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The Power of Travel Influencers' Ecological Discourse in Over-Tourism

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Abstract

The study focuses on the effects of Travel Influencers' Ecological Discourse (TIED), a superordinate concept that encompasses four primary concepts including conservation advocacy, environmental awareness messages, responsible travel recommendation and sustainable travel advocacy and their related concepts, on tourists' Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) and Joy of Missing Out (JOMO), which subsequently influences their intention to visit over-touristed destinations, with the boundary condition of eco-consciousness. Findings show that TIED was negatively associated with FOMO and positively with JOMO, and it did not directly influence visit intention. Both emotions mediated the positive relationship between FOMO and visit intention and the negative relationship between JOMO and visit intention, with divergent first-stage emotional responses but convergent negative indirect effects on visit intention. Eco-consciousness significantly moderated both the TIED–FOMO and TIED–JOMO pathways, with the discourse dampening FOMO and reinforcing JOMO's influence on visit intention for highly eco-conscious tourists.

1. Introduction

The tourism industry is once again in one of its rapid growth phases – now socially driven – and the Himalayan hill stations of India are as much a part of this as anywhere else in the world. In 2025, Himachal Pradesh saw more than three crore (30 million) tourists, an increase of nearly 72 per cent from 2024 (Sharma, 2026), and districts like Kullu and Shimla had more than 26 lakh tourists in a single year. This increase has exceeded the infrastructural capacity, with Shimla's water demand during peak seasons being around 45 million litres per day, which is fulfilled by just 20–30 million litres per day of water supply (Sharma, 2026), and the Atal Tunnel corridor that connects Manali has almost 11,000 vehicles crossing daily, while its capacity is rated at 4,500 (Zargar, 2026). Much of this traffic is now attributed to social media

and to travel-influencer content; these influence travel decisions well before a tourist books a holiday (Dutta, 2026; Ahmad, 2025).

The study's research problem can be summarised as follows: a paradox at the centre of the marketing of tourism through influencers. Some travel influencers have taken an ecological approach and actively promote the principles of conservation, responsible travel and sustainable practices, and are not afraid to speak out against the environmental impact of mass tourism. However, the same aspirational, image-sculpted messages that convey this ecological message also create a sense of urgency and a Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) for followers, which can push them towards the fragile sites at risk from tourism that the discourse aims to ward off (Dutta, 2026). Conversely, a fledgling tourist market seems to be attracted to this model of content but with the opposite affective response – a “Joy of Missing Out” (JOMO), which is an intentional selection of more laid-back and less crowded experiences (Aston, 2025). So it may be that ecological communiques either encourage or discourage over-touristed visitation, depending on the emotional pathway(s) they elicit and on the audience.

Researchers have begun to examine these dynamics, but the evidence remains fragmented. According to Lee, Wut and Wan (2025), the combination of FOMO-infused content and an endorser's type explains travel decisions, and NaveenKumar et al. (2026) report that the level of influencer exposure, as well as the level of influencer credibility, can both contribute to overtourism behaviour, and that FOMO is the main bridge between the two. Influencer endorsement and user-generated content (UGC) also increase the intentions of Generation Z and millennial travellers to visit a destination, as previously found by Susanto, Gaffar and Disman (2024). The literature, however, approaches FOMO as a singular phenomenon, does not compare it to its new counterpart called JOMO and rarely considers it as an ecological discourse composed of different elements, rather than a single undifferentiated media product.

This results in three overlapping gaps that stimulate the present study. First, to the best of our knowledge, models FOMO and JOMO as parallel, possibly opposing, mediators of an identical ecological-discourse stimulus, as despite industry evidence that a significant proportion of travellers are fascinated by the prospect of unplugging (85 per cent of travellers are interested in unplugging, Aston's 2025 Unpack report showed), there are still many that are drawn towards JOMO-oriented behaviour. Second, although the concept of ‘ecological discourse' encompasses three different sub-concepts in the literature (conservation advocacy, environmental awareness messaging, responsible travel recommendations, and sustainable

travel advocacy), none of these has been operationalised as a higher-order concept in the context of travel influencers. Thirdly, so far there is little empirical evidence for carrying capacity breaches in the Himalayas, as compared to the overtourism cases in the Western world or urban environments.

With this background, the present study aims to examine how travel intention towards over-touristed destinations is influenced by Travel Influencers' Ecological Discourse, examining the parallel mediating role of FOMO and JOMO between Travel Influencers' Ecological Discourse and visit intention, and examining the moderating role of eco-consciousness on the discourse–FOMO and discourse–JOMO relationships. The study drives both influencer content strategy and destination-management interventions to shift tourist demand away from ecologically saturated destinations.

2. Literature Reviews

2.1 Theoretical Foundation

This study is based on three supporting theoretical frameworks. The Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) model (Mehrabian and Russell, 1974) places the travel influencers' ecological discourse as the external stimulus that conditions the internal affective status of the tourists, as perceived

anxiety (FOMO) and response (JOMO), which eventually leads to the behavioural response of the intention to visit. Even though there is an aspiration to be like the person who is doing it, and the message is ecologically framed, social comparison theory (Festinger, 1954) can explain why this kind of content can still trigger upward comparison and urgency (FOMO), as viewers will compare their experience with the curated one that seems attainable. The FOMO–JOMO divergence is further explained by Construal-Level Theory by Trope and Liu (2010): psychologically distant, idealised portrayals of influencers could be construed abstractly and urgently (fuelling FOMO), while constellations of the same content, viewed by the eco-conscious viewer with personal values and environmental cost in mind, could be reinterpreted as cues for restraint (fuelling JOMO). All these theories support the idea that modelling eco-consciousness as a moderator can be justified, turning the same provocation to elicit different emotional and behavioural responses.

