

# Emotional Cartwheels: Exploring the Online Shopping Psyche of Sri Lankan Consumers

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**Abstract** - This study investigates the emotional influences on online shopping behavior among Sri Lankan consumers, focusing on the roles of excitement and anxiety. Through a qualitative research approach, we explore how these emotions impact consumer decisions and overall satisfaction at different stages of the online shopping journey. The study sample comprised 30 participants, including both males and females, aged between 18 and 60 years, residing in various urban and suburban areas of Sri Lanka. The findings reveal that excitement, particularly during the browsing stage, often leads to impulsive purchasing behaviors, while anxiety, especially during the decision-making and purchase stages, acts as a significant barrier to completing transactions. Additionally, cultural influences, such as collectivist values and social harmony, play critical roles in shaping these emotional responses and shopping behaviors. This study provides practical insights for online retailers to enhance the shopping experience by addressing these emotional triggers and building stronger relationships with Sri Lankan consumers. By addressing the limitations and suggesting directions for future research, this paper contributes to the limited literature on online shopping emotions in the Sri Lankan context.

**Keywords:** Online Shopping, Consumer Behavior, Emotions, Sri Lanka, Excitement, Anxiety

## I. INTRODUCTION

Online shopping has become a key aspect of consumer behavior globally, and Sri Lanka is no exception. The expansion of internet access and the widespread use of smartphones have dramatically changed the retail environment in Sri Lanka. According to the Department of Census and Statistics Sri Lanka (2022), internet penetration in the country has reached approximately 50%, with a growing number of consumers engaging in online shopping activities. This shift towards e-commerce has been further supported by the COVID-19 pandemic, which necessitated social distancing measures and led to a substantial increase in online transactions (Edirisinghe, 2021; Gu et al., 2021).

The rapid growth of e-commerce in Sri Lanka has brought about significant changes in consumer behavior. The convenience of shopping from home, the ability to compare prices easily, and the access to a wider range of products are some of the key factors driving this shift (Athapaththu & Kulathunga, 2018). Additionally, the availability of various payment options, including cash on delivery, bank transfers, and mobile payments, has further facilitated the adoption of online shopping among Sri Lankan consumers (Karunarathne et al., 2019). This transition has also been influenced by the increasing trust in online transactions, as e-commerce platforms enhance their security measures to protect consumer data (Aboobucker et al., 2019).

Emotions play a critical role in influencing consumer behavior, especially in the context of online shopping. The digital environment, characterized by its impersonal nature and lack of physical interaction, can lead to a range of emotional responses among consumers. Excitement, driven by the anticipation of finding new and desirable products, and anxiety, arisen from concerns about security and the reliability of online transactions, are two prominent emotions that significantly impact online shopping behavior (Reer et

al., 2022; Verhagen & Dolen, 2011). As such, understanding these emotional responses becomes crucial for online retailers aiming to enhance consumer satisfaction and develop customer loyalty.

Excitement in online shopping often arises from the discovery of new products, special deals, and the overall shopping experience. This excitement can be improved by personalized recommendations, limited-time offers, and engaging website designs (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2019). In fact, the use of bright colors, dynamic graphics, and interactive elements can create a sense of thrill and anticipation, encouraging consumers to spend more time on the website and make impulsive purchases (Wang et al., 2015). Moreover, the availability of detailed product descriptions, customer reviews, and high-quality images can further enhance the excitement by providing consumers with the information they need to make informed decisions (Bauer et al., 2019).

Conversely, anxiety in online shopping is primarily driven by concerns about the safety and security of online transactions, the authenticity of products, and the reliability of delivery services. Consumers tend to worry about the potential for fraud, identity theft, and the misuse of personal information (Duralia, 2024). Additionally, the inability to physically inspect products before purchase can lead to dilemmas about product quality and suitability (Singh et al., 2024). To minimize these concerns, e-commerce platforms must implement effective security measures, offer transparent return policies, and provide excellent customer service to build trust and reassure consumers (Zhang et al., 2018).

