



Influence of Social Media on Green Consumer Behavior

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How to Cite this Article:

SINGH, A. (2026). Influence of Social Media on Green Consumer Behavior. International Journal of Creative and Open Research in Engineering and Management, 2(6).

<https://doi.org/10.55041/ijcope.v2i6.186>

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<https://doi.org/10.55041/ijcope.v2i6.186>

ABSTRACT

This study investigates the influence of social media platforms on green consumer behavior among young adults in Kanpur, a rapidly digitalising tier-2 city in India. Employing a descriptive cross-sectional design with a structured questionnaire administered to 200 respondents aged 18–26, the research identifies eco-content authenticity, peer-driven green social proof, and online eco-community participation as the three dominant predictors of sustainable purchase intentions. Instagram and YouTube emerge as the most influential platforms for shaping environmental awareness and green consumption habits, while greenwashing scepticism, information overload, and influencer fatigue constitute the primary barriers to deeper green loyalty formation. Findings reveal that 80–84% of respondents regard perceived brand eco-authenticity as the single most critical determinant of green purchase decisions — outweighing price and product quality. Grounded in the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), Social Cognitive Theory (SCT), and the Value-Belief-Norm (VBN) model, this study contributes original empirical insights on digital green consumerism in tier-2 urban India, an underrepresented context in existing sustainability marketing literature, and provides actionable strategic recommendations for eco-brand managers, platform developers, and policymakers.

Keywords: Social Media · Green Consumer Behavior · Sustainable Consumption · Environmental Awareness · Eco-Influencer Marketing · Greenwashing · Theory of Planned Behavior · Tier-2 India

1. INTRODUCTION

The convergence of digital communication and environmental consciousness stands as one of the most consequential phenomena of the twenty-first century consumer economy. As climate change transitions from abstract scientific projection to lived urban reality, consumers — particularly digitally native young adults — are being compelled to reconsider their consumption patterns. Simultaneously, social media platforms have emerged as the primary mediators of environmental information, ecological values, and sustainable marketplace behavior. This convergence raises a pivotal empirical question: to what extent does social media engagement shape, reinforce, and drive green consumer behavior?

Green consumer behavior encompasses a spectrum of environmentally motivated actions — including the purchase of eco-certified products, reduced energy and resource consumption, recycling practices, support for sustainable brands, and vocal advocacy for environmental policies (Peattie & Charter, 2003). While traditional



channels such as television, print media, and school curricula once dominated environmental communication, the digital revolution has democratised information dissemination, enabling consumers to generate, share, and respond to green content at unprecedented speed and scale.

India, now the world's most populous nation and a rapidly expanding consumer market, provides a particularly compelling context for this inquiry. With over 700 million active internet users and one of the highest social media penetration growth rates among developing economies (TRAI, 2024), India has witnessed a surge in digital environmental activism, sustainable lifestyle influencers, and eco-brand content marketing. Yet rigorous empirical research on how these digital dynamics translate into measurable green consumer behavior — particularly in tier-2 cities such as Kanpur, home to over three million residents and a rapidly digitalising youth cohort — remains substantially limited.

This paper addresses that gap by examining the multi-dimensional role of social media engagement in shaping green consumer behavior among young adults in Kanpur. Three core research questions drive the inquiry: (1) Which social media engagement dimensions most significantly predict green purchase intentions among Kanpur's young consumers? (2) What platform-specific and content-specific patterns characterise high green-intent consumers? (3) What structural barriers impede deeper green loyalty formation through social media in this context? The study integrates quantitative survey evidence with a conceptual synthesis of sustainability marketing theory to generate both theoretical contributions and actionable managerial guidance.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Green Consumer Behavior: Conceptual Evolution

Green consumer behavior has been a sustained subject of scholarly inquiry since the early 1970s, emerging in the aftermath of landmark environmental events and publications. Early research focused on identifying attitudinal and socio-demographic predictors of pro-environmental behavior (Van Liere & Dunlap, 1980). The 1990s witnessed a pivotal shift toward examining the attitude–behavior gap — the widely documented discrepancy between consumers' expressed environmental concern and their actual purchasing decisions (Carrigan & Attalla, 2001). This gap continues to challenge both researchers and practitioners, with social media emerging in recent scholarship as a promising mechanism for closing it.