2.2 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework (see Figure 1) assumes that Travel Influencers' Ecological Discourse (TIED) is a formative-reflective higher-order construct that is theorised to emerge from four lower-order constructs: conservation advocacy, environmental awareness messages, responsible travel recommendations and sustainable travel advocacy, a two-stage approach recommended by PLS-SEM (Sarstedt et al., 2019). The influence of TIED on visit intention to over-touristed destinations is expected to be direct and indirect, both of which are mediated by two parallel mediators with divergent first-stage emotional responses but convergent negative indirect effects on visit intention. Eco-consciousness is set as a moderator on the two discourse-to-emotion pathways (TIED to FOMO and TIED to JOMO), which reflects the boundary condition between the feeling of urgency and mindful restraint when the same ecological message is delivered. This configuration enables the model to simultaneously regulate and drive over-touristed demand by using a single nomological network for the process of influencer marketing.

2.3 Travel Influencers' Ecological Discourse (TIED)

The corpus of conservation-oriented, environmentally informative and responsibility-oriented content that travel influencers include in their portrayal of their destinations is known as travel influencers' ecological discourse (TIED). TIED is a higher-order construct which combines several components: conservation advocacy (call to action regarding protection of the natural assets of a destination), environmental awareness messages (information regarding ecological risk or fragility), responsible travel recommendations (behavioural guidance regarding the minimisation of visitor impact) and sustainable travel advocacy (promotion of low-impact travel styles and operators). But there is increasing evidence that such content can continue to

portray eye-catching and exclusive imagery that induces a sense of urgency in viewers, even when aimed at protecting destinations (Lee et al., 2025). If, instead of aspirational imagery, fragility, limits and responsibility are emphasised, the urgency and anxiety that are inherent in FOMO can potentially be suppressed, as the destination is not something to be consumed immediately, but is instead something to be protected (Festinger, 1954; Zhang et al., 2025). Explicit models of restraint and care are also given an opportunity to shape JOMO, a disposition to refrain from a certain experience, and instead opt for a less intense one (Aston, 2025). Finally, ecological discourse imparts a convincing ‘value-congruent’ message that can directly undermine intention to visit an already-saturated site because the message itself makes such a visit environmentally inconsistent (NaveenKumar et al., 2026). The study suggests the following hypotheses:

H1: Travel Influencers' Ecological Discourse negatively influences Fear of Missing Out (FOMO)

H2: Travel Influencers' Ecological Discourse positively influences Joy of Missing Out (JOMO)

H3: Travel Influencers' Ecological Discourse negatively influences Visit Intention toward over-touristed destinations

2.4 Fear of Missing Out (FOMO)

FOMO is a chronic fear that one is missing out on something enjoyable that others are enjoying and an urge to be constantly connected with what others are doing (Przybylski et al., 2013). FOMO is an impulse for tourists to travel to popular and socially accepted travel destinations before they expire in popularity or become overcrowded with tourism (Dutta, 2026). Recent studies validate FOMO as a strong and proximal predictor of visit and recommendation intentions: Lee, Wut and Wan (2025) conclude that the anticipated elation, envy and social influence create FOMO, which in turn predicts visit and recommendation intention, while NaveenKumar et al. (2026) establish the linkage of FOMO as a critical psychological link between influencer exposure and overtourism contributing travel behaviour among Indian millennials. Since FOMO rests on an anxious basis of not being left out of an experience that is popular, tourists with strong FOMO are expected to gravitate towards over-touristed sites of interest, which was the case in this study. Accordingly:

H4: Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) positively influences Visit Intention toward over-touristed destinations

2.5 Joy of Missing Out (JOMO)

The affective opposite of FOMO is JOMO – the feeling of satisfaction, relief or contentment that comes from actively choosing to not be present in a popular, crowded, or socially pressured activity or experience, but to opt for a more intentional, less frenzied, and leisurely one (Aston, 2025). Ionics data aligns with industry trend data, with Expedia's Unpack '25 report revealing that 62 per cent of travellers believe a peaceful environment would help to alleviate stress, and 85 per cent are interested in a trip that allows them to unplug (Aston, 2025) – a sentiment that is reinforced by independent commentary that this trend is a direct result of the desire to avoid overtourism hotspots in favour of deeper, local engagement. Tourists with higher JOMO should be more satisfied with being away from home and therefore be less inclined to travel to tourist hotspots, being satisfied with less crowded places. This yields:

H5: Joy of Missing Out (JOMO) negatively influences Visit Intention toward over-touristed destinations

2.6 Visit Intention toward over-touristed destinations

A tourist's intention to visit an already over-touristed place reflects their readiness to travel to a place that is already at its comfortable or ecological carrying capacity, which is now widely documented in Indian Himalayan hill stations like Shimla, Manali, Mussoorie and Nainital (Zargar, 2026; Sharma, 2026). This is because in the S-O-R model, the intention to visit is regarded as the behavioural reaction in response to the affective reactions elicited by TIED (Mehrabian and Russell, 1974). Ecological discourse's persuasive content should influence visit intention primarily indirectly, via the opposite pathways of FOMO and JOMO, rather than through a direct pathway; the effect of TIED on visit intention should be mediated, but not necessarily direct. Based on the above, the study aims at a formal relationship between FOMO and JOMO as parallel mediators of the relationship between TIED and visit intention:

H6: FOMO mediates the negative relationship between travel influencers' ecological discourse and tourists' visit intention toward over-touristed destinations.