Despite the extensive amount of research on consumer emotions in online shopping worldwide, there is limited research conducted in this area focusing on the Sri Lankan context. Moreover, the unique cultural context of Sri Lanka, characterized by collectivism, high power distance, and a strong sense of community, tend to significantly influence online shopping behavior. According to Fernando and others (2019), word-of-mouth recommendations and social proof may play a crucial role in shaping Sri Lankan consumer's trust and confidence in e-commerce platforms. Additionally, socio-economic factors such as income levels, education, and access to technology can affect Sri Lankan consumers' willingness and ability to engage in online shopping. As such, it is essential to consider these cultural and socio-economic dimensions when studying the emotional influences on online shopping behavior in Sri Lanka (Perera et al., 2022). Nevertheless, prior studies have primarily focused on Western markets related to consumer emotions in online shopping, hardly any studies have been conducted to the Sri Lankan context. This has led to a significant void in understanding the variations of Sri Lankan consumer behavior in the digital space (Gu et al., 2021; PeNa-Garcia et al., 2020) to date, which calls for a timely investigation.

As such, this study aims to address the said void by exploring the emotional responses of Sri Lankan consumers during the online shopping process. Specifically, it investigates how excitement and anxiety experienced at different stages of the online shopping journey influence consumer decisions and their overall satisfaction. By doing so, the study confirms its significance in several ways. Firstly, it contributes to the limited knowledge on consumer emotions in online shopping, especially related to the context of Sri Lanka, thereby contributing to lessening the identified knowledge gap in the said area. Secondly, the study provides valuable practical insights for online retailers who are targeting Sri Lankan customers, by offering recommendations to enhance the online shopping experience and build stronger relationships with the target consumers in Sri Lanka (Karunaratne et al., 2019).

The rest of the paper is structured as follows. The subsequent section entails a brief of the literature review conducted related to the study, followed by the methodology adopted. The findings of the study and the relevant discussion will be presented afterward, leading to the overall study conclusion

## **II. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### ***A. Online Shopping Behaviour***

Online shopping has evolved into a significant mode of retail, majorly facilitated by advancements in technology and changes in consumer preferences. The convenience, variety, and often competitive pricing offered by online platforms have contributed to this growth. A study by Ramayah and Malhotra (2007) highlights that online shopping behavior is influenced by various factors, including ease of use, perceived usefulness, and the overall shopping experience. In Sri Lanka, the expansion of internet accessibility and smartphone usage has facilitated a boost in online shopping, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic (Edirisinghe, 2021).

Perceived privacy, behavioral control, website quality, and subjective norms massively influenced the online purchasing decisions of consumers in the post-COVID-19 era (Baidoun & Salem, 2023). Furthermore, several studies have investigated hedonic shopping (shopping for pleasure) motivations and impulse purchasing behavior on online shopping platforms, particularly in the retail sector (Ali et al., 2020; Goel et al., 2022). Seeing in this manner, Chen and Yao (2021) found that perceived enjoyment and hedonic motivations significantly drive online shopping behavior, leading to increased consumer engagement and higher purchase frequency.

Moreover, the role of social influence and electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) in shaping online shopping behavior has been extensively studied. According to Liu et al. (2022), positive eWOM significantly enhances consumer trust and purchase intentions, especially in emerging markets like Sri Lanka. The integration of social media platforms with e-commerce websites has further amplified the impact of social influence on consumer behavior (Chang, 2022).

### ***B. Emotional Responses in Online Shopping***

Emotions play a major role in shaping consumer behavior, especially in the context of online shopping. The digital shopping environment can evoke a range of emotional responses, such as excitement and anxiety. Excitement is often associated with the anticipation of discovering new products and the enjoyment of the shopping experience. Conversely, anxiety can arise from concerns about security, privacy, and the reliability of online transactions (Verhagen & Dolen, 2011).

Recent studies have further explored these emotional responses in online shopping contexts. Shang et al. (2020) emphasized that emotional arousal, driven by website aesthetics and interactive features, significantly impacts consumer engagement and satisfaction. Similarly, Wang et al. (2015) highlighted those positive emotions, such as excitement and enjoyment, enhance the likelihood of repeat purchases and long-term customer loyalty.

Conversely, negative emotions like anxiety can discourage consumers from completing transactions and negatively impact their satisfaction (Singh et al., 2024). The fear of fraud, data breaches, and receiving fake products are major sources of anxiety for online shoppers (Lissitsa & Kol, 2020). To address these concerns, online retailers must

implement robust security measures, transparent return policies, and responsive customer service.

