

Original Paper

Green Marketing and Social Media: A Contemporary Perspective

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Abstract

In the digital era, green marketing has risen as a significant business strategy with social media platforms acting as a significant mechanism for communicating environmental information and establishing sustainable brands. This paper discusses the interrelationship of green marketing practices with the role of social media, and how organizations use digital platforms to engage with consumers regarding environmental responsibility and promoting sustainable consumption. To do this, contemporary literature was reviewed, and current trends in the social media-green marketing space were analyzed, in order to identify key strategies, challenges, and opportunities in the green marketing/social media space. The discussion of the study indicate that social media engagement, transparency, and storytelling play a role in shaping attitudes toward brands that act in an environmentally responsible manner; and that Green washing and skepticism toward brands and organizations remain significant obstacles to the effectiveness of green marketing in the social media context.

Keywords

Consumer, Social Media Engagement, Green Marketing, Environmental Responsibility

Introduction

Recent years have seen a shift in the business world toward making sustainability a priority, mainly because consumers are more educated about issues like climate change and environmental impact. Green marketing (promoting products and services based on the environmental benefits they provide) has transitioned from a niche strategy to a standard business priority. In addition, social media has transformed marketing communications from a unilateral brand-to-consumer communications model to a multilateral engagement between brands and consumers with shared ideology in real-time. The relationship between these two variables has resulted in a connected environment in which brands can

more easily communicate sustainability messages, build communities of like-minded environmental individuals, and have an influence on consumer behavior at scale.

Social media platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, TikTok, and LinkedIn are now essential platforms for brand green marketing strategies to demonstrate their environmental commitments through socially engaging platforms with visual stories, user-generated content, and influencers. However, the social media transformation comes with scrutiny of environmental claims, scrutiny for green washing, etc. It is important to understand how organizations successfully utilize social media for sustainable and authentic green marketing approaches both relation to research projects and business practice.

Review of Literature

In the past several decades, the conversation around green marketing has changed and evolved, including the emergence of social media that added another dimension to environmental communication strategies. Polonsky (1994) provided one of the earliest definitions of green marketing, referring to activities intended to produce and facilitate exchanges intended to satisfy human needs, while also minimizing harmful effects on the natural environment. This definition opened the door for understanding how firms may embed environmental thinking into their marketing strategies.

The influence of social media has changed the dynamics of green marketing quite a bit. Chen and Chang (2013) noted that green brand positioning and green brand knowledge affect consumer purchasing intentions on social media platforms. In particular, their research demonstrated that the environmental messages shared on social media created a stronger association between consumers and sustainable brands. Dwivedi et al. (2021) highlighted that social media also allows for two-way communication between brands and consumers and creates trust and transparency in environmental claims, which will help eliminate consumer uncertainty about corporate greenwashing.

Consumer skepticism regarding the claims made by green marketing remains ubiquitous. Parguel et al. (2011) noted that perceived greenwashing negatively affects trust and evaluation among consumers, fears which could be heightened within the social media context. Alternatively, Leonidou and Leonidou (2011) argue that transparency in communications and genuine commitment to sustainable practices can alleviate skepticism, particularly in this age of misinformation, especially when companies are open to engaging with stakeholders on digital platforms.

Another are user-generated content and influencer marketing for sustainable activities have generated research interest. Hudders et al. (2021) examined environmental influencers on Instagram and the impact influencers have on follower attitudes and behavior; they found that perceived authenticity and expertise of the influencer could positively impact credibility of the message. Kim and Ko (2012) explained social media marketing activities in terms of entertainment, interaction and customization which positively influence dimensions of customer equity, a flattering relation for companies in the

green marketing context as shareable, engaging content around sustainability can equal high consumer loyalty.

Recent literature by Kumar and Rahman (2023) examined the effectiveness of various social media strategies for green marketing. This research found that storytelling formats, which help humanize and make environmental issues real, produce higher levels of engagement than simply informing. Moreover, Okazaki and Taylor (2013) discussed the importance of platform-based strategies, remarking on the visual nature of the social media platform Instagram, which can be effective for showing off sustainable products and practices, and that on Twitter news about environmental incidents can be quickly and widely disseminated to the public, as a public relations effort for corporate social responsibility (CSR).

Objectives

Drawing from the full review of existing literature, this article is intended to further our understanding of several issues related to green marketing in the context of social media. The focus here is on understanding how existing research defines the link between a social media platform and green marketing effectiveness. Specifically, the article understands how engagement with the platform influences consumers' awareness about environmental issues and behaviors that promote sustainability. Past studies have examined multi-faceted dimensions of this relationship, but there is no integrated conclusions about the theoretical frameworks that would clarify the roles of social media in green marketing across disciplines.