H7: JOMO mediates the negative relationship between travel influencers' ecological discourse and tourists' visit intention toward over-touristed destinations.

2.7 Eco-consciousness

Eco-consciousness is the consistent attunement to protecting the environment and the inclination to consider ecological impacts in personal choices (Zhang, Zhao and Zaman, 2025). For green-marketing research, eco-consciousness and related constructs (e.g., environmental knowledge, pro-environmental self-identity, felt obligation) repeatedly bolster the conversion of environmentally related stimuli into psychological and behavioural responses (Zhang et al., 2025). When applied to the current model, high-ELC tourists should be affected by the ecological discourse more concretely and personally, as presented in Construal-Level Theory (Trope and Liu, 2010): instead of being overwhelmed by the aspirational urgency of the contents, they should be in the attention of the conservation message, which should further reduce FOMO and further increase JOMO for high-ELC tourists compared to low-ELC tourists. Eco-consciousness is thus conceptualised as a moderator which influences both discourse–emotion paths instead of the discourse–visit-intention path directly:

H8: Eco-consciousness significantly moderates the relationship between travel influencers' ecological discourse and tourists' FOMO.

H9: Eco-consciousness significantly moderates the relationship between travel influencers' ecological discourse and tourists' JOMO.

3. Research Methodology

The study involved a quantitative, cross-sectional survey design to test the hypothesised relationships of Travel Influencers' Ecological Discourse (TIED), FOMO, JOMO, eco-consciousness, and visit intention toward over-touristed destinations. The data gathered were from major Indian hill stations like Shimla, Manali, Mussoorie and Nainital during the period of April-June 2026, and the respondents were domestic tourists aged 18 and above who reported that they followed content from travel influencers. The sampling technique used was a purposive intercept sampling approach, with 458 respondents being used after screening out those who did not complete the questionnaires or failed the attention check. All constructs were

assessed on multi-item 7-point Likert scales (1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree), adapted and reworded slightly for the hill-station context from previously validated instruments in the literature on influencer marketing, FOMO/JOMO and green consumption. Content validity was determined by two domain experts in tourism marketing who suggested revisions to the items, and a pilot study with 62 participants to test the reliability and clarity of the items, with no major concerns during the pilot stage and all the items' Cronbach's alpha values being above 0.70.

TIED was defined as reflecting the disjoint two-stage approach (Sarstedt et al., 2019) as a higher-order construct. The construct for TIED was specified as reflective-formative, with four lower-order dimensions. Common method bias was addressed through the use of item randomisation and assurances of anonymity and was checked using full collinearity variance inflation factors (Podsakoff et al., 2003). The models of measurement and structure were estimated by applying the Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) in the SmartPLS 4.0 program, and the

direct, indirect and mediating effects were tested for significance using bootstrapping with 5,000 subsamples. The study was carried out in compliance with the ethical policies of the host institution and national rules governing research ethics, and prior to data collection, informed consent and confidentiality of data were ensured for all the respondents. Data Analysis and Interpretation

4. Data Analysis and Interpretation

4.1 Respondent's Profile

There was a reasonable balance of males and females (52.8% male, 46.1% female; 1.1% other) and skewed toward younger and early-middle-aged adults (36.7% aged 25–34 years; 25.3% aged 18–24 years; 22.1% aged 35–44 years; 4.8% aged 55 years and older). The level of education was also high, with 41.0% of respondents having a bachelor's degree and 37.1% holding a master's degree, which indicates that the respondents were well-educated, similar to their active usage of social media. Salaried/private-sector employees (34.3%) and students (19.9%) were the largest groups by occupation, with the majority of students (60.4%) and salaried/private-sector workers (53.9%) being single (as opposed to married) at the time of the survey. The relevance of the sample for this study is further supported by the travel behaviour indicators, in which 36.9% of the sample reported 3–4 trips during the last two years, 17.9%

5–6 trips, and for frequency of viewing travel-influencer content, most of the sample reported 'sometimes' (31.7%) or 'frequently' (30.3%). Instagram (39.5%) and YouTube (31.2%) were the most popular platforms for consuming travel content. Overall, the profile describes a sample that is mainly digitally engaged and moderately frequent travellers, which is an appropriate target group for the study of emotional and behavioural reactions towards over-touristed destinations in hill stations, influenced by digital marketing strategies.

