


Chapter 8

Can Social Media Be a Transformative Tool for Building a Better Society? The Case of YouTube Videos on Consumer Sustainability Perception

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ABSTRACT

The study aims to evaluate consumers' perceptions of social marketing designed to enhance environmental awareness through social media platforms. The approach employed in this study is exploratory and interpretive. The data gathered from YouTube videos on the "Doğa İçin Çal" platform filmed during the 2019-2023 period were semiotically analyzed in terms of their content characteristics. Afterwards, the user comments were evaluated as well. During the analysis process, the consumer perception framework was used by utilizing the content analysis method through the Maxqda software program. The findings indicate that the videos effectively captured the target audience's attention and fostered social cohesion by promoting unity. However, the perception elements utilized in the videos indicate that the viewers pay greater attention to the aspects associated with musical performance, while the matter of environmental awareness remains in the background.

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INTRODUCTION

Social marketing involves using strategies that can affect human behavior, addressing socially complex issues such as promoting health and environmental sustainability, with a mission to provide greater benefits to individuals and communities (Andreasen, 2014). The primary objective of these strategies is to encourage the target audience to become active participants in shaping their own lives (Saunders et al., 2015). Nonetheless, the desired changes in behavior significantly rely on the individual's perception of stimuli, which contributes significantly to shaping their understanding of reality (Solomon, 2006). The process of perception begins with the reception of information through the five senses, whereas marketing communication plays a crucial role in concluding this process by capturing the individual's attention and subsequently interpreting the received information. In the contemporary era, these marketing communications are being held on through digitally produced commodities at an increasing pace, and social media products are a significant portion of this landscape. Furthermore, the utilization of social media by businesses has become increasingly favoured due to its numerous benefits, such as cost-effective reaching a wide-ranging audience, expeditious feedback for enhancing and advancing operations, as well as the capacity to cultivate customer satisfaction and facilitate the creation of value (Cheung et al., 2021; Li et al., 2021). As a result, in light of all these developments, businesses engage in marketing endeavours with the objective of fostering a shared awareness for a better society, employing social media platforms as a means to amplify their messages to a wider audience. Nonetheless, it is crucial to do a thorough follow-up and evaluation of the social marketing plan in order to ascertain the responses of the target market towards the social marketing activities, gauge the extent of awareness within the target audience, and determine whether the intended behavioural change has been achieved (Cheng et al., 2011). The research conducted to assess the effectiveness of these actions in shaping a meaningful consumer perception would ultimately contribute to the intended transformation in societal behaviour.

The primary aim of this study is to assess consumer perceptions of social marketing that seeks to promote environmental awareness via social media platforms. The study employed an exploratory and interpretive approach. "Doğa İçin Çal" platform was chosen as the research context, which got inspiration from "Playing for Change," platform established in the United States. Doğa İçin Çal has substantial views of more than 350 million and is primarily dedicated to fostering environmental awareness. In the study, firstly, data obtained from three YouTube videos on the platform shot between 2019-2023 were evaluated in a semiotic manner in terms of the characteristics utilized in the content. Thereafter, the user comments that received the maximum number of likes were analyzed. The consumer perception literature was used as the

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