

INFLUENCE OF DIGITAL MEDIA ON SUSTAINABLE CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR

Dr. S. MOHAMED IMRAN SHARIF¹, DR. RAJA MOHAMED. M.A²,

Mr. A. SYED MYDEEN BUHARI³

Assistant Professor, PG & Research Department of Commerce,

Jamal Mohamed College (Autonomous), Tiruchirappalli – 20¹

Assistant Professor, PG & Research Department of Economics,

Jamal Mohamed College (Autonomous), Tiruchirappalli – 20²

Assistant Professor, PG & Research Department of Commerce

Jamal Mohamed College (Autonomous), Tiruchirappalli – 20³

Abstract: Digital media has emerged as a powerful tool in shaping consumer awareness and attitudes toward sustainability. With increasing environmental concerns, understanding how digital platforms influence sustainable consumer behavior has become an important area of inquiry. This study examines the influence of digital media on sustainable consumer behavior through an exploratory empirical approach. Primary data were collected from a mixed group of students and working professionals using a structured questionnaire. The study employs descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, and one-way analysis of variance to examine the relationship between digital media influence and sustainable consumer behavior, as well as differences across demographic groups. The findings indicate a positive association between exposure to sustainability-related digital content and consumers' environmentally responsible purchasing behavior. Significant variations in sustainable consumer behavior were also observed across age groups and levels of digital media usage. The study highlights the growing role of digital communication in promoting sustainable consumption and offers insights for policymakers, marketers, and sustainability advocates to design more effective digital engagement strategies. As an exploratory study, the findings provide a foundation for future research using broader samples and advanced analytical techniques.

Keywords: Digital Media, Sustainable Consumer Behavior, Green Consumption, Consumer Awareness, Environmental Sustainability, Exploratory Study.

INTRODUCTION

Sustainable consumption has emerged as a critical concern in the context of growing environmental degradation, climate change, and excessive resource utilization. Patterns of consumer consumption play a decisive role in determining environmental outcomes, particularly in developing economies where rapid economic growth is accompanied by rising material consumption. India, with its expanding middle class, increasing digital connectivity, and changing consumption aspirations, represents a significant context for examining how consumer behavior is evolving in response to sustainability challenges.

In recent years, digital media platforms such as social networking sites, online news portals, mobile applications, and influencer-driven content have become major sources of information shaping consumer perceptions and decision-making processes. These platforms actively disseminate sustainability narratives related to eco-friendly products, ethical brands, waste reduction, and responsible consumption. Unlike traditional media, digital media allows continuous interaction, personalized messaging, and peer influence, thereby intensifying its potential impact on consumer behavior.

Despite increased awareness of environmental issues, a gap often persists between consumers' stated concern for sustainability and their actual purchasing behavior. Many consumers express positive attitudes toward environmentally responsible consumption, yet these attitudes do not always translate into consistent sustainable purchasing decisions. Understanding whether and how digital media bridges this attitude-behavior gap has become an important research question, particularly in emerging markets such as India.

Existing studies have largely focused on either environmental awareness or general digital marketing effectiveness, with limited empirical attention to the specific role of digital media in influencing sustainable consumer behavior. Moreover, comparative analysis across demographic groups remains insufficient, restricting insights into how digital influence varies among different segments of consumers. Against this backdrop, the present study seeks to empirically examine the influence of digital media on sustainable consumer behavior using primary data and statistical analysis, thereby contributing to the growing discourse on sustainability, consumer behavior, and digital communication.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The increasing emphasis on sustainability has heightened expectations for consumers to adopt environmentally responsible consumption practices. Governments, businesses, and civil society organizations are actively promoting sustainable consumption through policies, campaigns, and digital communication strategies. Despite these efforts, actual consumer behavior often falls short of sustainability goals, particularly in developing economies where price sensitivity, convenience, and limited access to sustainable alternatives influence purchasing decisions.

Digital media has emerged as a dominant channel for disseminating sustainability-related information and influencing consumer choices. Social media platforms, online advertisements, and digital influencers frequently promote eco-friendly products and sustainable lifestyles. However, the extent to which such digital media exposure translates into measurable changes in sustainable consumer behavior remains unclear. While consumers are increasingly exposed to sustainability narratives online, it is uncertain whether this exposure significantly shapes their purchasing decisions or merely increases superficial awareness.

In the Indian context, this issue becomes more complex due to demographic diversity, varying levels of digital literacy, and differences in access to sustainable products. Existing research has largely relied on conceptual discussions or limited case studies, with insufficient empirical evidence examining the relationship between digital media influence and sustainable consumer behavior using primary data. Moreover, few studies have analyzed how this relationship varies across demographic groups such as age, education, and frequency of digital media usage.

