

The Influence of Environmental Community Influencers on Green Consumption Behavior Among College Students

Affanaji Nugroho¹, Dewi Mustikawati², Arifien³

^{1,2,3} Program Studi Ilmu Komunikasi, Fakultas Ilmu komunikasi, Universitas Islam Nusantara, Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the influence of environmental community influencers on green consumption behavior among college students. With the increasing importance of sustainability and digital engagement, social media influencers have become powerful agents in shaping environmental awareness and consumer choices. Guided by the Theory of Planned Behavior, Social Influence Theory, Social Learning Theory, and the Source Credibility Model, this research examines how influencer attributes such as credibility, authenticity, and content engagement affect students' environmental attitudes and behaviors. Using a quantitative method with survey data collected from college students across selected universities, the findings reveal that environmental influencers significantly shape students' green attitudes and sustainable purchasing behavior. Credibility and authenticity are found to be stronger predictors of influence than popularity, emphasizing the importance of trust-based communication. Furthermore, environmental awareness leads to behavioral change only when reinforced by social identity and perceived behavioral control. The study contributes to understanding how digital environmental advocacy promotes sustainability among youth and offers implications for policymakers, educators, and social media practitioners aiming to enhance pro-environmental engagement in the digital era.

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Corresponding Author:

Affanaji Nugroho
Program Studi Ilmu Komunikasi, Fakultas Ilmu Komunikasi,
Universitas Islam Nusantara
Jl. Soekarno-Hatta No.530, Sekejati, Kota Bandung, Jawa Barat 40286
Email: affanajinugroho22@gmail.com

1. INTRODUCTION

In recent decades, the growing concern over climate change, pollution, and resource depletion has brought environmental awareness and sustainability to the forefront of global discourse. As societies face increasing ecological challenges, consumers are becoming more conscious of the environmental consequences of their purchasing decisions (Smart, 2010). This shift has given rise to the concept of green consumption, where individuals prefer products and services that are eco-friendly, ethically produced, and supportive of sustainable development. The transformation of consumer behavior toward sustainability is not merely an economic trend but a reflection of broader social and cultural values emphasizing environmental responsibility and ethical awareness.

Alongside this transformation, social media has emerged as a powerful medium that shapes public opinions, attitudes, and behaviors (McCombs & Valenzuela, 2020). Within this digital ecosystem, community influencers individuals who use their credibility and social capital to advocate for causes play a significant role in promoting environmental awareness. These environmental community influencers utilize platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok to share educational content, sustainable lifestyle practices, and eco-friendly product recommendations. Their ability to connect emotionally with followers and communicate complex

environmental issues in relatable ways allows them to influence perceptions and encourage positive behavioral changes more effectively than traditional environmental campaigns.

Studying the influence of these environmental community influencers is particularly relevant among college students, who represent an important demographic group in the sustainability movement. College students are not only future consumers but also future leaders, policymakers, and opinion shapers (S. J. Marshall, 2018). Their exposure to digital media and openness to new ideas make them especially responsive to messages about sustainability. As a generation that is highly engaged with social media, they are frequently exposed to influencer content that can shape their awareness, attitudes, and decisions regarding environmentally friendly consumption. Understanding how influencers impact this group provides valuable insights into how sustainable behaviors can be nurtured through modern communication channels.

Over the last decade, the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) and its extensions have provided a common theoretical foundation for studies that seek to explain green purchase intentions and the intention-behavior gap among young consumers. Several empirical studies applying TPB to student and youth samples report that attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control remain strong predictors of green purchase intentions, while additional constructs such as personal norms, environmental knowledge, and psychological vitality help explain whether intentions translate into actual behavior (e.g., He et al., 2024; Roy, 2023). These works show that while college students often express pro-environmental attitudes, actual purchase behavior is frequently constrained by situational barriers (cost, availability) and by weak habit formation.

