
Environmental Consciousness and Social Media Influence: Drivers of Pro-Environmental Behavior

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Abstract: This research examines the impact of environmental consciousness on pro-environmental behavioral intentions among Indian social media users, drawing on the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) as its conceptual framework. Research Data were collected through a quantitative, cross-sectional survey of 200 active users, and the proposed relationships were tested with Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM), incorporating issue involvement as a potential moderator. The results indicate that environmental consciousness significantly shapes both user attitudes and behavioural intentions, with attitudes exerting a strong impact on sustainable online behaviour. Moreover, issue involvement enhances the positive association between attitude and intention. However, the use of self-reported measures and a cross-sectional research design limits definitive casual inferences and may also be influenced by respondent's social desirability tendencies. From a real-world perspective, the findings guide marketers, environmental organizations, and policymakers in developing social media strategies that promote favourable attitudes and perceived behavioural control to encourage environmentally responsible intentions. At a societal level, the study highlights the capacity of digital platforms to promote environmental awareness and encourage behavioral change, underscoring their broader value as vehicles for targeted sustainability engagement.

This study extends TPB by integrating issue involvement as a moderator in the pro-environmental online context. It fills a gap in emerging-market research on digital environmentalism and offers actionable guidance for stakeholders in India and similar contexts.

Keywords: Environmental consciousness, digital influence, social media, pro-environmental behaviour, Theory of Planned Behaviour, India

1. Introduction

The accelerated penetration of social media platforms has transformed the way individuals engage with social and environmental issues. Platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter provide not only channels for interpersonal communication but also serve as interactive spaces for shaping awareness, influencing attitudes, and mobilizing behavioral change. In the context of sustainability, social media has emerged as a cost-effective medium for disseminating environmental messages, promoting pro-environmental values, and encouraging eco-conscious lifestyles (Kapoor et al., 2022).

Despite the growing importance of these platforms, a research gap persists in understanding the psychological mechanisms through which **environmental consciousness interacts with digital influence** to shape consumer behavior. Previous studies have examined environmental concern as a predictor of green purchase intention (Joshi & Rahman, 2015); relatively little research has investigated the role of **attitudes toward social media use** in mediating the relationship between environmental consciousness and pro-environmental behavioral intentions.

India presents a unique research context for this inquiry. With its large youth population and rapid digital adoption, social media has become a central arena for health and environmental discourse. Yet, empirical evidence examining how digital platforms interact with consumer consciousness to drive sustainable behavior remains scarce. This study seeks to address this gap by applying the Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991) and Value–Belief–Norm theory (Stern, 2000) to investigate how environmental consciousness influences attitudes toward social media and, consequently, behavioral intention.

By integrating insights from behavioral theories with empirical testing through PLS-SEM, this study contributes to both theory and practice. It expands the understanding of digital influence in sustainability communication and provides actionable implications for organizations and policymakers aiming to foster pro-environmental behavior through social media campaigns.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Theoretical Foundations

Theoretical Explanations of Pro-Environmental Action

The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) and the Value–Belief–Norm (VBN) framework are commonly used to understand how values, norms, and attitudes translate into intentions and behavior. In digital contexts, social media serves as both an information environment and a normative marketplace, amplifying information, shaping perceptions of social norms, and creating new pathways for value activation (Ajzen, 1991; Stern, 2000). Recent studies have highlighted that social media characteristics such as interactivity, peer endorsement, and algorithmic exposure strengthen the pathways from environmental concern to intention by increasing exposure, perceived social support, and perceived effectiveness of actions (Liao, 2024; Xie et al., 2024).

According to the Theory of Planned Behaviour, individual's behavioural intentions are shaped by their evaluative attitudes, perceived social pressures, and perceived ability to perform the behavior, which collectively influence actual behavioural outcomes. In green consumption, environmental consciousness shapes (i) favorable attitudes toward green products, (ii) normative beliefs (e.g., what important others expect), and (iii) perceived control (e.g., affordability/availability), thereby raising green purchase intention and behavior. Hypotheses typically specify: Consciousness → (Attitude, Norm, Control) → Intention → Purchase. According to Ajzen (1991), attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral

control shape behavioral intention, which in turn predicts actual behavior. In the context of environmental issues, attitude toward social media can be viewed as a determinant of behavioral intention, influenced by underlying environmental consciousness.

