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SUSTAINABLE CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR THROUGH GREEN DIGITAL MARKETING PRACTICES: A SKILL DEVELOPMENT PERSPECTIVE – OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

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ABSTRACT

In the context of increasing environmental concerns and rapid digital transformation, green digital marketing has emerged as an important approach for promoting sustainable consumer behaviour. This paper examines the role of green digital marketing practices in influencing environmentally responsible consumption, with a particular focus on the importance of skill development. Using secondary data and an extensive review of existing literature, the study explores how digital tools such as social media, data analytics, and artificial intelligence can be effectively utilized to encourage sustainable purchasing decisions.

The study finds that green digital marketing enhances consumer awareness, engagement, and brand loyalty when supported by professionals possessing both digital and sustainability-related skills. It further highlights that skill development in areas such as digital marketing, ethical communication, and environmental knowledge is essential for designing credible and impactful marketing strategies. However, several challenges persist, including greenwashing, consumer scepticism, digital inequality, and lack of standardized regulatory frameworks.

The paper concludes that integrating skill development with green digital marketing practices can significantly improve sustainable consumption patterns while also generating employment opportunities. It emphasizes the need for coordinated efforts among policymakers, educational institutions, and businesses to promote green digital competencies and ensure inclusive and effective implementation of sustainability-driven marketing strategies.

KEYWORDS: Green Digital Marketing, Sustainable Consumer Behaviour, Skill Development, Digital Skills, Green Skills, Sustainability, Consumer Awareness, Environmental Marketing



1. INTRODUCTION

In recent decades, concerns related to environmental degradation, climate change, and the unsustainable use of natural resources have significantly influenced both production and consumption patterns across the globe. The idea of sustainable development, popularized after the World Commission on Environment and Development report (1987), emphasizes meeting present needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own. Within this broader framework, consumer behaviour has emerged as a critical area where meaningful change can be achieved.

With the rapid expansion of digital technologies, marketing practices have undergone a fundamental transformation. Businesses are no longer dependent solely on traditional modes of communication; instead, they increasingly rely on digital platforms such as social media, search engines, and e-commerce portals to interact with consumers. This shift has led to the emergence of green digital marketing, which combines environmental consciousness with digital outreach strategies to promote eco-friendly products and responsible consumption.

At the same time, the effectiveness of these strategies depends not only on technological infrastructure but also on the availability of relevant skills. The growing demand for professionals who can integrate sustainability principles with digital marketing tools highlights the importance of skill development in this domain. Digital marketers today are expected to possess competencies in data analytics, content creation, and artificial intelligence, along with an understanding of environmental issues and ethical communication practices. In this sense, skill development acts as a bridge between technological innovation and sustainable outcomes.

Despite increasing awareness, a noticeable gap persists between consumers' positive attitudes toward sustainability and their actual purchasing behaviour. Icek Ajzen (1991) explains that behaviour is influenced by attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control, suggesting that awareness alone is insufficient to drive action. This highlights the need for well-designed digital marketing strategies supported by skilled professionals who can effectively influence consumer decisions.

Moreover, in developing economies such as India, challenges such as limited digital access, lack of training opportunities, and low awareness of sustainability practices further complicate the adoption of green consumption patterns. Therefore, integrating skill development initiatives with green digital marketing practices becomes essential for achieving both economic growth and environmental sustainability.



Against this backdrop, the present study attempts to explore how green digital marketing, when supported by appropriate skill development, can contribute to shaping sustainable consumer behaviour, while also identifying the opportunities and challenges associated with this emerging field.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The concept of green marketing has evolved significantly over time, reflecting the growing importance of environmental sustainability in business practices. Early work by Peattie and Crane (2005) critically examined green marketing and argued that it must move beyond superficial claims to become a genuinely transformative approach that minimizes environmental harm. Their study emphasized that without authenticity, green marketing risks losing credibility among consumers.

Subsequent research has highlighted the role of consumer awareness in shaping sustainable behaviour. Biswas and Roy (2015) found that consumers in emerging economies are increasingly aware of environmental issues, but their purchasing decisions are often influenced by factors such as price, availability, and trust. The study pointed out that while digital platforms enhance awareness, they must provide reliable and transparent information to effectively influence consumer choices.

With the advancement of technology, digital marketing has become a powerful tool in promoting sustainability. Kotler, Keller, and Chernev (2021) emphasized that sustainability has emerged as a key differentiating factor in modern marketing strategies. They argued that businesses integrating sustainability into their core values and communicating it effectively through digital channels can gain a competitive advantage.

In a similar vein, Chen, Wang, and Li (2020) examined the role of digital transformation in green marketing and found that technologies such as artificial intelligence, big data analytics, and personalized content significantly improve consumer engagement. These tools enable marketers to target environmentally conscious consumers more effectively and deliver customized sustainability messages.