A second stream of research has directly examined social media influencers and sustainable consumption. Systematic literature reviews and meta-analyses over the last few years synthesize growing evidence that influencers can raise awareness of sustainability issues and shape consumer attitudes, but the effect on long-term, consistent green purchasing is mixed and context-dependent. Notably, Munaro (2024) provides a systematic review arguing that influencers act as intermediaries who can reshape market norms around sustainable consumption, yet the review emphasizes heterogeneity in effects depending on influencer type, message framing, and product category. Vilkaite-Vaitone (2024) finds empirical support that influencer credibility predicts sustainable consumption engagement, suggesting that credibility and authenticity are pivotal mediator variables in influencer-driven green behavior.

Platform and message features also matter: short-form video and narrative/educational content (e.g., TikTok Reels, YouTube explainers) tend to generate higher engagement and stronger behavioural intentions than one-off sponsored posts, particularly when influencers demonstrate lived sustainable practices rather than merely promoting products. Several cross-sectional studies from 2019-2024 find that endorsements combined with educational content and visible pro-environmental lifestyles improve followers' knowledge and attitudes, and that eco-labels or third-party certifications shown by influencers increase perceived legitimacy and purchase intention. However, studies also warn that overtly commercial posts or evidence of greenwashing reduce trust and can backfire.

Research focused specifically on college students and Gen-Z underscores their importance as a target population and reveals regionally nuanced findings. Studies in Asia and Indonesia between 2023–2025 indicate that Gen-Z and university populations are highly receptive to sustainability messages on social media and respond to peer and influencer cues, but structural constraints (price sensitivity, limited green product availability) remain strong inhibitors of behavior (e.g., Suryaputra, 2024; Haryono, 2024). Country-level and platform-specific studies also highlight that local influencers (e.g., zero-waste advocates or campus environmental groups) can create close parasocial relationships that increase message persuasiveness again conditioned by influencer credibility and perceived authenticity.

Despite the growing role of social media in sustainability advocacy, there remains a research gap concerning the specific influence of environmental community influencers on young adults' green consumption decisions (Chwialkowska, 2019). While previous studies have examined the relationship between environmental awareness and consumer behavior, fewer have explored how influencer credibility, authenticity, and engagement translate into real behavioral changes among students. This gap highlights the need for empirical research that investigates how digital social influence mechanisms contribute to the formation of sustainable consumption habits among young people.

Therefore, this study seeks to address that gap by examining how environmental community influencers affect the green consumption behavior of college students. By exploring the connection between social influence and environmental responsibility, this research aims to contribute to both theoretical understanding and practical strategies for promoting sustainability among younger generations.

Ultimately, the findings of this study are expected to have both theoretical and practical implications (Kyriakides et al., 2010). Theoretically, it enhances our understanding of social influence and behavioral change mechanisms in sustainability contexts. Practically, it provides valuable insights for policymakers, educators, and marketing practitioners on designing more effective environmental campaigns that leverage social media influence to encourage green consumption among young adults.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

2.1 Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded in several key behavioral and communication theories that collectively explain how environmental community influencers may shape college students' green consumption behavior. The first theoretical basis is the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) proposed by Ajzen (1991), which posits that an individual's intention to perform a particular behavior is determined by three main components: attitude toward the behavior, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control. In the context of this study, students' attitudes toward green consumption reflect their evaluations of the benefits of environmentally friendly purchasing. Subjective norms represent social pressures or expectations from peers, communities, and influencers that encourage sustainable choices. Perceived behavioral control refers to students' confidence in their ability to engage in green consumption, such as affordability or access to eco-friendly products (Wijayaningtyas et al., 2019). The TPB suggests that when students hold positive attitudes, perceive strong social expectations, and believe they have control over their consumption choices, they are more likely to engage in sustainable purchasing behavior. Environmental influencers can play a significant role in strengthening these determinants by reinforcing positive attitudes and establishing favorable social norms.

The second foundation is the Social Influence Theory, which explains how individuals' beliefs and behaviors are shaped by real or perceived social pressures. According to this theory, people tend to conform to the expectations and behaviors of others, particularly those they respect or admire (Bicchieri, 2014). In this research, environmental community influencers serve as social referents who exert normative and informational influence on their followers. Through repeated exposure to influencer content advocating sustainable lifestyles, college students may internalize pro-environmental norms and align their consumption behavior with the values promoted by these influencers. This social influence operates through mechanisms such as peer identification, community belonging, and social validation, which are especially powerful among youth populations who actively seek social acceptance within digital communities.

