# THE EFFECT OF INSTAGRAM INFLUENCERS ON GREEN CONSUMPTION BEHAVIOR AMONGST INSTAGRAM FOLLOWERS IN MALAYSIA

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# DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my loving parents and my supportive husband. I also dedicate this thesis to my wonderful sisters.

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

# ABSTRACT

Nowadays, environmental problems are arising due to individuals' consumption behavior, which necessitates serious attention. Consumers are gradually becoming aware of the effects of their consumption behavior on the environment and making a difference. Social media, particularly Instagram, plays a major role in increasing awareness and promoting environmentally-friendly behavior. However, the impact of social media, particularly Instagram, on green behavior has been less understood. To address the gap in the literature, the current study intends to examine the impact of Instagram influencers on their followers' green consumption behavior. Moreover, this study aims to understand the mediating role of followers' green habits in the relationship between their green consumption intention and green consumption behavior. To achieve this goal, questionnaires were distributed among followers of some environmentally-conscious influencers, asking their opinions about the content of a specific Instagram account. Integrating the Theory of Planned Behavior and Agenda-Setting Theory, six hypotheses were developed and analyzed using Partial Least Squares – Structural Equation Modeling (SEM-PLS). The findings revealed that Instagram influencers' photo or video contents and green concerns positively influence the green attitudes of their followers. Additionally, it was confirmed that the green attitude strongly and positively influences the green consumption intention of Instagram followers. Moreover, green consumption intention and green habit are found to be the main predictors of green consumption behavior. However, the findings showed a non-significant association between the green word of mouth and green consumption intention. The originality of the research is in its investigation of the role of Instagram influencers in promoting green consumption behavior. From a practical perspective, the government of Malaysia may use the findings of this study to invest in social media, particularly Instagram, to formulate efficient policies and an environmental protection framework.

# ABSTRAK

Pada masa kini, masalah alam sekitar semakin meningkat disebabkan oleh tingkah laku penggunaan individu, yang memerlukan perhatian serius. Pengguna secara beransur-ansur menyedari kesan tingkah laku penggunaan mereka terhadap alam sekitar dan membuat perubahan. Media sosial khususnya *Instagram* memainkan peranan utama dalam meningkatkan kesedaran dan mempromosikan tingkah laku mesra alam sekitar. Walau bagaimanapun, kesan media sosial, terutamanya *Instagram*, terhadap tingkah laku hijau agak kurang difahami. Untuk menangani jurang dalam literatur, kajian ini berhasrat untuk mengkaji kesan pempengaruh *Instagram* terhadap tingkah laku penggunaan hijau pengikut mereka. Selain itu, kajian ini bertujuan untuk memahami peranan pengantara tabiat hijau pengikut dalam hubungan antara niat penggunaan hijau dan tingkah laku penggunaan hijau mereka. Untuk mencapai matlamat ini, soal selidik telah diedarkan di kalangan pengikut beberapa pempengaruh yang mementingkan alam sekitar, untuk bertanya pendapat mereka tentang kandungan akaun *Instagram* tertentu. Mengintegrasikan *Theory of Planned Behavior* dan *Agenda-Setting Theory*, enam hipotesis dibangunkan dan dianalisis menggunakan pendekatan Kuasa Dua Terkecil Separa – Pemodelan Persamaan Struktur (PLS-SEM). Penemuan kajian ini mendedahkan bahawa kandungan foto atau video dan keprihatinan hijau pempengaruh *Instagram* memberi kesan positif kepada sikap pengikut *Instagram* mereka. Selain itu, telah disahkan bahawa sikap hijau secara kuat dan positif mempengaruhi niat penggunaan hijau pengikut *Instagram*. Selain itu, niat penggunaan hijau dan tabiat hijau didapati menjadi peramal utama tingkah laku penggunaan hijau. Walau bagaimanapun, penemuan tersebut menunjukkan interaksi yang tidak signifikan antara komunikasi percakapan hijau dan niat penggunaan hijau. Keaslian penyelidikan ini adalah dalam kajiannya terhadap peranan pempengaruh *Instagram* dalam mempromosikan tingkah laku penggunaan hijau. Dari perspektif praktikal, kerajaan Malaysia mungkin boleh menggunakan penemuan kajian ini untuk melabur di media sosial, khususnya *Instagram*, untuk menggubal dasar yang cekap dan rangka kerja perlindungan alam sekitar.

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GCB     -     Green Consumption Behavior

GCI     -     Green Consumption Intention

GWOM     -     Green Word of Mouth

GA     -     Green Attitude

GC     -     Green Concern

PC     -     Photo/video content

SEM     -     Structural Equation Modelling

PLS     -     Partial Least Square

AVE     -     Average Variance Extracted

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# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1    Introduction

This chapter introduces the landscape of the thesis. It begins by explaining general trends and research background and continues with the problem statement and research gaps. Next, research questions and objectives are defined, followed by the study's significance, from theoretical and practical perspectives. The chapter then explains the study's scope, limitations, the definition of key terms, and the thesis structure.

### 1.2    Research Background

Rapid economic growth has often been associated with adverse environmental degradation (Joshi and Rahman, 2016). The considerable and worldwide environmental changes (Sun *et al.*, 2019) endanger human life (Muhammad *et al.*, 2019). Climate change and global warming, air pollution, waste generation, natural disasters (Maichum *et al.*, 2016), ozone layer depletion (Biswas and Roy, 2015a), and energy depletion are some examples of environmental problems (Zhang *et al.*, 2015).

Recently, environmental sustainability has captured different parties' attention, from practitioners to academics and business actors (Bhuian *et al.*, 2018; Jan *et al.*, 2019). Practitioners and scholars are concerned about environmental problems that are increasing every single day. Accordingly, they attempt to find a solution to adopt a sustainable environment (Joshi and Rahman, 2016). From a practical perspective, environmental issues have been placed on top of the political agenda with the end goal of preserving the environment and limited natural resources (Gatersleben *et al.*, 2010). From the academic perspective, the importance of environmental concerns is evident

by a sharp increase in ecological behavior research publications over the last two decades (Li *et al.*, 2019).

An examination of the literature revealed that there is an interrelationship between environmental problems and human life. Environmental quality both affects and is affected by humans. For instance, haze pollution affects the lives and work of humans. Conversely, individuals' lives and work are sources of haze pollution (Zhang *et al.*, 2019). In this regard, it has been stated that human behavior and consumption habits significantly contribute to environmental degradation. Regardless of how dramatic or small, people's behavior would impact the environment (J. Li *et al.*, 2019). According to Zhang *et al.* (2019), approximately 40 percent of the environmental issues are caused by unhelpful consumption patterns and unreasonable lifestyles. In other words, private households' hyper-consumption and consumption habits lead to environmental deterioration (Biswas and Roy, 2015a).

With ever-increasing concerns about the environment, people are pushed to make significant changes in their current habits and move toward more environmentally-friendly behavior, which leads to protecting natural resources (Gatersleben *et al.*, 2010). As a result of this pressure, people gradually realize that their behavior and daily habits impact the quality of the environment available for future generations (Smith and Brower, 2012; Perera *et al.*, 2018). They know that their purchasing behavior and consumption activities directly lead to many ecological problems (Laroche *et al.*, 2001; Chekima *et al.*, 2015; Dhandra, 2019; Tan *et al.*, 2019).

Therefore, it can be concluded that promoting green habits has an undeniable impact on dealing with environmental issues (Zhang *et al.*, 2019), and a change towards more environmentally-friendly consumption patterns is vital (Chekima *et al.*, 2015). Consumers can protect the planet (Joshi and Rahman, 2015) by adopting a different consumption approach; a method that leads to changing attitude and behavior (Biswas and Roy, 2015a). According to Peattie (2010), the higher willingness the consumers have to engage in green consumption behavior, the more possibility of developing a sustainable society.

In recent years, the Internet is known as one of the dominant platforms for spreading environmental information (eco-information). Hence, the Internet can be considered as a good source that helps to promote environmentally-friendly behavior and green consumption behavior (Huang, 2016; Amato *et al.*, 2019). Social media plays a more important role than traditional media in influencing pro-environmental behavior (Xu and Han, 2019). In its various manifestations, social media presents a golden opportunity and rich environment to study people's behavior. Much of the information (in text, image, and/or video format) is recorded and stored in publicly-accessible repositories and personal devices (Khoo, 2014). Social media is also widely used by youngsters, as opposed to traditional media. A large portion of the youth population around the world are using social media to communicate. They share thoughts and feelings with their peers by texting or posting different pictures and videos (Rani and Padmalosani, 2019).

