



IntelliMindEd, 2(6); 2026, 174-188

DOI: [10.69687/ime.nseeepsd.2026.1.14](https://doi.org/10.69687/ime.nseeepsd.2026.1.14)

National Seminar on Effect of Ecopreneurship on Environment Protection & Sustainable Development

Digital Storytelling for Ecopreneurs: A Study on How Small Brands Use Social Media for Green Messaging

Ms. Rayudu Loukika^{1*}, Prof. P. Uma Maheswari Devi²

¹Research Scholar, Adikavi Nannaya University, Rajamahendravaram, Andhra Pradesh, India.

²Professor, DCMS, Adikavi Nannaya University, Rajamahendravaram, Andhra Pradesh, India.

***Corresponding author e-mail:** loukikarayudu@gmail.com.

Abstract

Introduction: The rising climate crisis and increasing awareness of sustainable living have led to a new wave of entrepreneurship known as ecopreneurship, in which entrepreneurs pursue business goals not only for profit but also with a focus on environmental sustainability, ethical production, and community impact. This study investigates how small Indian eco-brands are using digital storytelling to promote sustainability and connect with conscious consumers, examining how founder stories, behind-the-scenes content, and customer experiences are used to build trust and inspire behavior change.

Methodology: The study adopts a qualitative content analysis method, widely used to examine media-based and non-numerical data, which helps explore how meaning, tone, and emotional elements are conveyed through digital content. Five Indian eco-brands were purposively selected based on their consistent storytelling activity on Instagram and YouTube over the past six months: Bare Necessities, Brown Living, Earthy Sapo, Climes, and GreenFootPrint. Content reviewed included Instagram Reels, YouTube videos, founder narratives, product stories, customer testimonials, and visual campaigns, examined for emotional tone, story structures, content strategies, brand voice consistency, and audience interaction patterns. Engagement metrics such as likes, comments, views, and user-generated responses

IntelliMindEd | ISSN: 2998-8527, USA | National Seminar on Effect of Ecopreneurship on Environment Protection & Sustainable Development, Department of Commerce & Management Studies, AKNU, Rajamahendravaram, AP, India

served as a proxy to measure audience resonance, and a benchmarking approach was applied to compare storytelling styles.

Results & Discussion: All five eco-brands demonstrated structured content strategies to deliver green messaging. Bare Necessities and Brown Living consistently use founder-led narratives, educational posts, and reels focused on sustainability tips; Earthy Sapo focuses on storytelling around handmade processes and natural ingredients; Climes relies on animated explainers and gamified posts; and GreenFootPrint leverages festival campaigns, DIY reels, and gifting themes. Bare Necessities and Earthy Sapo presented high transparency through behind-the-scenes content and personal stories, resulting in stronger trust and higher audience interaction, while posts leaning heavily toward product promotion without narrative depth had comparatively lower engagement. Storytelling including real-life stories sparked more emotional reactions, whereas informative posts by Climes were frequently saved but lacked emotional comments. Posts including direct calls to action generated greater engagement, targeted hashtags helped brands reach niche communities while broad hashtags diluted engagement, and cross-platform consistency built stronger brand recall.

Conclusion: Digital storytelling is not just a trend; it is a powerful, emotional, and strategic communication tool. For ecopreneurs, it acts as a bridge between business objectives and value-based missions, helping consumers understand not only what a brand sells but why it exists. Storytelling brings out the human side of a brand and has become a powerful equalizer in the market for small eco-brands. The study shows that stories have the power to build brand loyalty and contribute to eco-conscious behavior change. As India continues to adopt sustainable values, brands which focus on authentic, transparent, and emotionally rich storytelling will succeed in building a strong community, so that storytelling becomes a culture of communication that drives impact, identity, and purpose.

Keywords: Digital Storytelling; Ecopreneurs; Green Messaging; Social Media; Instagram; Small Brands; Brand Trust; Emotional Triggers; Consumer Engagement; Qualitative Content Analysis.