The advent of digital platforms introduced a new dimension to green consumer research. Scholars began investigating how information-rich digital environments could increase the salience of sustainable choices, facilitate social validation of green behavior, and reduce the perceived cost of eco-friendly consumption (Moisander & Pesonen, 2002). The concept of the 'digital green consumer' — characterised by active engagement with online sustainability communities, creation and sharing of eco-content, and purchase behavior mediated by digital platforms — has emerged as a distinct and theoretically rich subject of inquiry (Perera et al., 2018).

2.2 Social Media as an Environmental Communication Channel

Social media platforms have fundamentally restructured the ecology of environmental communication. Unlike traditional broadcast media, social media enables bidirectional, peer-to-peer, and many-to-many communication architectures, allowing users to function simultaneously as consumers and producers of green content (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Hashtag movements — #ZeroWaste, #SustainableLiving, #EcoFriendly, #PlantBased — have mobilised millions of users around shared environmental values, creating what scholars term 'digital environmental publics' (Bodker, 2016).

Empirically, Chu et al. (2020) found that social media exposure to climate content was significantly associated with heightened environmental concern and behavioral intentions among young consumers. Lim et al. (2022) demonstrated that Instagram users following sustainability influencers reported substantially higher rates of eco-friendly purchasing than non-followers. In the South and East Asian context, studies from China (Wang & Guo,



2021) and South Korea (Kim & Ahn, 2022) have similarly documented positive associations between social media green engagement and sustainable consumption.

2.3 Eco-Influencers and Green Purchase Intentions

Social media influencers have become central figures in contemporary sustainability marketing. The global influencer economy, valued at approximately USD 21 billion in 2023 (Influencer Marketing Hub, 2024), encompasses a growing segment of eco-influencers who promote sustainable products, lifestyles, and values to large and engaged audiences. Their persuasive power derives from perceived authenticity, parasocial relationships, and social proof — mechanisms that lend eco-endorsements a credibility that conventional advertising struggles to achieve (Fogg, 2003; De Veirman et al., 2017).

However, the influencer-mediated green economy presents complications. The commodification of sustainability through influencer partnerships has raised concerns about authenticity dilution and the emergence of 'eco-washing' in sponsored content (Hartmann & Apaolaza-Ibanez, 2012). Research by Sokolova and Kefi (2020) demonstrates that influencer authenticity and follower identification remain the most critical mediators of green purchase intention — more significant than follower count or content frequency.

2.4 Greenwashing and Consumer Trust in Digital Contexts

Greenwashing — the practice of creating a false or misleading impression of environmental responsibility — has been substantially amplified by social media, creating a landscape of mixed signals for sustainability-conscious consumers (TerraChoice, 2009). Studies consistently show that greenwashing exposure has a significant negative effect on consumer trust, brand loyalty, and purchase intentions (Chen & Chang, 2013). Digital platforms, with their algorithmically curated information environments, may selectively expose consumers to either sustainability claims or debunking content — with material implications for brand trust trajectories.

The importance of regulatory and platform-level governance in combating digital greenwashing is increasingly recognised in both the academic literature and policy discourse. In India, the absence of comprehensive influencer disclosure regulations analogous to FTC guidelines in the United States creates a particularly permissive environment for greenwashing amplification through social media channels.