As empirical evidence, the findings of a study by Xu and Han (2019) revealed that social media is positively correlated with pro-environmental behavior. Likewise, the results of the study of Young *et al.* (2017) proved that social media plays a significant role in reducing customers' food waste generation. Similarly, Zahid *et al.* (2018) mentioned that social media fuels environmental consciousness among consumers. Bedard and Tolmie (2018) found out that there is a positive influence of social media usage on green purchase intention of users. The authors particularly highlighted that intention to buy green products is even stronger among millennials with more frequent social media usage for consumption-related activities. Likewise, Burnasheva *et al.* (2019) stated that social media usage affects millennials' attitudes toward luxury fashion brands and online purchase intentions.

As a most recent trend, people are getting used to and looking for information from people who have a higher rate of visualization, who are usually referred to as influencers (Wang *et al.*, 2016). Influencers are individuals who have the power to influence or move the opinions of others about specific areas (Istania *et al.*, 2019), which include mostly celebrities from the music and film industry (Global Web Index, 2019). They share a massive volume of images, gifs, memes, etc. about their daily lives, personal life events, thoughts, and opinions (Manikonda and De Choudhury,

2017). Influencers have a huge number of followers and have their networks. Followers of these influencers tend to trust their influencers mostly. Each influencer's role varies, where some do promote brands, and some others do marketing, whereas others share experiences in their daily lives. This phenomenon of influencers affecting others' approaches represents a new form of independent third-party who endorses and nurtures or reshapes individuals' attitudes via blogs, tweets, etc. by using multiple social media channels (Glucksman, 2017).

In line with the above-mentioned statements and knowing that social media plays a critical role in shaping human behavior and improving environmental problems, it is time to develop our knowledge about green consumption behavior from a social media perspective. Stern (2000) groups the causal variables of environmental action into four major types: attitudinal factors, contextual forces (such as media exposure), personal capabilities, and habit. He encouraged scholars to develop new conceptual models for green behavior by incorporating and integrating new variables from different categories instead of focusing on personal or contextual factors.

By reviewing recent trends in the realm of green behavior, we found some less developed areas that need further attention. One of the neglected concepts is social media influencers' impacts on green consumption behavior of their fans and followers (Bedard and Tolmie, 2018). Despite the rapid expansion of Instagram as one of the most popular social media platforms, there is limited academic research about it compared to other social platforms such as Facebook and Twitter (Lay and Ferwerda, 2018). The following sections elaborate on extant research gaps, the context of the study, and consequent objectives.

## 1.3     Malaysian context

Malaysia is a country with a population of about 32 million, including a mixture of  Malays, Chinese, and Indians (Lai *et al.*, 2010). Malays are mostly Muslims, whereas other ethnicities follow Confucianism, Taoism, Buddhism, Christianity, etc. (Ghazali *et al.*, 2019). The diversity of races, cultures, and religions

in the Malaysian society delivers an excellent platform to advance research on consumers' green behavior. On the other side, the rapid recent economic growth in Malaysia has significantly affected Malaysians' consumption patterns. Hence, understanding people's consumer behavior in this country becomes more exciting and challenging (Lai *et al.*, 2010). The rapid growth of the Malaysian economy also leads to a force of "going green," as environmental threats are alarming the government and citizens (Lee, 2008).

Environmental Performance Index (EPI), measuring environmental health and ecosystem vitality across 180 countries, scored Malaysia 59.22 (in the 0–100 scoring system) and ranked 75th in Environmental Performance. To be more specific, Malaysia is ranked 80 in Environmental Health, 102 in Climate and Energy, and 107 in air pollution among 180 countries (EPI, 2018). As it is evident by statistics, the air quality of Malaysia does not show a remarkable position. Air pollution, a leading environmental threat to public health, contributes to two-thirds of environmentally-related deaths and disabilities (EPI, 2018).

In Malaysia, the government has taken numerous initiatives to promote green behavior among the people to encourage them to enhance green products' consumption (Tan *et al.*, 2019). First, the "Ministry of Energy, Science, Technology, Environment, and Climate Change" has taken some steps to promote environmental concern among Malaysian citizens. For instance, people are forced to pay for plastic bags and food containers during shopping, while encouraging them to bring their own bags and containers. Another good example is the "no straw by default" initiative that promotes fewer straws consumption (Mohd Suki, 2019).

Second, the "National eco-labeling scheme" was initiated by the "Standards and Industrial Research Institute of Malaysia" (SIRIM). This plan aims to classify green products as "cleaning agents," "building instruments," "home appliances," "home-care products," "office supplies," "package containers," "personal care products," "food," etc. (Tan *et al.*, 2019). Lastly, "Malaysia Green Tech Corporation" (MGTC), in collaboration with the "Ministry of Energy, Green Technology, and Water," introduced the "MyHIJAU program" to certify products with ecological

standards and encourage the use of environmentally-friendly products among Malaysians (Mohd Suki, 2019).

Knowing the fact that a) the Malaysian government already has perceived the importance of green consumption, b) Malaysia is dealing with environmental issues such as air pollution (EPI, 2018), and c) human behavior and consumption habits are the primary reasons for environmental degradation (L. Zhang *et al.*, 2019), it can be concluded that finding determinants of green consumption behavior in Malaysia is an important topic.

Among studies conducted in Malaysia, Ghazali *et al.* (2018) examined the green purchase behavior of 504 Muslims. The findings highlighted the critical role of habit and its stronger impact on green behavior than intention. Green habit was also found to moderate the relationship between green attitudes and green intentions. In another study by Saleki *et al.* (2019), the drivers of Malaysian consumers' organic food purchase intention were examined. The findings revealed that attitude, subjective norm, perceived behavioral control, moral norm, self-identity, and environmental concern exert significant positive effects on consumers' purchase intention.

Social media has also contributed to the mainstreaming of green issues and has helped people realize that their personal consumption affects the planet (Smith and Brower, 2012). However, choosing social media platforms and social media differs in various individuals, communities, and societies. Malaysians spend about five hours a day using different social media platforms. The statistics also show that 17% of social media users in Malaysia spend above nine hours a day checking their social media accounts (Ho, 2019).

Interestingly, it has been reported that in Malaysia, women spend more time checking their social media accounts than men. More specifically, 21% of females in Malaysia spend around nine hours (a day) on social media, whereas only 11% of males do so. WhatsApp is the most common platform, with almost 88% of usage, followed by Facebook, YouTube, and Instagram (with 81%, 74%, and 64%, respectively) (Global Web Index, 2019). It proves that Malaysia's exposure to social media is

relatively high, and Instagram is the third most popular platform among Malaysians. Apart from the Instagram popularity among Malaysians, our focus on Malaysia is also because Malaysian social media influencers can influence massive followers by reviewing products, services, and social trends on their social media accounts (Jalali and Khalid, 2019).

Malaysian influencers are actively involved in areas such as fashion, beauty, art, entertainment, education, food, health, sport, environmental protection, lifestyle, and travel. According to Helmy (2021), there are around 11 million Instagram users and 16800 influencers in Malaysia as of January 2020. The influencers earn up to 460 million Ringgit per year, which is a relatively high contribution to the economy. The statistics published in statista.com revealed that many influencers in Malaysia are considered Nano influencers. Nano influencers are our everyday people that usually do not make a living out of content creation. These influencers may have a smaller number of followers but often have reached into highly-targeted audiences (Zarei *et al.*, 2019). Lilian Tan[1] is an excellent example of a Nano influencer with around 7 K followers in Malaysia. She is a 4-times world champion sportswoman.

One of the most popular Malaysian influencers with 8 million followers is called Neelofa[2]. She is an entrepreneur of her own stunning hijab fashion line and is impacting the fashion industry. Neelofa influences purchase decisions of her followers and that is why companies are willing to pay her to tap into their reach. Regarding entertainment, strong influence and presence of Dato' Sri Siti Nurhaliza[3], famously known as Malaysia's Queen of Pop, in the entertainment industry is undeniable. She has more than 8 million followers. Relevant to this study's context, Tengku Datin Paduka Setia Zatashah[4] is an advocate for environmental protection in Malaysia. As a member of the Selangor royal, she attempts to raise her followers' awareness about environmental issues, particularly pollution caused by plastic usage. For instance, she

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[1] Instagram.com/@liliantanfitness https://www.instagram.com/liliantanfitness/?hl=en
[2] Instagram.com/@ neelofa Verified Account   https://www.instagram.com/neelofa/
[3] Instagram.com/@ ctdkc Verified Account   https://www.instagram.com/ctdk/?hl=en
[4] Instagram.com/@ zatashah Verified Account https://www.instagram.com/zatashah/

began "#sayno2plastic" campaign to reduce plastic pollution using her social media platform, Instagram.

