) + 0.343* (\text{Online Trust}) + 0.265* (\text{Website Quality}) + \epsilon$$

Among the three significant independent variables, prior experience has the highest coefficient value which indicates that among the three determinants of online purchase intention, prior experience has the highest impact. Respectively, online trust (0.343) and website quality (0.265) impact on the online purchase intention. Multiple R-squared value is 0.881, indicates that approximately 88.1% variation in online purchase intention is explained by the three significant independent variables.

#### 4.5. ANOVA Test

ANOVA test was performed to check the significance of the model where the null hypothesis states that the model is not significant.

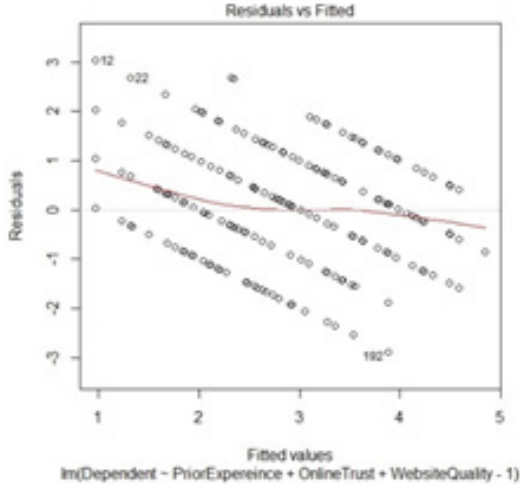
**Table 3: ANOVA Table**

	<b>Df</b>	<b>Sum Sq</b>	<b>Mean Sq</b>	<b>F value</b>	<b>Pr(&gt;F)</b>
Prior Experience	1	2354.38	2354.38	1918.252	2.2e-16 ***
Online Trust	1	114.98	114.98	93.680	2.2e-16 ***
Website Quality	1	32.35	32.35	26.354	5.397e-07 ***
Residuals	274	336.30	1.23		

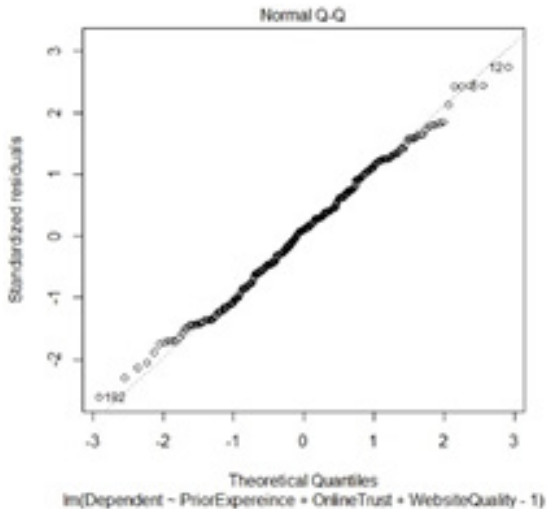
P values of prior experience (0.000), website quality (0.000), and online trust (0.000) are all less than 0.05 (Table 3), such that the null hypothesis can be rejected at a 5 percent level of significance. It can be concluded that there is 95% percent evidence that the model is significant.

Two more tests were conducted to check the autocorrelation of the residuals and multicollinearity. Autocorrelation was tested in terms of Durbin Watson (DW) test. DW statistic is 2.16 (P-value >0.05), such that it can be concluded that the residuals are not linearly auto-correlated. The results of the correlation analysis reveals no significant correlations among the independent variables. However, to further confirm, variance inflation factor (VIF) values for computed for each independent variables. VIFs for prior experience, online trust and website quality are 6.70, 6.809 and 6.128 respectively. All these values are well below the threshold (10), such that there is no multicollinearity issue in the dataset.

A residual analysis was conducted in order to detect any violations of assumptions made in the regression analysis such as non-linearity, unequal error variance and outliers. Residuals were plotted against the fitted values and there are no unusual data points in the data set and they are seem to be distributed randomly as depicted in the Figure 2. Therefore it can be concluded that the residuals are independent and they have a constant variance.



A normal probability plot was created to assess whether the dataset is approximately normally distributed. The residuals from the model fit were plotted against a theoretical normal distribution. As depicted in Figure 3, the points are distributed near to the straight line. Thus, the normal probability test confirms that the data set is approximately normally distributed.



## **5. Discussion**

Within the study context, findings indicate that the impact of demographic variables on online purchase intention is insignificant. Among the five factors identified through the literature review, only website quality, online trust and prior experience are positively and significantly associated with online purchase intention while there is no any significant affect from shopping orientation and consumer attitude.

