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ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN SHAPING CONSUMER INTENTIONS TO BUY SUSTAINABLE QUALITY GOODS IN SAUDI ARABIA

Abstract: Growing environmental awareness has spurred interest in sustainable products, including among consumers in Saudi Arabia. Social media platforms like Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook play a pivotal role in shaping consumer behaviour and influencing sustainable purchasing decisions. The study emphasises that consumer behaviour in sustainability contexts is complex and multifaceted, requiring more than generic messaging. To effectively promote sustainable consumption, it advocates for targeted, content-driven strategies tailored to the Saudi context. These strategies should leverage the persuasive power of social media to engage users meaningfully and foster long-term behavioural change. By aligning sustainability messaging with cultural values and digital habits, marketers and policymakers can enhance the impact of their campaigns. Ultimately, the integration of nuanced consumer insights with strategic digital engagement is key to advancing sustainability goals in Saudi Arabia's evolving marketplace. This approach can help bridge the gap between awareness and action, turning intention into consistent, eco-conscious purchasing behaviour.

Keywords: Social media, intention to buy sustainable goods, demographics, Saudi Arabia

1. Introduction

The increasing awareness of environmental issues and the need for sustainable consumption have led to a surge in interest in sustainable goods among consumers worldwide (Ghaffar & Islam, 2024; Maduku, 2024). In Saudi Arabia, similar trends are emerging, where social media platforms play a pivotal role in influencing consumer behaviours. This research explores how social media can shape consumer intentions to purchase sustainable goods in Saudi Arabia by examining various underlying factors.

Social media has become an integral part of modern communication, influencing various aspects of life, including consumer behaviour. Platforms such as Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook are not just communication tools but powerful marketing channels that can significantly affect purchasing decisions (Anggara et al., 2024; Setiawati & Sirait, 2024). The role of social media in shaping consumer behaviours, including their intentions to purchase sustainable goods, has garnered substantial interest from researchers (Nazish et al., 2024; Anjorin et al., 2024).

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Previous research has illustrated the critical role of social media influencers (SMIs) in shaping consumer purchase intentions. For instance, Mabkhot et al. (2022) found that the credibility of SMIs significantly influences consumers' purchase intentions in Saudi Arabia, with credibility acting as a mediator. This indicates that trust in social media content and personalities can significantly drive consumer behaviour. Alam et al. (2023) demonstrated the impact of social media on altruistic and egoistic motivations, highlighting that these motivations, in turn, influence green purchase intentions. Their findings underscore the potential of social media to drive consumer interest in sustainable products by appealing to both selfless and self-serving values.

In the fashion industry, Alatawy (2022) highlighted that social media marketing significantly affects customers' purchase decisions by enhancing brand value, recognition, and online shopping preferences. This showcases the potential for social media strategies to be effectively employed in promoting sustainable goods. Al-Alawi et al. (2020) indicated that social influence and the design and content quality of social media applications significantly impact consumers' online purchase intentions. This finding aligns with the notion that well-designed, engaging, and informative social media content can drive sustainable consumption behaviours. El-Gohary et al. (2023) revealed that adopting social media enhances sustainable entrepreneurial intentions among business graduates in Pakistan, providing insights into how social media can foster a sustainability-oriented mindset.

1.1 Aim and Research Questions

This research's primary aim is to investigate social media's role in shaping consumer intentions to purchase sustainable goods in Saudi Arabia. By examining the influence of social media usage, content engagement, and platform credibility, this study aims to comprehensively understand how social

media can promote sustainable consumption behaviours among Saudi consumers.

The main research question is: What is the relationship between demographics and social media usage characteristics, AND consumer intentions to buy sustainable goods?

2. Literature review

Recent academic research has focused on the intersection of social media and consumer behaviour, particularly as it pertains to sustainable consumption. Given social media's pervasive influence on modern communication and purchasing decisions, understanding its role in shaping consumer intentions to buy sustainable goods becomes crucial. This literature review examines existing research both supporting and opposing the notion that social media significantly impacts consumer intentions to purchase sustainable goods.

