Social Media Influencers' Credibility On Green Purchase Behavior: Evidence From Bangladesh

A.M. Shahahbuddin

Department of Business Administration, International Islamic University Chittagong, Bangladesh
*Corresponding Author:
Email: ams_iiuc@yahoo.com

Abstract.

The rising global awareness of environmental issues and health consciousness after COVID 19 have driven consumers to seek more sustainable lifestyles, significantly propelled green purchasing intent into the limelight. In regions where environmental education might be lacking, influencers can fill this gap. Social media Influencers often provide educational content on the importance of sustainability and how consumers can make greener choices, which can lead to more informed purchasing decisions. The purpose of the study is to ascertain the credibility of social media influencers' mastery on purchase intentions of individuals and how these intentions are carried over into actual green purchase behaviors. A quantitative, conveynience sampling uses an online survey that conducted from November 2023 to January 2024 on a south Asian country, Bangladesh. Data were coded in SPSS 26 and regressions, the sobel test were performed to find out mediating relationship. The results shows eco labeling had mediated the relationship on social media and green purchase intentions, while social media influencers' trust worthiness has impact on purchase. These findings have important implications for marketers and policymakers aiming to promote sustainable consumption.

Keywords: Green product, Purchase intension, green marketing and Bangladesh.

I.   INTRODUCTION

Social media influencers have the ability to persuade others to do things that are better for the environment. Since environmentally conscious consumer choices has received scant attention, researchers prioritize expanding knowledge on how it impacts on consumption behavior (Wang et al., 2019), thereby facilitating a more compelling purchasing experience (Asbahi et al. 2019). Social media influencers' persuasive abilities have the potential to encourage individuals to adopt environmentally favorable practices (Pittman & Abell, 2021; Lou & Yuan, 2019).Social media influencers (SMI) utilize their communication abilities to advocate for pro-environmental lifestyles among hundreds or thousands of followers with supporting statements and personal experiences (Sailer et al., 2022; Lou & Yuan, 2019). Pittman and Abell (2021) have observed that psychological research has not been particularly attentive to the influence of green purchase behavior, despite the influence of social media. According to McCracken (1989), trustworthiness is considered source's propensity to make valid claims. An individual's propensity to acquire environmentally friendly products may be positive or negative (Ritter et al., 2015; **Chen, & Chang, 2013;** Sreen et al., 2020). Consequently, cco labels addresses the issue of ocean plastics and other waste materials, global corporations like Nike and Adidas have invested in green technologies that enable the production of shoes from recycled materials (Crasto et al., 2020). Thereby, the sale volumes of these shoes suggested that they were exceedingly successful in the marketplace, as the firms received "social license.

" Eco-labeling can enhance this legitimacy by offering a uniform assessment of environmental advantages that aligns with the increasing environmental awareness among customers.South Asian nations such as India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and Nepal provide a distinctive setting for examining the interplay among social media influencers, eco-labeling, and the desire to make environmentally friendly purchases. The region's heterogeneous cultures, economic circumstances, and differing degrees of environmental consciousness make it a perfect study area for comprehending the influence of social media influencers on intentions to make environmentally friendly purchases **Arli, Van Esch, & Cui, 2023)**. Consumers' interest in purchasing products that prioritize environmental sustainability is demonstrated by their determination to acquire green products (Dagher & Itani, 2014). The theory of planned behavior has been empirically investigated to demonstrate that an individual's attitude toward purchasing environmentally friendly products is a robust predictor of their intentions to make green purchases (Kamalanon et al., 2022;

Zahan et al., 2020). They now believe that green consumption is a significant contributor to sustainability, environmentalism, and naturalism. Consequently, knowing Bangladesh's standing is essential for predicting the market's future potential. If they want to stay in the race, they need to build and maintain relationships with their customers that go beyond simply marketing products. The data collected from the survey can be utilized i. to ascertain the interaction between green purchase intention and social media influencers to ascertain the correlation between eco-labeling and social media influencers.

II.   LITERATURE REVIEW

Companies are passionately advocating green consumption in reaction to the ultimate perils posed to life by nature, and consumers are greatly driven by the blogs and postings of their friends and acquaintances. According to research by Tan et al. (2018), social media significantly impacted consumers' decisions about lowering their ecological footprint. The observed changes in consumption trends and assessments, as well as media and research reports, indicate that consumers are experiencing a substantial behavioral and attitude shift (Shuzhang et al., 2021; Turi et al., 2018; Mutum et al.,2021). In the context of green food products, SMIs have grown up as influential intermediaries between brands and consumers. Consumer behavior is substantially affected by their credibility, which encompasses trustworthiness, expertise, and attractiveness. Influencers' endorsements are more likely to be trusted when their persuasive power is enhanced by credibility. Consumers' propensity to choose environmentally friendly items over conventional ones is known as "green product purchase intention" (Majid and Elahe, 2017; Ali,et al., 2020). Personal norms, attitudes, environmental concerns, and willingness to pay were found to have a substantial impact on the purchase intention of products with environmentally friendly packaging, according to research by Prakash and Pathak (2017).In South Asia, where environmental awareness is increasing, influencers can be instrumental in the promotion of green the trust of consumers in green products can be improved by eco-labeling, which ensures that products comply with specific standards and provide information about their environmental impact.