4.2 Measurement Items Assessment-Lower Order Constructs

Table 1 presents the outer loadings and variance inflation factors (VIF) for all indicators of the eight lower-order constructs: the four TIED dimensions (conservation advocacy, environmental awareness messages, responsible travel recommendations, sustainable travel advocacy), FOMO, JOMO, eco-consciousness and visit intention. The loadings of the items were generally good, with nearly all above 0.70, and only three items for the responsible-travel-recommendation index (RTR1 = 0.759, RTR2 = 0.733, RTR3 = 0.712) and a single item for the sustainable-travel-advocacy index (STA1 = 0.763) being at the lower end of the recommended range. The loadings were high on items related to being "eco-conscious" (EC1–4: 0.908 to 0.936) and on the "JOMO" items (JOMO1–3: 0.886 to 0.915), indicating that these constructs were measured with high precision. The VIF values were also low, with all of them being less than the conservative threshold of 5, and the highest ones being for EC2 (4.521) and EAM2 (4.239), suggesting that multicollinearity was not a significant issue for the structural estimates. Overall, these findings suggest that individual item reliability was satisfactory for the reflective indicators for each lower-order construct, which serves as a foundation for evaluating internal consistency and construct validity of the lower-order constructs.

Table 1
Evaluation of the Survey Scale Items for Lower-Order Constructs

Variables	Items	Outer Loading	VIF	Variables	Items	Outer Loading	VIF
Joy of Missing Out (JOMO)	JOMO1	0.886	3.316	Conservation Advocacy	CA1	0.874	2.371
	JOMO2	0.900	3.866		CA2	0.863	2.367
	JOMO3	0.915	4.215		CA3	0.872	2.414
	JOMO4	0.752	1.883		CA4	0.838	2.072
	JOMO5	0.798	1.816	Environmental	EAM1	0.888	3.356
	RTR1	0.759	1.258	awareness messages	EAM2	0.922	4.239
	RTR2	0.733	2.272		EAM3	0.882	3.389

Responsible travel recommendations	RTR3	0.712	1.445		EAM4	0.809	2.116
	RTR4	0.801	2.515	Eco-Consciousness	EC1	0.915	3.679
Sustainable travel advocacy	STA1	0.763	1.642		EC2	0.936	4.521
	STA2	0.918	3.326		EC3	0.914	3.569
	STA3	0.829	2.236		EC4	0.908	3.329
	STA4	0.880	2.552	Fear of Missing Out (FOMO)	FOMO1	0.799	1.844
Visit Intention	VI1	0.899	3.347		FOMO2	0.831	2.409
	VI2	0.833	2.728		FOMO3	0.885	3.116
	VI3	0.863	2.846		FOMO4	0.878	3.699
	VI4	0.833	2.385		FOMO5	0.779	2.585
	VI5	0.869	2.864				

4.3 Assessment of Reliability and Validity of Lower Order Constructs

Convergent validity, internal consistency reliability and discriminant validity for the eight lower-order constructs are reported in Table 2. All Cronbach's alpha values were greater than

0.70 (from 0.755 to 0.938), and composite reliability (rho_C) values were from 0.839 to 0.956, all of which met the acceptable internal consistency for constructs (rho_C > 0.70). The average variance extracted (AVE) value ranged from 0.565 (responsible travel recommendations) to 0.843 (eco-consciousness), with all above the cut-off of 0.50, reflecting good convergent validity—the extent to which each construct's indicators explain the majority of the variance in their respective latent variable (Fornell and Larcker, 1981).

To check the discriminant validity of the constructs, the Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) ratio of correlations was used, which is currently the recommended criterion for PLS-SEM (Henseler, Ringle and Sarstedt, 2015). No pairwise HTMT ratio exceeded the conservative cutoff of 0.90, the highest being between FOMO and JOMO (0.894), followed by between Eco-Consciousness and JOMO (0.860), and between Eco-Consciousness and Visit Intention (0.853). Considering that no ratio exceeded 0.90, the criterion for discriminant validity was met at the conservative level of HTMT.90, and the relationships between constructs were considered to be the closest matches in the model, FOMO–JOMO and Eco-Consciousness–JOMO.

Table 2
Discriminant and Convergent Validity

	Conservation Advocacy	Eco-Consciousness	Environmental awareness messages	Fear of Missing Out (FOMO)	Joy of Missing Out (JOMO)	Responsible travel recommendations	Sustainable travel advocacy	Visit Intention
Discriminant Validity								
Conservation Advocacy								
Eco-Consciousness	0.792							
Environmental awareness messages	0.779	0.813						
Fear of Missing Out (FOMO)	0.823	0.634	0.748					
Joy of Missing Out (JOMO)	0.785	0.860	0.766	0.894				
Responsible travel recommendations	0.757	0.709	0.811	0.644	0.721			
Sustainable travel advocacy	0.634	0.788	0.738	0.853	0.740	0.653		
Visit Intention	0.676	0.853	0.674	0.634	0.811	0.580	0.727	
Convergent Validity								
Cronbach's alpha	0.884	0.938	0.898	0.891	0.905	0.755	0.869	0.912
Composite reliability (rho_a)	0.886	0.939	0.900	0.896	0.911	0.789	0.878	0.919
Composite reliability (rho_c)	0.920	0.956	0.929	0.920	0.930	0.839	0.912	0.934
Average variance extracted (AVE)	0.742	0.843	0.768	0.698	0.727	0.565	0.722	0.739