Numerous studies have demonstrated that social media can influence consumer intentions to buy sustainable products. For instance, Nekmahmud et al. (2022) found that social media marketing (SMM) and social media usage (SMU) positively influence consumers' intentions to purchase green products. By expanding the much-studied Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) (Ajzen, 1991; Ajzen, 2020; Conner & Armitage, 1998; Conner, 2020; Kan & Fabrigar, 2020) to include green thinking and social media factors, the study revealed a robust association between attitudes, subjective norms, perceived behavioural control, and the intention to purchase green products. This suggests that social media substantially shapes sustainable consumption behaviours through marketing tactics and social influences. Sun and Wang (2020) identified that social media marketing enhances subjective norms, product knowledge, and perceived consumer effectiveness (PCE), which, in turn, positively affect purchase intentions. Their

research underscores that social media marketing strategies can foster an environment conducive to sustainable consumption by educating and influencing consumer attitudes. In the context of green cosmetics, Pop et al. (2020) demonstrated that social media significantly impacts consumers' motivations and intentions to purchase eco-friendly products. Applying the TPB, their study found that social media as an information source enhances consumers' altruistic and egoistic motivations, which are crucial antecedents of green purchasing intentions. Zafar et al. (2021) highlighted the positive relationship between social media usage and sustainable purchasing attitudes mediated by environmental responsibility. Their study emphasised that trust in social media and perceived environmental effectiveness reinforce the role of social media in promoting sustainable attitudes, thereby encouraging green purchasing behaviours. On the other hand, Chi (2021) found that social media's impact on green consumption intentions is mediated by consumer motivation and moderated by environmental concern, suggesting that the effectiveness of social media campaigns may depend on targeting consumers with the right motivations and concerns.

Contrary to the findings above, some studies argue that social media's role in influencing sustainable purchase intentions may be limited or insignificant. Mandliya et al. (2020) investigated the impact of advertising and materialism on the intention to purchase environmentally sustainable products. They found that while attitude towards social and environmental accountability is positively associated with purchase intentions, the role of social media was not directly examined, indicating that other factors may be more influential. Salem and Alanadoly (2021) studied the effects of social media activities on word-of-mouth (WOM) towards sustainable fashion. While they found that personality traits influenced social media interactions and eco-friendly behaviour, the direct impact of social media on purchasing

intentions was unclear. This suggests that although social media facilitates information sharing and discussions about sustainability, translating these interactions into purchase intentions may require additional factors. Pittman et al. (2021) explored the effects of green advertising on non-green consumers using social media. They found that while low-information and high-fear appeal in social media advertising were effective in generating purchase intent and digital engagement, these strategies might only convert a specific segment of consumers, thereby questioning the broader applicability of social media as a tool for driving sustainable purchase intentions. Mabkhot et al. (2022) examined how social media influencers (SMIs) affect consumer purchase intentions. Their study in Saudi Arabia revealed that while SMIs and their credibility influence purchase intentions, this effect is mediated by trust and the perception of influencers' credibility, which might only sometimes align with broader social media strategies. Alam et al. (2023) emphasised that social media influences altruistic and egoistic motivations, which affect green purchase intentions. However, this influence is moderated by individual attitudes, suggesting that the impact of social media is not uniform and depends on pre-existing consumer attitudes towards sustainability.

The reviewed literature reveals a nuanced picture of the role of social media in shaping consumer intentions to buy sustainable goods. While numerous studies support the notion that social media positively influences sustainable consumption behaviours through enhanced attitudes, subjective norms, and motivations, other research suggests that this influence is contingent upon additional factors such as consumer motivations, pre-existing attitudes, and the credibility of social media influencers. These studies highlight the complexity of consumer behaviour in the context of sustainability. While social media can be a powerful tool for promoting sustainable products and behaviours, its effectiveness significantly depends on how

well social media strategies align with consumers' underlying motivations and attitudes. Future research should focus on identifying these contingent factors and developing more targeted social media campaigns to enhance their efficacy in promoting sustainable consumption.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

A cross-sectional survey research design was adopted to understand the influence of social media on consumer intentions regarding sustainable goods. This design was chosen because it allows for collecting data from a large sample at a single point in time, facilitating the examination of relationships between variables.

