THE IMPACT OF DIGITAL SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY ON BRAND LOVE, BRAND EVANGELISM, AND BUYING INTENTION IN GREEN PRODUCTS: A MEDIATED ANALYSIS

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to investigate the influence of digital social responsibility (DSR) on consumer behavior, particularly in the context of green product purchasing. Specifically, it examines the mediating roles of brand love and brand evangelism in shaping buying intention for environmentally friendly products. To assess the proposed theoretical framework, Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) was employed to analyze data from 304 respondents, ensuring a rigorous evaluation of the hypothesized relationships. The findings indicate a significant positive relationship between DSR and buying intention, with brand love and brand evangelism acting as mediating variables. These results underscore the crucial role of digital social responsibility in fostering emotional connections (brand love) and encouraging proactive advocacy (brand evangelism), ultimately driving consumer commitment to green product purchases. This study provides valuable insights for businesses aiming to enhance consumer buying intention for green products through strategic implementation of digital social responsibility initiatives.

Keywords: Digital social responsibility, purchase intention, brand love, brand evangelism.

1. INTRODUCTION

In an era defined by heightened environmental consciousness, consumers are increasingly factoring ecological considerations into their purchasing decisions, thereby creating a burgeoning market for green products [1]. This paradigm shift necessitates a comprehensive understanding of the multifaceted factors that influence consumers' green purchasing behaviors [2]. Consequently, businesses are compelled to adopt innovative marketing strategies that not only highlight the environmental benefits of their products but also resonate with consumers' values and aspirations [3]. Digital social responsibility has emerged as a potent tool for businesses seeking to cultivate brand loyalty, foster brand evangelism, and ultimately drive buying intention for green products [4].

The growing awareness of environmental issues and the increasing demand for ecofriendly products have propelled the ecological product industry forward, incentivizing organizations across various sectors to develop green marketing strategies that align with customer needs and emerging trends. The escalating environmental concerns have prompted a reevaluation of consumer behavior, compelling individuals to consider the ecological implications of their purchasing decisions, which has further driven the growth of the green product market [5]. Concurrently, businesses are proactively incorporating environmental concerns into their marketing strategies to connect with consumers who are actively seeking to integrate environmental issues into their purchasing decisions, recognizing the potential of green marketing to cultivate brand loyalty and boost sales.

Green marketing has evolved into a crucial strategy for businesses striving to optimize their operations while simultaneously safeguarding the interests of their customers and ensuring the long-term sustainability of the environment [2]. Green marketing emphasizes environmentally responsible business practices aimed at meeting consumer expectations while promoting sustainability. As marketing increasingly shifts to digital platforms, these green efforts must be communicated and upheld in the online space. This is where digital social responsibility (DSR) becomes relevant—it reflects a company's commitment to ethical, environmental, and social values through digital channels. The convergence of green marketing and DSR highlights the need to understand how digital initiatives influence consumer perceptions of sustainability. Therefore, this study seeks to examine the role of DSR in shaping consumer behavior within the context of green marketing in the digital age.

CSR has evolved into DSR, as digital transformation enables corporations to fulfill social duties more affordably and effectively. The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated this shift as businesses transitioned from traditional offline CSR to digital initiatives. This study addresses a gap in understanding how DSR specifically impacts consumer perceptions and behavior. The theoretical foundation of the research rests on social exchange theory, which suggests that when corporations voluntarily offer benefits to consumers through responsible practices, it inspires reciprocal behavior. The study proposes several key relationships: DSR positively influences purchase intention as consumers identify with ethical businesses; DSR enhances brand love as customers respond favorably to responsible practices; DSR increases brand evangelism by enabling active participation; and both brand love and brand evangelism strengthen purchase intention.

