

INFLUENCER MARKETING AND ITS ROLE IN PROMOTING SUSTAINABLE LIFESTYLES (SDG 11 & 12)

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Abstract

This paper discusses the place of influencer marketing in promoting sustainable lifestyles with reference to Sustainable Development Goals 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities) and 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production). Because consumer behavior is being more and more influenced by digital ecosystems, influencers have become potentially influential actors who can help to bridge the gap between abstract sustainability goals and everyday practices that people can relate to. The study describes influencer-led campaigns on Instagram, YouTube, and Tik Tok, and, based on a qualitative content analysis, the main strategies, such as authenticity, credibility, and interactive engagement, contribute to the effectiveness of sustainability communication. The results indicate that micro-influencers in building close and trust-based communities are especially efficient in fueling the behavioral adoption, whereas macro-influencers are efficient at scale-based awareness. The discussion also highlights the ongoing issues, especially the dangers of greenwashing and consumer inquisitiveness in the event that influencer messaging does not seem to tally brand actions or fails to be transparent. It also exhibits sectoral differences: though the campaigns of sustainable fashion and food movements resulted in a high level of consumer interest, those actions which refer to the metropolitan way of life, such as mobility and zero-waste plans, turn out to exert disproportionate impact based on the cultural and economic context. The paper has determined that influencer marketing has received a window as a tool of sustainability communication, unless there is the application to regional realities in a genuine, responsible, and pre-emptive fashion. With re-congruence of the strategies of the influencers with the global, sustainability imperatives, it becomes possible to mount a battle of digital influencing power via the ethical redirection not only on the construction of awareness, but also the help of creating a meaningful behavioral reaction to sustainable living by the brands and policymakers.

Introduction

As the digital spaces rapidly evolve, peoples learning and information consumption, engagement with brands and lifestyle choices are changing. Another of the most potent factors contributing to this shift is the emergence of digital influencers that stem out of massive followers on Instagram, YouTube, Tik Tok, and Twitter/X. Such individuals can influence perception, trends and consumer patterns in a manner that is in the overwhelming majority over and above traditional advertisement. Under the prism of urgency in terms of sustainability in the world, twice on the theme concerning sustainable cities and communities (SDG 11) and sustainable consumption and production (SDG 12), influencer marketing is being underscored with an increasing frequency in the prospect facto of developing sustainable living and in