1. Introduction

The rising climate crisis and increasing awareness of sustainable living have led to a new wave of entrepreneurship known as ecopreneurship. These entrepreneurs pursue

IntelliMindEd | ISSN: 2998-8527, USA | National Seminar on Effect of Ecopreneurship on Environment Protection & Sustainable Development, Department of Commerce & Management Studies, AKNU, Rajamahendravaram, AP, India

business goals not only for profit, but also with a focus on environmental sustainability, ethical production, and community impact.

Digital media has transformed how businesses engage with audiences. Today, social media platforms like Instagram, YouTube, and Facebook offer a space for eco-conscious messaging. Small businesses are no longer limited by marketing budgets. They can now connect with like-minded audiences through storytelling, visuals, and shared values. This opens the door for ecopreneurs to build both purpose and profits.

Unlike traditional advertisements, digital storytelling helps brands convey emotion, authenticity, and value. Narratives about founder journeys, product origins, sustainability missions, and customer feedback make the brand more relatable and trustworthy. In the Indian context, where personal trust and word-of-mouth still dominate, this storytelling becomes crucial.

With rising awareness about green consumption, Indian consumers are slowly transitioning from price-based buying to value-based choices. Ecopreneurs, through storytelling, bridge the emotional and knowledge gap, enabling this shift. Therefore, studying their storytelling techniques provides insight into how purpose-driven communication can influence behavior.

Moreover, storytelling enables small brands to break through noise in the digital space. Even brands with minimal ad budgets can go viral through well-crafted videos or messages that touch emotions. When customers relate to a brand's mission, they don't just buy — they advocate.

2. Objectives of the Study

- To understand the role of digital storytelling in communicating eco-brand values on social media

- To explore key content strategies adopted by small Indian ecopreneurs for green messaging
- To examine emotional themes and audience engagement patterns in eco-brand storytelling
- To assess how digital storytelling contributes to brand trust, consumer education, and community building

3. Review of Literature

Ottman (2011) emphasized that authenticity in messaging builds long-term consumer trust in sustainable products. He argues that green marketing should not only focus on product features but also reflect core values. Brands that communicate transparently are more likely to retain loyal customers over time.

Salmon (2010) introduced storytelling as a persuasive technique combining emotion, identity, and memory. His work highlights the psychological connection formed through narrative structures. He suggests that stories are more memorable than statistics, particularly in values-driven communication.

Chatterjee and Bhatia (2019) found that eco-brands sharing personal content build greater trust. They observed that behind-the-scenes videos and founder stories foster emotional bonds. This connection increases both engagement rates and repeat purchases.

Singh (2022) observed that green messages on social media influence youth purchase behavior. His study showed that Gen Z consumers are more likely to support brands aligned with environmental values. Visual storytelling was particularly effective in shifting perceptions.

Kumar (2020) stated that storytelling in startups leads to higher consumer retention. He emphasized that narrative branding creates a consistent voice that customers

remember. Startups using emotional storytelling had stronger brand loyalty than those relying solely on product promotion.

Jain and Mathur (2023) explored emotional storytelling and its role in brand recall. They found that emotionally rich narratives led to stronger memory retention among viewers. The study concluded that emotional triggers are key to long-term consumer engagement.

Rao and Patel (2021) found Instagram to be the most effective platform for eco-brands among Gen Z. The visual nature of Instagram supported engaging storytelling. They also noted that interactivity (polls, stories) enhanced brand relatability.

Banerjee (2022) emphasized culture-based eco-narratives in emerging markets. He found that local storytelling formats connected better with regional audiences. Cultural familiarity increased trust and message authenticity.

Sharma (2023) connected storytelling with habit formation in eco-conscious audiences. She showed that consistent exposure to eco-narratives helped develop sustainable buying patterns. Storytelling acted as both a motivator and educator.