## 1.4    Problem Statement

In the last two decades, there have been many drastic changes on the planet such as climate change, global warming, pollution (Tan, 2018), depletion of natural resources, acid rain, etc. One of the most significant problems among all others is the ubiquity and abundance of plastic debris (Barnes *et al.*, 2009), widely used and expected to exceed 500 million metric tons by 2050 (Sardon and Dove, 2018). All these problems gradually increased concerns about environmental protection (Manaktola and Jauhari, 2007). Scholars are of the view that human behavior has an undeniable impact on the environment (Zhang *et al.*, 2019). Citizens of the planet are responsible for preventing worsening environmental quality by practicing green consumption (Tan, 2018) and developing more environmentally-friendly behavior.

Prior studies have extensively discussed factors that predict green consumption behavior. For instance, perceived consumer effectiveness (Kabaday *et al.*, 2015), behavioral efficacy  (Lee, 2008), green attitudes ( Sreen *et al.*, 2018), religion ( Reni and Ahmad, 2016), and perceived value (Yadav and Pathak, 2017) are introduced as individual-level factors that play significant roles in foreseeing green behavior of people. Additionally, the impact of social influence (Lee, 2008; Khare, 2015), perceived behavioral control (Sreen *et al.*, 2018), subjective norm (Sreen *et al.*, 2018), and image branding (Lee, 2008) has been studied in previous research.

Nevertheless, an investigation of the literature revealed some gaps that need to be addressed. First, there is still a necessity to understand factors that impact green behavior (Paço *et al.*, 2019). It is also emphasized by Li *et al.* (2019) that there is a lack of deep analysis on the formation mechanism of green behavior. Second, the vast majority of studies rely on intention as a predictor of behavior, without extending the model to actual behavior. Therefore, it is required to incorporate green behavior along

with the intention (Yadav and Pathak, 2016). Third, there is a scarcity of research on green habit' influence on green behavior (Ariswibowo and Ghazali, 2017).

In this regard, Ghazali *et al.* (2018) tested this factor and found out that green habits positively influence green purchase intention and behavior. Once a habit develops, the brain does not work hard for decision-making. Instead, it focuses on more critical tasks (Kirshner, 2013). Hence, it can be concluded that the power of habit leads to performing green behavior on a daily basis. Fourth, the green concern is another crucial element that is still undeveloped. As suggested by Sreen *et al.* (2018), green concerns need to be added to green behavior models. Becoming environmentally concerned will result in the adoption of an automatic set of environmentally-friendly preferences.

Lastly, to date, social media's impact on green behavior has not been well understood (Dunlop *et al.*, 2016). A recent study by Xu and Han (2019) discovered that social media usage for environmental information acquisition has positive correlations with pro-environmental behavior. In another study, Bedard and Tolmie (2018) found out that social media usage and online interpersonal influence had positive relationships with green purchase intentions.

Narrowing down to a specific social media platform, although Instagram is the most widespread photo-sharing application, scholars paid less attention to it (Lay and Ferwerda, 2018), mostly targeting Twitter and Facebook instead (Tosun, 2012; Ozimek and Bierhoff, 2016; Rahim *et al.*, 2016). A significant study by Bedard and Tolmie (2018) suggests that influencers' role is worthwhile for future studies. This topic is particularly critical to train people and raise their awareness about environmental issues and green product consumption behavior (Tan, 2018). According to Global Social Media Landscape, global web index (2019), the main reason to use Instagram is to stay in touch with what others are doing, share photos and videos, and find products to buy/consume.

Unlike Facebook, Instagram primarily focuses on photo sharing, image enhancement, and nonreciprocal relationships (Jackson and Luchner, 2018). Sharing

images online via social networking services such as Instagram is a pervasive practice. Instagram allows users to take photographs, apply digital photographic filters, and upload the image, together with a short caption, to its social networking website (Zappavigna, 2016). Instagram users prefer this type of social media because they find it easier to upload, edit, and share photographs with other members (Saharuddin *et al.*, 2017).

On popular social media platforms, many users often follow popular social media accounts that are called social media influencers (Nandagiri and Philip, 2018). Social media influencers represent a new type of independent, third-party endorsers who shape the audience's attitudes through blogs, tweets, and the use of other social media channels. Through sites like Instagram, YouTube, Twitter, and Facebook, social media influencers create content promoting certain brands with the goal of obtaining a following and brand recognition (Glucksman, 2017). Hence, it can be concluded that influencers' activities in Instagram may impact followers' attitudes, mindset, opinion, intention, and behavior. This impact mainly can be attributed to the content of photos or videos shared on Instagram. Nonetheless, to date, the role of visual imagery as a mechanism of self-disclosure is undeveloped (Manikonda and De Choudhury, 2017). However, there is still a dearth of studies investigating the impact of influencers on green attitude and behavior. In this regard, Bedard and Tolmie (2018), in a study entitled "*Millennials' green consumption behavior: Exploring the role of social media*", called for further research on social media influencers' impacts on their followers' behavior.

By considering the above discussed environmental problems and gaps, this study investigates the impact of Instagram influencers' green activities on their followers' green consumption behavior. Consequently, we propose green concern, photo/video content, green word of mouth (WOM), green attitude, green habits, green consumption intention as antecedents of green consumption behavior.

Regarding the context, the current study focuses on Malaysia as a developing country with current challenges and environmental issues. In this study, Malaysia's context has been chosen due to fact that only a limited number of studies have been

done in Asian and developing countries (Yadav and Pathak, 2017; Chua *et al.*, 2019), mostly in China, (Chen and Deng, 2016; Gan and Li, 2018; Xu and Han, 2019) and India (Khare, 2015; Uddin and Khan, 2016; Jaiswal, 2018).

## 1.5 Research Questions

The research questions addressed in this thesis are as follow:

RQ1. Does Instagram influencers' photo/video content affect the green attitudes of Instagram followers in Malaysia?

RQ2. Does Instagram influencers' green word of mouth affect the green attitudes of Instagram followers in Malaysia?

RQ3. Does Instagram influencers' green word of mouth affect the green consumption intention of Instagram followers in Malaysia?

RQ4. Does green concern affect green consumption intention of Instagram followers in Malaysia?

RQ5. Do green attitudes affect the green consumption intention of Instagram followers in Malaysia?

RQ6. Does green consumption intention affect the green consumption behavior of Instagram followers in Malaysia?

RQ7. Does green consumption intention affect green habits of Instagram followers in Malaysia?

RQ8. Do green habits affect the green consumption behavior of Instagram followers in Malaysia?

RQ9. Do green habits mediate the relationship between green consumption intention and green consumption behavior of Instagram followers in Malaysia?

**1.6    Research Objectives**

Research objectives of the study are as follow:

RO1. To examine the relationship between Instagram influencers' photo/video content and green attitudes of Instagram followers in Malaysia.

RO2. To examine the relationship between Instagram influencers' green word of mouth and green attitudes of Instagram followers in Malaysia.

RO3. To examine the relationship between Instagram influencers' green word of mouth and green consumption intention of Instagram followers in Malaysia.

RO4. To examine the relationship between the green concern and green consumption intention of Instagram followers in Malaysia.

RO5. To examine the relationship between green attitudes and green consumption intention of Instagram followers in Malaysia.

RO6. To examine the relationship between green consumption intention and green consumption behavior of Instagram followers in Malaysia.

RO7. To examine the relationship between green consumption intention and green habits of Instagram followers in Malaysia.

RO8. To examine the relationship between the green habits and green consumption behavior of Instagram followers in Malaysia.

RO9. To examine the mediating impact of green habits on the relationship between green consumption intention and green consumption behavior of Instagram followers in Malaysia.

**1.7     Significance of the study**

This study has significant theoretical and practical implications in line with creating a sustainable planet for the future generations by promoting green consumption behavior.

**1.7.1   Theoretical significance**

From a theoretical viewpoint, this study contributes to the body of knowledge in several ways. The first contribution of this study is theory extension. The present research aims to extend the theory of planned behavior by introducing new variables and considering new relationships among variables. According to the theory of planned behavior, background factors allow us to improve our knowledge about intention and action determinants. Exposure to social media is one of the background factors that is suggested to be tested empirically. Exposure to social media and its impact on individuals' attitudes is supported by the agenda-setting theory. Thus, this study contributes to understanding media effects in the context of green consumption behavior by integrating two theories, namely the theory of planned behavior and the agenda-setting theory.

