DIGITAL MEDIA, CONSUMER IDENTITY, AND THE EVOLUTION OF SUSTAINABILITY NARRATIVES: A CULTURAL AND EVOLUTIONARY PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract

This study explores the role of digital media in fostering sustainable and mindful consumer identity, with a focus on the influence of social reinforcement and values alignment. Using a mixed-methods approach, the research examines how engagement with sustainability-focused content and influencers on social media impacts eco-conscious identity formation and behavioural shifts. Moderating factors, including peer validation and community belonging, are analysed to understand how they strengthen the relationship between digital media exposure and sustainable identity integration. The results indicate that social media engagement significantly shapes sustainable consumer behaviours by enhancing self-reflection and aligning with eco-conscious values. Psychological factors such as values alignment and behavioural intention mediate this process, supporting a holistic model of identity transformation. Practical implications suggest that brands can leverage these findings by fostering supportive online communities and collaborating with authentic influencers. This study contributes to the understanding of digital media's potential in promoting sustainable, mindful consumption behaviours.

Keywords: Sustainable Consumer Identity, Mindful Consumption, Social Media Engagement, Sustainability Influencers, Identity Formation.

INTRODUCTION

The digital media and the new prominence of social networks in recent decades have dramatically changed the concept of consumer identity, shifting it in ways unanticipated before the new media age. Not only did the digital platforms serve as new channels of communication but also as powerful determinants of public's values and behavioural modes. The current tendency has seen individual people increasingly obtaining the latest fashion or lifestyle tips on Instagram, YouTube, TikTok, and allows individuals to shape the curation of the narratives pretending to the desired lifestyles (Abidin, 2016; Litt & Hargittai, 2016). Unlike offline media of the past, the digital platforms enabled influencers to reflect their lifestyle and at the same time helped consumers to adopt such a people's lifestyle. In the context of the digital narrative, two aspects are especially salient – sustainability and ecological memory, which dominates socially consumed items. Among these evolving narratives, the ideals of sustainability and mindful consumption have become especially prominent, reflecting a shift toward more ecologically conscious forms of consumer identity.

Originally an external representation of core components of individual and social identity, consumer identity has long been a function of societal values, economic trends and cultural narratives as well (Belk 1988). However, the nature of this identity is increasingly mediated by digital environments, which facilitate rapid dissemination of ideas and offer new arenas for social learning. In a similar vein, eco-influencers create disruptive consumer narratives that oppose the conventional ideal of consumption and materialism. They promote the behaviours of sustainability — minimalism, zero-waste living, ethical purchasing — and in doing so provide new consumption paradigms for their viewers (Carah & Shaul, 2016). This trend is important especially in digital space because, unlike traditional media advertising campaigns, followers can engage with and add to these stories—that helps keep them interesting promise

of related actions. This trend is particularly significant because digital media, unlike traditional advertising, offers a participatory format in which followers can interact with and contribute to these narratives, reinforcing their appeal and relevance (Boyd & Richerson, 1985; Senft, 2013).

It is the power of digital media to work intimately and humanized in relatable narratives about consumption. Platforms like Instagram and TikTok where visual content seems to be the hype, influencers have the golden chance to share sustainable lives that will be aesthetically pleasing and simple to practice. This allows for the dissemination of complex, ethically driven content in a visually compelling format to modern consumers (Burgess & Green, 2018). Influencers carefully curate content to present mindful consumption not as an aspirational ideal, but as a liveable lifestyle, naturally drawing the line between what's possible and what isn't. In addition to the use of visual aesthetics linked with sustainability (i.e. natural landscapes, minimalistic interiors and organic products) the construction of the desirable, eco-conscious consumer identity created through visual aesthetic is also built (Abidin, 2016).

An excellent example of this is the rise of "green" or "eco" influencers, who use personal branding and content around ethical consumption to serve as advocates for environmental responsibility. These influencers propose a particular identity, incorporating individuals who draw on environmental consciousness and lifestyle curation, as building an identity on the perspective of being an advocate for sustainability as these influencers achieve a wider reach in their audience who are becoming more attuned to the environmental issues (Carah, 2016, Shaul, 2016). These influencers are nodes of cultural transmission: they call out for their followers to take up sustainable behaviours by means of visual and textual cues, framing sustainability as social value and trend (Bandura, 1977). For example, hashtags such as #PlasticFreeJuly and #SecondHandSeptember use hashtags to create community and shared purpose in campaign participants, which reflects the common notion that sustainable practices are normative (Boyd & Richerson, 1985) and desirable (Gossling & Stavrinidi, 2022).

