



Benefits and Challenges of Facebook Live Video Streaming in Sri Lankan Businesses Promotions: Viewers' Perspective

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Abstract

The emergence of novel technology and the increasing capabilities of networks have boosted the business world to an amazing level. Business promotions are much easier today than in previous times due to such novel developments. Live video streaming is one of the latest audio-visual communication advertisement tools worldwide, and Facebook live video streaming (FBLVS) is so popular. Countries like Canada, the USA, and China have studied this latest concept. But, in the Sri Lankan context, a gap has been identified to know the viewers' perspective about FBLVS as it helps business people to fine-tune their promotion activities as per the view of potential buyers. Accordingly, the current study was carried out aiming at studying the benefits and challenges of FBLVS for viewers in Sri Lanka. The researchers conducted an exploratory qualitative study and reached the FBLVS viewers through semi-structured interviews by following the purposive sampling technique. The collected data were recorded and transcribed and identified the relevant open and axial codings followed the research questions. Findings discovered that Interaction, Real-time problem-solving, Cost-effectiveness, Convenience and Trustworthiness are the major benefits. Technical issues and Low content quality are the major challenges faced. The researchers opted to fulfil this study's requirement and allow the Sri Lankan community to be aware of live video streaming and FBLVS. Also, this study provides a different perspective on the FBLVS.

Keywords: Social Live Video Streaming (SLVS), Facebook Live Video Streaming (FBLVS), Business Promotion, Viewers, Sri Lanka

Introduction

Business organizations are the primary strength of any economy of the world, and they provide goods and services for humankind to survive on earth. However, with globalization, business organizations have to compete to grab the market since many businesses offer competitive products at a lower cost. Also, consumers can find many more alternative products in the market to fulfil the same need. Hence, companies have to be more careful when they are selling their products. Further, with globalization and technological developments, people can consume any good in any country via social media platforms. Thus, this has increased the existing competition among businesses worldwide.

Promoting goods and services has become vital in the business world due to the above mention matter. Business organizations spend much to promote their products and position in the customers' minds before their rival organizations. According to Kotler (2011), a promotional mix can be used to promote the products. Advertising, public relations, personal selling, sales promotion, and direct marketing are the promotional mix tools. Direct marketing is one of the best cost-effective promotion methods. Direct marketing is one of the fastest-growing sectors globally, which creates direct communication with their target customers and is not just direct mail or electronic catalogues (Todorova, 2015). Direct marketing is capable of generating brand and sales. New technological developments and the use of the internet have created possible ways to apply new and attractive forms of direct marketing. Web marketing, e-mail marketing, direct mail, web seminars, telemarketing promotions, sale channels, catalogues, and online sales are such forms and more (Todorova, 2015).

Online sale is one of the more cost-effective promotion methods of direct marketing. Today in the world, technological developments have affected every industry. The reason behind that is, new technologies rise day by day and replace older ones. As a result, today the majority of consumers use online to purchase both products and services. Moreover, younger generations are growing up with new technologies, which concerns it as a norm (Verhoef & Bijmolt, 2019).

New technology is rising very fast in Sri Lanka as well. As a result, there is a significant percentage of both computers (34.3%) and digital literacy (57.2%) in Sri Lanka (Department of Census and Statistics, 2021). Computer literacy means a person can use a computer on him/her own, which is considered computer literacy. However, digital literacy is more than computer literacy. It concerns knowledge from personal computers to smartphones and tablets. Today people are living in a digital economy as a result of the development of new technologies. Hence, today's world's attention has been given to internet-based business models. This new technology is highly being grabbed by Sri Lanka as well. According to the Department of Census and Statistics Sri Lanka (2021),

the percentage distribution of Internet-using household populations (age 5-69) from 2019 to 2021 is 30.3%, 36% and 44.5% respectively. According to statistics, internet users are highly increasing in Sri Lanka. Therefore, most industries are now highly moving into online sales promotion in the world and Sri Lanka.