Eco-labels may indicate fair trade practices, organic production, or other sustainability criteria in the context of green food products. Eco-labeling is a method of providing information regarding the environmental effects of products (Testa, et al., 2015). It can increase consumers' confidence in environmentally friendly items by guaranteeing their ecological advantages and adherence to particular criteria (Grappe, et al., 2022. Within the realm of environmentally-friendly food goods, eco-labels serve as indicators of organic production, fair trade procedures, or other sustainability standards. Research has indicated that the use of eco-labeling greatly enhances the legitimacy of items advocated by influencers, resulting in increased consumer trust and intention to purchase. Individuals who recommend environmentally certified green items have a greater impact on building customer confidence and promoting environmentally friendly purchasing, as opposed to those who support products without such certification. Previous research has demonstrated a strong correlation between religious identification and environmentally conscious consumption habits (Davari et al., 2017; Sundar,2021; Chowdhury, et.al., 2022; Wang et al., 2020; Ham, Pap, & Mahony, 2019). Taking good care of the environment is something that followers of most religions are taught to do (Richter, 2020). For example, Iguchi et al. (2021) examined 1,184 small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Japan's manufacturing sector and discovered that CEOs with strong religious beliefs are more likely to support green efforts at the company level.

Increased green purchasing intentions can be achieved through the combination of social media influencers and eco-labeling. The credibility and perceived value of eco-friendly products can be increased when influential people raise public awareness and comprehension of eco-labels. By combining their own credibility with the official validation provided by brands, influencers can increase the positive impact they have, as well as the trust and intention to purchase, among consumers.A green consumer will only be dedicated and think about going green if they are fully aware and properly informed about the environment, thereby committing to a worthy environment or a committed environmentalist. In order to establish a shift in green culture, it is necessary for a parallel shift in environmental awareness and attitude. Therefore, there is currently no significant change in the environmental aspect of the "going green" movement, and local

communities have little to no knowledge of environmental culture. These arguments are predicated on the limitations of going green and prior empirical research that has investigated these factors in various countries. Additionally, this study employed a robust, recently developed instrument, green culture, to evaluate the validity of the previous study in Bangladesh. Consequently, this research contributes to the business sector by fostering the consumer market to support the "going green" network and advancing socio-economic research.

However, it is crucial to consider challenges such as socio-economic disparities, varying levels of digital proficiency, and skepticism toward innovative products and marketing strategies. It is therefore possible to assume that:

H1: Social media influencers credibility has positive relationship with trust in green food products;

H2: Eco Labeling mediates positively relationship between Social media influencers and green purchase intention for greenfood products;

H3: Eco Labeling influences green purchase intentions;

H4: Social media influences green purchase intentions;

H5: Green purchase intention has positive relation with green purchase behavior

III.   MATERIALS AND METHODS

We carried out online survey because it facilitates the contact of many respondents and guarantees their anonymity from alumni of private universities in Chattrogram to discover their opinions on green marketing through conveynience sampling as it is much popular nowadays (Gavard-Perret et al., 2012; Hoe, 2008; Andrade, 2021). We found 210 responses from November 2023 to December 2024 and 10 incomplete responses were dropped. According to Saunders et al. (2007), a sample size of 200 is adequate to represent a large group. The participants' responses were voluntary and anonymous, and their privacy was preserved. Measurement items were adapted from tested instruments for this research, with contextual modifications.

A self administered questionnaire was developed with the items adapted and modified (Ohanian 1990; Moser et al., 2015; Xu et al., 2020). An evaluation was conducted for each using a five-point Likert scale, where one signifies "strongly disagree" and five "strongly agree." Results from a pilot test (n = 30) using exploratory factor analysis and Cronbach's alpha ($\alpha >.75$) showed that the participants found the items meaningful.We have used multiple linear regression and Pearson's correlation to look at how the independent and dependent variables are related to each other. Finally, we used the Sobel test to explore for mediating influence of customer orientation.