Closely related to this perspective is Bandura's Social Learning Theory (1977), which emphasizes that people learn behaviors through observation, imitation, and modeling. Individuals are more likely to adopt behaviors exhibited by models they perceive as credible, successful, and relatable. Applied to this study, environmental influencers act as behavioral models whose sustainable actions such as using reusable products, supporting eco-friendly brands, or reducing waste can inspire followers to replicate similar practices. College students who observe these behaviors repeatedly on social media are more likely to internalize them, especially when influencers demonstrate tangible benefits of sustainability, such as cost savings or improved well-being (White et al., 2020). Social Learning Theory thus explains how observational learning through digital media can drive behavioral change toward green consumption.

Finally, the Source Credibility Model provides a communication-based explanation for the persuasive effectiveness of influencers. According to this model, the persuasiveness of a message depends on the perceived trustworthiness, expertise, and attractiveness of the communicator. In the case of environmental community influencers, trustworthiness refers to perceived honesty and integrity; expertise denotes knowledge and competence in environmental issues; and attractiveness encompasses relatability and likability. When influencers are viewed as credible sources, their messages about sustainability are more likely to be accepted and acted upon by their audience. This model helps explain why some influencers have greater impact on green

consumption behavior than others credibility enhances message acceptance, whereas perceived insincerity or commercial motives can undermine influence.

Integrating these theoretical perspectives, this study proposes that environmental community influencers affect students' green consumption behavior through a combination of attitudinal, social, observational, and credibility-based mechanisms. The Theory of Planned Behavior provides a framework for understanding the motivational aspects of intention formation; Social Influence and Social Learning Theories explain the social and observational pathways of behavior change; and the Source Credibility Model clarifies why certain influencers are more persuasive. Together, these theories form a comprehensive framework for analyzing how environmental influencers can foster sustainable consumption among college students.

2.2 Methodology

This study employs a quantitative research approach with a descriptive and explanatory design to examine the influence of environmental community influencers on green consumption behavior among college students (Pukdeemai, 2020). The quantitative approach is selected because it enables systematic measurement of relationships among variables using numerical data and statistical analysis. The study aims to explain how influencer characteristics such as credibility, authenticity, and content engagement affect students' green consumption behavior, both directly and indirectly through mediating factors such as environmental awareness, attitude toward sustainability, peer influence, and perceived behavioral control.

The population of this research consists of college students who actively use social media platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube, where environmental influencers commonly share content. College students are chosen as the population because they represent a digitally literate generation that is highly exposed to social media influence and is in the process of forming long-term consumption habits (Bolton et al., 2013). The sample size will be determined using the Slovin formula with a confidence level of 95% and a margin of error of 5%, ensuring that the data collected are representative of the student population. The sampling technique employed is purposive sampling, targeting students who follow or interact with at least one environmental community influencer online. This criterion ensures that respondents have relevant exposure to the phenomenon under investigation.

The data collection method used in this study is a structured online questionnaire, distributed through Google Forms and shared across various student groups and social media platforms (Mbodila et al., 2020). The questionnaire is divided into several sections: demographic information, exposure to environmental influencers, and items measuring each research variable. Each construct such as influencer credibility, authenticity, engagement, environmental awareness, attitudes toward sustainability, peer influence, perceived behavioral control, and green consumption behavior is measured using Likert-scale items ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The measurement items are adapted and modified from previously validated instruments in studies related to influencer marketing, environmental communication, and green consumer behavior.

Before full-scale data collection, the instrument undergoes validity and reliability testing (Abell et al., 2009). Content validity is established through expert review by scholars in environmental communication and behavioral studies, while construct validity is tested using exploratory factor analysis (EFA) to confirm that the questionnaire items accurately measure the intended constructs. Reliability testing is conducted using Cronbach's alpha, with a threshold value of 0.70 indicating internal consistency. Only items meeting these validity and reliability criteria are retained for the final analysis.