### ***C. Stages of the Online Shopping Journey***

The online shopping journey comprises several stages such as browsing, decision-making, purchase, and post-purchase. Each stage can denote specific emotional responses. During the browsing stage, consumers may experience excitement as they explore products and discover new items. However, as they move towards the decision-making and purchase stages, anxiety may increase due to concerns about payment security and product authenticity (PeNa-Garcia et al., 2020).

The decision-making stage involves evaluating product options, comparing prices, and reading reviews. This stage is critical as consumers' emotional responses can significantly influence their purchase intentions. Positive emotions, such as excitement and satisfaction, can enhance the decision-making process, leading to higher purchase likelihood (Huang & Benyoucef, 2017). Conversely, negative emotions, like anxiety and frustration, can result in decision paralysis and cart abandonment (Mazaheri et al., 2012).

During the purchase stage, consumers' emotions continue to play a crucial role. Excitement can drive impulse purchases and increase the likelihood of buying additional items. Conversely, anxiety can lead to cart abandonment, where consumers hesitate to finalize their purchases due to concerns about payment security, delivery reliability, and potential regrets (Duralia, 2024). Online retailers can address these issues by offering secure payment options, providing real-time order tracking, and ensuring timely and reliable delivery services (Wang et al., 2015).

The post-purchase stage is equally important, as consumers evaluate their overall shopping experience and the quality of the products received. Positive emotions, such as satisfaction and delight, can lead to repeat purchases, positive word-of-mouth, and customer loyalty. Negative emotions, such as disappointment and frustration, can result in product returns, negative reviews, and a loss of trust in the e-commerce platform (Zhang et al., 2018). Therefore, online retailers must prioritize post-purchase support, including efficient customer service, hassle-free returns, and proactive communication to address any issues that may arise (Aboobucker et al., 2019).

### ***D. Impact of Emotions on Consumer Decisions and Satisfaction***

The influence of emotions on consumer behavior has been extensively researched. Positive emotions, such as excitement, can enhance consumer engagement and lead to impulsive buying decisions. A study by Mazaheri and others (2012) found that excitement positively impacts the likelihood of making a purchase and overall satisfaction with the shopping experience. Similarly, Reer and others (2022) demonstrated that positive emotional responses, triggered by website aesthetics and user-friendly interfaces, significantly enhance consumer satisfaction and loyalty.

Conversely, negative emotions like anxiety can discourage consumers from completing transactions and negatively impact their satisfaction (Kim et al., 2008). Anxiety related to payment security, privacy concerns, and delivery reliability can lead to increased cart abandonment rates and lower overall satisfaction (Zhang et al., 2018). To reduce these negative impacts, online retailers must focus on enhancing website security, providing clear and transparent information, and ensuring reliable delivery services (Lissitsa & Kol, 2020).

Despite the recognition of these emotional influences, there is a lack of qualitative research examining how specific emotions affect different stages of the online shopping journey. Majority of the past studies have focused on quantitative analyses, providing a general understanding of emotional impacts without investigating the specificities of consumers' experiences (Ramayah & Malhotra, 2007). Moreover, while considerable research has been conducted on online shopping behavior and emotional responses, there are notable gaps, particularly in the context of emerging markets like Sri Lanka. Previous studies have primarily concentrated on Western markets, overlooking the unique cultural and socio-economic factors that influence consumer behavior in different regions (Liu et al., 2013; Gu et al., 2021).

### **III. METHODOLOGY**

#### ***A. Research Design***

This study utilizes a qualitative research approach to explore how specific emotions, such as excitement and anxiety, experienced during the online shopping process influence consumer decisions and satisfaction. Qualitative research is considered suitable for this study as it allows for an in-depth understanding of the subjective experiences and emotional responses of consumers (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This method is especially useful for understanding the subtle ways emotions influence behavior and decision-making in online shopping environments.

This study specifically selected a phenomenology research design, excluding ethnography, grounded theory, or case studies, referring to the aim and scope of the study. Phenomenology is chosen because this design focuses on understanding the lived experiences of individuals and the way they make sense of those experiences (Reeves et al., 2008). This method is highly effective in exploring the depth of consumer emotions and their significance in the online shopping journey, offering rich insights into the personal and subjective experiences of the participants (Smith et al., 2009). Recent studies have emphasized the relevance of phenomenology in consumer research, highlighting its ability to reveal deep established emotional responses and their implications for consumer behavior (Gill, 2020; Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014; Vaismoradi et al., 2013).