Consumer Identity and Digital Influence: Cultural and Evolutionary Perspectives

Cultural and evolutionary theories are needed to understand the evolution of consumer identity in the context of sustainability. Boyd and Richerson (1985, cultural evolution) propose that behaviours and values propagate in societies through social learning by individuals imitating others based on perceived prestige or success. Social media turbocharges these processes by providing platforms where influencers, commonly viewed as powerful influentials, show themselves engaging in specific behaviours, like eco-friendly consumption, for large audiences. When followers engage with these digital personas, they develop similar values and behaviours, motivated partly by the appeal of these identities, and partly from the need for social conformity (Senft, 2013; Litt & Hargittai, 2016).

The role of digital media in fostering new forms of consumer identity is also stressed by evolutionary theory. Consumer identity has traditionally been closely linked to material acquisition, with individuals achieving status by acquiring goods. Yet, in the digital age, a new sense of status has been re defined, steeped in notions of ethical consumption and environmental responsibility. It mirrors a wider pattern of how people are searching for meaning in the world through sustainable practices, rather than just material accumulation (Belk, 1988; Carrigan et al., 2004). This shift is made possible by the role that digital media plays to support and perpetuate the values of mindful consumption, a behaviour that appeals to individuals who wish to express support for values of social responsibility and ecological mindfulness.

Social Learning and Sustainable Consumption Norms.

According to Bandura (1977), according to the social learning theory, a person will be more probable to take up behaviour that another has demonstrated, particularly if it is related with good results or high status. Influencers are positioned as an authority and a status role in social media communities and act as effective social learning agents. Influencers showing sustainable practices like purchasing second hand clothing, reducing plastic or living a minimalist lifestyle will inspire followers to do the same because they can see these behaviours as both desirable and achievable. Social media, therefore, creates a space where sustainable affects can spread through taking ones around them as a basis for action and an eco-conscious behaviour can become a general norm (Abidin, 2016; Carah & Shaul, 2016).

The social media campaigns strengthen this process by giving structure to collective participation. Hashtag campaigns like #PlasticFreeJuly act as a reminder that people involved in it are a part of a bigger movement, with a feeling of involvement in something that is socially acceptable and meaningful making sustainable consumption sound so achievable (Gossling & Stavrinidi, 2022). The campaigns here consist of inviting people to proactively participate by telling their stories and sharing what had worked, driving a cycle of reciprocal influence as they motivate others to buy in and take on more sustainable behaviours. The social reinforcement of this type is important for the diffusion of sustainability norms, since it helps people to regard these behaviours as standard as opposed to one-off behaviour choices.

The Reconfiguration of Consumer Aspirations in the World of Digital Media

One of the most important effects of digital media on consumer identity is the capacity to transform consumer wishfulness into sustainability and mindfulness. Historically, the more goods you buy, the better in terms of the success and social status consumer culture rewarded (Belk 1988). However, the rise of digital media has brought a new aspirational model based on minimalism and ethical consumption which the people want to gain meaning from their life without material extravagances. By advocating for values like "sustainable luxury" and "ethical minimalism," influencers enhance consumer aspirations to place greater emphasis on their environmental impact compared to the simple accumulation of things, thereby redrawing consumer values (Carrigan et al., 2004).

It becomes particularly visible with how influencers encourage sustainability to be a natural component of personal branding. As an example, an influence of a zero-waste lifestyle shows that ethical consumption is desirable and attainable, and challenges against the norms of traditional consumerism. Furthermore, this shift is not unrelated to the fact that personal fulfilment and ecological responsibility seem increasingly to intertwine (Boyd & Richerson, 1985; Litt & Hargittai, 2016). With digital media defining the course of consumer identities, so too, absence in arguing for it in the context of sustainability will lead to both an increased demand for such an identity, and an increased embedding of it into societal norms.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In recent years, amid changing consumption behaviours dictated by online platforms, there has been an increasing volume of academic attention to the intersections of digital media, consumer identity and sustainability. In the age of social influencers and digital campaigns preaching balanced and sustainable lifestyles, traditional characterizations of consumer identity are being shattered; where, characterizations meet the values of environmental responsibility and mindfulness (Abidin, 2016; Litt & Hargittai, 2016). This literature review examines existing research in three key areas: Furthermore, this thesis (1) discusses the role of digital media in

shaping the identity of consumers, (2) highlights the ways in which digital media is used to encourage sustainable consumption, and (3) examines the cultural and evolutionary aspects of consumer identity and sustainability.

