Social Shopping Intention of the University Students toward Sustainable Goods: An SEM-Based Investigation

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Abstract

This study examines how the perceived information quality and the information credibility of social media shopping sites together with price consciousness shape the university students' intention to purchase organic agricultural products as sustainable alternatives to traditional goods in Bangladesh. A survey of 160 university students was analyzed with partial least squares structural equation modeling (SEM) technique. The measurement model met standard reliability and validity criteria; collinearity was low. The information credibility and the information quality significantly increased social shopping intention, while price consciousness showed a non-significant effect. These findings are consistent with social commerce literature that emphasizes information cues and eWOM signals in shaping online decisions and suggest that credible, well-reasoned content may outweigh price considerations for this segment. Theoretically, this study contributes to elaboration likelihood model and information-adoption perspectives to social media context for sustainable consumption study. Practically, the findings motivate marketers to strengthen their communication sources and information presentation, rather than follow price-only promotional strategies.

Keywords: Information quality, information credibility, price consciousness, social shopping intention, social media, university students.

1 Introduction

The dynamically developing trend of sustainable consumption is manifested. However, particularly in the category of food products, organic goods are now synonymously pronounced as sustainable goods in literature (Melović et al., 2020; Nowak et al., 2025; Rizzo, et al., 2024). This is because organic products care for

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the environment, animal welfare, harmful substances used in production, low level of processing, and short shelf life (Wojciechowska-Solis & Barska, 2021) that strengthens soil fertility and agroecosystem functioning by relying on ecological cycles and largely excluding synthetic agrochemicals and GMOs, typically using production methods which follow even higher sustainability standards (Gamage et al., 2023; Rizzo, et al., 2024). So, the empirical studies claimed a positive relationship between consumer awareness of the concept of sustainable consumption and the consumption of organic products (Wojciechowska-Solis & Barska, 2021) in the context of developing countries (Saeed et al., 2019).

The social media does more than advertise sustainability. It can teach and actively involve younger, ethically motivated consumers by making issues like sourcing easier to normalize a sustainable lifestyle and can nudge everyday behavior and consumption in a more sustainable direction (Strähle & Gräff, 2016). The activities like word-of-mouth sharing, personalized messages, and entertaining posts help build positive attitudes toward green products, which then predict willingness to pay more for sustainable options (Gupta & Syed, 2022). The rapid rise of social media platforms has reshaped consumer behavior, especially in e-commerce and sustainable consumption. The online shopping offers notable advantages such as convenience, price comparison, time savings, reduced fuel costs, and avoidance of travel and traffic, making it an attractive alternative to traditional retail (Etminani-Ghasrodashti & Hamidi, 2020).

The recent projections highlight this growth: the number of global e-commerce users is expected to reach 3.6 billion by 2029, with average revenue per user of $1,728, driven by internet expansion, improved online experiences, and the surge of social commerce (Statista, 2024a). Within this evolving landscape, social media functions as both a commercial and a social ecosystem (Jacobson et al., 2020), enabling direct consumer–brand interactions and amplifying peer influence on purchase decisions (Suki & Suki, 2019). Therefore, recently researchers treating social media-based e-commerce sites as social shopping sites (Daliri et al., 2014; Erkan & Evans, 2016; Fu et al., 2020; Li, 2019).

The social media can strengthen subjective norms and product knowledge and, at the same time, make people less price-conscious, which support pro-environmental actions (Sun & Wang, 2020). However, limited awareness and perceived high cost still block green purchases in many emerging markets (Sun & Wang, 2020). The social media is also a main channel for green product

information, shaped by environmental concerns, cultural values, and peers' recommendations (Saeed et al., 2019; Zafar et al., 2021). Many companies now invest heavily in online green marketing—often focusing on social platforms—because engagement depends on social context; for example, collectivist settings like South Korea tend to accept sustainability messages more than individualist ones such as the United States (Minton et al., 2012).