#### ***B. Population and Sampling***

The population considered for this study includes all individuals who engage in online shopping in Sri Lanka. Given the diverse socio-economic and cultural setting of the country, the sample was selected to reflect this diversity. Thus, we used purposive sampling to select participants with experience in online shopping. This sampling method was adopted because it ensures that the selected individuals can provide rich and relevant information regarding their emotional experiences during online shopping (Patton, 2015). The sample comprised 30 participants, including both males and females, aged between 18 and 60 years, residing in various urban and suburban areas of Sri Lanka. This diverse demographic sample was chosen to capture a broad range of experiences and perspectives from the target respondents. Recent research supports the use of purposive sampling in qualitative studies, especially when the goal is to obtain detailed and context-specific insights from participants with relevant experiences (Etikan et al., 2016).

### ***C. Data Collection and Analysis***

Data were collected using semi-structured interviews, which allow for flexibility in investigating deeper into participants' emotional responses and experiences. An interview guide was developed, consisting of open-ended questions designed to facilitate detailed explanations about the participants' online shopping journeys, focusing on the emotions experienced at different stages (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015). These interviews were conducted in both Sinhala and English, depending on the participants' preference, and lasted approximately 30-40 minutes each.

Interviews were conducted both in person and via video conferencing platforms to accommodate participants' availability and preferences. The use of semi-structured interviews is widely recognized in recent qualitative research for its effectiveness in eliciting rich, detailed data (Adams, 2015; Jamshed, 2014). The interviews were recorded with the participants' permission and subsequently transcribed word-for-word. This carefully conducted transcription process is crucial for ensuring the accuracy and reliability of the data (Halcomb & Davidson, 2006; McGrath et al., 2019).

Thematic analysis was used to analyze the interview data, following the guidelines outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006). This method involved coding the data, identifying themes, and interpreting the findings in line with our research questions. Several key themes were derived, reflecting the core emotional experiences and their impact on online shopping behavior. Thematic analysis is particularly well-suited for this study as it allows for the identification and exploration of patterns within qualitative data (Nowell et al., 2017). Recent studies have demonstrated the effectiveness of thematic analysis in revealing complex emotional and behavioral dynamics in consumer research (Clarke et al., 2015; Maguire & Delahunt, 2017).

Furthermore, integrating recent advancements in qualitative data analysis, software tools such as NVivo were employed to facilitate the organization and analysis of the data. This approach enhances the rigor and transparency of the research process, ensuring a systematic and comprehensive analysis of the participants' responses (Castleberry & Nolen, 2018; Jackson & Bazeley, 2019). The use of NVivo in qualitative research has been increasingly recognized for its ability to manage large datasets and support detailed thematic analysis (Edwards-Jones, 2014; Zamawe, 2015).

## **IV. FINDINGS**

The analysis of the interview data revealed several key themes related to the emotional responses of consumers during the online shopping process. The primary emotions identified were excitement and anxiety, which varied in intensity and impact across different stages of the online shopping journey. These emotions significantly influenced consumer decisions and overall satisfaction with the shopping experience. A novel finding of this study is the identification of the role of cultural context in shaping these emotional responses, which has not been extensively explored in prior research (Chen & Lee, 2020).

### ***A. Emotional Responses across Different Stages of Online Shopping***

***1) Browsing Stage:*** During the browsing stage, participants commonly reported feelings of excitement. This excitement arose from the anticipation of discovering new and desirable products, the thrill of potential bargains, and the enjoyment of exploring various options. Several participants considered this stage to be similar to a treasure hunt, where

