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Digital Persuasion in Sustainable Consumption: An Integrated Model of Influencer Credibility, e-WOM, Informational Quality and Argument Quality on Green Buying Behaviour

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Abstract

Environmental concern and awareness of sustainable development have significantly reshaped consumer behaviour. However, inconsistent behaviour remains evident, as consumers who endorse pro-environmental attitudes do not consistently make sustainable purchasing decisions. A quantitative research design was adopted. Data were collected from 304 respondents who actively follow influencers on social media platforms, using a structured questionnaire based on a five-point Likert scale. The data were analysed using SPSS and AMOS through Confirmatory Factor Analysis and Structural Equation Modelling. The findings reveal that influencer credibility, electronic word of mouth, informational quality, and argument quality significantly and positively influence consumer green buying behaviour towards eco-friendly products with Argument Quality having the strongest effect.

Keywords: influencer marketing, consumer buying behaviour, electronic word of mouth, sustainability, green buying behaviour.

JEL Classification: M31; D12; Q56.

Introduction

Consumer behaviour has undergone a prominent shift driven by the growing environmental concerns and increasing awareness of sustainable development. Global challenges such as climate change, pollution, and resource depletion have shifted consumer priorities beyond price and quality towards eco-friendly and ethical considerations (Nguyen et al., 2019). Eco-friendly products are designed to minimise adverse environmental effect throughout their life cycle have consequently become central to this emerging consumption pattern (Leonidou et al., 2013).

The conversion of pro-environmental issues into self-reported green buying behaviour remained inconsistent, despite increased awareness of sustainability. This gap between positive environmental attitudes and sustainable purchases, commonly described as the attitude-behaviour gap, has been widely documented (Carrington et al., 2010). Individual attitudinal concern regarding the environment does not shift it into green buying behaviour (Vermeir and Verbeke, 2006).

Studies have explained the inconsistency including the lack of trustworthy information, perceived higher cost charged for green products and uncertainty about the product efficiency (Janssen et al., 2022). These barriers demonstrated the importance of credible and persuasive communication in influencing sustainable purchasing decisions. Marketing communication has become increasingly social and interactive with the rapid evolution of digital media. Traditional advertising has gradually shifted towards consumer-centred and peer-driven digital communication environment. Potential consumers have cultivated large online followings and can significantly shift their audience attitude and actions.

Among the most influential of these communicators are social media influencers (Filip et al., 2025). Influencers craft consumer perception of brands and products, making them authentic in relation to require consumer trust (Liu and Zheng, 2024). The propagation of green products coincides with the rise of influencer marketing. Influencer content blends with the personal narrative with product endorsement for making it appear more authentic and persuasive many times (Casaló et al., 2017; Lou and Yuan, 2019). They offer not only product information but also their experience and opinions, and social validation, making their recommendation effective in crafting consumer behaviour (De Veirman et al., 2017; Sokolova and Perez, 2021). At the same time, the rise of social media has drastically altered how consumers access, interpret and act upon the information. Recent systematic evidence confirms that influencers can shape attitudes and behaviours related to sustainable consumption (Veckalne et al., 2025).

Growing environmental concerns have significantly reshaped consumer decision-making in coming years. Still, a persistent gap remains between pro-environmental attitudes and self-reported green buying behaviour. Although consumers have increasingly shown support for Sustainable consumption, many fail to consistently change this attitude into eco-friendly buying which is reflecting what the prior research describes as the attitude-behaviour gap (Carrington et al., 2010). The rapid expansion of social media has transformed the marketing communication with influencers as powerful opinion leaders capable of crafting consumer perception and behavioural intentions in parallel.

Recent studies have found that influencers foster brand credibility and buying behaviour through authentic and informative content especially when their communication aligns with the persuasive principles such as those work through Elaboration Likelihood Model (Liu and Zheng, 2024). Furthermore, studies focusing specially on green products demonstrate that influencer marketing can positively influence eco-friendly buying behaviour by increasing product knowledge and authenticity (Agustina et al., 2023). This study explores the consumer purchasing behaviour towards the sustainable products in the digital era persuaded by influencer marketing. This study examines the influencer credibility (IC), electronic word of mouth(e-WOM), informational quality (IQ), and argument quality (AQ) that craft the sustainability inclination in modern consumers.

Although, the latest studies have made a better understanding of social media influencers and consumer behaviour. (Liu and Zheng, 2024) stated that influencer-driven communication fosters brand credibility and purchase behaviour. Still, they had focused on purchase behaviour rather than consumers buying behaviour. Lou and Yuan (2019) demonstrated that informative message value and influencer credibility are central to influencer marketing effectiveness, but this evidence does not integrate these cues with e-WOM in a sustainability-specific framework.

Cheung and Thadani (2012) highlighted the role of e-WOM information in influencing consumer decision-making. Yet, findings mostly consider peer-generated information in isolation without the integrating role of influencer interaction. (Mathur et al., 2024) showed that argument quality and credibility influence consumer behavioural towards eco-friendly products. The model was limited to certain product criteria and did not the combined effects of multiple message and source cues in a broader sustainability context. The researcher had recognised the relevance of influencer source credibility and message quality cues in social persuasion (Liu and Zheng, 2024; Cheung and Thadani, 2012). The construct has rarely been integrated into a unified framework to explain the attitude and behavioural gap in sustainable consumption. Existing literature often isolates individual predictors, thereby limiting a proper understanding of how several digital persuasion mechanisms altogether shapes sustainable buying behaviour.

Consequently, there is a need for an integrated theoretical framework that concurrently examines the influencer credibility, electronic word of mouth, informational quality, and argument quality as drivers of sustainable purchase behaviour. No prior studies have simultaneously integrated these four-persuasion mechanism to explain green buying behaviour using SEM to the best of the researcher`s knowledge. This study explores the gap by proposing and examining such a model offering a more holistic view of how digital persuasion influences consumers for eco-friendly purchase decisions.

The objective of the study is to examine the effect of influencer credibility, electronic word of mouth, informational quality, and argument quality on consumers buying behaviour towards eco-friendly products.

1. Research Background

This study framework is based on Source Credibility Theory (Ohanian, 1990) and the Elaboration Likelihood Model (Petty and Cacioppo, 1986) to explain how digital persuasion mechanism influence sustainable buying behaviour in influencer marketing. The source credibility model is the most influential framework in persuasion and influential research (Ohanian, 1990).

The research framework suggest that the persuasion of communicator relies on how credible the audiences perceive them to be through their credibility expertise, trustworthiness, and attractiveness. (Ohanian, 1990) Ohanian explains that the extent to which a communicator is perceived as capable of making valid and reliable assertions. When influencers are seen as knowledgeable, honest, and relatable their endorsements are more persuasive and effective in shaping consumer attitudes and behaviour. This theoretical framework is relevant for eco-friendly products collaborating with source credibility and influencer marketing.