3.2 Data Collection

Data was collected through an online questionnaire designed based on existing validated scales and newly developed items tailored to the context of this study. The questionnaire was administered via Google Forms and distributed through various social media platforms, including Twitter (now known as X), Instagram, and Facebook, which are popular among Saudi consumers. The data was collected through a structured questionnaire to assess demographic information, platform preferences, and behavioural intentions concerning social media use and purchasing decisions. Participants reported their age and gender, followed by their preferred social media platform. The questionnaire included a Likert-scale item to evaluate their intentions to purchase products advertised on social media, with responses ranging from 1 (Low) to 7 (High). Additionally, respondents indicated the average number of hours they spent on social media per day. Another Likert-scale item measured the perceived influence of social media on their purchasing decisions, with a scale ranging from 1 (Low) to 7 (High). This comprehensive approach

ensured a detailed understanding of how age, gender, platform preference, and social media engagement correlate with consumer behaviour and purchasing intentions.

3.3 Sample Selection

A non-probability convenience sampling method was used due to its ease of access and the aim of gathering data quickly from a diverse group of respondents. The target population included Saudi residents aged 18 and above who actively use social media. To ensure a representative sample, the survey was shared in Arabic and English and disseminated through influencers and social media groups across various regions in Saudi Arabia.

The sample size was determined using Cochran's formula for an unknown population, resulting in a required minimum sample size of 384 respondents. However, the questionnaire was distributed to approximately 600 potential participants to account for potential non-responses or incomplete surveys.

3.4 Data Analysis

Data analysis was conducted using R version 4.4.1. The analysis consisted of the following steps:

- **Descriptive Statistics:** To summarise the demographic, social media usage, and intention to purchase sustainable goods.
- **Inferential Statistics:** Multiple regression analysis was employed to examine the relationship between demographics, social media usage, and consumer intentions to buy sustainable goods

3.5 Ethical Considerations

Informed consent was obtained from all participants, who were assured of the confidentiality and anonymity of their responses. Participation was voluntary, and

respondents could withdraw from the survey without penalty. Data were stored securely and only used for this research.

4. Results

The results obtained from the analysis of data are summarised below.

4.1 Descriptive Statistics

The descriptive statistics analysis serves as a foundational understanding for the further investigation of the relationship between demographics, social media usage characteristics, and consumer intentions to purchase sustainable goods, addressing the primary research question of this study.

Table 1 and Table 2 summarise the sample's demographic characteristics (the accompanying charts are shown in Figure 1.

This section details the descriptive statistics related to Age, Duration of Social Media Usage, Intentions to Purchase, and Social Media Influence, as well as the distribution of Gender and Preferred Social Media Platform among participants.

There were 405 people in the sample. The respondents ranged from 18 to 60 years, averaging 39.79 years (SD = 11.986). 69.4% are female (n=281) and 30.6% are male (n=124). Participants preferred a variety of social media platforms, with the following distribution: Facebook (16.5%), Instagram (17%), Other platforms (15.8%), Snapchat (17.3%), TikTok (17.5%), and Twitter (15.8%). Participants reported spending between 1 and 5 hours daily on social media, with a mean duration of 2.86 hours (SD = 1.383). Social media influence on purchasing decisions, also rated on a scale from 1 (Low) to 7 (High), had a mean score of 4.14 (SD = 2.009). The intentions to purchase sustainable goods, rated on a scale from 1 (Low) to 7 (High), had a mean score of 4.05 (SD = 2.004).