According to Martini (2018), researchers have focused on online visual communication in the last decade. Today one-way communication is old-fashioned. Now people can connect with their peers worldwide in real-time (Nwokah & Aeene, 2017). Today, online promotion moves into Live Video Streaming (LVS) to facilitate their consumers' real-time experience. LVS is one of the most popular online promotion methods globally (Zhang et al., 2019). LVS can be identified as an audio-visual communication method that differs from traditional online video. It generates a higher level of engagement and qualitatively different kinds of engagement (Martini, 2018). LVS provides a real-time experience to the viewers and offers opportunities to communicate and interact with broadcasters and co-viewers (Hu et al., 2017). Now the LVS industry is rapidly increasing among e-retailers worldwide because this method is a very cost-effective online promotion method. Anyone can easily provide information about their products, and consumers can ask questions in real-time (Zhang et al., 2019). According to Zhang et al. (2019), when businesses use the LVS strategy, it helps to decrease the psychological distance between customers and perceived uncertainty. Therefore, it will be affected to increase consumers' purchase intention. Since 2015, e-retailers have begun to use LVS to find out a new way to attract consumers and remain their products and services competitive. This way is a unique experience for online consumers (Zhang et al., 2019). As a result of smartphones and internet connections, e-retailers can now easily use LVS to promote their products through social media because social media has provided facilities for LVS such as YouTube Live, Twitter Live, Facebook Live, etc.

Among social media, Facebook is more widespread among e-retailers. According to the Facebook report for the second quarter of 2022, there were 1.97 billion daily active users on average (Highlights, 2022). Hence, e-retailers can easily attract a vast target market through Facebook Live Video Streaming. According to the statistics, Facebook Live Videos create 6 times (Montti, 2018) and get 10 times more interactions and more comments than regular ones. Also, Facebook Live users spend 3 times more on live videos than on pre-uploaded videos (Savage, 2016). Hence, today Facebook Live Video Streaming (FBLVS) is the latest and more popular cost-effective online promotion method globally. But still, it is not much popular in Sri Lanka. However, business owners have a massive opportunity to attract a vast target market by providing attractive Facebook live video streaming. FBLVS will be a good platform for all types of businesses to directly interact with their target market and offer the opportunity to induce feelings for the products and give a real-time experience.

Today in the world, FBLVS is making a tremendous impact on the world since 2015. It is becoming more popular in the world. Currently, researchers have given their attention to LVS in the world context. Concerning Sri Lankan context, researchers' attention is still very low on LVS/FBLVS. However, many large organizations in Sri Lanka use FBLVS to broadcast and promote their events live. Some FBLVS events done by some large organizations in Sri Lanka are the Annual General Meeting 2018 of Commercial Bank, the new product launch of Uswatte Confectioneries, new factory launches of Global Rubber Industries, Micro new showroom opening and, New factory launch of Sakora Solar.

Though FBLVS is a cost-effective promotion method for businesses, more businesses are still unaware of FBLVS in Sri Lanka. But, in today's world, a considerable portion of world consumers connect with technology, and they own and use mobiles or computer devices. Hence, in the global context, marketers have identified the advantages of social networks such as Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, Pinterest and LinkedIn (Scott et al., 1996). Hence, marketers highly use FBLVS globally to promote their products in the countries such as China, the USA, the UK and, Canada. But, in Sri Lanka, that is extremely low. Further, know-how about viewers' perspectives on FBLVS is rarely investigated locally and globally. Hu et al., (2017) and Yu et al., (2018) have studied viewers' perspectives regarding live video streaming in China and South Korea respectively. Thus, researchers identified a paucity of studies available regarding viewers' perspectives on FBLVS. Viewers are the potential buyers of a company's products. Therefore, knowing their view is essential to design effective FBLVS promotion activities of a business. Hence, the researcher wanted to study the viewers' perspective on FBLVS as an effective tool for business promotions in Sri Lanka. Business people need to know the viewers' ideas about FBLVS to promote their business products at a lower cost. Especially, viewers' view about the benefits and problems of FBLVS is important to know to use this method efficiently to promote businesses. Therefore, researchers dedicated the study to investigating How do viewers perceive FBLVS-based business promotions done by Sri Lankan business organizations?

Though many scholars explored the different areas of LVS and FBLVS, viewers' perspective is an uncovered area. Thus, unpacking the research problem, the researchers aimed to explore the benefits and challenges experienced by the viewers through FBLVS-based promotions done in Sri Lankan businesses.

This study provides not only academic significance but also provides practical significance as well. The FBLVS plays an important role in the online business promotion method globally. It will become a great supporter for every business. FBLVS supports companies in finding new ways to attract their customers, gain competitive advantages over other companies, and maintain their competitiveness. FBLVS delivers more precise, detailed information about its latest products. It gives product experience and increases

the willingness to buy products as potential customers. More consumers can easily get motivated through this technology at once. Hence, it is automatically improving the purchase intention of potential customers. Ultimately, this study will significantly impact the continuity of the businesses as this identifies the benefits and challenges experienced by viewers of FBLVS in business promotions.

