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NAVIGATING THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON SUSTAINABLE PURCHASE INTENTION FOR GREEN COSMETICS

Anu Grover*, Hareesh Kumar T.**

Abstract *The current environmental situation has resulted in increasing expenditures on sustainable marketing practices and the need to conduct further research on the effective way to influence sustainable intention within the realm of social media. Grounded in the theory of planned behaviour, this study aims to evaluate the direct influence of social media on individuals' perspectives regarding sustainable purchasing, particularly in the context of green cosmetics. The present study employed the data set obtained from 221 respondents and structural equation modelling (SEM) Amos v24 was used to analyse the relationship among variables. The findings of the study illuminate that perceived trust in social media and interactivity on social media sites had a substantial impact on the sustainable purchase intention of consumers while the factor eWOM (electronic word of mouth) did not significantly influence users' intention to purchase green cosmetics. The study gives actionable insights for firms in the green cosmetics market on including and managing social media sites in their communication strategy to drive sustainable purchasing behaviour.*

Keywords: *eWOM, Perceived Trust in Social Media, Interactivity, Sustainable Consumption, Sustainable Purchase Intention*

INTRODUCTION

The modern world of advanced technology as a facilitator of human life has come at a substantial price for the environment (ElHaffar et al., 2020). Industrialisation, food waste, deforestation, and plastic pollution have exacerbated environmental degradation, culminating in a planetary emergency. The cosmetics industry is a significant contributor to this crisis due to its reliance on excessive packaging, unsustainable resource consumption, and plastic-intensive practices. Furthermore, it releases numerous chemical pollutants that contaminate water sources and disrupt ecological balance (Hoang et al., 2024). Although synthetic ingredients used in these products may provide an instant glow, they often carry long-term health risks. This highlights the urgent need to shift from conventional to sustainable consumption behaviours (Quoquab et al., 2019). Environmental deterioration has become a pressing concern not only for environmentalists but also for governments, business leaders, and the general public (Grilli & Curtis, 2021; Zafar et al., 2021). Sustainable consumption practices have gained widespread recognition as a crucial means of mitigating the environmental impacts of human activities. Marketing industries are increasingly adopting sustainable practices in response to evolving societal values, regulatory reforms, and growing environmental awareness (Kaur & Chahal, 2018; Singh Kushwaha, 2015).

In response to growing consumer concerns, the cosmetics market is experiencing a resurgence of interest in environmentally friendly or 'green' products (Ghazali et al., 2017). These products are intended to promote sustainability by providing various advantages such as less usage of natural resources, recycling, reuse, and eco-friendly packaging practices (Zappelli et al., 2016; Anchliya et al., 2023). Interestingly, Arora et al. (2023) and Singh Kushwaha (2015) noted that organisations are recognising the wider scope of green marketing in the current environment. With their growing efforts on environmentally sustainable marketing strategies, enterprises have begun to emphasise digital communication channels such as social media platforms to

* Research Scholar (UGC-SRF), Department of Financial Administration, School of Management, Central University of Punjab, Bathinda, Punjab, India. Email: groverannu10@gmail.com

** Assistant Professor, Department of Financial Administration, School of Management, Central University of Punjab, Bathinda, Punjab, India. Email: hareesh.kumar@cup.edu.in

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elevate the marketing of green cosmetic products (Han & Xu, 2020).

The utilisation of social media platforms to promote sustainable attitudes and intention among people is an ever-evolving practice (Zhao et al., 2019). Social media exerts a trenchant impact in facilitating fast communication and expanding awareness among the wider population (Irwin et al., 2012; Sharma & Chaudhry, 2025). It is imperative to acknowledge the potential of social media platforms to optimise their influence for environmental improvement (Hamid et al., 2017) as the present era is witnessing an inevitable shift towards a sustainable revolution. The IBM Institute for Business Value (IBV) report (2019) highlights the importance of sustainability in addressing environmental challenges. However, lack of information can discourage consumers from purchasing sustainable products (Okuah et al., 2019; Zahid et al., 2018). Knowledge is crucial for sustainability; it requires the efforts of different social forces (Calcagni et al., 2019). Social networking sites (SNSs) provide an effective medium for promoting knowledge about pro-environmental behaviour (Vulkko, 2021).

