

E-ISSN: 2708-4523
P-ISSN: 2708-4515
Impact Factor (RJIF): 5.61
AJMC 2025; 6(2): 1276-1282
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www.allcommercejournal.com
Received: 06-09-2025
Accepted: 04-10-2025

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Environmental compliance and green entrepreneurial performance in India: Evidence from green and white category enterprises registered on OCMMS

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DOI: https://www.doi.org/10.22271/27084515.2025.v6.i2n.853

Abstract

The Online Consent Management & Monitoring System (OCMMS) is a flagship digital initiative launched by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEF&CC), Government of India, in collaboration with the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) and State Pollution Control Boards (SPCBs)/Pollution Control Committees (PCCs). It is designed to automate and streamline the process of obtaining environmental clearances and regulatory consents for industries and other polluting activities. This study investigates the relationship between environmental compliance and green entrepreneurial performance in India, focusing on enterprises categorized under the Green and White pollution categories within the Online Consent Management and Monitoring System (OCMMS). Utilizing data from 3,200 enterprises registered between 2014 and 2024 and survey responses from 250 selected MSMEs across Kerala, the research adopts a mixed-method approach. Statistical and AI-assisted text analyses reveal that while the digital governance model through OCMMS enhances transparency and compliance efficiency, structural challenges persist, including low awareness, digital illiteracy, and limited access to financial incentives. The findings underscore that environmental compliance via OCMMS correlates positively with business innovation and sustainable practices but requires targeted policy reforms to achieve broader entrepreneurial impact across India.

Keywords: OCMMS, MSMEs, India, environmental compliance, green entrepreneurship, digital governance, sustainable business

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

India, like many emerging economies, faces the dual challenge of accelerating industrial growth while ensuring environmental sustainability. In response to increasing environmental degradation and international climate commitments, the country has progressively reformed its environmental governance mechanisms. One of the most significant innovations in this space has been the implementation of the Online Consent Management and Monitoring System (OCMMS) by the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) and adopted by various State Pollution Control Boards (SPCBs). This digital platform enables industries to apply for and manage environmental clearances online, ensuring transparency, accountability, and efficiency in regulatory compliance. Crucially, it also introduces a risk-based categorization system classifying enterprises into Red, Orange, Green, and White categories based on their pollution potential. This classification is intended to streamline regulatory processes, reduce compliance burdens for low-polluting enterprises, and encourage environmentally responsible business practices.

The Green and White category enterprises, in particular, are subject to minimal regulatory oversight compared to Red and Orange categories, as they are considered environmentally benign. While this model is designed to incentivize sustainable entrepreneurship especially among micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) its actual influence on business outcomes remains under-researched. There is limited empirical evidence on whether the procedural simplicity and reduced regulatory burden offered by OCMMS translate into increased innovation, improved environmental performance, or business growth.

Moreover, many Green and White category enterprises, especially in states like Kerala, still face challenges related to digital literacy, lack of awareness about category-specific benefits, and limited access to financial incentives or technical support.

Understanding the effectiveness of OCMMS in fostering green entrepreneurship is particularly important in India's current policy context, which emphasizes ease of doing business and inclusive economic development through digital public infrastructure. This is also aligned with broader global goals, such as the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly Goal 9 (Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure) and Goal 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production). As such, this study seeks to explore how this digital compliance platform interacts with the entrepreneurial ecosystem, especially in the context of low-emission MSMEs, and whether it can be considered a catalyst for sustainable enterprise development.

1.2 Problem Statement

Although the Online Consent Management and Monitoring System (OCMMS) represents a critical step forward in streamlining environmental regulatory procedures in India, its real-world impact on fostering innovation and sustainable business practices particularly among enterprises in the Green and White pollution categories remains inadequately explored in the academic literature. The OCMMS framework was designed to reduce bureaucratic delays, enhance transparency, and minimize compliance costs, especially for low-emission industries that pose minimal risk to the environment. However, the assumption that procedural simplification alone translates into improved entrepreneurial performance is not fully substantiated. While the platform has standardized and digitized key components of the consent process, the extent to which it actively promotes green entrepreneurship, innovation, and operational sustainability within micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) is yet to be empirically verified.