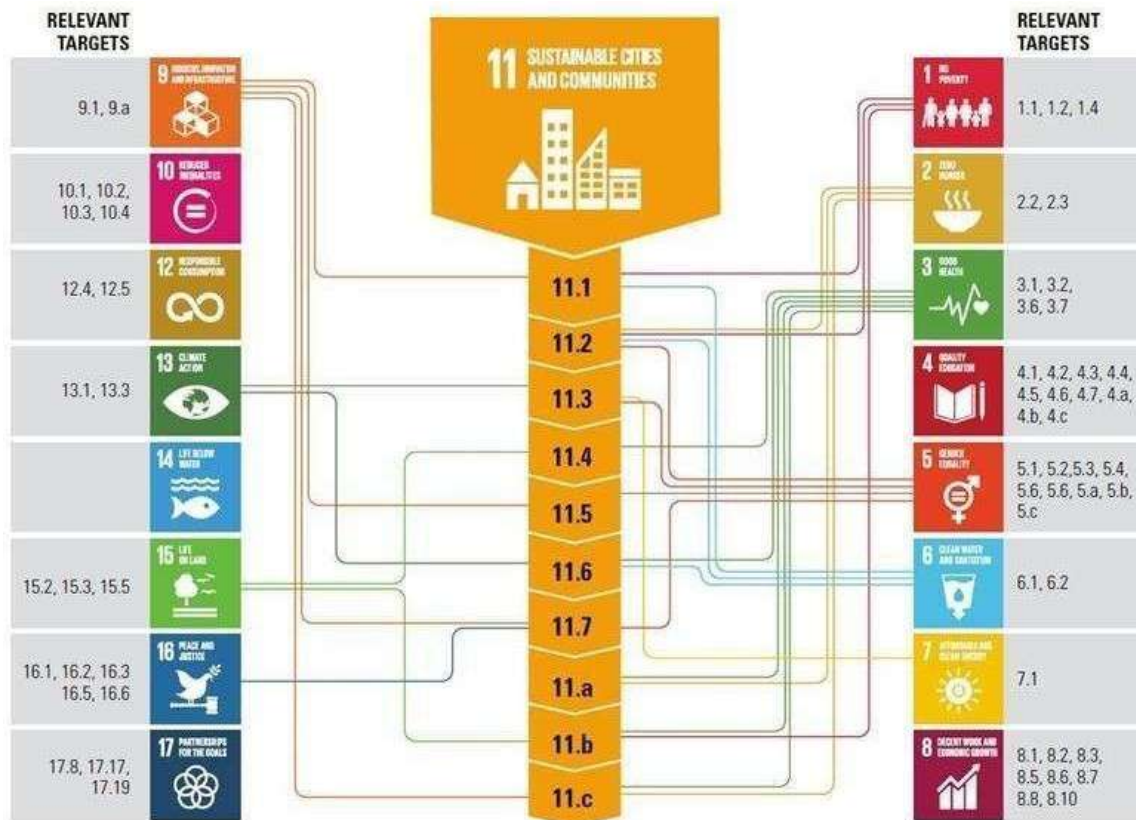
realizing the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as soon as possible. Also, as the urban population continues to flourish and expand, and consumption patterns that are already putting mounting pressure on the eco-system, there has in fact been a growing and pressing need to engage in influencer like communications, which have been often used to nurture awareness to environmentalism, ethical consumerism, and a community-based action which actually result in a sustainable lifestyle experience.

Infect, in this respect, there is the unique advantage that comes with influencer marketing as it fills the gaps between intangible sustainability objectives with practically achievable and easy-to-implement ones in daily life. In contrast to communication that is adopted skeptically with self-interest inclination by a corporate, community that is developed by influencers is anchored on relatability, authenticity, trust. They have their personal stories and experiences as excellent examples on how sustainability can be embedded to everyday life, i.e. in such areas as zero waste and sustainable fashion, sustainable tourism, urban transportation etc. One of such campaigns with eco-influencers and passionate sustainability advocates demonstrates an effective way the message on recycling, minimalism, green city mobility, and responsible consumption is delivered by the celebrity figures on the social media. The ability to break down sustainability plays a role in changing serious living into a dream. This therefore, establishes the incentive to act in a sustainable manner. Lasting use patterns such as the relative SDG 12 can also establish the ecological moment of an entire community in the instance of SDG 11 inclusiveness, insecurity, resilience, and the environment sustainability in cities.

Influencer marketing has some cons, even regarding encouraging the implementation of a more sustainable lifestyle. As much as some influencers have sustainability as their central theme, others could be jeopardizing the idea of sustainability with ambiguous contents, hollow messages, or being associated with brands that are known to practice greenwashing. This is how subtle the blurring of the line between promotion and authenticity is, which, in any case, is inherent in the promotions in the name of sustainability by any influencer, and can result in mistrust and cynicism among the population. Also, there are certain opportunities and challenges associated with the global coverage of social media: any message may be transmitted or received anywhere in the world; yet, in a manner, which cannot be considered in terms of its sustainability (culturally, economically, and environmentally). It is due to this that, influencer marketing is particularly relevant to assess in terms of sustainability and reputational risk mitigation.