Generation Z consumers, recognized as digital natives, extensively rely on platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube for product discovery, evaluation, and decision-making (Axcell & Ellis 2023). They prioritize authenticity, trust, and engagement, making them highly susceptible to social media influencers whose endorsements shape their attitudes and preferences (Djafarova & Bowes 2021). Despite the increasing digital integration into consumer lifestyles, sustainable shopping behavior in the social media context remains underexplored, particularly in emerging economies. For example, the digital media market in Bangladesh is continuing its decade-long upward trend and is projected to reach 74.4 million users by 2027 (Statista, 2024b). A population of 173.8 million and 188.6 million having active mobile connections (DataReportal, 2024), this trend highlights the growing prominence of online shopping (Islam et al. 2023). However, studies on social media shopping for organic agricultural products is limited although the buying and selling attributes for organic agricultural products both in the offline and e-marketplace is different than that of traditional products (Robina-Ramírez et al., 2020).

The recent quantitative research by Bangladeshi scholars has built a useful foundation on organic farming and why people may choose organic products, which is gaining attention in Bangladesh (Kabir et al., 2023; Sumi & Kabir, 2018). Most studies focus on general purchase intention, willingness to pay, or continuance intention, but remain under-studied in depth. For instance, intention-focused work on organic tea shows that trust and perceived price, along with product attributes, health consciousness, and environmental concern are central drivers of buying intention (Sumi & Kabir, 2018). The research on organically farmed shrimp indicates that limited knowledge and consumer confusion can hold back the organic market even when preferences exist (Hoque et al., 2021). The broader organic-food studies similarly emphasize individual-level traditional predictors such as attitudes, perceived behavioral control, and health consciousness (Kabir & Islam, 2022), and point to satisfaction and attitudes as

important pathways for continued consumption (Kabir et al., 2015). More recent evidence also underlines the role of trust and eco-label communication but suggests that information and education can meaningfully shift organic purchasing in emerging economies like Bangladesh (Akter et al., 2023).

In contrast, the online shopping behavior for green products in Bangladesh primarily examines cost efficiency and delivery experience (Saha et al. 2020), and available online technologies on purchase intention (Islam et al. 2023), as well as brand engagement (Hafez, 2023). Taken together, these findings hint that information exposure, persuasion, and credibility signals—often delivered through social platforms—matter a lot. This leaves a clear gap around how social media shapes shopping intention for organic agricultural products—especially for the university students. However, literature rarely tests a combined influence of information quality, price and credibility in the social media platform directly on intention nor does it examine the university students as a distinct segment whose purchasing pathways are likely shaped by intensive social media use and peer-to-peer influence. Thus, the present study addresses the current research gap by examining the integrated influence of price consciousness, information quality, and information credibility on the intention to buy organic agricultural products as sustainable alternatives to traditional goods in the social media context in Bangladesh using structural equation modeling (SEM) technique. So, the objectives of the present study are to:

a. examine the influence of information quality on social shopping intention to buy organic agricultural products
b. examine the influence of price consciousness on intention to buy organic agricultural products on social shopping sites

2 Literature Review

2.1 Theoretical underpinning

The variables used in the study are mainly adapted from elaboration likelihood model (ELM) of persuasion (Cacioppo & Petty, 1984). They are also discussed in the information adoption model (Erkan & Evans, 2016; Sussman & Siegal, 2003), which Sussman and Siegal (2003) proposed by narrowing ELM's scope to measure informational influence in the computer mediated communication platforms. In literature, the social media information quality and the information credibility have been mostly used as central and peripheral routes in the elaboration likelihood

model of information processing (Aghakhani et al., 2023; Zha et al., 2018). In the elaboration likelihood model, information quality is considered as central route and source credibility is considered as peripheral route of information processing. Due to the information overload misinformation and social risk, the social media information credibility and the message quality are very important predictors of trust in the claim of the goods and service of the sellers on social media (Daliri, 2014; Ngo et al., 2024). The information credibility is the perceived trustworthiness and expertise of an information source, and within the information adoption model, it functions as a key filter that shapes how people form intention to purchase (Ngo et al., 2024). The perceived information quality is reflected in usefulness, completeness, and timeliness, because useful information captures attention and helps users learn more, while comprehensive information enables an accurate understanding of the product and its attributes (Sun et al., 2021).