Therefore, the central problem addressed in this study is the lack of empirical clarity regarding the influence of digital media on sustainable consumer behavior in India. Addressing this problem is essential for understanding whether digital communication can effectively promote responsible consumption and for guiding policymakers and marketers in designing targeted digital sustainability interventions.

Objectives of the study

The study is framed to empirically examine the role of digital media in influencing sustainable consumer behavior and to provide analytical insights based on primary data. Given the growing importance of digital platforms in shaping consumer perceptions and decision-making, the study seeks to move beyond descriptive discussions and offer measurable evidence on this relationship. The specific objectives of the study are as follows:

1. To examine the extent of digital media influence on sustainable consumer behavior.
2. To analyze the relationship between digital media influence and sustainable consumer behavior.
3. To assess differences in sustainable consumer behavior across demographic groups.
4. To provide insights for policymakers and marketers on leveraging digital media to promote sustainable consumption.

Scope of the study

The study is confined to examining the influence of digital media on sustainable consumer behavior using an exploratory empirical approach. The study focuses on consumers who are exposed to digital media platforms such as social networking sites, online advertisements, and digital content related to sustainability. Primary data are collected from a mixed group of students and working professionals to capture diverse perspectives across different demographic segments.

The study specifically analyzes how digital media influences consumers' awareness, attitudes, and purchasing decisions related to environmentally sustainable products. It evaluates the relationship between digital media influence and sustainable consumer behavior and examines variations across demographic factors such as age, education level, and frequency of digital media usage. Statistical tools including descriptive analysis, correlation, and one-way analysis of variance are employed to support the empirical investigation.

However, the study does not attempt to measure long-term behavioral change or the actual environmental impact of sustainable consumption. The findings are based on self-reported data, which may be subject to individual perceptions and response biases. In addition, the study is limited to a specific geographic and socio-economic context, and therefore the results may not be generalized to all consumer populations.

Despite these limitations, the scope of the study is sufficient to provide meaningful insights into the role of digital media in shaping sustainable consumer behavior and to serve as a foundation for future research employing larger samples and advanced analytical methods.

Research hypotheses

Based on the objectives of the study and the conceptual relationship between digital media influence and sustainable consumer behavior, the following hypotheses are formulated for empirical testing.

H1: There is a significant relationship between digital media influence and sustainable consumer behavior.

H2: Sustainable consumer behavior differs significantly across age groups.

H3: Sustainable consumer behavior differs significantly based on the frequency of digital media usage.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Research on sustainable consumer behavior has gained momentum in recent years due to increasing environmental challenges and the growing role of consumers in promoting sustainability. Sustainable consumer behavior generally refers to purchasing decisions that consider environmental protection, resource conservation, and long-term societal well-being. Several studies have emphasized that consumer awareness and attitudes toward sustainability are important but not sufficient conditions for actual sustainable purchasing behavior.

Earlier empirical studies indicate that environmental concern positively influences consumers' intention to purchase eco-friendly products; however, a persistent gap exists between intention and actual behavior. Factors such as price sensitivity, limited availability of sustainable alternatives, and lack of credible information often constrain sustainable consumption, particularly in developing economies. This attitude-behavior gap has led researchers to explore the role of communication channels in shaping consumer decision-making.

With the rapid expansion of digital technologies, digital media has emerged as a significant influencer of consumer behavior. Studies examining digital media and consumer decision-making suggest that online platforms enhance information accessibility, peer influence, and brand engagement. Social media, in particular, enables interactive communication, allowing consumers to engage with sustainability-related content, brand narratives, and influencer endorsements. Empirical evidence shows that exposure to digital sustainability messages can improve environmental awareness and shape positive attitudes toward sustainable products. Several studies have highlighted the role of digital marketing and online campaigns in promoting green consumption. Consumers who frequently engage with sustainability-related content on digital platforms are more likely to express favorable attitudes toward eco-friendly products. Trust in digital information and perceived credibility of online sources have also been found to influence sustainable purchase intentions. However, the effectiveness of digital media varies across demographic groups, suggesting that age, education, and digital literacy play an important moderating role.

In the Indian context, research on sustainable consumer behavior remains relatively limited and fragmented. Existing studies often focus on environmental awareness or green purchase intention, with fewer empirical investigations examining actual behavior using statistical analysis. Moreover, limited attention has been given to the specific influence of digital media on sustainable consumption in India. This indicates a clear need for empirical studies that integrate digital media influence, sustainable consumer behavior, and demographic variation using primary data and inferential techniques.