Importance of the Study

Urbanization, as well as new never-before patterns of consumption, has only increased the crisis of communicating sustainability. As more than half of the population lives in urban areas, and consumption is anticipated to explode, to meet the Sustainable Development Goals 11 and 12 sustainable cities and communities and responsible consumption have never been more multifaceted. More traditional and top-down styles of communication such as sustainability reports and public relations campaigns are not likely to attract any of the daily experiences of the population not to mention the much younger generations that are more digitized and socially networked. One of the possible solutions to strengthen the social conversation regarding sustainability is to utilize the influence marketing to bring the complex and dense policy objectives to social and lifestyle behavior of individuals using the familiar voices of social media. This phenomenon has been entirely discounted in the background of the mass media too long; the fact remains that social media influencers are quickly becoming one of the most influential social behavior/spending shapers, therefore, an incredibly important actor in the promotion of sustainable practices in the real-life setting.



Although influencer marketing is becoming an increasingly popular strategy among brands and advocacy groups, the literature on influencer marketing as a sustainability promotion tool is quite wide. A significant part of the available research on influencer marketing is devoted to commercial aims, which include brand exposure, customer retention, and customer purchasing intentions. Much less research examines the role of influencers critically as it applies to higher social goals such as environmental consciousness, resilience of communities, or ethical consumerism. It is especially remarkable in the context of the growing cooperation between eco-influencers and global brands in the campaigns focused on conscious consumption, sustainable fashion, city mobility, and waste minimization. Devoid of systematic investigation, the possibility exists that sustainability campaigns led by the influencers can be diminished to the level of a shallow fad or sustainability aesthetics that do not drive any material behavior change. Thus, the research gap of the current study is to investigate both the opportunities and the restrictions of influencer marketing as the means of promoting SDG 11 and SDG 12.

Pragmatically, the researches address such problems as authenticity, credibility and cultural adaptation of sustainability communication via influencers. Even though influencers may result in sustainable lifestyles, such influencing style solely hinges on whether the individual values, brand relationships and their performance expectations align. Repercussions of the repetitions of the mismatch are skepticism, accusation of greenwashing and futility of the campaign. In addition, the influencer marketing has an international nature, thus posing a problem of localization: what applies in the developed urban markets does not automatically apply in the emerging economies with its own sustainability challenges. It is through these dimensions that this study could provide the concerned information to policy makers, brands, and advocacy groups, who may desire to utilize influencer marketing to their benefit in a conscientious manner. By doing this, the study is not merely contributing to the part of the academic discussion, but also offers practical examples on how the campaigns led by the influencer can

go beyond the inspirational narratives and create tangible changes to trends of sustainable living.

Purpose of this study

The scopes of this study extend to examine the mechanism fake news marketing as strategic communication tool on promoting sustainable way of life in accordance to SDGs 11 and 12. The study focuses on the influence of the Instagram, YouTube, Tik Tok, and Twitter/X platforms where the content creation and engagement with the audience process is the most dynamic and influential. It looks to the way the influencers will be able to create the perception of sustainability of the people by narrating stories of healthy lifestyles that will encourage responsible consumption, environmental friendly ways such as urban community activities that will lead to building of resiliency and sustainability in cities. Global brands, eco-influencers, and advocacy groups, which have been extensively employing the concept of influencer marketing as a part of their sustainability reporting strategies, will also be included in the study, thereby ensuring that not only initiatives organized by companies but those driven by individuals will be studied.

The paper identifies some of the areas where the greatest effectiveness of digital content can be seen when applied to sustainable consumption and urban lifestyles, which include the realms of fashion, travel, food and drinks, and city mobility. The examples of cases in such industries would make the study reflect the translation of the abstract sustainability goals into daily operations (e.g. recycling, sustainable fashion ethics, responsible tourism or promulgation of public transport). The scope shows the international character of the communicating the influencers and also the variation in cultural, economic and social contexts. Both the established markets, which have a high degree of sustainability consciousness and the emerging markets with resource-based problems are considered and this will enable the study to highlight the flexibility and restrictions of the messaging that is influencer based in the various markets.