Many studies measured both the direct and indirect effects of information quality and credibility on intention in the social media context (Moradi & Zihagh, 2022; Sang et al., 2023). Sun et al. (2021) measured the direct and indirect effects of perceived information quality and perceived information credibility on purchase intention along with social influence in the social media context too. Daliri et al (2014) measured the impact of information quality directly on social media based online shopping, which they called social shopping intentions. However, Erkan and Evans (2016) measured the direct effect of social media information quality and credibility along with adoption as independent variables to online purchase intention what they called purchase intention from social media shopping websites. On the other hand, Fu et al. (2020) used perceived information quality as predictor of online social shopping intention.

Because anyone can generate eWOM online, consumers increasingly rely on information quality and information credibility, both of which shape product evaluations and purchase intention. Both quality and credibility of eWOM on social media may exert a stronger influence than on company websites, which present claims from only one-party shopping websites, especially since social media is typically less anonymous and credibility acts as an early gatekeeper in persuasion (Erkan & Evans, 2016).

In addition, in the context of green consumption, high product prices can discourage environmentally responsible purchases, particularly when consumers perceive limited economic benefits (Arce Salazar & Oerlemans, 2016). Although

the prior research confirms that consumers generally prefer lower prices, the impact of price consciousness on purchasing decisions varies depending on the type of product (Erdem et al., 2002). When consumers possess adequate knowledge of sustainable product benefits and sufficient resources to afford them, the salience of price considerations tends to diminish (Wang et al., 2018). Therefore, in the current context, without any mediating variables information quality, the information credibility, and price consciousness are used as direct predictors of social shopping intention to purchase organic agricultural products as sustainable alternatives to traditional products.

2.2 Social shopping intention

The social shopping has emerged as a transformative extension of e-commerce, where interpersonal interactions and social influences play a central role in shaping consumer decision-making. Li (2019) demonstrates that while social commerce constructs such as ratings, reviews, and referrals stimulate social interactions, their effect on purchase intention is mediated by trust in product recommendations, highlighting the importance of relational and affective factors over purely informational cues. Complementing this, Fu et al. (2020) show that informational and normative social influences exert a stronger impact on consumers' social shopping intention than information quality itself, with social interactional factors such as familiarity, expertise, and similarity amplifying these effects. At the same time, the bibliometric analysis by Barbosa and Santos (2023) reveals that research on social shopping has grown substantially in the past two decades, particularly after COVID-19, identifying consumer behavior, social media integration, and omnichannel strategies as key thematic clusters. Taken together, these findings suggest that social shopping is not merely a transactional process but a socially embedded practice where trust, influence, and interaction converge to drive consumer intentions, while also underscoring the need for further empirical validation across contexts.

2.3 Information quality and social shopping intention

On the social media platforms, shoppers are surrounded by readily accessible product information delivered through images, video, text, and audio, which can strengthen behavioral intention by making evaluation easier and more engaging (Daliri et al., 2014). The perceived information quality reflects how useful, understandable, relevant, and accurate that content feels, and consumers often treat

high-quality information as practical evidence for learning about products, comparing attributes, solving decision problems, and justifying choices (Fu et al., 2020). When the information is useful, it captures attention, and when it is comprehensive and current, it improves understanding and speeds up decision-making by helping users grasp the attributes they care about and stay updated (Sun et al., 2021). In crowded online environments where reliability is uncertain, dependable and up-to-date information becomes especially valuable and can shape satisfaction and overall evaluation of the shopping experience (Fu et al., 2020). As the users process this information to maximize their outcomes, the stronger perceived information quality should translate into stronger intention to shop via social platforms (Sun et al., 2021). Therefore, the present study proposes:

H1: Perceived information quality positively influences social shopping intention for organic agricultural products as sustainable alternatives to traditional goods