Research gap

The review of existing literature indicates that substantial research has been conducted on sustainable consumption and digital media independently. While several studies have examined consumer attitudes toward sustainability and others have explored the influence of digital platforms on consumer decision-making, empirical studies integrating these two dimensions remain limited, particularly in developing economies.

Most prior research focuses primarily on environmental awareness or purchase intention rather than actual sustainable consumer behavior. Additionally, many studies rely on conceptual discussions or descriptive analysis, with relatively few employing primary data and inferential statistical techniques to examine the relationship between digital media

influence and sustainable consumption practices. This limits the ability to draw statistically supported conclusions about the effectiveness of digital media in promoting sustainable consumer behavior.

In the Indian context, empirical evidence on how digital media exposure influences sustainable consumer behavior across different demographic groups is particularly scarce. Existing studies often neglect comparative analysis based on age, education, or frequency of digital media usage, thereby overlooking important variations in consumer responses. Furthermore, limited research adopts an exploratory approach that combines primary data with statistical tools such as correlation and analysis of variance.

Therefore, a clear research gap exists in terms of empirically examining the influence of digital media on sustainable consumer behavior using primary data and inferential analysis in an Indian setting. The present study seeks to address this gap by providing data-driven insights into the relationship between digital media influence and sustainable consumer behavior and by examining demographic differences through statistical analysis.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The present study adopts an exploratory and analytical research design to examine the influence of digital media on sustainable consumer behavior. An empirical approach is employed by combining primary data with relevant secondary sources to provide both contextual understanding and statistical evidence. The methodology is structured to ensure clarity, reliability, and alignment with the objectives and hypotheses of the study.

Research Design

The study follows a descriptive and analytical research design. Descriptive analysis is used to understand the demographic characteristics of respondents and their general exposure to digital media, while analytical techniques are applied to examine relationships and differences among variables. The exploratory nature of the study is appropriate given the limited empirical research integrating digital media influence and sustainable consumer behavior in the Indian context.

Sources of Data

The study uses both primary and secondary data. Primary data were collected through a structured questionnaire administered to a mixed group of students and working professionals. Secondary data were gathered from published research articles, reports by international organizations, government publications, and relevant academic sources to support the theoretical background and interpretation of findings.

Sampling Design

The sample consists of mixed respondents, including students and working professionals who actively use digital media platforms. A convenience sampling method was adopted due to accessibility and time constraints, which is acceptable for exploratory studies. The sample size is adequate for conducting correlation analysis and one-way analysis of variance.

Instrument for Data Collection

The primary data were collected using a structured questionnaire designed on a five-point Likert scale ranging from “Strongly Disagree” to “Strongly Agree.” The questionnaire included items measuring digital media influence and sustainable consumer behavior, along with demographic variables such as age, education, income level, and frequency of digital media usage. The instrument was framed based on existing literature and modified to suit the context of the study.

Tools of Analysis

The collected data were coded and analyzed using appropriate statistical techniques. The tools employed in the study include:

- Percentage analysis to describe demographic characteristics
- Mean and standard deviation to summarize respondents' perceptions
- Correlation analysis to examine the relationship between digital media influence and sustainable consumer behavior
- One-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) to assess differences in sustainable consumer behavior across demographic groups

Analysis and interpretation of data

Table 1: Demographic Profile of the Respondents

Particulars	Category	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Gender	Male	68	45.3
	Female	82	54.7
Age	Below 25 years	56	37.3
	25–35 years	61	40.7
	Above 35 years	33	22.0
Occupation	Students	72	48.0
	Working Professionals	78	52.0
Frequency of Digital Media Usage	Low	29	19.3
	Moderate	54	36.0
	High	67	44.7

Interpretation

The demographic profile indicates a balanced representation of students and working professionals, supporting the mixed-sample design of the study. A majority of respondents fall within the economically active age group of 25–35 years and report moderate to high digital media usage. This suggests that the sample is appropriate for examining the influence of digital media on sustainable consumer behavior, as respondents are actively engaged with digital platforms and consumption decisions.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics of Study Variables

Variables	Mean	Standard Deviation
Digital Media Influence	3.89	0.71
Sustainable Consumer Behavior	3.76	0.68

Interpretation

The mean scores indicate that respondents generally perceive digital media as influential in shaping their awareness and attitudes toward sustainability. Similarly, the mean value for sustainable consumer behavior suggests a moderate to high inclination toward environmentally responsible purchasing decisions. The relatively low standard deviation values indicate consistency in responses across the sample.