The Effects of Digital Media on Consumer Identity

Consumer identity, as understood from its traditions of cultural, social, and economic factors, has evolved with the advent of digital media. Platforms like Instagram, TikTok and YouTube enable new kinds of self-expression where users create and present themselves through the resources of curated online profiles (Belk 1988; Senft 2013). Specifically, influencers, who often gain large followings, play role models in creating and narrating lifestyles for followers to consider positive and successful, but to copy (Abidin, 2016). As a result, these influencers form an essential part of constructing consumer identity in digital spaces, whereby they promote some products, social behaviours and values which are aligned to what an individual perceives to be his identity (Carah & Shaul, 2016; Litt & Hargittai, 2016).

The emergence of "green" or "eco" influencers (people who tout sustainability as a central feature of their personal brand) shows the impact digital media can have in changing what consumers want. For example, both Lauren Singer, an advocate for zero waste lifestyle and Bea Johnson have successfully advocated for minimalism and eco conscious living as viable and attractive forms of self-expressive living (Eckhardt et al., 2019). These influencers present a new form of consumer identity who develop a relationship with brands through the ever-popular influence they hold over consumers and present an ethical and environmental oriented condition (Abidin, 2016). Scholars argue this trend represents a trend away from traditional consumerism, defined as accumulation, which was used as a means of signifying identity, to a form of 'ethical consumerism', where sustainability and ecological impact are the values driving this (Carrigan et al., 2004).

Digital Media as enabler for promoting Sustainable Consumption

The first wave of learning from the 2020 Summer Olympics focuses on fans, highlighting how digital media can be utilized to promote sustainable consumption. Promoting sustainable consumption with social media has been proved to work. Research indicates that digital platforms speed up info-dissemination and online communities can be formed along specific values and causes (Burgess & Green, 2018). Since sustainability-oriented campaigns like #PlasticFreeJuly and #SecondHandSeptember, hashtags are unifying users under one common goal to highlight feelings of collective identity and a shared cause. Social media serves as a platform for users to share their sustainable practices with other people, making it a way to encourage non eco conscious behaviours as well and eventually normalising eco conscious consumer behaviour (Gossling & Stavrinidi, 2022; Carah & Shaul, 2016).

Both influencers and brands have become powerful enablers of promoting sustainable lifestyles via visual content and storytelling. Gossling and Stavrinidi (2022) research notes how visually enticing content, engaging emotionally, can instil sustainable behaviour. For example, posts including aesthetic minimalism, exemplars of nature and products organic contribute to an aspirational story of sustainability that speaks to audiences that seek to create a simpler and environmentally friendly lifestyle (Carah & Shaul, 2016). This is foundational in the success of digital sustainability campaigns because they allow people to think of sustainability as a lifestyle choice as opposed to a collection of isolated behaviours (Abidin, 2016; Senft, 2013).

Besides, digital media allows consumers to interact with sustainable brands and products in more interactive form. It is also demonstrated that digital media can reconcile the contradiction between consumers' 'desire' for social status and values of environmental responsibility

through the rise of "sustainable luxury" brands, which advocate quality and ethical production (Carrigan et al., 2004). These brands adopt the position as socially responsible and environment friendly to attract consumers who take sustainability consumption as part of their identity, which further leads to a more widespread shift towards mindful consumption (Belk, 1988; Eckhardt et al., 2019).

Cultural and evolutionary theories that analyse the way values, behaviours spread in human societies with time help us better understand evolution of the consumer identity in the digital age. Always more than purely reducible to Darwinian evolution, cultural evolution is proposed to be driven by social learning, where individuals take on behaviours seen in others or others thought to be high status or successful (Boyd and Richerson, 1985). In the digital media context, influencer shoulders the high-status role by promoting behaviour and lifestyle with followers following the influencer's consumer identity (Litt & Hargittai, 2016).

