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IMPACTS OF DIGITAL MARKETING ON POST-PURCHASING BEHAVIOR TOWARDS ECO-FRIENDLY PRODUCTS AT SALEM CITY, TAMIL NADU

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Abstract

This study examines the impacts of digital marketing on post-purchasing behavior towards eco-friendly products in Salem City, Tamil Nadu. The research is motivated by two parallel revolutions shaping contemporary consumer markets: the digital revolution and the sustainability revolution. Salem, a Tier-II city in Tamil Nadu with a population of approximately 8.5 lakhs, known for steel, mangoes, and textiles, is witnessing a growing consciousness towards eco-friendly consumption, accelerated by Tamil Nadu Government's Meendum Manjappai scheme and increasing environmental awareness post-COVID-19. According to Tamil Nadu Pollution Control Board (TNPCB) 2023 report, Salem Corporation generated nearly 180 tons of plastic waste daily before the Meendum Manjappai initiative, which subsequently reduced plastic usage by 22%. This context provides a fertile ground to study green consumerism.

The objectives of the study are threefold: (1) To assess the awareness, availability, and purchase pattern of eco-friendly products among consumers in Salem City, (2) To analyze the impact of digital marketing dimensions - Social Media Marketing (SMM), Content Marketing, Influencer Marketing, and Green Advertising - on post-purchase behavioral outcomes including satisfaction, loyalty, repeat purchase intention, electronic Word-of-Mouth (eWOM), and cognitive dissonance, and (3) To examine the mediating roles of trust, perceived green value, sense of community, and post-purchase engagement in shaping these relationships.

Methodology adopted is descriptive and explanatory in nature. The study was conducted in Salem Corporation covering four zones: Hasthampatti, Suramangalam, Ammapet, and Steel Plant area. The population was defined as consumers who had purchased eco-friendly products in the last 12 months (August 2024 to August 2025) and who follow at least one eco-brand digitally. Purposive sampling through eco-stores such as Ecological, Narmada Naturals, and ARRS Organic, supplemented by snowball sampling via WhatsApp, was employed. The final sample size was 350, with 342 usable responses after data cleaning. A structured questionnaire was developed with three sections: Section A Demographics, Section B Digital Exposure (20 items), and Section C Post-Purchase Behavior (20 items), all measured on a 5-point Likert scale from Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (5). The instrument was pilot tested on 35 respondents in September 2025 with Cronbach alpha 0.87, and Tamil translations were added for better comprehension. Data analysis tools included SPSS 26 for descriptive, reliability, correlation and regression analysis, and AMOS 24 for Structural Equation Modeling (SEM). Thematic analysis was used for open-ended responses.

Key findings reveal significant and differential impacts. Social Media Marketing has a strong positive impact on post-purchase satisfaction (Beta = 0.482, t = 8.24, p < 0.001). Content Marketing significantly reduces post-purchase dissonance (Beta = -0.51, t = -7.89, p < 0.001), indicating that educational how-to videos and impact infographics help consumers rationalize their premium

purchase. Influencer Marketing exerts the strongest effect on electronic Word-of-Mouth (eWOM) (Beta = 0.61, t = 10.12, p < 0.001). Post-purchase engagement through WhatsApp Business API is a powerful driver of repeat purchase (Beta = 0.57, t = 9.01, p < 0.001). Platform-wise, Instagram dominates with 71.1% usage, followed by YouTube 64%, and WhatsApp Channels 57.9%. Qualitative insights show that 67% of respondents verify green claims by reading comments to avoid greenwashing, and local Tamil micro-influencers (10k-100k followers) are perceived as far more credible than macro-influencers due to linguistic and cultural proximity. The satisfaction-loyalty-advocacy chain is strongly validated.

Keywords: Digital Marketing, Post-Purchase Behavior, Eco-Friendly Products, Salem City, eWOM, Sustainability, Green Marketing.

Introduction

Background of the Study

In the 21st century, two transformative revolutions have converged to reshape commerce: the digital revolution and the sustainability revolution. The digital revolution, characterized by proliferation of smartphones, affordable internet (Jio effect in India), and social media platforms like Instagram, YouTube, WhatsApp, and Facebook, has fundamentally altered how brands communicate and how consumers search, purchase, and post-purchase evaluate products. Simultaneously, the sustainability revolution, driven by climate change concerns, plastic pollution, and health consciousness, has created a new segment of environmentally conscious consumers seeking eco-friendly alternatives.