The rest of the paper is organised as follows. Section 2 reports the literature review related to the field and Section 3 presents the Methodology of the study. Section 4 provides Results and data analysis whilst Section 5 reports the discussion. Finally, the conclusion and recommendations are provided in Section 6.

Literature review

With the growth of technology, marketers highly grabbed new technologies to promote their products and services. Because those methods are very cost-effective (Ritz et al., 2019), any type of business (micro & large scale) can focus on a cost-effective promotion method through new technology. According to Kotler (2011), there are various promotion methods named the promotional mix. Every business owner should focus on the promotional mix before selecting a promotion method for their own business.

In the present era, every organization must compete in the market for survival. Hence, every organization has to communicate with its customers about its products to stimulate interest in the brand, create positive attitudes towards the brand, and explain and show how their products can satisfy customers' needs and want than competitors' products. Marketers use various forms of promotion to communicate information about their products to consumers (Graeff, 1995). Because promotion is a way of communicating with their target market about their products. The promotion aims to attract their market and motivate them to purchase their products. Promotion is an essential element in marketing (Karunanithy & Sivesan, 2013). Because, in marketing, the fundamental goal is to create and maintain exchanges by promoting products and services that satisfy customers' needs (Graeff, 1995). In today's modern business market, it is used many promotional strategies by business organizations. Promotional strategies can have various objectives, such as informing and creating interest in their new products, creating and maintaining positive attitudes about their brand, and motivating consumers to purchase their products (Graeff, 1995). Most managers trust promotion, which plays a vital role in creating brand awareness for their products (Sagala et al., 2014). In the current era, competition within business firms is very high in the market (Kumar & Patra, 2017). Hence, the huge challenge is to choose the most appropriate promotional mix for a particular business (Karunanithy & Sivesan, 2013). Because of that, every business organization should want to select a more efficient strategy for their organization to stay and compete in the market (Kumar & Patra, 2017).

Hence, the promotional mix can be called a blend of communication tools used by business organizations (Karunanithy & Sivesan, 2013). They are advertising, public relations, personal selling, sales promotion and direct marketing (Kotler, 2011). Any paid form of controlled impact implemented through the mass media in presenting and promoting products and services can be called an advertisement. The advertisement budget depends on various factors such as the size of the company, the financial capability of the company, marketing strategy, market situation, market share, expenditure on promotional activities, product-specific, stage of the life cycle of the business and more (Todorova, 2015). But advertising effects increase the volume of purchases by loyal customers. Therefore, it has less effectiveness in winning new customers (Durmaz, 2011). Personal sales can be defined as expressed in a personal presentation of ideas and products to the client in which the seller induces and supports the customer to decide on purchasing. Personal selling depends on product type, type of customer and terms of technology sales (Todorova, 2015). Combination of actions with a single or short term to persuade customers and commercial organizations by offering them additional incentives to increase sales is called sales promotion (Todorova, 2015). Various sales promotional tools are price discounts, coupon schemes, premium offers (buy one and get one free), bonus packs, scratch cards, brand switching, purchase acceleration, stockpiling and new product trial (Mitta & Sethi, 2011). But some researchers have different views that sales promotion like an expensive tool and may effect on profits of retailers negatively (Shamout, 2016). Public relations can be summarized as a set of activities and aspects directly related to the company's marketing function, special publications, participation in community activities for fundraising, sponsorship of special events and public works to improve the image of the business organization (Todorova, 2015). In a global economy, direct marketing is one of the fastest-growing sectors. Business organizations use direct marketing to communicate with their target market directly. The growth of technology and the use of the internet create possible to apply the latest as well as attractive forms of direct marketing. Today powerful internet and mobile technology have created strong relationships with business organizations and customers via social media, websites, mobile applications, and online promotions. Because, this is the most appropriate way for business organizations who find a cost-effective, fast and reliable way to communicate with their target market (Todorova, 2015). With the popularity of social media, online promotion is called the best promotion method in direct marketing. Because, it is a very cost-effective, fast and reliable promotion method for business organizations.