These demographic characteristics (Table 1 and Table 2) reveal a diverse participant group, which is essential for understanding the varied influences of social media on sustainable purchasing intentions across different demographics as shown in Fig. 1, Fig. 2 and Fig.3 below.

Table 1. Summary statistics

	Min.	Max.	Mean	SD
Age	18	60	39.79	11.986
Duration Social Media (Hours Per Day)	1	5	2.86	1.383
Intentions To Purchase (1-Low to 7-High)	1	7	4.05	2.004
Social Media Influence (1-Low to 7-High)	1	7	4.14	2.009

Table 2. Frequency counts

		Frequency	Percent
Gender	Female	281	69.4
	Male	124	30.6
	Total	405	100
Preferred Platform	Facebook	67	16.5
	Instagram	69	17
	Other	64	15.8
	Snapchat	70	17.3
	TikTok	71	17.5
	Twitter	64	15.8
	Total	405	100

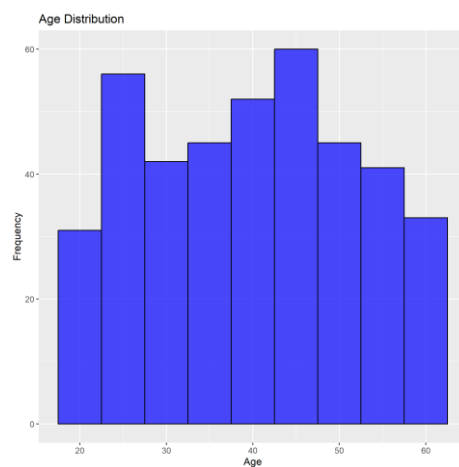


Figure 1. Age Distiribution

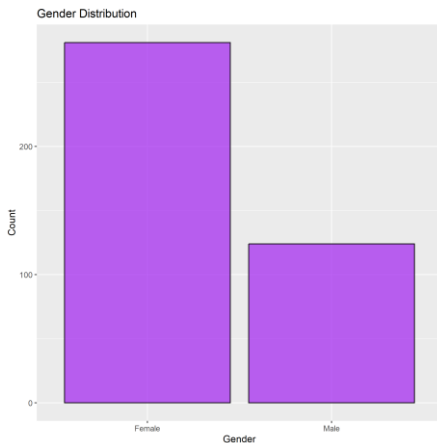


Figure 2. Gender Distiribution

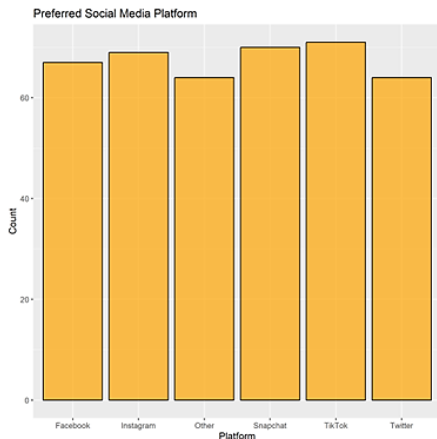


Figure 3. Preferred social media platform

5. Multivariate analysis

To explore how demographic characteristics and social media usage patterns influence consumer intentions to purchase sustainable goods, we analysed the descriptive statistics for Intentions to Purchase (rated on a scale of 1 to 7) across different gender and preferred social media platform categories, as shown in Tables 3, 4 and Figure 4.

The mean Intention to Purchase sustainable goods is slightly higher among males (Mean = 4.19, SD = 2.062) than among females (Mean = 3.99, SD = 1.978). Overall, the average Intention to Purchase for the entire sample is 4.05 (SD = 2.004). Respondents

who prefer TikTok have the highest mean Intention to Purchase (Mean = 4.24, SD = 1.975), closely followed by Instagram users (Mean = 4.14, SD = 2.067). The lowest mean Intention to Purchase is observed among users who prefer "Other" platforms (Mean = 3.83, SD = 2.150). The mean Intention to Purchase for the entire sample is consistent at 4.05 (SD = 2.004) across all platforms.

