



Faculty of Management Studies
Rajarata University of Sri Lanka

3RD INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH SYMPOSIUM ON MANAGEMENT

“Strengthening Management Ecosystems for Sustainable Futures”

NOV 28
2024



2024 **irms**

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BUILDING BRAND TRUST AND SUSTAINABILITY OF MSMEs THROUGH STORYTELLING: STRATEGIES FOR MARKETING ECO-FRIENDLY PRODUCTS

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ABSTRACT

In a competitive market for eco-friendly products, MSMEs need effective marketing strategies to build brand trust and sustainability. Research shows that consumers increasingly prioritize sustainability in their purchasing decisions. Storytelling is a powerful tool for achieving these goals. The objective of this study is to analyze how storytelling serves as an effective marketing tool for MSMEs to enhance brand trust and promote sustainability in eco-friendly products. To develop brand trust and sustainability for MSMEs that specialize in eco-friendly products, this study examined the critical role played by storytelling. This study employs a mixed-methods approach to examine the impact of narrative-driven marketing on consumer perceptions and behaviors. Surveys were conducted with 65 customers using convenience sampling, and participants were selected based on their availability and willingness. Focus group discussions were held with 18 MSMEs, chosen through purposive sampling to ensure relevant insights on narrative-driven marketing. This combined approach provided a well-rounded understanding of the topic from both consumer and MSME perspectives. The findings show that a strong narrative builds a stronger emotional bond between consumers and environmentally friendly products in addition to improving brand trust. Furthermore, the research delineates the pivotal tactics that MSMEs might employ to effectively convey their endeavors toward sustainability and ethical conduct, thereby fostering enduring patronage. This study advances the knowledge of environmentally concerned consumers' perceptions of sustainable marketing strategies and emphasizes the use of storytelling to elevate brand trust. MSME owners indicated that authentic narratives about sustainability practices foster transparency and increase consumer trust. Customers felt a stronger connection with brands that shared personal stories with founders and employees. The narratives highlight sustainability journeys, such as ethical sourcing and reducing environmental impact, appealing to eco-conscious consumers. Storytelling cultivates emotional connections by illustrating real-life impacts and encouraging customer loyalty and advocacy. This research provides actionable insights for MSMEs to enhance marketing strategies through storytelling focused on sustainability and strengthening brand identity and consumer trust. Policymakers can support these efforts by offering resources and training in effective storytelling and sustainable marketing practices, highlighting the potential of storytelling to engage consumers and promote sustainable practices in eco-friendly product marketing for MSMEs in Sri Lanka.

Keywords: Eco-friendly, Storytelling Marketing, Sustainability, SMEs, Strategies