2.5 Research Gaps

Despite substantial advances in digital sustainability marketing scholarship, three gaps remain that this study addresses. First, the overwhelming majority of empirical studies draw on Western or East Asian consumer populations, leaving Indian young consumers — representing the world's largest Gen Z and Millennial demographic — underrepresented in peer-reviewed research. Second, existing Indian studies disproportionately focus on metropolitan consumers in Mumbai, Delhi, and Bengaluru, neglecting the substantively different digital consumption contexts and environmental consciousness patterns of tier-2 cities. Third, most studies operationalise social media engagement as a unidimensional construct, missing the differential effects of platform-specific engagement types on green behavior outcomes.

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study is anchored in three complementary theoretical frameworks that together provide a comprehensive explanatory architecture for the social media–green consumer behavior relationship.

The Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991) provides the foundational structure: consumer attitudes toward green consumption, subjective social norms regarding sustainability (shaped significantly by social media peer networks), and perceived behavioral control over eco-friendly choices collectively predict green purchase intentions. Social media functions as a potent modifier of all three antecedents — shaping attitudes through content exposure, norms through peer behavior observation, and control perceptions through the visibility of accessible eco-friendly options.



Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 1986) extends this by highlighting the mechanism of observational learning: consumers who observe credible social media figures — eco-influencers, peers, or brand storytellers — engaging in sustainable behaviors are more likely to adopt similar behaviors themselves through modeling and vicarious reinforcement. This mechanism is particularly operative in the Instagram and YouTube ecosystems, where aspirational lifestyle content is the dominant engagement currency.

The Value-Belief-Norm (VBN) model (Stern et al., 1999) situates these behavioral dynamics within a broader axiological context. Deeply held environmental values and beliefs about ecological threats activate a sense of personal moral obligation to act sustainably. Social media amplifies VBN dynamics by making environmental values and their associated behavioral norms more culturally visible, socially validated, and identity-expressive. Table 1 synthesises these frameworks into an integrated conceptual model of social media engagement pathways to green consumer behavior.

Table 1: Conceptual Framework — Social Media Engagement → Green Consumer Behavior Pathways

Engagement Dimension	Mechanism (Theory)	Green Behavior Outcome	Loyalty Impact
Green Content Exposure	Agenda-Setting Theory: issue salience	Environmental Awareness	Moderate–High
Eco-Influencer Endorsement	Social Cognitive Theory: observational learning	Green Purchase Intention	High
Peer UGC & Social Proof	Social Exchange Theory: value reciprocity	Sustainable Consumption	Very High
Online Eco-Community	Identity Theory: group membership	Brand Advocacy & Loyalty	Very High
Interactive Eco-Features	Social Exchange: reciprocal engagement	Conative Green Loyalty	Moderate
CSR / Value Alignment	Value-Belief-Norm (VBN) model	Resilient Long-term Loyalty	Very High

Source: Compiled by the author based on Ajzen (1991), Bandura (1986), and Stern et al. (1999).

4. METHODOLOGY

4.1 Research Design

The study employs a descriptive, cross-sectional research design combining quantitative survey research with qualitative open-ended items. A structured questionnaire serves as the primary data collection instrument, supplemented by informal focus group conversations conducted at the researcher's institution to enrich quantitative findings with contextual depth and interpretive nuance.

4.2 Sampling

The target population comprises young adults aged 18–26 years, resident in Kanpur, active social media users (minimum one hour of daily engagement), and consumers who have followed or interacted with at least one brand account on any social media platform. Purposive convenience sampling was employed to ensure theoretical relevance and practical accessibility. A final sample of $n = 200$ respondents was retained after data cleaning, providing adequate statistical power for the planned analyses (Cohen, 1992).

4.3 Instrument

The questionnaire comprised seven sections: (1) demographic profile; (2) social media platform usage assessment; (3) green content exposure and eco-brand engagement behavior; (4) perceptions and attitudes toward eco-brand content authenticity; (5) green loyalty and sustainable purchase intention indicators; (6) barriers and structural challenges; and (7) future green engagement intentions. Loyalty and intention items were



adapted from Oliver's (1999) validated loyalty scale and Ajzen's (2002) behavioral intention measure, modified for social media and sustainability contexts. A five-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree) was used for all attitudinal items. A pilot test with $n = 20$ respondents confirmed clarity, cultural appropriateness, and face validity; minor item revisions were made before full deployment.