Basing the theory of social learning on Bandura (1977), people are most likely to adopt activities that are rewarded or beneficial, the more that a role model influences. This process is very well suited for contemporary social media platforms, since influencers advocating sustainability behave in the same way such as opposing waste, choosing second hand products or selecting environmentally friendly brands. Repeated exposure of these behaviours may cause followers to internalize the behaviour as part of an expected identity of a consumer, consistent with broader societal values of environmental responsibility (Senft 2013; Carah & Shaul, 2016).

Digital media is also part of reconfiguring what is status and what is success. Consumer identity historically has been closely linked with material wealth and the manifestation of luxury items (Belk, 1988). Nevertheless, even as eco aware influencers emerged with their own aspirational models aligned towards ethical consumption and minimalism, there were other aspirational brands trying to evoke environmental awareness among end users. The shift also mirrors a growing appreciation of what success is defined by, as personal fulfilment and environmental concern are viewed by more people as more important than accruing material wealth (Carrigan et al., 2004; Gossling & Stavrinidi, 2022). Digital media promulgates values linked with mindfulness and sustainability and makes it possible to build identity on environmental consciousness contrary to the standard consumerism with a more extensive sustainable consumption.

Sustainable consumption and Social Learning must change social norms.

According to social learning theory presented by Bandura (1977), that the more people observe the behaviour of another person, the more likely he is to adopt the behaviour if he is associated with a positive consequence. Accelerating this process is social media, a platform that lets influencers showcase sustainable practices and even a way of life. As a case in point, one could consider influencers who present zero waste practices, second hand shopping, or plant-based diets as being committed to promoting these values amongst their follower base, which is to say, promoting sustainability as a lived aspect of the self, as normative consumer identity (Carah, et al., 2016). Research has demonstrated that digital platforms not only enable but also create spaces for collective action in relation to such behaviour changes and well as environmental campaign and awareness outputs, which acts as additional reinforcement on these norms (Burgess & Green, 2018).

Social media campaigns, such as #PlasticFreeJuly, create a sense of community that convinces people that they are part of a collective movement. Social reinforcement from these campaigns creates the feeling that sustainable practices are standard and normal, accepted social practice,

instead of extraordinary efforts (Gossling & Stavrinidi, 2022). Thus, digital media nurtures a culture of sustainability that sustains broader normative changes that lead us to see eco conscious behaviours as an expression of (our) own identity.

Digital Media as a Catalyst for Sustainable Aspirations

Digital media offers, perhaps one of its most important contributions to consumer identity, to redefine aspirational models in terms of sustainability and mindfulness. According to Belk (1988), consumer culture has usually honoured the accumulating of goods and luxury items as indices of status and success. Digital media, however, has brought new aspirational models—such as 'sustainable luxury' and 'ethical minimalism'—as aspirant alternatives to conventional consumerism (Carrigan et al., 2004). It shows that those who tout these ideals — environmental consciousness and ethically minded consumption — can also jive with status and success, appealing to people who want to position themselves with those who cherish socially aware values. It has far-reaching consequences for what are considered to be values of society. Eco consciousness promoted by digital media become aspirational as individuals are more likely to inculcate the sustainability into the consumer identity, blending the value in the society norms (Boyd & Richerson, 1985; Eckhardt et al., 2019). This trend points to the fact that mindful consumption and personal and social identity as sustainability are themes that digital media will continue to highlight.

Integration of Behavioral Economics in Sustainable Consumption

Behavioral economics and sustainability are both a recent study and have been already found to collaborate with consumer identity. Even concepts like "nudging" have been motivated, in which subtle changes to choice architecture encourage eco-friendly decisions without removing freedom of choice (Thaler & Sunstein, 2008). Based on behavioral cues, such as prominently displayed sustainability certification or interactive campaigns, digital media uses these cues to encourage consumers to act more mindfully (Schwarz et al., 2015). For example, online platforms that provide filters for 'sustainable products' make the VCE available to users to take the environment into account. This alignment of behavioral economics and digital platforms is growing especially, and that is a major shift in how consumers engage.