According to a 2024 survey conducted by Rakuten Insight on sustainable consumption, approximately 84% of Vietnamese respondents indicated a willingness to pay a premium for sustainable products. Furthermore, more than half of the respondents rated the purchase of sustainable or environmentally friendly products as highly important, highlighting a strong consumer inclination toward environmentally responsible consumption behaviors [6]. Vietnam has demonstrated its commitment to the United Nations' 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, particularly in promoting sustainable production and consumption. Vietnam's rapid urbanization and rising disposable incomes are expected to further drive demand for sustainable products. With 37 million additional individuals projected to join the consumer class by 2030, the market potential for sustainable goods is significant [7]. A survey conducted by PwC revealed that more than 80% of respondents are willing to pay an average premium of 9.7% for products with verified origins and those made from sustainable materials. The research contributes to the limited literature on DSR in developing nations, particularly in Vietnam. The findings underscore the growing significance of Digital Social Responsibility (DSR) in shaping consumer behavior toward green products in Vietnam. With a clear consumer willingness to pay a premium for sustainable goods and increasing awareness of environmental responsibility, DSR emerges as a powerful driver of brand love, brand evangelism, and purchase intention. As Vietnam continues to align with global sustainability goals and experiences rapid socioeconomic growth, brands that effectively communicate and implement DSR strategies are likely to gain competitive advantage. This research not only highlights the potential of DSR in influencing consumer loyalty and advocacy but also fills a critical gap in understanding its impact within developing markets like Vietnam, offering valuable insights for marketers, policymakers, and businesses committed to sustainable development.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Theoretical background

2.1.1. Digital Social Responsibility

Digital Social Responsibility (DSR) has emerged as a powerful approach for companies to demonstrate ethical practices and social commitment through digital channels [8]. Digital Social Responsibility (DSR) refers to the expression of social responsibility through digital platforms. It involves using digital technologies to implement corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives, enabling businesses to engage with stakeholders more effectively and efficiently. DSR has become increasingly important due to the digital transformation of businesses and the growing reliance on digital platforms for communication and interaction [9]. DSR is described as the digital implementation of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), wherein organizations utilize digital technologies to execute and communicate CSR initiatives. This includes the use of digital platforms such as company websites and social media [10].

In the contemporary business landscape, CSR has become increasingly significant—not only to consumers but also to potential employees. The digital transformation has profoundly reshaped how CSR is practiced, with advancements in digital technologies and social media enabling the formation of virtual brand communities for customer engagement and knowledge sharing. Platforms like Facebook have become vital tools for businesses to engage stakeholders in CSR activities, including online donations and free service offerings. Puriwat & Tripopsakul advocate for the transition of traditional CSR efforts into digital formats. As digitalization progresses, the shift from brick-and-mortar to brick-and-click business models further underscores the growing importance of DSR [9].

2.1.2 Social Exchange Theory

Social Exchange Theory (SET) provides a foundational framework for understanding the impact of Digital Social Responsibility (DSR) initiatives on consumer behavior. By emphasizing the cost-benefit analysis and reciprocity inherent in human relationships, SET offers insights into how DSR initiatives shape perceptions, engagement, and loyalty in the digital corporate-consumer dynamic [11, 12].

The essence of social exchange theory in relation to DSR lies in its principle of reciprocity. When corporations voluntarily engage in responsible digital practices that benefit consumers, society, or the environment, they create a sense of obligation among stakeholders to reciprocate this goodwill. For instance, when a company transparently shares its sustainable manufacturing processes on social media or invests in digital platforms that protect user privacy, consumers perceive these actions as beneficial and may feel compelled to respond favorably through increased engagement, loyalty, or purchase intention [13]. This study contributes theoretically by extending SET to the digital context, demonstrating how DSR functions as a form of intangible value exchange that influences consumer decision-making in green marketing environments.

2.2. Hypothesis development

The concept of corporate social responsibility (CSR) has evolved significantly, extending beyond traditional practices to encompass digital dimensions through the emergence of Digital Social Responsibility (DSR) [14]. Contemporary consumers exhibit heightened awareness and discernment regarding corporate digital conduct, expecting firms not only to uphold ethical standards and ensure data security but also to actively contribute to the enhancement of the

digital environment [8]. This includes promoting digital accessibility and fostering responsible online interactions. Organizations that embed DSR into their core strategies and operational frameworks are more likely to establish stronger emotional connections with consumers [15]. These connections, commonly referred to as brand love, are rooted in perceived value congruence and the alignment of social and ethical objectives. Moreover, brands that demonstrate a consistent commitment to ethical digital practices, such as safeguarding consumer privacy, ensuring digital inclusivity, and engaging in transparent online marketing, tend to enhance consumer trust and brand credibility [16]. By transparently engaging in DSR initiatives, such as online sustainability campaigns, digital transparency in supply chains, and eco-conscious content, brands foster emotional bonds with environmentally conscious consumers. This alignment of values cultivates brand admiration, affection, and attachment, all of which are core components of Brand Love. In emerging markets like Vietnam, where sustainable consumption is gaining momentum, DSR may serve as a key emotional trigger that enhances consumer-brand relationships.