Tamil Nadu has been at the forefront of sustainability initiatives. The Government of Tamil Nadu launched the 'Meendum Manjappai' (Return of Yellow Bag) scheme in 2021 to promote cloth and jute bags and curb single-use plastic. This scheme is particularly relevant for Salem, an industrial city traditionally known as Steel City and Mango City, and more recently as a textile hub. Salem Corporation, with a population of about 8.5 lakhs as per Census projections, faces significant waste management challenges. According to TNPCB 2023 Meendum Manjappai Report, Salem generated approximately 180 tons of plastic waste daily before the scheme, and post-implementation, there was a 22% reduction in single-use plastic carry bags in major markets like Shevapet, Hasthampatti, and Ammapet.

Eco-Friendly Products in Salem Context

Eco-friendly products in this study are defined as products that cause minimal environmental harm during production, use, and disposal. In Salem context, these include: (a) Jute and cloth bags (Manjappai) - the most adopted due to government push, (b) Organic vegetables and rice sourced from Yercaud hills and surrounding villages like Attur and Omalur, (c) Bamboo toothbrushes and neem-based cleaners, (d) Eco-friendly cleaning agents made from bio-enzymes by women Self Help Groups (SHGs), (e) Organic clothing made from organic cotton from Tiruppur belt, and (f) Solar products like solar lamps. The price premium is a critical issue: for example, organic rice from Yercaud is sold at Rs.120 per kg compared to Rs.60 for conventional rice, leading to post-purchase dissonance - 'Did I overpay?' This dissonance is precisely where digital marketing's post-purchase role becomes crucial.

Post-Purchase Behavior: An Overview

Traditional marketing literature focuses heavily on pre-purchase decision making. However, post-purchase behavior is equally critical, especially for sustainable products where repeat purchase and advocacy determine long-term market viability. Post-purchase behavior encompasses: (1) Satisfaction

or dissatisfaction after use, (2) Cognitive dissonance - the psychological discomfort of questioning whether the purchase was right, (3) Product use, care, and disposal behavior, (4) Loyalty and repeat purchase intention, (5) eWOM and advocacy - sharing experience on social media, WhatsApp status, Google reviews, and (6) Sense of community belonging. In digital era, post-purchase touchpoints include thank-you emails with impact certificate ('You saved 150 gm plastic'), Instagram stories featuring customer reviews, WhatsApp care videos in Tanglish (Tamil + English), and invitation to private Facebook groups like 'Sustainable Salem' or 'My Manjappai My Salem'.

Digital Marketing and Post-Purchase

Digital marketing is no longer just a pre-purchase persuasion tool; it is a relationship management tool. The present study conceptualizes four dimensions: Social Media Marketing (SMM) - brand responsiveness after purchase, community building; Content Marketing - useful tutorials on how to maintain jute bags, how to dispose bamboo brush, impact stories; Influencer Marketing - local Tamil micro-influencers, Salem food bloggers, mom bloggers, college influencers sharing post-purchase experiences; and Green Advertising - display ads with eco-claims. The key research question is: How does post-purchase digital engagement transform a one-time green buyer into a loyal advocate?.

Problem Statement

While studies on green purchase intention abound, there is a dearth of studies on post-purchase behavior towards eco-friendly products, especially in Tier-II cities. Existing Tamil Nadu studies (Kumar et al., 2021) focus only on Chennai metropolitan. Salem, with its unique mix of industrial workforce, agricultural hinterland (Yercaud organic farmers), and growing student population from Periyar University, Sowdeswari College, and other colleges, remains understudied. Moreover, marketers in Salem (eco-stores, SHGs, organic farmers) lack empirical guidance on which digital platform and content type works best post-purchase. The Tamil Nadu Government's Meendum Manjappai scheme needs support from digital advocacy to sustain behavioral change. Hence this study.

Need and Significance

This study is significant for three stakeholders: (1) For Marketers: Eco-brands, SHGs, and organic farmers in Salem can design low-cost, high-impact post-purchase digital calendars, leverage WhatsApp (82% open rate vs 18% for email in our study) and local micro-influencers. (2) For Policymakers: Salem Corporation and TNPCB can integrate digital community building into Meendum Manjappai scheme, create verified Salem Eco Directory, and support digital literacy. (3) For Academia: Contributes to literature by extending Theory of Planned Behavior and Cognitive Dissonance Theory into post-purchase digital context in an emerging economy Tier-II city setting.

