Social Media Influence on Consumption of Personal Care Products: Implications for Sustainable Consumption

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Abstract
There are around 5.07 billion active social media users of different social media platforms. Apart from traditional marketing, it allows the brands to engage with their prospective customers in a very interactive way that results in customer engagement. Generally, the advancement of social media has changed customer behavior, buying patterns, purchase decisions of the customers. Brands also use influencers with a reasonable follower base as a part of their promotion strategy. However, this research undergoes on how social media (such as new age social media like Instagram, YouTube short videos) creates an impact in the buying decisions of the customers and the implications of Sustainable consumption. This research explores how social media influence customers about consumption of personal care products and also about inferences of Sustainable consumption. This study collects the data through a questionnaire-based survey among all social media users. The sample size for data collection is 393 samples. The results will give a better insight into the consumption of customers and help to give suggestions for implications of Sustainable consumption of personal care products. Ultimately, this research relies on the impact of social media influence in the purchase intention of the customers. In addition to that, it analyzes the purchase intention of the customers due to social media usage and the implications of Sustainable consumption only based on their needs.
Keywords: Social Media Usage, Type of Content Preferred in Social Media, Preferred Brands of Personal Care Products, Purchase Intention

Introduction

Social media has become as an integral and inevitable part of our day-to-day life. Social media platforms like Instagram, YouTube, Facebook etc., can be used for the multiple purposes such as personal purposes (Entertainment) and for business purposes. Apart from the entertainment purposes, social media is considered as the widely used digital platform by the business firms to promote their brands. Now-a-days people are highly engaged in the social media and sharing about their life updates, interests and opinions. It also helps the business firms to know the interest, needs as well as the preferences of the customers. Social media is a perfect medium for customer engagement. Meanwhile, the companies also use social media platforms to market their products and services in a most effective way. It will help to reach wider audience through social media advertising and marketing instantly and effectively. The evolved version of the social media such as creating and posting short video content about the personal care products in Instagram, YouTube are highly engaged in shaping the customer's buying behavior. Social media have the great potential to influence the spending patterns of the customers. Social media has significantly created an impact in the choices

and preferences of the customers and their purchase intention. Moreover, social media also influences the customer behavior which may leads to increasing consumption beyond the necessity of products. Social media platforms are the widely used tools by the brands as a part of their sales promotion techniques. Further, social media is viewed as appropriate medium for promoting the personal care products compared to the direct marketing. Social media is a platform which provides a great opportunity for positioning their products for all types of businesses especially for start-ups. When customers used to see the influencers or celebrities promoting the brands or the products, they also got influenced to buy those products. Even though the digital presence, qualified and rich content of the brand, the appropriate selection of influencers must be good enough for the expected sales in the business point of view. Choosing inappropriate influencers causes poor sales of the brand. Because, Influencer marketing can also create a positive or negative image of the brand. It is completely based on the authenticity of the information shared with the public on the social media regarding the product or brand. Eventually, it leads to impulsive purchases by the customer.

Theoretical Framework

There are numerous theories relating to social media influence and engagement as well as consumption. The theories are source credibility theory, social media engagement Theory (SMET), Uses and Gratification Theory. Based on these theories, we can know that the previous studies have proven that the social media plays a significant role in shaping the purchase intention of the customers. Those studies are focused in the context of social media influence and the purchase intention of the customer in a general basis. This study mainly focuses how much the social media influences the customer to purchase the personal care products. It also suggests the implications for sustainable consumption.

Source Credibility Theory

The Source credibility theory is a model of communication strategy applied in marketing research (Hovland and Mandell). According to Source Credibility Theory, the credibility of a promotional message is determined by the recipient's impression of the influencer's trustworthiness and reliability (Giffin). Renowned influencers frequently have a significant following on social media, which boosts their credibility and influences potential clients' purchase intention. Existing research shows popularity as an important component in identifying social media influencers from ordinary users. Eventually, the popularity of the influencers is a way to know that how much the digital platforms affects the purchase intention.
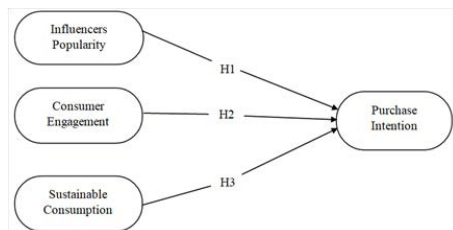
Social Media Engagement Theory (SMET)