Sinha and Joshi (2021) suggested that consistent content strategy impacts long-term engagement. Their research indicated that sporadic content led to disengagement. Brands with structured storytelling calendars performed significantly better.

Mehta and Roy (2020) highlighted how sustainability storytelling attracts ethical investors. They emphasized the importance of aligning brand missions with investor values. Brands that communicated their environmental goals clearly received more funding inquiries.

Thakur (2022) analyzed the role of transparency in digital branding. His work showed that honesty in production and sourcing details increased consumer trust. He also emphasized the role of live videos in validating brand claims.

Iyer and Bhattacharya (2019) focused on narrative marketing in Indian green startups. Their findings revealed that founder-led stories increased trust in newer brands. They advocated using regional language to strengthen emotional appeal.

Mohan et al. (2021) explored user behavior influenced by brand storytelling on Instagram. They found that storytelling led to more profile visits and saved posts. Stories that were both emotional and educational had the highest interaction.

Zhang et al. (2020) discussed emotional triggers in green messaging globally. They identified fear, hope, and pride as key emotional drivers. Brands that used a mix of these emotions saw broader appeal.

Pandey (2023) studied customer loyalty linked to value-driven messaging. Her research emphasized the importance of purpose over product. Value-based storytelling was found to improve word-of-mouth referrals.

George and Anjali (2021) showed content with human touch increased user-generated interaction. Posts with real employees or customers were more relatable. They concluded that authenticity fuels engagement more than high-quality visuals alone.

Lee (2019) compared consumer response to story-based vs fact-based content. Story-based posts received significantly higher emotional responses. He suggested combining both for maximum impact.

Malhotra (2022) explained that storytelling helps humanize sustainable supply chains. By showing real people and processes, brands appeared more ethical. This led to better customer advocacy and online reviews.

Nayak and Kapoor (2023) examined the credibility of eco-influencers through storytelling. They found that influencers who shared personal journeys were more trusted. Product endorsements without narrative context had lower impact.

Several researchers (Chatterjee & Bhatia, 2019; Jain & Mathur, 2023) describe content strategies as the planned use of formats such as educational posts, emotional narratives, influencer collaborations, hashtags, visual storytelling, and community engagement tools like polls or contests. These strategies aim to increase authenticity, improve brand recall, and build long-term digital engagement.

Zhang et al. (2020) and Sharma (2023) further explored emotional triggers like pride, empathy, and urgency, showing how these factors drive reactions such as comments, shares, and follow-through actions. These emotional connections are essential in building trust and converting audience attention into sustained consumer behavior.

4. Research Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative content analysis method, which is widely used to examine media-based and non-numerical data. This method helps explore how meaning, tone, and emotional elements are conveyed through digital content. It is especially effective in analyzing storytelling strategies where subjectivity and consumer perception play an essential role (Sinha & Joshi, 2021; Rao & Patel, 2021).

Five Indian eco-brands were purposively selected based on their consistent storytelling activity on Instagram and YouTube over the past six months. These brands were chosen to ensure diversity in product categories, audience reach, and storytelling formats.

The brands include Bare Necessities, Brown Living, Earthy Sapo, Climes, and GreenFootPrint.

To ensure credibility, brands were selected based on verified social media presence, consistent posting frequency, and clear alignment with sustainability goals. Each brand represents a unique niche in the eco-product segment, enabling a broader analysis of storytelling styles and themes.

Content reviewed included Instagram Reels, YouTube videos, founder narratives, product stories, customer testimonials, and visual campaigns. The material was examined for recurring elements such as:

- Emotional tone (e.g., empathy, pride, urgency, authenticity)
- Story structures (origin stories, customer impact, behind-the-scenes)
- Content strategies (e.g., use of hashtags, influencer collaborations, calls to action, short-form video formats)
- Brand voice and consistency across platforms
- Audience interaction patterns (likes, shares, comments, saves)

Emotional triggers were assessed based on visual cues, captions, tone of narration, and viewer responses (Zhang et al., 2020; Sharma, 2023). Indicators such as the presence of emojis, storytelling language, customer testimonials, and founder involvement were coded manually.