Online Promotion through Social Media

With the growth of the internet, social networks have developed that enable communication and connection of users (Durmaz, 2011). Social media can be defined in

different ways; it is a combination of software-based digital technologies. Generally, it is presented as apps and websites. Social media users can send and receive information or digital content over social media (Appel et al., 2019). Six Degrees was the first modern social network. That was launched in 1997 and it is not functioning today (Durmaz, 2011). Today, people use social media in various forms for many purposes, such as news feeds on Facebook and private massaging through WhatsApp and Twitter. These purposes can be categorized into three categories. The first category is communicating and socializing with known persons digitally like friends, and family members, the second is communicating and socializing with unknown persons who have a common interest, and the third is receiving and providing digital content like news gossip and user-generated product reviews. Social media let people interact with others freely and offer many ways for marketers to attract and engage with their target market (Appel et al., 2019).

In today's competitive environment, marketing promotion is an important factor in doing business. Because promotion highly impacts the buying decision of consumers. A good promotion can support the company to be a success (Chianasta & Wijaya, 2014). But traditional marketing is an old passion. Today online marketing has spread many different branches including social media (Ndubisi & Moi, 2006). That means, with the development of technology, most business organizations use the Internet to promote their products. Social media play one of the biggest roles in that. In the current era, billions of people use social media and spend many hours on social media. Hence, that is not a cause to surprise why many marketers use social media as a market channel (Appel et al., 2019). Social media are being used to promote their products to the customer (Chianasta & Wijaya, 2014). Today business people open their company's pages on social media. Because business owners can get many benefits from marketing through social media. Some of them are a relatively low cost of the campaign, fast feedback, increased traffic to the website, fastness, and the very easiness of launching new products or services, and brand enhancements easy to access (Durmaz, 2011). Promoting through social media is a very easy and mass communication way to the company's marketing, and business organizations can attract a huge audience by promoting products through social media. Because, today social media can highly impact humans' lifestyles (Chianasta & Wijaya, 2014). Most business organizations use online promotion through social media blogs, and chat forums because of many reasons such as eliminating geographical constraints, ease of access, consolidation of high margin for customization, and ability to reach both actual consumers as well as potential customers around the world (Ndubisi & Moi, 2006). Social media can positively affect important marketing outcomes such as the acquisition of new customers and sales. The growth of social media can positively impact not only marketing practices but also the behaviour of consumers. As a place for providing customer care, many brands have used social media platforms to address

customers' specific questions and fix problems. As well as customer care based on social media is expected to become more personalized and customized in the future. Customers can directly message a business organization, ask questions from them and order products or services through social media (Appel et al., 2019).

Today the most influential social media is Facebook. Mark Zuckerberg launched Facebook in 2004. Today Facebook is the largest social media and it is an excellent advertising platform. Today, most business organizations use Facebook to directly communicate with their target market (Durmaz, 2011). For June 2019, there were 1.59 billion daily active Facebook users on average, increasing up to 8% year over year (Facebook, 2019). Products promotion through Facebook make many benefits for a company business organization can easily promote their products through Facebook that is not much cost and that method is very easy to identify the target market by joining groups which have similar needs as well as interests (Chianasta & Wijaya, 2014). With the popularity of Facebook social media marketing has been more popular. Without considering age, income, education levels and occupation Facebook has become a key platform for entertainment, information and communication for all people in Sri Lanka. Hence, today, online marketing is the best cost-effective strategy for every marketer can satisfy their customers and expand their business in their competitive market (Nishanthi & Arjun, 2015). Because of that development, Social Live Video Stream (SLVS) is the latest more popular cost-effective online promotion method in the world.

Social Media Live Video Streaming

With the emergence of social media, social live video streams have become more popular among users (Wang et al., 2016). Most researchers have identified live video streaming as an emerging industry (Cunningham et al., 2019). Today the development of streaming technology supports enhancing audio and video applications over the internet (Wang et al., 2016). Most social media users use social media to produce and broadcast their programs in real-time (Scheibe et al., 2016). Every social media user can produce their content or participate in other viewers' live video streams. This opportunity has provided various ways to communicate with other broadcasters as well by chatting, gaming as a team or sending gifts (Yu et al., 2018). When it comes present, a live video stream has been adopted as a marketing strategy by e-retailers. Because in the current world, e-retailers began to apply live video streaming to attract consumer attention and maintain competition. Today live video streaming has become a unique promotional tool to broadcast information about the products and services for business-to-consumers and business-to-business in real-time. As well as today's live video stream has become a unique strategy compared with other marketing strategies such as video, brand community, word of mouth and picture descriptions (Zhang et al., 2019). Live video stream is very easy to use by anyone because live streaming can be broadcasted through various devices. There are three main platforms available for live streaming. Facebook

Lives and Twitter's Periscope have been competing in the last two years in the live streaming area. Both are very easy to start live streaming by launching the app. The most popular social media for live streaming is Facebook. Facebook Live and Periscope both are very easy to use through mobile apps. Today millions of Facebook users broadcast live videos through Facebook (Herron, 2017). Hence, business owners can use live video streams for promoting their products through Facebook as a very cost-effective promotion method.