H1: Digital Social Responsibility (DSR) positively influences Brand Love in the context of green products.

Brand evangelism refers to the phenomenon where highly satisfied and loyal customers actively promote and advocate for a brand, often without any direct incentive. These individuals, known as brand evangelists, go beyond repeat purchasing to voluntarily spread positive word-of-mouth, influence others' perceptions, and defend the brand in public forums or online platforms [17]. Beyond its impact on cultivating brand love, Digital Social Responsibility serves as a catalyst for fostering brand evangelism, wherein satisfied customers actively advocate for a brand and its offerings. Digital platforms provide consumers with unprecedented opportunities to voice their opinions, share experiences, and engage in discussions regarding brands and products [18]. When brands authentically embrace and enact digital social responsibility, they cultivate a heightened sense of psychological alignment and shared identity with consumers, thereby amplifying consumers' propensity to voluntarily champion the brand across their social networks and digital communities [8]. Specifically, when consumers discern a brand's unwavering commitment to digital social responsibility, they are inclined to internalize the brand's values as congruent with their own, resulting in a profound sense of brand identification that motivates them to proactively disseminate positive brand narratives, endorse the brand's products or services to their peers, and defend the brand against negative publicity or criticisms.

H2: Digital Social Responsibility (DSR) positively influences Brand Evangelism in the context of green products.

Buying intention is influenced by various factors, including perceived value, brand trust, product quality, price, personal attitudes, and social influences [19]. In the context of digital environments, online reviews, influencer endorsements, and digital CSR initiatives can significantly impact consumers' purchase intentions by shaping their perceptions and emotional responses [9]. Understanding buying intention allows businesses to forecast demand more accurately and tailor marketing efforts to align with consumer motivation and expectations.

H3: Digital Social Responsibility (DSR) positively influences Buying Intention in the context of green products.

Brand evangelists are driven by emotional attachment, personal identification with the brand's values, and a strong belief in the brand's quality or mission [20]. Their advocacy plays a crucial role in building brand credibility, expanding customer bases, and strengthening brand communities. In the digital age, social media has amplified the voice and reach of brand evangelists, making them vital assets in modern marketing strategies.

- *H4: Brand love positively influences Buying Intention in the context of green products.*
- H5: Brand love positively influences Brand Evangelism in the context of green products.

Brand evangelism is motivated by consumers' psychological and emotional attachment to a brand and is manifested through behavioral outcomes that extend beyond simple purchasing decisions or word-of-mouth recommendations [21]. Brand evangelists are driven by emotional attachment, personal identification with the brand's values, and a strong belief in the brand's quality or mission [20]. Their advocacy plays a crucial role in building brand credibility, expanding customer bases, and strengthening brand communities. In the digital age, social media has amplified the voice and reach of brand evangelists, making them vital assets in modern marketing strategies.

H6: Brand evangelism positively influence Buying Intention in the context of green products

Digital Social Responsibility (DSR) enhances a brand's image by aligning corporate values with societal expectations, particularly in the digital realm. When brands actively engage in ethical digital practices, such as protecting consumer data, promoting digital inclusion, and demonstrating environmental awareness consumers are more likely to develop a favorable brand perception. This perception fosters emotional attachment, which is the essence of brand love. Furthermore, consumers who feel a deep emotional connection to a brand are more likely to translate this attachment into purchase intentions. This is because emotional bonds reduce perceived risks, enhance trust, and reinforce identity alignment with the brand. In this light, brand love functions as a key mediating variable in transforming DSR efforts into actionable consumer behaviors [22, 23]. While DSR influences how consumers perceive a brand's ethics and values, its impact may extend beyond emotional connections and into behavioral expressions, such as brand evangelism. Consumers who evangelize a brand also tend to exhibit higher purchase intention, not only because of their strong commitment but also due to cognitive consistency where their actions (advocacy) align with intentions (purchasing) [24]. Thus, brand evangelism plays a dual role: reinforcing the brand's reputation and directly influencing the consumer's decision-making process.