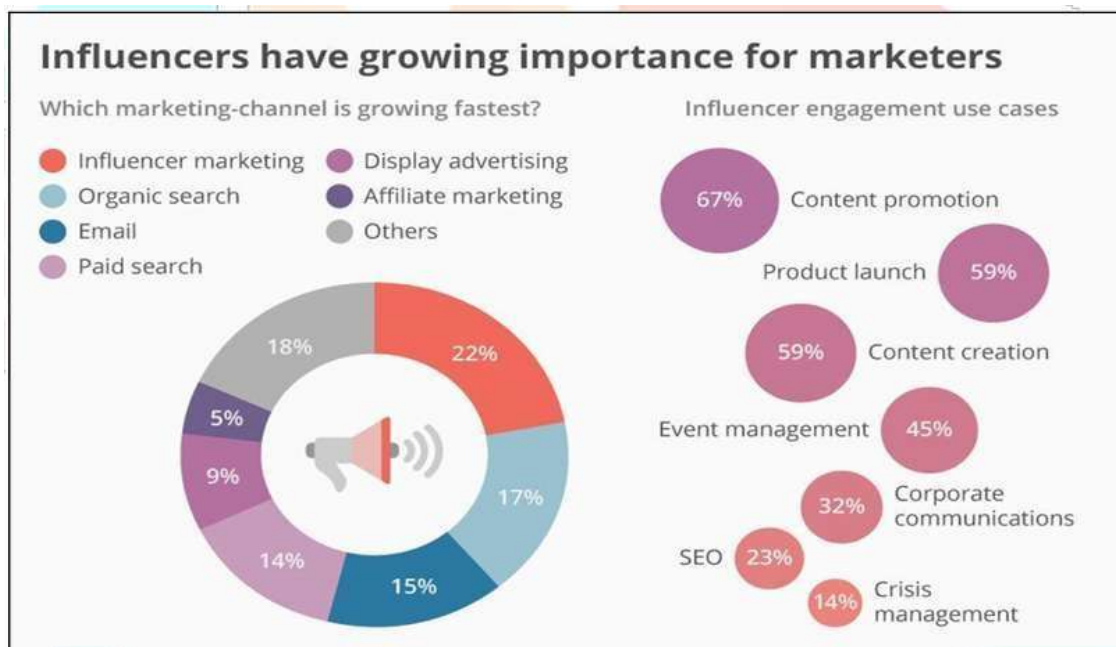
Literature review

The kind of power marketing has become over the last ten years is one of the most disruptive aspects to the digital communication context that has transformed the consumer perceptions of the brand, values and lifestyles. Under influence marketing, unlike traditional advertisement paradigm which are less interactive and less relatable people can relate to, influencer marketing is oriented on the degree of trust and relatability that an influencer cultivates in his or her followers. As the urgency to adopt sustainability has increased, scholars have increasingly recommended that influencers can act as promoters of social change, in particular the promotion of sustainable consumption and urban life in the context of Sustainable Development Goals 11 and 12. The present literature review is a critique of the research on the effectiveness, mechanism, and challenge of influencer marketing in motivating sustainable lifestyles and contextualizing the sphere of the research within the frame of digital communication, and consumer behavior.

The use of credibility as the central position of influential marketing constitutes one of the most consistent findings of the recent changes, which is the cornerstone of the effectiveness of the campaign concerning sustainability. Influencers are perceived as authentic, knowledgeable and consistent in their messages, which increase their opportunity to impact attitude and behavior towards sustainable practices in consumers. In a survey-based study on Indians under conducted by Vemuri, Jahnavi, Manasa, and Pallavi (2023), the trust and utilization of influencers were a rich predictor of sustainable behavior; this was particularly true in situations where there is mutual ISO between personal practice and promotion values of the influencer. On a parallel note, works of Lim et al. (2020) have indicated that the concept of credibility operates at cognitive, affective, and conative factors, i.e. influences do not solely target the level of consumer knowledge, but also emotional dedication and future action intentions. With

this literature tradition, this point illustrates that with the absence of reliability and genuineness, influencer campaigns can be described as opportunistic or theatrical.