Social Media Engagement Theory (SMET) focuses on the interaction between individuals and social media platforms. It suggests that engagement on social media involves the emotional, cognitive, and behavioral investment of users in interacting with content, brands, and other users. This theory posits that the degree of engagement (such as liking, commenting, sharing, and posting) varies based on the individual's emotional connection to the content, the relevance of the content, and the perceived value of participating in online interactions. SMET explains how different forms of engagement (active vs. passive) influence users' attitudes and behaviors, particularly in the context of brand engagement and customer behavior. Higher levels of engagement are often associated with stronger brand loyalty and more significant influence on purchase intention.

Uses and Gratification Theory (UGT)

Uses and Gratification Theory (UGT) (Krcmar) explains how individuals actively engage in social media and content that satisfy their specific needs and desires. Rather than being passive recipients of social media messages, users are seen as active participants who choose the content that best meets their emotional, informational, or entertainment needs. UGT is particularly relevant to social media, where users select platforms and types of content based on their personal gratifications, such as entertainment, social interaction, information, or self-expression. This theory helps to explain the effect of social media usage and how it influences user behavior, including brand interactions and purchase decisions.

Conceptual Model

Literature Review and Hypotheses Development

Social Media Usage

Social media have become an ineluctable part of our modern life (Lervik-Olsen et al.). Social media platforms are now essential to many facets of daily life, such as education, health, news etc.The studies states that people use social media for 145 minutes a day on average. The most captivating content on social media is short-form videos. In the age of digital media, social media has been found to be one of the most successful marketing techniques. Social media significantly influences the consumption of personal care products, shaping customer behavior and promoting Sustainable consumption. This influence is primarily driven by social media influencers, marketing strategies, and customer engagement with Responsible practices. The best place for the personal care product industry to advertise without spending a lot of money is on social media channels. Influencers' recommendations and reviews are highly trusted, leading to increased purchases of personal care products (social media influence on consumption in beauty industry: modern studies). For interacting with large number of audience Facebook, Instagram and YouTube become very popular marketing tool (Malik and Kumari). After 2005 You Tube is found to be one of the most famous online platforms. After one year YouTube allow business to use their platform for promoting their goods and services (Schwemmer and Ziewiecki). Facebook is found to be one of the most used social media platforms and You Tube is second most used social media platform. Instagram had 2 billion monthly active users as of April 2024 means that the mobile – first network ranks higher in terms of size of the audience. Moreover, 41 percent of the users said that they enjoyed while engaging with the informative content on Instagram. This research exhibits the usage of social media platform and the type of social media content in which the customers are engaged.

Influencers Popularity

According to Source Credibility Theory, the credibility of a promotional message is determined by the recipient's impression of the influencer's trustworthiness and reliability (Giffin). Renowned influencers frequently have a significant following on social media, which boosts their credibility and influences potential clients' purchase intention. Existing research shows popularity as an important component in identifying social media influencers from ordinary users. This study analyzes the number of followers as a proxy for popularity, classifying people as influencers or regular users based on that measure. The demographics of social media platforms have an impact on both user engagement and viewer behavior. For example, 80% of Instagram users are under 30, whereas 60% of Twitter users are over 30. According to Leone, customer engagement differs by platform. For example, among the social media platforms, Instagram has the most engaged social media users (7%) interacting with a social media post, while Twitter has least engaged people (less than 2%) with a social media post promoting a product. The rising popularity of social media influencers has a major role in customer behavior, especially when it comes to personal care products. Influencers with a large following are often viewed as more credible, which increases their capacity to influence customer purchase intention. This is confirmed by research showing that influencer credibility has a favorable impact on brand consideration and purchase intention, particularly among Generation Z customers who follow beauty influencers (Toma). Influencers' reliability and knowledge are essential variables in their credibility and, as a result, influence over customer behavior. Moreover, social media platforms have become critical in shaping customer attitudes toward sustainable consumption, with influencer marketing playing an important role in encouraging responsible consumption behaviors. The fact that a large amount of personal care sales are driven by things popularized on social media indicates the change from traditional advertising to influencer-driven marketing techniques. Additionally, perceived trust

in influencers influences the association between social media marketing and buy intent, stressing the necessity of choosing the correct influencers to boost product credibility and customer trust. Eventually, influencers large following bases also have a considerable impact on customer purchase intention, highlighting the importance of social media in current personal care product marketing techniques.