Concerning the extant studies that exist in FBLVS-related research history, it is not extended to a deeper level. A few scholars have investigated related areas of FBLVS. Wongkitrungrueng et al., (2020) studied Live streaming commerce from the sellers' perspective and provided the implications for online relationship marketing based on Thailand online sellers. This study aimed at investigating the strategies employed by Facebook online sellers to be successful in live-streaming selling. The mixed approach has been utilized to collect data. Thus, both quantitative and qualitative methods were used by them to gather the required data. Descriptive statistics, principal component analysis (PCA) and content analysis are the data analysis tools used in the study and they have found four sales approaches and twelve strategies. Transaction-based approach, persuasion-based approach, Content-based approach and Relationship-based approach are the four major approaches found and Simple selling, Limit quantity/time offer, Demonstration, Character, Game prize, Show, Product related, Non-product related, Service, Share personal life, Share feelings/experiences, Community activities are the twelve strategies identified under above 4 main approaches. Zhang et al., (2020) have also studied the impact of live video streaming on online purchase intention of customers based in China.

The main aim of the study is to explore the impact of LVS strategy on the online purchasing intention of customers with other two factors; psychological distance and perceived uncertainty whilst deploying construal level theory. In order to conduct the study, the authors collected secondary data from the largest e-retailer Taobao.com. The quasi-experiment is the analysis tool used for the study and it is found that the LVS strategy can improve the online purchasing intention of customers by reducing psychological distance and perceived uncertainty. Addo et al., (2021) also studied customer engagement and purchase intention in live-streaming digital marketing platforms in China. The researchers were aiming to study the effects of customer engagement in live-streaming digital markets on purchase intention based on the data gathered from two major e-commerce platforms; Taobao.com and JD. 1726 datasets were gathered through these two platforms. Customer engagement and followership are the two major variables used to identify the impact on purchase intention. Further, followership has been tested as a mediator in the relationship between customer engagement and purchasing intention. Gender, product category, number of products

and streaming platform have been utilized as controlled variables in the study. The manual observation and transaction records of above mention two e-commerce platforms were applied as data sources for this study. Multiple linear regression with PROCESS macro was employed to analyse the data gathered by the researchers and found that customer engagement has a significant relationship with followership and purchase intention. However, when customers become followers, there is no significant impact from customer engagement to purchase intention whilst price act as a significant moderator. Another study conducted by Long & Tefertiller (2020) studied China's New Mania for Live Streaming: Gender Differences in Motives and Uses of Social Live Streaming Services.

This is also another study conducted in China as China is more popular for live streaming. This particular study has been conducted aiming to study the motivations and uses of social live video streaming and gender differences in it which has been used for communication, fun-seeking, relationship seeking and social relationships. Uses and gratification theory was the employed theory for this study and a self-administered online survey was steered to collect data from the respective audience. The product-moment correlations, one-way ANOVA, and chi-square tests are analysis techniques employed in his study. The study has come up with numerous findings and one interesting thing is that males are not heavy users of social live streaming than females. Next, Hu et al., (2017) studied Why do audiences choose to keep watching on live video streaming platforms? An explanation of the dual identification framework based on the live streaming platforms in China. Social identity theory has been applied and the aim of the paper was to explain the continuous watching behaviour intention among the audience. The live-streaming genre was used as the moderator variable whilst age, gender and tenure are the control variables. A dual identification framework has been utilized for this. Douyu TV and YY Live, two different types of live video streaming platforms were used for data collection and tools were sent for the possible respondents of those two platforms. A partial least square (PLS) method is the method used to analyse the data. Finally, the study revealed that there is a positive association between respondents' identification of broadcasters and audience groups with the continuous watching intention of live streaming videos.