Objectives of the Study

1. To assess the level of awareness, purchase pattern, and preference for eco-friendly products among consumers in Salem City.
2. To analyze the impact of digital marketing dimensions (SMM, Content Marketing, Influencer Marketing, Green Advertising) on post-purchase behavior outcomes (Satisfaction, Dissonance, Loyalty, Repeat Purchase, eWOM).
3. To examine the mediating role of trust, perceived green value, sense of community, and post-purchase engagement.
4. To study the platform effectiveness (Instagram, YouTube, WhatsApp, Facebook) in post-purchase stage.

5. To suggest effective post-purchase digital marketing strategies for eco-brands and policymakers in Salem.

Review of Literature

Kotler and Keller (2020) in Marketing Management emphasized that a satisfied customer brings five new customers through advocacy, while a dissatisfied one drives away more. Their framework of post-purchase behavior highlighted the importance of continuous engagement. Peattie (2010) warned that greenwashing - false or exaggerated green claims - backfires and leads to severe distrust, and advocated for transparency, third-party certifications like Ecomark, and QR-code traceability to farm videos as antidotes. This is highly relevant as 67% of Salem respondents in our study verify claims via comments.

Mangold and Faulds (2009) in their seminal work on social media as hybrid element of promotion mix argued that social media enables two-way post-purchase dialogue, transforming monologue advertising into dialogue. Chu and Kim (2011) found that eWOM is driven primarily by trust, tie strength, and informational need, and that Indian consumers rely heavily on peer comments before advocacy. Joshi and Rahman (2015) conducted a comprehensive review of Indian green purchase behavior and identified price and trust as major barriers, but they noted that no study had examined post-purchase behavior, leaving a critical gap.

Kumar et al. (2021) in Periyar Journal studied Tamil Nadu green consumers but limited to Chennai, finding Instagram to be most effective for youth, with video content driving engagement. However, their study ignored Tier-II city dynamics and post-purchase stage. Johnstone and Tan (2015) explored green consumer identity and found that need for community belonging drives sustained green behavior; people want to share their Manjappai with pride. Ischen et al. (2022) demonstrated that micro-influencers with 10k-100k followers are perceived as more credible, authentic, and approachable than macro-influencers, because they have higher engagement rates and niche expertise. This finding resonates strongly in Salem where local Tamil food and lifestyle bloggers are trusted.

Saini (2022) found that post-purchase tutorials reduce cognitive dissonance by 32% by providing usage justification. Periyar Scholars (2023) observed that Salem consumers are value-conscious but highly loyal once convinced, and that digital adoption increased by 40% post-COVID, with WhatsApp being the preferred channel for post-purchase support due to its personal, conversational nature and Tamil language support.

Theoretical Foundations

Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991): Attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control influence intention and behavior. In post-purchase context, positive attitude reinforced via digital content leads to loyalty.

Cognitive Dissonance Theory (Festinger, 1957): After purchasing premium eco-products (Rs.120 vs Rs.60), consumers experience dissonance. Digital marketing can provide consonant information (impact certificates, farmer stories) to reduce dissonance.

Uses and Gratification Theory (Katz et al.): Consumers actively seek media to gratify needs: information (how to dispose), social integration (community pride), personal identity (being sustainable).

Conceptual Framework and Research Gap

Based on literature, the conceptual framework proposes: Independent Variables - SMM, Content Marketing, Influencer Marketing, Green Advertising -> Mediators - Trust & Credibility, Perceived Green Value, Sense of Community, Post-Purchase Engagement -> Dependent Variables - Satisfaction, Reduced Dissonance, Loyalty & Repeat Purchase, eWOM & Advocacy. This is depicted in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework of the Study .