H1: Social media influencers with a huge followers significantly influences the purchase intention of the customers.

Customer Engagement

The definition of customer engagement as the level of connectedness between a customer and a firm, stating that a higher level of customer engagement enhances a firm's competitiveness (Hepola et al.). The above definition expanded, asserting that customer engagement also involves "events and activities engaged in by the customer that are not directly related to search, alternative evaluation and decision-making involving brand choice". The concept of customer engagement has been evolved and redefined over the period of time. Customers are willing to contribute to the firm when they feel connected to the brand (CBE) which is the central component of the customer engagement construct. In the digital era, the customer engagement with brands has been significantly raised by the digital content marketing of the personal care products through the new age social media platforms (Odoom). Here, Social media makes the customers to participate in the online discussion forums or engaging with the social media posts such as sharing or commenting the posts which are relevant to them. Eventually, this research paper analyses the level of customer engagement in the social media platforms of personal care products.

H2: The level of customer engagement with the social media significantly influences the purchase intention.

Sustainable Consumption

Sustainable consumption, defined as the use of goods and services that meet basic needs while minimizing environmental harm, has garnered significant attention in recent years due to growing environmental concerns (Vergragt). Social media platforms have emerged as critical channels influencing customer behavior, particularly in the personal care industry. These platforms provide information on eco-friendly practices and create awareness of the environmental impact of customer choices. Customers increasingly rely on social media to make informed decisions about personal care products. Peer reviews, influencer endorsements, and brand campaigns on platforms such as Instagram and YouTube offer insights into product sustainability, driving eco-conscious purchasing behaviors (De Veirman). Research indicates that individuals who prioritize sustainable consumption often evaluate the environmental impact of their purchases, favoring products that are eco-friendly and brands that promote sustainable practices, such as recyclable or biodegradable packaging (Joshi). Brands leveraging social media to highlight their commitment to sustainability, including eco-friendly packaging and ethical sourcing, have witnessed greater customer trust and loyalty (Gleim). Moreover, the interactive nature of social media enables customers to align their values with those of the brands they support, further promoting Sustainable consumption patterns (Kapoor et al.).

H3: The sustainable consumption behavior significantly influences the purchase intention of the customers.

Purchase Intention

Social media has a significant effect on people's decisions on purchasing personal care products because it influences their preferences and behavior in a lot of different ways. By increasing brand attention through their trustworthiness, social media influencers have a significant impact on purchase intentions, especially among customers from Generation Z (Rizomyliotis et al.). Influencers' credibility which is defined by their visual appeal, dependability, and knowledge has a favorable effect on customers' perceptions of advertisements and goods, which in turn increases the desire to buy (Saputra and Sakti). Additionally, by providing customers with appropriate information and fostering brand relationships, social media marketing tactics such as influencer marketing are successful in encouraging sustainable purchasing choices.

Because social media influencers offer relatable and personalized content, customers frequently prefer to buy personal care items from them, which might result in impulsive purchasing behaviors. This is further reinforced by the fact that social media platforms are the main places where people can find information about products, and many customers make their decisions to buy on the opinions and suggestions of influencers. Furthermore, as customers are influenced by the perceived friendliness and expertise of firms that use sustainable business practices, including these practices into social media communications might improve Sustainable consumption behaviors. Influencer credibility, personalized advertising, and the encouragement of sustainable consumption are just some of the various ways that social media influences customer choices and behaviors in the market for personal care products.