Engagement metrics were also considered. These included visible indicators such as the number of likes, comments, views, and user-generated responses, which served as a proxy to measure audience resonance and content impact (Mohan et al., 2021; Rao & Patel, 2021).

To compare the storytelling styles, a benchmarking approach was applied. This involved evaluating the content based on frequency of storytelling, emotional depth, strategy usage, and performance of different content formats. This triangulated approach helped validate findings and align with previously established frameworks in social media branding literature.

The selected brands and their focus areas are listed below:

Table 1: Selected eco-brands and their focus areas

Brand Name	Description
Bare Necessities	Zero-waste personal care
Brown Living	Sustainable lifestyle marketplace
Earthy Sapo	Handmade bath and body products
Climes	Climate-action and carbon offset platform
GreenFootPrint	Eco-stationery and plantable gift items

Each of these brands demonstrates distinct storytelling strategies tailored to their niche:

- **Bare Necessities** focuses heavily on educational content, founder-led stories, and sustainability tips in short-form video formats. Their brand narrative centers around zero-waste living and conscious consumption. They often use a minimalist aesthetic and step-by-step guides to promote behavior change. The founder's visible presence in most content adds to credibility and emotional connection.
- **Brown Living** curates multiple sustainable brands under one platform and uses story highlights, curated blog content, and infographics to promote low-impact lifestyles. Their storytelling emphasizes informed decision-making and a sense of eco-community. The brand often features customer voices and expert opinions to reinforce trust.
- **Earthy Sapo** leverages a handmade, natural aesthetic through behind-the-scenes reels and user testimonials. Their content showcases traditional production techniques, the use of local ingredients, and the artisans behind the products. The brand builds emotional appeal by highlighting the authenticity and simplicity of natural living.
- **Climes** uses animated explainers and visual metaphors to simplify complex climate-action concepts. Their content appeals to younger, environmentally curious audiences by focusing on interactive content like carbon footprint calculators and gamified engagement. Their use of brand mascots and clean graphics makes abstract ideas approachable.

- **GreenFootPrint** often features their plantable products in storytelling formats centered around festivals, gifting rituals, and emotional connections with nature. They run campaign series like “Gifts That Grow” to emphasize environmental impact. Their content blends creativity, color, and eco-conscious messaging to resonate with eco-friendly consumers and educators.

These brand observations help establish a strong foundation for the analysis that follows and reflect how storytelling, when crafted with clarity and emotion, becomes a central part of eco-conscious branding strategies.

5. Data Analysis / Discussion

This section addresses all the study's objectives by examining storytelling content, strategies, emotional themes, and their impact on audience engagement and eco-brand positioning.

5.1 Content Strategies and Storytelling Formats

All five eco-brands demonstrated structured content strategies to deliver green messaging. Bare Necessities and Brown Living consistently use founder-led narratives, educational posts, and reels focused on sustainability tips. Earthy Sapo focuses on storytelling around handmade processes and natural ingredients, while Climes relies on animated explainers and gamified posts for climate education. GreenFootPrint leverages festival campaigns, DIY reels, and gifting themes to creatively communicate sustainability. These strategies reflect each brand's communication intent and target audience behavior.

5.2 Authenticity vs Promotional Tone

Bare Necessities and Earthy Sapo presented high transparency through behind-the-scenes content and personal stories. Their messaging was more relatable and non-salesy, resulting in stronger trust and higher audience interaction. On the other hand,

Climes and GreenFootPrint combined promotional and informational content. Posts that leaned too heavily toward product promotion without narrative depth had comparatively lower engagement. This validates the objective of evaluating brand trust and the role of authentic storytelling in building community.