Apart from the above studies, many other authors have studied these live-streaming-associated studies. China's live streaming industry: platforms, politics, and precarity by Cunningham et al., (2019), Social Media, Subjectivity, and Surveillance: Moving on From Occupy, the Rise of Live Streaming Video, Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies in Canada by Thorburn (2014), Live Streaming: Mobile-Friendly Alternatives by Herron (2017), Online distant witnessing and live-streaming activism: Emerging differences in the activation of networked publics by Martini (2018), Impact of Viewer Engagement on Gift-giving in Live Video Streaming in South Korea by Yu et

al., (2018), Data mining analytics investigate Facebook Live stream users' behaviours and business models: The evidence from Thailand by Liao et al., (2022), An Exploratory Study on Data mining analytics investigate Facebook Live stream users' behaviours and business models: The evidence from Thailand Consumer Purchase Behavior From Live Webcasting E-Commerce: A Means-End Chain Analysis Using Facebook Live Webcasting by Lu et al., (2020), Using Facebook Live to Advocate Breast Cancer Screening by Tso & Parikh (2020), Facebook Live-Streaming: How it affect the Purchase Intention of Generation Y In Malaysia? by San Lim et al., (2022), and The effects of live streaming attributes on consumer trust and shopping intentions for fashion clothing by Chandruangphen et al., (2022) are those studies conducted related to SMLVS in the global context.

Research Methodology

The study was carried out based on the philosophy of anti-positivism since the researchers wanted to find out the subjective reality of the viewers' perspective about FBLVS in business promotions in Sri Lanka. Also, less attention has been paid to this new concept, and there is a requirement to create new knowledge to the existing body of knowledge. Hence, the study was done as a qualitative one based on an inductive approach. Further, this is an exploratory study done by deploying a survey method to collect required primary data from the FBLVS viewers. As the researchers sought for benefits and challenges faced by viewers, the exploratory research design was identified as the best design. The researchers purposively and conveniently selected a few viewers who watch FBLVS related to promotions in business organizations. Based on the perspective the viewers take after watching FBLVS can lead them to create an intention to buy the products of such businesses. Thus, it is indeed important to have a good understanding of viewers' ideas on this business promotion tool. Based on that rationale, the study was chosen to evaluate the benefits and challenges encountered by the viewers.

Semi-structured in-depth telephone interviews were conducted with them using a semi-structured interview guide developed by the researchers (A.1). All the respondents of the study were the viewers who can be current or potential customers/consumers of respective businesses. Also, the selected viewers who had watched a business promotion of FBLVS in different organizations and researchers sought their general view of FBLVS without being framed into one specific organization. 08 respondents (bank manager, grama niladhari, PHI officer, Development officer, event manager and 3 undergraduates) were interviewed in order to obtain multi perspectives of the phenomena. They were contacted personally based on convenience in order to gather the required data. They responded to our questions individually and gave their total consent to use the data provided for the study. Finally, the content analysis was used to analyse the data to

identify the viewers' perspective on FBLVS in business promotions in Sri Lanka and did not use any software applications.

Results and Data Analysis

The researchers developed a semi-structured interview protocol and conducted in-depth telephone interviews with Facebook account holders in diversified fields based on the convenience of the researchers. Qualitative content analysis was used to analyse data. Content analysis means the descriptive identification process of coding and identification of topics as a research method for subjective interpretation of the data of written information (Hsieh et al., 2005).

The interviews were conducted in Sinhala and recorded all the ideas of the respondents with their consent. After that, all audio recordings were transcribed into written form in the English language. Thereafter, the researcher coded the data recorded in each transcript by using excel sheets. According to the coding procedure, initially create initial or open codes with the help of statements given by the respondents. After completing all open codes for each transcribes, the researcher identified the axial coding which matches the open coding categories developed (A.2).

The researchers conducted in-depth telephone interviews with 08 FBLVS viewers. The purpose of the qualitative study is not to generalize the results. Instead, the researchers wanted to uncover the subjective reality of the world. Hence, the study was conducted with a small sample. Finally, the analysis found 5 benefits and 2 problems associated with FBLVS related to business promotions.

Benefits of FBLVS in Business Promotions from Customer View

Here, we discussed the benefits which come from utilizing the FBLVS. With a thorough analysis of the interviews, a few key vital facts were identified that a particular individual has experienced when using this platform. Interaction, Real-time problem-solving, Cost-efficiency, Convenience and Trustworthiness are the major benefits identified through the study.

Interaction: First key point that we see in a FBLVS is the interaction. With a large community of different cultures having gathered together on Facebook, live videos can boost the popularity of the product among the community. It was an excellent platform to promote the products and services locally and internationally as well. When interviewing the people, it was recognized that there are two sets of people based on their interaction level. Some are interacting with the live video actively and clarifying their doubts related to the video. This was further proved by one of the statements of interviewee 07.