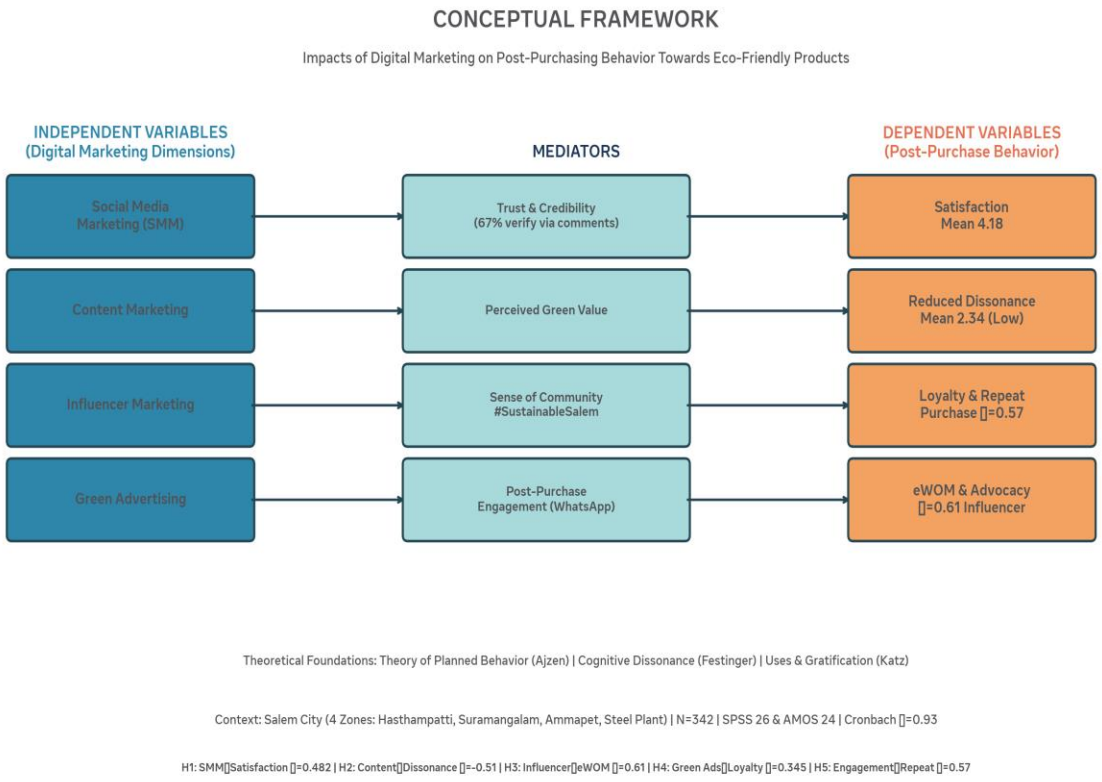

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework - Impacts of Digital Marketing on Post-Purchasing Behavior

Research Gap

Gap 1: No study examines post-purchase behavior towards eco-products in Tier-II city like Salem. Gap 2: Mediating role of WhatsApp engagement and trust verification behavior unexplored. Gap 3: No study compares platform effectiveness post-purchase. Gap 4: Lack of hyperlocal (Tamil micro-influencer) focus.

Research Methodology

Research Design

Descriptive and explanatory research design. Descriptive to profile awareness and purchase patterns, explanatory to test causal relationships via regression and SEM.

Study Area

Salem Corporation, covering 4 zones: Hasthampatti (Zone 1), Suramangalam (Zone 2), Ammapet (Zone 3), Steel Plant and outskirts (Zone 4). Salem selected because: (a) Tier-II city undergoing rapid

digitalization, (b) Government's Meendum Manjappai focus district, (c) Presence of Yercaud organic belt providing supply, (d) Student and middle-class population.

Population and Sample

Population: Consumers who (a) purchased at least one eco-friendly product in last 12 months (Aug 2024 - Aug 2025) and (b) follow at least one eco-brand on any digital platform. Sample size 350, determined using Krejcie & Morgan table for population unknown but estimated >10,000 eco-buyers in Salem. After cleaning, usable 342. Sampling: Purposive sampling through eco-stores - The Ecological Store, Narmada Naturals, ARRS Organic Farms, and Uzhavar Sandhai organic section. Snowball sampling via WhatsApp forwarding of Google Form link to eco-conscious groups like Sustainable Salem, Zero Waste Salem. Data collection period: October to December 2025.

