

Green Influencers: Analyzing the Role in Transforming Consumer Preferences towards Sustainable Consumption

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ABSTRACT

The increasing environmental concerns lead to rise of social media influencers positioned as green influencers. A significant force that engages with consumer and sustainability. However, whether this influence transforms into actual purchasing behaviour, rather than merely raising awareness, is under explored. The study examines the relationship between the green influencer and environmental awareness, sustainable attitudes and preferences, green purchase intention, and actual sustainable behaviour while considering barriers to sustainable consumption (price, availability, authenticity uncertainty, greenwashing concern) as factors intervening at the awareness to intention-to-actual behaviour stage.

Data were collected from [120] respondents via [questionnaire] and analysed using correlation and regression analysis. Results show exposure as its strongest association with environmental awareness ($r = .682$, $R^2 = .465$) and sustainable attitudes/preferences ($r = .644$, $R^2 = .415$), a moderate association with actual sustainable behaviour ($r = .613$, $R^2 = .375$), and weaker associations with purchase intention ($r = .447$, $R^2 = .200$) and purchase frequency ($r = .294$, $R^2 = .086$).

The findings indicate that while green influencer effectively raises awareness and shapes attitudes, the capacity to sustain purchasing behaviour is limited and consistent with the documented attitude-behaviour gap in previous research. This pattern points to structural and psychological barriers, including price sensitivity and greenwashing scepticism, intervening between intention and action.

This research aims to understand the green influencers influence on consumers' buying patterns. It also helps to analyse the consumers actual consumption actions.

This will assist the policy makers, businesses and government with the help of green influencers to identify ways to curb complex challenges posed by unsustainable practices. And will help in identifying the mechanisms that can be change agents for sustainable purchase

Keywords: green influencers, environmental awareness, sustainable consumption, purchase intention, attitude-behaviour gap

INTRODUCTION

Environmental problems have intensified considering the unsustainable practices of production and consumption. Over a period environmental pollution, ecological degradation, resource depletion and pollution increased manifold. Environmentalists, influencers, government are trying to educate consumers

with the growing concern of environmental degradation. Thus, consumers are expected to be aware of the environmental consequences of the actions of purchase and consumption. Research shows that there is not much conversion among the aware consumers towards actual consumption. Consumers express positive environmental attitude but fail to purchase responsibly.

Emergence of digital and social media platforms has become an important source of information for consumers. Iqbal et al. (2025) Digital platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, Facebook, and other social networking platforms allow information about environmental issues, sustainable lifestyle and eco-friendly practises to reach consumers swiftly. Rapid growth of social media has developed the ecosystem of social media influencers who communicate with their viewers with their personal experiences, recommendations, reviews and opinions. This shapes the consumer perceptions, attitudes, behaviour and decisions.

In this boarder ecosystem, green influencers are those influencers who focuses on content that mainly focuses on environmental issues, sustainability, eco-friendly lifestyles, ethical brands and responsible consumption. This helps green influencers communicate information more accessible and relatable to social-media users. Green influencers act as information provider when they make viewers understand the issues and ways to opt alternatives, they act as opinion leaders when they suggest brands and consumption patterns and thus via their personal experiences and lifestyles, they motivate sustainable practices. The exposure of content does not always signify acceptance of change in viewers. Credibility and trust of green influences depend on how the viewers find them knowledgeable, authentic, transparent, and genuinely concerned about environmental issues. Constant promotion of green brands does bring concern of commercial motives, authenticity and greenwashing. Thus, not always exposure will erase the gap between attitude and actual buying. This widens the scope for research in analysing increase in awareness through social media and digital platforms to actual buying behaviour among buyers. Consumers tend to possess positive relationship between environmental concern and green purchase behaviour Hussain et al. (2020) But there are various factors that tend not to make the relationship direct and consistent.