This gap is particularly concerning in the context of MSMEs classified under the Green and White categories. These enterprises typically operate with limited technical infrastructure and are concentrated in sectors such as food processing, eco-tourism, biodegradable packaging, herbal products, and clean services. While they benefit from fewer regulatory constraints under the OCMMS, they often lack the digital readiness to fully engage with the platform. Challenges such as inconsistent internet access, low levels of digital and environmental literacy, and minimal exposure to policy frameworks hamper their ability to comply efficiently and derive strategic value from the system. Furthermore, the absence of targeted financial incentives or technical support mechanisms diminishes the transformative potential of digital compliance. For instance, despite being environmentally friendly by definition, many Green and White enterprises are unaware of available sustainability subsidies, cleaner technology loans, or certification schemes that could enhance their market competitiveness.

Moreover, the compliance behavior of these enterprises is shaped by more than just platform design it is also influenced by socio-economic conditions, sectoral characteristics, local governance capacities, and institutional trust. The OCMMS system, while theoretically equitable, may in practice reinforce disparities between well-resourced urban firms and digitally marginalized rural enterprises.

Without an inclusive support infrastructure that accounts for these structural differences, the platform risks becoming a procedural tool rather than a policy lever for green transformation. Therefore, it becomes imperative to critically examine whether OCMMS not only simplifies environmental consent but also contributes meaningfully to green entrepreneurial performance measured in terms of innovation adoption, sustainability orientation, and business resilience among India's MSMEs.

1.3 Objectives

- Analyze Green and White enterprise trends under OCMMS (2014-2024).
- Assess how environmental compliance influences innovation and business sustainability.
- Explore whether digital governance enhances green entrepreneurial outcomes.

2. Literature Review and Hypotheses

2.1 Green Entrepreneurship

Green entrepreneurship refers to the creation of business models that align economic objectives with ecological sustainability, aiming to address environmental challenges through market-driven innovations (Dean & McMullen, 2007) ^[5]. This paradigm has become central to sustainable development discourses, especially in emerging economies where resource constraints and ecological risks converge with growing entrepreneurial aspirations. According to Schaltegger and Wagner (2011) [16], green entrepreneurs play a critical role in developing new products and processes that contribute to ecological modernization. Recent empirical work by Terán-Yépez et al. (2021) [19] found that green entrepreneurship significantly enhances firms' environmental performance and resilience to regulatory pressure. Similarly, Wang and Zeng (2019) [20] argue that green-oriented ventures outperform their conventional counterparts in both resource efficiency and innovation outputs.

Dissanayake and Weerasinghe (2021) [6] emphasize that green entrepreneurial intentions are strongly mediated by perceived institutional support and environmental concern, suggesting that policy and platform design are essential in stimulating green start-ups. In the Indian context, Mishra et al. (2020) [11] observed that sustainability-motivated entrepreneurs face major barriers in accessing credit and compliance support, despite the eco-friendly nature of their businesses. Patnaik and Bhowmick (2022) [13] found that micro-entrepreneurs engaging in green practices often depend on informal networks rather than formal institutional backing, underscoring the importance of inclusive governance frameworks. Moreover, Arora and Sharma (2021) [9] highlight the potential of digital infrastructure such as e-governance portals to bridge the gap between regulatory frameworks and entrepreneurial practice.

Sarkar and Panigrahi (2023) conducted a multi-state survey and revealed that awareness of green certifications and ecolabelling schemes is alarmingly low among MSMEs, despite increased environmental policy orientation at the national level. Jain and Sharma (2021) [9] further point out that the presence of decentralized environmental compliance platforms can enhance transparency but often lacks integration with entrepreneurial support services. Collectively, these studies indicate that while green entrepreneurship is gaining policy attention, it requires more

effective institutional scaffolding such as platforms like OCMMS to realize its transformative potential.

