When AI Use Becomes Climate-Relevant: Emotional and Motivational Processes Driving Consumer Co-Responsibility

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As artificial intelligence (AI) becomes embedded in everyday communication and branding practices, its environmental footprint is gaining public visibility. This study examines whether AI use can function as a climate-relevant consumption cue that activates pro-environmental behavior. Drawing on cognitive dissonance, moral self-regulation, and climate emotion research, we propose a moderated serial mediation model in which AI use intensity increases climate-related emotional responses, which ultimately increase pro-environmental behavioral intentions. We further argue that awareness of AI's environmental impact amplifies this process by enhancing emotional activation and perceived co-responsibility. Using survey data from a representative U.S. sample, results support the proposed model. Findings contribute to advertising and branding research by positioning AI use as a morally meaningful practice and by highlighting how transparency about AI's footprint can foster consumer agency rather than disengagement.

Keywords: Artificial intelligence (AI); pro-environmental behavior; climate change; emotional activation; motivational engagement; sustainability communication.