Therefore, research focuses on analysing the role of green influencers in transforming consumers preferences towards sustainable consumption. It will enable the understanding of how communication through social media influencers transforms into actual consumption and purchase of green products.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The review suggests the environmental concern acts as a strong positive factor while considering green consumer behaviour. Individuals are concerned about environmental deterioration and protection of environment is considered personally important. Hussain et al. (2020) found that environmental concern and green purchase behaviour has positive relationship. Sharma et al. (2023) identifies environmental and psychological determinants of green buying, but research indicates that the relationship is always not direct and consistent, though individuals show strong concern but prioritise various aspects such as price, convenience, brand familiarities. Environmental concern creates favourable psychological correlations but is not transcended into consistent behaviour. Sharma et al. (2023) also reviewed that green purchase behaviour is associated with various factors such as environmental consciousness, health consciousness, self-efficacy, perceived consumer effectiveness. It makes attitude- behaviour gap relevant. Research supports existence of the inconsistency of concern and behaviour. Gan et.al. (2008) shows that environmental consciousness and purchase intentions improved the green purchasing behaviour but at the same time higher prices, unfamiliar brands but at the same time higher prices, unfamiliar brands demotivated their purchase. Witek & Kuźniar (2021) highlights how premium prices, accessibility,

scepticism creates inconsistencies and discouragement between attitude & actual buying. Factors such as premium pricing, perceived risk, fear of green washing discourages willingness to purchase green products. Consumers understand the environmental benefits of green products but are failing to act on purchase because of price, availability, convenience, product performance uncertainty.

The purchase decisions made by consumers are influenced by social norms, peer groups and communities. Hussain et al. (2020) points out that social influence significantly affects green purchase behaviour and social environment shapes green purchase behaviour.

Social media has expanded the nature and reach of social influence. Social media drives interaction. Sustainability related content is shared, viewed, discussed and incorporated in consumers everyday activities. Iqbal et al. (2025) suggests that social media or digital platforms contribute to influencing consumers. Social media influences can reinforce sustainable behaviour. Social media influencers attract followers with personal experiences, product recommendations, lifestyle demonstrations narrowing the gap of consumer decision making. Jalali & Khalid (2019) provides that influencer social credibility and values can influence followers' environmental choices. Credibility of the source becomes important for consumers with respect to adopting to sustainable practices and adoption of products. Rodrigo & Mendis (2023) proposes that influencer credibility helps to bridge the gap between green purchase intention and actual purchase. Wu et al. (2025) suggested that greenwashing can act as a negative conditioning when it comes to green influencer marketing. Greenwashing weakens the relationship between influencers and sustainability claims.

Sharma et al. (2023) also identified scepticism, green confusion, premium pricing as barriers to green purchase behaviour. The literature points out that green influencers content becomes persuasive only if consumers viewing green content trust or perceive influencers as knowledgeable and trustworthy.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. Does exposure to green influencers associate with actual purchase behaviour
2. Does awareness through green influencers change consumer preferences, intention and actual buying

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

1. To understand the influence of green influencers on transforming consumer awareness and attitudes towards green consumption
2. To analyse green influencer's influence on consumer preference and intention
3. To analyse the impact of green influencer on consumers' actual consumption actions

DATA SOURCES

We employed both primary and secondary data. Primary data was collected through a structured questionnaire administered to social media users, designed to measure green influencer exposure, perceived influencer credibility, environmental awareness, attitudes toward sustainable products, sustainable preferences, purchase intention, actual sustainable behaviours, and barriers to sustainable consumption

Secondary data were drawn from academic journals, peer-reviewed articles, books, and industry reports relating to social media influencers, green marketing, green consumerism, sustainable consumption, and consumer behaviour theory.

POPULATION AND SAMPLE

The population consists primarily of young social media users in the age group of 18–29 years. The study employed non-probability convenience sampling, as respondents were recruited through accessible online and social media networks. A total of 120 valid responses were obtained through an online, self-administered questionnaire, with no missing data on the quantitative items.

Table 1.1: Demographic Profile of Respondents (N = 120)

Variable	Category	n	%
Gender	Female	69	57.5%
	Male	51	42.5%
Education	Graduate	65	54.2%
	HSC	40	33.3%
	Postgraduate	11	9.2%
Daily Social Media Use	3–5 hours	58	48.3%
	5+ hours	36	30.0%

RELIABILITY OF THE RESEARCH INSTRUMENT

Constructs demonstrated acceptable-to-good internal consistency.