The study integrates the source credibility (Ohanian, 1990) and the Elaboration likelihood model (ELM) to provide a wide-ranging explanation of digital influence in sustainable consumption. (Ohanian, 1990) Ohanian`s Source Credibility theory explains the persuasive effectiveness of a message depends on the trustworthiness; and expertise of the Influencer Credibility works primarily as peripheral cue in shaping consumer attitudes through heuristic processing in the influencer marketing. The elaboration likelihood model (Petty and Cacioppo, 1986) explains that persuasion occurs through distinct routes (central and peripheral).

Argument quality represents a central role cue as it reflects the logical strength, coherence, and evidential support that arguments encourage deeper cognitive elaboration, promoting consumers to critically evaluate eco-friendly product information. Recent studies indicate high argument strength significantly fosters green purchases behaviour (Mathur et al., 2024). (Cheung and Thadani, 2012) stated that Informational quality further reinforces central route processing by improving message clarity, completeness, and accuracy, thereby increasing perceived usefulness and facilitating informational adoption.

Meanwhile, electronic word of mouth (e-WOM) works as a base in social influence theory and the informational adoption model reflecting peer-generated evaluation that provides social validation and normative influence on consumers. Electronic word of mouth goes through central and peripheral mechanisms reducing claims within digital environment (Cheung and Thadani, 2012). The current study offers an integrated theoretical framework explaining how these dimensions of digital persuasion collectively influence green buying behaviour.

Influencer Credibility and buying behaviour towards eco-friendly products

Influencer credibility reflects the audience evaluation of the influencer`s expertise, honesty and alignment with the values not their popularity. The research shows that when consumers perceive influencers as knowledgeable regarding the environmental issues and consistent in their messaging, then they are more likely to accept their sustainability claims and get influenced by those claims which turns their attitude into purchase behaviour (Kapitan and Silvera, 2016). Credibility is degree to which consumers perceive an influencer credibility and consistency which shows that these perceptions can significantly affect buying decisions. When an influencer is seen as credible, consumers lean towards evaluation of not only influencer recommendations but also the products that are being endorsed by the influencer more favourably.

Recent evidence similarly indicates that influencer credibility strengthens brand consideration and purchase intention, particularly when consumers hold strong green consumption values (Rizomyliotis et al., 2026). This also works for eco-friendly products, where consumers often seek assurance about the sustainability claims offered. Credible influencers also strengthen the perception of green brands` authenticity turning it into consumers` trust in green products and boosting the probability of purchase (Poulis et al., 2026). Consequently, influencer credibility may function as mechanism that helps the attitude behaviour gap in sustainable consumption by delivering transparent and reliable information that resonates with consumer environmental values.

H_1: Influencer Credibility positively influences buying behaviour towards eco-friendly products

Electronic Word of Mouth and buying behaviour towards eco-friendly products

Electronic word of mouth (e-WOM) refers to the opinions, recommendations, and evaluations shared by consumers through digital platforms such as social media, review sites, blogs etc (Hennig- Thurau et al., 2004). E-wom can have a powerful impact on consumer perception and decisions because of digital sharing in public, searchable and rapidly spread for high involvement choices like eco -friendly products. E-WOM serve as a social mechanism for validation, reducing doubt and strengthening trust (Hennig Thurau et al., 2004).

Positive peer evaluation strengthen trust in sustainability claims and enhance confidence in purchase decisions. Vice-versa negative electronic word of mouth can intensify doubt and discourage buying behaviour. Therefore, favourable electronic word of mouth is expected to positively influence consumers buying behaviour towards eco-friendly products.

H_2: Electronic Word of Mouth positively influence buying behaviour towards eco-friendly products

Informational Quality and buying behaviour towards eco-friendly products

Informational quality explains the clarity, accuracy, relevance, relevance, and completeness of information provided about a product. This extends to the degree to which influencers communicate detailed, transparent information about eco-friendly products in influencer marketing. High informational quality helps consumers better understand of environmental understanding of environmental aspect of products, reduces uncertainties and enhances perceived value and trust, thereby positively affecting purchase behaviour (Lou and Yuan, 2019; Liu and Zheng, 2024). Influencers must provide accurate information by endorsing the eco-friendly products, which is not sufficient for making consumers aware and informed.

Prior research Social Media advertising and sustainability reveal that informative significantly influences consumer attitudes and purchase behaviour, sometime even more strongly than credibility alone (Nguyen et al., 2019). When consumers receive accurate and comprehensive sustainability related information, they are better equipped to evaluate products claims that can enhance perceived value and trust (Poulis et al., 2026). Informational clarity plays vital role in facilitating informed decision making. Therefore, higher informational quality is expected to positively influence consumer buying behaviour towards eco-friendly products.

H_3: Informational Quality positively influence buying behaviour towards eco-friendly products

Argument Quality and buying behaviour towards eco-friendly products

The strength, coherence, logic and evidence shown in the message in persuasive communication theory is known as argument quality. Strong arguments are more likely to influence consumers who are motivated and capable of processing information deeply such as individuals evaluating eco-friendly products (Petty and Cacioppo, 1986). Argument Quality becomes salient due to consumer's tendency to critically assess products claims. The data, logical communication and facts make the argument strong helping to reduce disbelief and reinforce purchase behaviour.

Mathur et al. (2024) research on green cosmetics has shown that argument quality, along with source credibility affects consumer attitude and purchase behaviour revealing that quality of content matters as much as the communicator quality. Argument quality is crucial in crafting consumer decision making whenever consumers are highly involved in environmental issue and seek assurance about involved in environmental issues and seek assurance about sustainability benefits.

H4: Argument Quality positively influence buying behaviour towards eco-friendly products.

Theory Integration and Contribution

Integration of Influencer Credibility, e-WOM, Informational Quality, and Argument Quality allows a more holistic understanding of persuasion in the context of sustainable consumption. Instead of analysing these components as separate influences on persuasive messages, the

current paper aims at viewing them as complementary forms of persuasion cues based on source-based and message-based strategies. Influencer Credibility is the source-based component of the persuasion framework, where consumers make judgments regarding communicator's expertise, credibility and attractiveness. On the other hand, Informational and Argument Quality is the message-based components that affect consumer's attitude to information and argumentation. Finally, e-WOM acts as a socially derived form of persuasive cues, which consists of peer reviews, social validation, and social opinions that support or refute the claims made by the influencer. Thus, the theory is an expansion of Source Credibility Theory and Elaboration Likelihood Model, where one considers the aspects of who communicates the message about sustainability, what is the content of this message, how well it is argued, and how it is socially validated.