The current study will be one of the pioneer studies that focus on the Instagram platform and investigate the influencers' impact on green consumption behavior of their followers. This study also contributes to the body of knowledge by examining the influence of the content of photos/videos shared by Instagram influencers on their followers' green consumption behavior. The impact of Instagram influencers' photo content on followers' attitudes is supported by the agenda-setting theory.

The next contribution of this study is adding green habits to the theory of planned behavior. Habits are considered as roots of a broad range of actions. Once behavior turns into a habit, performing that particular conduct does not require much effort, and the person can do it spontaneously, without the need for deliberate effort.

The last contribution of this study can be explained from a methodological perspective. The vast majority of studies that have measured green attitudes are only relied on two or three items with remarkably similar content. However, this study measures green attitude from a multidimensional perspective, which adds value to the research finding by capturing a right and comprehensive picture of followers' green attitude.

**1.7.2   Practical Significance**

Industrialization and aspects of global warming have been significant concerns in the past few decades. Generally, this study contributes to increasing the awareness of green consumption behavior to combat global warming and climate change and change people's behavior.

From a practical perspective, the current research findings will provide new insights to Malaysia's policymakers and the government. The present study's motivation is to determine green consumption behavior's primary antecedents from a social media perspective. Malaysia's government may use this study's findings to initiate new plans and strategies for protecting the environment through more investment on social media platforms. Media is a powerful instrument for the governments to impact public participation in environmental protection and encourage green consumption behavior.

Besides government and policymakers, the findings of the current study may benefit marketers and managers. For marketers, it helps to plan appropriate marketing strategies. The study's findings will also equip sales managers to exploit factors that contribute to the formation of favorable attitudes towards green products and, consequently, green consumption behavior.

This study is also significant for the design of environmental messages. Campaign practitioners, journalists, non-governmental organizations, and all other

entities that advocate environmental protection should consider social media, particularly Instagram, to promote green behavior.

Additionally, this research is significant for influencers. They can incorporate green practices in their daily usage of Instagram posting processes, spread green culture to their followers, and become active and innovative in increasing the knowledge and changing their followers' attitudes. Many green influencers are practicing green activities through posting content on Instagram. The reduced cost, less pollution, and saving energy are benefits of sustainable green practices that could be achieved using social media to target potential followers willing to live a greener lifestyle.

## 1.8    Scope and Limitation

The current study is limited by the time and scope of the investigation. First, this study is limited to Malaysia's context, and findings cannot be generalized to other contexts. Second, this study is limited by time, from 2018 to 2020. Regarding the scope of investigation, the respondents of this study are Instagram users who follow certain influencers with environmental concern. The reason to choose Instagram followers is that influencers have an undeniable impact on consumers' attitudes and purchase intention (Evans et al., 2019). Therefore, it is worth investigating the influence of Instagram influencers on followers' attitudes and green consumption behavior in Malaysia. Concerning the unit of analysis, this study falls into individual category. This is mainly because the respondents are followers of Instagram influencers and their viewpoints about research variables will be asked.

## 1.9    Definitions of Key Terms

### 1.9.1    Influencers

According to Arora *et al.* (2019), Influencers are those individuals who have social media profiles in certain platforms such as Instagram and YouTube. These people are the ones who have huge numbers of followers and have their own network. In this study, Instagram influencers refer to individuals who have an Instagram account with a considerable number of followers.

### 1.9.2    Followers' Green Concern

Green concern refers to how an individual is involved in environmental issues (Kwong, 2016). In this study, followers' green concern refers to the degree to which a follower has concerns about environmental issues and is actively involved in them.

### 1.9.3    Green Word of Mouth

Green word of mouth (WOM) is the extent to which a customer would inform friends, relatives, and colleagues about a product or a brand regarding positive environmental feedback (Chen *et al.*, 2014). In this study, Influencers' green WOM refers to online messages, feedback, or comments posted and shared by influencers, which contain environmental messages and encourage green consumption behavior.

### 1.9.4    Green attitude

Attitude refers to the perception and evaluation of a person from an object or outcome (Zhang *et al.*, 2018). In this study, followers' green attitudes refer to the

degree to which green consumption behavior is positively or negatively valued by the followers.

### 1.9.5   Photo/video content

It refers to information, experience, and expression of a picture of something or someone (Yarbil and Argaç, 2017). In this study, Influencers' green photo/video content refers to the pictures/videos that are shared by an influencer containing a green concept. A photo/video is green if it is relevant to an environmental problem or encouraging followers to have green consumption behavior.

### 1.9.6   Green habit

Habit is the "semiautomatic performance of well-learned behaviors." The behaviors that are performed more frequently become habitual gradually (Ghazali *et al.*, 2018). In this study, green habits refer to how an Instagram follower develops a habit of green consumption.

### 1.9.7   Green Consumption Intention

Green consumption intention (GCI) refers to an individual's readiness to perform green behavior (Chen and Deng, 2016). In this study, followers' green consumption intention means the extent to which a follower is willing or feels ready to consume green products in the future.

### 1.9.8 Green Consumption Behavior

Green consumption behavior (GCB) refers to acting with a sense of social responsibility and usage of products that do not harm the environment (Paço *et al.*, 2019). In this study, followers' green consumption behavior refers to consuming environmentally-friendly products and avoiding consumption behavior that damages the environment.

### 1.10 Organization of Research

This thesis is agonized as follows:

**Chapter 1:** This chapter explains the background of the study, followed by the problem statement, research questions, and research objectives. Next, the significance of the current research and its necessity is briefly discussed. The chapter ends with an explanation of the scope and definition of key terms.

**Chapter 2:** First, a review of past literature related to green consumption intention and behavior is provided. Second, relevant variables and elements are identified and discussed in detail. To end with, the research models and hypotheses are developed.

**Chapter 3:** This chapter discusses the research paradigm, research methodology, and sampling procedure. Additionally, an appropriate instrument to measure the constructs is introduced on the basis of previous studies. The chapter ends with an explanation of the data collection and data analysis.

**Chapter 4:** This chapter discusses the data analysis and interpretation of collected data. Two steps of the structural equation modeling are explained.

Finally, the hypotheses are tested to see whether they are confirmed or rejected.

**Chapter 5:** The chapter is about the discussion on the findings of the current study. The theoretical and managerial implications of the study are highlighted, and future lines of the research are recommended.

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**Appendix A   (Questionnaire)**


**<u>Survey on green consumption behavior</u>**


We are conducting a research on "The effect of Instagram influencers on green consumption behavior amongst Instagram followers in Malaysia". The following questionnaire looks at your personal view about factors that impact consuming green products in your daily life. Please fill in the questionnaire if you follow an Instagram account that promote green and environmentally friendly concepts. Your participation is voluntary and your answers will be kept confidential. It will only take about 5 minutes of your valuable time to complete this survey. Your assistance in this matter is greatly appreciated.




Regards

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**Section A:**

Demographic questions

This part concerns some general information. Please tick (√) in provided box bellow that best describes your answer

1. Gender:       Male    ☐   Female    ☐

2. Age:       17 or less ☐       18-34 ☐       35-46 ☐       47 or above ☐

3. Education level:   Diploma and lower ☐ degree ☐       Master ☐   PhD ☐

4. Ethnicity:       Malay ☐       Chinese ☐       Indian ☐       Other ☐

5. Income level:   less than RM3000 ☐ RM3001 to 6000 ☐ RM6001 or more ☐

**Section B:**

Please tick (√) in provided box bellow that best describes your answer. Strongly disagree= 1, disagree=2, natural=3, agree=4 and strongly agree=5.