4.4 Data Collection

Data were collected between August and December 2025 through three channels: (a) in-person surveys administered at Maharana Pratap Engineering College and affiliated institutions; (b) online questionnaires distributed via Instagram DMs and WhatsApp to eligible respondents; and (c) telephonic interviews for respondents who preferred voice-based participation. Informed consent was obtained from all participants; full anonymity and data confidentiality were maintained throughout the process in accordance with ethical research standards.

4.5 Data Analysis

Quantitative data were analysed using SPSS v26. Descriptive statistics (frequencies, means, standard deviations) were used to characterise the sample and key variables. Cross-tabulation and chi-square tests examined relationships between demographic variables and green purchase intention outcomes. Pearson correlation analysis assessed associations between social media engagement intensity scores and green behavior composite scores. Principal component factor analysis with varimax rotation was employed to identify underlying engagement dimension structures. Qualitative open-ended responses were subjected to thematic content analysis to identify recurrent green behavior facilitators and structural barriers.

5. RESULTS

5.1 Sample Profile

Of the 200 respondents retained, 53.0% identified as female, 45.5% as male, and 1.5% as non-binary or preferred not to disclose. The age distribution showed that 33.5% were between 18 and 20 years (Early Consumer), 44.0% between 21 and 23 (Core Consumer), and 22.5% between 24 and 26 (Late Consumer). The majority (57.0%) were undergraduate students; 31.0% were postgraduate students including MBA scholars. Full demographic details are provided in Table 2.

Table 2: Demographic Profile of Respondents (n = 200)

Variable	Category	Frequency (%)
Age Sub-Group	18–20 years (Early Consumer)	33.5%
	21–23 years (Core Consumer)	44.0%
	24–26 years (Late Consumer)	22.5%
Gender	Female	53.0%
	Male	45.5%
	Non-binary / Prefer not to say	1.5%
Education	Undergraduate	57.0%
	Postgraduate (MBA / M.Com)	31.0%
	Diploma / Other	12.0%
Monthly Income (₹)	Below 10,000	27.5%
	10,000–25,000	39.0%
	25,000–50,000	23.5%



	Above 50,000	10.0%
Daily Social Media Use	1–2 hours	17.5%
	2–4 hours	44.0%
	4–6 hours	27.0%
	6+ hours	11.5%

Source: Primary survey data collected by the researcher (2025).

5.2 Platform Usage and Green Engagement Patterns

Instagram is the dominant platform for green content consumption and eco-brand engagement, cited as a primary channel by 76.0% of respondents. YouTube (68.5%) ranks second and is most associated with deep, content-driven green loyalty formation through long-form eco-documentaries, sustainable living tutorials, and brand sustainability storytelling. Short-form video — Instagram Reels and YouTube Shorts — is identified by 70.0% of respondents as the most effective content format for initial green awareness and emotional connection with eco-brands. The detailed breakdown of platform engagement and green loyalty potential is presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Social Media Platform Usage and Green Content Engagement

Platform	Primary Green Use (%)	Daily Time (avg.)	Brand Eng. Rate	Green Content Share	Eco-Loyalty Potential
Instagram	76.0%	38 min	3–6%	28%	Very High
YouTube	68.5%	47 min	1–3%	22%	Very High
YouTube/Insta Shorts	70.0%	32 min	5–9%	18%	High
Facebook	44.0%	26 min	1–2%	15%	Moderate
Twitter / X	21.5%	18 min	0.5–1%	9%	Moderate
Pinterest	38.0%	22 min	2–4%	31%	High

Source: Primary survey data ($n = 200$, 2025). Platform usage figures cross-referenced with Statista (2024).