2.4 Information credibility and social shopping intention

The information credibility is commonly viewed as a receiver-based judgment that encompasses both objective evaluations of message accuracy and subjective assessments of the medium through which the message is delivered (Li & Suh, 2015). At the message level, the credibility reflects perceptions of information quality, accuracy, and currency, which allow consumers to evaluate whether the content is reliable and useful for decision-making (Li & Suh, 2015). In social commerce contexts, this credibility is particularly significant because electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) information often substitutes for direct product experience (Ngo et al., 2024). The prior studies have shown that consumers are more persuaded by credible eWOM messages, as these reduce uncertainty and enhance confidence in purchase decisions (Erkan & Evans, 2016).

Given that social media platforms provide interactive, timely, and user-generated content, the credibility of eWOM information shared in these settings is expected to exert a more substantial effect on consumers' behavioral intentions compared to more static shopping websites (Aghakhani et al., 2023; Erkan & Evans, 2016; Sun et al., 2021). The social media allows for dynamic engagement, peer validation, and rapid updates, all of which enhance perceived credibility and, in turn, influence purchase behavior. Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H2. The perceived information credibility positively influences consumers' intention for social shopping for organic agricultural products as sustainable alternatives to traditional goods

2.5 Price consciousness and social shopping intention for sustainable goods

Price consciousness refers to consumers' tendency to focus on obtaining products at the lowest possible cost and is often seen as a significant determinant of purchasing decisions (Ahmetoglu et al., 2014). In the context of green consumption, however, the high product prices can discourage environmentally responsible purchases, particularly when consumers perceive limited economic benefits (Arce Salazar & Oerlemans, 2016). Although the prior research confirms that consumers generally prefer lower prices, the impact of price consciousness on purchasing decisions varies depending on the type of product (Erdem et al., 2002). When consumers possess adequate knowledge of sustainable product benefits and sufficient resources to afford them, the salience of price considerations tends to diminish (Wang et al., 2018). Furthermore, in social media–based commerce, the credibility of eWOM information and social influence often outweigh price concerns, as consumers place greater emphasis on trust, peer recommendations, and product authenticity (Erden et al., 2002). Therefore, in the domain of social shopping for sustainable goods, the price sensitivity is expected to play only a marginal role compared to the social and informational factors. Thus, the final hypothesis is proposed as:

H3. Price consciousness has a non-significant influence on consumers' social shopping intention for sustainable goods

3 Methods

This study aimed to explore the university students' intention to shop organic agricultural products on social media. After identifying a research gap, the conceptual framework includes information quality, information credibility, price consciousness, and social media shopping intention and was drawn to assess the hypotheses. This study adopted a quantitative approach to test the model. Initially, the measurement items were adapted from previously used scales (Table 1).

Table 1. The measurement items of the study

Description	Codes	Reference
I intend to buy products based on the shopping experiences of members of my social media community or fan page.	SSPI1	(Fu et al., 2020)
I intend to purchase products based on recommendations from members of my social media community or fan page related to the products themselves.	SSPI2	
I intend to buy a product recommended by members of my social media community or fan page.	SSPI3	
I intend to impress members of my social media community or fan page by purchasing socially acceptable	SSPI4	
I intend to share my experiences with members of my social media community or fan page.	SSPI5	
The information on the social media shopping sites I visit provides sufficient reasoning.	INFQ1	(Erkan & Evans, 2016).
The information on the social media shopping sites I visit is understandable.	INFQ2	
The information on the social media shopping sites I visit is clear	INFQ3	
The information is well presented.	INFQ4	
The information on the social media shopping sites I visit is objective.	CRDB1	
The social media pages/shopping sites I visit are trustworthy.	CRDB2	
The social media pages/shopping sites I visit are rich in reliable information.	CRDB3	
The social media pages/shopping sites I visit are rich in information from experts.	CRDB4	
Price plays a crucial role in the decision to purchase a product.	PCON1	(Sun & Wang, 2020).
I consider the price before deciding to buy a product.	PCON2	
I usually try to buy products at the lowest price.	PCON3	
I pay attention to fair prices when buying products.	PCON4	

