



Social Media Influencers and Purchase Intention for Sustainable Food Packaging in Chonburi, Thailand: The Mediating Role of Consumer Attitude

Nutchanapong Nimitniwat¹ and Thanapol Inprasertkul^{2*}

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Abstract

This study investigated the relationships among consumers' perceptions of social media influencer attributes—attractiveness, trustworthiness, expertise—consumer attitudes, and purchase intention toward sustainable food packaging in Chonburi, Thailand, while examining consumer attitude as a mediating mechanism underlying these relationships. A quantitative research approach was employed with a cross-sectional design. Data were collected from 400 Thai residents living in Chonburi through a structured online questionnaire using non-probability multi-stage sampling, consisting of purposive sampling and convenience sampling. Data analysis included descriptive statistics, regression analysis, and mediation analysis using the Sobel test. The findings indicated that consumers have exhibited high levels of perception toward social media influencer attributes, positive attitude and purchase intentions toward sustainable food packaging. Trustworthiness and expertise significantly influenced both attitude and purchase intention, whereas attractiveness showed no significant effect. Consumer attitude had a strong positive impact on purchase intention and significantly mediated the relationships of trustworthiness and expertise with purchase intention. These findings suggest that credible and knowledgeable influencers are able to support sustainability-oriented marketing communication, although consumer attitude remains the key mechanism shaping purchase intention. The results offer practical implications for businesses and policymakers by highlighting the value of credibility-based and attitude-oriented communication in promoting sustainable food packaging.

Keywords: social media influencers, source credibility, attitude, purchase intention, Theory of Planned Behavior, sustainable food packaging

Introduction

Nowadays, Chonburi Province, Thailand, generates a significant amount of waste on a daily basis. Recent data indicates that approximately 1 kiloton of waste is produced per day and up to ~350 kilotons annually with relatively low recycling rates compared to its size, particularly for certain types of plastic materials (Chonburi Provincial Statistical Office, 2025a, 2025b). As food packaging is one of the common forms of daily consumer waste, encouraging the use of sustainable food packaging is directly relevant to both environmental management and consumer behavior in the province. Despite the sheer amount of waste, ongoing environmental initiatives (The Circulate Initiative, 2023) and increasing public participation suggest a growing awareness of sustainability within the province. Private-sector and community efforts have also contributed to waste reduction (Thai Beverage PLC, 2024). Recycling programs and local participation in 3Rs (reduce, reuse, and recycle) reflect consumers' behavioral changes toward more sustainable consumption (Duangsitthichoke et al., 2023). These local initiatives show that waste reduction in Chonburi is not only a government concern but also involves private-sector action and community participation. Given the scale of waste generation, combined with increasing environmental awareness and participation, Chonburi represents a suitable locale and context for studying sustainable consumption behavior. In addition, Chonburi is a key province in the Eastern Economic Corridor (EEC), with strong urban development,

¹ Graduate Student, Burapha Business School, Burapha University

² Lecturer, Burapha Business School, Burapha University

business activity, consumer purchasing power, and digital media exposure. These characteristics make Chonburi a suitable context for examining sustainable consumption behavior influenced by online communication.

Over the past decade, sustainability has become an important factor influencing consumer behavior in Thailand (PwC, 2021). Consumers are increasingly inclined toward environmentally friendly products and are more willing to support businesses that contribute to environmental improvement (Nielsen, 2022). As a result, sustainable food packaging has emerged as a key solution for reducing environmental impact while maintaining product functionality. At the same time, digital media plays a crucial role in shaping consumer behavior. Social media influencers (SMI), as trusted online figures, have become important agents in influencing consumer perceptions and decisions (De Veirman et al., 2017) on products or services available online. Through their content and communication, social media influencers are also able to promote sustainable products, enhance consumer awareness, and influence purchasing behavior (Cattapan et al., 2023).

Previous studies have examined the relationships between social media influencers, attitude, and purchase intention, often based on the theory of planned behavior (Sharkasi & Rezakhah, 2023). While attitude has been identified as a key determinant of purchase intention, there remains only limited research that specifically examines the combined role of SMIs and attitude in the context of sustainable food packaging in Chonburi. More importantly, the theoretical understanding of how SMI attributes, namely trustworthiness, attractiveness, and expertise, operate in a high-involvement sustainability context remains limited. Unlike conventional consumption, sustainable food packaging requires consumers to evaluate environmental claims, credibility, and perceived social value of the product. Therefore, social media influencer attributes may not affect consumer attitudes and purchase intention in the same way as in ordinary / conventional product promotion. Accordingly, this study aimed to examine the influence of social media influencers on consumers' purchase intention toward sustainable food packaging, with attitude acting as a mediating variable. This study contributed by extending the attitude component of the Theory of Planned Behavior through the integration of SMI credibility attributes and by providing practical implications for sustainability-oriented influencer marketing.