However, the role of social media in promoting green products, especially in green cosmetics, is still in its infancy in developing countries such as India (Shimul et al., 2022). Research is needed to explore how social media activities influence customers' attitudes and purchase intention for green products (Gupta & Syed, 2022; Teixeira et al., 2023). To foster the sustainable purchase intention, it is imperative to acknowledge the factors influencing such intention. Consequently, the research has been expanded to measure the impact of key determinants (eWOM [electronic word of mouth], perceived trust in social media, and interactivity) on sustainable purchase intention towards green cosmetics.

The majority of previous studies have predominantly taken a general approach without focusing on specific product categories. Therefore, it would be intriguing to investigate consumer purchase intention specifically for a particular product category (Arora et al., 2023; Sun & Wang, 2020). This study aims to fill the research gap by exploring the determinants of sustainable purchase intention for green cosmetics in the Indian context.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM)

The world of digitalisation has made it possible to share information with a number of audiences in less than one minute. eWOM pertains to the online sharing of information about products and services among consumers. According to Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004), eWOM refers to any positive or negative statements made by potential, actual, or former customers about a product or company, and these statements are publicly available to a large audience. In the context of the cosmetic industry, a survey conducted by Khanom (2020) found that 88% of consumers actively seek out and scrutinise product reviews before buying cosmetic products, thus highlighting the importance of eWOM in shaping consumers' purchasing decisions in this industry.

Perceived Trust in Social Media

Trust is essential to interpersonal relationships and is associated with truthfulness, behaviour consistency, and fulfilling promises while performing expected activities. Sun et al. (2016) defined perceived trust in social media as the people's belief in the reliability, credibility, and ethical conduct of the platforms they use. It comprehends the user's subjective interpretation regarding social media platforms' motives and actions. In the context of online activities and transactions, trust has become an essential aspect. Herrando et al. (2019) postulated that users' trust in online information is influenced by a particular source of information. Users' level of confidence on these platforms has a profound impact on their interactions and shopping behaviour (Zafar et al., 2020). Therefore, it is imperative to comprehend the effect of trust on social media platforms in shaping consumers' intentions and behaviour.

Interactivity

Social media platforms provide a virtual space for users to exchange ideas and information (Gupta & Syed, 2022). Interaction, the pivotal component of social media, is the fundamental strategy for maintaining positive relationships (Ariel & Avidar, 2015). This feature of social media platforms empowers individuals to have control over their interactions, resulting in heightened engagement (Godey et al., 2016). The advent of social media has brought about a transformative shift in the way information is shared through the inclusion of its distinctive two-way communication feature (Wang, 2014). This feature has had a profound impact on the interaction between businesses and their customers by providing customers with an opportunity to give feedback and pinpoint any shortcomings in a company's products. It helps strengthen the relations between sellers and consumers.

Sustainable Purchase Intention

Purchase intention, a crucial aspect of consumer behaviour, reflects the readiness of consumers to make a purchase decision (Mei et al., 2012). Ajzen (1991) defined the purchase

intention as the subjective probability of performing a certain behavioural action. Hsu et al. (2017) opined that it holds significant importance in determining the favourability or unfavourability of consumer purchase behaviour. The more positive attitude towards a specific product, the greater the likelihood of buying it (Ghazali et al., 2017). In follow-up statements, Liu et al. (2020) argued that the more positively consumers feel towards green products, the greater their likelihood of purchasing them. The study highlights the significance of consumer purchase intention in shaping their decision-making process, a key factor for developing marketing strategies in this sector.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

The present research is based on the theory of planned behaviour (TPB), which is widely used to predict the intentions and behaviour of people. According to the TPB, individuals are more likely to engage in a particular behaviour if they have a greater intent towards it (Ajzen, 1991). Consequently, behavioural intention exerts the actual behaviour, and determinants such as attitude, perceived behaviour control, and subjective norms affect the behavioral intention. The TPB has been widely used to predict people's intentions and behaviour in numerous studies. This research explores the concepts related to green and social media marketing and its importance in addressing purchase intention in an ecological context based on the TPB.