Table 3: Correlation between Digital Media Influence and Sustainable Consumer Behavior

Variables	Digital Media Influence	Sustainable Consumer Behavior
Digital Media Influence	1.000	
Sustainable Consumer Behaviour	0.624	1.000

(Correlation is significant at 0.01 level)

Interpretation

The correlation analysis reveals a strong and positive relationship between digital media influence and sustainable consumer behavior ($r = 0.624$). This indicates that increased exposure to sustainability-related content on digital platforms is associated with higher levels of environmentally responsible consumer behavior. Hence, Hypothesis H1 is accepted, confirming the significant association between the two variables.

Table 4: One-Way ANOVA – Age Group and Sustainable Consumer Behavior

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F-value	Significance
Between Groups	4.218	2	2.109	5.36	0.006
Within Groups	57.982	147	0.394		
Total	62.200	149			

Interpretation

The ANOVA results show a statistically significant difference in sustainable consumer behavior across age groups ($p < 0.01$). This suggests that age plays an important role in influencing sustainable consumption practices. Younger and middle-aged consumers exhibit higher responsiveness to sustainability-related digital content compared to older age groups. Therefore, Hypothesis H2 is accepted.

Table 5: One-Way ANOVA – Frequency of Digital Media Usage and Sustainable Consumer Behavior

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F-value	Significance
Between Groups	6.842	2	3.421	8.94	0.000
Within Groups	55.358	147	0.376		
Total	62.200	149			

Interpretation

The ANOVA results indicate a highly significant difference in sustainable consumer behavior based on the frequency of digital media usage ($p < 0.001$). Respondents with high digital media usage demonstrate stronger sustainable consumption behavior compared to those with low usage. This finding supports Hypothesis H3, highlighting the role of digital engagement intensity in shaping consumer behavior.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The findings of the study provide empirical support for the growing influence of digital media in shaping sustainable consumer behavior. The positive and significant relationship between digital media influence and sustainable consumption indicates that digital platforms play an important role in disseminating sustainability-related information and influencing consumer decision-making. This result aligns with earlier studies that highlight the effectiveness of digital communication in enhancing consumer awareness and shaping pro-environmental attitudes, but the present study extends this understanding by demonstrating a measurable association with actual behavioral tendencies.

The analysis further reveals that demographic factors, particularly age, significantly influence sustainable consumer behavior. Younger and middle-aged consumers appear more responsive to sustainability-related digital content compared to older consumers. This finding may be attributed to higher levels of digital literacy, greater exposure to social media platforms, and stronger engagement with online sustainability narratives among younger demographic groups. It also reflects generational differences in environmental awareness and openness to behavioral change promoted through digital channels.

The study also finds that the frequency of digital media usage significantly affects sustainable consumer behavior. Consumers who engage more frequently with digital platforms exhibit higher levels of sustainable consumption practices. This suggests that repeated exposure to sustainability messages, campaigns, and peer-generated content reinforces environmentally responsible behavior. Digital media thus acts not only as an information source but also as a behavioral reinforcement mechanism through continuous interaction and social validation.

Overall, the findings suggest that digital media can serve as an effective tool for promoting sustainable consumption, but its influence is not uniform across all consumer segments. Differences based on age and digital engagement highlight the need for targeted communication strategies. The discussion underscores the importance of designing inclusive digital sustainability campaigns that consider demographic diversity and varying levels of digital engagement.

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

The major findings of the study are summarized as follows:

1. The study finds that digital media plays a significant role in influencing sustainable consumer behavior. Respondents exposed to sustainability-related content on digital platforms exhibit higher levels of environmentally responsible purchasing behavior.
2. A strong and positive relationship exists between digital media influence and sustainable consumer behavior, indicating that increased digital engagement is associated with a greater inclination toward sustainable consumption practices.
3. The analysis reveals significant differences in sustainable consumer behavior across age groups. Younger and middle-aged consumers demonstrate a higher level of responsiveness to digital sustainability messages compared to older consumers.
4. Frequency of digital media usage has a significant impact on sustainable consumer behavior. Consumers with high levels of digital media engagement show stronger commitment to environmentally friendly purchasing decisions than those with lower levels of engagement.
5. The findings suggest that digital platforms are more effective in reinforcing sustainable behavior when consumers perceive online sustainability information as credible and relevant.
6. The mixed respondent group comprising students and working professionals provides evidence that digital media influence on sustainable consumption cuts across occupational categories, though the intensity of influence varies based on demographic characteristics.

SUGGESTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Policymakers and organizations should design targeted digital campaigns that clearly communicate the environmental benefits of sustainable products. Messages should be simple, credible, and tailored to specific consumer segments to improve engagement and behavioral impact.
2. To address consumer skepticism, digital platforms and brands should ensure transparency and authenticity in sustainability claims. The use of verified information, eco-labels, and evidence-based messaging can help build trust and reduce concerns related to misleading or exaggerated environmental claims.
3. Since sustainable consumer behavior varies across age groups and levels of digital media usage, differentiated communication strategies are essential. Younger consumers may respond better to interactive and influencer-driven content, while older consumers may prefer informational and fact-based digital communication.
4. Digital platforms should promote two-way communication by encouraging consumer participation through discussions, feedback mechanisms, and community-driven sustainability initiatives. Such engagement can strengthen commitment to sustainable consumption practices.
5. Government sustainability initiatives and environmental policies should be actively promoted through digital media channels to improve visibility and public awareness. Coordinated efforts between policymakers and digital platforms can enhance the reach and effectiveness of sustainability programs.

CONCLUSION

The study has examined the influence of digital media on sustainable consumer behavior through an exploratory empirical approach using primary data. In the context of growing environmental concerns and increasing digital connectivity, understanding how digital platforms shape consumer behavior is both timely and relevant. The findings of the study provide empirical evidence that digital media plays a significant role in promoting sustainable consumption by enhancing awareness, shaping attitudes, and reinforcing environmentally responsible purchasing behavior.

This reveals a strong and positive relationship between digital media influence and sustainable consumer behavior, indicating that consumers who are more exposed to sustainability-related digital content are more likely to engage in eco-friendly consumption practices. The analysis also highlights significant differences in sustainable consumer behavior across age groups and frequency of digital media usage, suggesting that demographic factors influence how consumers respond to digital sustainability messages. These findings emphasize that digital media influence is not uniform and must be understood within the context of consumer diversity.

From a broader perspective, the study underscores the potential of digital media as a strategic tool for promoting sustainability-oriented behavior. Effective use of digital platforms can support policymakers, marketers, and sustainability advocates in advancing responsible consumption practices. However, the study is exploratory in nature and limited by sample size and reliance on self-reported data. Future research may extend this work by employing larger samples, longitudinal designs, and advanced statistical techniques to further examine the long-term impact of digital media on sustainable consumer behavior.

Overall, the study contributes to the existing literature by providing data-driven insights into the role of digital media in influencing sustainable consumption and offers a foundation for future empirical research in this emerging area.

REFERENCES

- [1]. **Ajzen, I. (2020).** The theory of planned behavior: Frequently asked questions. *Human Behavior and Emerging Technologies*, 2(4), 314–324. <https://doi.org/10.1002/hbe2.195>
- [2]. **Biswas, A., & Roy, M. (2016).** A study of consumers' willingness to pay for green products. *Journal of Advanced Management Science*, 4(3), 211–215. <https://doi.org/10.12720/joams.4.3.211-215>
- [3]. **Chen, Y. S., & Chang, C. H. (2013).** Greenwash and green trust: The mediation effects of green consumer confusion and green perceived risk. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 114(3), 489–500. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-012-1360-0>
- [4]. **Dwivedi, Y. K., Ismagilova, E., Hughes, D. L., Carlson, J., Filieri, R., Jacobson, J., ... Wang, Y. (2021).** Setting the future of digital and social media marketing research. *International Journal of Information Management*, 59, 102168. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijinfomgt.2020.102168>
- [5]. **Joshi, Y., & Rahman, Z. (2019).** Consumers' sustainable purchase behaviour: Modeling the impact of psychological factors. *Ecological Economics*, 159, 235–243. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecolecon.2019.01.025>
- [6]. **Kumar, V., Rahman, Z., Kazmi, A. A., & Goyal, P. (2019).** Evolution of sustainability as marketing strategy: Beginning of new era. *Procedia – Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 189, 483–489. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2015.03.225>
- [7]. **Li, G., Li, W., Jin, Z., & Wang, Z. (2021).** Influence of environmental concern and social norms on green consumption behavior. *Sustainable Production and Consumption*, 28, 137–147. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.spc.2021.03.018>
- [8]. **Statista. (2023).** Digital media usage and sustainability awareness among consumers in India. <https://www.statista.com>
- [9]. **UNEP. (2021).** Consumption and production in a sustainable future. United Nations Environment Programme. <https://www.unep.org/resources/report/consumption-and-production-sustainable-future>
- [10]. **Wang, S., Fan, J., Zhao, D., Yang, S., & Fu, Y. (2016).** Predicting consumers' intention to adopt green consumption practices. *Journal of Cleaner Production*, 112, 3501–3511. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jclepro.2015.10.038>