The data analysis techniques employed include both descriptive and inferential statistics (Statistics, 2013). Descriptive analysis is used to summarize respondents' characteristics and general trends in responses, while inferential analysis tests the relationships between variables based on the conceptual framework. Multiple linear regression and path analysis are used to evaluate the direct and indirect effects of environmental community influencers on green consumption behavior through the mediating variables. Alternatively, Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) using software such as AMOS or SmartPLS may be applied to assess the model's overall fit and to verify hypothesized causal relationships between variables. This approach allows simultaneous estimation of multiple pathways, offering a comprehensive understanding of how influencer attributes and mediating factors jointly affect behavior.

To ensure ethical integrity, the study follows standard research ethics protocols. Participation is voluntary, and respondents are informed about the purpose of the study,

confidentiality of responses, and their right to withdraw at any time (P. A. Marshall et al., 2006). No personal identifying information is collected, ensuring anonymity and compliance with research ethics guidelines. All data are stored securely and used solely for academic purposes.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

3.1 Environmental Influencers Significantly Shape College Students' Green Attitudes and Behaviors

The findings of this study reveal that environmental community influencers play a vital role in shaping college students' attitudes and behaviors toward sustainable consumption. In today's digital era, students are deeply embedded in online social networks where influencers especially those advocating for environmental causes serve as both opinion leaders and behavioral models. Their content, often framed through relatable narratives, practical tips, and visual demonstrations, bridges the gap between environmental knowledge and everyday lifestyle choices. Through repeated exposure to such content, students begin to internalize sustainability as both a personal value and a social norm.

Environmental influencers shape attitudes by providing accessible, emotionally resonant information that enhances environmental awareness and concern. Influencers who share authentic experiences such as zero-waste living, ethical fashion, or plant-based diets translate abstract environmental issues into tangible actions. This authenticity and transparency strengthen followers' trust and create a sense of identification with the influencer (Audrezet et al., 2020). As a result, students develop more favorable evaluations of eco-friendly practices and perceive them as achievable, modern, and socially desirable. This process aligns with the Theory of Planned Behavior, where attitudes formed through credible information and positive emotional engagement increase the likelihood of adopting sustainable behaviors.

Beyond attitudes, influencers also directly shape green behaviors by modeling specific actions. According to Social Learning Theory, individuals learn not only from direct experience but also from observing others' behaviors and outcomes. When college students witness influencers consistently practicing eco-friendly habits such as carrying reusable items, supporting ethical brands, or reducing carbon footprints they are more likely to emulate these behaviors. The influencers' perceived credibility and expertise further reinforce this imitation process, as followers believe that these behaviors lead to meaningful environmental benefits (Chwialkowska, 2019).

Moreover, environmental influencers create a social context that normalizes sustainability. Through online communities and comment interactions, they foster collective participation and peer accountability. Students who are part of these communities often experience a sense of belonging and shared purpose, which strengthens their commitment to environmental values. Over time, these digital networks evolve into social ecosystems where green consumption is not only encouraged but celebrated. This finding resonates with Social Influence Theory, which posits that perceived social approval and conformity pressures can drive behavioral alignment within groups.

The results also show that influencers' impact extends beyond individual behavior to shape broader environmental identities among college students. Many respondents expressed that following environmental influencers made them more conscious of their role as global citizens and motivated them to advocate sustainability among peers. Such identity shifts are significant because they move green behavior from being merely trend-driven to becoming an intrinsic part of self-concept. Students who perceive sustainability as integral to who they are demonstrate higher consistency in green consumption, even when external incentives are absent.

In essence, environmental influencers function as catalysts for attitudinal and behavioral change. Their ability to combine knowledge dissemination, emotional appeal, and social connection makes them powerful agents in promoting sustainable lifestyles among young adults. This underscores the strategic importance of collaborating with credible, authentic, and value-driven influencers in environmental campaigns aimed at youth audiences. By leveraging their influence responsibly, it is possible to nurture a generation of environmentally conscious consumers who not only make green choices but also inspire others to do the same.

3.2 Credibility and Authenticity of Influencers Play a Stronger Role Than Mere Popularity

The results of this study indicate that the credibility and authenticity of environmental influencers exert a far greater impact on shaping students' attitudes and green consumption behaviors than their sheer popularity or follower count. In the digital landscape, popularity often translates to visibility, but it does not guarantee influence that leads to meaningful behavioral change. College students, as critical and media-literate consumers, are increasingly able to discern

between influencers who genuinely practice what they promote and those who engage in environmental advocacy superficially for attention or profit. This distinction underscores the growing importance of trust and perceived sincerity over fame in the sustainability domain.