3.1 Participants

The target population consists of the university students who are active social media users. The biggest segment of social media users in Bangladesh is represented by the university students (Chowdhury, 2025; Rahman & Mithun, 2021; Saha & Guha, 2019). 70% of the university students use social media for at least 4 to 6 hours a day (Hosen et al., 2021). The social media does more than advertise sustainability that can teach and actively involve the younger, ethically

motivated consumers by making issues like sourcing easier to normalize a sustainable lifestyle and can nudge everyday behavior and consumption in a more sustainable direction (Strähle & Gräff, 2016). So, the university students are potential consumers who have all the necessary knowledge particularly due to massive access to social media which could be the reason to switch toward ecological behavior (Kaur & Gangwar, 2023). Also, they have direct positive influence on their parents' innovation adoption behavior in the family (Liang et al., 2019). As a result, several recent studies have been conducted on green purchase behavior of the university students in different parts of the world including, Bangladesh (Maisha & Shetu, 2025), Taiwan (e.g., Huang & Yu, 2022), and India (Yadav & Pathak, 2016). Moreover, the findings from study on the young consumers may highlight the implications for policymakers and marketers of sustainable goods (Maisha & Shetu, 2025). Therefore, the university students have been sampled for this study.

3.2 Data collection

A non-probability purposive sampling technique was then adopted due to the high cost and complexity of probability sampling and limitation of the research project (Saunders, 2009). The Google from based questionnaire was initially prepared in English, translated into Bengali, and re-translated by a bilingual academic for accuracy. A seven-point Likert scale was used to measure the items.

In a class of E-Marketing course conducted by a particular researcher, 60 students were approached to share the link of the Google form based online questionnaire to at least three of their close friends who can response. In the course's WhatsApp group, the researcher shares the link of the questionnaire. The students were required to submit the screenshots of the successful submission page gathered from their friends in the WhatsApp group. To avoid missing values for easy data handling, that researcher using the Google form setting made all the questions compulsory. The survey generated 160 responses without any payment made to the participants during two weeks of May 2024.

However, the current sample size (160) is sufficient for structural equation modelling for testing a simple model based on either 10 cases per parameter rules (Kock & Hadaya, 2018) or a priori power analysis using GPower 3.1 technique (Faul et al., 2009). Several studies used similar sample size, (160) for example, while studying young consumers' offline and online shopping behavior (Suleman

et al., 2020) and green cosmetics buying intention (Sharma et al., 2021). Data was analyzed using partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) technique to test the measurement and structural models as recommended by experts (Hair et al., 2019). For data analysis, IBM SPSS 25 (IBM Corp., 2017) and SmartPLS 4 (Ringle et al., 2024) software were used.

4 Results of the Study

4.1 Demographic profile of the respondents

The survey included 160 respondents, including 63.1% undergraduate students, and the remainder are postgraduate (36.9%). The sample was divided into male 70.6% and female 29.4. As expected for a university cohort, the age distribution was concentrated in the early twenties: 78.1% (125) were 22–24 years old, 13.8% (22) were 19–21, and 8.1% (13) were 25–27 or above. The participants came from a mix of home locations—rural (31.25%) and city-center areas (30.0%) in roughly equal measure, followed by semi-urban (26.25%) and urban neighborhoods (12.5%). Social media use was intensive: the largest share reported about four hours per day (41.9%), roughly a third used around two hours (34.4%), and a smaller group used three hours (16.3%), with only small tails at one and five hours (about 7.5% each).