the possibility of finding a perfect item created a sense of joy and eagerness. *“I always feel excited when I start browsing. It’s like going on a treasure hunt, not knowing what great deals or unique items I might find. The whole process of exploring different categories and discovering new products gives me a sense of thrill and anticipation. It’s this feeling of uncertainty and the potential of finding something amazing that keeps me engaged and motivated to browse longer.”* (Participant 5) *“I look forward to browsing online stores because it feels like an adventure. You never know what interesting items you might come across. Sometimes I end up finding products that I didn’t even know I wanted, but they seem perfect once I see them. The variety and novelty of online shopping make the experience exciting and enjoyable, almost like exploring a new place with endless possibilities.”* (Participant 7) *“I don’t get as excited as my children do when browsing online. I’m more careful and like to compare options thoroughly before making any decisions. While they might be thrilled by the newest gadgets or trendy clothes, I focus on practicality and value. I spend a lot of time reading reviews and comparing prices to ensure I’m making the best choice. Although I may not share the same level of excitement, the thoroughness of my approach helps me feel more confident and satisfied with my purchases.”* (Participant 10)

This excitement was particularly visible among younger participants, who expressed a sense of adventure and novelty in their online shopping activities. However, this excitement was not universally experienced. Some older participants expressed a more cautious approach during the browsing stage, reflecting a difference in digital literacy and comfort levels with online shopping.

**2) Decision-Making Stage:** As participants progressed to the decision-making stage, the initial excitement often mixed with anxiety. Concerns about the authenticity of products, the reliability of the seller, and the security of payment methods were prominent. This anxiety was more visible among older participants and those with previous negative experiences. *“I get anxious when I have to decide whether to buy something. I worry about the quality and if it’s really worth the price. There’s always that fear of receiving something that doesn’t match the description or is of poor quality. I think about whether I can trust the seller and if the product will actually be delivered on time. All these thoughts make the decision-making process stressful, especially when I’m spending a significant amount of money.”* (Participant 12) *“I always double-check reviews and compare several products before making a decision. I’ve had bad experiences before, so I’m very cautious now. In the past, I’ve received items that were completely different from what was advertised, and returning them was a hassle. Now, I spend a lot of time reading customer reviews and looking for any red flags. I also compare prices across different websites to make sure I’m getting the best deal. This thorough approach helps me feel more secure, but it also makes the shopping process much longer and sometimes frustrating.”* (Participant 14)

The anxiety felt by consumers during this stage tend to have led them towards extensive product comparisons and hesitation. This was especially unique among participants who had experienced issues with online purchases in the past.

**3) Purchase Stage:** The purchase stage reflected a combination of relief and anxiety. Relief was felt upon successfully completing a transaction, while anxiety was mainly about the delivery process and the condition of the product upon arrival. Younger participants, who were more accustomed to online shopping, reported lower levels of

anxiety compared to older participants. *“I feel relieved after making the purchase, but then I start worrying about whether the product will arrive on time and in good condition. There’s always that lingering concern about shipping delays, especially with international orders. I also worry about the packaging and whether the item will be damaged during transit. It’s a mix of satisfaction from completing the purchase and anxiety about the next steps.”* (Participant 20)

Some participants highlighted the ease of the purchase process as a positive aspect, contributing to a sense of accomplishment and satisfaction. *“The buying process is usually straightforward, which makes me feel good about getting what I need without much hassle. The user-friendly interface and clear instructions on the website help a lot. I appreciate features like one-click purchasing and saved payment information, which make the whole process quick and convenient. This efficiency boosts my confidence in online shopping and encourages me to return to the same platform for future purchases.”* (Participant 25)

**4) Post-Purchase Stage:** In the post-purchase stage, satisfaction was heavily influenced by the alignment of the received product with expectations. Participants expressed excitement and satisfaction when products met or exceeded their expectations, while anxiety and disappointment were reported when there were discrepancies. *“I feel really happy and satisfied when the product is just as described. It makes the whole process worthwhile. When I receive exactly what I expected, it feels like a reward for my decision-making process and the time spent researching. It boosts my confidence in online shopping and makes me more likely to shop from the same platform again. Knowing that the product meets my needs and preferences validates my choice and provides a sense of fulfillment.”* (Participant 8)

Negative experiences in this stage were often tied to the quality of the product and the accuracy of the product description. Participants who received products that did not match their expectations felt a strong sense of disappointment and frustration. *“When the product isn’t as good as described, it’s really frustrating. It feels like a waste of time and money. The disappointment is even greater when I’ve waited a long time for the delivery, only to find that the product doesn’t meet my expectations. It creates a sense of regret and makes me hesitant to trust the seller or the platform in the future. The hassle of returning the product and the uncertainty of getting a refund add to the overall negative experience.”* (Participant 18)