4.4 Assessment of Reliability and Validity of Higher-Order Constructs

In line with the two-stage outer- and inner-layer approach used in the analysis (Sarstedt et al., 2019), Table 3 shows the outer weights used to validate TIED as a higher-order formative-reflective construct based on the LV scores of its four lower-order dimensions. All four dimensions contributed significant outer weights to TIED: sustainable travel advocacy carried the strongest weight (0.390, $t = 6.039$, $p < 0.001$), followed by environmental awareness messages (0.341, $t = 4.765$, $p < 0.001$), conservation advocacy (0.238, $t = 3.133$, $p = 0.002$) and responsible travel recommendations (0.163, $t = 3.014$, $p = 0.003$). The results showed that all weights were significant at the 5% level, which indicates that each dimension contributes to the higher-order construct in meaningfully non-redundant ways and that the other dimensions are not completely captured by the other dimensions. The VIF values for the four dimensions were between 2.337 and 3.347, which is well below the threshold value of 5, suggesting that the problem of collinearity among the formative indicators of TIED is not serious. The dominant sub-dimensions that influenced a tourist's overall impression of a travel influencer's ecological message were sustainable travel advocacy and environmental awareness messages, indicating that messages about low-impact travel styles and destination fragility information had a stronger impact on the overall impression of an ecological message than did generic appeals to conservation and detailed calls for specific actions.

Table 3
Assessment of Higher-Order Constructs

Dimensions of Travel Influencers' Ecological Discourse	Outer Weights	T statistics	P values	VIF
LV scores - Conservation Advocacy -> Travel Influencers' Ecological Discourse	0.238	3.133	0.002	2.474
LV scores - Environmental awareness messages -> Travel Influencers' Ecological Discourse	0.341	4.765	0.000	2.337
LV scores - Responsible travel recommendations -> Travel Influencers' Ecological Discourse	0.163	3.014	0.003	3.221
LV scores - Sustainable travel advocacy -> Travel Influencers' Ecological Discourse	0.390	6.039	0.000	3.347

4.5 Model Fits and Effect Size

The saturated model yielded a standardised root mean square residual (SRMR) of 0.075, which is less than the upper bound of 0.08 commonly used to define an acceptable fit of the model to

the empirical correlation matrix. The NFI was 0.817, indicating comparatively modest incremental fit. Therefore, model-fit evidence should be interpreted alongside the structural model's predictive and explanatory assessment rather than as evidence of strong global fit. The unweighted least squares discrepancy (d_ULS) is reported for information purposes in addition to these major indices: d_ULS = 1.547. On the other hand, an effect size analysis indicated that FOMO had a large f-square on visit intention (f-square = 0.558), indicating that FOMO is a strong proximal determinant of visit intention in the model. The f^2 value indicates the contribution of TIED to the explained variance of the relevant endogenous construct; it should not be interpreted as a measure of indirect mediation (see Table 4). The effect of eco-consciousness on FOMO ($f^2 = 0.289$) was significantly larger than the effect on JOMO ($f^2 = 0.078$), and the effects of TIED on JOMO ($f^2 = 0.148$) and FOMO ($f^2 = 0.117$) were both small-to-moderate. The path coefficient for the influence of JOMO on visit intention was also smaller, though significant, than it was for the other constructs ($f^2 = 0.030$). Overall, the pattern of effect sizes is consistent with the notion that FOMO has the most important mediation in the model.

4.6 Structural Equation Model

The bootstrapped PLS-SEM structural model is shown in Fig. 2, along with standardised path coefficients and p-values, indicator loadings and outer weights. The model accounted for a high level of variance in its endogenous constructs ($R^2 = 0.786$ for FOMO, $R^2 = 0.733$ for JOMO, and $R^2 = 0.746$ for visit intention) and explained it relatively well, especially in the two emotional mediating constructs. Visually, the model confirms the hypothesised downstream divergent relationships between TIED and FOMO (path coefficient is−0.273, $p < 0.001$), and between TIED and JOMO (path coefficient is 0.342, $p < 0.001$), and the direct relationship between TIED and Visit Intention (path coefficient is negligible and non-significant, −0.010, p

= 0.829). The path of FOMO to visit intention (0.722; $p < 0.001$) is much larger than the path of JOMO to visit intention (−0.159; $p = 0.001$), which visually supports the dominant role of FOMO in the mediating process. The dashed arrows between eco-consciousness and TIED (dashed arrow−0.130, $p < 0.001$, and dashed arrow 0.208, $p < 0.001$) and JOMO (dashed arrow 0.232, $p < 0.001$, and dashed arrow 0.173, $p = 0.001$) show that eco-consciousness systematically influences the translation of ecological discourse into any of the emotional responses.

Table 4 reports the bootstrapped results (5,000 subsamples, 95% bias-corrected confidence intervals) for all direct, mediating and moderating hypotheses. Among the direct effects, H1 was supported: TIED was significantly and negatively associated with FOMO ($\beta = -0.273$, $t = 6.207$, $p < 0.001$). H2 was also supported, as TIED positively influenced JOMO ($\beta = 0.342$, t

= 8.106, $p < 0.001$), thus providing evidence for the hypothesised divergence between emotional responses to the same ecological stimulus. Therefore, the sign of H3 (proposing a negative direct effect) was not supported ($\beta = -0.010$, $t = 0.216$, $p = 0.829$), and the path coefficient fell within the range of the confidence interval (−0.095 to 0.086), which includes zero and reflects that ecological discourse alone does not meaningfully affect visit intention, after the mediating role of emotions had been controlled. The visit intention was positively predicted by H4 with the largest coefficient ($\beta = 0.722$, $t = 15.315$, $p < 0.001$). The hypothesised direction of effect for H5 was negative; visit intention decreased with JOMO ($\beta = -0.159$, $t = 3.245$, $p = 0.001$); the effect of JOMO was relatively small in comparison to the effect of FOMO.