VBN links values (biospheric/altruistic) to ecological beliefs, which activate personal norms (obligation to act), predicting pro-environmental behaviors, including green consumption and activism. In this view, environmental consciousness operationalizes the value/belief substrate that activates the moral obligation to choose greener options—even when they cost more or are less convenient. According to Stern (2000), value-belief theory argues that pro-environmental behavior arises from the activation of personal norms, which are shaped by values and ecological beliefs. Environmental consciousness represents an antecedent belief structure that motivates individuals to act in accordance with environmental norms. When integrated with TPB, VBN helps explain how environmental consciousness translates into moral obligation and positive attitudes toward sustainable behaviors, thereby influencing intention.

2.2 Environmental Consciousness

Environmental consciousness refers to an individual's lasting awareness of environmental issues and the sense of responsibility to reduce harm. In consumer contexts, it has been operationalized through ecological worldviews, such as the Revised New Ecological Paradigm (NEP), and through specific consumption tendencies, like Ecologically Conscious Consumer Behavior (ECCB). The Revised NEP offers a validated 15-item scale commonly used to measure pro-ecological attitudes and predict related behaviors. Meanwhile, ECCB captures purchase and usage behaviors that reflect that orientation. Together, these tools represent the attitudinal and behavioral aspects of "consciousness" in green consumption research.

Environmental consciousness—an individual's awareness, concern, and sense of personal responsibility for ecological issues—remains a reliable predictor of green intentions and behaviors in multiple contexts. Meta-analyses and empirical studies confirm that consciousness typically increases favorable attitudes and perceived moral obligation, but situational constraints and digital echo chambers may moderate whether attitudes become actions. Recent evidence from large samples in Asia and cross-platform studies demonstrates that exposure to credible environmental content on social platforms raises both environmental knowledge and willingness to participate in protective behaviors, though effect sizes vary across platforms and demographic groups (Xie et al., 2024).

2.3 From Consciousness to Green Consumption

Meta-analytic and review evidence consistently show that pro-environmental orientations (concern, values, and consciousness) are positively associated with pro-environmental behaviors, including green purchasing—albeit with small to moderate average effects once situational constraints are considered. Classic syntheses (e.g., Bamberg & Möser, 2007) report reliable links from attitudes and moral norms to behavior, echoing earlier evidence on knowledge/awareness and responsibility. More recent reviews of green purchase behavior identify facilitators (environmental concern, perceived consumer effectiveness, and trust in eco-labels) and barriers (price premiums, availability, and skepticism), which help explain the persistent attitude–behavior gap.

2.4 Social Media and Attitude Formation

Social media platforms have become vital tools for spreading environmental information, shaping opinions, and influencing user behaviors. Attitude toward social media use can be defined as an individual's overall evaluation of using digital platforms for information and interaction related to environmental issues.

Research in digital communication suggests that positive attitudes toward social media use enhance individuals' likelihood to engage with sustainability-related content and adopt environmentally responsible behaviors (Erkan & Evans, 2016; Kapoor et al., 2022). Moreover, social media provides interactive and peer-driven environments where informational support and perceived credibility strengthen attitudes and, subsequently, behavioral intentions (Pelling & White, 2009). Thus, attitude toward social media serves as a key psychological link between consciousness and behavioral intention.

Recent literature have further explored the role of digital platforms i.e social media in influencing pro-environmental behavior. Liao (2024) found that social media exposure positively affects environmental attitudes and subjective norms, which in turn enhance behavioral intentions toward pro-environmental actions. Similarly, Xie et al. (2024) demonstrated that increased engagement with environmental content on platforms like WeChat leads to higher environmental awareness and a greater likelihood of engaging in sustainable behaviors. These findings underscore the importance of social media as a tool for fostering pro-environmental behavior, particularly when users are exposed to credible and relevant content.

2.5 Theoretical Model

Based on the above conceptual grounding, this study proposes a model in which environmental consciousness influences attitude toward social media use, which subsequently affects behavioral intention. Issue involvement is considered as a moderator in the link between attitude to use social media and intention to behave, as highly involved individuals may show stronger or weaker conversions of attitude into intention depending on cognitive overload and situational constraints. The following model has been proposed.