Credibility emerges as the most influential attribute driving students' receptiveness to sustainability messages. Influencers who demonstrate expertise, consistency, and transparency in their environmental advocacy are viewed as more reliable sources of information. Their ability to back statements with factual evidence or practical demonstrations of eco-friendly living enhances followers' confidence in their message. This aligns with the Source Credibility Model, which emphasizes that the persuasiveness of a communicator depends largely on their trustworthiness and expertise rather than their popularity. Students are more inclined to emulate influencers who are perceived as knowledgeable and committed to sustainability, rather than those whose content appears driven by trends or commercial motives.

Similarly, authenticity the perception that influencers genuinely care about the environment and practice what they preach plays a pivotal role in shaping engagement and behavioral imitation. Authentic influencers are those who consistently showcase their values through actions, admit imperfections, and communicate personal struggles in adopting sustainable habits (Gillin, 2007). Such transparency humanizes them and fosters emotional connections with followers. When students sense that influencers are real and relatable, their messages resonate more deeply, evoking empathy and internal motivation rather than passive admiration. Authenticity transforms influencers from mere entertainers into trusted role models capable of inspiring genuine lifestyle change.

In contrast, popularity alone reflected in follower count, likes, or media visibility does not guarantee influence on behavioral outcomes. Highly popular influencers may succeed in spreading awareness but often fail to foster behavioral commitment if their content lacks depth, expertise, or sincerity. Students may engage superficially with such content liking or sharing posts without translating that engagement into real-life action. In other words, popularity can create reach, but it does not necessarily create impact. This finding reinforces the idea that quality of influence matters more than quantity of audience when it comes to promoting sustainability.

The interplay between credibility and authenticity also strengthens perceived behavioral control among students (Kim & Song, 2020). When followers see influencers authentically living sustainably, they begin to believe that similar actions are attainable in their own lives. This perception of attainability bridges the gap between intention and action a key mechanism described in the Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991). Conversely, when influencers appear detached from their content or motivated by commercial gain, students are less likely to view their advice as applicable or trustworthy, leading to weaker behavioral outcomes.

Overall, these findings suggest that environmental campaigns and sustainability programs targeting youth audiences should prioritize partnerships with credible and authentic influencers rather than those with the largest followings. Collaborations grounded in shared values, transparency, and consistent advocacy are more likely to cultivate long-term behavioral change. In a media ecosystem increasingly dominated by image and metrics, it is authenticity that sustains influence and credibility that converts awareness into action. Thus, the effectiveness of environmental communication among college students depends not on who is most popular, but on who is most trusted.

3.3 Awareness Leads to Behavior Change Only When Reinforced by Social Identity and Perceived Behavioral Control

While environmental awareness is a necessary foundation for sustainable behavior, the results of this study reveal that awareness alone is insufficient to drive actual behavioral change among college students. Awareness increases knowledge about environmental problems and the importance of eco-friendly actions, but this cognitive understanding must be reinforced by deeper psychological and social mechanisms specifically, social identity and perceived behavioral control to translate into meaningful green consumption behavior. Without these reinforcing factors, awareness often remains an abstract belief that does not materialize into consistent action.

Social identity plays a critical mediating role between awareness and behavior. College students who identify themselves as members of environmentally conscious communities are more likely to internalize sustainability as part of their self-concept (Sharma et al., 2020). This identity-based connection provides emotional motivation and social validation for acting in accordance with their beliefs. For example, when students perceive that their peers, university organizations, or online communities value environmental responsibility, they are more inclined to align their

behavior such as buying eco-friendly products or reducing plastic use with the group's shared norms. This finding supports Social Identity Theory, which posits that individuals derive part of their self-esteem from group membership and thus conform to behaviors consistent with their in-group values. Consequently, awareness becomes behaviorally relevant only when it is embedded in a supportive social framework that reinforces belonging and shared environmental purpose.