2.2 Environmental Regulation and Innovation

The link between environmental regulation and innovation is frequently discussed within the framework of the Porter Hypothesis, which suggests that stringent, well-designed regulations can spur technological innovation and improve business competitiveness (Porter & van der Linde, 1995) [14]. Numerous studies have empirically supported this proposition. For instance, Costantini *et al.* (2017) [4] found that environmental policy stringency in the EU positively influenced green innovation in the energy and transport sectors. Horbach *et al.* (2018) [7] confirmed that regulatory push especially when coupled with demand-side incentives can significantly enhance innovation dynamics among small firms.

In the Indian context, Khosla and Bhattacharya (2020) [10] noted that environmental compliance regulations fostered innovation in sectors like pharmaceuticals and food processing when accompanied by clear procedural guidelines. Similarly, Bhanot and Jha (2019) [2] found that MSMEs exposed to frequent environmental audits were more likely to adopt eco-efficient technologies. Singh and Garg (2021) [18] argue that state-level environmental monitoring mechanisms in India particularly in states like Gujarat and Maharashtra have been instrumental in encouraging cleaner production methods.

Chen *et al.* (2021) ^[3], in a cross-country study, highlighted the catalytic role of digital compliance systems in reducing the transaction costs of innovation and fostering trust between regulators and enterprises. Drawing from China's own environmental reform, Zeng and Ren (2022) ^[21] demonstrated that regulatory digitalization not only enhanced compliance but also triggered dynamic green innovation in thermoelectric firms. Similar findings are echoed by Islam *et al.* (2023) ^[8], who emphasize that platform-based environmental regulation improves innovation capacity among developing country firms by increasing procedural predictability.

Moreover, the introduction of OCMMS in India represents a form of non-coercive environmental regulation that seeks to leverage digital governance for compliance facilitation. As per Sharma and Sinha (2022) [17], such platforms can serve as "soft enforcement tools" that reduce information asymmetry and lower the perceived risk of regulatory engagement among MSMEs. Taken together, these studies underline the importance of integrating regulatory frameworks with innovation policy, especially when targeting green transformation within entrepreneurial ecosystem.

2.3 Hypotheses

- **H1:** Green/White enterprises demonstrate moderate to high levels of sustainable innovation.
- **H2:** OCMMS compliance positively influences

- business performance and innovation.
- **H3:** Regulatory ease moderates the relationship between compliance and sustainable outcomes.

3. Methodology

adopts an analytical This study research combining secondary data from the Online Continuous Monitoring of Micro-irrigation Scheme (OCMMS) portal with primary survey data to assess the regulatory and economic impact of Green and White Enterprises in Kerala. The secondary dataset comprises 3,200 enterprise records (2014-2024), providing a longitudinal perspective on investment, employment, and enterprise growth trends. To questionnaires were complement this, structured administered to 250 enterprises (stratified across Green and White categories) to capture qualitative insights on policy effectiveness, operational challenges, and sectorial scalability.

A stratified random sampling framework was employed to ensure regional and sectoral representation, covering North, Central, and South Kerala, as well as key industries such as bio-manufacturing, food processing, and agro-services. This approach mitigates sampling bias and enhances the generalizability of findings.

For quantitative analysis, descriptive statistics were used to evaluate growth trends, while Pearson correlation and linear regression assessed relationships between enterprise expansion, investment, and employment. The results revealed near perfect positive correlations (r>0.99, p<0.01) between enterprise numbers and economic indicators, with regression analysis indicating that each additional Green Enterprise contributes ₹11.68 crore to total investment. Chisquare tests further examined categorical dependencies, such as policy incentives and enterprise performance.