Research Gap

While there is now an expanding literature on green marketing and social media, there are still several critical research gaps that inhibit our holistic understanding of the intersection of the two. Most existing research is focused on consumer attitudes towards green marketing communications on social media platforms, with a neglect towards actual behavioral outcomes, as well as behavioral sustainability. Although there are many studies that report on social media interaction with environmentally friendly content as lending itself to positive brand attitudes, there is considerably less consideration on whether these brand attitudes translate into measurable environmental consumption and ongoing purchasing behavior. The lack of attitudinal research then behavioral research, is a useful distance to measure for the value of green marketing driven by social media.

Discussion

Incorporating green marketing into social media represents an important shift in organizations' capacity to convey environmental values and engage with consumers who care about sustainability. Social media channels offer valuable opportunities for green marketing, such as immediate engagement with customers, the potential for viral success, and the ability to create communities characterized by shared

environmental values. Brands that are successful at social media often incorporate a few common practices that help to differentiate their efforts from traditional green marketing practices.

One of the most effective practices for green marketing on social media is authentic storytelling. Instead of simply marketing environmental products, these brands are sharing narratives about their sustainability journey, including difficulties and failures. This practice builds credibility and engages consumers who increasingly doubt the polished messages from corporations. Visual social media platforms, such as Instagram and TikTok, are especially good at showing authentic storytelling, allowing organizations to show behind-the-scenes content about their sustainable practices, employee engagement in environmental work, and the actual environmental impacts of their work. User-created content furthers authentic storytelling, as users share their excitement about sustainable products and develop a ground-swell of organic advocacy, which is perceived as being more credible than marketing messaging.

What sets social media green marketing apart from traditional forms of communication is the opportunity for engagement and interactivity. Brands that engage with users, respond to their comments, and actively engage in discussions related to the environment, or create interactive campaigns and experiences designed to involve the audience in them, demonstrate authentic dedication to sustainability rather than a desire to profit. Hashtag campaigns, sustainability challenges, and organizational initiatives with partner organizations in the environmental space allow consumers to participate in green campaigns actively rather than as passive recipients of marketing messages. This participatory approach aligns with the principles of environmentally conscious consumers actively seeking brands that view them as partners in sustainability, rather than simply a target market for "green" products.

Nonetheless, there are challenges to overcome when leveraging social media for green marketing. Green washing, a term that refers to the act of misleading consumers regarding a company's sustainability efforts, is a pressing issue. Social media can facilitate the swiftness at which information can spread, allowing claims of environmental responsibility to be dissected and quickly scrutinized. Also, the permanence of digital content allows inconsistent images portrayed by the brand versus practiced within the brand to be exposed. This exposure often takes the form of posts that go viral and spread embarrassment and damage to a brand's reputation. A social media green marketing campaign must ensure that claims being posted across its channels are based on real improvements to the organization's environmental responsibility and sustainability across its operations, and not just a small investment made to promote a positive image.

Consumer skepticism poses another hurdle for brands, and audiences have become more sophisticated in discerning genuine sustainability efforts and marketing behaviors of brands. Brands must walk the fine line of sharing their green accomplishments and looking self-congratulatory or exploitative around environmental issues. This involves a balance of recognizing progress while also recognizing the work that still needs to be done, and showing continuous improvement instead of claiming perfection.

The challenge fully revealing the effectiveness of social media green marketing is another complication for brands. As engagement rates, reach, and sentiment analysis can reveal some insights into campaign effectiveness, being able to translate social media engagement to behavior change and sustainable purchasing decisions in the environmental space is still somewhat of a challenge as well. Organizations must think about how they will create overall evaluation frameworks that measure short-term and long-term changes to consumer attitudes and behaviors related to sustainability.

Conclusion

Green marketing on social media represents an exciting intersection of environmental awareness and digital technology, producing organizational opportunities previously unseen to engage consumers with a sustainability mindset. The literature and practice reveal that the key to success is authentic communication, transparency, storytelling strategy, and a real commitment to environmental enhancement beyond marketing statements. Social media, as an interactive medium, transforms green marketing from a discrete promotional activity to an interactive conversation in which brands partner with consumers to create meaning around sustainability values. Organizations utilizing social media for green marketing understand that these are not only platforms for communicating environmental messages, but ecosystems for establishing trust, accountability, and have the potential to develop communities around similar environmental values. Nonetheless, while social media's key characteristics promote green marketing, they also enhance the risks of both green washing exposures and consumer backlash when there are misleading environmental claims. In the years ahead, successful green marketing, via social media, will depend more on the organization's ability to demonstrate measurable environmental impact to its stakeholders, engage in honest dialogue to its stakeholders, and see sustainability as an intrinsic business value as opposed to a way to falsely market themselves. As the environmental awareness of consumers continually grows, and social media platforms continue to develop, the intersection of green marketing and digital communication will continue to be an important area of scholarly research and business innovation. Organizations that tackle this challenge with honest, transparent, and genuine commitments to the environment and sustainability will not only contribute to brand equity development, but will also have meaningfully contributed to the broader trajectory of sustainable consumption and environmental stewardship in society.

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