Table 3. Intentions To Purchase (1-Low to 7-High) by Gender

Gender	Mean	N	SD
Female	3.99	281	1.978
Male	4.19	124	2.062
Total	4.05	405	2.004

Table 4. Intentions To Purchase (1-Low to 7-High) by Preferred Platform

Preferred Platform	Mean	N	SD
Facebook	3.99	67	1.950
Instagram	4.14	69	2.067
Other	3.83	64	2.150
Snapchat	4.07	70	2.101
TikTok	4.24	71	1.975
Twitter	4.02	64	1.804
Total	4.05	405	2.004

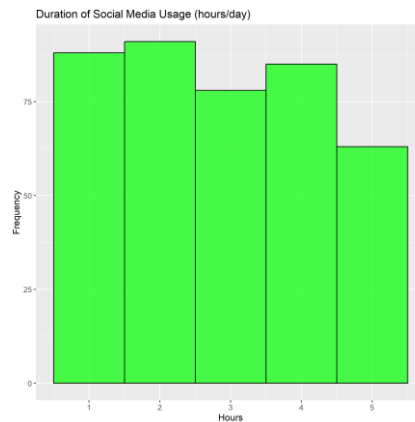


Figure 4. Duration of social media usage

The slight variations in mean Intention to Purchase scores across gender and preferred social media platforms provide initial insights into the research question. Although males show a marginally higher intention to

purchase sustainable goods, the difference is insignificant. Similarly, preferences for different social media platforms do not show drastic differences in purchase intentions, although TikTok and Instagram users report slightly higher intentions than other platforms.

These results lay the groundwork for more in-depth statistical analyses to determine whether these observed differences are statistically significant and to explore the potential interactions between demographic characteristics, social media usage behaviours, and consumer intentions to purchase sustainable goods. Understanding these relationships can help create targeted social media strategies to promote sustainable consumption among Saudi consumers, aligning with the research's aim.

To understand the relationship between demographic characteristics, social media usage, and consumer intentions to buy sustainable goods, a multiple regression analysis was conducted. The independent variables in the model were Social Media Influence as shown in Fig.5, Age, Duration of Social Media Use (hours per day), Gender (Female), and Preferred Social Media Platform (Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, TikTok, Twitter), with Intentions to Purchase sustainable goods as the dependent variable.

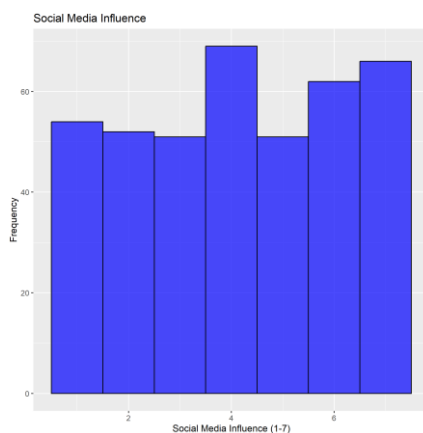


Figure 5. Social media influence

The model summary indicates that the predictors collectively explain 11% of the variance in intentions to purchase sustainable goods ($R^2 = .011$). The overall regression model is not statistically significant, $F(9, 395) = 0.464$, $p = 0.898$. This implies that the independent variables, taken together, do not significantly predict intentions to purchase sustainable goods. Furthermore, the coefficient for Social Media Influence is insignificant ($B = -0.046$, $p = 0.365$), suggesting that social media influence does not substantially impact the intentions to purchase sustainable goods. The Age coefficient is also insignificant ($B = 0.007$, $p = 0.431$), indicating no significant relationship between age and purchase intentions. The Duration of Social Media Use was insignificant ($B = -0.014$, $p = 0.853$), indicating that the number of hours spent on social media per day is not a significant predictor of purchase intentions.