Research Objective

1. To assess the level of consumers' purchase intention, attitude, and perception of social media influencers toward sustainable food packaging.
2. To examine the effects of social media influencers and consumer attitude on purchase intention toward sustainable food packaging.
3. To investigate the mediating role of consumer attitude in the relationship between social media influencers and purchase intention.

Literature Review

Sustainability and Sustainable Food Packaging

Sustainability refers to the integration of environmental, social, and economic considerations to meet present needs without compromising future generations (United Nations, 1987). This concept is reflected in global initiatives such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which include SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production) and SDG 13 (Climate Action) that are directly related to this study, as they focus on the reduction of waste, the efficient use of resources, and the adoption of sustainable practices in industries and daily consumption. (United Nations, 2015). In Thailand, sustainability has been incorporated into national policies such as the Bio-Circular-Green (BCG) Economy Model, which promotes eco-friendly practices and waste reduction (The Secretariat of the Cabinet, 2021). These initiatives encourage both businesses and consumers to adopt environmentally responsible behaviors. In addition to the concept of sustainability, sustainable food packaging refers to packaging solutions designed to minimize environmental impact while maintaining product safety and functionality (Boz et al., 2020), which includes the use of recyclable, biodegradable, compostable, or reusable materials (Dörnyei et al., 2023). Sustainable packaging has become relevant and increasingly important due to environmental concerns and changing consumer preferences. Prior research indicates that eco-friendly packaging positively influences consumer attitudes and purchase intentions, providing a relevant context for examining consumer behavior in this study (Potsch & Farzana, 2023), which poses as a relevant context for examining consumer behavior in this study.

Purchase Intention

Purchase intention refers to an individual's willingness and readiness to engage in a purchasing behavior, derived from intention in the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) (Ajzen, 1991). Within TPB, intention is considered a direct predictor of actual behavior, as it reflects both evaluation and motivation to perform a specific action. In this study, purchase intention represents consumers' likelihood to purchase sustainable food packaging. As a dependent variable, purchase intention is influenced by both internal and external factors. Internally, attitude determines the degree of favorability toward sustainable consumption. Consumers who perceive sustainable food packaging as beneficial are more likely to form stronger purchase intentions (Magrizos et al., 2021; Rakuša & Milfelner, 2025). Externally, social media influencers (SMIs) act as influential agents who can enhance consumers' perceptions and encourage purchasing behavior through communication and engagement (Amanah & Harahap, 2025; Patmawati & Miswanto, 2022). Previous studies have confirmed that positive attitudes toward sustainable products significantly increase purchase intention (Magrizos et al., 2021), while influencer-related factors such as credibility and interaction further strengthen consumers' intention to purchase (Patmawati & Miswanto, 2022; Zhao et al., 2024). These findings support TPB by showing that psychological and social factors assist in shaping purchase intention (Ajzen, 1991).

Social Media Influencers

Social media influencers (SMI) are individuals who create content and build a following on digital platforms, allowing them to influence consumer opinions and behaviors (Duffy, 2020). Their communication is often perceived as more authentic and trustworthy compared to traditional advertising (Sokolova & Kefi, 2019). SMIs play an important role in digital marketing by promoting products and shaping consumer perceptions. Their effectiveness depends on several attributes, commonly including trustworthiness, attractiveness, and expertise (Liu et al., 2023; Nafees et al., 2021; Sitorus et al., 2024). These attributes all influence how consumers perceive both the influencer and the promoted product. This study adopts the Source Credibility Model proposed by Ohanian (1990), which conceptualizes source credibility through three key dimensions: trustworthiness, attractiveness, and expertise. These dimensions provide the theoretical basis for decomposing social media influencers into three attributes in this study: trustworthiness, which refers to the degree to which consumers perceive an SMI as honest and reliable; attractiveness, which refers to the degree to which consumers perceive an SMI as appealing; and expertise, which refers to the degree to which consumers perceive an SMI as knowledgeable and competent in relation to the promoted product.

Previous studies have shown that SMIs can positively affect consumer attitude and purchase intention. Social media influencers' trustworthiness and expertise enhance their credibility to consumers, while attractiveness increases engagement and attention (Lim et al., 2017; Sitorus et al., 2024). As a result, SMIs are able to influence both psychological responses (attitude) and behavioral outcomes (purchase intention) (Amanah & Harahap, 2025; Liu et al., 2023). In this study, SMI is treated as an independent variable consisting of three main attributes: trustworthiness, attractiveness, and expertise, which are expected to influence both attitude and purchase intention toward sustainable food packaging. Accordingly, the following dimension-level hypotheses were formulated:

H_{1a}: Trustworthiness has a significant positive effect on purchase intention.