Recent literature also underscores the importance of skill development in enhancing the effectiveness of green digital marketing. Studies indicate that the integration of digital competencies with environmental knowledge is essential for designing impactful marketing campaigns. A lack of trained professionals in this interdisciplinary area often limits the successful implementation of sustainable marketing strategies, particularly in developing countries.

Furthermore, behavioural theories provide a strong foundation for understanding sustainable consumption. The Theory of Planned Behaviour proposed by Ajzen (1991) suggests that consumer



actions are shaped by attitudes, social norms, and perceived control. This implies that marketing strategies must not only inform but also motivate and enable consumers to adopt sustainable practices. Overall, the existing literature suggests that while green digital marketing has significant potential to influence consumer behaviour, its success depends on three key factors: credibility of information, effective use of digital technologies, and the availability of skilled human resources. However, there remains a gap in integrating skill development explicitly with green marketing practices, which this study seeks to address.

3. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The present study aims to examine the interrelationship between green digital marketing, sustainable consumer behaviour, and skill development. In particular, it focuses on understanding how the integration of digital competencies and sustainability-oriented skills can enhance the effectiveness of environmentally responsible marketing practices.

The specific objectives of the study are as follows:

1. **To examine the role of green digital marketing** in influencing and promoting sustainable consumer behaviour in the digital era.
2. **To analyse the importance of skill development**, particularly digital and green skills, in designing and implementing effective green marketing strategies.
3. **To identify the key opportunities** arising from the integration of digital marketing practices with sustainability initiatives.
4. **To explore the major challenges** faced by businesses, including skill gaps, technological barriers, and issues of consumer trust in adopting green digital marketing.
5. **To suggest practical strategies and policy measures** for strengthening the link between skill development and sustainable digital marketing practices.

These objectives collectively aim to provide a comprehensive understanding of how skill development can act as a catalyst in promoting sustainable consumption through digital marketing platforms.

4. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The present study develops a conceptual framework that integrates green digital marketing with skill development to explain its influence on sustainable consumer behaviour. The framework is grounded in behavioural theory, particularly the model proposed by Icek Ajzen (1991), which suggests that human behaviour is shaped by attitudes, social norms, and perceived behavioural control.

In the context of this study, sustainable consumer behaviour is not merely a result of awareness but is

significantly influenced by how effectively

The framework consists of four key components:

4.1 Digital Skills and Green Skills

Digital skills include competencies such as search engine optimization (SEO), data analytics, content creation, and the use of artificial intelligence in marketing. Green skills refer to knowledge of environmental sustainability, ethical marketing practices, and the ability to communicate eco-friendly values effectively. The integration of these skills enables professionals to design impactful green marketing campaigns.

4.2 Green Digital Marketing Strategies

These strategies involve the use of digital platforms—such as social media, websites, and e-commerce—to promote environmentally sustainable products and practices. Skilled professionals utilize storytelling, influencer marketing, and personalized content to create meaningful engagement with consumers.

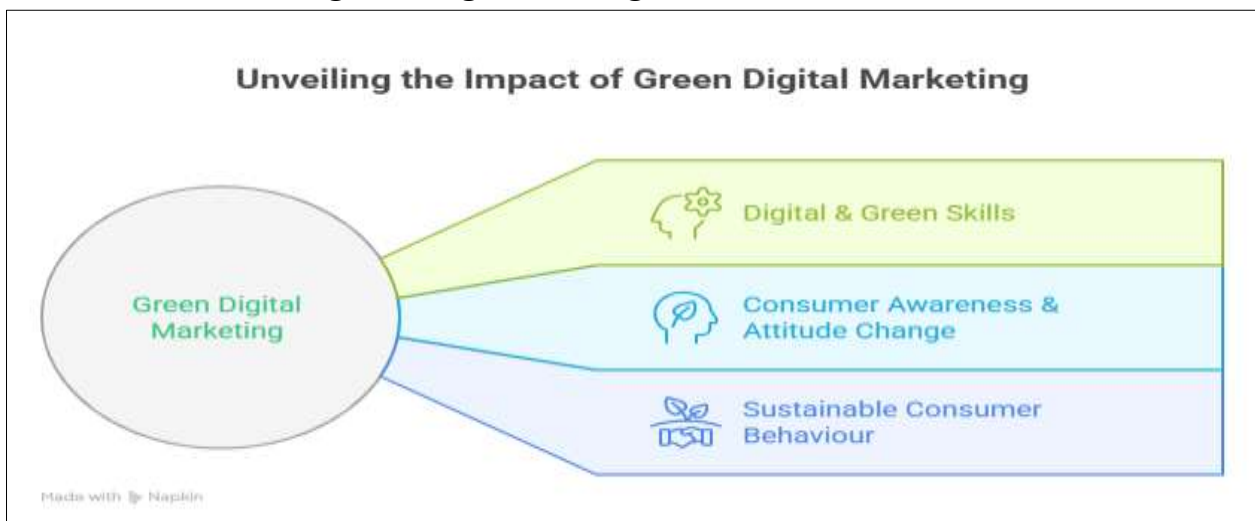
4.3 Consumer Awareness and Attitude Formation

Effective communication through digital channels increases consumer awareness about environmental issues and influences their attitudes toward sustainable consumption. This stage reflects the cognitive and emotional responses of consumers, which are critical in shaping their intentions.