IV.   RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1   Descriptive Statistics of Respondents

Descriptive statistics were used to assess and analyze the responder demographic. The reliability of each construct was then checked by calculating cronbach's alpha. Of the valid respondents, 112 are men and 88 are women; the age distribution is as follows: 55% are under 40 and 45% are over 40. Additionally, according to the demographics, approximately 73.5 percent of the participants had an education level higher than the SSC. There are 41 responders who have finished post-graduation (39.4%), with only six (5.8%) holding a professional degree. It is better to access the data normality before further analysis (Hair et al., 2014). As recommended by Kline (2015), Skewness and Kurtosis statistics were used to test the normality.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics and Test of Normality

	Mean	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis	Conbach (α)
1. Social media influencer	3.73	0.65	0.02	-0.82	.83
2. Trust	2.77	1.30	0.15	-1.57	.76
3. Eco Labeling	2.90	1.08	-0.08	-0.74	.81
4. Green purchase intent	3.06	1.22	0.18	-1.17	.72
5. Green behavior	3.26	1.05	-0.18	-1.02	.71

Source: Author's survey results

Kline (2015) suggested that the Skewness value should be less than 3, and the absolute value for Kurtosis should be less than 10. Results shown in table 1, reveal that both Skewness and Kurtosis statistics

have values well within the recommended criteria. The average mean of the data is also 3.27 on a 5- point Likert scale, indicating respondents' agreement.

4.2 Correlation analysis

Table 2 shows green behavior was correlated with SMI 58% and statistically significant at a 99.99% confidence level.

Table 2. Correlation analysis

	1	2	3	4	5
1. Green behavior	1				
2. SMI	.584	1			
3. Trust	.241	.417	1		
4. Eco Labeling	.265	.432	.460	1	
5. Green purchase intent	.017	.415	.265	.387	1

Pearson correlation(2 tailed test), significant at a 99.99% confidence level,p-value < 0.01

Source: compiled data

Besides, Green behavior is significantly correlated with Trust by 24% and Eco labeling by 27%, while other variables did not predict a significant correlation. Hence, Trust predicted a significant correlation with all variables such as green purchase intent by 42 and all correlations are statistically significant at 99.99% due to the p-value is less than 0.01. The Pearson correlation results show imperative hierarchical variables to the model. The dependent variable, Green behavior exposed that social media influencer' credibility is the most imperative factor in shown in Table 2.

4.3 Multiple regression analysis

The results of the overall impacts of the dependent and independent variables are presented in Table 3. The results indicate that R^2 is 0.76 and R^2 after adjustment is 0.721; the difference is of a moderate nature. An R^2 greater than .50 indicates a strong fit (Hair et al., 2016). In addition, the F-value (41.747) is statistically significant with a confidence level of 99.99%. It indicates that there is substantial regression in the model between IVs and DV. Meanwhile, the model projected coefficients of regression of 1.162 for social media influencer, -0.164 for trust, .036 for eco labeling, in addition to DV and green purchase intent and SMI regression weights of 0.762 and 1.162, respectively. Hence, social media influencer exhibited the strongest correlation with green purchase intention and was statistically significant. In other words, a 1 unit change in eco labeling will change a positive weight of 1.162 green purchasing intent.

Table 3. Total effects

Variable	R^2	Adjusted R^2	F	β	p-value
1. Green purchase intent				.762	.012
2. Social media influencer	.760	.721	41.747(.0001)	1.162	.000
3. Trust				-.164	.000
4. Eco Labeling				.036	.372

Figure1: Structured model
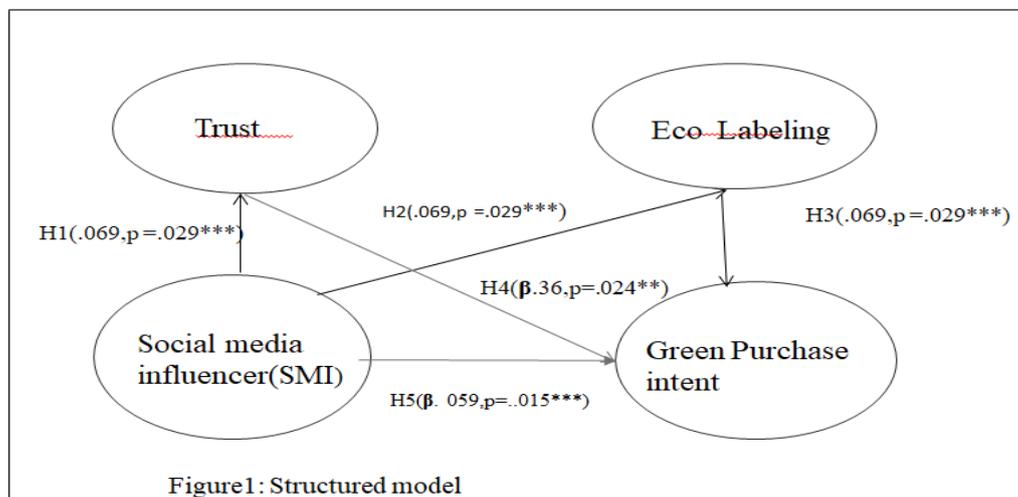
The Sobel test (Sobel 1982) was employed in this investigation to assess the indirect effect. The webpage utilises the unstandardized β and the standard error presented in figure 1 as inputs in order to analyse the mediation effect. Table 4 displays the results of the Sobel test as well as the indirect effects. In order to determine the significance of the mediation effect, the Sobel test utilized standard error and unstandardized β.According to the indirect effect and the Sobel test results, only one path (SMI credibility to Green Purchase Intension) was not mediated by Eco Labeling significantly. At the same time, the other paths was significantly mediated.