| Photo/video content | Strongly Disagree | | | | Strongly Agree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. This Instagram account often posts photographs/videos about environmental issues | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 2. This Instagram account tags photographs relevant to green behavior | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 3. The visual content of this Instagram account is relevant to my needs | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 4. This Instagram account posts photos/videos that are valuable for me | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 5. The photos/video content of this Instagram account is useful for me | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 6. Photos/videos of this Instagram account are timely | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| **Green concern** | | | | | |
| 1. I am worried about the worsening of the quality of the environment | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2. Environmental issues are my major concern | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 3. I am passionate about environmental protection issues | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 4. I often think about how the environmental quality can be improved | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| **Green word of mouth** | | | | | |
| 1. This Instagram account highly recommends certain product to others because of their environmental image | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 2. This Instagram account positively recommends consuming certain products because of their environmental functionality | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 3. This Instagram account encourages others to consume environmentally-friendly products | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 4. This Instagram account presents useful content about consumption of certain products because of its environmental performance | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| **Green habit** | | | | | |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Consuming green product is something "I do frequently" | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 2. Consuming green product is something "I do automatically" | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 3. Consuming green product is something "I do without having to consciously remember" | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 4. Consuming green product is something "that makes me feel weird if I do not do it" | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 5. Consuming green product is something "I do subconsciously" | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 6. Consuming green product is something "that would require effort NOT to do it" | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 7. Consuming green product is something "that belongs to my (daily, weekly, monthly) routine" | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 8. Consuming green product is something "I start doing before I realize I am doing it" | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 9. Consuming green product is something "I would find hard NOT to do" | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 10. Consuming green product is something "I have no need to think about doing" | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 11. Consuming green product is something "Consuming green product is the typical me" | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 12. Consuming green product is something "I have been doing for a long time" | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| **Green attitude** | | | | | |
| 1. I feel good about myself when I behave in an environmentally friendly way | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 2. I feel positive when I behave in an environmentally friendly way | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 3. I would be willing to pay higher prices for goods and services if it helped protect the environment | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 4. I would be willing to lower my standards of living if it helped protect the environment | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 5. I would be willing to support higher taxes if it helped to protect the environment | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 6. My personal behavior can bring about positive environmental change | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| **Green consumption intention** | | | | | |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. In the near future, I will consider consuming products that are less polluting | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 2. Very soon, I will consider switching to environmentally friendly brands for ecological reasons. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 3. I plan to consume environmentally friendly products rather than conventional products in coming times | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 4. I intent to consume products with positive environmental contribution | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 5. I absolutely want to consume green products in the near future | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| **Green consumption behavior** | | | | | |
| 1. Before choosing a product for consumption, I look at ingredients label to see if it contains things that are environmentally damaging | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 2. I choose to consume products that are environmentally-friendly | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 3. I attempt to use water efficiently in my daily life | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

| 4. I often consume the less packaging products | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|