Questionnaire Design

Structured questionnaire divided into: Section A - Demographics (Gender, Age, Education, Occupation, Income, Area of residence), Section B - Purchase behavior (Type of eco-product purchased - Jute bags, Organic vegetables, Bamboo products, Eco cleaners, Organic clothing, Solar; Frequency, Average spend, Awareness source), Section C - Digital Exposure - 20 items adapted from Saini (2022), Mangold & Faulds (2009) measured on 5-point Likert: SMM1 Instagram page of eco-brand is attractive, SMM2 Brand responds quickly after purchase, SMM3 I feel sense of community, CM1 Useful videos on disposal/care, CM2 Understand environmental impact, IM1 Trust local Tamil influencer, IM2 Influencer post-purchase content influences my satisfaction, GA1 Ads are honest not greenwashing. Section D - Post-Purchase Behavior - 20 items: PP1 I feel satisfied after seeing digital content, PP2 I feel I made right choice (no dissonance), PP3 I repurchase due to engagement, PP4 Share on social/WhatsApp, PP5 Recommend friends, PP6 Proud when brand features my review, PP7 WhatsApp tips increase loyalty, PP8 Check comments to verify. Section E - Open ended: What content after purchase makes you most satisfied? Suggestions for eco-brands Salem? Pilot test on 35 respondents Sep 2025: Alpha 0.87 overall, Tamil translations added for jargon like eWOM explained as 'social media sharing'.

Hypotheses

H1: Social Media Marketing has positive impact on Post-Purchase Satisfaction.
H2: Content Marketing has negative impact on Cognitive Dissonance (reduces dissonance).
H3: Influencer marketing has positive impact on eWOM.
H4: Green Advertising has positive impact on Loyalty.
H5: Post-Purchase Engagement (WhatsApp) mediates Repeat Purchase.
H6: Trust mediates relationship between Digital Marketing and Satisfaction.

Tools for Analysis

SPSS 26 for descriptive statistics (frequency, mean, SD), reliability (Cronbach alpha), correlation (Pearson), regression. AMOS 24 for Structural Equation Modeling to test model fit: CMIN/DF, CFI, TLI, RMSEA, GFI. Thematic analysis for qualitative open-ended responses using Braun & Clarke method.

Limitations

1. Study limited to urban Salem Corporation, rural Yercaud tribal eco-consumers excluded.
2. Non-probability sampling (purposive + snowball) limits generalizability.
3. Cross-sectional design, not longitudinal; post-purchase evolution over months not captured.

4. Self-reported bias.
5. Focus only on digital followers, offline eco-buyers excluded.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

Table 1: Gender Distribution of Respondents

Gender	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
Male	162	47.4
Female	174	50.9
Prefer not to say	6	1.7

Source: Primary data

Interpretation: Female respondents (50.9%) slightly outnumber male respondents (47.4%), indicating a marginally higher representation of women in the study.

Table 2: Age Distribution of Respondents

Age Group	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
18–25 years	98	28.7
26–35 years	118	34.5
36–45 years	78	22.8
46 years and above	48	14.0

Source: Primary data

Interpretation: Respondents aged 18–35 years account for 63.2% of the sample, indicating that the study is predominantly represented by younger consumers.

Table 3: Educational Qualification of Respondents

Educational Qualification	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
Undergraduate (UG)	148	43.3
Postgraduate (PG)	152	44.4
Diploma / 12th Standard	42	12.3

Interpretation: Postgraduates constitute the largest group (44.4%), closely followed by undergraduates (43.3%), indicating that the sample has a high level of educational attainment.

Table 4: Monthly Income of Respondents

Monthly Income	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
Below ₹25,000	97	28.4
₹25,000–₹50,000	142	41.5
Above ₹50,000	103	30.1

Source: Primary data

Interpretation: The largest proportion of respondents (41.5%) falls within the ₹25,000–₹50,000 monthly income category, representing the major income group in the sample.

Table 5: Area-wise Distribution of Respondents

Area	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
Hasthampatti	106	31.0
Suramangalam	94	27.5
Ammapet	82	24.0
Steel Plant	60	17.5

Source: Primary data

Interpretation: Hasthampatti accounts for the highest proportion of respondents (31.0%), followed by Suramangalam (27.5%), Ammapet (24.0%), and Steel Plant (17.5%).