H_{1b}: Attractiveness has a significant positive effect on purchase intention.

H_{1c}: Expertise has a significant positive effect on purchase intention.

H_{2a}: Trustworthiness has a significant positive effect on consumer attitude.

H_{2b}: Attractiveness has a significant positive effect on consumer attitude.

H_{2c}: Expertise has a significant positive effect on consumer attitude.

Attitude

The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) proposed by Ajzen (1991) explains human behavior through three main components: attitude, subjective norm, and perceived behavioral control. These components collectively influence behavioral intention, which in turn leads to actual behavior. In this study, only attitude and intention are applied. Attitude refers to the degree to which an individual evaluates a behavior positively or negatively (Ajzen, 1991). In the context of this research, it reflects consumers' evaluation of sustainable food packaging, including its environmental and personal benefits. Attitude plays an important role in shaping purchase intention. Consumers with positive attitudes toward eco-friendly products are more likely to develop stronger intentions to purchase such products (Long et al., 2024; Magrizos et al., 2021; Rakuša & Milfelner, 2025). Prior studies have also shown that environmental concern and knowledge positively influence attitude, which subsequently enhances purchase intention (Patel, 2018; Zhang & Luo, 2021).

While TPB proposes attitude, subjective norm, and perceived behavioral control as determinants of intention (Ajzen, 1991), this study focuses solely on attitude because it is the most relevant TPB component to this study's objective of examining how social media influencer attributes shape consumers' evaluations of sustainable food packaging and subsequently influence purchase intention (Ilieva et al., 2024) (Lim et al., 2017; Zhao et al., 2024). Subjective norm and perceived behavioral control were therefore excluded because the present study does not aim to examine social pressure or consumers' perceived ability to purchase sustainable food packaging, but rather focuses on how influencer credibility contributes to attitude formation and purchase intention. In addition, attitude can function as a mediating variable between external influences and behavioral intention (Ilieva et al., 2024; Singh & Aggarwal, 2023; Zhao et al., 2024). Social media influencers, through their credibility and attractiveness, can shape consumers' attitudes, which then influence purchase intention (Chhabra & Sharma, 2025; Lim et al., 2017). Therefore, attitude is considered a key variable in explaining purchase intention toward sustainable food packaging in this study. Hence, the following hypothesis was developed:

H₃: Consumer attitude has a significant positive effect on purchase intention toward sustainable food packaging.

Based on the proposed mediating role of attitude, the following dimension-level mediation hypotheses were developed:

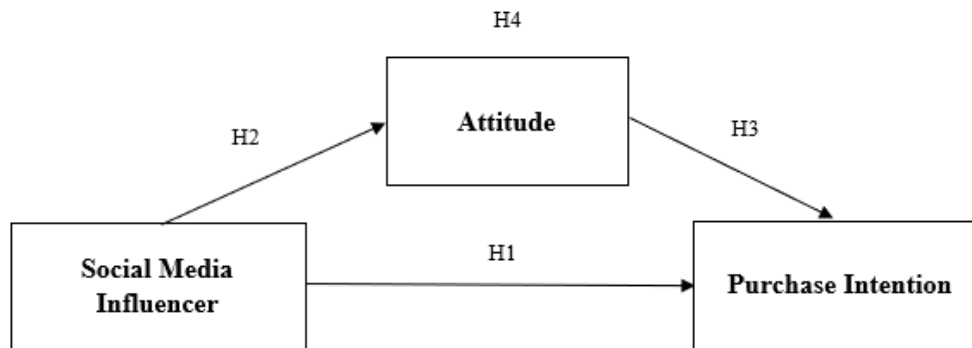
H_{4a}: Consumer attitude mediates the relationship between trustworthiness and purchase intention.

H_{4b}: Consumer attitude mediates the relationship between attractiveness and purchase intention.

H_{4c}: Consumer attitude mediates the relationship between expertise and purchase intention.

Based on the literature review, this study proposed the following conceptual framework;

Figure 1. Research conceptual framework



Note: *H₁, H₂, and H₄ are consisted of SMI attributes: trustworthiness, attractiveness, and expertise. H₃ represents the effect of attitude on purchase intention*

Research Methodology

Population and Sample

The target population consisted of Thai residents in Chonburi Province, with a total population of 1,617,152 as of June 2025 (Department of Provincial Administration, 2025). The sample size was determined using the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) table which resulted in a minimum of 385 respondents (Krejcie & Morgan, 1970). To enhance reliability and account for potential data collection errors, the sample size was increased to 400 respondents in total. This study employed a non-probability multi-stage sampling approach. First, purposive sampling was used to select Thai residents living in Chonburi Province. Then, convenience sampling was applied to collect responses from accessible respondents through online channels. As this approach did not use probability-based selection, the findings might not be fully generalizable to all consumers in Chonburi Province.

