


Chapter 4

Crafting Effective Sustainable Fashion Communication on Social Media: Message Framing Effect on Customer Engagement

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ABSTRACT

Sustainable consumption is an issue that firms try to encourage through different tools. A common approach to influencing environmental consumer behaviors and attitudes is message framing. Specifically, gain-frames highlight the benefits of engaging in a behavior, while loss-frames emphasize the costs of not doing so. The goals of this study are twofold: to examine the effects of sustainable message framing on customer engagement intention and to investigate the moderating effect of attitude towards sustainable message on this relationship. An experimental study was conducted with 66 participants equally distributed between two framing groups.

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Drawing on the prospect theory, it was proposed that, compared to loss-framed messages, gain-framed brand messages on social media may produce higher customer engagement intention. Based on the theory of customer engagement marketing, it was anticipated that increases in the level of additional attitude towards sustainable message could strengthen the effect of gain message framing. Results provide empirical support for both hypotheses.

INTRODUCTION

The rapidly-growing fashion industry (Orminski et al., 2021), is also the second most environmentally damaging (Hasbullah et al., 2020; Qutab, 2017). It generates significant textile waste (Beall, 2020), contributes to greenhouse gas emissions (European Parliament, 2021; Quantis, 2018; Shafie et al., 2021), and consumes vast amounts of water (Hasbullah et al., 2020; UNEP, 2020). Hence, the industry needs a fundamental shift not only in production processes, but also in overall practices, to minimize its impact on the environment. The increasing prominence of sustainable fashion (SF) in both academia and practice directly addresses this need. Specifically, retailers can foster SF consumption and behaviors by using fashion as a communication tool (James and Montgomery, 2017). It is crucial to explore effective strategies for framing sustainable fashion in retailing communication and messaging to encourage sustainable behaviors (Mukendi et al., 2020; Orminski et al., 2021). In addition, social media discourse plays a key role in influencing consumer perceptions and behaviors toward sustainable fashion (Orminski et al., 2021). Recent research in image-based social media analysis of sustainable fashion brands indicates that sharing sustainability images leads to increased digital customer engagement (Milanesi et al., 2022). In addition, the aspect of sustainability that generated the highest level of digital customer engagement is environmental sustainability (Testa et al., 2021). Social media is an effective platform for customer engagement in sustainable fashion communication, however, research on this topic has been limited (Lee and Weder, 2021; Milanesi et al., 2022; Testa et al., 2021). Therefore, the aim of this study is to investigate and develop effective sustainable fashion communication strategies on social media, with a particular emphasis on message framing, aimed at enhancing customer engagement.

Message framing, a prevalent green advertising tool, is frequently employed to shape consumer behaviors and attitudes (Zubair et al., 2020). Gain (loss) frames emphasize the benefits (costs) gained by (not) engaging in a particular behavior (Tversky and Kahneman, 1981). In green advertising, gain-framed messages highlight the environmental benefits of purchasing green products, while loss-framed messages underscore potential adverse consequences associated with acquiring

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