**Appendix B   (Outlier)**



Photo Content



Green WOM

Green Habit



Green Attitude

GCI



GCB

# Appendix C   (Normality)

Green Concern -> Green Attitude



Green Habit -> GCB

Green WOM -> GCI



Photo Content -> Green Attitude
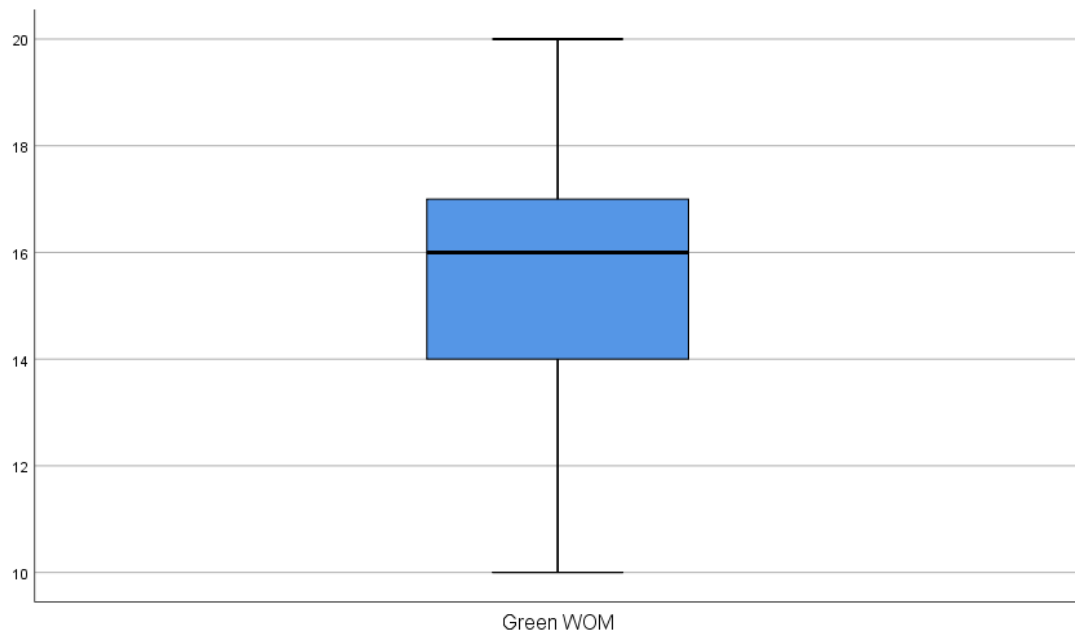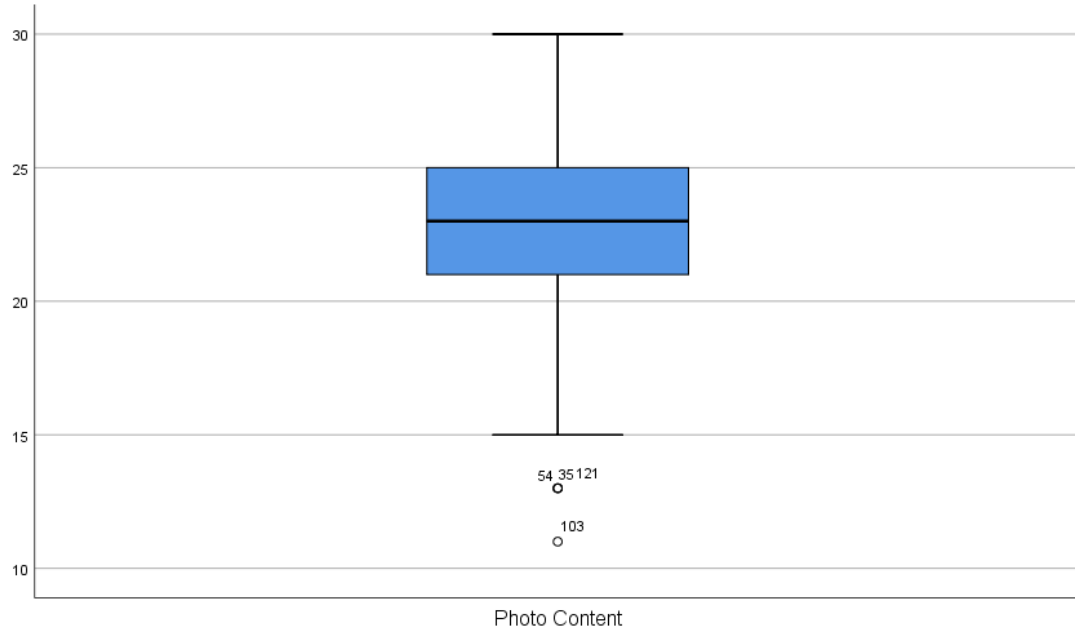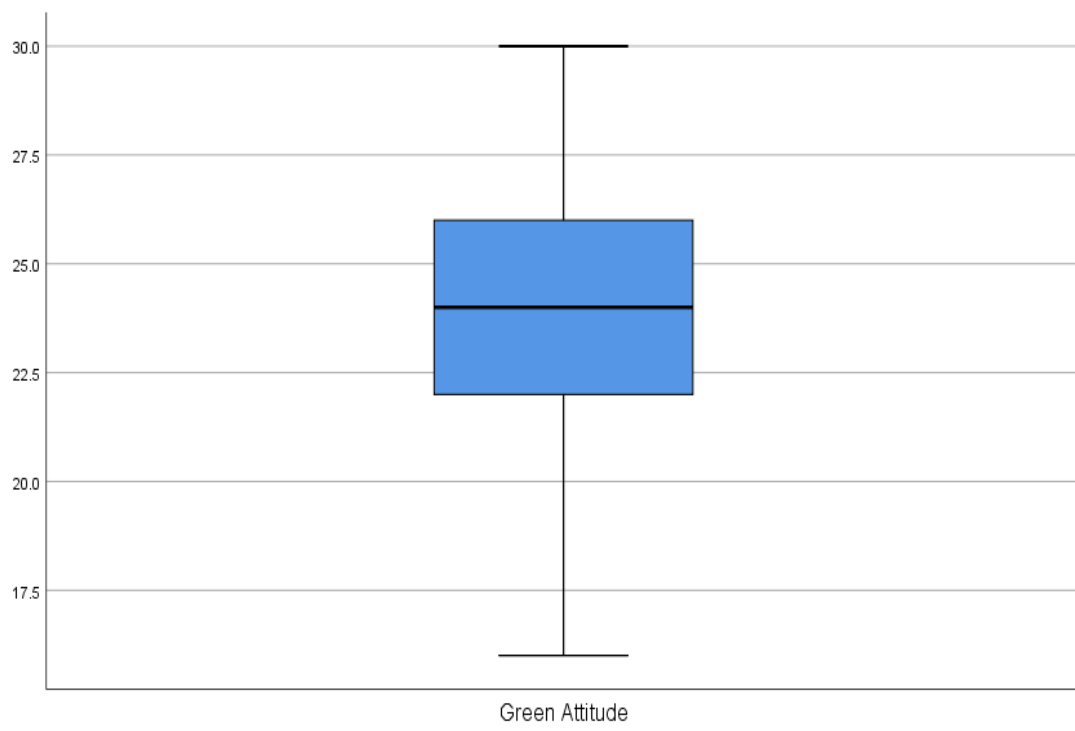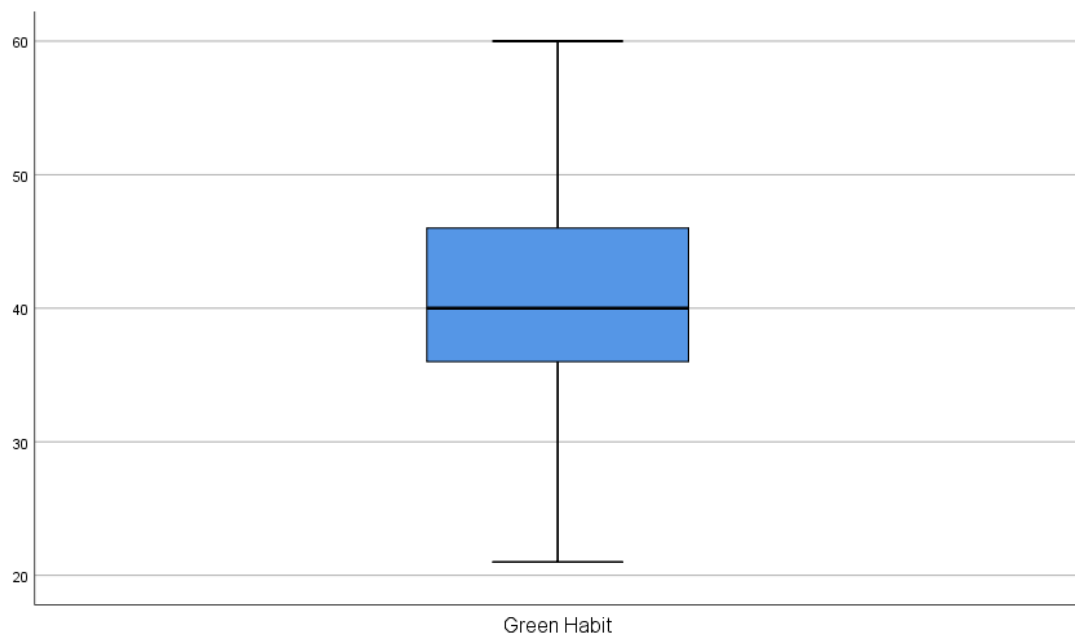