This integration gives an explicit theoretical understanding of the attitude-behaviour gap on sustainability, which indicates that consumers may demonstrate a favourable attitude towards environmental protection and sustainable goods but do not convert this attitude into purchasing behaviour. Source Credibility Theory helps understand how credible influencer can lessen uncertainty and increase the credibility of sustainability claims, and Elaboration Likelihood Model shows how consumers process persuasive messages through central and peripheral processing. Through central route, consumers can assess the quality, relevancy, completeness, rationality and strength of the information related to sustainability issues with the help of Informational Quality and Argument Quality. Through peripheral route, Influencer Credibility and e-WOM serve as heuristics and social cues to assist evaluation when consumers lack sufficient motivation, skill or capacity to engage in elaborate processing of information. As such, the proposed theoretical framework implies that attitude-behaviour gap could be bridged by sustainable consumption messages that gain support from credible source, good information and good arguments.

Thus, the theoretical uniqueness of the current research can be seen not only in the consideration of four factors affecting buying behaviour, but also in the fact that the process of digital persuasion in sustainable consumption is a complex process based on interactions of source, message, cognitive, and social cues. The theory encompasses both Source Credibility Theory and Elaboration Likelihood Model by treating the role of Influencer Credibility and e-WOM mainly as source and social cues, whereas Informational Quality and Argument Quality are message cues which may encourage further cognitive processing. Such approach broadens the classical use of Source Credibility Theory in terms of communicators' features and the classic view of ELM that is focused on the central versus peripheral path distinction. According to the theory, people's transition from positive sustainability evaluations to eco-friendly buying behaviour will become more evident if the aspects of credibility, information quality, argument quality, and social validation are considered at the same time.

2. Research Methodology

This study adopted a quantitative research design to explore the factors influencing the consumer purchasing behaviour towards eco-friendly products in relation to influencer marketing. A survey-based approach was used to enable a systematic data collection from a relatively large sample and facilitate the statistical analysis of hypothesis testing. The quantitative design is appropriate for theory testing and examining relationship among influencer credibility, electronic word of mouth, informational quality, argument quality and green buying behaviour.

The method used for the sample selection was that of purposive sampling, where participants were selected based on their exposure to the field of influencer marketing. The participants had to be following at least one social media influencer so that they had some exposure to the content produced by influencers.

The population under study includes individuals who are both users of social media as well as consumers of Gorakhpur, Uttar Pradesh, India, who follow at least one social media influencer or watching influencers.

The process of data collection took place from 10 February 2026 to 17 April 2026. Over this period, the structured questionnaire was distributed using digital channels and physical distribution to the selected respondents in Gorakhpur, Uttar Pradesh, India. The respondents had to be screened such that they would have been following at least one social media influencer before being chosen for the research. In total, 304 valid responses were collected.

The number of responses used in the final analysis was 304. Responses that did not meet the inclusion criteria set by the research study and responses that were not complete were not included in the final data set. The sufficiency of the sample size was evaluated against the needs of the proposed CB-SEM model. The survey questionnaire included 20 measurement questions associated with 5 latent variables, each having 4 indicators. The suggested model is rather simple; therefore, it has a small number of latent variables and hypothesised relationships between them. Thus, the collected sample of 304 participants contains more than 15 observations per measurement question (304/20 = 15.2). This makes it possible to estimate the measurement and structural models using the AMOS software. Furthermore, the sample size exceeds the widely-used minimal requirement of 200 observations for CB-SEM models (Kline, 2016). Consequently, 304 respondents could be regarded as an appropriate sample for further CFA and SEM.

Data were collected using structured questionnaire distributed through digital platforms as well as offline forms. A total of 304 valid responses were obtained and retained for analysis. The sample size is considered as adequate for structural equation modelling (SEM), satisfying recommended threshold for model estimation and statistical power.

Instrument Development

The questionnaire consisted of 20 measurement items adapted from established scales in prior studies. All items were measured using a five Point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The instrument was designed to capture respondents' perceptions of influencer credibility, e-WOM, informational quality and self-reported green buying behaviour towards eco-friendly products. In this study, Green Buying Behaviour (GBB) is interpreted as a self-reported behavioural construct that combines reported purchasing choices with willingness and environmental consideration in purchase decisions; it does not represent objectively observed transaction data.

Table 1 presents the measurement constructs, corresponding item codes, measurement items, and the original sources from which the scales were adapted.