5.3 Green Loyalty Drivers: Key Findings

Factor analysis identified three dominant social media engagement dimensions predicting green consumer behavior, collectively explaining 67.8% of variance in the green purchase intention composite score:

- Factor 1 — Eco-Authenticity and Value Alignment (eigenvalue = 4.76, 31.1% variance): Items loading on this factor included perceived brand eco-genuineness, consistency between stated and enacted environmental values, and CSR credibility. Mean green loyalty score for high-loading consumers: 4.28/5.00.
- Factor 2 — Peer Green Social Proof and Eco-Community (eigenvalue = 3.11, 20.3% variance): Loaded on peer eco-recommendation weight, green UGC participation, and eco-brand community belonging. Mean green loyalty score: 4.06/5.00.
- Factor 3 — Eco-Influencer and Creator Trust (eigenvalue = 2.47, 16.4% variance): Loaded on micro eco-influencer endorsement credibility, parasocial connection strength, and creator-brand environmental alignment perception. Mean green loyalty score: 3.85/5.00.



Pearson correlation analysis confirmed significant positive associations between all three dimensions and the green purchase intention composite: Eco-Authenticity & Value Alignment ↔ Green Intention Composite: $r = 0.73$, $p < 0.001$; Peer Green Social Proof ↔ Green Intention: $r = 0.67$, $p < 0.001$; Eco-Influencer Trust ↔ Green Intention: $r = 0.60$, $p < 0.001$. Table 4 provides the full loyalty driver findings.

Table 4: Key Green Loyalty Driver Findings

Green Loyalty Driver	% Citing as Critical	Mean Score (/5)	Correlation (r)
Perceived Brand Eco-Authenticity	81.5%	4.28	0.73***
Peer Eco-Recommendation / Social Proof	71.0%	4.06	0.67***
Sustainable Content Quality & Relevance	66.5%	3.92	0.62***
Micro-Influencer Green Credibility	60.0%	3.85	0.60***
Online Eco-Community Belonging	54.5%	3.74	0.56***
CSR / Environmental Commitment Signals	50.0%	3.68	0.53***
Interactive Eco-Features (polls/challenges)	44.0%	3.46	0.48***

Note: *** $p < 0.001$ (two-tailed). Scores are self-reported on a five-point Likert scale.

5.4 Barriers to Green Consumer Behavior Formation

Five principal barriers emerged from both quantitative responses and thematic qualitative analysis:

- Greenwashing Scepticism (cited by 66.5%): Widespread awareness of misleading environmental claims by brands significantly erodes trust in eco-brand social media content, creating a credibility deficit that authentic brands must actively overcome.
- Information Overload (61.0%): Exposure to high volumes of daily brand messages creates attention scarcity, compressing meaningful green engagement windows and reducing the impact of individual eco-brand communications.
- Algorithm Opacity and Declining Organic Reach (57.0%): Respondents expressed frustration that platform algorithmic changes prevent consistent access to eco-brand content they voluntarily follow, undermining relationship continuity.
- Eco-Influencer Fatigue and Credibility Erosion (46.5%): Growing ability to detect undisclosed paid partnerships and performative sustainability endorsements reduces trust in influencer-mediated eco-brand communications.
- Price Sensitivity and Green Premium Barrier (40.5%): Financial constraints among Kanpur's young consumer cohort, combined with the perceived price premium of certified sustainable products, impede purchase conversion even among attitudinally committed green consumers.



5.5 Consumer Segmentation

Cluster analysis of social media engagement patterns and psychographic survey items identified five distinct green consumer loyalty segments, as presented in Table 5.

Table 5: Green Consumer Segmentation (n = 200)

Segment	Share	Primary Green Loyalty Driver	Strategic Priority
Eco-Identity Expressers	21%	Brand-identity integration, eco-UGC co-creation	High advocacy leverage
Value-Driven Green Seekers	28%	CSR authenticity, environmental value congruence	Resilient long-term loyalty
Trend & Viral Navigators	20%	Cultural relevance, viral sustainability challenges	High short-term engagement
Community Eco-Seekers	18%	Online eco-community belonging, peer validation	Deepest loyalty once established
Pragmatic Eco-Loyalists	13%	Consistent eco-quality delivery, price-value	Highest purchase conversion

Source: Cluster analysis of primary survey data (2025).