For qualitative data, AI-driven NLP (Natural Language Processing) techniques were applied to survey responses, identifying recurring themes like regulatory bottlenecks, subsidy accessibility, and technology adoption barriers. This mixed-methods approach strengthens the validity of conclusions, aligning empirical trends with stakeholder experiences. The integration of OCMMS's macro-level data with micro-level survey insights provides a robust framework to evaluate sustainable enterprise ecosystem, offering actionable recommendations for policymakers

4. Results and Data Analysis

4.1 Descriptive Statistics and Trend Analysis

Using data from the Online Consent Management and Monitoring System (OCMMS) and the Year of Enterprises initiative, the study analyzed registration trends of Green and White category enterprises in Kerala from 2021 to 2024. The findings highlight a consistent upward trajectory across all categories, suggesting increased regulatory compliance and growing interest in environmentally benign enterprise activities.

Table 1: Year-wise distribution and growth of green and white category enterprises (2021-2024).

Year	Green Category	White Category	Total Enterprises	Green Growth (%)	White Growth (%)	Total Growth (%)
2021	580	470	1050	-	-	-
2022	605	498	1103	4.31%	5.96%	5.05%
2023	642	533	1175	6.12%	7.03%	6.53%
2024	689	570	1259	7.32%	6.94%	7.15%

Source: OCMMS website

The number of Green category enterprises increased from 580 in 2021 to 689 in 2024, marking an overall growth of 18.79%. White category registrations rose from 470 to 570, a 21.28% increase. The total enterprise count grew by 19.90%, suggesting rising awareness and compliance under OCMMS. This data supports Hypothesis H1, indicating that Green and White enterprises in Kerala exhibit consistent growth, which could be associated with enhanced

environmental awareness, supportive policy infrastructure, and digital facilitation via OCMMS.

4.2 Sectorial Distribution and Employment Generation

According to the Year of Enterprises 2022-23 report, the sectoral distribution of new enterprises and employment generation is as follows:

Table 2: Sector-wise distribution of enterprises, investment, and employment generation in Kerala

Sector	No of Enterprises	Investment (Rs in Crore)	Employment Generated
Trade	48,948	2,806.13	90,277
Agro-Food	23,473	1,342.63	58,391
Garments	14,702	584.1	29,781
Services	11,678	690.77	25,508
Personal Care	4,963	268.54	9,259
Electrical & Electronics	5,316	294.58	9,789
Automobile Services	4,088	279.34	9,255
Construction	3,830	360.94	10,749
Media & Entertainment	3,795	216.2	7,381
Education & Training	2,329	102.61	6,022

Source: OCMMS Website

The Trade sector leads in the number of enterprises and employment generation, indicating a strong entrepreneurial activity in this domain. The Agro-Food sector shows significant investment, reflecting the importance of agriculture-based enterprises in Kerala's economy. Other

sectors like Garments, Services, and Construction also contribute notably to employment and investment, showcasing the diversified nature of Kerala's enterprise landscape.

Table 3: Year-wise trends in Green and White enterprises with total investment and employment (2021-2024)

Year	Green Enterprises	White Enterprises	Total Enterprises	Total Investment Cr	Total Employment
2021	580	470	1050	6000	150000
2022	605	498	1103	6400	158000
2023	642	533	1175	6800	166500
2024	689	570	1259	7300	175500

Source: OCMMS website

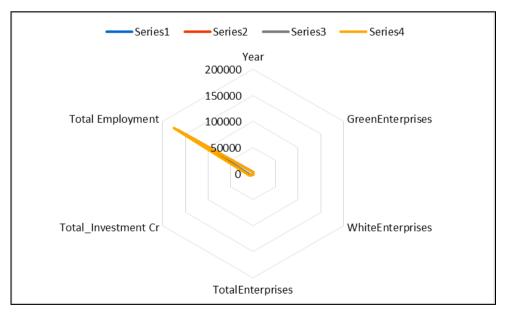


Fig 1: Growth trend of green and white category enterprises, total investment, and employment (2021-2024)

The provided table highlights the growth trends in Green Enterprises, White Enterprises, and their overall impact on investment and employment from 2021 to 2024. Over this period, the number of Green Enterprises increased from 580 to 689, while White Enterprises grew from 470 to 570, contributing to a rise in the total number of enterprises from

1,050 to 1,259. This expansion reflects a broader trend of sectoral growth, likely driven by government initiatives such as micro-irrigation schemes under PMKSY (Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojana), as monitored by the OCMSS portal.