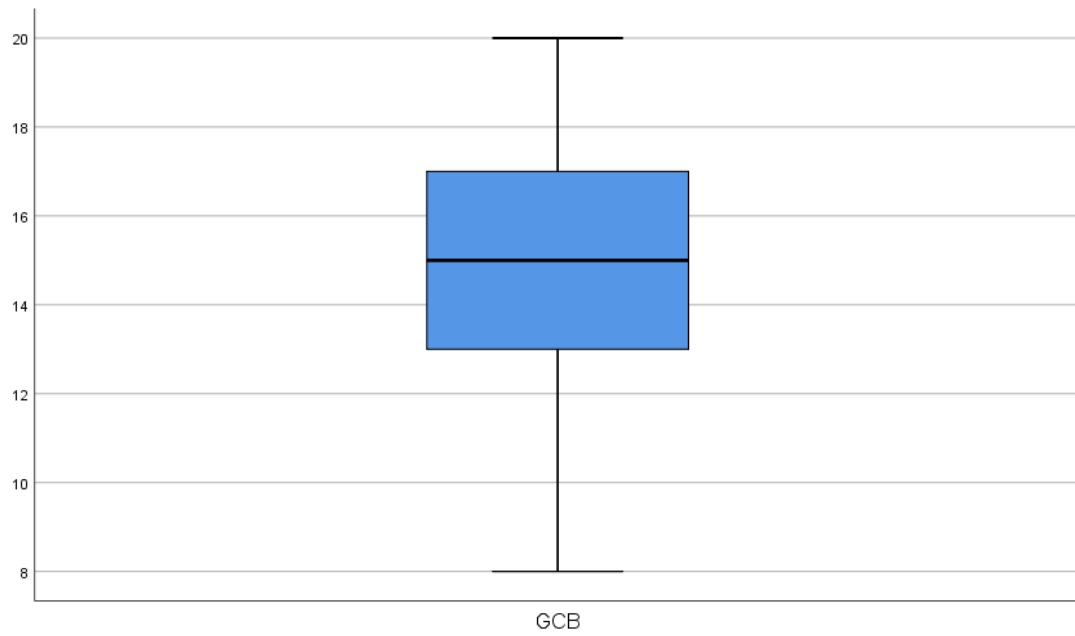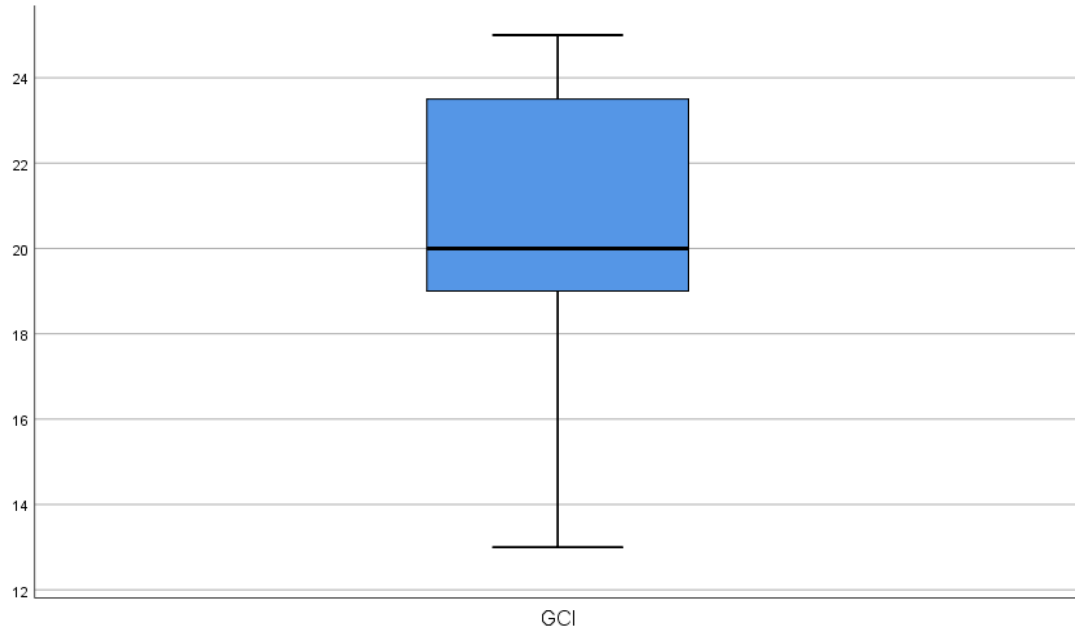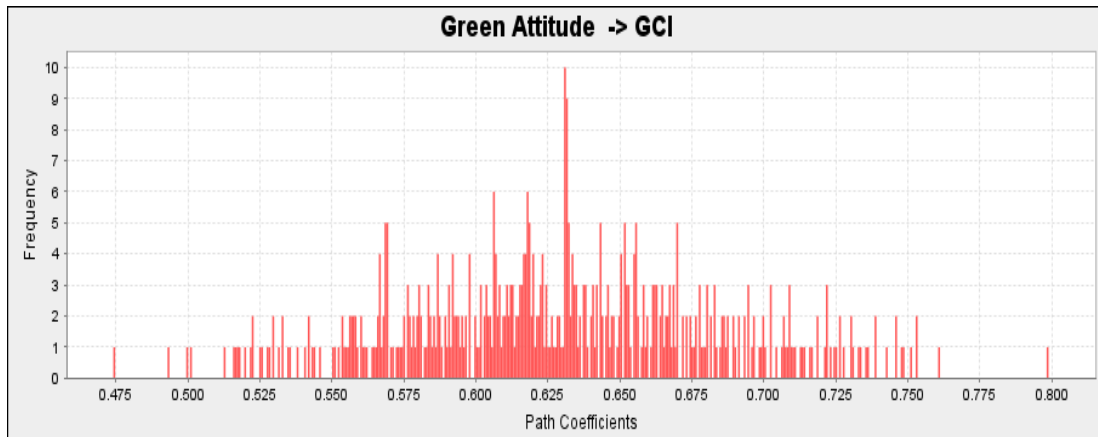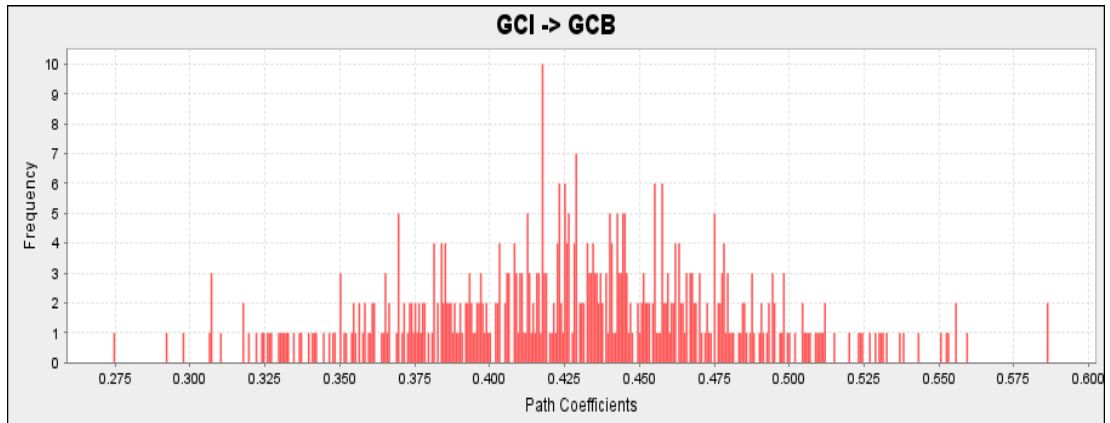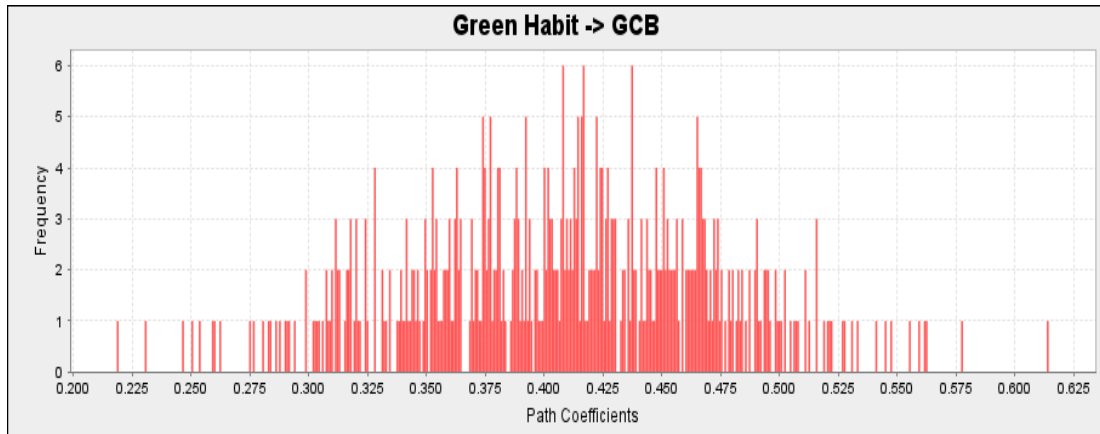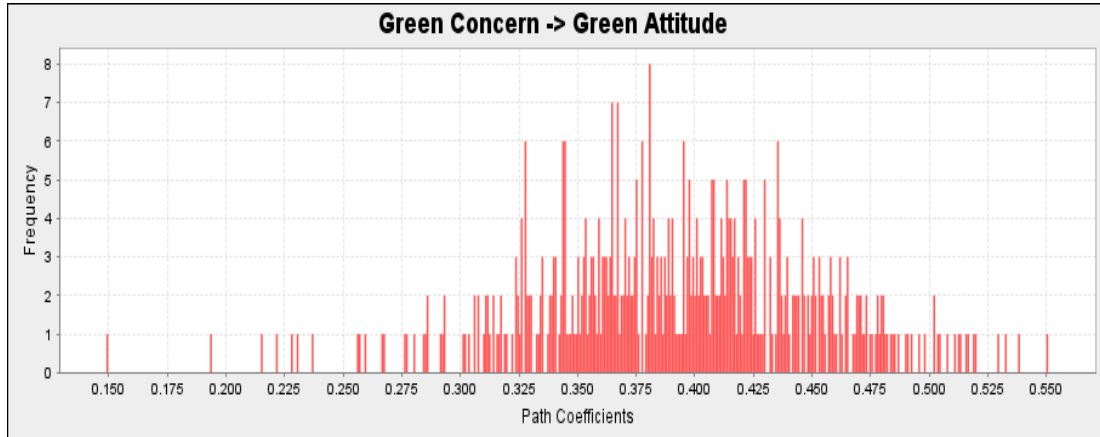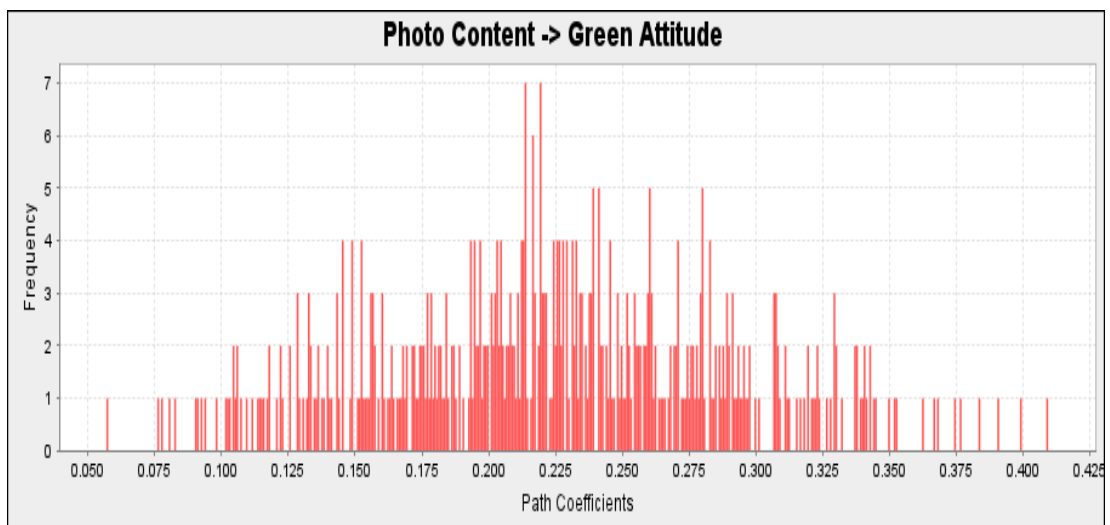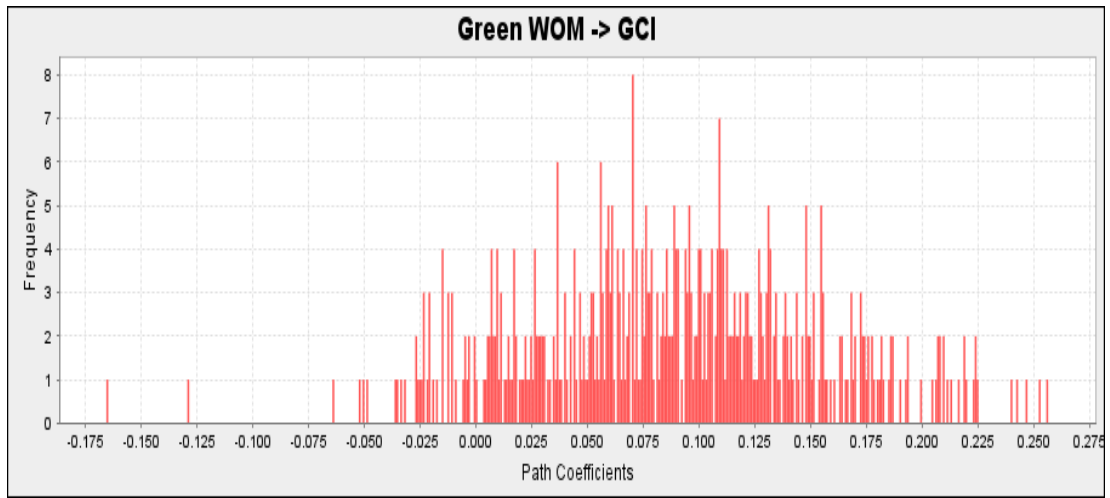
**Appendix D (Structural Equation Modelling)**