Research Model

This study forms a research model based on the social media engagement Theory, uses and gratification theory, Theory of planned behavior. Moreover, the research variables of this study Platform type (e.g., Instagram, YouTube), Followers (Influencers popularity), Type of content, Customer engagement, Sustainable consumption which are the independent variables. The dependent variable is the purchase intention of the customers. In order to analyze how social media affects customer purchase decisions and sustainable consumption practices, the research approach in this study incorporates key theories. It creates a complete structure connecting factors like platform type (e.g., Instagram, YouTube), follower counts, content type, customer engagement, and sustainable consumption. It is based on the theories of social media engagement, uses and gratification, planned behavior, and customer behavior. Purchase decisions made by customers is the independent variable. This model explains how customer engagement is influenced by different social media platforms which in turn affects decision-making and encourages sustainable purchase habits. Influencer popularity, as determined by follower counts, serves as a stand-in for credibility and has a big impact on customer trust and buying patterns. Customer interaction levels are also influenced by the type of material (such as detailed reviews or short videos), which further shapes their engagement level. An essential element is sustainable consumption, which reflects customers' awareness of the environment as shaped by reliable social media content. The concept highlights responsible consumption practices by establishing a correlation between sustainability outcomes and customer engagement. Relevant insights into how social media activities and sustainable customer practices interact in the personal care products sector is ensured by this complete methodology.

Research Methodology

This study aims to identify the customer engagement with the social media and the purchase intention. The random sampling technique is used in this research. The Questionnaire is framed as agreement scale questions ranging from strongly disagree as 1 to strongly agree as 5. Descriptive Data provides the required demographic details. It goes with primary data collection through questionnaire-based study by Google forms. The Questionnaire was distributed to the target audience such as all social media users. The internal consistency is ensured through high Cronbach's Alpha values. The data was analyzed using SMARTPLS for the analysis. The Reliability analysis and structural equation modeling (SEM) to measure the reliability and to test and evaluate causal relationships between variables. A structured, questionnaire-based survey distributed using Google Forms was used to collect primary data for this research. Active social media users are included in the target demographic representation on social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube. A dataset for statistical analysis was used by the collection of 393 samples in total. It is a purposive sampling method. The analysis of customer interaction and its connection to purchase decisions is a key component of the research technique. Cronbach's alpha reliability analysis was done to check the validity and reliability of the data, and structural equation modeling (SEM) was employed to assess the causal links between the variables.

Research Objectives

- To measure the level of social media usage on the purchase intention of the customers.
- To assess whether the influencers popularity leads to sustainable consumption.
- To examine the influence of sustainable consumption behavior on the purchase intention of the customers.

Data Analyses and Interpretation

Table 1 Demographic Analysis

Particulars	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Male	157	40
Female	236	60
Total	393	100
Age		
Below 18	37	9.4
18-25	274	69.7
26-35	17	4.3
36-45	26	6.6
46-60	39	9.9
Total	393	100
Designation		
Student	275	70
Employed	13	3.3
Unemployed	92	23.4
Researcher	7	1.8
Others	7	1.5
Total	393	100
Educational Qualification		
School	19	4.84
Bachelor's Degree	184	47.17
Master's Degree	170	43.63
PhD	10	1.81
Others	10	2.52
Total	393	100
Income		
Below 10000	200	50.8
10001-25000	59	15
25001-50000	56	14.2
Above 50000	78	20
Total	393	100

Source: Primary Data

The demographic analysis indicates that out of 393 respondents, 60% were females (236 respondents) and 40% were males (157 respondents). This states that females are the ones who are interested to purchase more personal care products. The age distribution shows that 69.7% belonged to 18-25 age group, 46-60 years at 9.9% and below 18 at 9.4%. The age group belongs to 36-45 years at 6.6%, 26-35 years at 4.3%. In this data, 70% people are students, 23.4% are unemployed and 3.3% were employed. Followed by 1.8% are Researchers and 1.5% comes under others category. Among the respondents, 47.17% people holds a Bachelor's Degree, 43.63% have a Master's Degree and 4.84% have completed the school education. Followed by, 1.81% have completed PhD and 2.52% comes under others category. In the category of income, 50.8% of respondents earn below 10000, 15% earns around 10001-25000 and 14.2% and 20% of people earns above 50000. This data indicates that females and the people in 18-25 years are the primary customers of personal care products. Moreover, most of the people are students who holds a Bachelor's Degree and earns below 10000.