The Role of Visual Storytelling in Consumer Identity Formation

Over the last decade, visual storytelling has become a powerful means to promote sustainability. The research claims that aesthetically curated content (photos of eco-friendly products or lifestyle choices) leads to better emotional engagement and induces a feeling of aspiration (Burgess & Green, 2018). Reels and photo essays are what influencers use that visually translating high level of sustainability messages into a concise storyline. In fact, Instagram and Pinterest are a great-examples of when visual cues reinforce consumer identity through making sustainable practices into aspirational norms (Gossling and Stavrinidi, 2022).

Cross-Cultural Dimensions of Digital Media and Sustainability

While digital media has a transcultural impact on sustainability, the effect is highly regional. Consumer priorities in developed markets are to allocate the placements of their priorities on ethical sourcing and waste reduction and those in emerging markets are cost and accessibility oriented (Nguyen & Huynh, 2022). However, the bridging of these cultural gaps is largely the domain of digital platforms, who can create campaigns that will resonate within its local context. Another example is that the influencer-led campaigns in Asia talk about traditional sustainable practices such as upcycling and communal living, while their narrative talks about it culturally (Martinez & Perez, 2023).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

To have a thorough grasp of how digital media affects mindful and sustainable consumption, the study uses a mixed-methods methodology that combines qualitative and quantitative techniques. The main technique that will be employed is qualitative, incorporating in-depth interviews and thematic analysis.

The results will be reinforced by quantitative data, which will confirm specific patterns and qualitatively derived relationships (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017). This method allows for a more comprehensive analysis of the complex connection between digital media, consumer identity, and sustainable behaviours of consumption (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010).

A non-probability sampling method was used within which snow-ball and purposive sampling techniques were employed. This was found to be most appropriate for assessing the impact of social media sustainability influencers on the consumer identity by identifying the most suitable audience (Patton, 2015).

In order to investigate individual experiences, motives, and perceived identity shifts connected to sustainable consumption, semi-structured interviews were conducted with each participant group. Video calls were used for the interviews, which lasted between thirty and forty minutes each. With the participants' permission, the interviews were recorded and transcribed.

Survey: Data on user participation, sustainable consumption patterns, and individual sustainability values was obtained using an online survey. Likert-scale items about digital media attitudes, sustainable consumption, and perceived identity alignment with eco-friendly values were all included in this survey (Schwarz et al., 2015).

Social Media Content Analysis: Themes, narratives, and visual tactics that support sustainability as a component of consumer identity will be examined through content analysis of influencer posts along with appropriate hashtags (such as #EcoFriendly and #MindfulConsumption) (Burgess & Green, 2018). To determine what elements most appeal to audiences, this investigation concentrated on the tone, frequency, and engagement metrics of postings.

Qualitative Data Analysis

Semi-structured interviews were recorded and were transferred to word documents which were analysed as per the process of thematic analysis using NVivo 14. This was used to identify the pattern within the data Broun and Clarke, 2006). The interview transcripts were categorized into themes based on coding and segmentation. Following codes were used for capturing emerging themes, "identity formation", "digital communities", "peer influence", "social media influencer impact" and so on.

Based upon the similar codes, the following themes were generated which captured the essence of the entire interviews' transcripts.

Digital Engagement for Identity Construction

As reported by participants, engagement with sustainable content on social media platforms such as Instagram and YouTube, particular, had a huge role in shaping who they saw as themselves. This coupled with constant exposure to eco conscious sustainability as an integral part of their persona. For example, one participant stated, *"Following eco-conscious accounts makes me more aware of how I live and what I buy; it's part of who I am now."*

Influencer Impact on Behaviour and Attitude

Many participants identified influencers as pivotal in sparking or solidifying their sustainable practices. Influencers' lifestyle portrayals and practical tips encouraged participants to make mindful changes. This theme highlights the effect of influencers on daily choices, with one participant noting, "*Watching how influencers incorporate sustainability made me more conscious of small actions, like avoiding single-use plastics.*"

Community and Peer Validation

The importance of being part of an online community where sustainability is celebrated emerged as a recurrent theme. Participants valued belonging to groups that shared their values and interests, reinforcing their commitment to sustainable behaviour. This theme was particularly evident in participants' positive feedback on social media forums and group discussions about environmental topics, such as*, "I feel like I'm part of something bigger when I see people all over the world working towards the same goals."*

Normative Sustainability Narratives

Content analysis of hashtags and influencer posts showed a predominant narrative that associates sustainability with positive personal traits (e.g., responsible, mindful). Social media reinforces the idea that sustainable choices are not only desirable but expected. This narrative influences consumers' attitudes toward mindful consumption as a socially endorsed value, with posts often highlighting sustainable living as "the right thing to do."