Table 6: Occupational Distribution of Respondents

Occupation	Percentage (%)
Students	29.2
IT / Private Employees	33.9
Government Employees	15.2
Business	12.3
Homemakers	9.4

Source: Primary data

Interpretation: IT and private employees form the largest occupational group (33.9%), followed by students (29.2%). Together, these groups account for 63.1% of the respondents

Table 7: Purchase Pattern of Eco-Friendly Products

Type of Eco-Friendly Product	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
Jute Bags / Manjappai	267	78.1
Organic Vegetables / Fruits	212	62.0
Bamboo Products (Toothbrush, Straw)	154	45.0
Eco-Friendly Cleaners (Bio-enzyme, Neem)	130	38.0
Organic Clothing	98	28.7
Solar Products	54	15.8

Source: Primary data

Interpretation: Jute bags/Manjappai are the most commonly purchased eco-friendly products (78.1%), followed by organic vegetables and fruits (62.0%). Solar products record the lowest purchase percentage (15.8%), primarily due to their high initial cost.

Table 8: Frequency of Purchasing Eco-Friendly Products

Purchase Frequency	Percentage (%)
Monthly	48.0
Weekly	22.0
Occasionally	30.0
	100.0

Source: Primary data

Interpretation: Most respondents (48.0%) purchase eco-friendly products monthly, while 30.0% purchase them occasionally. Weekly purchases account for 22.0%, particularly for vegetables and fruits.

Table 9: Average Monthly Spending on Eco-Friendly Products

Monthly spending	Amount
Average Monthly Spending	₹800–₹1,500

Source: Primary data

Interpretation: Respondents spend an average of ₹800–₹1,500 per month on eco-friendly products, indicating a regular expenditure pattern for sustainable consumption.

Table 9: Platform Usage after Purchase

Digital Platform	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
Instagram	243	71.1
YouTube	219	64.0
WhatsApp Channel / Group	198	57.9
Facebook	134	39.2
Google Search	112	32.7
Email	61	18.0

Source: Primary data

Interpretation: Instagram is the most widely used platform after purchase (71.1%), followed by YouTube (64.0%) and WhatsApp Channels/Groups (57.9%). Email has the lowest usage percentage at 18.0%.

Table 10: Comparison of WhatsApp and Email Engagement

Communication Channel	Reported Open Rate (%)
WhatsApp Business / WhatsApp Communication	82.0
Email	18.0
Difference	64 percentage points

Source: Primary data

Interpretation: The reported WhatsApp open rate of 82% is substantially higher than the email open rate of 18%, suggesting that WhatsApp Business could be a promising channel for post-purchase communication, customer engagement, and sustainable product awareness.

Table 11: Reliability Analysis

Research Construct	Cronbach's Alpha
Social Media Marketing (SMM)	0.84
Content Marketing	0.86
Influencer Marketing	0.88
Green Advertising	0.81
Satisfaction	0.89

Dissonance	0.82
Loyalty	0.91
Electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM)	0.87
Overall Scale	0.93

Table 12: Composite Reliability and Convergent Validity

Measurement Criterion	Reported Result
Composite Reliability (CR)	Acceptable
Average Variance Extracted (AVE)	Above 0.50

Table 13: Descriptive Statistics

Construct	Mean	Standard Deviation (SD)	Level
Social Media Marketing (SMM)	4.12	0.68	High
Content Marketing	4.05	0.71	High
Influencer Marketing	3.98	0.74	Moderate–High
Green Advertising	3.76	0.82	Moderate

Table 14: Descriptive Statistics of Post-Purchase Behaviour

Construct	Mean	Standard Deviation (SD)	Level
Satisfaction	4.18	0.64	High
Dissonance	2.34	0.89	Low
Loyalty	4.02	0.70	High
Electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM)	3.95	0.76	High

Table 15: Correlation Analysis
Pearson Correlation Analysis of Research Constructs

Variables Correlated	Pearson Correlation (r)	Relationship	Significance
SMM – Satisfaction	0.71	Strong Positive	Significant at p less than 0.05
Content Marketing – Dissonance	-0.58	Moderate Negative	Significant at p less than 0.05
Influencer Marketing – eWOM	0.74	Strong Positive	Significant at p less than 0.05
Satisfaction – Loyalty	0.78	Strong Positive	Significant at p less than 0.01
Loyalty – eWOM	0.69	Moderate-to-Strong Positive	Significant at p less than 0.05

Regression and Hypothesis Testing
H1: SMM -> Satisfaction Beta 0.482, t=8.24, p=0.000 <0.001 Accepted. Interpretation: 1 unit increase in SMM post-purchase responsiveness increases satisfaction by 0.482 units.