Table 2

Particulars	Frequency	Percentage
Type of Social Media Platform		
Instagram	233	59.2
YouTube	118	30.0
Facebook	33	8.3
Others	10	2.5
Type of Content Preferred		
Social media posts	223	56.7
User generated content	59	15.0
Images	36	9.2
Videos	36	9.2
Infographics	26	6.7
Text posts	13	3.3
Authenticity of the Social Media Content		
Very important	170	43.3
Important	134	34.2
Somewhat important	75	19.2
Not important	13	3.3
Total	**393**	**100**

Source: Primary Data

This table shows that the Instagram is the widely used social media platform (59.2%) by the people and social media posts (56.7%) is highly preferred type of content in the social media platforms. Furthermore, this table exhibits that the authenticity of the social media content (43.3%) of the personal care products is very important among customers.

Table 3 Reliability Analysis

Variable Name	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability (rho_a)	Composite reliability (rho_c)	Average variance extracted (AVE)
Consumer Engagement	0.933	0.940	0.950	0.791
Influencers Popularity	0.854	0.878	0.900	0.694
Purchase Intention	0.832	0.853	0.898	0.747
Sustainable Consumption	0.862	0.879	0.905	0.705

Source: Primary Data

This analysis aims to exhibit the reliability and validity of the data employed before testing the hypotheses with the structural path model with the help of PLS Bootstrapping analysis. And the results are mentioned in the Table 5 which includes Cronbach's alpha, Composite reliability (rho_a), Composite reliability (rho_c) and Average variance extracted (AVE).

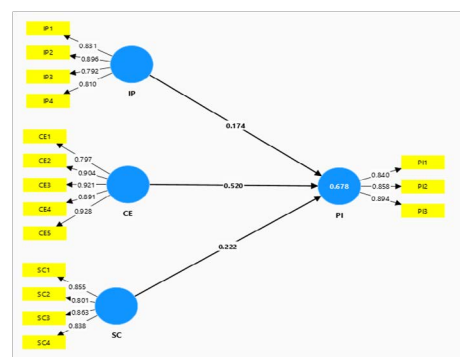These findings insists that Cronbach's alpha values range from 0.832 to 0.933 is significantly higher than the recommended threshold value of 0.600. The Composite Reliability (rho_c) values range from 0.898 to 0.950.The AVE values which measures convergent validity shows that exceeding the threshold value of 0.5, with Consumer Engagement (0.791), Influencers Popularity (0.694), Purchase Intention (0.747), Sustainable Consumption (0.705) being strong constructs. These results confirmed that the data has a good Cronbach's alpha, Composite reliability and required internal consistency.

Table 4 Discriminant Validity

Variable Name	Consumer Engagement	Influencers Popularity	Purchase Intention	Sustainable Consumption
Consumer Engagement				
Influencers Popularity	0.797			
Purchase Intention	0.881	0.784		
Sustainable Consumption	0.703	0.687	0.760	

Source: Primary Data

The results of discriminant validity shows that all the variables are distinctive from each other. The values of Influencers Popularity (0.797), Purchase Intention (0.881), Sustainable Consumption (0.703) are below the threshold value of 0.90 which is distinct enough. Moreover, the correlation between Sustainable Consumption and other variables from 0.687 to 0.760 also indicates good discriminant validity.

Purchase Intention Model

Table 5 Path Coefficients

Variable Name	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T statistics (|O/STDEV|)	P values	F Square	Level of Significance
Consumer Engagement -> Purchase Intention	0.109	4.755	0.000	0.344	Significant
Sustainable Consumption -> Purchase Intention	0.086	2.587	0.010	0.082	Significant
Influencers Popularity -> Purchase Intention	0.104	1.682	0.093	0.041	Significant

Source: Primary Data

The path coefficient analysis shows the relation between all variables with purchase intention. Consumer Engagement to Purchase Intention has a strong path coefficient value (0.344) with a high significant P value of 0.000. The values of Influencers Popularity (0.797), Purchase Intention (0.881),both Influencers Popularity and Sustainable Consumption have a moderate but notable effect on purchase intention. The F Square values represents the effect size of relationships between the dependent variables and independent variables. Higher F Square values indicates a strong effect on the dependent variable. The customer engagement (0.344) states that it has a substantial effect on purchase intention. The sustainable consumption (0.082) shows a moderate effect on purchase intention. Whereas the Influencers Popularity (0.041) shows a smaller effect on purchase intention.

Table 6 R Square

Variable Name	R-square	R-square adjusted
Purchase Intention	0.678	0.669

Source: Primary Data

The R square value of 0.678 indicates that 67.8% of variance in the purchase intention in the model. The adjusted R square suggests that the model still explains a significant level of variance. Both values indicates a strong explanation in the model. Additionally, the Q^2predict at 0.653, RMSE at 0.607 and MAE at 0.443 exhibits good fit and accuracy.