The coefficient for gender (being female) is not significant ($B = -0.232$, $p = 0.294$), suggesting that gender does not significantly affect purchase intentions. Also, Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, TikTok, and Twitter users did not show significant differences in purchase intentions compared to other social media platforms, as indicated by the non-significant p-values for each platform.

The regression analysis (Table 5 and Fig.1) reveals that the selected demographic characteristics and social media usage variables do not significantly predict the intentions to purchase sustainable goods among Saudi consumers. Despite the theoretical importance of factors such as social media influence, duration of use, age, gender, and preferred social media platform, the statistical results show that these factors do not have a significant collective or individual impact on consumer intentions in this context.

These findings suggest that other variables, not included in this model (e.g., the level of education of the people, awareness about the environment), might play a more critical role

in shaping consumer intentions to purchase sustainable goods. Future research should consider exploring additional factors such as specific types of content engagement, individual attitudes toward sustainability, and perceived benefits of sustainable goods. The insights drawn from this analysis highlight

the complexity of consumer behaviour in the context of sustainable consumption and indicate the need for a more nuanced approach to understanding and influencing sustainable purchase intentions through social media.

Table 5. Predictors of Intentions To Purchase (1-Low to 7-High)

Model				t	Sig.
	Unstandardized Coefficients B	Std. Error	Standardized Coefficients Beta		
(Constant)	3.940	.556		7.085	<.001
Social Media Influence (1-Low to 7-High)	-.046	.051	-.046	-.908	.365
Age	.007	.008	.040	.788	.431
Duration Social Media Use (Hours Per day)	-.014	.074	-.009	-.186	.853
Gender=Female	-.232	.221	-.053	-1.051	.294
Preferred Platform=Facebook	.163	.357	.030	.458	.647
Preferred Platform=Instagram	.337	.351	.063	.958	.339
Preferred Platform=Snapchat	.256	.349	.048	.734	.464
Preferred Platform=TikTok	.447	.348	.085	1.284	.200
Preferred Platform=Twitter	.192	.358	.035	.537	.592

a. Dependent Variable: Intentions To Purchase (1-Low to 7-High)

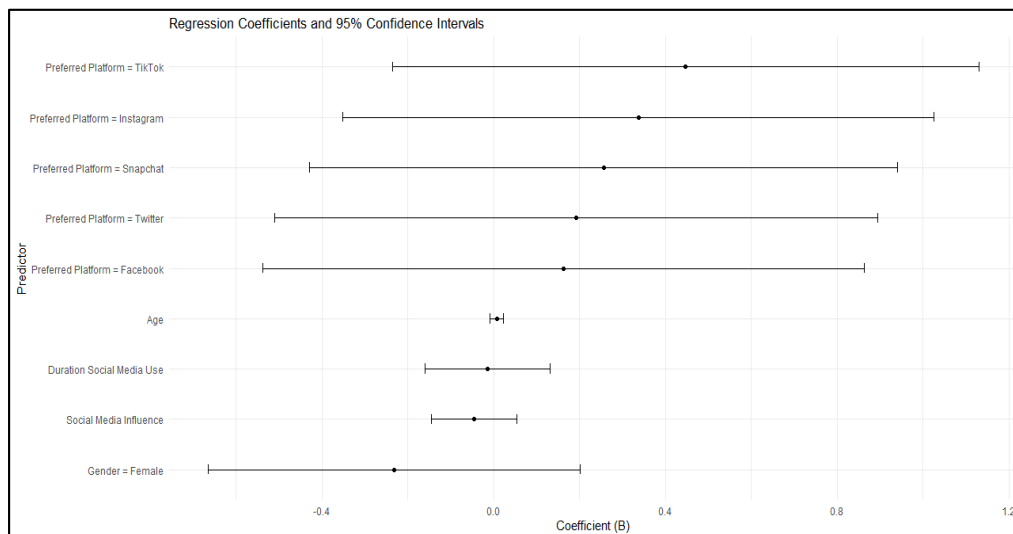


Figure 6. Predictors of Intentions To Purchase (1-Low to 7-High)

6. Discussion and Conclusion

The objective of this study was to assess the role of social media in shaping consumer intentions to buy sustainable goods in Saudi Arabia, considering demographics and social media usage characteristics. Our findings provide nuanced insights that affirm and challenge existing literature in this field.