Table 1: Measurement Scale Adopted

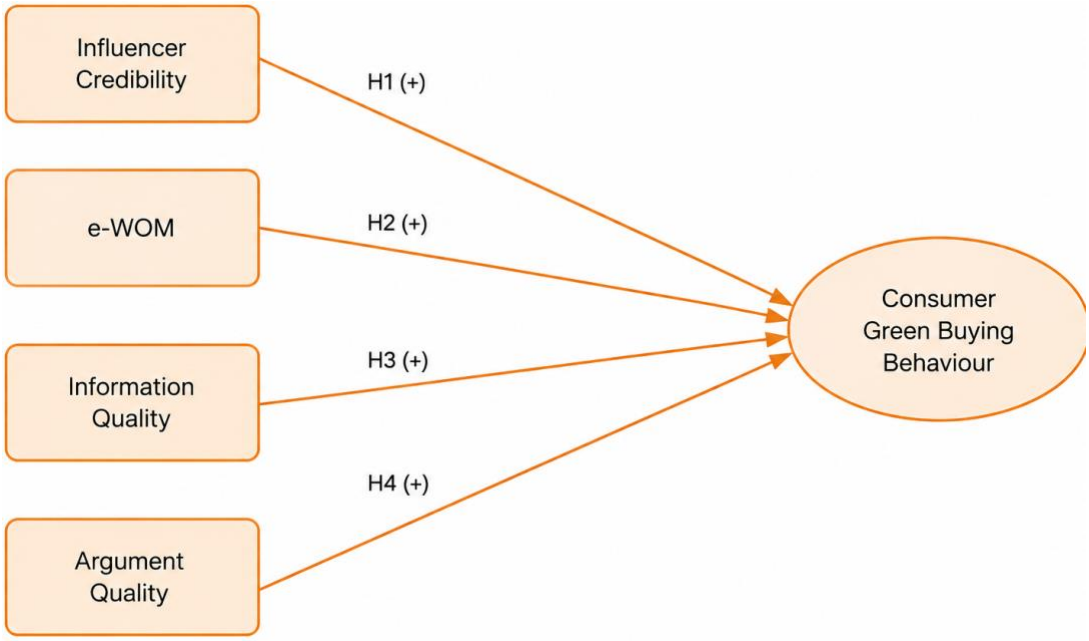
Construct	Code	Measurement Item	Adopted Source
Influencer Credibility	IC1	The influencer I follow is knowledgeable about eco-friendly products.	Ohanian (1990); Lou and Yuan (2019)
	IC2	I consider the influencer to be trustworthy when recommending eco-friendly products.	
	IC3	The influencer provides honest opinions about eco-friendly products.	
	IC4	I perceive the influencer as a credible source of information about sustainable products.	
Electronic Word of Mouth	EW1	I often find positive online reviews about eco-friendly products.	Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004); Cheung and Thadani (2012) Cheung et al. (2008); Ismagilova et al. (2020)
	EW2	Online recommendations from other consumers influence my evaluation of eco-friendly products.	
	EW3	I consider other consumers' online experiences when evaluating eco-friendly products.	
	EW4	Positive online opinions increase my confidence in purchasing eco-friendly products.	
Informational Quality	IQ1	The information provided about eco-friendly products is clear and easy to understand.	Lou and Yuan (2019); Liu and Zheng (2024)
	IQ2	The information provided about eco-friendly products is accurate.	
	IQ3	The information provided by influencers is relevant to my needs when evaluating eco-friendly products.	
	IQ4	Influencers provide sufficient information to help me evaluate eco-friendly products.	
Argument Quality	AQ1	The arguments presented by influencers about eco-friendly products are logical.	Petty and Cacioppo (1986); Mathur et al. (2024)
	AQ2	The influencer provides convincing reasons for recommending eco-friendly products.	
	AQ3	The claims made about eco-friendly products are supported by relevant facts or evidence.	
	AQ4	The arguments presented by influencers are strong enough to influence my evaluation of eco-friendly products.	
Green Buying Behaviour	GBB1	I purchase eco-friendly products when they are available to me.	Joshi and Rahman (2015); Nguyen et al. (2019); Vermeir and Verbeke (2006)
	GBB2	I choose eco-friendly products over conventional alternatives whenever possible.	
	GBB3	I am willing to purchase products that have lower environmental impact.	
	GBB4	I regularly consider environmental impact when making product purchases.	

Source: Authors' adaptation based on Ohanian (1990), Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004), Vermeir and Verbeke (2006), Cheung et al. (2008), Lou and Yuan (2019), Nguyen et al. (2019), Cheung and Thadani (2012), Liu and Zheng (2024), and Mathur et al. (2024).

The collected data were analysed using the statistical software SPSS and AMOS. The descriptive statistics and reliability analyses were performed using SPSS. Internal consistency was assessed through Cronbach`s alpha. Confirmatory factor analysis was conducted using AMOS to evaluate construct validity. Model fit indices were assessed to ensure measurement adequacy. Structural equation modelling was performed to test the hypothesised relationship among constructs and evaluate the proposed model.

Based on the theoretical arguments and hypotheses developed above, Figure 1 illustrates the proposed theoretical framework and the hypothesised relationships between the four digital persuasion mechanisms and Green Buying Behaviour.

Figure 1: Theoretical Framework



Source: Authors' conceptualisation based on Source Credibility Theory (Ohanian, 1990) and the Elaboration Likelihood Model (Petty and Cacioppo, 1986).

3. Research Results

Demographic Profile

Table 2 presents the demographic profile of the 304 respondents included in the study, covering gender, marital status, education, occupation, monthly income, and residential background. The respondents on a gender basis reveal that male respondents are 59.2% of the total sample while females are 40.8 %. The majority of the respondents were unmarried 56.9% and married 35.2% with a smaller proportion of respondents as a single 7.9%. The qualification of the respondents reflects a proportion of graduates 38.2%, intermediate 24%, postgraduate 19.7%, high school 13.2% and 4.6% doctoral degrees. When it comes to occupation, the respondents have largest segment 44.1 % of students, 23.4% salaried, 18.8% self-employed and smaller proportion of homemakers. Almost 50% of the respondents reported earnings below Rs.10,000 while next half were distributed across higher income groups. Finally, the majority of respondents 59.2% belonged to rural areas while 40.8% belonged to urban regions ensuring the diversity of the respondents' residential background.

Table 2: Descriptive Analysis

Demographic	Percentage
Gender	
Male	59.2
Female	40.8
Marital Status	
Married	35.2
Unmarried	56.9
Single	7.9
Education	
High School	13.2
Intermediates	24.0
Graduate	38.2
Postgraduates	19.7
Ph. D	4.6
Occupation	
Students	44.1
Salaried	23.4
Self-Employed	18.8
Business	8.2
Homemaker	5.6
Monthly Income	
<10,000	47.4
10,001-25000	23.4
25,001-50,000	18.4
>50,000	10.9
Residents	
Rural	59.2
Urban	40.8

Source: Authors' calculations based on survey data (N = 304).

Reliability

Table 3 shows that all constructs demonstrate high Cronbach`s alpha values which range from 0.938 to 0.972. Cronbach`s alpha is a widely accepted measure for evaluating reliability with a value above 0.70 considered as satisfactory and assessed through reliability analysis to assess the internal consistency of the measurement scale (Cronbach,1951, Hair et al., 2019). Influencer credibility (α = 0.965), e-WOM (α = 0.945), Informational Quality (α = 0.938), Argument Quality (α = 0.972), and Buying behaviour (α = 0.962) reveal strong internal consistency. This result presents that the measurement items reliably capture their respective constructs.

Table 3: Reliability

Construct	Items Code	No. of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Influencer Credibility	IC1 – IC4	4	0.965
Electronic Word of Mouth	EW1 - EW4	4	0.945
Informational Quality	IQ1 - IQ4	4	0.938

Construct	Items Code	No. of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Argument Quality	AQ1 - AQ4	4	0.972
Green Buying Behaviour	GBB1 -GBB4	4	0.962

Source: Authors' calculations based on survey data (N = 304), using SPSS.

Exploratory Factor Analysis

The Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) used was conducted via PCA and Varimax rotation to uncover the structure behind the 20 measurement items. The sampling adequacy was found to be excellent based on the KMO statistic (KMO = 0.900), and Bartlett's test of sphericity was significant ($\chi^2 = 8377.168$, df = 190, $p < .001$), hence confirming that the data set met the criteria for conducting factor analysis (Kaiser, 1974). The communalities were in the range of 0.736 and 0.958 showing that the extracted factors effectively represent the items. Five factors with eigenvalues above 1 were retained accounting for 88.959% of the total variance. Upon Varimax rotation, it was evident that the 20 items had grouped themselves into five different but expected constructs namely Argument Quality (AQ), Influencer Credibility (IC), e-WOM, Green Buying behaviour (GBB), and Information Quality (IQ). All the factors have factor loadings in the range of 0.814 and 0.942 which is above the cut off level of 0.50 as per the recommendation of Hair et al. (2019).