Table 7 LV (Latent Variables) Summary

Variable Name	Q² predict	RMSE	MAE
Purchase Intention	0.646	0.607	0.443

Source: Primary Data

This table summarizes the predictive relevance and accuracy of the research model related to the latent variable "Purchase Intention". The Q² predict, also known as Stone – Geisser criterion helps to measure the relevance of the model. A value greater than 0 indicates that the model has predictive relevance for the latent variable. With Q²predict value of 0.646, this model demonstrates a strong predictive relevance for purchase intention. It shows that the model predicts purchase intention effectively.

RMSE (Root Mean Square Error) measures the average magnitude of the errors between predicted and observed values. Lower values indicate better predictive accuracy. The RMSE of 0.607 indicates the moderate predictive accuracy, suggesting that the model's predictions for predictions for purchase intentions are reasonably close to the actual values, though there is still way for improvement.

MAE (Mean Absolute Error) measures the average absolute errors between predicted and observed values. Like RMSE, lower values represent better accuracy. The MAE of 0.443 suggests that the model's predictions are quite accurate, with minimal deviation from actual purchase intention.

Table 8 MV (Manifest Variables) Summary

	Q² predict	PLS-SEM_RMSE	PLS-SEM_MAE	LM_RMSE	LM_MAE	IA_RMSE	IA_MAE
PI 1	0.345	0.963	0.740	1.080	0.840	1.190	0.988
PI 2	0.412	0.937	0.711	0.994	0.729	1.222	1.025
PI 3	0.653	0.820	0.647	0.870	0.661	1.392	1.196

Source: Primary Data

This table gives key predictive metrics and error related metrics across different modeling approaches, including Partial Least Squares Structural Equation modeling (PLS–SEM), Linear Model (LM) and Indicator Approach (IA). The Q^2 predict values states the highest value which is the Sustainable consumption (0.653) has the strong predictive power following by the Customer engagement (0.412) and Influencers popularity (0.345) are the least. When comparing the prediction errors using PLS-SEM, Sustainable Consumption has lowest errors (RMSE of 0.820 and MAE of 0.647) that it is accurately predicted among other variables. The Linear model (LM) demonstrates that the moderate accuracy with its best performance with customer engagement where it has least values of RMSE at 0.870 and MAE at 0.661. The Indicator Approach (IA) shows the highest errors of all indicators making as a least effective model for purchase intention.

Discussions

Social media is considered as the suitable medium for most of the brands especially in personal care products sector. Research states that when promoting products, Instagram, YouTube are crucial for customer engagement (Schwemmer and Ziewiecki). The findings of this study also states that the Customer Engagement have a significant effect with purchase intention (Lervik-Olsen et al.). With reference to the existing studies, Sustainable Consumption practices also is emphasized.

This research suggests that the brands should make a strategic approach to leverage social media platforms to connect with target customers even more effectively. By partnering with influencers who have a genuine and relevant following, companies can strongly influence consumer purchasing decisions. However, it is essential for managers to select influencers whose values align with the brand to ensure authenticity and avoid any potential negative outcomes. Additionally, creating compelling and informative content, such as short videos and real customer testimonials, can help build consumer trust and drive sales.

Furthermore, brands are encouraged to promote sustainable consumption through their social media efforts. By emphasizing the eco-friendly aspects of personal care products and encouraging mindful purchasing choices, businesses can attract environmentally conscious customers. This strategy not only helps reduce overconsumption but also enhances the brand's reputation as socially responsible. Managers should leverage data insights from social media engagement to fine-tune marketing strategies, ensuring alignment with customer preferences while cultivating long-term loyalty and supporting sustainability.

Conclusions

This study finds that the sustainable purchasing practices and customer engagement with the social media have a significant impact on Purchase Intention in the personal care goods industry. The findings suggest that businesses should leverage social media platforms, particularly Instagram, to engage customers in an authentic and sustainable way. With a strong emphasis on customer interaction and sustainability, the study offers insights into how businesses may enhance their marketing tactics and appeal to environmentally conscious, younger, and digitally active customers.

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