Relationship Between eWOM and Sustainable Purchase Intention

eWOM has become the most trustworthy and reliable online information-sharing approach in today's digital world, resulting in most people referring to online reviews of others before making any purchase (Jain et al., 2023). In order to become the limelight in the scenario of 'green and sustainable practices', some companies are starting to conduct unethical green washing practices to gain a significant market share. Due to these issues, consumers are more likely to rely on the information shared by other consumers than the company (Zhang et al., 2018). Jaini et al. (2020) postulated that eWOM has become the most potent tool impacting individuals' attitudes and behaviour towards products or services. Likewise, Jain et al. (2023) argued that eWOM can significantly influence the decision-making process of consumers. Recent studies (Gupta & Syed, 2022; Jaini et al., 2020) claim that eWOM can change people's mindset about purchasing green products. Consequently, the study posits that:

Hypothesis 1 (H1)

eWOM positively influences consumers' sustainable purchase intention towards green cosmetics.

Relationship Between Perceived Trust in Social Media and Sustainable Purchase Intention

Trust has become a central issue in online shopping behaviour. Boone et al. (2008) posited that trust is a crucial factor in eliciting social responses among the members of a group, society, and organisation. Social networking sites are based on interpersonal relations, as users who perceive a high trust in such platforms tend to continue using them, ultimately impacting their shopping behaviour (Zafar et al., 2020). When social media is perceived as a credible source of information, individuals are more likely to exhibit more significant interest in environmentally conscious content such as blogs, comments, or videos (Han & Xu, 2020). Likewise, Kaur and Chahal (2018) opined that consumers have a positive attitude towards advertisement messages promoting sustainable products on social media platforms. Accordingly, the study hypothesises that:

Hypothesis 2 (H2)

Perceived trust in social media positively influences consumers' sustainable purchase intention towards green cosmetics.

Relationship Between Interactivity and Sustainable Purchase Intention

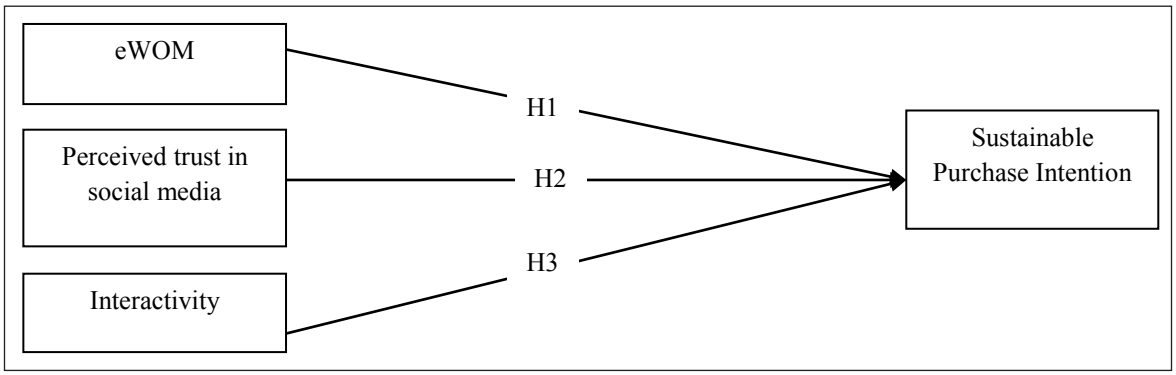
Interaction on social media is progressively becoming a part of every individual's daily activities (Abbas et al., 2019). Social media platforms display the social structure, reflecting the settings of different social factors, including individuals, organisations, and communities (Scholz et al., 2018). Interactive features of social media can be used to build environmental identities and strengthen relations with the environment (Ballew et al., 2015). The extensive features of social media interaction (mutual communications, information sharing, and providing opinions) can be used

by green firms to promote pro-environmental behaviour. As per the TPAM model, social interaction led to the fulfilment of social motivation, contributing to the development of sustainable behaviour. Thus, the study assumes the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 3 (H3)

Interactivity positively influences consumers' sustainable purchase intention towards green cosmetics.

The proposed relationship among the variables used in study is shown in Fig. 1.



Source: Authors' compilation.

Fig. 1: Conceptual Framework

METHODOLOGY

Survey and Data Collection

To test the research hypothesis, a close-ended structured questionnaire was designed. Data was collected online using judgemental sampling from Indian respondents who use various social media platforms to purchase and gain information about green cosmetic. A judgemental sampling method was applied to reach the respondents. The statements of the questionnaire were based on the five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The study has followed the guidelines outlined by Hair et al. (2014) in constructing sample size, having 5 to 10 samples for each item or statements. The sample comprised 221 respondents from India in which 130 (58.8%) were female and 91 (41.2%) were male.