Research Tools

Data were collected through a structured questionnaire in Google Forms and developed in Thai. The instrument consisted of two sections: 1) Demographic information, which was adapted from prior studies (Chanluean, 2016; Wongkotwarin, 2021) and 2) Construct measurements which contain social media influencers, attitude, and purchase intention that use a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) (Boone & Boone, 2012; Sullivan & Artino, 2013). Measurement items were adapted from prior studies. Specifically, the instrument included three items for trustworthiness, three items for attractiveness, three items for expertise, and four items for attitude adapted from Long et al. (2024) and Zhao et al. (2024). In addition, five items measuring purchase intention were adapted from Polat (2025) and Płoska et al. (2024). All items were modified to suit the context of sustainable food packaging.

Research Tool Development

Content validity was assessed using the Index of Item-Objective Congruence (IOC) and evaluated by five experts. All items achieved IOC values above 0.50, indicating acceptable validity set within the study (Rovinelli & Hambleton, 1976; Yaghmaie, 2003). Reliability was tested using Cronbach's alpha to assess internal consistency (Brotherton, 2015). A try-out test with 30 respondents has presented acceptable results: social media influencers = 0.924, attitude = 0.732, and purchase intention = 0.780, exceeding the recommended threshold of 0.70.

Data Collection

Primary data were collected through an online questionnaire distributed via Google Forms to Thai residents in Chonburi Province. The questionnaire was shared through online communication channels, including Facebook, LINE, and online community groups / platforms. A total of 400 valid responses were obtained. However, because the questionnaire was distributed online, the sample might involved self-selection bias, as digitally active consumers and those more familiar with social media influencers might be more likely to participate. Therefore, the findings are most applicable to consumers with online access and exposure to digital communication.

Statistical Techniques

Descriptive statistics including frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation, were used to summarize respondents' demographic characteristics and their opinions toward key constructs. Multiple linear regression analysis was used to test H_{1a} – H_{1c} and H_{2a} – H_{2c} , simple linear regression analysis was used to test H_3 , and the Sobel test was used to examine the mediation hypotheses H_{4a} – H_{4c} . To assess multicollinearity, Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values were examined before conducting the regression analysis. Common method bias was assessed using Harman's single-factor test.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical standards were strictly maintained. Participation was voluntary; informed consent was obtained from all respondents and full anonymity and confidentiality were ensured. All collected data were used solely for academic purposes. Approval for ethical considerations was secured from the Human Research Ethics Committee (Approval no. IRB4-019/2569).

Results and Discussion

Demographic Information

A total of 400 valid responses were analyzed. The collected sample was balanced in gender (47.3% male, 47.0% female, 5.7% LGBTQIA+). Most respondents were in the age group of 18–44 (76.8%), held a bachelor's degree (57.8%), and were employed in private companies (38.8%). The most common monthly income range was 20,001–30,000 THB (24%). Regarding purchasing behavior in the multiple answers section, social media (71.5%) and retail stores (65.3%) were the primary channels for sustainable food packaging, with the most prominent motivation for purchase being environmental concern (86.5%).

Assessment of Social Media Influencers, Attitude and Purchase Intention

According to the summarized data of the 400 respondents (Table 1), overall perception of social media influencers was high ($\bar{x} = 3.57$). Among its dimensions, Attractiveness was rated highest ($\bar{x} = 3.94$), followed by Expertise ($\bar{x} = 3.51$) and Trustworthiness ($\bar{x} = 3.28$) which achieved only a moderate level. Respondents exhibited high levels of positive attitude toward sustainable food packaging ($\bar{x} = 3.97$) along with consumers' purchase intention being high overall ($\bar{x} = 3.67$).

Table 1: Assessment of social media influencers, attitude and purchase intention

Construct	$\bar{x}$	S.D.	Level
Social media influencers	3.57	0.63	High
<i>Trustworthiness</i>	3.28	0.84	Moderate
<i>Attractiveness</i>	3.94	0.73	High
<i>Expertise</i>	3.51	0.76	High
Attitude	3.97	0.67	High
Purchase intention	3.67	0.76	High

Note: The interpretation of mean scores was based on a five-level criterion: 1.00–1.80 = very low, 1.81–2.60 = low, 2.61–3.40 = moderate, 3.41–4.20 = high, and 4.21–5.00 = very high

Preliminary Analysis

Preliminary analysis was conducted before hypothesis testing to ensure the appropriateness of the regression models. Multicollinearity was assessed using Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values. The VIF values were 1.579 for trustworthiness, 1.369 for attractiveness, and 1.726 for expertise. Since all VIF values were below the commonly accepted threshold of 5, multicollinearity was not considered a serious concern in this study. Common method bias was also assessed using Harman's single-factor test. The first unrotated factor accounted for 36.28% of the total variance, which was below the recommended threshold of 50%. Thus, common method bias was unlikely to substantially affect the results. The following sections present the regression and mediation results used to test the proposed hypotheses.