The results of the mediation (H6 and H7) support the findings that both FOMO and JOMO mediate the effect of TIED towards the intention (negatively) in the same direction, but in different emotional ways. The indirect effect of TIED on visit intention through FOMO was negative and significant ($\beta = -0.197$, $t = 5.875$, $p < 0.001$) – which is because TIED reduces

FOMO, and FOMO in turn increases the intent to visit, resulting in a net suppressing effect. H7 was also supported as the indirect effect through JOMO was negative and significant (β =

−0.054, t = 2.980, p = 0.003), in which case TIED increases JOMO, which in turn decreases visit intention. The direct effect (H3) was not significant, while both indirect effects were significant, suggesting an indirect-only (full) mediation pathway: FOMO's indirect effect through the channel was about 3.6 times greater in magnitude than JOMO's, highlighting FOMO as the main pathway by which ecological discourse ultimately undermines intended visitation to over-touristed destinations.

Table 4
Hypothesis Testing using Bootstrapping

Hypotheses	β	Confidence Interval		T Stat.	P Values	Decision
		2.50%	97.50%			
Direct Effect						
H1: Travel Influencers' Ecological Discourse -> Fear of Missing Out (FOMO)	−0.273	−0.354	−0.182	6.207	0.000	Supported
H2: Travel Influencers' Ecological Discourse -> Joy of Missing Out (JOMO)	0.342	0.255	0.419	8.106	0.000	Supported
H3: Travel Influencers' Ecological Discourse -> Visit Intention	−0.010	−0.095	0.086	0.216	0.829	Not Supported
H4: Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) -> Visit Intention	0.722	0.628	0.810	15.315	0.000	Supported
H5: Joy of Missing Out (JOMO) -> Visit Intention	−0.159	−0.262	−0.072	3.245	0.001	Supported
Eco-Consciousness -> Fear of Missing Out (FOMO)	0.490	0.406	0.582	10.895	0.000	Supported
Eco-Consciousness -> Joy of Missing Out (JOMO)	−0.284	−0.385	−0.196	5.851	0.000	Supported
Mediating Effect						
H6: Travel Influencers' Ecological Discourse -> Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) -> Visit Intention	−0.197	−0.264	−0.134	5.875	0.000	Supported
H7: Travel Influencers' Ecological Discourse -> Joy of Missing Out (JOMO) -> Visit Intention	−0.054	−0.094	−0.024	2.980	0.003	Supported
Moderating Effect						
H8: Eco-Consciousness x Travel Influencers' Ecological Discourse -> Fear of Missing Out (FOMO)	−0.130	−0.167	−0.098	7.495	0.000	Supported
H9: Eco-Consciousness x Travel Influencers' Ecological Discourse -> Joy of Missing Out (JOMO)	0.208	0.167	0.250	9.921	0.000	Supported

Finally, the moderation results confirm both H8 and H9. The negative correlation between TIED and FOMO was further strengthened by highly eco-conscious tourists (interaction β =

−0.130; t = 7.495; p < 0.001), indicating that highly eco-conscious tourists will feel even more

negative about FOMO when they hear ecological messages. Consequently, the positive relationship between TIED and JOMO was significantly reinforced by eco-consciousness (interaction β = 0.208, t = 9.921, p < 0.001), which means that eco-conscious tourists are more easily moved by the same discussion into JOMO. Furthermore, substantial direct effects of eco-consciousness were found for both mediators (0.490 on FOMO,−0.284 on JOMO), supporting the role of eco-consciousness as a strong moderator of main effects. Taken together, these results provide evidence for the postulated influence of eco-consciousness as a boundary condition that directs the same ecological message in conflicting emotional – and consequently behavioural – directions.

5. Discussion and Implications

This study aimed to investigate the influence of travel influencers' ecological discourse on tourists' visit intention toward the over-touristed North Indian hill stations via a similar emotional pathway of FOMO and JOMO and the moderating influence of eco-consciousness. The results do not confirm a one-way street between ‘influencers and overtourism’ or ‘green messaging and overtourism’, but rather show a split emotional process that is influenced by the tourist's own attitude towards the environment.

The results of this study suggest that the indirect and total effects of TIED were significant, but the direct effect was not, which suggests that ecological discourse does not persuade or dissuade tourists in a direct, unmediated way. Rather, as in the Stimulus-Organism-Response logic model that underlies its functioning (Mehrabian and Russell, 1974), the discourse is exclusively affective. This is particularly significant for literature on influencer marketing that at times views exposure to visit-intention relationships as largely direct (Susanto et al., 2024); in an ecological-messaging case specifically, the emotional pathway seems to be the only viable pathway.