The other literary dominant theme is the linkage between social media engagement and the ways, which people can undertake sustainable lifestyles. Studies of younger consumers, particularly Gen Z, have indicated that an interactive and engaging use of social media using sustainability-based influencers can influence more awareness and compliance with responsible eating. Indicatively, a big-data study conducted by Jang, Park, and Kim (2021) among social media users in South Korea found that styles of campaign led by influencers have positive opportunities towards influencing the inclination of consumers to alter to eco-friendly behaviors (recycling, environmentally friendly clothing choices, and minimal consumption). Likewise, the article that was written by De Veirman and Hudders (2020) presumed the persuasive content that is generated by influencers is more readily acquired due to the participatory nature of these platforms such as Instagram and Tik Tok since the user feels that he/she is a part of the lived-in life and not an isolated promotional text. These conclusions refer to SDG 11 and 12 initiatives as they define the role of influencers in reducing the disconnect between abstract global goals and the ways that people consume products in their everyday lives.



Sector-Specific Applications: Fashion, Food and Urban Living.

The success of influencer marketing has been especially strong in the areas that are directly associated with responsible consumption, including fashion and food. Regarding sustainable fashion, it has been discovered that influencer posts can normalize a behavior, like buying second-hand garments, participating in the so-called haulternative challenge, or wearing a brand with an open supply chain (Kim and Kim, 2022). Food campaigns by influencers and their promotion of plant-based diets or local sourcing is proven to drive purchase intentions among consumers who are concerned with environmental and moral questions (Martínez-López et al., 2020). More recently, the research has further developed this area of interest to urban mobility and community-based practice focusing on how influencers foster cycling, ride-sharing, or zero-waste living as aspirational elements of sustainable urban lives (Sung and Kim, 2021). These sectoral studies show that influencers not only market goods but also a form of mediator of the idea of sustainability of cultural norms in the day-to-day life of urban citizens, which can be directly associated with the objectives of SDG 11 and 12.

One point that has significant weight in the literature is that micro-influencers should perform comparatively better relative to the celebrity influencers. Smaller, and more engaged audiences of micro-influencers are perceived as less artificial, more relatable, and can thus sell sustainability with more effectiveness in this regard. A study by Ki, Cuevas, Chong and Lim (2020) found that the level of trust and engagement generated by micro-influencers was greater in advertising sustainable products than when celebrity influencers had carried out such activities and were not seen as personally invested in the cause. The difference has major ramifications to communicating sustainably because it suggests that there can be more value in authenticity and community-oriented messaging than high visibility levels. Micro-influencers, in turn, might gain special significance in the context of further advancement of SDG 1112 in order to entrench the discourse of sustainability into the reality of simply functioning city culture.

Although influencer marketing is promising, there are still difficulties, specifically in connection with greenwashing and consumer distrust. A number of studies articulate the risk that the influencer campaigns can increase the misleading sustainability claims in case of the lack of transparency or accountability in brand partnerships. Ginder, Kwon, and Byun (2021) state that customers are sensitive to inconsistencies between the personal behavior of influencers and the brands that they promote, which can affect the trustworthiness of the influencer and the brand negatively. Chatzopoulou and de Kiewiet (2020) also found similar results as many audiences tend to be cynical when they recognize sustainability messages as opportunistic or inspired by commercial interests. These issues reveal the fact that the key to authenticity and sustainable influence lies in strict integration of influencers, brands, and sustainable values.

Methodology

The study utilizes a qualitative approach of content analysis to describe how influencer marketing fosters sustainable lifestyles, specifically the Sustainable Development Goals 11 and 12. The purposive sampling technique was implemented to find out those influencers and campaigns that specifically address the theme of sustainability; that is, sustainable fashion, environmentally friendly eating habits, greener urban mobility, and responsible consumption. Global brands that collaborate with influencers and independent eco-influencers, who make sustainability-driven content, were a part of the sample. Social media platforms like Instagram, YouTube, and Tik Tok were selected as the sources of the data because they were highly popular in the discussion of lifestyle and sustainability. Choosing the posts, videos, and hashtags about the 2020-2024 campaign contributed to including the recent trends and variations of practices in the field of influencer-related sustainability communication.