5.3 Emotional Triggers and Messaging Types

Storytelling that included real-life stories (e.g., founders' sustainability journeys, customer testimonials) sparked more emotional reactions. Earthy Sapo and Brown Living received higher engagement on content that evoked empathy or inspiration. In contrast, informative posts by Climes (like tips and environmental facts) were frequently saved but lacked emotional comments. These findings align with the objective of identifying emotional themes and evaluating their influence on consumer response.

5.4 Audience Engagement and Call to Action

Posts that included direct calls to action — such as “Tag a friend,” “Try this eco-habit,” or “Join our challenge” — generated greater engagement. GreenFootPrint's “Gifts That Grow” campaign and Bare Necessities' DIY video guides were widely reshared and commented on. These posts not only encouraged action but helped drive consumer education, aligning with the objective of assessing how storytelling supports learning and behavioral change.

5.5 Hashtag Strategy and Visibility

Targeted hashtags like #EcoWarrior, #PlasticFree, and #ZeroWasteOffice helped brands reach niche communities. Broad hashtags like #SustainableIndia increased visibility but diluted engagement. Brands with customized hashtags achieved more focused interaction, supporting the strategic use of hashtags in content planning.

5.6 Cross-Platform Story Consistency

Climes and Bare Necessities maintained a consistent tone, visual identity, and storytelling format across Instagram and YouTube. This built stronger brand recall and familiarity, which contributes to sustained brand trust and loyalty. Such consistency is key in reinforcing eco-brand values and community identity.

Table 2: Comparative summary of eco-brand storytelling

Brand	Focus Area	Best Performing Content Type	Engagement Style
Bare Necessities	Zero-waste living	Founder videos, DIY reels	High authenticity
Brown Living	Curated eco marketplace	Eco-tips, lifestyle images	Community emphasis
Earthy Sapo	Handmade products	Behind-the-scenes reels	Emotional storytelling
Climes	Climate education	Animated explainers, IGTV videos	Educational, structured
GreenFootPrint	Eco gifts, stationery	Gifting campaigns, testimonials	Seasonal, festive

6. Findings

- Storytelling is an effective low-cost marketing strategy for small eco-brands
- Emotional and transparent stories create brand loyalty and higher engagement
- Video-based content increases visibility, especially among younger audiences
- CTAs in eco-posts encourage user involvement and behavior change
- Storytelling bridges the gap between brand mission and consumer identity
- Audience participation and visual storytelling enhance community development
- Eco-storytelling acts as a brand education tool in markets with limited awareness
- Cross-platform storytelling helps reinforce brand values consistently
- Brands using local language or culture in storytelling gained more relatability

7. Conclusion

Digital storytelling is not just a trend. It is a powerful, emotional, and strategic communication tool. For ecopreneurs, it acts as a bridge between business objectives and value-based missions. It helps consumers not only understand what a brand sells, but why it exists.

IntelliMindEd | ISSN: 2998-8527, USA | National Seminar on Effect of Ecopreneurship on Environment Protection & Sustainable Development, Department of Commerce & Management Studies, AKNU, Rajamahendravaram, AP, India

Storytelling brings out the human side of a brand. Especially for small eco-brands, it has become a powerful equalizer in the market. The study shows that stories have the power to not only build brand loyalty but also contribute to eco-conscious behavior change.

As India continues to adopt sustainable values, storytelling will remain central to shaping conscious consumption. The findings suggest that brands which focus on authentic, transparent, and emotionally rich storytelling will succeed in building a strong community.

The research concludes that storytelling, when used with intent and consistency, becomes more than just content. It becomes a culture of communication — one that drives impact, identity, and purpose.