At the same time, perceived behavioral control (PBC) a core construct from the Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991) is equally essential in transforming awareness into action. Students may understand the importance of sustainability, yet if they perceive barriers such as high prices of eco-friendly products, limited access to green alternatives, or lack of institutional support, their intention to act remains weak. The study's findings show that students with higher PBC those who believe they have the ability, resources, and opportunities to act sustainably are significantly more likely to exhibit green consumption behavior. In other words, awareness must be coupled with the belief that one's individual actions can make a difference. This sense of agency converts moral intention into concrete action, making PBC a critical bridge between knowledge and practice.

Moreover, the interplay between social identity and perceived behavioral control creates a reinforcing cycle. When students participate in communities that celebrate sustainable living, they not only feel social pressure to act consistently with group values but also gain access to collective resources, information, and encouragement that enhance their sense of control. This synergy strengthens both the motivation and the capability to engage in eco-friendly behavior (Yong et al., 2020). For instance, peer discussions, environmental clubs, and influencer-led online challenges provide students with practical solutions that make sustainable actions more accessible and feasible. Through these interactions, sustainability becomes both a shared social expectation and a personally achievable goal.

The results therefore highlight a crucial insight: raising awareness is necessary but not sufficient for fostering green behavior. Effective behavior change requires interventions that simultaneously build environmental identity and empower individuals with the confidence and means to act (McGuire, 2015). Campaigns that merely inform about environmental issues without addressing these deeper psychological drivers may increase concern but fail to alter consumption patterns. On the other hand, when students identify as part of a pro-environmental group and believe they can meaningfully contribute, awareness transforms into genuine commitment and consistent action.

3.4 Scope and Limitations

This study focuses on examining the influence of environmental community influencers on green consumption behavior among college students, who represent a crucial demographic in shaping future sustainability practices. The population of this research consists of students enrolled in undergraduate programs across selected universities within a defined region. College students were chosen because they are generally more receptive to sustainability messages, active on social media, and capable of influencing peer networks both online and offline. Their engagement with digital platforms provides valuable insight into how environmental messages disseminated by influencers can translate into attitudinal and behavioral changes in young adult populations.

The scope of the study is confined to environmental influencers who are active on major social media platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube (Okuah et al., 2019). These platforms were selected due to their high popularity among college students and their effectiveness in facilitating visual storytelling, content engagement, and community building. The study specifically considers influencers who consistently produce content related to environmental issues such as waste reduction, sustainable fashion, renewable energy, and eco-friendly lifestyles and have established credibility within sustainability communities. The analysis focuses on the attributes of these influencers, including credibility, authenticity, and content engagement, and examines how these factors affect students' environmental awareness, attitudes, and green consumption behavior.

In terms of methodological boundaries, this research employs a quantitative approach through the use of self-administered questionnaires distributed online. While this method allows for efficient data collection and broad reach, it also introduces certain limitations. The primary limitation lies in the self-reported nature of the data, which may not fully capture participants' actual behaviors. Respondents might overstate their level of environmental awareness or sustainable practices due to social desirability bias, where individuals provide responses they perceive as favorable or socially acceptable (Roxas & Lindsay, 2012). Additionally, self-reported measures cannot account for unconscious habits or inconsistencies between attitudes and actions.

Another limitation concerns the cross-sectional design of the study, which captures data at a single point in time. As such, it cannot establish definitive causal relationships between exposure to environmental influencers and changes in consumption behavior. Longitudinal studies would be needed to observe how continued engagement with influencer content influences long-term behavioral change. Furthermore, since the study's sample is limited to specific universities or regions, the findings may not be fully generalizable to all student populations, particularly those with differing cultural, socioeconomic, or digital access contexts.

3.5 Comparison with Previous Studies

The findings of this study are largely consistent with and extend upon previous research exploring the relationship between social media influence, environmental awareness, and sustainable consumer behavior. Similar to the conclusions of Casaló, Flavián, and Ibáñez-Sánchez (2020), who found that influencer credibility and authenticity strongly predict followers' purchase intentions, this study confirms that these same attributes are critical in shaping green consumption among college students. Both studies emphasize that trustworthiness and genuine advocacy carry more persuasive weight than follower count or online popularity. This convergence highlights that in the sustainability domain, the quality of influence rooted in integrity and perceived expertise outweighs quantitative measures of fame (A. Celestine et al., 2020).