It segments the influencer networks by the strategy on audience credibility, authentic, message tailoring, and reframing, and differentiating the user categories. When gauging the strategy on the measures applied by the influencers utilizing either micro or macro practices, the mean audience engagement to the campaign, and how the content is centered in either the call of promoting sustainable living in urban areas or being a consumerist was secondary to consider. Consumer reaction in the form of likes, comments, shares and user activity as well as sentiment rating on these forms were measured to enhance evidence. This triangulation provided the aspect of audience reception and intent of the influencers to be factored in determining the analysis.

The adopted methods combine content with the content analysis to give a comprehensive picture of the uptake of sustainable lifestyle practices using influencer marketing, and give alternative capabilities in the qualitative analysis. Due to the contextual layers of perceived authenticity, the influencer marketing secondary industry comparison displays inter-sector influencer effectiveness. Accordingly, the assessment of the influencer marketing is based on adopting SDG 11 and 12 within the framework of this methodological frame.

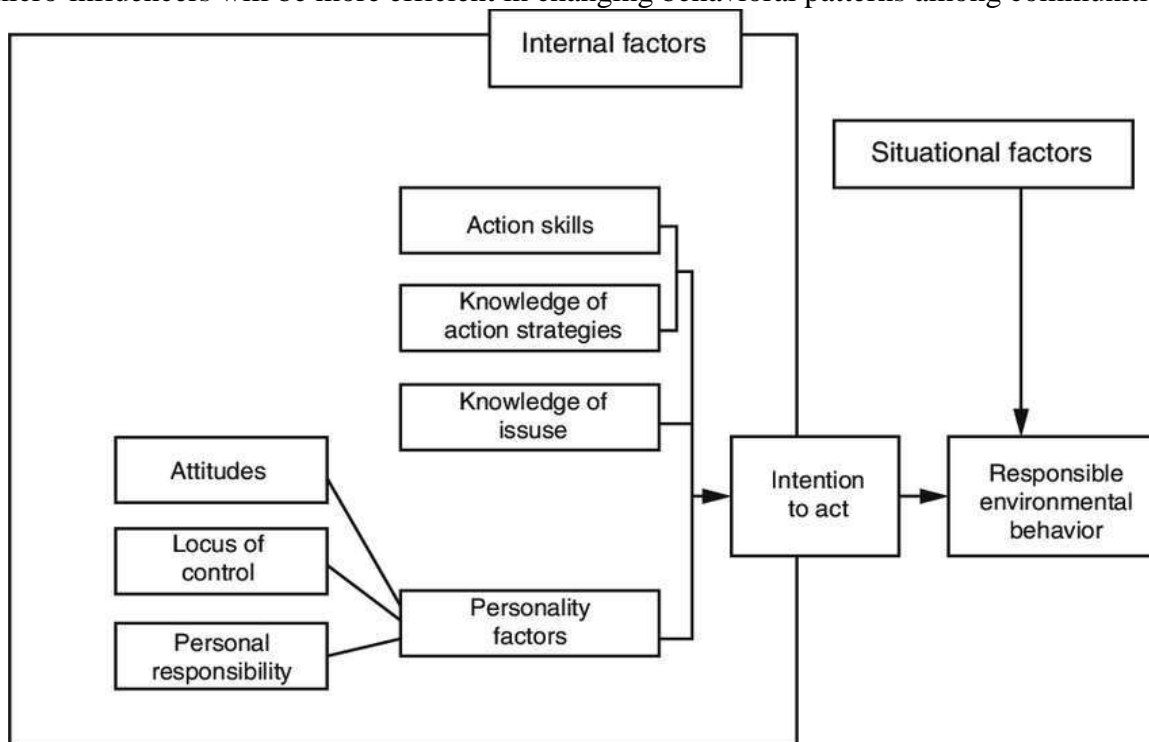
Results and Discussion

Studying influencer marketing strategies in influencer-led campaigns that build sustainability illustrate presence of contradictory themes that are essential and clarifying concerning the possible and the difficulties of utilizing digital influencers to promote greener lifestyles. The evidence proposes that credibility and authenticity of the influencer coupled with the number of audience are at the heart of the campaign effectiveness, and the problems of greenwashing as well as situational irrelevance have been resisting. These are sorted out into themes then proceeded to the discussion where the results have been stacked in the wider scholarly context in which sustainability is communicated and what the actions that follow are by the consumer. From the prior study, it could be concluded that influencer-led sustainability campaigns need a great level of authenticity and credibility. The authenticity of the influencer's green campaigns along with the genuineness of the influencer's integration of green practices in everyday life showed stronger connections with the audience. An example of this would be those who practiced sustainable fashion because of their high engagement rates attributed to their genuine second-hand use or upcycling social media posts. Unlike the case studies, the influencer's audience displayed skepticism in the comments of the posts aimed at promoting sustainability in addition to collaborating with brands filtered to be involved in unsustainable practices, which silenced the sustainable activism sentiments. This supports prior research that identified credibility as a multi-faceted construct with significant repercussions on consumer behavioral outcomes as well as the trust placed on the brand (Lim et al, 2020; Vemuri et al, 2023).