8. Suggestions / Recommendations

Based on the findings, it is recommended that ecopreneurs invest more in storytelling strategies that clearly reflect their brand values and sustainability mission. More focus should be given to video content, especially short-form formats such as Instagram Reels or behind-the-scenes videos, which tend to attract higher engagement. Sharing customer testimonials, real user experiences, and stories directly from the founders can help build a stronger sense of authenticity and trust. Educational content like eco-tips, DIY guides, and posts that raise awareness about climate issues can enhance consumer understanding and loyalty. Collaborating with eco-influencers and including regional language or culturally relatable elements can improve message reach and connection. It is also helpful to maintain consistency in tone, visual identity, and posting schedules across different platforms. Lastly, working alongside NGOs, sustainability campaigns, or community projects can add more emotional value and visibility to a brand's green messaging efforts.

8.1 Limitations and Future Scope

IntelliMindEd | ISSN: 2998-8527, USA | National Seminar on Effect of Ecopreneurship on Environment Protection & Sustainable Development, Department of Commerce & Management Studies, AKNU, Rajamahendravaram, AP, India

Although this study provides valuable insights into how small eco-brands use digital storytelling for green messaging, it has certain limitations. The research is limited to publicly available content from five Indian eco-brands on Instagram and YouTube, without any direct interaction with brand teams. Insights into the strategic intent behind content creation or internal performance metrics were not explored. Similarly, audience feedback was interpreted based on likes, shares, and comments rather than through structured consumer surveys.

The focus was also restricted to two platforms, excluding other emerging channels like LinkedIn, Pinterest, or regional platforms. While the sample size was appropriate for qualitative analysis, the findings may not represent all eco-entrepreneurial practices across India.

Future research could adopt a multi-method approach, combining content analysis with interviews, surveys, or sentiment analysis. Studies comparing storytelling between small eco-brands and large sustainability-focused companies may provide deeper insights. Further, exploring regional languages, local narratives, and influencer collaborations can add dimension. Examining how storytelling impacts brand loyalty, purchasing decisions, and eco-conscious habits would also strengthen the understanding of its effectiveness.

References

1. Ottman, J. A. (2011). *The New Rules of Green Marketing: Strategies, Tools, and Inspiration for Sustainable Branding*. Berrett-Koehler Publishers. [ISBN: 9781605098661]
2. Salmon, C. (2010). *Storytelling: Bewitching the Modern Mind*. Verso Books. [ISBN: 9781844676016]

3. Chatterjee, A., & Bhatia, A. (2019). Social media strategies in green branding: A study of Indian eco-brands. *IIMB Management Review*, 31(4), 362-374. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.iimb.2019.07.005>
4. Kumar, R. (2020). Digital branding and customer engagement among Indian startups. *Journal of Business Insights*, 14(2), 22-31. [UGC-CARE Listed Journal]
5. Singh, V. (2022). Influence of green messaging on consumer behaviour in Indian metros. *Marketing Edge Journal*, 10(1), 55-64. [Institutional Repository — Symbiosis University]
6. Jain, R., & Mathur, V. (2023). Emotional marketing and brand recall: A consumer psychology study. *Indian Journal of Business Psychology*, 8(1), 78-90. [Available at Indian Business & Management Journals Network]
7. Rao, M., & Patel, S. (2021). Instagram as a storytelling platform for startups: Evidence from Indian D2C brands. *Asian Journal of Marketing Research*, 15(3), 45-57. [Indexed in Google Scholar]
8. Banerjee, S. (2022). Cultural storytelling in eco-branding: Lessons from South Asia. *Sustainable Business Studies Quarterly*, 6(4), 104-117. [ResearchGate — Available on request]
9. Sharma, A. (2023). Eco-narratives and Gen Z behaviour: The psychology of sustainable choices. *Journal of Contemporary Consumer Research*, 11(2), 91-102. [ISSN: 2395-9992]
10. Srinivas, K., & Roy, P. (2021). Trust and transparency in eco-influencer branding. *Digital India Journal of Media Studies*, 9(2), 134-144. [National Institute of Media and Communication Studies — Publication Archive]