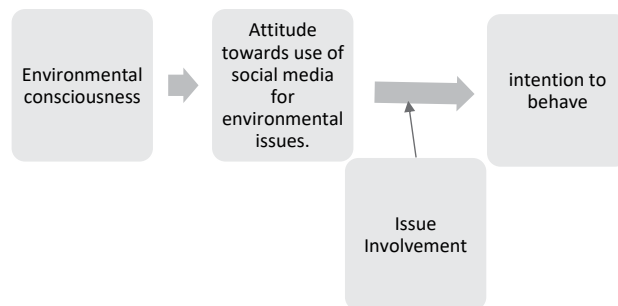


Figure 1: Proposed Model

3. Hypotheses Development

3.1 Environmental Consciousness and Attitude toward Social Media

Individuals who are more environmentally conscious are more aware of ecological problems and have greater motivation to seek and process relevant information. Prior studies suggest that environmentally conscious consumers evaluate digital platforms positively when these platforms provide credible, interactive, and timely information on sustainability (Huang et al., 2014; Joshi & Rahman, 2015). As consciousness shapes evaluative judgments, it is expected to have a significant influence on attitudes toward social media use for environmental purposes.

H1: Environmental consciousness positively influences attitude toward social media usage.

3.2 Attitude and Behavioral Intention

According to the Theory of Planned Behavior, attitude is a key factor influencing behavioral intention (Ajzen, 1991). Research has shown that when individuals develop positive attitudes toward social media platforms, they are more likely to have strong intentions to act in accordance with environmental messages they encounter online (Erkan & Evans, 2016; Kapoor et al., 2022).

Therefore, favorable attitudes toward using social media for ecological content should boost intention to act.

H2: Attitude toward Social Media use has a positive effect on intention to behave.

3.3 Moderating Role of Issue Involvement

Issue involvement refers to the perceived personal relevance and importance of environmental issues. Prior research suggests that highly involved individuals may process information more deeply and display stronger linkages between intention and behavior (Zaichkowsky, 1985; Cho & Boster, 2005). In contrast, low involvement may weaken the translation of intention into behavior.

Therefore, issue involvement is expected to strengthen the relationship between attitude and behavioral intention.

H3: Issue involvement influences the relationship between attitude toward social media use for environmental issues and intention to act on environmental concerns.

4. Research Methodology

4.1 Research Design

The research adopted a quantitative cross-sectional survey design to investigate the associations among environmental consciousness, attitudes towards social media usage, and related constructs. Considering the study's emphasis on latent constructs and predictive modelling, Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) was employed using SmartPLS 4. This method is particularly suitable for exploratory models, larger multi-construct datasets, and non-normal data distributions (Hair et al., 2019).

4.2 Sample and Data Collection

Primary data were sourced from respondents who regularly use social media and reside in the Delhi–NCR region, through a structured questionnaire distributed via both online and offline channels. Snowball sampling was used to identify participants, ensuring that respondents were active social media users and aware of environmental issues. A total of 200 valid responses were obtained, which is well above the minimum sample size requirement for PLS-SEM analysis based on the “10 times rule” (Hair et al., 2019). The demographic profile of respondents indicated a mix of gender, age groups, and educational backgrounds, reflecting the diversity of urban Indian social media users. The majority of participants were in the 20–35 age group, highlighting the relevance of young adults as primary consumers of digital environmental content.

4.3 Measures

All constructs were measured using established scales from prior literature, adapted to the context of social media and environmental issues. Participant Responses were measured using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (“strongly disagree”) to 5 (“strongly agree”).

- Environmental Consciousness was measured using items adapted from Dunlap et al. (2000) and Straughan & Roberts (1999).
- Attitude toward Social Media Use was assessed using items adapted from Erkan & Evans (2016) and Kapoor et al. (2022).
- Intention to behave was measured following Ajzen (1991) and Bamberg & Möser (2007).
- Pro-Environmental Behavior was captured using items adapted from Kaiser et al. (2005).
- Issue Involvement was measured using Zaichkowsky's (1985) personal involvement inventory.

All measures demonstrated acceptable reliability and validity as reported in the results section.

5. Results

5.1 Measurement Model Assessment

The measurement model was first assessed for reliability and validity. Indicator reliability was confirmed as all outer loadings exceeded the recommended threshold of 0.70 (Hair et al., 2019). Internal consistency reliability was established with Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability values above 0.70 for all constructs. Convergent validity was demonstrated as Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values exceeded the 0.50 benchmark, indicating that more than 50% of the variance in indicators was explained by their respective constructs.