Measurement Model analysis (CFA)

The confirmatory factor analysis was *evaluated* to assess the adequacy of the construct and to ensure that the observed variable reliably presents its fundamental latent constructs. The goodness of fit indices indicate that the measurement model demonstrates an acceptable to good fit with the data. The CMIN/DF value of 2.191 falls within the recommended threshold values of 3-5, which suggest a reasonable equilibrium between the model and explanatory (Byrne, 2016). Incremental fit indices further support the reliability of the model with CFI (.977), and NFI (.959) exceeding the recommended limit value of 0.90, indicating a strong comparative fitness. Though the GFI (.899) and adjusted GFI (.868) are marginally below the ideal threshold value, which are considered in complex behavioural models when other fit indices demonstrate strong support (Byrne, 2016). The RMSEA value of 0.063 remains within the critical limit of 0.080, which reflects a satisfactory estimate of the model to the population covariance matrix.

"The RMSEA value below 0.080 signals a model that rationally captures the observed covariance structure (Brown, 2015)." The measurement model satisfies the established criteria for construct validity and model adequacy which is confirms that the scales employed are reliable and suitable for further structural analysis.

Convergent Validity

It signifies the extent to which multiple indicators if a construct shares a higher 'proportion of variance'. This is evaluated through composite reliability, and average variance extracted. According to Fornell and Larcker (1981), CR value should be above 0.70 and AVE value should be greater than 0.50.

Table 4 shows that all constructs satisfy the recommended criteria for convergent validity. Composite Reliability (CR) values range from 0.939 to 0.972, while Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values range from 0.795 to 0.898. For every construct, AVE exceeds Maximum Shared Variance (MSV), further supporting construct validity (Fornell and Larcker, 1981).

Table 4: Convergent Validity

Variable	CR	AVE	MSV
Influencer Credibility	.972	.898	.230
e-WOM	.966	.878	.211
Information Quality	.950	.827	.169
Argument Quality	.961	.860	.230
Green Buying Behaviour	.939	.795	.225

Source: Authors' calculations based on survey data (N = 304), using AMOS.

Discriminant Validity

Discriminant validity was evaluated using both the Fornell–Larcker criterion and the Heterotrait–Monotrait (HTMT) ratio. Table 5 shows that the square root of the AVE for each construct exceeds its correlations with the other constructs. Although the inter-construct correlations are statistically significant ($p < .001$), their magnitudes remain within acceptable limits. These results support the empirical distinctiveness of the constructs and provide evidence of discriminant validity (Hair et al., 2022).

Table 5. Fornell–Larcker Criterion for Discriminant Validity

Variable	AQ	IC	e-WOM	GBB	IQ
AQ	0.948				
IC	0.460***	0.937			
e-WOM	0.255***	0.339***	0.910		
GBB	0.479***	0.406***	0.411***	0.927	
IQ	0.414***	0.423***	0.334***	0.474***	0.891

Note: AQ = Argument Quality; IC = Influencer Credibility; e-WOM = electronic Word of Mouth; GBB = Green Buying Behaviour; IQ = Information Quality. Bold diagonal values represent the square roots of the Average Variance Extracted (AVE). *** $p < .001$.

Source: Authors' calculations based on survey data (N = 304), using AMOS.

HTMT Validity

Table 6 presents the Heterotrait–Monotrait (HTMT) ratios used as an additional assessment of discriminant validity. All HTMT values are below the recommended threshold of 0.85, providing further evidence that the constructs are empirically distinct.

The HTMT ratio has been recommended as a more reliable criterion compared to the Fornell and Larcker criterion (Henseler et al., 2015). According to Henseler, HTMT is ratio of the construct correlation to the within-construct correlation and provides a robust assessment of discriminant validity in structural equation modelling (Henseler et al., 2015). HTMT Value range was observed between argument quality and green buying behaviour (GBB) (0.459). Though this value remains well within the acceptable threshold limit. Therefore, following the Henseler criterion, the result demonstrates that the discriminant validity is satisfactory (Henseler et al., 2015). These findings confirm that Argument Quality, Informational Quality, Influencer Credibility, Electronic word of mouth, and buying behaviour are empirically distinct constructs that support the adequacy of the measurement model.

Table 6. Heterotrait–Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) for Discriminant Validity

Variable	IQ	GBB	e-WOM	IC	AQ
IQ	–				
GBB	0.444	–			
e-WOM	0.315	0.408	–		
IC	0.384	0.389	0.326	–	
AQ	0.376	0.459	0.246	0.427	–

Note: IQ = Information Quality; GBB = Green Buying Behaviour; e-WOM = electronic Word of Mouth; IC = Influencer Credibility; AQ = Argument Quality. All HTMT values are below the commonly applied threshold of 0.85, supporting discriminant validity.

Source: Authors' calculations based on survey data (N = 304).

Table 7 reports the assessment of common method bias using Harman's single-factor test.

Table 7. Common Method Bias Assessment

Factor	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	8.837	44.184	44.184

Note: Extraction method: Principal Axis Factoring.

Source: Authors' calculations based on survey data (N = 304), using SPSS.