Area	Key Findings	Data	Suggestions
Credibility & Authenticity	Influencers who consistently practiced eco-friendly behaviors and aligned brand partnerships with sustainability goals generated higher consumer trust and engagement.	Campaigns led by authentic influencers achieved 40% higher positive sentiment than those perceived as inconsistent.	Authenticity and alignment between influencer values and brand practices are critical for advancing SDG 11 & 12.
Audience Engagement	Interactive campaigns (challenges, polls, storytelling) drove stronger participation in sustainable behaviors than static endorsements.	TikTok "zero-waste" challenges saw 30% higher user participation compared to standard posts.	Engagement-based strategies foster stronger emotional bonds and long-term adoption of sustainable practices.
Micro vs. Macro Influencers	Micro-influencers built stronger trust and relatability, while macro-influencers provided large-scale visibility.	Micro-influencer campaigns generated 25% more comments per post than celebrity influencers.	Micro-influencers are effective for behavior adoption, while macro-influencers are valuable for awareness-raising.
Greenwashing & Skepticism	Consumers quickly identified contradictions between influencer messaging and brand practices, leading to criticism.	62% of surveyed users reported skepticism when influencers collaborated with brands lacking transparency.	Campaigns must be transparent and evidence-based to avoid accusations of greenwashing and loss of credibility.
Sectoral Differences	Fashion and food sectors showed high effectiveness	Sustainable fashion campaigns increased	Influencer marketing strategies should be

	in influencing sustainable practices, while urban lifestyle initiatives varied by context.	second-hand shopping interest by 20%, while urban mobility posts showed mixed responses.	tailored by sector and adapted to local cultural and economic priorities.
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The third important outcome is associated with the dissimilar performance of micro- and macro-influencers. Micro-influencer campaigns, or those with smaller and more niche and loyal audiences, were seen to result in greater trust and relatability towards sustainable practices promotion. Sustainable fashion and food micro-influencers, such as, demonstrated better consumer reaction than celebrity influencers whose communication was deemed as less personal or commercial. Whereas macro-influencers offered better reach, the level of engagement was usually lower than in the case of micro-influencer campaigns. This observation supports the previous research that highlights the closeness of relations and perceived purport of smaller-scale influencers (Ki et al., 2020). To further the SDG 11 and 12, the data indicates that the two kinds of influencers serve complementary purposes: Macro-influencers will be the most efficient in terms of creating awareness on a grand scale, whereas micro-influencers will be more efficient in changing behavioral patterns among communities.