4.4 Sustainable Consumer Behaviour

The final outcome of the framework is the adoption of environmentally responsible purchasing and consumption patterns. When consumers are well-informed, motivated, and supported by accessible options, they are more likely to make sustainable choices.

Figure 1: Figure showing Flow of the Framework



Source: self-compiled



This framework highlights that **skill development acts as a foundational driver** that strengthens the entire process. Without adequate skills, digital marketing efforts may fail to convey authentic sustainability messages, thereby limiting their impact. Conversely, a skilled workforce can bridge the gap between awareness and action, ensuring that green marketing translates into real behavioural change.

5. Opportunities in Green Digital Marketing with Skill Development

The integration of green digital marketing with skill development presents multiple opportunities for businesses, consumers, and the broader economy. As digital technologies continue to expand, the demand for professionals equipped with both technical expertise and sustainability knowledge is also increasing. This convergence creates new avenues for innovation, employment, and responsible consumption.

5.1 Employment Generation and Emerging Skill Domains

One of the most significant opportunities lies in the creation of new job roles that combine digital marketing expertise with sustainability knowledge. The growing emphasis on environmentally responsible business practices has led to the emergence of roles such as sustainability content strategists, ESG analysts, and green marketing consultants. Skill development initiatives in areas like digital analytics, eco-branding, and ethical communication can enhance employability, particularly among youth in developing economies.

5.2 Enhanced Consumer Engagement

Digital platforms provide interactive and participatory environments where consumers can engage with brands. Skilled marketers can design compelling campaigns using storytelling, visual content, and influencer collaborations to promote sustainable lifestyles. Such engagement not only raises awareness but also encourages consumers to actively participate in environmental initiatives.

5.3 Cost-Effective and Sustainable Promotion

Green digital marketing reduces dependence on traditional advertising methods such as print media, thereby minimizing paper usage and environmental impact. At the same time, digital campaigns are more cost-effective and scalable. Professionals trained in digital tools can optimize marketing strategies to achieve higher reach with lower resource consumption.

5.4 Data-Driven Targeting and Personalization

The use of big data and artificial intelligence allows businesses to identify and target environmentally conscious consumers more accurately. Skilled professionals can analyse consumer data to design personalized marketing messages that align with individual preferences and values. This increases the effectiveness of campaigns and improves conversion rates.

5.5 Global Reach for Sustainable Products

E-commerce platforms enable even small and medium enterprises to reach global markets. With the right digital skills, entrepreneurs can promote eco-friendly products beyond geographical boundaries, contributing to sustainable trade and inclusive growth. This is particularly beneficial for rural and local



producers who can access wider markets through digital channels.

5.6 Strengthening Corporate Image and Brand Loyalty

Organizations that effectively communicate their sustainability efforts through digital platforms can build a strong and positive brand image. Transparency and authenticity in messaging, supported by skilled professionals, enhance consumer trust and long-term loyalty. In competitive markets, sustainability can act as a key differentiator.

6. Challenges in Implementing Green Digital Marketing

Despite the growing importance of green digital marketing, its effective implementation faces several challenges, particularly in the context of skill development and technological accessibility. These challenges not only limit the impact of sustainability-driven marketing strategies but also hinder the transition toward responsible consumer behaviour.

6.1 Skill Gaps in Green Digital Marketing

One of the primary challenges is the lack of professionals who possess both digital marketing expertise and sustainability knowledge. While digital skills such as data analytics and content creation are increasingly common, the integration of environmental awareness and ethical marketing practices remains limited. This gap reduces the effectiveness of green campaigns and often leads to superficial or poorly executed strategies.

6.2 Greenwashing and Credibility Issues

Many organizations exaggerate or falsely claim the environmental benefits of their products, a practice commonly referred to as greenwashing. In the absence of skilled professionals and proper regulatory oversight, such misleading communication damages consumer trust. Once credibility is lost, it becomes difficult for even genuinely sustainable brands to influence consumer behaviour.