Discriminant validity was assessed using the Fornell–Larcker criterion and the Heterotrait–Monotrait (HTMT) ratio. The square root of each construct's AVE was greater than its correlations with other constructs, and HTMT ratios were below the conservative cut-off of 0.85. Together, these results confirmed that the constructs were empirically distinct.

Table 1: Reliability and validity statistics of the measurement model

	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability (rho_a)	Composite reliability (rho_c)	Average variance extracted (AVE)
Attitude towards the use of Social Media for environmental issues	0.894	0.896	0.892	0.509
Environmental Consciousness	0.828	0.832	0.827	0.490
Intention to behave towards environmental issues	0.939	0.941	0.938	0.604
Issue involvement	0.902	0.913	0.902	0.700
Attitude<issue involvement<intention to behave towards environmental issues	0.842	0.881	0.864	0.566

The results of the reliability and validity assessment indicate that all constructs demonstrate satisfactory psychometric properties. Cronbach's alpha values for the constructs ranged from 0.828 to 0.939, exceeding the recommended threshold of 0.70 (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994), thereby confirming internal consistency reliability. Similarly, the composite reliability values (ρ_a and ρ_c) for each construct were found to be above 0.80, which is well beyond the acceptable cut-off of 0.70 suggested by Hair et al. (2019). This provides further evidence of construct reliability.

Convergent validity was evaluated using the average variance extracted (AVE). In line with the guidelines of Fornell and Larcker (1981), an AVE value above 0.50 indicates that a construct explains more than half of the variance of its observed indicators. The constructs "Attitude towards the use of social media for environmental issues" (AVE = 0.509), "Intention to behave towards environmental issues" (AVE = 0.604), "Issue involvement" (AVE = 0.700), and the higher-order construct (AVE = 0.566) all surpassed this threshold, confirming convergent validity. The construct "Environmental Consciousness" recorded a slightly lower AVE (0.490). However, scholars have argued that when composite reliability values are above 0.60, convergent validity can still be considered adequate, even if the AVE falls marginally below 0.50 (Fornell & Larcker, 1981; Malhotra & Dash, 2011). Given that both composite reliability and Cronbach's alpha for this construct are well above the recommended cut-offs, its retention is justified. Overall, the results confirm that the constructs used in the study demonstrate strong reliability and adequate convergent validity, thereby supporting their suitability for further structural model analysis.

5.2 Structural Model Assessment

Following the establishment of measurement validity, the structural model was evaluated. Multicollinearity was not a concern, as all VIF values were below 5. The model's explained variance was satisfactory, with R^2 values indicating that:

- Attitude toward social media use explained a significant proportion of variance in behavioral intention,
- Behavioral intention contributed substantially to explaining pro-environmental behavior.

Predictive relevance (Q^2 values) was above zero for all endogenous constructs, indicating satisfactory predictive accuracy.

Path coefficients (β) and their significance were tested using bootstrapping with 5,000 resamples. The results are as follows:

- **H1:** Environmental consciousness \rightarrow Attitude towards use of social media for environmental issues ($\beta = p < 0.001$) — Supported.
- **H2:** Attitude towards use of social media for environmental issues \rightarrow intention to behave ($\beta = p < 0.001$) — Supported.
- **H3:** Issue involvement \times attitude towards use of social media for environmental issues \rightarrow intention to behave ($\beta = p < 0.05$) — Supported (moderating effect).

These results confirm the hypothesized relationships and highlight the mediating role of attitude as well as the moderating role of issue involvement.

Table 2 : Path coefficients, t-values, and p-values for all hypotheses

	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics (O/STDEV)	P values
Consciousness > Attitude towards_ use of the Social Media for environmental issues.	0.335	0.339	0.052	6.407	0.000
Attitude towards_ Social Media -> Intention to behave	0.182	0.181	0.039	4.674	0.000
Issue involvement x attitude towards use of social media towards environmental issues > intention to behave	0.168	0.168	0.042	4.007	0.000

The results of the structural equation modeling indicate significant relationships among the constructs. First, environmental consciousness was found to have a positive and significant effect on attitude towards the use of social media for environmental issues ($\beta = 0.335$, $t = 6.407$, $p < 0.001$). This suggests that individuals with higher levels of environmental consciousness are more likely to develop favorable attitudes toward engaging with social media content related to environmental concerns. This finding is consistent with prior studies which highlight that individuals who are environmentally conscious are more receptive to pro-environmental messages disseminated through digital platforms (Biswas & Roy, 2015; Joshi & Rahman, 2019).