Social Media Influencers on Purchase Intention

The results, presented in Table 2, revealed that trustworthiness ($\beta = 0.138$, $p < .05$) and expertise ($\beta = 0.169$, $p < .05$) both had significant positive effects on purchase intention, whereas attractiveness was not significant ($p > .05$). The model explained 7.9% of the variance in purchase intention (Adjusted $R^2 = 0.072$). Although the model was statistically significant, its explanatory power was relatively low. Cohen's f^2 was 0.086, indicating a small effect size. This suggested that SMI attributes contribute to purchase intention, but other factors not included within the model might have greater explanatory power to explain a larger proportion of consumers' purchase intention toward sustainable food packaging. Therefore, H_{1a} and H_{1c} were supported, whereas H_{1b} was not supported.

Table 2: Analysis of Social Media Influencers on Purchase Intention

Construct	B	β	t	p-value
Constant	2.606	-	11.806	.000
Trustworthiness	.125	.138	2.276	.023*
Attractiveness	.014	.013	.237	.813
Expertise	.171	.169	2.665	.008*

Note: $R = 0.281$, $R^2 = 0.079$, Adjusted $R^2 = 0.072$, $F = 11.30$, $*p < 0.05$

Social Media Influencers on Attitude

The results indicated that trustworthiness ($\beta = 0.119$, $p < .05$) and expertise ($\beta = 0.159$, $p < .05$) significantly influenced attitude, while attractiveness remained insignificant ($p > .05$), as presented in Table 3. The model explained 9.7% of the variance in attitude (Adjusted $R^2 = 0.090$). Although the model was statistically significant, its explanatory power was also relatively low. Cohen's f^2 was 0.107, indicating a small effect size. This suggests that SMI attributes influence consumer attitude, but their overall explanatory contribution is limited. Therefore, only H_{2a} and H_{2c} were supported, whereas H_{2b} was not supported.

Table 3: Analysis of social media influencers on attitude

Construct	B	β	t	p-value
Constant	2.772	-	13.923	.000
Trustworthiness	.098	.119	1.991	.047*
Attractiveness	.093	.098	1.756	.080
Expertise	.147	.159	2.537	.012*

Note: $R = 0.311$, $R^2 = 0.097$, $Adjusted\ R^2 = 0.090$, $F = 14.15$, $*p < 0.05$

Attitude on Purchase Intention

The results of simple linear regression analysis in Table 4 showed that attitude had a significant positive effect on purchase intention ($\beta = 0.761$, $p < .05$), explaining 57.9% of the variance in purchase intention ($Adjusted\ R^2 = 0.578$). Cohen's f^2 was 1.375, indicating a large effect size. This confirmed that attitude is a strong predictor of purchase intention toward sustainable food packaging. Therefore, hypothesis 3 was supported.

Table 4: Analysis of attitude on purchase intention

Construct	B	β	t	p-value
Constant	.347	-	2.404	.017
Attitude	.836	.761	23.403	.000*

Note: $R = 0.761$, $R^2 = 0.579$, $Adjusted\ R^2 = 0.578$, $F = 547.70$, $*p < 0.05$

The Mediating Role of Attitude

The Sobel test shown in Table 5 indicated that consumer attitude significantly mediated the relationships between trustworthiness and purchase intention, and between expertise and purchase intention. However, the mediating effect of attitude in the relationship between attractiveness and purchase intention was not statistically significant. This indicated that trustworthiness and expertise influence purchase intention indirectly through consumer attitude, whereas attractiveness did not show a significant indirect effect. Therefore, H_{4a} and H_{4c} were supported, whereas H_{4b} was not supported.