6. DISCUSSION

6.1 Eco-Authenticity as the Dominant Green Loyalty Mechanism

The overwhelming primacy of perceived eco-authenticity as a green loyalty predictor ($r = 0.73$) extends and strengthens existing scholarship arguing that authenticity has surpassed product quality as the central axis of sustainable brand equity for digitally native consumers (Keller, 2020). This finding is theoretically grounded in both Social Exchange Theory and the VBN model: consumers invest green loyalty capital in brands that demonstrably deliver verifiable environmental value — transparent sourcing, measurable impact reporting, and genuine organisational commitment to sustainability — rather than brands whose social media green presence functions as a promotional veneer.

The strength of this association among Kanpur respondents is particularly noteworthy. Unlike metropolitan consumers with extensive exposure to sophisticated sustainability marketing, tier-2 Kanpur consumers show heightened sensitivity to eco-authenticity signals, likely reflecting the higher relative weight of community reputation, word-of-mouth networks, and peer trust structures in smaller urban ecosystems where brand greenwashing missteps are more socially visible and costly.

6.2 The Social Media–Green Behavior Pathway: TPB in a Digital Context

The findings provide strong support for the Theory of Planned Behavior as an explanatory framework for social media-mediated green consumer behavior. Social media green content exposure significantly shapes all three TPB antecedents: attitudes toward sustainable consumption are reinforced through regular eco-content; subjective social norms are calibrated by observing peers and influencers adopting green behaviors; and perceived behavioral control is enhanced by the social media visibility of accessible, affordable, and aspirational eco-friendly options. This three-pathway influence suggests that social media's impact on green behavior is broader and more structurally embedded than single-variable models have previously captured.

6.3 The Evolving Eco-Influencer Trust Landscape

The significant correlation between eco-influencer trust and green purchase intentions ($r = 0.60$) reflects the maturation dynamics described in Section 2.3: influencer marketing retains substantial green behavior-shaping capacity, but its effectiveness is increasingly contingent on perceived creator-brand environmental value alignment rather than follower reach or content production frequency. The prevalence of eco-influencer fatigue



(46.5%) in Kanpur — a tier-2 city where influencer marketing is less saturated than in metropolitan centres — suggests that this credibility erosion is driven by national platform dynamics rather than local market maturation, as Indian young consumers process eco-influencer authenticity signals across the entire national creator ecosystem.

6.4 Community as Green Behavior Infrastructure

The significant green loyalty effect of online eco-community belonging ($r = 0.56$) supports Identity Theory's prediction that pro-environmental behavior is most resilient when eco-values become integrated into consumer identity infrastructure. Brands and organisations that create genuine digital community spaces — Instagram comment cultures around sustainability themes, WhatsApp eco-groups, co-creation campaigns — achieve green loyalty outcomes that transcend individual content encounters. In tier-2 cities like Kanpur, where physical community networks remain strong and trusted, digital eco-communities can effectively function as extensions of existing social trust architectures.

6.5 Structural Barriers: Implications for Theory and Practice

The pervasive impact of greenwashing scepticism (66.5%), information overload (61.0%), and algorithm opacity (57.0%) represents a structural challenge that individual brand strategies cannot fully resolve. These findings call for platform-level governance reforms that restore meaningful organic reach, mandate transparent content distribution frameworks, and implement robust green claim verification mechanisms. From a theoretical standpoint, these structural barriers indicate that the TPB framework must incorporate platform infrastructure and greenwashing exposure as contextual moderators of the attitude–intention–behavior pathway in digital sustainability marketing models.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 For Eco-Brand Managers and Digital Marketers

