

# Chapter 5

## Using Influencer Marketing to Strengthen Brand Evangelism: A Pathway to Sustainable Marketing

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### **ABSTRACT**

*Influencer marketing is a rapidly evolving digital strategy that harnesses the influence and credibility of social media personalities to promote brands, products, or services to specific target audiences. With the rise of platforms such as Instagram, Facebook and YouTube individuals have gained the ability to build significant followings, making them valuable partners for brands seeking authentic engagement with their consumer base. This chapter aims to explore how influencer marketing contributes to sustainable marketing efforts, focusing on the role influencers play in strengthening brand evangelism. The chapter is structured into sections that delve into the evolution of influencer marketing, the strategies influencers use to expand brand loyalty, and the challenges they face in promoting sustainable products. Additionally, it will examine the limitations of influencer marketing in driving consumer behavior towards sustainability and provide insights into the future of influencer marketing and brand evangelism in the context of long-term brand sustainability.*

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the rise of social media influencers (SMIs) has become a dominant trend, leading to a surge in the adoption of influencer marketing (IM) within business strategies. As of July 2024, the global number of internet users reached 5.45 billion, representing 67.1 percent of the world's population. In which 63.7 percent of the global population, were active on social media platforms. Social media's prevalence provides companies with access to vast online networks, enabling direct interaction with users and the ability to influence consumer behavior (Wielki, 2020; Yildirim, 2021). Platforms like Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, Twitter, and YouTube have seen dramatic growth in user bases, creating opportunities for firms to directly engage with consumers and unprecedented global audiences, surpassing the reach of traditional influencers, allowing them to significantly shape marketing campaign outcomes. Consequently, the digital age has given rise to the concept of "digital influencers" (Isyanto et al., 2020; Leung et al., 2022; Vaidya & Karnawat, 2023). Increasingly, marketers are leveraging online influencers to promote products and brands on social media platforms like Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube, accelerating the expansion of influencer marketing. This strategy involves selecting influencers and providing incentives for them to engage their followers to endorse a company's offerings (Wielki, 2020). Initially, influencer marketing closely mirrored celebrity endorsements, where prominent figures would promote products or services. However, with the advent of platforms like Instagram, YouTube, and Facebook, everyday individuals have been able to gather large followings, reshaping the influencer marketing landscape. The effectiveness of influencer marketing establishes on three key aspects of social media: direct communication between influencers and their audiences, the amplification of messages via these platforms, and the ability to accurately measure the reach and impact of campaigns. Strong relationships between consumers and brands also have a significant impact on consumer behavior. Studies show that these relationships can drive actions such as purchasing a brand, promoting it, and opposition to competitor brands (Kapoor et al., 2023; Schorn et al., 2022; Vaidya & Karnawat, 2023; Wielki, 2020; Yildirim, 2021). Ultimately, robust consumer-brand connections foster loyalty, vibrant brand communities, and sustained performance in both physical and online environments. Brand evangelism, characterized by vocal and active support of a brand through purchasing, referrals, and advocating against competitors, has also emerged as a powerful phenomenon. Recognizing this potential, brands began collaborating with influencers to establish authentic connections with their audiences (Anggarini, 2018; Isyanto et al., 2020; Rungruangjit et al., 2023; Schorn et al., 2022). Authenticity and trust became pivotal in influencer selection, as audiences sought genuine endorsements from influencers who had meaningful ties to the products they

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