H7: Brand love mediates the relationship between digital social responsibility and consumers' buying intention

H8: Brand Evangelism mediate the relationship between digital social responsibility and consumers' buying intention

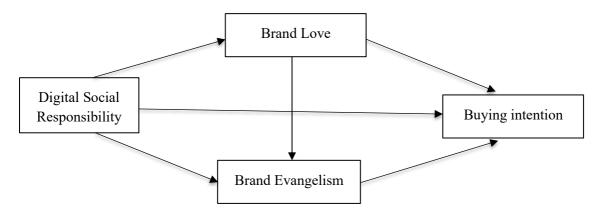


Figure 1. The theoretical framework

Source: by author (2025)

3. METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a quantitative research approach, utilizing a structured questionnaire to examine the proposed research variables and test the formulated hypotheses. The data were analyzed using SmartPLS 4.0. The measurement items employed in this study were adapted from established scales in prior research to ensure content validity and contextual relevance. The construct of Digital Social Responsibility (DSR) was measured using items adapted from [9], reflecting consumer perceptions of a brand's ethical and socially responsible behavior in the digital environment. Brand Love was measured using the scale developed by [16], which captures the emotional attachment and affection consumers feel toward a brand. The construct of Brand Evangelism was based on measurement items proposed by [21], focusing on consumers' voluntary and enthusiastic promotion of a brand to others. Purchase Intention was assessed using items adapted from [8], which evaluate the likelihood of consumers purchasing green products in the future. All items were measured on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 ("Strongly Disagree") to 5 ("Strongly Agree").

The participants of this study consisted of Vietnamese consumers with prior experience with purchasing or expressing interest in green products. Data were collected through an online survey distributed via social media platforms. Before participation, respondents were informed of the purpose of the study and assured of the confidentiality and anonymity of their responses. A total of 304 valid responses were collected and used for analysis. The sample included a diverse demographic profile regarding age, gender, education, and income level to ensure a comprehensive understanding of consumer behavior about digital social responsibility and green product consumption.

4. RESULTS

The respondents comprised 139 males (45.7%) and 165 females (54.3%). In terms of age distribution, 37.9% were between 18 and 25 years old, 27.5% were aged 26 to 35, and 34.6% were 36 or older. Regarding occupation, 31.3% were students, 57.4% were employed staff, and 11.3% identified as freelancers.

The outer model was evaluated based on individual item reliability, internal consistency reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity. All factor loadings exceeded the recommended threshold of 0.70, which is above the minimum criterion of 0.50 proposed [25] as shown in Table 1. This indicates satisfactory item reliability across the constructs. Composite reliability (CR) values were all above 0.80, thereby confirming the internal consistency and homogeneity of the constructs. Regarding convergent validity, the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values ranged from 0.596 to 0.728, exceeding the recommended minimum threshold of 0.50, thus confirming convergent validity.

| Variables | Items | Loadings | Cronbach's α | CR | AVE | VIF |
|-------------------------------|-------|----------|--------------|-------|-------|-------|
| Digital social responsibility | | | 0.875 | 0.914 | 0.728 | |
| | DSR1 | 0.859 | | | | 2.253 |
| | DSR2 | 0.872 | | | | 2.387 |
| | DSR3 | 0.855 | | | | 2.153 |
| | DSR4 | 0.826 | | | | 1.933 |

Table 1. Cronbach's α, CR, & AVE

| - | | | | | | |
|---------------------|--------|----------|--------------|-------|-------|-------|
| Variables | Items | Loadings | Cronbach's α | CR | AVE | VIF |
| Brand love | | | 0.830 | 0.881 | 0.596 | |
| | LOVE1 | 0.758 | | | | 1.625 |
| | LOVE2 | 0.815 | | | | 2.073 |
| | LOVE3 | 0.811 | | | | 2.062 |
| | LOVE4 | 0.728 | | | | 1.442 |
| | LOVE5 | 0.746 | | | | 1.641 |
| Brand evangelism | | | 0.797 | 0.867 | 0.620 | |
| | EVAN1 | 0.770 | | | | 1.732 |
| | EVAN2 | 0.747 | | | | 1.664 |
| | EVAN3 | 0.797 | | | | 1.815 |
| | EVAN4 | 0.833 | | | | 1.893 |
| Buying intention | | | 0.840 | 0.893 | 0.676 | |
| | INTEN1 | 0.794 | | | | 1.680 |
| | INTEN2 | 0.796 | | | | 1.704 |
| | INTEN3 | 0.863 | | | | 2.183 |
| | INTEN4 | 0.834 | | | | 1.954 |