## Cronbach's Alpha



## Path Coefficients
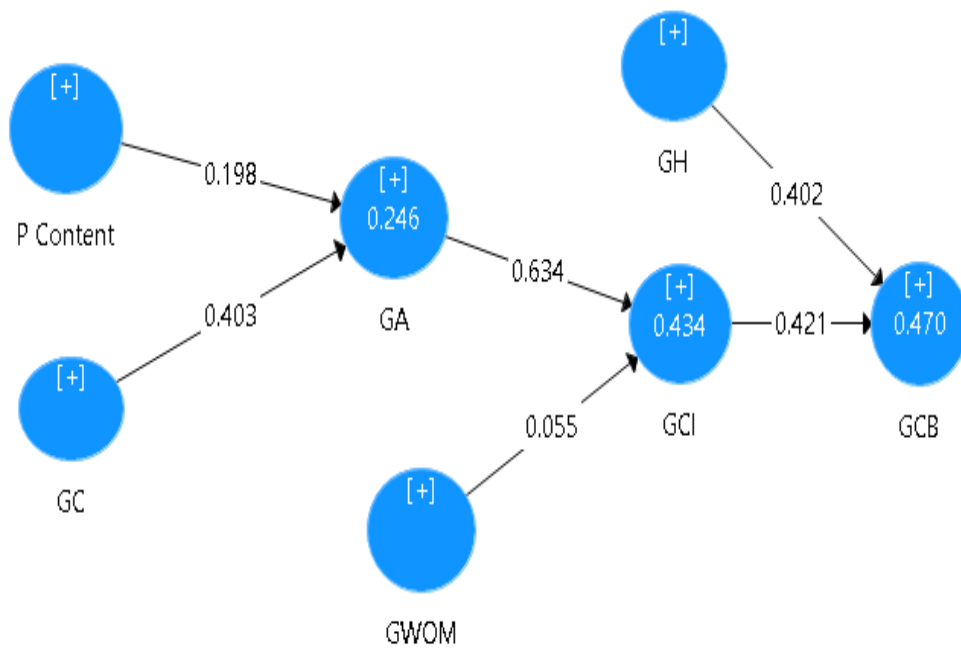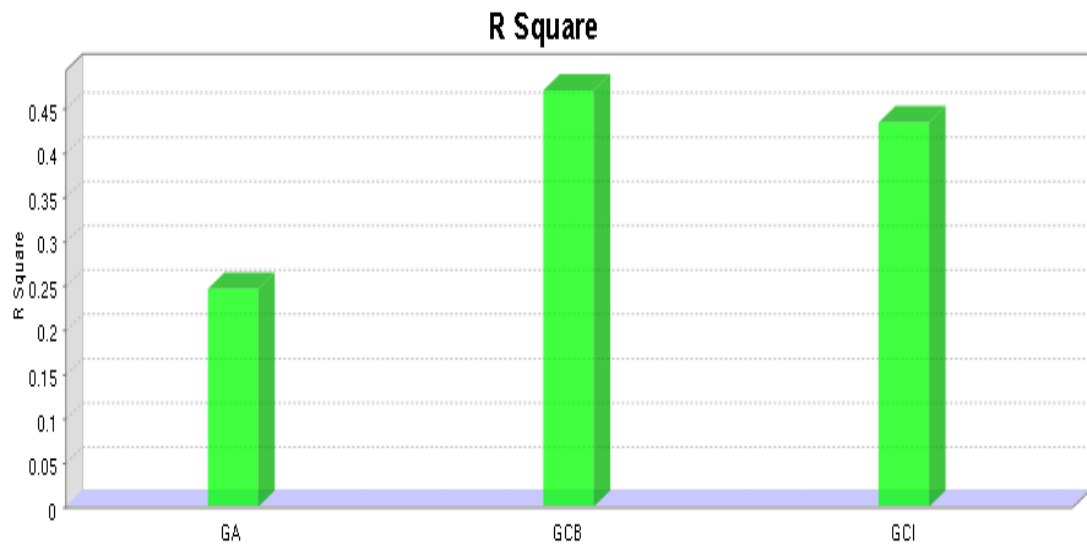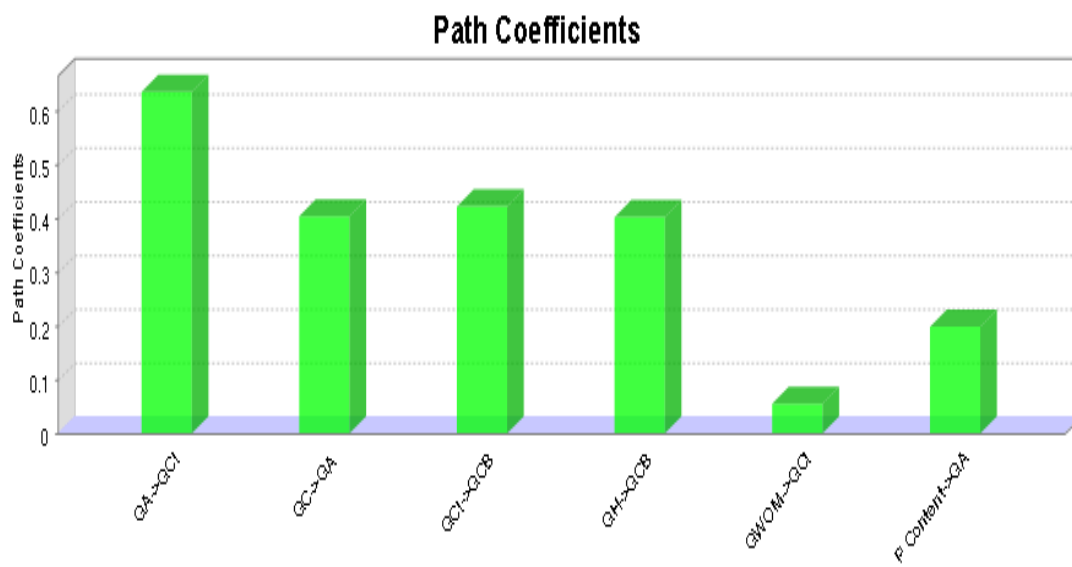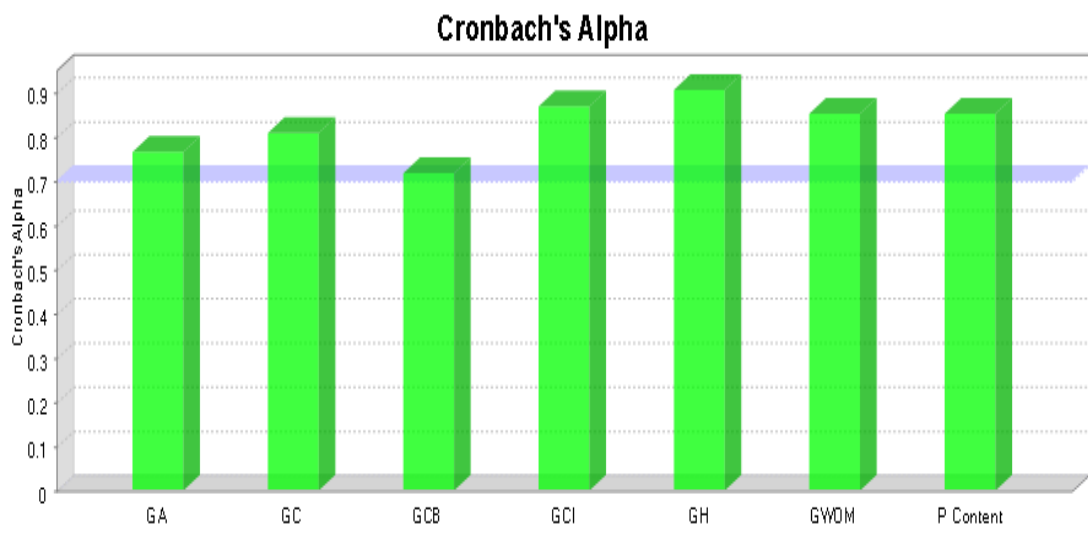
**Appendix D   (Data Collection- Beach Cleaning)**

# LIST OF PUBLICATIONS

Saghati Jalali, Sanaz and Khalid, Haliana (2020), A conceptual framework for describing the influence of Instagram influencers' activity on green consumption behavior, *Business Management and Strategy.*

Saghati Jalali, Sanaz and Khalid, Haliana (2019), Understanding Instagram influencers values in green marketing industry, 1st International Professional Doctoral Symposium 2019 (IPDocS 2019).