Table 2. Respondents' profile

Description	Category	n	%
Education	Undergraduate	101	63.1
	Postgraduate	59	36.9
Gender	Female	47	29.4
	Male	113	70.6
Age	19-21 and below	22	13.8
	22-24	125	78.1
	25-27 and above	13	8.1
Home	City Center	48	30.0
	Rural	50	31.25
	Semi-urban	42	26.25
	Urban	20	12.50
Daily social media usage hours	1 hour	12	7.5
	2 hours	55	34.4
	3 hours	26	16.3
	4 hours	67	41.9
	5 hours	12	7.5
Total (n)		160	100%

4.2 Measurement model

All items' factor loadings (Table 3) surpass 0.70, ensuring individual indicator reliability. Cronbach's alpha (α= 0.823-0.847) and composite reliability (CR=0.816-0.850) values exceed 0.70 thresholds, indicating strong internal consistency reliability. The average variance extracted (AVE 0.620 - 0.739) meets the acceptable threshold of 0.50, confirming that each construct explains a sufficient proportion of variance, resulting in convergent validity. Also, the Fornell-Larcker criterion (Table 4) establishes discriminant validity as each construct's square root of AVE is greater than its correlations with other constructs (e.g., SSPI = 0.788). Moreover, the Heterotrait-Monotrait ratio (HTMT) values (Table 5) remain acceptable level, affirming discriminant validity and indicating that constructs are conceptually distinct. These findings confirm the model's robustness, fostering structural model analysis and hypotheses testing (Hair et al., 2019; Sarstedt et al., 2021).

Table 3. Reliability and validity

Items	Loading	Constructs	α	CR	AVE
INFQ1	0.833	INFQ	0.823	0.835	0.652
INFQ2	0.831				
INFQ3	0.757				
INFQ4	0.807				
CRED2	0.835	CRED	0.824	0.833	0.739
CRED3	0.885				
CRED4	0.858				
PCON1	0.831	PCON	0.808	0.816	0.635
PCON2	0.847				
PCON3	0.730				
PCON4	0.775				
SSPI1	0.799	SSPI	0.847	0.850	0.620
SSPI2	0.794				
SSPI3	0.774				
SSPI4	0.794				
SSPI5	0.777				

Note: INFQ = Information quality. CRED= Credibility of the information. PCON= Price consciousness. SSPI=Social shopping intention. α= Cronbach's alpha. CR= Composite reliability. AVE = Average variance extracted.

Table 4. Discriminant validity: Fornell-Larcker criterion

Constructs	INFQ	CRED	PCON	SSPI
INFQ	0.808			
CRED	0.754	0.860		
PCON	0.551	0.559	0.797	
SSPI	0.677	0.709	0.513	0.788

Table 5. Discriminant validity: Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT)

Constructs	INFQ	CRED	PCON	SSPI
INFQ				
CRED	0.915			
PCON	0.672	0.690		
SSPI	0.797	0.836	0.617	

4.3 The structural model and test of hypotheses

The values of the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) ranged between 1.542 and 2.490, indicating no serious collinearity issues and ensuring unbiased regression estimates (Hair et al., 2019; Kock, 2015) for the proposed structural model.

Table 6. Collinearity statistics.

Constructs	INFQ	CRED	PCON	SSPI
INFQ				2.456
CRED				2.490
PCON				1.542
SSPI				

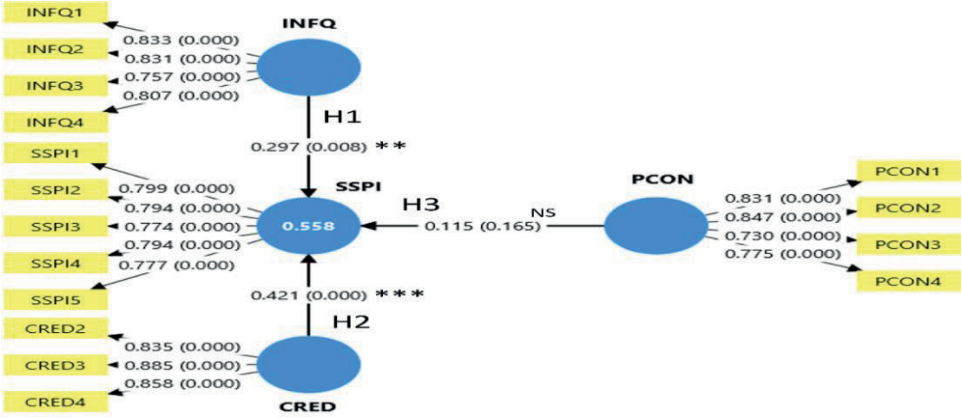

Figure 1.Structural model results.