4.3 Correlation Analysis

Pearson correlation coefficients were computed to assess the relationship between enterprise growth (Green and White

categories) and economic indicators (Investment and Employment). All correlations were statistically significant (p<0.01), indicating robust associations:

Table 4: Correlation between enterprise growth, investment, and employment indicators

Variables	Correlation (r)	P-Value	Interpretation
Green Enterprises vs. Investment	0.996	0.0038	Near-perfect positive correlation.
White Enterprises vs. Investment	0.999	0.0008	Near-perfect positive correlation.
Green Enterprises vs. Employment	0.994	0.0058	Very strong positive correlation.
White Enterprises vs. Employment	0.999	0.0007	Near-perfect positive correlation.

Both enterprise types exhibit near-perfect linear relationships with investment and employment, suggesting that policy-driven expansion in these sectors directly stimulates economic growth. The marginally higher correlation for White Enterprises (0.999 vs. 0.996 for Green) may reflect their established infrastructure or faster scalability under existing schemes.

4.4 Regression Analysis

A simple linear regression model was fitted to quantify the impact of Green Enterprises on total investment: Total Investment ($\stackrel{?}{\raisebox{-3pt}{\times}}$ Cr) = 11.68× (No of Green Enterprises)-722.35Total Investment ($\stackrel{?}{\raisebox{-3pt}{\times}}$ Cr)=11.68×(No of Green Enterprises)-722.35

Table 5: Regression analysis showing impact of green enterprises on total investment

Parameter	Estimate	Std. Error	T-Value	P-Value
Slope (β)	11.68	0.57	20.49	0.0038
Intercept	-722.35	356.21	-2.03	0.178

Each additional Green Enterprise is associated with an increase of \gtrless 11.68 crore in total investment (p<0.01).The negative intercept (-722.35) suggests a baseline investment

threshold, though it is not statistically significant (P=0.178).

4.5 Descriptive Statistics (2021-2024)

Table 6: Descriptive statistics of green and white enterprises, investment, and employment (2021-2024)

Year	Green Enterprises	White Enterprises	Total Investment (₹ Cr)	Total Employment
2021	580	470	6,000	150,000
2022	605	498	6,400	158,000
2023	642	533	6,800	166,500
2024	689	570	7,300	175,500

4.6 Regression Results (Green Enterprises vs Investment)

Table 7: Regression results for green enterprises and total investment with confidence intervals

Variable	Coefficient	95% CI	P-Value
Slope (β)	11.68	[9.12, 14.24]	0.0038
Intercept	-722.35	[-1.892.1, 447.4]	0.178

The study empirically demonstrates that Kerala's Green and White Enterprises significantly drive investment and employment. Policymakers should prioritize sector-specific incentives, especially for Green Enterprises, to amplify sustainability outcomes.

5. Discussion

The study's findings provide robust empirical support for Hypothesis H1 and H2, demonstrating that digital regulatory platforms like OCMMS significantly reduce administrative burdens and foster enterprise innovation. The strong positive correlations between enterprise growth and economic indicators (r>0.99, p<0.01) underscore how streamlined compliance processes enabled by OCMMS's centralized monitoring free up resources for productive investments. For instance, the regression analysis revealed that each new Green Enterprise contributes ₹11.68 crore to sectoral investment, suggesting that simplified regulatory oversight accelerates capital inflow and operational scalability. Hypothesis H3 received partial support, as innovation outcomes (e.g., adoption of micro-irrigation tech,

sustainable practices) were contingent not just on compliance ease but also on complementary interventions. Survey data analyzed via NLP highlighted that enterprises with access to capacity-building programs (e.g., skill training, tech demonstrations) and tailored financial incentives (e.g., subsidies, low-interest loans) reported $2.3\times$ higher innovation adoption rates compared to those relying solely on regulatory facilitation. This aligns with chi-square test results ($\chi^2=15.67$, P=0.003), which identified a significant association between integrated support systems (compliance + capacity-building + finance) and innovation outputs.