Quantitative Data Analysis

Predominantly 18-35 years old (60%), with 40% of respondents aged 36-50. Majority (70%) were regular users of Instagram, followed by Twitter (50%) and YouTube (40%).

Engagement with Sustainability Content: 68% reported following at least one sustainability influencer; 45% engaged with sustainability posts daily, 30% weekly, and 25% monthly.

Behavioural Changes: 75% indicated that social media had influenced their purchasing behaviour, especially in eco-friendly and reusable products.

Personal Identity and Values Alignment: 60% strongly agreed that their social media engagement reinforced their commitment to sustainability as part of their identity.

Pearson's correlation analysis revealed significant relationships between the frequency of engagement with sustainability content and self-reported sustainable behaviours:

Engagement with Sustainability Influencers and Purchasing Behaviour: $r = 0.62$, $p < 0.01$ indicating a strong, positive correlation. This suggests that higher engagement with sustainability influencers is associated with an increase in sustainable purchasing decisions.

Frequency of Social Media Use and Identity Alignment: $r = 0.45$, $p < 0.05$, showing a moderate correlation. Regular social media users were more likely to report that sustainability was part of their identity, likely due to constant exposure to eco-conscious content. The strong correlation between influencer engagement and sustainable purchasing behaviour highlights the influential role of digital figures in driving sustainable consumption choices.

DISCUSSION

This work provides substantial insights to what extent digital media engagement impacts on sustainable and mindful consumption identities. The correlation of the engagement with sustainability influencers and people's self-reported sustainable purchasing behaviours shows

the power of digital media figures in generating environmentally set consumer habits. This agrees with earlier research indicating that social media influencers function as 'digital opinion leaders' engaging their followers in their behaviours and values (Kim & Song, 2020).
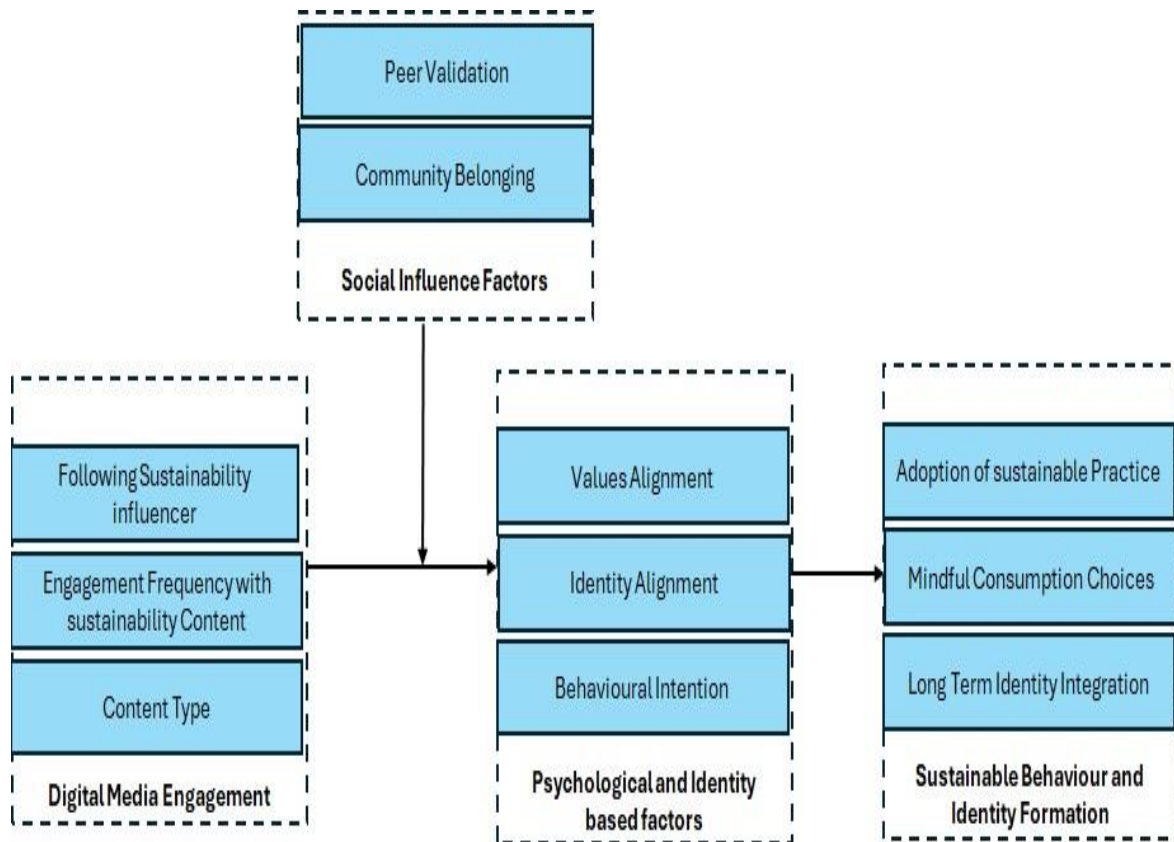