Emotional polarisation of ecological discourse is confirmed by the support for H1 or H2, where one, on the one hand, decreases FOMO while the other increases JOMO. This is in line with the work of Lee, Wut and Wan (2025) and NaveenKumar et al. (2026), which both find FOMO as an important mediator in travel decisions and do not compare FOMO with its growing opposite. The current findings indicate that the ability of travel content to incite anxious urgency actually decreases when the content has a more "conservation" emphasis, while for a

portion of viewers, the opposite emotional state, more positive, is fostered. It is a puzzle in the overtourism literature that some of the campaigns based on an ecological approach do not seem to have much impact on demand dampening across the entire campaign, even though the content might have reduced FOMO among some people and increased it among others.

This is also one of the most important results of the study, as the effect of FOMO on visit intention (β = 0.722) is more dominant than that of JOMO (β =−0.159), as confirmed in H4 and H5. It suggests that, overall, the emotion of FOMO is more powerful than the emotion of sustainability in this context: there is a downstream impact of FOMO that is so strong that even if it is suppressed in the ecological conversation, a residual FOMO translates well to visit intention. This imbalance reflects that while cultural FOMO may be a growing issue (Aston, 2025), the reality is that FOMO-related behaviour is influencing booking decisions for top destinations (Dutta, 2026). In practice, it means that unless ecological discourse can lower FOMO enough or appeal to a large enough population who are "JOMO" (joy of missing out) receptive, it is not going to be enough to shift demand in the desired direction.

The results of the mediation analysis (H6, H7) show that the pattern was fully indirect, with both pathways of mediation (FOMO and JOMO) having statistically significant, same-direction (demand-suppressing) indirect effects, though of a notably different magnitude. Even though JOMO is a smaller, yet statistically significant indirect pathway, the FOMO-based indirect pathway is still much larger, and it is clear that FOMO is the main pathway that the ecological discourse took to ultimately influence the over-touristed visit intention. This is a methodological and theoretical contribution beyond the single-mediator FOMO models found in the literature (Lee, Wut and Wan, 2025; NaveenKumar et al., 2026), as it shows that a comprehensive model of how the FOMO dynamics of influencers influence overtourism will require modelling both emotional sides simultaneously.

The most theoretically interesting findings are those of moderation (H8, H9). This eco-consciousness did not just serve as a parallel predictor, but it significantly enhanced the relationship for both discourse–emotion and emotion–discourse. As vividly presented in the slope analysis (Fig. 3), the strength of the relationship in both ways increased significantly with the addition of the factor of eco-consciousness. This aligns with the Construal-Level Theory's assumption that people interpret information differently based on their psychological orientations toward that information (Trope and Liu, 2010); highly eco-conscious tourists seemed to construe ecological discourse in terms of things that were concrete and personally

relevant, meaning that these types of tourists seemed to be more likely to let the information recalibrate their emotion, while less eco-conscious tourists seemed comparatively unmoved by the same information, consistent with more recent research finding that the concept of eco-consciousness strengthens the psychological effect of green marketing stimuli more broadly (Zhang, Zhao and Zaman, 2025). The take-home message is crude yet clear: ecological discourse is not simply a demand management tool suitable for all, but one that must be segmented to target the audience in terms of environmental disposition.

These findings paint a picture of a powerful and potentially dual influence of travel influencers: While they can influence the urgency-driven overtourism behaviour of tourism audiences, they can also foster a contented willingness to choose alternatives, and only effectively affect the latter group, and only in part, when audiences are more eco-minded. Based upon one of the world's most overtly over-tourism-affected mountain regions (Zargar, 2026; Sharma, 2026), this nuanced picture is more actionable and theoretically sound than previous single-mediator, single-audience travel behaviour models that centred on influencers.

6. Conclusion

The present study investigated the mediating role of FOMO and JOMO, with the moderating role of eco-consciousness, in relation to how the ecological discourse of travel influencers influences tourists' intention to visit the over-touristed North Indian hill stations. The results of PLS-SEM analysis revealed that the ecological discourse has no significant direct impact on the intention to visit, but it has a significant indirect effect via two opposing emotional pathways: via the pathway of reducing FOMO, which has a stronger effect, and increasing JOMO, which is not as strong. It is

expected that the impact of the emotion of FOMO is greater than the impact of the emotion of JOMO. The importance of eco-consciousness greatly enhances both discourse–emotion relationships; thus, the effectiveness of the discourse relies on tourists' underlying environmental disposition.

There are limitations to this study that suggest some areas for further research. First, in its cross-sectional design, it is not possible to examine emotional and behavioural associations at any single point in time and is incapable of establishing causal ordering, which would be strengthened by a longitudinal or experimental design. Second, the data are collected from tourists who were physically at the North Indian Hill stations only during one peak season

(April to June every year), which could be a limitation in terms of generalisability to other times, areas, or types of tourist destinations other than ecologically sensitive hill stations. Third, visitation intention was assessed and not actual visitation behaviour, which could lead to an intention–behaviour gap. Future research could expand the model to other contexts of overtourism (coastal, urban or heritage destinations), include objective visitation or mobile-tracking data, and include other moderators (such as destination familiarity, influencer parasocial trust), as well as testing whether targeted, eco-consciousness-segmented influencer campaigns can be experimentally proven to shift the distribution of tourist demand away from overtourism sites.