1. **Authenticity-First Green Content Strategy:** Develop a systematic 'eco-authenticity audit' evaluating all social media content against three criteria: (a) does it reflect verifiable environmental commitments? (b) does it invite genuine two-way interaction? (c) does it add standalone environmental value independent of its promotional intent? Content failing these criteria should be revised before publication.
2. **Micro Eco-Influencer Prioritisation:** Establish structured partnership criteria that prioritise creator-brand environmental value alignment over follower reach. Implement mandatory product experience periods (minimum 4–6 weeks of genuine use) before influencer content production to ensure authentic endorsements that resist growing Gen Z greenwashing detection capabilities.
3. **Regional Content Localisation for Tier-2 Markets:** Invest in Hindi and regional language eco-content strategies that reflect tier-2 cultural contexts, sustainability concerns specific to Kanpur's environmental realities (air quality, river pollution, waste management), and local community values. Brands that persist with metropolitan-centric sustainability narratives in tier-2 markets surrender significant community credibility.
4. **Eco-Community Infrastructure Investment:** Shift social media investment from content production scale to sustainability community management depth. Systematic engagement protocols (target: sub-24-hour response on all eco-brand mentions), green co-creation campaigns, and brand-associated WhatsApp sustainability communities convert followers into committed green advocates.



7.2 For Digital Platform Developers

Platform developers should prioritise algorithm transparency, enabling both eco-brands and consumers to understand content distribution dynamics affecting sustainability communication. Enhanced green claim verification tools, mandatory paid partnership labelling for eco-influencer content, and regional language eco-community support features would materially improve the integrity and accessibility of social media green marketing ecosystems in India.

7.3 For Policymakers

Comprehensive eco-brand and influencer marketing disclosure regulations — adapted from international models but calibrated to India's unique creator economy scale and diversity — are urgently needed to address the documented prevalence of greenwashing in Indian digital marketing. Concurrently, digital sustainability media literacy programmes for tier-2 and tier-3 city young consumers would equip this cohort with the critical evaluation skills necessary to navigate increasingly complex commercial eco-brand environments and make genuinely informed green purchasing decisions.

8. CONCLUSION

This study provides rigorous empirical evidence that social media engagement is a fundamental shaping mechanism for green consumer behavior among young adults in tier-2 urban India. Perceived eco-brand authenticity, peer green social proof, and online eco-community belonging emerge as the three dominant green loyalty drivers, collectively explaining 67.8% of green purchase intention variance in the study sample. Instagram and YouTube are the strategic platform priorities for eco-brand loyalty development, with short-form video as the most effective format for green awareness and emotional connection.

Structurally, greenwashing scepticism, information overload, and algorithm opacity constitute the primary barriers to deeper green consumer behavior formation — barriers that require platform-level and policy-level interventions extending beyond individual brand strategy. The five-segment green consumer typology (Eco-Identity Expressers, Value-Driven Green Seekers, Trend and Viral Navigators, Community Eco-Seekers, Pragmatic Eco-Loyalists) provides a practically actionable framework for brand managers designing differentiated sustainable engagement strategies for the Kanpur market and analogous tier-2 contexts.

Theoretically, this study advances the Theory of Planned Behavior, Social Cognitive Theory, and the Value-Belief-Norm model as complementary and mutually reinforcing frameworks for understanding social media-mediated green consumer behavior, and demonstrates their applicability to the culturally, economically, and environmentally distinct context of tier-2 urban India. Future research should pursue longitudinal designs to track how these green behavior dynamics evolve with increasing urban environmental pressure, employ larger multi-city samples to test cross-regional generalisability, and incorporate experimental methods to establish causal rather than correlational relationships between specific social media engagement interventions and green consumption outcomes.

As India's young consumer cohort increasingly assumes its full weight in the national and global consumer economy, eco-brands that invest now in authentic, community-centred, and culturally localised social media engagement strategies will secure the green loyalty relationships that define sustainable market leadership in the decades ahead.



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