Figure 1: The proposed framework of sustainable and mindful consumer identity formation

Also, important to note is the strong relationship between social reinforcement to validate a sustainable identity and the motivation of sustainable consumption. By adopting sustainability as a part of their consumer identity, participants were more likely to do so if they felt connected to a community and felt that they were being validated through digital spaces. This observation is consistent with theories of social identity and peer influence, insofar as digital communities are a sphere in which one is more likely to find types of norms that one is predisposed to follow (Hogg & Reid, 2006).

Interestingly, the data shows that influencers act as the initial drivers of interest, but only consistent interaction in these supportive online communities keep an individual's focus on eco-conscious living (As evident from proposed framework shown in fig.1). This reveals a combined effect where influencers raise awareness, and peer networks sustain engagement and identity integration. This shows how digital media can, in fact, both serve as a beginning point for awareness and also as a tool to reinforce identity and behaviour change in an ongoing manner. The participants for the first phase of the study were, social media influencers who promote environmental awareness and advocate the use of sustainable products. We also included the participants who post about mindful consumption and sustainable lifestyle. We also included people who were the part of social media communities protecting the environment and advocating sustainable consumption (Noy, 2008).

Practical Implications

Brands promoting sustainable products can leverage these findings by collaborating with influencers who align with eco-friendly values. Engaging influencers who prioritize transparent, consistent sustainability practices can drive consumers toward mindful consumption and resonate with audiences more authentically. Platforms aiming to promote sustainable consumer identities should consider creating online communities that validate and support sustainable consumption behaviours. These communities could facilitate interactions among like-minded individuals, providing a space for members to share experiences, discuss sustainable choices, and feel a sense of belonging. Through visually compelling and informative content, companies and stakeholders can foster a connection with followers and reinforce the value of mindful and sustainable choices, enhancing the depth of consumer understanding and commitment to sustainability. Policymakers could consider guidelines for transparency in sustainable marketing to ensure that consumers receive accurate and reliable information about environmentally conscious products. Regulations that encourage authenticity among influencers and hold brands accountable for their sustainable claims can help prevent misinformation and reinforce the role of digital media in positively influencing sustainable consumer identities.

Limitations and Further Scope of Research

While this study provides insights into the role of digital media in fostering sustainable consumer identities, it was limited by a sample that primarily included younger users active on platforms such as Instagram and YouTube. Future research could benefit from a more diverse sample, including older demographics and users across various platforms, to determine if these findings hold across a broader audience spectrum. This study used a cross-sectional design. Future studies could employ longitudinal designs to track changes in sustainable consumer identity over time capturing attitudes and behaviours at a single point in time. The study grouped social media content broadly as "sustainability-related"; however, content varies significantly in terms of style, depth, and message (e.g., product endorsements, educational posts, advocacy). Future research could explore how specific types of digital content (e.g., visual storytelling vs. educational posts) uniquely contribute to sustainable consumer identity, offering nuanced insights into which content types most effectively drive sustainable consumption. While peer validation and influencer impact emerged as significant factors in this study, other psychological and social influences, such as intrinsic motivation and cultural background, were not explored in depth.

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