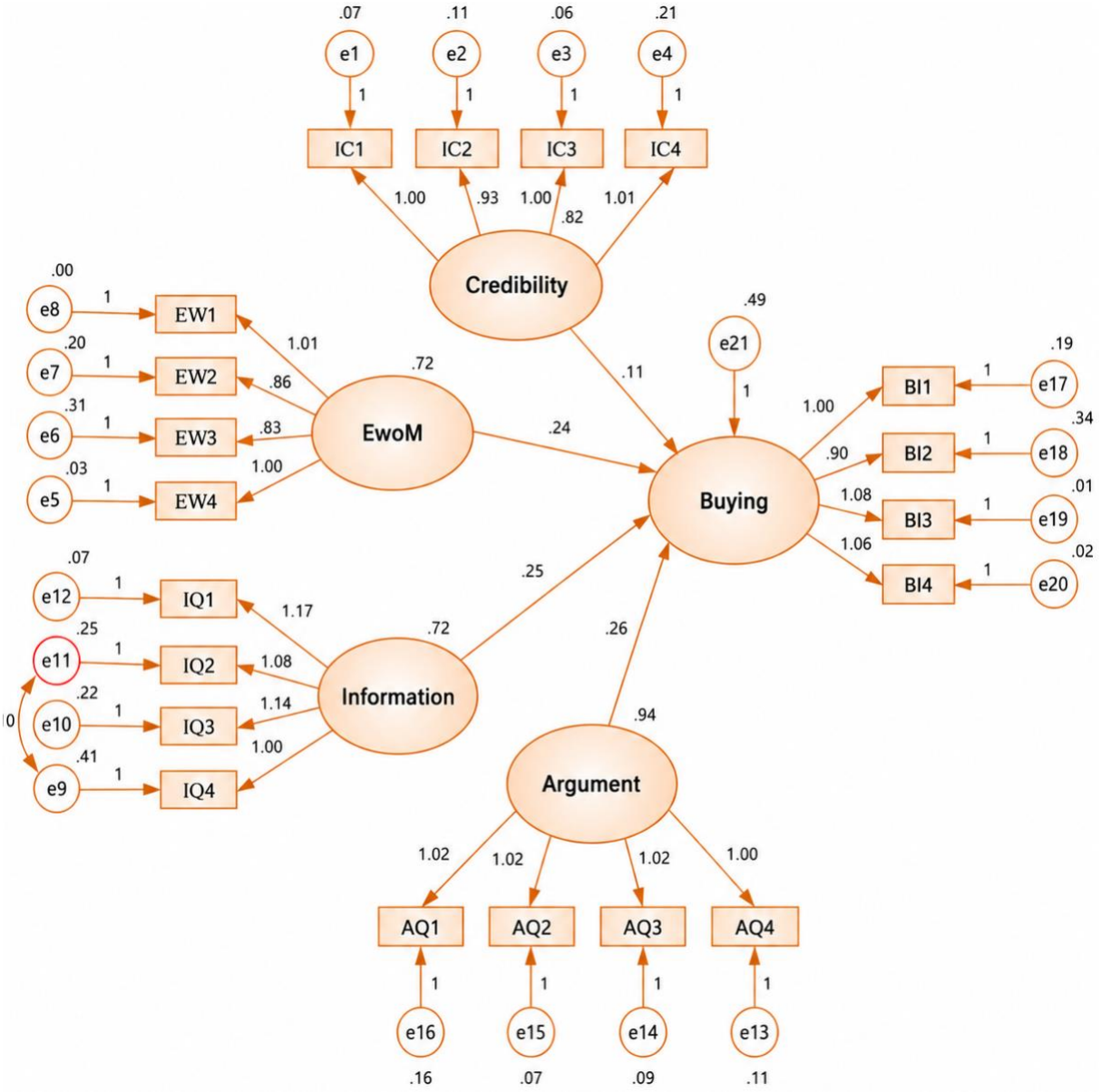
The first factor accounted for 44.184% of the total variance (extraction sum of squared loadings = 8.837). Because this value is below the commonly used 50% benchmark, no single factor appears to dominate the measurement items, suggesting that common method bias is unlikely to be a major concern in this study (Podsakoff et al., 2003).

Structural Equation Model Analysis Result

The structural model was measured to evaluate the hypothesised relationship among the constructs following the validation of the measurement model. Structural equation modelling allows the researchers to go beyond mere association and test theoretically specified structural relationships within a single comprehensive framework (Kline, 2016). The structural model exhibits a satisfactory fit to the data. The CMIN/DF value of 2.992 demonstrates an acceptable model fit, while the CFI (.961) and NFI (.943) values exceed the recommended threshold of 0.90, supporting adequate incremental fit. While, the GFI (0.853), and AGFI (0.812) are comparatively lower which shows that the indices are sensitive to sample size and model complexity and should be interpreted in aggregation with other fit measures (Hair et al., 2022, Hair et al., 2019). The RMSEA value of 0.069 further supports the adequacy of the structural model which is remaining within the acceptable criteria (Hair et al., 2022). These indices suggest that the proposed structural framework fits the observed data reasonably well and is suitable for hypothesis testing.

Figure 2 presents the estimated structural model, including the measurement indicators and the unstandardised path estimates for the hypothesised relationships.

Figure 2. Path Diagram



4. Unstandardised Estimates

Model Fit Statistics

The structural model was evaluated after establishing the reliability and validity of the measurement model. Overall fit indices indicate an acceptable model fit, providing an appropriate basis for testing the hypothesised structural relationships.

Table 8 summarises the principal goodness-of-fit indices for both the measurement and structural models and compares the observed values with the recommended threshold criteria.

Table 8. Model Fit Statistics

Model Fit Index	Threshold Value	Structural Model Actual Value	Measurement Model Actual Value
p-value	> .05 (desirable)	< .001	< .001
CMIN/DF Ratio	≤ 3.00	2.992	2.191
CFI	> .90	.961	.977
NFI	> .90	.943	.959
GFI	> .90	.853	.899
Adjusted GFI	> .90	.812	.868
TLI	> .90	.955	.973
SRMR	< .05	.054	.038
RMSEA	< .08	.069	.063

Note: CMIN/DF = chi-square divided by degrees of freedom; CFI = Comparative Fit Index; NFI = Normed Fit Index; GFI = Goodness-of-Fit Index; Adjusted GFI = Adjusted Goodness-of-Fit Index; TLI = Tucker–Lewis Index; SRMR = Standardized Root Mean Square Residual; RMSEA = Root Mean Square Error of Approximation.

Source: Authors' calculations based on CFA and SEM results (N = 304), using AMOS.

Explanatory Power (R2)

Explanatory ability of the structural model was determined through the Squared Multiple Correlation (R^2) which was provided by the AMOS software. In case of Green Buying Behaviour, the value of R^2 was 0.245 which suggests that Influencer Credibility, E-WOM, Information Quality, and Argument Quality, when taken together, account for 24.5% of the variation in consumers' green buying behaviour towards eco-friendly products. The rest 75.5% of the variation is accounted for by other factors that are outside the scope of the current model. This suggests that the suggested model explains consumers' green buying behaviour in the context of eco-friendly products.

Hypotheses Testing

The hypotheses proposed in this study examine the effects of influencer credibility, electronic word of mouth, informational quality, and argument quality on self-reported green buying behaviour towards eco-friendly products. According to Table 9, all the relationships in the hypothesized propositions have proven to be positive and statistically significant. Thus, H1, H2, H3, and H4 are empirically confirmed. It is clear that the effect of argument quality on consumer purchasing behaviour is the greatest among other variables (B = 0.257), whereas informational quality (B = 0.254) and e-WOM (B = 0.243) have almost equal effects.