Measurement

For the development of the questionnaire, all the measures used in the study have been adopted from previously established scales and modified as per the need of the study. To assess the eWOM effect on consumers' sustainable purchase intention for green cosmetics scales from Gupta and Syed (2022) and Teixeira et al. (2023) were adapted. Arora et al. (2023) scale was adapted to gauge the perceived trust in social media and sustainable purhcase intention. Further, interactivity was measured through the scale adapted from Gupta and Syed (2022).

DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Respondents' Demographic Profile

Table 1: Demographic Profile

Demographic Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Male	91	41.2%
Female	130	58.8%
Age		
18–20	17	7.7%
21–25	150	67.9%
26–30	41	18.6%
31–35	10	4.5%
36–40	2	0.9%
Above 40	1	0.5%
Education Qualification		
10th+2	11	5%
Graduation	77	34.8%
Post-graduation	113	51.1%
Doctoral	16	7.2%
Professional	4	1.8%

Demographic Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Occupational Status		
Student	179	81%
Private Employee	14	6.3%
Govt Employee	11	5%
Business	6	2.7%
Homemaker	6	2.7%
Others	4	2.3%
Living Area		
Rural	73	33%
Semi-urban	70	31.7%
Urban	78	35.3%

Source: Primary data analysis.

The analysis of the demographic profile depicts that the majority of respondents were female (58.8%) and the remaining were male (41.2%). The majority of responses were from the age group 21–25 (67.9%). Further, the percentage of post-graduates was 51.1%, graduates 34.8%, 16 respondents (7.2%) had doctorates, and 11 respondents (5%) were 10th + 2, and four were doing professional courses. Most of the respondents were students (81%), followed by private employees (6.3%), 5% were government employees, 2.7% had their own business; and homemakers made up the same percentage, i.e., 2.7%, and others were 2.3%. 35.3% of respondents were from urban areas, 33% from rural, and 31.7% from semi-urban areas.

Measurement Model

The measurement model was evaluated using Confirmatory Factor Analysis in Amos. The factor loadings for each item were assessed during the confirmatory factor analysis, and two items, eWOM 1 and eWOM 2, were removed due to cross-loadings. The overall goodness of fit of the model was evaluated using the model-fit indicators (CMIN/df, GFI, AGFI, NFI, IFI, CFI, TLI, and RMSEA), and all values were within their respective common acceptable levels. Table 2 depicts the good fit of the four-factor model (eWOM, perceived trust in social media, interaction, and sustainable purchase intention) based on the data: CMIN/df = 1.989, GFI = 0.908, CFI = 0.965, TLI = 0.957, SRMR = 0.503, and RMSEA = 0.067.

Table 2: Measurement Model Analysis

Assessment	Fit Indices	Recommended Value	Source(s)	Obtained Value
Absolute Fit	RMSEA	RMSEA < 0.08	Bentler and Hu (1998)	0.067
	GFI	GFI > 0.80	Hair et al. (2010)	0.908
Incremental Fit	CFI	CFI > 0.90	Bentler (1990)	0.965
	AGFI	0 to 1, close to 1	Hair et al. (2010)	0.869
	NFI	NFI > 0.90	Hair et al. (2010)	0.933
	IFI	IFI > 0.90	Hair et al. (2010)	0.966
	TLI	TLI > 0.90	Bentler (1990)	0.957
Parsimonious Fit	CMIN/df	CMIN/df < 3.0	Hair et al. (2010)	1.989

Source: Primary data analysis.

Construct Reliability

Construct reliability is assessed to measure if the variables are consistent with what they intend to measure. The researcher has used composite reliability to measure the construct reliabilities, which ranged from 0.791 to 0.929, above the 0.70 benchmark (Hair et al., 2010). Hence, construct reliability was established for each construct in the study (Table 3).

Convergent Validity

For measuring the convergent validity of scale items, the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) (Fornell & Larcker, 1981) was used in the study. The AVE values exceeded the threshold value of 0.50 as proposed by Fornell and Larcker (1981). Therefore, the scales used for the present study demonstrate the required level of convergent validity (Table 3).