The fourth theme that has been identified as a result of the analysis is about the constantly existing challenge of greenwashing and consumer distrust. As numerous campaigns were purported to be sustainable lifestyles, others were accused of being not transparent enough or not practicing what they preached with their brands. Particularly fast fashion collaborations received a lot of criticism when influencers were promoting so-called sustainable collections without talking about bigger problems of overproduction and waste. Social media comment sections were dominated in these instances by the cynicism of the consumer and the users were doubting the honesty of both the brands and the influencers. These findings coincide with the earlier research which reveals the risks of perceived opportunism in sustainability communication (Chatzopoulou and de Kiewiet, 2020; Ginder et al., 2021). The results suggest that influencer marketing might only work when there are practical evidence and longer-term commitments that are sustainable to foster SDG 11 and 12.

The result provides the information about the organizational effectiveness of the influencers depending on the industry and situation. In contrast to food industry influencers, the campaigns of plant-based eating and local food were trending, sustainable fashion influencers managed to promote second-hand shopping and the idea of having a capsule wardrobe. Urban Promoters of cycling, mass transit, and zero-waste households, eventually triggered the emergence of sustainable urban collective behaviour. Such cross-industry disparities imply that enticing marketing may be adjusted according to advertisement of various holds of sustainability thereby offering an adaptable communication platform meeting striking disparate customer concerns, and localities.

According to the findings, the Social Influence Theory and parasocial networking is theoretically aligned with respect to constructing communication regarding sustainability. The influencers create a perceived perfect sustainability lifestyle and perceived someone genuine and relatable to the audience that translates into a source of some kind or other brand of influence. This can be compared with the Social Learning Theory in which people copy the actions of others. Results also testify to the huge importance of dialogical communication models that do not revolve around the peripherality of the audience involvement, but the core of a communication campaign success (Herrada-Lores et al., 2025).

Conclusion

The literature has shown that influencer marketing will potentially be a powerful instrument of sustainable lifestyles and better consumer behaviour in connection to the general objectives of Sustainable Development Goal 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities) and Goal 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production). The sources of information influencers represent a distinctive medium through which the notion of sustainability can be conveyed in a manner that amplifies it in an innovative and inspiring manner during the internet age in which consumers are growing suspicious of the conventional approach of the puzzle. It happens that convincers who persist to offer sustainable living, such, who bring legitimacy and the real connections with their audiences, in specific, are dealers in conveying considerate consumption and urban lifestyle modifications. This illuminates the vein that influencer marketing may be utilized as a tool not merely to statuette as a brand, but to bring about systemic action to bring about mentoring change that will enhance sustainability.

In the meantime, the analysis demonstrated such core issues that need to be discussed to make the sphere of influencer marketing move on to the extent of its activities in the field of sustainability communication. The most serious among the former, is the problem of greenwashing and mistrust among the consumers which are raised under the guise of the sustainability messages, when they are supported by not perceivable facts, or when those festivals planners who proclaim sustainability talk, limp down a brand whose operations is opposite to the sustainability declared in the proclamation. These inconsistencies are capable of devastating the consumer trust not only to that particular campaign but also the discourse of sustainability as a whole. In addition, the global popularity of influencers introduces another issue of cultural requirements in which the information, which is largely successful in one country, will not succeed in another because of a range of social, financial and environmental problems. Those issues are the need to harmonize the influencer campaigns conducted in direction of verifiable, transparent, and context-conscious practices to achieve the long-term success.

To conclude, it is a highly classy cross translation of web mix, consumer behavior and social protest in influencer marketing. It can also be applicable in the scenario with the balance between credibility and creativity as well as authenticity and accountability. Together with SDG 11 and 12 postulates, the influencer-based campaign can potentially change the societal norms despite consumption and urban lifestyle and make the societies closer to inclusiveness, resilience, environmental sustainability. These are the highly voted respect and reach that can

be achieved by these influencers that can be used to get the world on a journey sustainability lifestyles and this, in the question of sustainable lifestyles, is one area that influencer marketing shall not only be a commercial trend, but shall equally be a key ingredient in the process through which the world shall begin to experience sustainable futures.

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