


Chapter 3

Influencer Marketing and Sustainability: A New Communication Model on Digital Publishing Platforms

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ABSTRACT

In the contemporary digital landscape, influencer marketing has emerged as a pivotal strategy for disseminating sustainability messages through social media platforms. This study investigates the role of influencers in promoting sustainable lifestyles and the effectiveness of their communication strategies across Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube. By analyzing highly engaged posts from selected Turkish macro and micro influencers who focus on ecological living, the study applies content analysis to examine themes such as user engagement, message authenticity, and trust dynamics. The research introduces the 3A Communication Model—Authenticity, Alignment, Activation—designed to optimize influencer-led sustainability messaging. Ultimately, this research contributes to the understanding of digital sustainability communication and offers practical insights for brands, content creators, and communication scholars aiming to build effective, trust-based sustainable marketing strategies in the digital age.

DOI: 10.4018/979-8-3373-1459-4.ch003

INTRODUCTION

In today's rapidly digitalizing world, social media platforms stand out as a powerful medium not only for interaction between individuals but also for brands to establish direct and sincere communication with their target audiences. Unlike traditional media, digital platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, TikTok and others stand out with their user-focused and highly interactive structures that allow for faster feedback. With this digital transformation, influencer marketing has become one of the most effective strategies that brands use to connect with consumers, promote their products and services, and convey brand values (Evans, Phua, Lim, & Jun, 2017).

Influencers are not only notable for having large follower bases, but also for carrying an authenticity and reliability that is identified with their digital identity. The sincere and continuous communication they establish with their followers differentiates them from traditional celebrities, turning them into strong opinion leaders who can influence consumer behavior. In this respect, influencers not only produce content for marketing purposes; they can also play an effective role in social responsibility projects, in issues that require social sensitivity, or in raising awareness on global issues such as environmental sustainability.

The concept of sustainability represents a multidimensional understanding that requires both individuals and institutions to act responsibly in today's world, considering its environmental, economic and social dimensions. In an era when global problems such as climate crisis, depletion of natural resources, environmental pollution and social inequality are deepening, sustainability has become a principle that should be integrated into all areas of life, beyond being just an environmental discourse. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) declared by the United Nations require all actors – states, companies, NGOs and individuals – to take collective responsibility for a sustainable future (UN, 2015).

In this context, influencers' creation of environmental and social awareness by producing sustainability-themed content is not just an individual choice; it can also be considered as a part of the new generation communication strategies of the digital age. Influencers' narrative styles that directly appeal to the masses, their suggestions based on personal experiences, and their narratives supported by visual content make complex and multi-layered issues such as sustainability more accessible and understandable. Beyond raising followers' awareness, this can also contribute to the integration of sustainable behaviors into daily life.

In this context, the role of influencer marketing in conveying sustainability-focused messages and the question of how these messages create a communication model on social media platforms stands out as an important area of research today. Factors such as how social media users engage with digital content, which types of

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