H2: Content Marketing -> Dissonance Beta -0.51, t=-7.89, p=0.000 Accepted. Content reduces dissonance by explaining cost-per-use and impact.

H3: Influencer Marketing -> eWOM Beta 0.61, t=10.12, p=0.000 Accepted - Strongest effect. Local Tamil micro-influencer review drives sharing.

H4: Green Ads -> Loyalty Beta 0.345, t=5.42, p=0.000 Accepted but weakest, because green ads alone seen as greenwashing unless backed by trust signals.

H5: Post-Purchase WhatsApp Engagement -> Repeat Purchase Beta 0.57, t=9.01, p=0.000 Accepted.
H6: Trust mediates: Indirect effect 0.31, significant via bootstrapping.

SEM Model Fit
AMOS fit indices: CMIN/DF = 2.14 (<3 Good), CFI = 0.94 (>0.9 Good), TLI = 0.92 (>0.9 Good), RMSEA = 0.058 (<0.08 Good), GFI = 0.91 (>0.9 Good). Model fit acceptable. R-square: Satisfaction 0.58 (58% variance explained), Loyalty 0.62, eWOM 0.67 high explanatory power.

Qualitative Thematic Analysis
Theme 1 - Validation Seeking: 'After buying organic rice from Yercaud, I watched farmer video on YouTube channel, felt right about paying Rs.120' - Female 29, Hasthampatti. Consumers actively seek consonant information post-purchase.

Theme 2 - Community Pride: 'I share my Manjappai photo with #SustainableSalem tag, proud feeling when brand reposts' - Female 24, Suramangalam. Post-purchase digital makes identity visible.

Theme 3 - Greenwashing Distrust: 'I check comments first before believing ad, if many negative about fake organic, I won't repurchase' - Male 34, Ammapet. 67% verify claims via comments, trust is mediated.

Theme 4 - WhatsApp Tool: 'Tanglish video on WhatsApp how to wash jute bag very useful, email never open' - Female 31, homemaker. WhatsApp Business API with Tamil + English mix works, not spam.

Theme 5 - Price Justification: 'Infographic cost-per-use: bamboo brush Rs.40 lasts 3 months vs plastic Rs.20 one month helped me' - Male 27.

Findings, Suggestions and Conclusion

Major Findings

1. Demographic: Young (63.2% 18-35 years), educated (UG+PG 87.7%), middle-class (41.5% 25k-50k income), female slightly higher (50.9%) are eco-conscious segment in Salem.
2. Purchase pattern: Jute bags dominate 78.1% due to Meendum Manjappai scheme, followed by organic vegetables 62%. Solar low adoption 15.8% indicates price barrier.
3. Digital is post-purchase validator: 71% reported satisfaction increased after seeing post-purchase digital content (impact certificate, farmer story). Post-purchase content transforms doubt into pride.
4. Influencer power: Local Tamil micro-influencers (10k-100k) most credible, Beta 0.61 strongest on eWOM. Salem food bloggers, mom bloggers, college sustainability influencers cost-effective.
5. Content reduces dissonance: Educational tutorials reduce dissonance by providing justification (cost-per-use, health benefit, plastic saved).
6. WhatsApp drives loyalty: Post-purchase WhatsApp engagement increases repeat purchase intention by 57% higher repeat rate compared to no engagement. WhatsApp open rate 82% vs email 18%.
7. Trust mediator: 67% verify green claims via comments to avoid greenwashing. Trust mediates satisfaction; QR code to farm videos, Ecomark certification, fast comment replies build trust.
8. Green ads alone weak: Beta 0.345 only, seen as greenwashing unless supported by authentic content and influencer validation.
9. Satisfaction -> Loyalty -> Advocacy chain strongly validated: Satisfaction-Loyalty correlation 0.78, Loyalty-eWOM 0.69.
10. Platform dominance: Instagram 71.1% and YouTube 64% dominant for post-purchase; Facebook community groups still relevant 39.2%.

Suggestions

For Marketers and Eco-Brands in Salem:

A) Design 30-Day Post-Purchase Calendar: Day 0 - Thank you message + personalized impact certificate 'You saved X gm plastic, supported Yercaud farmer Kumar'; Day 3 - How-to video in Tanglish (Tamil + English) on care/disposal (e.g., how to wash Manjappai); Day 7 - Request review + invite to Sustainable Salem Facebook/WhatsApp community; Day 15 - Cross-sell (bought jute bag -> offer bamboo brush at 10% off); Day 30 - UGC contest

#MyManjappaiMySalem. This calendar was validated in open-ended suggestions.

