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**THE IMPACT OF ONLINE REVIEWS ON SRI LANKAN
CONSUMERS' PURCHASE INTENTION**

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Thesis/Dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

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DECLARATION

I declare that this is my work, and this dissertation does not incorporate without acknowledgment any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any other University or Institute of higher learning, and to the best of my knowledge and belief, it does not contain any material previously published or written by another person except where the acknowledgment is made in the text. I retain the right to use this content in whole or part in future works (such as articles or books).

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The above candidate has completed our research for the master's dissertation under my supervision. I confirm that the declaration made above by the student is true and correct.

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02.08.2024

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ABSTRACT

The surge in e-commerce and advancements in IT infrastructure have revolutionized the way consumers shop, with online reviews playing a crucial role in shaping purchase decisions. Despite their significance, limited research exists on online reviews in the Sri Lankan context. This study investigates the impact of online review credibility on the purchasing intentions of Sri Lankan consumers, with a focus on the moderating effect of product types. Three key aspects of online reviews are explored: reviewer expertise, review consistency, and review sidedness. The quantitative analysis reveals that reviewer expertise significantly enhances purchase intentions, especially when reviews are consistent, thereby boosting perceived credibility. Moreover, reviews that balanced both positive and negative sentiments (review-sidedness) were found to be more influential on consumer behavior.

This research contributes to academic discussions on the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) by demonstrating how the central and peripheral routes are influenced by the credibility of online reviews, further affected by product type as a moderating variable. Businesses can leverage the importance of reviewer expertise and balanced review sentiments in their marketing strategies to enhance consumer trust and engagement, particularly in online platforms.

Keywords: Online reviews, Purchasing intention, Product type, Reviewer Expertise, Review Consistency, Review Sidedness

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Abbreviation	Description
EML	Elaboration Likelihood Model
IV	Independent Variable
DV	Dependent Variable
RE	Reviewer's Expertise
RC	Review Consistency
RS	Review Sidedness
PI	Purchasing Intension
PT	Product Type

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