Declarations

The authors have no conflicts of interest to declare for this research.

This research with humans has been carried out in compliance with the ethical principles of the Declaration of Helsinki and the ethical guidelines of the affiliated institution. Institutional ethics committee approval was obtained for data collection. The purpose and objectives of the study were explained to all participants, and informed consent was obtained prior to their participation.

Data Availability:

Data are available with the corresponding author and can be provided upon request.

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Figures

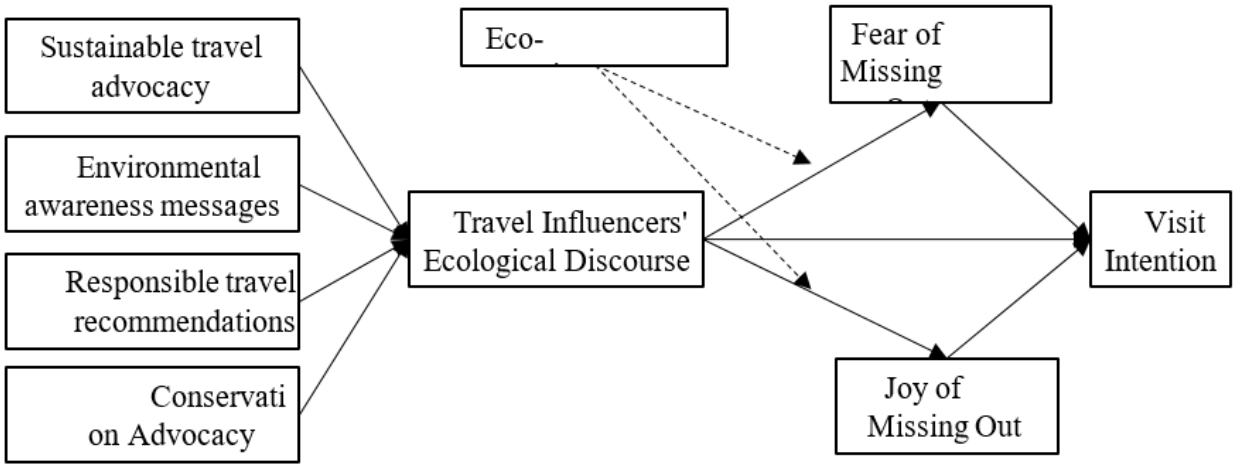


Figure 1

Conceptual Framework

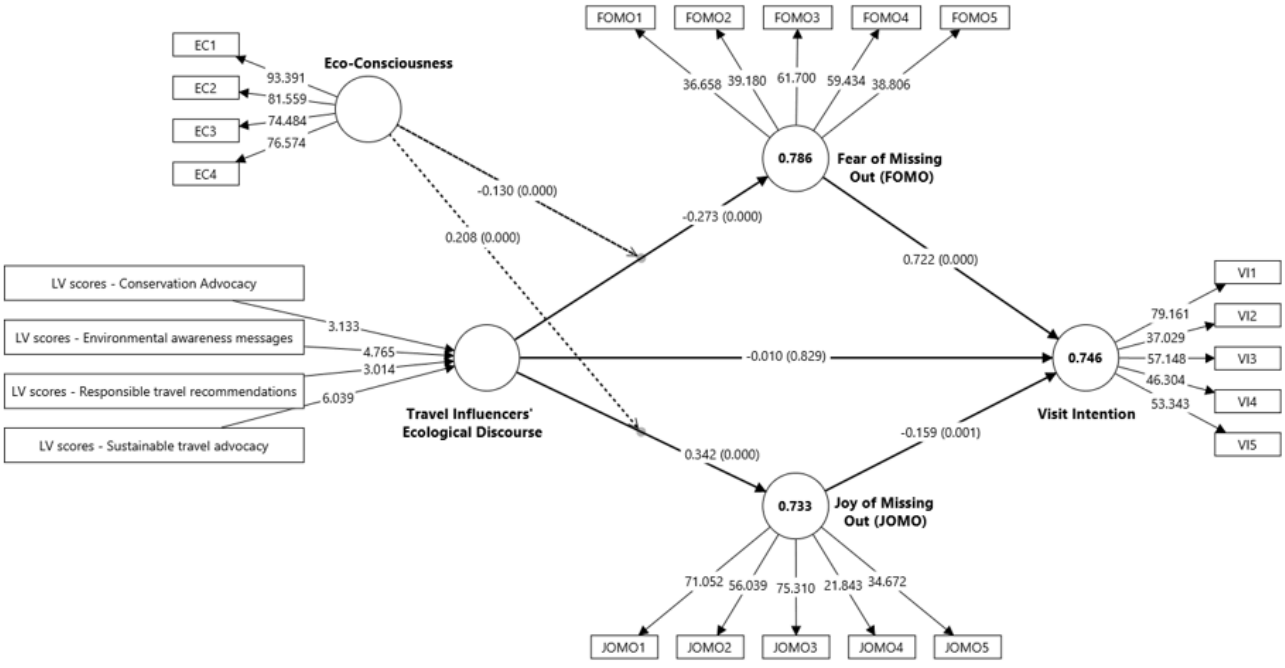


Figure 2

Structural Model Analysis