6.3 Digital Divide and Limited Accessibility

In developing economies, unequal access to digital infrastructure poses a significant barrier. Rural and underdeveloped regions often lack reliable internet connectivity and digital literacy, restricting the reach of green digital marketing initiatives. Moreover, limited access to skill development programs further widens this gap, preventing inclusive participation in sustainable consumption.

6.4 Consumer Scepticism and Price Sensitivity

Although consumers increasingly express concern for the environment, their actual purchasing decisions are often influenced by price and convenience. Many consumers remain sceptical about the authenticity of green claims, especially when products are priced higher than conventional alternatives. This creates a challenge for marketers in converting positive attitudes into actual buying behaviour.

6.5 Lack of Standardized Metrics and Measurement Tools

Measuring the effectiveness of green digital marketing campaigns in terms of actual environmental impact is complex. There is a lack of standardized tools and indicators to assess whether marketing efforts are genuinely leading to sustainable behaviour. Additionally, the shortage of skilled analysts



further complicates the evaluation process.

6.6 Regulatory and Ethical Challenges

The absence of uniform guidelines and regulatory frameworks for green marketing allows the spread of misleading information. Without clear standards, businesses may adopt inconsistent practices, leading to confusion among consumers. Ethical concerns also arise when data-driven marketing techniques are used without transparency or accountability.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

In light of the findings and discussion, it is evident that the effectiveness of green digital marketing depends not only on technological advancement but also on the development of relevant skills and supportive institutional mechanisms. The following recommendations are proposed to strengthen the integration of sustainability and skill development within digital marketing practices:

7.1 Promotion of Green Digital Skill Development Programs

There is a need to design and implement structured training programs that combine digital marketing competencies with sustainability knowledge. Educational institutions, training centres, and government agencies should introduce courses focusing on areas such as digital analytics, eco-branding, ethical communication, and sustainable business practices. Such initiatives will help create a workforce capable of executing impactful green marketing strategies.

7.2 Enhancing Transparency and Credibility

Organizations should adopt transparent communication practices by providing verifiable information about their environmental claims. The use of eco-labels, certifications, and traceability mechanisms can help build consumer trust. Skilled professionals should ensure that marketing messages are accurate, evidence-based, and aligned with actual business practices to avoid greenwashing.

7.3 Strengthening Digital Infrastructure and Accessibility

To ensure inclusive participation, it is essential to improve digital infrastructure, particularly in rural and semi-urban areas. Expanding internet access and promoting digital literacy programs will enable a wider population to engage with green digital marketing initiatives. This will also create opportunities for skill development and employment in underserved regions.

7.4 Policy and Regulatory Support

Governments should establish clear guidelines and standards for green marketing practices in digital media. Regulatory frameworks can help prevent misleading claims and promote ethical marketing behaviour. Additionally, integrating sustainability and skill development into national policies and development programs can accelerate the transition toward a green economy.

7.5 Encouraging Industry–Academia Collaboration

Collaboration between educational institutions and industry can play a crucial role in bridging the skill gap. Universities should work closely with businesses to design curriculum and training modules that reflect current market needs. Internships, workshops, and certification programs can provide practical



exposure to students in the field of green digital marketing.

7.6 Leveraging Partnerships with Influencers and NGOs

Organizations can collaborate with eco-influencers, non-governmental organizations, and community groups to enhance the credibility and outreach of their campaigns. Such partnerships can help disseminate authentic sustainability messages and encourage community participation in environmental initiatives.

8. CONCLUSION

The present study highlights that green digital marketing has emerged as a significant tool for promoting sustainable consumer behaviour in the digital age. By leveraging digital platforms, businesses can effectively communicate environmental values, influence consumer perceptions, and encourage responsible consumption patterns. However, the study clearly establishes that the success of such initiatives is not solely dependent on technology, but largely on the availability of skilled human resources.

The integration of **skill development** with green digital marketing practices is crucial in ensuring that sustainability messages are authentic, data-driven, and impactful. Professionals equipped with both digital competencies and environmental awareness are better able to design strategies that bridge the gap between consumer intention and actual behaviour. In contrast, the absence of such skills often leads to ineffective campaigns, credibility issues, and practices like greenwashing.

The study also underscores the importance of addressing structural challenges such as the digital divide, lack of standardized regulations, and consumer scepticism. Without inclusive access to digital infrastructure and training opportunities, the benefits of green digital marketing may remain limited to certain segments of society, particularly in developing economies.

In conclusion, green digital marketing, when supported by robust skill development initiatives and ethical practices, holds immense potential to drive sustainable consumption and contribute to broader environmental goals. Businesses, policymakers, and educational institutions must work collaboratively to build capacities, strengthen transparency, and promote responsible innovation. Such a coordinated approach will not only enhance marketing effectiveness but also support the transition toward a more sustainable and inclusive economy.

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