Table 5: Mediation analysis of attitude between social media influencers and purchase intention

SMI Construct	a, B (S.E.)	b, B (S.E.)	Indirect Effect	Sobel Z	p-value
Trustworthiness	0.098 (0.049)	0.836 (0.036)	0.082	1.995	0.046*
Attractiveness	0.093 (0.053)	0.836 (0.036)	0.078	1.751	0.080
Expertise	0.147 (0.058)	0.836 (0.036)	0.123	2.524	0.012*

Note: B = unstandardized coefficient, $S.E.$ = standard error, a path = effect of SMI attribute on consumer attitude, b path = effect of consumer attitude on purchase intention, $*p < 0.05$

Discussion and Interpretation

Levels of Consumers' Perception of Social Media Influencers, Attitude, and Purchase Intention

Although most social media influencer attributes were rated at a high level, trustworthiness remained comparatively weaker. This suggests that consumers may still have some skepticism toward influencer credibility in sustainability-related product promotions. In this regard, transparent, evidence-based, and clearly communicated information on sustainability-related products appears necessary to strengthen consumer confidence. This aligns with prior research emphasizing that trustworthiness is a crucial yet often uncertain factor in influencer marketing (Nafees et al., 2021), and that strengthening trust requires continuous and appropriate implementation of SMI marketing strategies over time. The high level of consumer attitude suggests that consumers in Chonburi already possess a strong positive perception toward sustainable food packaging. This can be explained by increased levels of environmental awareness and broader sustainability trends within Thailand, where consumers in urban regions with high internet accessibility are increasingly likely to recognize the environmental benefits of eco-friendly packaging. The results also indicated that consumers with higher environmental concern tend to develop more favorable attitudes toward green products, which remained consistent with prior studies such as Magrizos et al. (2021) and Rakuša and Milfelner (2025). The finding on purchase intention further revealed that consumers demonstrated a strong willingness to support sustainable products, which was generally consistent with their positive attitudes. However, its slightly lower mean value compared to attitude suggests that while consumers feel positive about these products, there are still barriers, such as price, convenience, and availability, that can limit actual behavioral intention among individuals within the province. Overall, these results showed that while consumers were generally positive toward sustainability, their evaluation of social media influencers was more cautious and thorough, particularly regarding their trustworthiness.

Effects of Social Media Influencers and Attitude on Purchase Intention

The findings indicated that two SMI attributes, namely trustworthiness and expertise, significantly and positively affected consumers' attitudes and purchase intention toward sustainable food packaging, although the explanatory power of the models remained limited. This suggests that SMI can function as opinion leaders who shape favorable evaluations of environmentally friendly products through credible and engaging content. In addition, influencer endorsements may directly encourage consumers to consider environmentally responsible products.

Although SMI can shape consumer evaluations of sustainable food packaging as mentioned, its low explanatory power could be explained by the omitted TPB constructs, namely subjective norms and perceived behavioral control, as well as other sustainability factors, such as environmental concern and knowledge (Patel, 2018), which may account for additional variance not examined in this study. The low explanatory power also suggests that SMI attributes should be interpreted as one of several factors influencing sustainable purchase intention, rather than the dominant predictor. Other variables not included in this model, such as environmental concern, price sensitivity, product availability, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control, may explain additional variance. Therefore, although this study focuses on attitude as the evaluative mechanism within TPB, future studies may include subjective norms and perceived behavioral control to provide a more complete TPB-based explanation.

Regarding the influence of SMI on attitude, the result is consistent with previous studies by Chhabra and Sharma (2025); Long et al. (2024); Rayasam and Khattri (2022), which found that influencer characteristics positively influence consumer attitudes across various consumption contexts, including the sustainable consumption context within this study. Similarly, the influence of SMI on purchase intention is consistent with Amanah and Harahap (2025); Patmawati and Miswanto (2022); Zhao et al. (2024), who reported positive relationships between influencer marketing and consumer purchase intention. SMI's effects on attitude and purchase intention can be further explained by examining the role of each of its attributes, namely trustworthiness, expertise, and attractiveness, as follows:

The significant effect of trustworthiness in the context of sustainable products can be explained by the nature of these products, as consumers often rely on credible information from sources such as SMI to reduce uncertainty about whether the product genuinely possesses sustainable or eco-friendly attributes. When social media influencers are perceived as honest and reliable, consumers are more likely to form positive attitudes and leading into behavioral intentions. This indicates consistency with prior studies such as Lim et al. (2017) and Nafees et al. (2021) that highlighted credibility and trustworthiness as key determinants of consumer response with lowered hesitation.

Expertise showed a significant effect in influencing consumer responses to relatively complex products, particularly when influencers possess sufficient knowledge and understanding of the promoted product. This suggests that consumers value influencers who demonstrate knowledge and experience; sustainable food packaging is a relatively complex topic that requires clear explanation and full understanding in order to communicate its value effectively. The result also aligns with prior studies by Liu et al. (2023) and Zhao et al. (2024), which found that social

media influencers expertise enhance consumer confidence and decision-making toward promoted products in their respective study contexts. Expertise showed a slightly stronger effect than trustworthiness, which may reflect the information-intensive nature of sustainable food packaging. Consumers may require clear explanations about environmental benefits, recyclability, material safety, and product value before forming purchase intention. Therefore, knowledgeable social media influencers may be especially persuasive to their audience in sustainability-related product communication.