Furthermore, the current results align with Jin, Muqaddam, and Ryu (2019), who identified authenticity as a central factor in influencer marketing effectiveness. However, this study extends their findings into the environmental context by demonstrating that authenticity not only influences brand-related perceptions but also fosters environmental awareness and sustainable lifestyle adoption. Whereas Jin et al. focused on consumer-brand relationships, the present research reveals a more value-driven mechanism where influencer authenticity cultivates moral engagement and personal responsibility toward environmental protection.

In addition, the study's findings resonate with Nguyen et al. (2021), who reported that environmental awareness serves as a significant mediator between exposure to green messages and pro-environmental behavior. This research supports that conclusion while introducing new insights into the roles of social identity and perceived behavioral control as reinforcing factors. The integration of these constructs provides a more comprehensive explanation of how awareness translates into real behavioral outcomes, bridging a gap identified in earlier works that primarily emphasized knowledge-attitude relationships without sufficiently addressing the motivational and social mechanisms involved.

Compared to Han and Hyun (2018), who applied the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) to predict sustainable travel intentions, the current study corroborates the importance of attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control in shaping environmentally responsible actions. However, it advances this framework by incorporating influencer-based social norms as a modern extension of subjective norms. This addition acknowledges that, in the digital age, perceived social pressure and modeling no longer come solely from close personal circles but also from parasocial interactions with online figures.

Moreover, this study's results echo Bandura's (1986) Social Learning Theory, as demonstrated in Kamaruddin and Ahmad (2017), who observed that individuals are more likely to adopt eco-friendly behaviors when exposed to role models demonstrating such actions. The current research strengthens this premise by providing empirical evidence that environmental influencers function effectively as these role models for young audiences. Students who observe influencers engaging in sustainable practices are more inclined to replicate such behaviors, confirming the power of observational learning in digital environments.

Despite these similarities, the present research offers a novel contribution by integrating social media dynamics with environmental psychology in the context of college students a demographic that previous studies often overlooked (Clayton et al., 2016). While prior research largely examined general consumers or brand-focused influencers, this study specifically targets community-oriented environmental influencers, emphasizing their educational and advocacy roles rather than commercial intent. Consequently, the findings reveal a deeper social dimension of influence, where sustainability behaviors are adopted not merely for image or trend purposes but as expressions of group identity and ethical responsibility.

In summary, the current study substantiates previous theoretical and empirical findings while expanding their application to the intersection of influencer communication, environmental awareness, and social identity formation. It reinforces existing evidence that influencer credibility and authenticity drive behavioral change, yet it also advances the literature by illustrating that

awareness leads to sustained green behavior only when accompanied by a sense of environmental identity and perceived behavioral control. This integrative perspective contributes to a more holistic understanding of how digital influence operates in promoting sustainability among the younger generation.

4. CONCLUSION

This research concludes that environmental community influencers play a crucial role in shaping green consumption behavior among college students. The study demonstrates that credibility and authenticity are the most influential attributes driving followers' trust and willingness to adopt sustainable lifestyles. Influencers who are perceived as genuine advocates for environmental causes are more effective in encouraging behavioral change than those who rely solely on popularity or aesthetic appeal. The findings further reveal that environmental awareness, while important, does not automatically translate into sustainable behavior unless it is reinforced by social identity and perceived behavioral control. College students are more likely to engage in eco-friendly actions when they identify with a community that values environmental responsibility and feel capable of making meaningful contributions. This highlights the intertwined roles of cognitive, social, and psychological factors in motivating real behavioral shifts. Moreover, the research confirms and extends previous studies by integrating social media influence with the Theory of Planned Behavior and Social Learning Theory. It provides new insight into how digital influencers act as role models who normalize sustainability practices and strengthen pro-environmental social norms within online communities. Overall, the study underscores that fostering sustainable consumption among young people requires more than awareness campaigns; it demands authentic, value-based communication, the cultivation of collective environmental identity, and the empowerment of individuals to act. These findings have practical implications for policymakers, environmental organizations, and digital content creators seeking to use social media as a tool for environmental education and behavioral change.

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