Note: Value on the dependent variable (SSPI) is R^2. $^{**}p < .01$, $^{***}p < .001$. NS= non-significant.

The bias-corrected and accelerated bootstrapping (5000 samples) results show (Table 7) that the path coefficient values are (β) > confidence interval lower limit (CILL) but β < the confidence interval upper limit (CIUL). All paths are shown (Table 7 and Figure 1) have $t > 1.96$ and $p < 0.05$ except the path between PCON and SSPI. INFQ strongly influences SSPI (H1: β = 0.297, p = .008), Also, CRED influences SSPI significantly (H2: β = 0.421, p = .000) and the most influential determinant of SSPI. However, PCON has insignificant values (H3: β = 0.115, p = .165). Therefore, H1, H2 and H3 (i.e. price consciousness has a non-significant influence on consumers' social shopping intention for sustainable goods) all are supported.

Table 7. Test of hypotheses

Hypotheses	β	SD	*t*	CILL	CIUL	Sig	Decision*
H1: INFQ -> SSPI	0.297	0.113	2.634	0.070	0.514	0.008	Supported
H2: CRED -> SSPI	0.421	0.093	4.537	0.219	0.586	0.000	Supported
H3: PCON -> SSPI	0.115	0.083	1.388	-0.049	0.273	0.165	Supported

Note: * Bias corrected and accelerated bootstrapping. CILL = confidence interval lower limit and CIUL confidence interval upper limit. Decisions*= for H1 and H2 β > CILL but < CIUL, t >1.96, $p < .05$ but for H3 p>0.05.

4.4 Explanatory power of the model

The PLS-SEM results indicate varying levels of importance among the antecedents (Table 8) of the target construct- SSPI. CRED shows the highest importance (0.421) followed by INFQ. Predictive relevance (Q^2: 0.521) of the independent variables is substantial for the SSPI model with acceptable predictive errors (RMSE = 0.705, MAE = 0.489), explaining (R^2 = 0.558) almost 6% of the variance in SSPI. These findings highlight the prominence of information credibility to affect social shopping intention for organic agricultural products.

Table 8. Predictive power of the research model

Antecedents	Target constructs	Importance	Q^2predict	RMSE	MAE	R^2
INFQ	SSPI	0.297				
CRED	SSPI	0.421	0.521	0.705	0.489	0.558
PCON	SSPI	0.115				

5 Discussion and Implications

5.1 General discussion on findings

The results are consistent with evidence that the social media eWOM credibility can influence intentions more strongly than the information on shopping websites, due to interactive validation and social proof. This adds platform contingency to models of online persuasion in sustainable consumption (Erkan & Evans, 2016; Li, 2019). By showing that content quality/credibility shape intention in a sustainability context, the study connects social commerce mechanisms with pro-environmental decision making, complementing cross-cultural work on motives and norms (Minton et al., 2012) and extending the social commerce lens to green products (Fu et al., 2020; Li, 2019).

The results indicate that, for the Bangladeshi university students, both information credibility and information quality on social media shopping sites increase social shopping intention for organic agricultural products, while price consciousness does not show a significant effect; credibility is the strongest predictor followed by information quality and the model explains a meaningful share of intention (R^2 = 0.558). This pattern fits well with social commerce research where message cues and eWOM signals shape online decision-making, including findings that information quality matters for social shopping intention and that credibility reduces uncertainty in peer-driven environments (Fu et al., 2020; Erkan & Evans, 2016; Li, 2019; Bai et al., 2015).