Second, attitude towards social media use for environmental issues was positively associated with the intention to behave in an environmentally responsible manner ($\beta = 0.182$, $t = 4.674$, $p < 0.001$). This indicates that favorable perceptions of social media as a source of environmental information enhance individuals' willingness to involve in pro-environmental behaviors. This result aligns with the theory of planned behavior (Ajzen, 1991), which asserts that attitudes significantly shape behavioral intentions, and supports earlier findings where positive attitudes toward online platforms promoted sustainable behaviors (Ham & Han, 2013).

Finally, the moderating effect of issue involvement on the relationship between attitude towards social media and intention to behave was also significant ($\beta = 0.168$, $t = 4.007$, $p < 0.001$). This demonstrates that the influence of attitude on behavioral intention becomes stronger when individuals are more personally involved with environmental issues. In other words, individuals who are highly engaged with environmental concerns are more likely to translate favorable attitudes toward social media into actual behavioral intentions. This is in line with previous evidence suggesting that issue involvement enhances the strength of attitudinal effects on behavioral outcomes (Zaichkowsky, 1985; Wang, 2021). Taken together, these findings suggest that both environmental consciousness and issue involvement play critical roles in shaping individuals' attitudes and behavioral intentions toward environmental issues via social media platforms.

6. Discussion

The findings of this study reinforce the argument that environmental consciousness is a critical antecedent of pro-environmental decision-making. Consistent with prior research (Dunlap et al., 2000; Bamberg &

Möser, 2007), environmentally conscious individuals were found to evaluate social media platforms more positively when these platforms provided relevant environmental content. This supports the premise that consciousness shapes digital attitudes and validates the integration of TPB and VBN frameworks.

The positive influence of attitude toward social media use on behavioral intention further highlights the role of digital platforms in fostering sustainable practices. Similar to the findings of Erkan and Evans (2016) and Kapoor et al. (2022), the results confirm that favorable attitudes toward social media translate into stronger behavioral intentions. Importantly, the path from intention to pro-environmental behavior was significant, echoing Ajzen's (1991) TPB assertion that intention is the immediate antecedent of behavior.

Finally, the moderating role of issue involvement highlights the importance of personal relevance in strengthening the intention–behavior link. This finding extends Zaichkowsky's (1985) argument on involvement by showing that highly involved individuals are more likely to act on their environmental intentions in digital contexts.

7. Implications

7.1 Theoretical Implications

This finding of this study contribute to the environmental communication and consumer behavior research in several ways. First, by integrating TPB and VBN, it demonstrates how consciousness and digital attitudes jointly shape sustainable behavior, advancing theoretical understanding of environmental psychology in digital spaces. Second, it confirms the mediating role of attitude toward social media, providing empirical support to digital influence literature (Kapoor et al., 2022). Third, the identification of issue involvement as a moderator adds nuance to intention–behavior dynamics, addressing gaps noted in previous attitude–behavior research.

7.2 Practical Implications

From a managerial perspective, the findings highlight the potential of social media campaigns in shaping pro-environmental behavior. Policymakers and NGOs can leverage social media platforms not merely as information channels but as behavioral change tools, focusing on building trust, credibility, and interactive engagement. Businesses promoting eco-friendly products can design digital strategies that emphasize environmental values to align with consumer consciousness. Furthermore, campaigns targeting high-involvement audiences may yield stronger behavioral conversions, making involvement a useful segmentation variable.

8. Limitations and Future Research

There are some drawbacks to this study. First, Delhi-NCR's use of snowball sampling restricts the results' applicability to other areas or rural people. Second, future studies may use longitudinal or experimental methods because the cross-sectional design limits the capacity to conclude causality. Third, behavioral tracking studies are necessary because the use of self-reported measures may induce social desirability bias. Finally, although environmental consciousness was the main focus of this study, future research might include digital literacy or health consciousness as additional factors to expand the framework.

9. Conclusion

The study provides evidence that environmental consciousness shapes positive attitudes toward social media use, which in turn foster stronger behavioral intentions and pro-environmental behaviors. The findings reinforce the relevance of TPB and VBN in digital contexts and highlight issue involvement as an important moderator. Beyond theoretical contributions, the study underscores the transformative role of social media in promoting sustainability, offering insights for policymakers, practitioners, and scholars.

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