Previous studies have confirmed the critical role of social media in influencing consumer behaviour, particularly in the context of sustainable consumption. For example, Nekmahmud et al. (2022) and Sun and Wang (2020) highlighted the effectiveness of social media marketing in enhancing consumer intentions to purchase green products. In our study, however, the regression analysis indicates that social media influence, as perceived by participants, does not significantly impact their intentions to purchase sustainable goods. This divergence may be attributed to the unique cultural and social dynamics of Saudi Arabia, underscoring the need for localised research in understanding consumer behaviour.

Our findings align partially with the literature that emphasises the influence of demographics on consumer intentions. Studies like those by Alam et al. (2023) and Mabkhot et al. (2022) have noted that consumer attitudes and social influences often depend on demographic factors. However, our results show that age, gender, and the time spent on social media do not significantly predict consumer intentions to purchase sustainable products. This finding complicates the narrative posited by studies such as Zafar et al. (2021), which emphasised the role of individual demographics in reinforcing sustainable attitudes.

While Alatawy (2022) and Al-Alawi et al. (2020) have emphasised the importance of specific social media platforms in influencing consumer behaviour, our study did not find significant differences across platforms in predicting intentions to purchase sustainable goods. Although TikTok and Instagram users exhibited slightly higher intentions, these

differences were not statistically significant. This might reflect a generalised behaviour among Saudi social media users irrespective of platform choice, suggesting that platform-specific strategies may not be as impactful as previously thought.

A critical insight from the reviewed literature is the necessity for engaging and credible content to drive consumer behaviour. Studies like those by Salem and Alanadoly (2021) and Pop et al. (2020) have highlighted that the quality and design of social media content significantly affect consumer intentions. Given that our model collectively explained only 11% of the variance, it suggests that content quality, authenticity, and engagement levels might be more crucial than demographics or platform usage in driving sustainable purchase intentions.

6.1 Conclusion

This study contributes to the growing body of literature examining the interplay between social media and sustainable consumer behaviours in a Saudi Arabian context. Contrary to much existing research, our findings suggest that neither demographics nor general social media usage patterns significantly predict intentions to purchase sustainable goods among Saudi consumers.

These results imply that other factors, including the nature of social media content, the credibility of influencers, and individual attitudes towards sustainability, may play a more pivotal role. This challenges marketers and policymakers to refine their strategies when promoting sustainable consumption through social media, focusing on more personalised and content-driven approaches.

6.2 Limitations and Future Research

While this study offers valuable insights, it has limitations. The use of a non-probability convenience sampling method may limit the generalizability of our findings. Furthermore, our study did not account for psychological and contextual factors such as environmental awareness, cultural beliefs, and socio-

economic status, which might also influence sustainable consumption behaviours.

Future research should adopt a more comprehensive approach by incorporating these additional variables. Experimental designs and longitudinal studies could also provide deeper insights into the causal relationships between social media activities and sustainable consumer intentions. Moreover, qualitative research could explore consumer perceptions and attitudes towards sustainable goods, providing a richer understanding of the underlying motivations and barriers.

6.3 Practical Implications

The results highlight the complexity of

influencing sustainable consumer behaviours through social media for practitioners and policymakers. They suggest a shift away from blanket strategies based solely on demographics or platform popularity towards more nuanced, content-driven, and engagement-focused approaches. Brands must invest in high-quality, credible, and engaging sustainability-related content to drive consumer intentions effectively. By leveraging the right mix of content authenticity, influencer credibility, and targeted messaging, businesses and policymakers can encourage a more significant impact on promoting sustainable consumption, contributing to broader environmental goals and sustainable development initiatives in Saudi Arabia.

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