“When broadcasting some events live through Facebook I have participated actively”
Interviewee 03 also agreed with this by saying that *“we can get benefits through the interaction. Because we can get a big picture of that through this interaction. It gives good feedback”*.

People who are not actively interacting were the next category that described the intention of the public not to interact with the Facebook community through live videos. As per interviewee 04 who was commented on that by saying, *“Usually, I am not going to message while I am watching live videos”*

Even though the interviewed people had two categories based on their interaction, all of them agreed that Facebook live videos were the best platform to interact with business people.

Real-time problem solving: When a manufacturer has released a product to the market in a commercial world, people tend to resolve doubts related to that particular product before buying it. In FBLVS, this requirement could easily be solved with the active participation of the community through Facebook.

In FBLVS, viewers have the opportunity to direct any doubt related to the product online. It is a very good opportunity for viewers to resolve their problems in real-time. This was further proved by interviewee 02 by stating *“If we have a problem, we can direct it to the producer, that is good.”*

Cost-efficiency: Lower cost is a fact which is sought by both the viewers and business people. Viewers always want to purchase a quality product at a lower cost. FBLVS is a good approach for viewers to find information about goods and services at a lower cost before deciding to buy them. According to interview responses, FBLVS is a good platform for both the viewers and business holders as it requires less cost to do a FBLVS compared to other high-cost promotion methods. Interviewee 02 responded as below proving that they can get a good outcome for the amount that they spend to watch FBLVS.

“We can sort out all the queries related to the product in real-time without physically visiting their outlets. So, it indeed saves our money”

Convenience: This is another beneficial experience for viewers of FBLVS. They can watch it from any place they wish. And also, viewers can watch these videos again and again to grab more information which was missed during the video. Viewers can use their devices to watch the videos at their convenience. The below statement given by Interviewee 01 proved this further.

“But now we can find things which we want through this very easily and directly. We can directly contact the producers. There is no time-bound. We can direct our problems within a convenient time and they can answer within a convenient time. We have access to anything here.”

Trustworthiness: One main important factor needed for the customers is trustworthiness. Even though products have been demonstrated in FBLVS, a customer needed to be keen on whether the product can be trusted or not. Based on the user

reviews, it was analyzed why the Live videos were trusted under which circumstances. Based on the below idea of interviewee 01, it is clear that people have put their trust in live videos most of the time under different circumstances to make the customers trust more on the products more.

“Live videos can be trusted than traditional videos because traditional videos are not broadcasting live”

Problems of FBLVS in Business Promotions from Customer View

The researchers identified two major problems faced by them when watching FBLVS related to business promotions. There are Technical issues and Low content quality.

Technical issues: When concerning this major factor, viewers mentioned that they are experiencing unnecessary pop-ups, limitations in mobile data and poor connection quality. This makes consumers unhappy as it is inconvenient for people. Many viewers have mobile data-related issues as live videos need more data. This was proved with the idea of interviewee 04.

“If we use a router, it is very easy to watch videos. But there is a limitation on the usage of mobile data because those watching live videos are getting limited from many videos to a few numbers of videos”

Interviewee 06 also justified the problem of mobile data-related FBLVS as follows.

“It is not a problem when I am at home. But, when I go outside of the home, I have to think of that. Because I have to do my every task using my mobile data during whole the day. I am watching live videos when I am at home”.

Low content quality: Viewers of the sample have experienced weak presentation, less creativity, poor preparation, and poor clarity related to FBLVS in business promotions. Such issues related to FBLVS can demotivate viewers to watch live videos of business promotions. Below are some of the responses of viewers related to this

“Creativeness of live videos is not up to the quality of traditional ones.” (Interviewee 06)

“One disadvantage of this method is unclearness of the video” (Interviewee 08)

“While broadcasting a live video, the camera may be moved and that will change the quality of the video. As well as the presenter may be confused.” (According to interviewee 05)

Discussion

There is a rarity of studies conducted from the viewers' perspective regarding the FBLVS in business promotions locally and globally. Thus, this is the very first attempt to assist to know the benefits and challenges that they perceive referred to FBLVS related to business promotions in Sri Lanka.