Table 9. Hypotheses Testing Results

Hypotheses	Unstandardised B	S. E	C.R	p-Value	Result
H_1	.106	.046	2.326	0.020	Accepted
H_2	.243	.049	5.006	***	Accepted
H_3	.254	.051	4.974	***	Accepted
H_4	.257	.044	5.885	***	Accepted

Source: Authors' calculations based on SEM results (N = 304), using AMOS.

5. Discussions

H1: Influencer Credibility and Consumer Green Buying Behaviour

The results show that influencer credibility has a statistically significant positive relationship with self-reported green buying behaviour in relation to eco-friendly products (B = 0.106, C.R. = 2.326, p = 0.020). Therefore, H1 is confirmed. It means that consumers are predisposed to react favourably to eco-friendly product recommendations if they believe that an influencer is credible, knowledgeable, and authentic. Its statistical significance proves that the credibility of the information source remains one of the key factors influencing the consumers' decisions regarding environmentally friendly purchases despite the relatively small effect size.

This result supports the recent studies devoted to the role of influencer credibility in promoting green consumption. Thus, according to Rizomyliotis et al. (2026), social media influencers' credibility positively impacts consumers' brand consideration and purchase intention, while green consumption values can intensify these relationships. These findings should be considered relevant to the research question since they cover the case of Gen Z consumers under the context of influencer marketing and prove that the credibility of the source has an effect on consumer reactions. Further support for this assumption is provided by Khurana et al. (2025), who studied the effects of social media influencers' credibility on green cosmetics purchase intentions. According to their findings, influencer credibility facilitates brand trust, which, in turn, positively influences the purchase intentions.

The findings further indicate that influencer credibility is positively associated with self-reported green buying behaviour for eco-friendly products (B = 0.106, p < 0.05). This shows that when consumers perceive an influencer`s credibility as trustworthy, expertise and authentic, then consumers are more likely to be persuaded to purchase eco-friendly offerings. Liu and Zheng (2024) found that perceived source credibility positively influences consumer trust and purchase behaviour in online spaces. Similarly, reported that the credibility of social media influencers positively affects consumer willingness to adopt product recommendations for products relating to sustainability values (Schouten et al., 2020). This also confirmed that the influencer`s credibility significantly shapes consumer responses in eco-centric marketing (Liu and Zheng, 2024).

The current result thus adds to the recent literature on green influencers by highlighting a positive association between credibility and consumer buying behaviour. It indicates that even though consumers need substantial information prior to buying environmentally friendly goods, the credibility of the individual providing this information is still an important predictor of behavioural response.

H2: Electronic Word of Mouth and Consumer Green Buying Behaviour

The findings indicate that there exists a significant positive relationship between electronic word of mouth (e-WOM) and consumer buying behaviour regarding eco-friendly products (B = 0.243, C.R. = 5.006, p < 0.001). Thus, H2 is confirmed. The positive unstandardised coefficient indicates that e-WOM is a relevant predictor of self-reported green buying behaviour in the proposed framework. Online reviews, recommendations, consumer experiences, and peer-generated information may serve as additional sources for evaluation of the benefits and credibility of eco-friendly products.

The result is consistent with the findings of Nguyen et al. (2024), who studied the relationship between e-WOM and purchase intention towards green cosmetics among young female consumers from Vietnam. The researchers found that e-WOM has a significant impact on green cosmetics purchase intention.

The findings align with the regression coefficient for electronic word of mouth(ewom) (B = 0.243, $p < 0.001$) indicating a positive peer-generated content and online recommendations persuade consumer decisions. The data has a significantly positive effect on buying behaviour towards eco-friendly products. Ismagilova reveals that e-WOM is a strong predictor of purchase behaviour in sustainable product markets (Ismagilova et al., 2020). Electronic word of mouth improves consumer trust and adoption of eco-friendly products by reducing perceived risk and enhancing informational awareness and richness (Cheung and Thadani, 2012).

Similar findings were presented by Rajalakshmi et al. (2024), who discovered that e-WOM has a direct link to green-product purchasing and concluded that e-WOM works indirectly through environmental concern, environmental knowledge, and environmental consciousness. Thus, it is possible to claim that e-WOM is not only informational but also increases consumer's environmental awareness and makes him/her buy eco-products.

Further, the literature on online reviews is consistent with the obtained results. According to a recent meta-analysis, some features of online reviews like argument quality, usefulness, credibility, valence, and number are significantly related to the purchase intention. In particular, argument quality, review usefulness, and review credibility were found to have a significant effect on the process.

Therefore, it is possible to conclude that consumer-generated digital communication becomes a key persuasive tool in favour of eco-products. Consumers feel confident about the product because they see favourable experiences and recommendations of other consumers. Thus, uncertainty disappears and a positive purchase decision takes place.

H3: Informational Quality and Consumer Green Buying Behaviour

From the results obtained, it is evident that there is a strong positive relationship between informational quality and consumer buying behaviour for eco-friendly products (B = 0.254, C.R. = 4.974, $p < 0.001$). Therefore, the alternative hypothesis H3 is supported by these results. The unstandardised coefficient is the second highest among the four predictor variables, indicating the important role of information quality in consumers' evaluations of eco-friendly products.

Eco-friendly products often include some kind of environmental claim with regards to the manufacturing process, the materials used, energy efficiency, recyclability, health effects, and environmental impacts of such products. As a result, consumers will need good and appropriate information regarding the products so that they can make informed decisions about the product they are looking for.

Indeed, recent empirical research results confirm the above explanation. According to Wu and Long (2024), social media marketing related to eco-friendly purchases is affected by usefulness of the information and green trust. These findings prove that the useful information in social media can positively affect consumers' evaluation and lead to green purchase outcomes.

Furthermore, Sun et al. (2025) considered the influence of green advertising information on green purchasing behaviour using structural equation modeming and artificial neural network. The results revealed that information about environmental protection and product performance increases information quality, which positively affects green purchasing behaviour. This research proves the current finding especially, because it considered green purchasing behaviour, but not only general online purchase intention.

Moreover, Gattupalli et al. (2025) stressed the significance of information usefulness and credibility in green products purchasing. This research focused on the role of information characteristics in the green product purchase decisions.

The H3 result shows that informational quality significantly persuades consumer buying behaviour towards eco-friendly products consistent with the statistical result ($B = 0.254$, $p < 0.001$). This demonstrates that high-quality information is relevant, accurate and make conscious awareness among consumers which increases consumer willingness to buy products with environmental claims. Higher informational quality leads to enhanced consumer evaluation and buying outcomes (Cheung and Thadani, 2012). Also, Cheung and Thadani (2012) showed that accurate and rich value information is critical in reducing distrust and facilitating eco-friendly product adoption. When online content includes high informational quality, consumers engage more deeply with product messages which persuades buying behaviours (Dwivedi et al., 2021).