The non-significant effect of attractiveness is theoretically meaningful because attractiveness received the highest descriptive mean but did not significantly predict attitude or purchase intention. This suggests that consumers may notice or positively evaluate attractive influencers, but attractiveness alone is insufficient in a sustainability-related context. From the perspective of the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM), sustainable food packaging can be viewed as a high-involvement product context in which consumers rely more on central-route cues, such as credible information, expertise, and environmental value, than on peripheral cues such as appearance or visual appeal. Therefore, attractiveness may increase attention, but it may not be strong enough to shape attitude or purchase intention when consumers evaluate sustainability claims on advertised products.

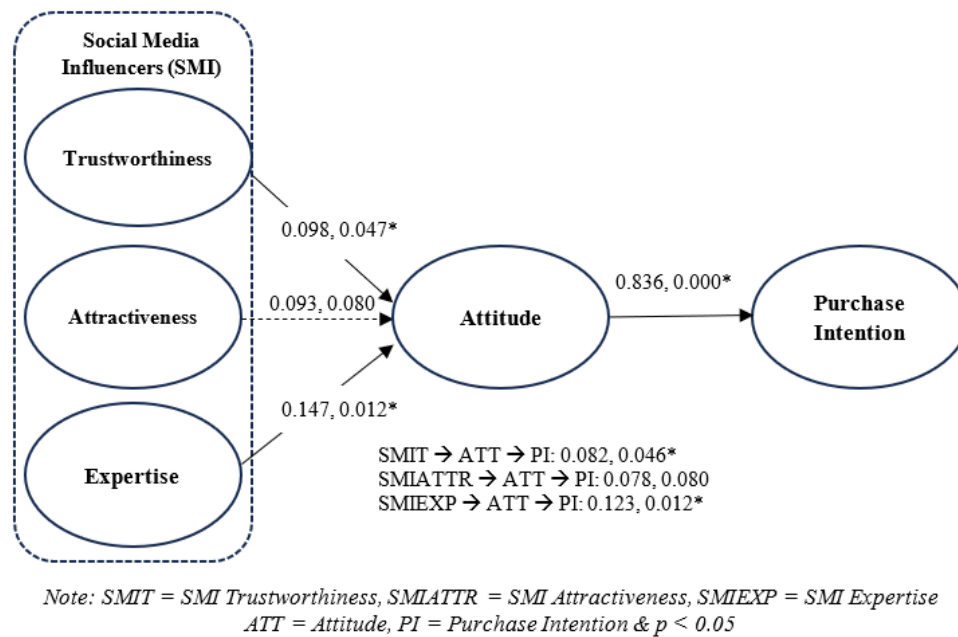
Furthermore, the results showed that attitude had a very strong and significant effect on purchase intention with high explanatory power, indicating that consumers with more favorable evaluations of sustainable food packaging were more likely to intend to purchase such products. This can be interpreted as evidence that attitude plays a central role in shaping individuals' purchase decisions regarding sustainable food packaging, even when external factors such as social media influencers are considered. In other words, consumers may need to develop a positive evaluation of sustainable or eco-friendly products before external promotional factors, such as social media influencers, can further strengthen their purchase intention. Given the importance of attitude and its high explanatory power, attitude becomes a crucial precondition for strengthening consumer motivation toward sustainable products through the central route of persuasion, or high elaboration in ELM, which serves as an effective route for promoting sustainable consumption and its products.

This finding is consistent with prior studies by Magrizos et al. (2021) and Rakuša and Milfelner (2025), which identified attitude as a key determinant of behavioral intention in sustainability-related contexts. The result suggests that positive perceptions of environmental benefits and personal contribution to sustainability play an important role in shaping consumers' purchasing decisions. Overall, this objective demonstrates that social media influencers and their attributes can influence consumer behavior differently across different dimensions. However, not all social media influencer attributes appear equally effective in the context of sustainable food packaging, while attitude emerges as the strongest predictor of consumers' purchase intention toward sustainable food packaging.

The Mediating Role of Consumer Attitude

The mediation analysis showed that attitude partially mediates the relationship between SMI attributes and purchase intentions, specifically for trustworthiness and expertise, while no mediation effect was found for attractiveness. A further important observation is that the indirect effects of SMI through attitude are weaker than the direct effects of SMI on purchase intention. This indicates that while attitude can act as a mediating role, the mediation through attitude is not always a necessary step for SMI to influence on purchase intention. SMI and its attributes can directly influence purchase intention without fully relying on attitude formation. Consumers may respond directly to influencer recommendations to a limited extent, due to low explanatory power, without substantial changes in their attitude, especially when they perceive the SMI as credible (trustworthiness) or knowledgeable (expertise) about the subject they are promoting. Therefore, attitude explains part of the mechanism, but it does not fully account for the relationship between SMI attributes and purchase intention.