Among these three determinants, the prior experience can be considered as the highest influential factor towards online purchase intention. Such that based on their prior experiences, consumers tend to use online purchasing websites in the future. Therefore, usefulness, ease of use, and benefits are some of the factors that consumers may remember after visiting a physical store or making an online purchase. Rather than shopping through new websites, consumers are more likely to shop via the websites which are more familiar to them. In order to obtain the customers' attraction, sellers are required to add value to their websites and differentiate their sites continuously. At his/her first visit, if the customer receives the expected satisfaction from his/her online shopping experiences, there is more likely that he/she is willing to do more transactions with the same website in the future too. In order to give a worthy and memorable experience to the customers, Sri Lankan fast fashion retailers may add modifications such as incentives and rewards, online live chat support, free deliveries and offers to their shopping websites.

Online trust is the second most significant factor which affects the online purchasing decision. Trust has been identified as one of the main determinants of the success of e-retailers, and much research has been conducted with regard to web site features triggering consumer trust. Considering the Sri Lankan scenario, fast fashion retailing sector consists of both well-established online retailers and those who are fairly new to the online retailing environment. When making online purchases, lack of clear legal norms and issues pertaining to trust may effect on online transactions. Trust is a factor that cannot be built immediately or there is no any specific way to build it, making things hard for online retailers. Sellers should consider every single aspects when

doing online businesses. Trust is an effective method to reduce uncertainty in e-commerce and plays a critical role in purchasing processes where consumers look for high-quality goods. Creating the “About Us” page, updating contact information, and creating a privacy policy are some of things that can be done by retailers to enhance trust of their websites.

The third most influential factor on online purchase is website quality. When using websites, consumers primarily focus on the website design, information, ease of use, etc. At present, there are immense number of fast fashion retailing websites, making it really a big challenge to the fast-fashion retailers to enhance the website quality to satisfy the consumers by differentiating from competitors. Information quality, service quality, and the website design are some other features which combine with the website quality. To enhance the quality of their websites, Sri Lankan fast fashion retailers can create more user friendly websites, provide clear information, and modify websites using modern technology. One such modern technology is referred as virtual reality (VR) shopping platforms. By using VR technology, consumers can feel a memorable experience from the home, just like the experience they get when they visit the physical store. Sri Lankan retailers too can modify their websites by using these new technologies to the extent possible.

## **6. Conclusion**

### **6.1. Limitations and Future Research**

The overall results of this study validate and add to previous research that explore determinants of online purchase intention. However, limitations for this study exist that should be considered for future research to increase the generalizability. One significant limitation of the study is that the participants were predominantly drawn from one single industry; fast fashion retailing. Therefore, the results of this study may be applicable only to the sample represented. Future research studies should extend over to other industries like hotel, insurance and banking. The present study employed only factors in its attempt to identify the determinants of online purchase intention (prior experience, website quality, online trust, shopping orientation and consumer attitude). A fruitful extension for future work can be done by examining a

more comprehensive model of consumer online purchase intention by incorporating factors associated with Sri Lankan culture such as the impact of family, friends, lifestyle and personality factors. Another limitation of the study is that the Sri Lankan consumers are still not technologically savvy. This limitation might have influenced the findings of the study. Present study setting did not allow to observe whether consumers actually reserve online (i.e. at a competing website) or offline (i.e. by telephone, direct mail or through physical shopping place). This study is quantitative in nature, hence a future study can use qualitative aspect too by specially referencing to a particular organization.

## **6.2. Recommendation**

Today, the consumers are well knowledgeable and they are always looking for better deals with more benefits, making it difficult to maintain consumer purchase intention and to keep consumers loyal to one particular brand. Consumers are continuously exposed to new services and new experiences in both internet technology and fast fashion retail industry, thus marketers have a great challenge to retain their customers and attract new customers to their organizations. The purpose of this study was to find out the factors affecting the online purchase intention in fast fashion retailing industry in Sri Lanka.

According to the findings of the study, there is a higher level of online purchases in the fast fashion retailing sector. Therefore it is important for the fashion retailing organizations that engage online businesses to attract their customers to their brands and keep long term relationships with them by addressing key influencing factors on online purchase intention. Prior experience, online trust, and website quality significantly influence on the online purchase intention. Therefore marketers need to understand those factors well and the effect of those factors on the online purchase intention of their consumers. To maintain or to increase online purchase intentions, marketers should take actions such as adding value to the websites to positively enhance the consumer prior experiences, taking necessary actions to provide secure services and maintain an attractive and well-performed websites.

### 6.3. Conclusion

The fast fashion retailing industry operates in a highly dynamic and competitive environment and has been rapidly growing over the years. Fast fashion retailers are grabbing the market at a high pace with the rapid increase in the development and penetration of internet. This study provides an insight into the determinants of online purchase intention in the fast fashion retailing industry in Sri Lanka.

It can be concluded that online retailing has been growing rapidly in the fast fashion industry and factors such as prior experience, online trust, and website quality significantly influence online purchase intention in the fast fashion industry in Sri Lanka. Among all the influencing factors prior experience and online trust have a high impact on the online purchase intention. Therefore the management of fashion retailing organizations should focus on the factors such as website quality, online trust, and previous experience. Also, they need keep update about the ever improving internet technologies and other technologies relevant to fast fashion industry, since technology highly influences online customers.

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