Discriminant validity was assessed using the Fornell–Larcker criterion, which indicated that each construct shared more variance with its own indicators than with other constructs, thus confirming discriminant validity. Furthermore, all Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values were below 5, suggesting the absence of multicollinearity among the indicators (Table 2).

Table 2. Heterotrait-monotrait ratio of correlations (HTMT)

| | DSR | EVAN | INTEN | LOVE |
|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| DSR | 0.853 | | | |
| EVAN | 0.586 | 0.788 | | |
| INTEN | 0.657 | 0.603 | 0.822 | |
| LOVE | 0.537 | 0.503 | 0.583 | 0.772 |

The structural model evaluation supported all proposed hypotheses, indicating robust relationships among the constructs (Table 3).

Table 3. Testing the direct relationship

| Relationships | Original sample | Sample mean | STDEV | P Values | note |
|---------------|-----------------|----------------|-------|-------------|----------|
| DSR -> LOVE | 0.537 | 0.538 | 0.045 | 0.000 | Accepted |

| DSR -> EVAN | 0.444 | 0.443 | 0.054 | 0.000 | Accepted |
|----------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|----------|
| DSR -> INTEN | 0.369 | 0.369 | 0.051 | 0.000 | Accepted |
| LOVE -> INTEN | 0.255 | 0.257 | 0.052 | 0.000 | Accepted |
| LOVE -> EVAN | 0.265 | 0.266 | 0.047 | 0.000 | Accepted |
| EVAN -> INTEN | 0.259 | 0.257 | 0.054 | 0.000 | Accepted |
| DSR -> LOVE -> INTEN | 0.137 | 0.139 | 0.031 | 0.000 | Accepted |
| DSR -> EVAN -> INTEN | 0.115 | 0.114 | 0.028 | 0.000 | Accepted |

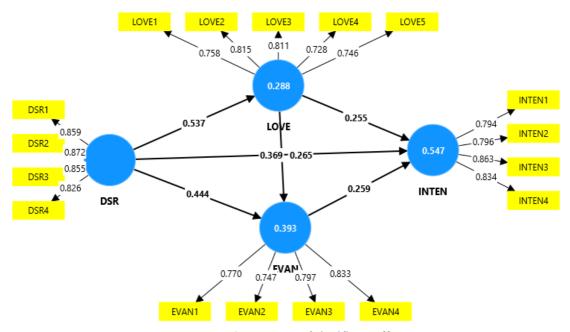


Figure 2. Summary of significant effects

Source: by author (2025)

5. DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION

This study offers valuable insights for marketers and sustainability-focused organizations seeking to strengthen consumer engagement with green products. One of the key findings is that digital social responsibility significantly enhances consumers' emotional connection with a brand. When brands demonstrate ethical behavior in the digital space—such as promoting environmental awareness, protecting consumer data, and supporting digital inclusion—they build trust and affection among consumers. This emotional attachment, often referred to as brand love, plays a crucial role in shaping consumer loyalty and long-term engagement.

The findings of this study suggest that digital social responsibility plays a pivotal role in shaping brand love, brand evangelism, and consumers' buying intentions toward green products. To capitalize on this, businesses should actively embed digital social responsibility into their digital marketing strategies. One effective approach is to enhance transparency by regularly sharing authentic and detailed content about sustainability efforts, such as eco-friendly production processes, carbon reduction targets, or ethical labor practices, through social media, email newsletters, and websites. These initiatives help build trust and emotional