Table 3: Loadings, Reliability, and Convergent Validity

Items	Loadings	Alpha	Composite Reliability	AVE
eWOM		0.779	0.791	0.559
eWOM 3	0.687			
eWOM 4	0.717			

Items	Loadings	Alpha	Composite Reliability	AVE
eWOM 5	0.833			
Perceived Trust in Social Media		0.900	0.9	0.693
PT1	.875			
PT2	.827			
PT3	.843			
PT4	.784			
Interactivity		0.895	0.895	0.739
I1	.877			
I2	.852			
I3	.851			
Sustainable Purchase Intention		0.928	0.929	0.722
SPI1	.868			
SPI2	.857			
SPI3	.849			
SPI4	.856			
SPI5	.819			

Source: Primary data analysis.

Discriminant Validity

Discriminant validity is supposed to assess the accuracy of a measure in evaluating a specific concept while minimising correlation with unrelated concepts. Table 4 illustrates the details of the bolded square root of AVE, indicating that diagonal constructs have a larger value than non-diagonal constructs. Therefore, this model demonstrates that the constructs possess discriminant validity, as per the Fornell and Larcker (1981) criteria.

Table 4: Discriminant Analysis

	I	eWOM	PT	SPI
I	**0.860**			
eWOM	0.579	**0.748**		
PT	0.722	0.569	**0.833**	
SPI	0.775	0.565	0.672	**0.850**

Source: Primary data analysis.

STRUCTURAL MODEL ANALYSIS

The second step involved analysing the structural model to confirm the research hypotheses. Like the measurement model, the structural model is confounded to fit the model indices falling within the acceptable ranges: CMIN/df = 1.989, GFI = 0.908, CFI = 0.965, AGFI = 0.869, TLI = 0.957, RMSEA = 0.067, NFI = 0.933, and IFI = 0.966. The squared multiple correlations were 0.637 for sustainable purchase intention; this shows that 63% of variance in sustainable purchase intention is accounted by eWOM, perceived trust in social media, and interactivity.

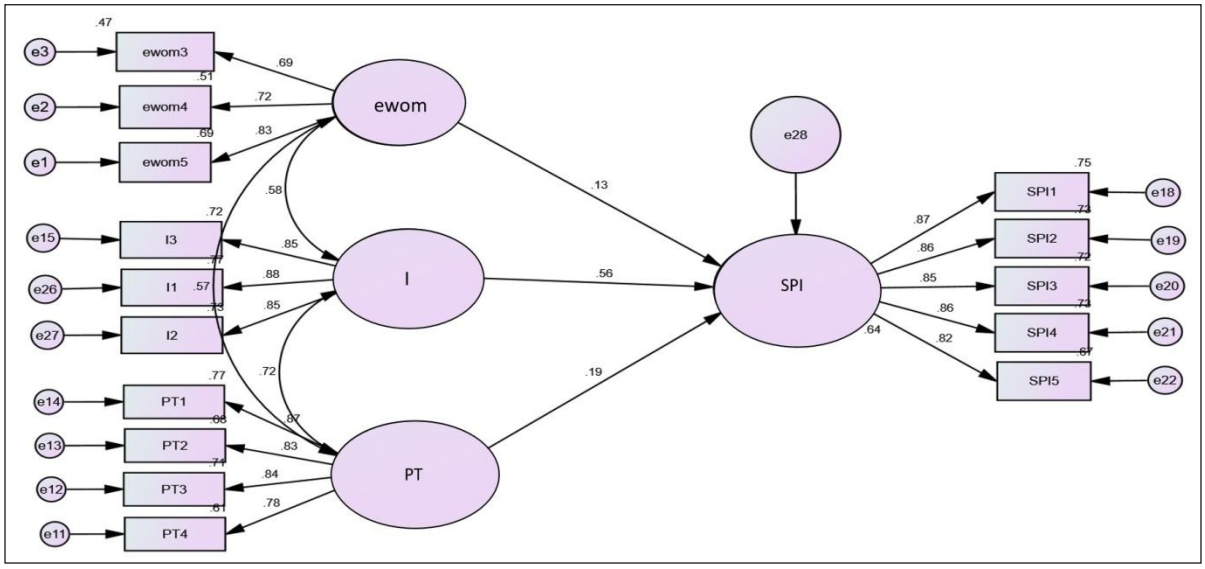
Testing of Hypothesis

The study assessed the impact of eWOM, perceived trust in social media, and interactivity on sustainable purchase intention. The impact of eWOM on sustainable purchase intention was positive but not significant as the p-value is 0.68, greater than 0.05, T = 1.827, less than 1.96, and b = 0.133, rejecting H1. The impact of perceived trust in social media on sustainable purchase intention was positive and significant (b = 0.194, T = 2.328), and p-value is 0.020, supporting H2. Likewise, interactivity has also created a positive and significant impact on sustainable purchase intention, having the values within acceptable ranges (b = 0.559, T = 6.274, and p < .001). Hence, H3 was supported. Model fit indices and hypothesis testing results are presented in Table 5, while the structural model with standardised path estimates is depicted in Fig. 2.