The majority of existing studies have investigated the consumers' and sellers' sides and provided recommendations (Wongkitrungrueng et al., 2020; Zhang, et al., 2019; Addo et al., 2021; Lu et al., 2020). As of the findings of the study, five benefits and two major challenges were identified. Interaction, Real-time problem-solving, Cost-effectiveness, Convenience and Trustworthiness are introduced as benefits and Technical issues and Low content quality are the challenges. The researchers did not find any similar study though there are few other studies which studied the viewers' perspective in LVS (Hu et al., 2017; Yu et al., 2018). Thus, this study provides a novel contribution to the existing pool of knowledge by investigating FBLVS related to business activities. We as an emerging economy, still trying to expand the market and this is a wonderful tool to be used to achieve the aim of any scale of business. However, we encounter some limitations in finding viewers who watch the same type of business promotional videos, thus we sorted it out by reaching viewers who watch numerous business promotional FBLVS.

Finally, this study is worthwhile not only for business organizations but also for viewers, current and potential buyers too can make rich their experience and buying decisions through these findings.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The prime purpose of the study was to identify viewers' perceptions of FBLVS as a promotional tool in Sri Lankan businesses. Accordingly, to get the ideology of the general public, eight consumers who were working in different fields were interviewed. All the interviews were proposed to analyze under a semi-structured in-depth interview procedure. But, due to the prevailing COVID-19 pandemic situation, interviews were conducted under a semi-structured interview procedure through telephone conversations. Telephone interviews were conducted from 31/05/2020 to 25/06/2020 and each interviewee has given their opinion on FBLVS from their perspective. For the interviewed cluster, the bank manager, university students, development officer, Grama niladhari officer, PHI officer, and event manager have given their idea on FBLVS.

According to the consumers' ideas, the researcher has identified and analyzed the live video stream environment in Sri Lanka and identified 05 benefits experienced by viewers and 02 problems encountered. The researcher identified major benefits of Interaction, Real-time doubt-solving, Cost-efficiency, Convenience and Trustworthiness. Also, Technical issues and Low content quality were the two major barriers identified in the study results. Accordingly, below are the implications of this study.

The FBLVS platform was identified and applied by several countries such as China, Canada, and the United States which were the technological giants in the world. Thus, this platform was highly popular among the community to gain economic as well as social benefits. But, as a third-world country in the world, Sri Lanka was yet to use these technologies and this topic has not been undertaken by fellow researchers up until

this moment from the perspective of the viewers. Hence, there was a gap in studying viewers' perspectives on this as it helps organizations to understand viewers' end. So, this research supports filling that gap and can take this as a guideline for fellow researchers as well as the overall business community to understand the viewers' side related to FBLVS in Sri Lankan context. Further, this study is among the first few studies which studied the viewers' perspective on FBLVS in Sri Lankan business promotions. Hence, it bridges a gap available in the literature in this field of study.

In the practical scenario, the biggest implications of this concept were that this was one of the best low-cost methods to promote local businesses at the local as well as international levels. Also, by considering the benefits of this FBLVS, this was the method to promote every type of business in Sri Lanka and boost the contribution it was given to the GDP by a good margin. Thus, the government can introduce this concept to the business community. And also, business people who do FBLVS can have viewers' perceptions on this based on benefits and challenges and can make necessary actions to improve the quality and promote this method as a good business promotion method. It will lead them to reduce their cost.

The researchers would like to recommend business organizations who used FBLVS to promote their businesses consider the findings of this study as it provides a different view of potential customers of their businesses. Any business wants to expand its customer base and here they can't ignore viewers' ideas regarding this particular tool. Thus, we recommend them to look at especially the challenges in order to increase the effectiveness of FBLVS.

Further, government authorities can make arrangements to increase the facilities required for such low-cost promotion mechanisms as it covers a wider audience at a low cost. They can further create required policies to enhance quality promotion via this.

Finally, the viewers can understand the benefits that they can obtain through this method as it makes their life easy and can escape from challenges in possible ways from their level.

Researchers planned to experiment by broadcasting a Facebook live video with a business to promote their products through FBLVS and study how their viewers perceive that live video as a promotional tool. But, because of the situation in the country (Covid-19), the researchers were unable to experiment with further clarification. As well as researcher planned to conduct face-to-face semi-structured interviews to collect the data. But, because of the current situation in the country (Covid-19), the researchers had to perform semi-structured interviewees through telephone conversations. It was a limitation because the researcher couldn't investigate interviewees' reactions (E.g., Facial expressions).

For future research aspects, fellow researchers can use a quantitative approach to clarify the facts obtained in this research. As well as this study can do as an experiment

by broadcasting a Facebook live video for promoting a product of a business. Also, they can increase the sample for the research and cross check the identified factors and find new factors which have not been found yet for the Sri Lankan context.

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