connection, both of which are critical to fostering brand love. Moreover, companies can deepen this emotional bond by using storytelling techniques that humanize their digital social responsibility efforts. Sharing real-life narratives, such as employee volunteer experiences or community impact stories, creates a sense of purpose that resonates with consumers. Businesses may also consider rewarding eco-conscious behaviors through digital recognition systems, such as eco-badges, loyalty points, or exclusive access to green products. To maximize the impact of digital social responsibility) on brand love, evangelism, and purchase intention, businesses should prioritize the creation of interactive digital campaigns that engage consumers in meaningful, values-driven experiences. Interactive quizzes, games, or AR experiences that educate users on the brand's green efforts while entertaining them can also foster a deeper emotional connection. Additionally, brands can crowdsource green ideas or product innovations through digital platforms, empowering consumers to co-create solutions and reinforcing their sense of shared purpose. These participatory campaigns not only strengthen brand love but also turn engaged customers into active brand evangelists who voluntarily promote the company's values and green products within their networks.

To stimulate brand evangelism, companies should empower satisfied and socially aware customers to act as advocates. This can be achieved through digital ambassador programs that offer early product access, recognition, or rewards for social sharing and referrals. Providing shareable content, branded hashtags, and sustainability toolkits can help loyal customers spread positive word-of-mouth organically. Additionally, businesses can cultivate digital communities, such as forums or groups on social media platforms, where green consumers exchange ideas, promote responsible behavior, and feel a sense of belonging. The study confirms that both brand love and brand evangelism mediate the relationship between digital social responsibility and buying intention. This means companies must view these elements not just as outcomes, but as strategic levers. By investing in emotionally resonant and ethically transparent digital experiences, brands can not only earn trust and admiration but also convert those sentiments into concrete purchasing behaviors. These findings offer a strong call for marketers to move beyond surface-level green messaging and to implement deeply integrated, values-driven digital strategies that drive both consumer impact and business growth.

While this study provides meaningful insights into the impact of digital social responsibility on brand love, brand evangelism, and purchase intention in the context of green products, several limitations should be acknowledged. The study focused specifically on the context of green products within Vietnam, which may limit the applicability of the results to other product categories or cultural settings. Future research could explore comparative studies across different countries, industries, or demographic groups to enhance the external validity of the findings. Despite these limitations, the study contributes to the limited literature on digital social responsibility in developing markets and provides a valuable foundation for further exploration of responsible digital branding and consumer engagement.

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TÓM TẮT

TÁC ĐỘNG CỦA TRÁCH NHIỆM XÃ HỘI SỐ ĐẾN TÌNH YÊU THƯƠNG HIỆU, QUẢNG BÁ THƯƠNG HIỆU VÀ Ý ĐỊNH MUA SẢN PHẨM XANH

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Nghiên cứu này nhằm khám phá tác động của trách nhiệm xã hội số (Digital Social Responsibility – DSR) đối với hành vi người tiêu dùng, đặc biệt trong bối cảnh mua sắm sản

phẩm xanh. Cụ thể, nghiên cứu phân tích vai trò trung gian của tình yêu thương hiệu và hành vi quảng bá thương hiệu trong việc hình thành ý định mua các sản phẩm thân thiện với môi trường. Để kiểm định mô hình lý thuyết được đề xuất, phương pháp Mô hình phương trình cấu trúc bình phương bé nhất một phần (PLS-SEM) được áp dụng trên dữ liệu thu thập từ 304 người tham gia khảo sát, đảm bảo độ tin cậy và tính chặt chế trong phân tích các mối quan hệ giả thuyết. Kết quả nghiên cứu cho thấy trách nhiệm xã hội số có mối quan hệ tích cực đáng kể với ý định mua, trong đó tình yêu thương hiệu và quảng bá thương hiệu đóng vai trò trung gian quan trọng. Những kết quả này nhấn mạnh vai trò thiết yếu của DSR trong việc xây dựng kết nối cảm xúc với thương hiệu (brand love) và thúc đẩy hành vi truyền bá tích cực (brand evangelism), từ đó nâng cao cam kết mua sắm sản phẩm xanh của người tiêu dùng. Nghiên cứu mang lại những gợi ý hữu ích cho doanh nghiệp trong việc thúc đẩy ý định mua sản phẩm xanh thông qua các chiến lược thực thi trách nhiệm xã hội số một cách hiệu quả.

Từ khóa: Trách nhiệm xã hội số, ý định mua, tình yêu thương hiệu, quảng bá thương hiệu.