The result is consistent with previous studies by Ilieva et al. (2024), Singh and Aggarwal (2023), Zhao et al. (2024), and Chhabra and Sharma (2025), which reported attitude as an important psychological mechanism linking influencer characteristics and consumer behavioral outcomes. As the mediation effect in this study was partial and observed only for trustworthiness and expertise, the findings suggest that SMI may influence purchase intention through both direct and attitude-mediated pathways. This extends the applicability of the attitude construct within TPB by showing that external digital influences and internal psychological processes can be integrated to jointly shape sustainable consumption intentions.

Figure 2. Mediation model

Conclusion

This study examined the influence of SMI attributes on consumers' purchase intention toward sustainable food packaging in Chonburi Province, with consumer attitude as a mediating variable. In relation to the first research objective, consumers showed high levels of perception toward SMI, positive attitude, and purchase intention toward sustainable food packaging. For the second objective, trustworthiness and expertise significantly influenced both consumer attitude and purchase intention, whereas attractiveness was not significant. For the third objective, consumer attitude mediated the relationships between trustworthiness and purchase intention, and between expertise and purchase intention. Overall, the findings suggest that sustainability-oriented influencer marketing should emphasize credibility and expertise rather than attractiveness alone, while attitude remains the key mechanism linking social media influencer attributes with purchase intention in a sustainability context.

Contribution

Theoretical Contribution

This study extends the attitude component of TPB by integrating external source-credibility constructs from (Ohanian, 1990) as antecedents in a sustainability context. The novelty of this study lies in examining trustworthiness, attractiveness, and expertise in the specific context of sustainable food packaging in Chonburi Province. The findings showed that consumers are more influenced by trustworthy and knowledgeable influencers than by attractive influencers. This suggests that sustainable purchase decisions are driven more by credibility, knowledge, environmental values, and positive evaluation than by appearance alone.

Managerial Contribution

For businesses, social media influencer selection should emphasize credibility and product knowledge rather than appearance alone. Nano- and micro-influencers may be useful for trust-building and community-level engagement, while macro-influencers may be suitable for broader awareness campaigns. Marketing content should focus on educational and value-driven messages, such as product demonstrations, short videos, reviews, recyclability information, environmental benefits, and real consumer value. These strategies can help strengthen consumer attitude and purchase intention toward sustainable food packaging.

Policy Contribution

For policymakers and sustainability initiatives, social media represents a valuable channel for promoting sustainable consumption. Public campaigns should collaborate with credible and knowledgeable influencers to communicate the environmental benefits of sustainable food packaging through platforms commonly used in Thailand, such as Facebook, LINE, TikTok, and Instagram. Such communication may help increase public awareness and strengthen positive attitudes toward environmentally responsible consumption.

Limitation and Future Research Directions

First, the use of a quantitative survey design in this study limited the ability to explore deeper explanations of consumers' motivations and perceptions for research objectives. Additionally, the research relied on self-reported data, which was subject to response bias for each individual entry. It is recommended for future research to employ a form of qualitative method and more tools for measuring content validity to better provide deeper insights into consumer motivations and perceptions toward sustainable products in future research framework and better enhance the validity of data entries. Second, the study was focused on Chonburi Province in Thailand within a limited data collection period (during February and March 2026), which limited the generalizability of the findings (combined with the small of scope of only sustainable food packaging as well). Expanding to other regions or conducting comparative analyses across different cultural contexts in related regions (ASEAN) are recommended for future studies. In addition, because this study used an online cross-sectional survey, the findings may involve self-selection bias and cannot fully confirm causal relationships.

Finally, the study examined only three social media influencer attributes. Future research could explore additional constructs such as interactivity, content quality, environmental concern, price sensitivity, product availability, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control, which may further explain consumer behavior and account for other constructs with high explanatory power in sustainability contexts. Future research may also apply EFA and CFA to confirm the measurement structure, SEM-based or bootstrapped mediation analysis to test indirect effects more robustly, and longitudinal designs or actual purchase behavior measurement to provide more comprehensive findings.

Declaration of Generative AI use

During the preparation of this work, the authors used AI in order to search for supporting literature, check for grammatical errors, and improve the readability of the manuscript. After using the mentioned tool/service, the authors reviewed, edited, and finalized the output along with taking full responsibility for the final content.

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