### **B. Influence of Emotions on Consumer Decisions**

The study found that emotions significantly influenced consumer decisions at each stage of the online shopping journey. Excitement during the browsing stage often led to impulsive purchasing behaviors, especially among younger participants. *“I often buy things on impulse when I’m excited. It’s just too tempting to resist good deals or interesting items. The excitement of finding something new and the fear of missing out on a limited-time offer make it hard to think rationally. Sometimes I buy things I don’t need because I get caught up in the excitement.”* (Participant 9)

Anxiety, particularly during the decision-making and purchase stages, acted as a factor to discourage some consumers, leading to abandoned carts or extensive product comparisons before making a purchase. *“There have been times when I’ve just left items in my cart because I couldn’t decide if it was safe to buy them or not. The uncertainty about the product quality and whether the seller is trustworthy makes me hesitate. I often*



*second-guess my choices and worry about potential issues, which sometimes leads me to abandon the purchase altogether, even if I initially liked the product.”* (Participant 17)

One unique finding of this study is how cultural background influences these emotions. Participants from more collectivist backgrounds expressed higher levels of anxiety related to online shopping, driven by concerns about community opinions and social reputation (Chen & Lee, 2020). *“I worry about what my family and friends will think if the product I buy turns out to be bad. It makes me more anxious about buying things online. The fear of disappointing them or being judged for making a poor choice adds a lot of pressure. I tend to seek approval or advice before finalizing my purchase to ensure that my decision is well-regarded within my social circle.”* (Participant 22)

### **C. Influence of Emotions on Consumer Satisfaction**

The relationship between emotions and overall consumer satisfaction was evident in the expressions made by respondents. Positive emotions, such as excitement and relief, contributed to higher satisfaction levels, while persistent anxiety and negative post-purchase experiences led to dissatisfaction. A unique finding in this study was the significant impact of cultural expectations on satisfaction. Certain participants who valued social harmony and family approval based on their cultural setup, felt less satisfied when their purchases didn't meet the expectations of their community. *“I feel disappointed when the product isn't good because I worry about what my family will think of my choice. It's not just about my satisfaction with the product, but also about how my purchase decisions reflect on me within my family. If the product doesn't meet their standards or expectations, I feel like I've let them down. This pressure makes the shopping experience more stressful and impacts my overall satisfaction.”* (Participant 28)

Participants also noted that their satisfaction was influenced by the ease of return processes and customer service quality. Efficient and hassle-free return policies enhanced satisfaction, while difficulties in returning products contributed to frustration and dissatisfaction. *“It's really important for me to be able to return a product easily if it's not what I expected. Good return policies make me feel more confident about shopping online. Knowing that I can easily return an item without any hassle gives me peace of mind and encourages me to take a chance on products I'm interested in. On the other hand, complicated return processes or poor customer service make me hesitant to shop from the same platform again.”* (Participant 21)

## **V. DISCUSSION & IMPLICATIONS**

The findings of this study provide valuable insights into the emotional dynamics of online shopping among Sri Lankan consumers. The emotions of excitement and anxiety were revealed as significant influencers of consumer behavior throughout the online shopping journey. These findings align with existing literature but also reveal unique aspects related to the cultural context of Sri Lanka.

The role of excitement in driving impulsive purchases during the browsing stage has been previously researched. Excitement, characterized by anticipation and joy, can lead to less deliberative decision-making and a higher likelihood of impulse buying (Mazaheri et al., 2012). Our study supports this explanation, with many participants expressing that the thrill of finding desirable products often led to spontaneous purchases. This phenomenon was particularly evident among younger participants who associated online shopping with entertainment and exploration.

Conversely, anxiety acted as a significant barrier during the decision-making and purchase stages. This finding is consistent with Kim and others (2008) trust-based consumer decision-making model, which highlights how perceived risk and anxiety can deter consumers from completing transactions. Our study extends this understanding by highlighting that anxiety was particularly visible among older participants and those with previous negative experiences, indicating that past experiences and age can moderate the impact of anxiety on online shopping behavior.