Table 5: Structural Model Results

Hypothesised Relationship	Standardised Estimates	t-Value	p-Value	Decision
eWOM SPI	0.133	1.827	0.68	Rejected
PT SPI	0.194	2.328	0.020	Accepted
I SPI	0.559	6.274	0.000	Accepted
R-Square				
Sustainable Purchase Intention	0.64			
Model Fit				
CMIN/df = 1.989, **GFI** = 0.908, **CFI** = 0.965, **AGFI** = 0.869, **TLI** = 0.957, **RMSEA** = 0.067, **NFI** = 0.933, and **IFI** = 0.966				

Source: Primary data analysis.



Source: Authors' compilation.

Fig. 2: Structural Model

The hypothesis testing results reflect that eWOM positively but not significantly influences the consumers' sustainable purchase intention for green cosmetics. This is contradictory to our assumption. Hence, the first hypothesis was rejected. The second hypothesis was to evaluate the effect of perceived trust in social media on users' intentions. The positive and significant results showed that the trust of consumers on social media sites has started burgeoning. Social media platforms offer a variety of sources from where users can obtain reliable information regarding the sustainability of products or brands, and they are perceived as risk-free platforms (Liang et al., 2021; Zafar et al., 2021). Therefore, social media use can profoundly impact individuals' beliefs, lifestyles, and purchasing decisions for green products. Moreover, the interaction on social media sites significantly influences the consumer's purchase intention. The findings are consistent with the prior studies (Godey et al., 2016; Gupta & Syed, 2022; Kim & Ko, 2012), which demonstrated the relevance of interactivity for promoting environmental behaviour.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The research delves into the concept of sustainable consumption and sustainable purchase intention of consumers for green cosmetics. Utilising the theory of planned behaviour, the study offers an eclectic understanding of individuals' preference for 'green' over conventional products and the profound impact of social media on their purchase decisions. The extensive adoption of social media by the common masses has unearthed enormous marketing prospects for businesses. The result of the study underscores the importance of social media platforms for persuading the people to use green cosmetics. The study's

findings demonstrate that the perceived trust in social media is significantly influenced by the reliability of the content disseminated through these platforms. As such, the trustworthiness of the information shared on social media channels is critical in shaping individuals' perception of trust in them. Therefore, businesses and organisations must carefully navigate the landscape of social media platforms, prioritising dissemination of accurate and authentic information to enhance their audience's confidence in their brand and to establish themselves as reliable sources of information. In addition, companies can communicate their commitment to sustainability to their stakeholders, including customers, investors, and the wider audience.

Moreover, the interactivity on social media can add multiples to purchasing green cosmetics, underscoring the need for companies to map out the interactive features of these platforms to influence consumers' sustainable decisions effectively. Surprisingly, eWOM does not substantially impact individuals' intention to make sustainable purchases. This result may reflect the consumer's questionability about the credibility of online comments and messages, or consumers may prioritise other factors over it. The research outcomes could provide valuable insights into sustainable consumption and the purchasing patterns towards green cosmetic products. Further, these findings assist organisations in establishing green and sustainable marketing strategies and offer policy suggestions to the government. These strategies can play a pivotal role in encouraging consumers to make sustainable choices.

LIMITATION AND FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTION

The present study offers valuable insights, but it is imperative to acknowledge its limitations. The study did not measure the actual behaviour of the respondents, which can be more effective in bridging individuals' 'intention-behaviour' gap for purchasing green products. Thus, further research should be conducted to scrutinise the actual purchasing patterns of consumers, which could be one of the opportunities for further study. The study centred on green cosmetics only, while there are other areas within the green product category where further research could be conducted. Moreover, the study did not delve into the impact of demographic variables, such as age, gender, income, and education, on consumer purchasing decisions. Future research could explore the moderating effect of these variables on green product purchasing behaviour and provide a more nuanced understanding of the sustainable consumption patterns.

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