Table 1.2: Reliability Analysis (Cronbach's Alpha)

Construct	No. of Items	Cronbach's α	Interpretation
Green influencer exposure	3	0.698	Acceptable/borderline
Environmental awareness	2	0.864	Very good
Sustainable attitudes/preferences	2	0.724	Acceptable
Purchase intention	3	0.801	Good
Actual sustainable behaviour	5	0.600	Relatively modest
Barriers	2	0.741	Acceptable

HYPOTHESIS

H01: - Exposure to green influencers has a significant positive relationship with environmental awareness. Strongest relationship was observed between green influencer exposure and environmental awareness ($r = .682$, $p < .01$). Viewers who see more of green influencer content tend to have higher environmental

awareness. This suggests that green influencers provide information and make viewers more aware of environmental issues and sustainable practices

H02: Exposure to green influencers has a significant positive influence on purchase intention

Statistically ($r = .447$, $p < .01$) weaker than H1. This suggests that green influencers can imbibe purchase intention of eco-friendly products, but green influencer exposure alone will not lead to purchase intention. Several other factors also affect people's willingness to buy sustainable products.

H03: - Exposure to green influencers has a significant positive influence on actual green consumer behaviour.

Green influencer exposure has a strong positive relationship with actual sustainable behaviour ($r = .613$). This suggests that green influencer exposure leads to actual behaviour than intention. Green influencer exposure to actual behaviour relationship is stronger than its relationship with purchase intention

Table 1.3: Summary of Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis	Relationship	r	R ²	Result
H1	Exposure → Awareness	.682	.465	Supported
H2	Exposure → Purchase Intention	.447	.200	Supported (comparatively weak)
H3	Exposure → Actual Behaviour	.613	.375	Supported

FINDINGS

The findings of the study indicate a strong digital engagement with active social media users for 3 to 5 hours daily. It indicates a high exposure of respondents to social media, green influencers and sustainability- related content. The mean values (2.57 for following influencers and 3.12 for seeing sustainability content) shows that participants engage with sustainability influencers and their content at moderate levels.

A correlation coefficient of $R = 0.6248$ indicates a strong positive relationship, meaning that higher exposure to sustainability influencers is associated with greater awareness, more positive attitudes, and increased likelihood of sustainable actions. This suggests that green influencers help in providing information and creating environmental awareness among consumers.

Purchase intention was lower than both awareness and attitude measures indicating an awareness to purchase gap, where being aware of sustainability did not lead to an intention to purchase sustainable products.

The findings reveal an aversion among respondents to pay a premium for sustainable products.

While green influencer content influences positive attitudes toward sustainable consumption, this attitudinal shift does not fully transform into behaviour highlighting a significant attitude–behaviour gap, especially in situations requiring higher financial commitment.

Green influencers shape positive preferences, brand consideration, and purchase intentions. But the influence is less powerful when consumers must make a direct financial sacrifice. Influencers are increasing motivation, but price and trust/greenwashing concerns are preventing consumers from transforming motivation into actual purchases.

Actual sustainable behaviour tends to remain limited to low-cost or no-cost actions

Green influencers may be effective in creating awareness and transforming attitudes but Price, availability, and doubts about genuine sustainability claims/greenwashing may prevent consumers from turning posit-

ive attitudes into actual purchases.

CONCLUSION

Green influencers positively influence on sustainable buying behaviour. Consumers that are exposed to green influencers are more environmentally aware and they develop positive attitude towards sustainable products and adapt to practices like recycling or reduction of fast fashion

The research shows that there is a strong association with green influencer exposure with environmental awareness, sustainable attitudes, purchase intention, and sustainable behaviour among young social media users.

Factors such as price, availability, and doubts about whether products are genuinely sustainable may prevent people from turning awareness and positive attitudes into regular purchases.

The green influencers can validate the role as effective environmental educators since there is a strong association between exposure and awareness ($r = .682$) thereby helping consumers build trust and credibility of sustainable practices.

Marketers and brands can adopt influencer campaign strategies and adopt complementary strategies such as addressing price barriers through loyalty incentives or accessible pricing tiers, improving transparency around sustainability claims, and directly countering greenwashing scepticism via third-party certification that can convert the strong awareness into actual purchase behaviour. Similarly, policy makers can make policies and strategies that provide affordable sustainable options such as subsidies, tax incentives etc that will help in translating intentions to actual habits

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