A new contribution brought about by our study is the identification of the cultural context's role in shaping emotional responses. In Sri Lanka, a country that is considered to share collectivist values, social reputation and communal approval significantly influence consumer behavior. Participants expressed higher levels of anxiety about online shopping decisions due to concerns about how their choices would be perceived by their close social circles. This finding aligns with Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory, which states that collectivist cultures emphasize social harmony and the collective over individual preferences (Hofstede, 2001).

The impact of cultural expectations on post-purchase satisfaction is another unique aspect revealed by this study. Participants who placed high value on social harmony reported lower satisfaction when their purchases did not meet communal expectations. This indicates the importance of considering cultural factors when studying consumer behavior, as they can significantly influence emotional responses and satisfaction levels. Recent research supports this, suggesting that cultural values play a crucial role in shaping consumer expectations and satisfaction (Gentina et al., 2021).

#### ***A. Practical Implications for Online Retailers***

Our study's findings suggest several practical implications for online retailers targeting Sri Lankan consumers. Firstly, enhancing the browsing experience of online shoppers by incorporating elements that evoke excitement, such as flash sales and personalized recommendations, can capitalize on the impulsive buying tendencies driven by excitement. Retailers can use data analytics to offer personalized shopping experiences, thereby increasing the likelihood of spontaneous purchases (Grewal et al., 2017).

Secondly, online retailers could reduce the negative effect of anxiety on purchase decisions by ensuring secure payment options, transparent product information, and reliable customer service. Transparency and security are crucial in building trust and reducing anxiety among consumers, especially in markets where online shopping is still gaining traction (Bartikowski et al., 2020).

Thirdly, understanding the cultural context can enable retailers to tailor their marketing strategies to better align with Sri Lankan consumers. Highlighting how products are socially acceptable and benefit the community in marketing messages can align closely with the collectivist values of Sri Lankan consumers. This approach can lead to greater satisfaction and loyalty among online shoppers in Sri Lanka (Pratesi et al., 2020).

Additionally, to address the unique cultural dynamics identified in this study, retailers could develop marketing campaigns that emphasize family and community benefits. In fact, retailers could showcase testimonials from satisfied customers within the same cultural context. This could enhance the perceived social approval of the products. Additionally, incorporating culturally relevant symbols and narratives in advertising can strengthen the emotional connection with consumers (Wahab et al., 2024).

Furthermore, improving the return policies and ensuring hassle-free processes can significantly enhance consumer trust and satisfaction. Studies have shown that flexible and customer-friendly return policies reduce post-purchase anxiety and contribute to overall satisfaction (Huang & Benyoucef, 2020). Online retailers should also focus on maintaining high standards of customer service to address any issues promptly and effectively, thereby mitigating negative emotional responses.

## **VI. LIMITATIONS & DIRECTIONS**

Despite the important findings revealed by our study, it is important that its limitations are acknowledged. The sample we considered for this study was limited, which might not have captured the full diversity of the Sri Lankan online shopping population. To overcome this limitation in future studies, researchers should aim to include a larger and more diverse sample by expanding efforts to cover a wider geographical area and a broader demographic spectrum. Additionally, implementing random sampling techniques will help ensure that every individual within the target population has an equal chance of being selected, thereby enhancing the representativeness and generalizability of the findings. Moreover, future studies could explore the long-term impact of emotional responses on customer loyalty in online shopping. Researchers could also investigate the impact of emerging technologies, such as augmented reality and virtual reality, on emotional responses and shopping behaviors in different cultural contexts (Hsu & Lin, 2020).

## **VII. CONCLUSION**

This study provides valuable insights on the critical role of emotions, specifically excitement and anxiety, in influencing online shopping behavior among Sri Lankan consumers. By exploring how these emotions affect different stages of the online shopping journey, the research provides a detailed understanding of consumer decision-making processes and satisfaction levels. The findings highlight the unique impact of cultural factors, such as collectivist values and social harmony, on emotional responses and consumer behavior. This study not only contributes to the limited literature on online shopping emotions in the Sri Lankan context but also offers practical insights for online retailers. By enhancing the shopping experience through personalized recommendations, secure transactions, and culturally resonant marketing strategies, retailers can better meet the needs of Sri Lankan consumers and foster greater loyalty. Future research should aim to address the study's limitations by including larger and more diverse samples, as well as exploring the long-term effects of emotional

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