H4: Effect of Argument Quality on Consumers Green Purchasing Behaviour

It can be seen from the findings that argument quality has a statistically significant positive impact on consumers' purchasing behaviour regarding eco-friendly products ($B = 0.257$, C.R. = 5.885, $p < 0.001$). Hence, H4 is confirmed. Among all four variables used in the conceptual framework, argument quality shows the largest estimated positive unstandardized coefficient. It can be assumed that the respondents react strongly to the quality of arguments provided via digital communication channels when it comes to eco-friendly products.

This conclusion is in line with the Elaboration Likelihood Model by Petty and Cacioppo (1986). According to the central route of persuasion in this theory, motivated and competent consumers assess the strength, relevance, and quality of the arguments provided in the message. In case of eco-friendly products, strong arguments will allow consumers to determine how environmentally friendly the product is and what its sustainability means.

Likewise, Mathur et al. (2024) investigated argument quality and source credibility in relation to green cosmetics. The research revealed that argument quality exerts a positive effect on consumer attitudes and that source credibility is also an important factor affecting consumers' behavioural intentions in the case of green cosmetics. This proves that the quality of the environmental products' message may have a positive effect on consumers' responses in the green product context.

Kenang and Kasetty (2024) have further illustrated the relevance of argument quality for social commerce by showing that argument quality is one of the factors contributing to trust development and buying behaviours. It further proves that the evaluation of online persuasive messages by consumers does not happen only on the basis of the communicator but also on the strength of the message arguments.

Also, the recent research on influencers has pointed out the significance of argument quality as an important substantive cue in digital persuasion. In research on influencer credibility and argument quality, it has been recognized that source credibility is a heuristic cue while argument quality is a systematic one, thus the relevance of both cues in information evaluation.

The H4 shows that argument quality significantly affects purchasing behaviour towards eco-friendly products as supported (B = 0.257, p < 0.001). This reveals that consumers are more likely to be influenced when the arguments presented in influencer content are logically strong, relevant and evidence-based. Petty and Cacioppo (1986) argued that consumers process high-quality arguments more consciously which helps in strengthening attitude change and behavioural outcomes. Strong argument in influencer communication significantly enhances buying behaviour when it`s related to ecological and sustainable products (Casaló et al., 2017). Breves et al. (2024) further show that argument quality is a substantive cue that promotes deeper cognitive elaboration in sponsored influencer content.

This finding is thus quite significant since argument quality showed the largest unstandardized coefficient (B = 0.257). It implies that in case of eco-friendly products, the consumers react much better to a logically and convincingly structured environmental argument as compared to source credibility. The result also confirms the importance of the ELM in explaining persuasion in social media settings in sustainability related cases.

Conclusions, Implications, Limitations and Future Research

This study examined how four digital persuasion mechanisms—influencer credibility, electronic word of mouth, informational quality, and argument quality—relate to consumers' self-reported green buying behaviour towards eco-friendly products. By integrating Source Credibility Theory with the Elaboration Likelihood Model, the study provides a unified perspective on how source-related, social, informational, and argument-based cues operate within digital sustainability communication.

The findings indicate that all four proposed relationships are positive and statistically significant. Among the predictors, argument quality shows the largest unstandardised coefficient (B = 0.257), closely followed by informational quality (B = 0.254) and e-WOM (B = 0.243), while influencer credibility has a smaller but still significant relationship with green buying behaviour (B = 0.106). These results suggest that consumers responding to sustainability-related communication may rely particularly strongly on logically structured, relevant, and evidence-based arguments, while also considering the quality of the information provided, peer-generated evaluations, and the credibility of the influencer.

Overall, the findings reinforce the importance of combining credible communication with substantive information and persuasive argumentation when promoting eco-friendly products. Rather than relying primarily on influencer popularity or endorsement, effective sustainability communication appears to depend on the interaction between source credibility, message quality, argument strength, and social validation through e-WOM.

The study contributes to the literature on digital persuasion and sustainable consumption by integrating Source Credibility Theory and the Elaboration Likelihood Model within a unified framework comprising influencer credibility, e-WOM, informational quality, and argument quality. While influencer credibility and e-WOM operate primarily as source and social cues, informational and argument quality support more elaborate cognitive processing of sustainability-related messages. By considering these mechanisms simultaneously, the

framework provides a broader explanation of how digital persuasion may contribute to narrowing the attitude–behaviour gap. The findings suggest that self-reported green buying behaviour is shaped by the combined influence of source credibility, message quality, argument strength, and social validation.

The findings suggest that brands and marketers should collaborate with credible and knowledgeable influencers while ensuring that sustainability claims are supported by clear, relevant, and verifiable information. The stronger effects of argument quality, informational quality, and e-WOM indicate that campaign effectiveness should extend beyond influencer popularity towards substantive and evidence-based communication.

Brands should also encourage authentic consumer reviews and positive e-WOM. Combining credible influencers, high-quality information, strong arguments, and consumer-generated social validation may strengthen sustainable product communication and support more consistent self-reported green buying behaviour.

Several limitations should be considered when interpreting the findings. First, the cross-sectional research design does not allow strong causal conclusions regarding the relationships between digital persuasion mechanisms and green buying behaviour. Future research could employ longitudinal or experimental designs to investigate the direction and development of these relationships over time.

Second, the use of purposive sampling may limit the generalisability of the findings. Future studies could apply probability-based sampling procedures and include larger and more diverse samples. Third, the study relies on self-reported data, which may be affected by recall bias and social desirability. Accordingly, Green Buying Behaviour should be interpreted as a self-reported behavioural construct and behavioural orientation rather than as objectively observed purchasing activity. Future research could complement survey measures with actual purchasing records, behavioural data, or experimental choice measures.

Finally, the study was conducted among respondents from Gorakhpur, Uttar Pradesh, India, which limits the extent to which the results can be generalised to other geographical and cultural contexts. Comparative studies across regions and countries could examine whether the relative influence of credibility, e-WOM, informational quality, and argument quality

CRediT Authorship Contribution Statement

Yadav, N.: Conceptualisation, Methodology, Investigation, Data Curation, Formal Analysis, Writing – Original Draft. Singh, S.: Conceptualisation, Methodology, Supervision, Validation, Writing – Review & Editing. Both authors have read and approved the final version of the manuscript.

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Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding this manuscript.

Data Availability Statement

The data supporting the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

Ethical Approval Statement

This study involved human participants and was conducted in accordance with established ethical standards. Informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to participation, and anonymity, confidentiality, and voluntary participation were maintained throughout the research process.

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