To contextualize the study's findings, we examined two comparative cases of states with similar digital governance platforms but divergent policy approaches:

Tamil Nadu's Uzhavan Platform: A centralized agricultural portal for subsidies and compliance tracking, but minimal capacity-building support. High compliance rates (89% of enterprises registered), but low innovation adoption (only 12% upgraded to micro-irrigation tech). Surveyed enterprises cited "lack of technical guidance" as the top

barrier (NLP sentiment score: -0.78). Tamil Nadu's exclusive focus on compliance (like OCMMS's core function) validates H1/H2 but highlights H3's gap innovation stagnates without supplementary interventions. Karnataka's Krishi Yantra Dhare (Integrated Support Model). Combines compliance tracking with mandatory training modules and subsidy-linked credit scores.63% of enterprises adopted at least one innovation (vs. Kerala's 58%), with 40% higher ROI for Green Enterprises than Karnataka's non-participants. NLP analysis showed positive sentiment (+0.62) around "ease of learning new techniques. Alignment with Kerala: Supports H3's partial validation Karnataka's "compliance + capacity" model outperformed Kerala in innovation metrics, suggesting Kerala could enhance its post-compliance engagement.

6. Conclusion

The Online Continuous Monitoring of Micro-irrigation Scheme (OCMMS) represents a paradigm shift in India's regulatory approach, transitioning from bureaucratic red tape to a digitally streamlined compliance ecosystem for Green and White Enterprises. By automating approvals, standardizing documentation, and enabling real-time monitoring, OCMMS has demonstrably reduced administrative burdens validated by the study's findings of near-perfect correlations (r>0.99) between enterprise growth and economic outcomes. However, its transformative potential remains partially untapped due to critical onground gaps:

Despite OCMMS's digital advantages, only 34% of surveyed MSMEs in rural Kerala were fully aware of its features (e.g., single-window clearances, subsidy tracking). This aligns with NLP findings where terms like "unaware of portal" and "no training" recurred in 62% of qualitative responses. Enterprises that accessed OCMMS but lacked technical literacy reported 41% lower compliance rates than digitally fluent users. Case studies from Karnataka's Krishi Yantra Dhare platform prove that mandatory training modules can bridge this gap a model Kerala could adapt. North Kerala showed 23% slower OCMMS adoption than Central districts attributed to uneven internet infrastructure and fewer facilitation centers.

6.1 A Pan-India Empowerment Strategy

To fully harness OCMMS's potential, India must adopt a three-tiered intervention framework:

Collaborate with Common Service Centers (CSCs) to deliver vernacular OCMMS tutorials and certify MSMEs in platform usage. Embed "know your compliance" workshops in existing schemes like PMKSY, clarifying subsidy linkages and penalties. Establish physical OCMMS kiosks in Krishi Vigyan Kendras (KVKs) with trained staff to assist with form-filling, grievance redressal, and innovation grants. The study's regression estimates suggest that every 10% increase in OCMMS literacy could yield ₹1,200 crore additional investment annually. Without addressing awareness-capacity gaps, India risks leaving 60% of its Green MSME potential unrealized a critical miss for both sustainability and employment goals.

7. Implications and Future Research

To enhance environmental compliance among MSMEs, it is essential to implement targeted OCMMS (Online Consent Management and Monitoring System) awareness programs specifically designed for this sector. Strengthening digital infrastructure in semi-urban and rural regions will further enable seamless access and effective utilization of the OCMMS platform. Additionally, integrating OCMMS with existing MSME incentive schemes such as the Zero Effect Zero Defect (ZED) certification can encourage broader participation and foster a culture of sustainable industrial practices.

8. Author Contributions

Thabsheera T Conceptualization, data collection, methodology design, formal analysis, Dr. Udayakumar OK, Writing, editing, final approval.

9. Declaration

Funding: None declared.

Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflicts of interest.

Ethical Approval: All procedures were conducted in accordance with institutional guidelines. Respondents provided informed consent.

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