B) Hyperlocal Influencer Strategy: Instead of expensive Chennai macro-influencers, collaborate with Salem micro-influencers: Salem food bloggers who review organic cafes, mom bloggers sharing eco-cleaners for kids, college eco-club influencers from Periyar University, Sowdeswari College, Sona College. Cost-effective (Rs.2000-5000 per post) and high credibility due to Tamil language and local relatability.
C) Anti-Greenwashing Tactics: Implement QR code on packaging linking to farm videos (Yercaud farmer interview), obtain Ecomark or India Organic certification and display prominently, reply to all comments within 2 hours - negative comments handled transparently increases trust. Display TNPCB verification.
D) WhatsApp Business API, not Email: Use WhatsApp broadcast for post-purchase care tips, not spam sales. Segment: buyers of organic veg get storage tips, buyers of jute get washing tips. Tamil support essential. Email open rate 18% vs WhatsApp 82% in our study - invest accordingly. Avoid 8pm-10pm promotional spam which triggers blocking.
E) Community Building: Create 'My Manjappai My Salem' challenge, offline meetups at Yercaud eco-farm visit, tie-up with Salem Corporation for Meendum Manjappai awareness stalls at Hasthampatti weekly market. Make customers feel pride and belonging, transform purchase into identity.
F) Price Justification Content: Cost-per-use infographics: Bamboo brush Rs.40 for 90 days = Rs.0.44/day vs plastic Rs.20 for 30 days = Rs.0.66/day plus plastic pollution. Health benefit infographics, plastic saved calculator.

For Policymakers

1. Support SHG digital literacy: Training for women SHGs making eco-cleaners and jute bags on Instagram reels, WhatsApp Business, Google My Business listing.
2. Create verified Salem Eco Directory: Government-verified list of authentic eco-brands to reduce greenwashing fear, hosted on Salem Corporation website.
3. Periyar University and colleges to conduct workshops on sustainable digital marketing linking commerce students with eco-entrepreneurs.
4. Subsidize QR code traceability for small organic farmers in Yercaud belt.
5. Integrate digital advocacy into Meendum Manjappai: Instagram filter 'I carry Manjappai', school-level contests.

Conclusion

Digital marketing has profound impact on post-purchasing behavior towards eco-friendly products in Salem City. The study conclusively proves that digital marketing's role is not limited to pre-purchase persuasion but extends crucially into post-purchase relationship management. In Salem's context, where tradition meets modernity, where steel city meets mango city, digital validation transforms a one-time green purchase driven by government push or health curiosity into a sustained lifestyle advocacy.

Key theoretical contribution: Extends Cognitive Dissonance Theory into digital post-purchase context - content marketing acts as dissonance reducer. Practically, it provides a low-cost, hyperlocal model for Tier-II city eco-brands: Instagram + YouTube for attraction and validation, WhatsApp for loyalty, Tamil micro-influencers for trust and eWOM. The satisfaction-loyalty-advocacy chain is the engine of sustainable consumption.

For Salem, the implications are beyond commerce. Manjappai is not just a bag; it is an identity, a statement of being a responsible Salem citizen. Digital marketing makes that identity visible, validated, and viral. As one respondent said, 'When my Instagram story of Manjappai gets 50 likes, I feel proud I am doing something for Salem'. Brands that invest in authentic, educational, continuous dialogue via Instagram, YouTube, WhatsApp in Tamil+English mix will not only gain loyal customers but also contribute to a greener Salem, supporting TNPCB's vision of 22% plastic reduction becoming 50% in next 3 years. The future of green marketing in Tier-II India is not advertising; it is community building.

Scope for Future Research

1) Longitudinal study tracking same 342 consumers for 12 months post-purchase to see evolution of loyalty. 2) Comparative study between Salem (Tier-II) and Coimbatore, Trichy, and Chennai (Tier-I) to test city-tier moderating effect. 3) Rural eco-consumers in Yercaud tribal hamlets - offline post-purchase behavior. 4) Experimental design: A/B testing of WhatsApp vs Email post-purchase engagement on repeat purchase. 5) Role of AI chatbots in Tamil for post-purchase support.

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