When the results are compared with Bangladesh based organic studies, the direction is consistent but the emphasis is slightly different: prior work repeatedly highlights trust, knowledge, and credibility-related cues as important, such as organic tea purchase intention shaped by trust and perceived price (Sumi & Kabir, 2018), Willingness to pay differences linked with knowledge and confusion in organically farmed shrimp (Hoque et al., 2021), and organic food intention shaped

by attitudes and perceived behavioral control (Kabir & Islam, 2022), while trust and eco-label communication also appear influential (Akter et al., 2023).

In the present context, credibility being stronger than information quality can be read critically as a sign that students may treat organic claims as hard to verify online, so they lean more on who is speaking (experts, trusted pages, peer validation) than only what is said, which is also compatible with the argument that credibility works as an evidence cue in social settings (Li, 2019; Erkan & Evans, 2016).

The null effect of price consciousness is important to discuss, because it does not mean price is irrelevant in general—rather it may be weaker under specific conditions. The literature already suggests that price sensitivity varies by product type and perceived value, and can fade when consumers feel knowledgeable, capable, and guided by pro-environmental motivations (Erdem et al., 2002; Sun & Wang, 2020; Wang et al., 2018). So, for this student segment with heavy social media exposure, credible and timely information may substitute for price as the main decision shortcut, whereas in other organic categories (e.g., tea), perceived price can still play a stronger role (Sumi & Kabir, 2018), suggesting a boundary condition rather than a contradiction.

5.2 Implications

Theoretically, the findings strengthen the claim of use of the elaboration likelihood model and the Information Adoption Model to predict intention in the social media context by stretching the model with price consciousness by showing that the central-route cue (information quality) and peripheral-route cue (source credibility) both have direct effects on intention, where most literature measured indirect effects. This also adds a sustainability-specific contribution: in social shopping for organic agricultural products, credibility and quality appear as distinct yet additive drivers, while price consciousness behaves like a context-dependent factor that can weaken when social proof and credible claims dominate (Fu et al., 2020; Li, 2019; Erkan & Evans, 2016).

Empirically, the study suggests clear actions for practice and society: sellers and page owners should invest in credible communication sources (transparent sourcing, expert-backed statements, verifiable claims) and improve information presentation (clear, complete, relevant, and up-to-date details, using multimedia

formats), because these are more likely to lift intention than price-only promotions for this group (Daliri et al., 2014; Sun et al., 2021).

A practical implication is that the university students should be treated as a key sustainability segment, not a side group, because they already form the largest share of social media users in Bangladesh and many spend long hours online each day, which makes their buying choices highly visible and easily copied by peers (Hosen et al., 2021). So, for the universities and the policymakers, the findings also support building digital literacy around evaluating sustainability claims and reducing misinformation risks, so that the young consumers can make better judgments and potentially diffuse these preferences in families and communities, helping sustainable consumption become more normal in daily life (Strähle & Gräff, 2016).

6 Conclusion

Analyzing the surveyed data from 160 university students based on PLS-SEM analysis, the study finds that the information credibility and the information quality on social media shopping sites significantly increase in intention to buy organic agricultural products as sustainable alternatives to traditional products. The students think information quality and credibility of e-WOM in social media are much more important than price. These conclusions rely on a robust measurement model (reliable, valid, and discriminant) and a well-behaved structural model without serious collinearity. However, the use of non-probability purposive sampling technique and the voluntary nature of responses have restricted responses among students. Although, according to the rules of thumb, the sample is sufficient to conduct SEM, the results may not generalize to other age groups or income levels, so the unobserved confounds and the common-method concerns cannot be fully ruled out. The study measures intention, not actual purchase behavior. Also, platform differences and product categories were not analyzed in depth. However, the findings still served the purpose of the study as the university students are the major social media users and the heaviest users among the social media user segments in Bangladesh and abroad with fastest growing numbers.

The future researchers can do the following studies: experiments that manipulate credibility and argument strength to test causal effects, mediation tests via trust and attitudes, multi-group comparisons by product category, longitudinal designs to track conversion from intention to behavior, and cross-platform studies contrasting

social media versus marketplace websites, following eWOM credibility logic in prior research.

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