Table 4. Sobel test

Mediation path	Indirect effect	Test statistic	Std. Error	p-value
SMI – Trust – GPI	0.255	3.56	0.071	0.0003
SMI – Eco labeling - GPI	-0.043	-0.49	0.085	0.617

4.4 Hypothesis results

Table 5. Hypothesis testing

Hypothesis	Decisions
H1: SMI-Trust	Supported
H2: SMI-Eco label	Supported
H3: Eco Labeling - green purchase intentions	Supported
H4: SMI -green purchase intentions	Not Supported
H5: Trust –Green purchase intent	Supported

Note: *p>0.05

This study established its hypotheses using the results of multiple regression analyses, and the Sobel test (Table 5).The support was found for four out of five hypotheses. The results proved the significant effect of social media influencer on enhancing green purchase intention. A direct significant positive relationship (H1) was found between SMI credibility and trust in food products. Meanwhile, H3 (eco labeling to GPI) was not supported due to negative effects even the result is significant. Hence, H2 (the mediating effect between social media and GPI) was supported. In addition, H4 was supported by showing a significant direct relationship between Trust and GPI, while eco labeling failed to mediate the relationship (H5). This study aims to examine the relationship between these variables and the likelihood that social media followers will make eco-friendly goods purchases. Since believing in social media influencers' credibility encourages a more environmentally conscious consumer mindset. In accordance with prior research (Chetioui et al., 2020; Khan, 2020; Kumar & Tripathi, 2019), this investigation revealed that the credibility of influencers influence attitudes. In the realm of electronic products, Lou, & Yuan (2019) and Saleem et al. (2015) conducted research, which revealed a substantial positive correlation between green trust and green purchase intentions.

Other studies, including those conducted by Kang and Hur (2011) and Nuttavuthisit and Thogersen (2015), have also identified the same correlation.Previous research confirms that followers' beliefs about the social media influencer's opinions on eco-friendly items are influenced by the influencer's credibility (Pham et al., 2021; Jin, Yin, Zhou, & Yu, 2021; Khwaja, Mahesar, & Qureshi, 2021). In addition, Punyatoya (2014) conducted research that demonstrated that consumers are more inclined to adopt a green lifestyle when they are highly aware of their environmental impact. Sreen et al. (2018) emphasize that consumer attitudes toward purchasing green products can potentially impact their purchasing intentions and, as a result, their purchasing behavior(Mishra, Gupta, & Bansal, 2022; Pham, et al., 2021). On top of that, we found that when people believe social media influencers are legitimate, it makes them more likely to buy eco-friendly food products, which supports hypotheses. While some studies find a correlation between stronger religiosity and environmental concern (Martín-Consuegra, et al., 2018; Arli et al., 2023), This research confirms a positive correlation between the religious identification of top-executives in SMEs and their level of engagement in GM, hence, corroborate the previous study (Xie, & Madni, 2023;Iguchi et al., 2021). The study's findings demonstrate that eco-labels do not significantly influence consumers' intentions to make environmentally conscious purchases.

V.   CONCLUSION

When customers put their faith in media influencers, the campaign has an impact on their desire to buy environmentally friendly products. In general, the surveys were valid and reliable. Some items were chosen without taking cultural differences among customers or the passage of time into account; the study's scope should be broadened to incorporate these elements. Eco labeling is a mediating variable that enhances the association between SMI and GPI. In addition, information disseminated on social media acts as a stimulus for green consumption among the millennium. The study of consumption behavior has a wealth of theoretical implications at the border of sustainability, green purchasing, and the role of social media influencers in social media. In particular, the credibility of social media influencers was identified as a critical construct that directs and indirectly influences consumer attitudes and beliefs, as well as the intention to purchase and the actual purchase of green products. In addition, the practical implications pertain to the establishment of sponsorship partnerships with social media influencers whose values are most consistent with an organization's environmental commitments, irrespective of their follower count, in order to encourage environmentally conscious consumption. The impact of the individual industry variables could be taken into account in future research.

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