

Role of Influencer Marketing in Promoting Sustainability

Dr. Shikha Mittal, Anshika Chaudhary

Raj Kumar Goel Institute of Technology

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.51583/IJLTEMAS.2026.150400018>

Received: 04 April 2026; Accepted 09 April 2026; Published: 02 May 2026

ABSTRACT

As the global demand for sustainable living intensifies, brands and consumers alike are turning to more conscious choices that align with environmental and social responsibility. In this shift, influencer marketing has emerged as a powerful digital tool, not just for promoting products, but also for spreading awareness and inspiring action toward sustainability. This study explores the evolving role of influencer marketing in promoting sustainability across industries, highlighting how digital creators have become powerful intermediaries in shaping consumer awareness, attitudes, and eco-conscious behaviours. Using a qualitative and exploratory research approach, the study draws insights from secondary data, online sources, and of sustainability influencers across fashion, beauty, lifestyle, travel, home, and technology sectors. The findings show that authenticity, credibility, and transparency are central to effective sustainability communication, with micro- and nano-influencers often generating deeper trust and engagement.

Keywords: Influencer Marketing, Sustainability, Green Consumer Behavior, Social Influence, Source Credibility, Sustainable Branding, Environmental Marketing

INTRODUCTION

Sustainability has become a crucial global necessity in recent years, forcing firms, consumers, and policymakers to reconsider conventional patterns of production and consumption. Organizations are under growing pressure to embrace sustainable business practices and openly promote them as the negative effects of social inequity, resource depletion, and climate change become more apparent (Kumar, & Christodouloupoulou, 2014). Concurrent with this change, social media influencers have emerged as a significant force in digital marketing, using their reach, relatability, and credibility to sway customer attitudes and behaviour (De Veirman, Cauberghe, & Hudders, 2017).

To build credibility with the target audience and market their brand, a company collaborates with a well-known influencer. This type of digital marketing is called influencer marketing. The influencers convey the message to the audience in an indirect manner. They use blogs, tweets, videos, and other digital content to influence their audience's thoughts. The public views influencers as trustworthy and sincere. As such, their supporters consider their opinions to be reliable and valid (Freberg, Graham, McGaughey, & Freberg, 2011). Sales and brand recognition are increased when influencers introduce and promote any product on their platform. Followers trust social media influencers because they are experts in their field, and they base their purchases on their recommendations. Businesses utilize influencers to promote their goods. Those with a substantial social media following are considered influencers or content creators. Every industry, including technology, fashion, cuisine, travel, and leisure, is increasingly using influencer marketing. Every social media site has influencers connected to a certain industry.

Influencer marketing, which was formerly mostly focused on lifestyle, fashion, and beauty, is now including values-based messaging, particularly with regard to social and environmental issues. Sustainability-focused influencers, sometimes referred to as eco-influencers or greenfluencers, are playing an increasingly important role in educating and motivating their followers to adopt responsible consumption habits (Lou, & Yuan, 2019). These influencers not only create content but also act as thought leaders, bringing brands and socially conscious consumers together. Influencer marketing promotes products, lifestyles, and causes by taking advantage of the

reach and credibility of individuals who typically have niche audiences and significant social capital. This kind of marketing is increasingly being used not only to promote products but also to support social and environmental goals like climate action, ethical fashion, zero-waste living, and more (Lou, & Yuan, 2019). When perceived as sincere and value-driven, influencers' remarks on sustainability can resonate deeply with followers, especially with millennials and Gen Z consumers who value values more than aesthetics (Hassinen, 2018).

Influencer marketing, however, has a complicated role in advancing sustainability. Some influencers may really advocate for sustainable practices, while others may engage in "greenwashing," which is the practice of using sustainability more as a marketing ploy than as a genuine commitment (Delmas, & Burbano, 2011). At a time when consumers are growing more leery of promoted content, this inconsistency calls into question authenticity, trust, and influence. This gap becomes more critical as brands face rising skepticism regarding greenwashing and the need for transparent and trustworthy. Addressing this research gap, this chapter seeks to investigate the changing role of influencer marketing in advancing sustainability communication. In order to promote a more ethical and sustainable consumer culture, this study will investigate how influencers could be useful collaborators. The study specifically seeks to: (1) examine the effectiveness of influencer marketing in shaping consumer attitudes and behaviors toward sustainable consumption; (2) analyze the role of influencer characteristics in promoting sustainability messages; and (3) explore the strategic implications for brands using influencer marketing to communicate sustainability commitments.

This study employs a qualitative and exploratory research approach to examine the impact of influencer marketing on promoting sustainability. Data were collected through online websites targeting social media users who follow sustainability-focused influencers across platforms such as Instagram and YouTube. This study is referenced from secondary sources found on different blogs and published journals. The study contributes to existing literature by offering an in-depth understanding of the psychological and emotional mechanisms through which influencer marketing supports sustainability promotion. These insights are valuable for marketers and sustainability advocates seeking to design relatable, trustworthy communication strategies. Future research may expand through cross-cultural qualitative comparisons, digital ethnography, or mixed-method approaches to strengthen the understanding of influencer-led sustainability communication.

Background to the Study

The combined effects of digitalization and a growing worldwide awareness of sustainability are causing a fundamental upheaval in the modern marketing environment. Today's consumers are more knowledgeable, environmentally conscientious, and sensitive to social and environmental issues than their predecessors. As a result of this change in consumer values, businesses are now using more ethical and transparent marketing strategies, and sustainability is now a major component of their brand rather than just a CSR activity (Kotler, Kartajaya, & Setiawan, 2017). However, social media's emergence has altered how companies communicate with their target markets, allowing for more individualized, interactive, and peer-influenced communication methods (Freberg, Graham, McGaughey, & Freberg, 2011).

Influencer marketing, a digital technique that uses the reach and popularity of social media celebrities to influence consumers' thoughts and behaviour, lies at the nexus of these two phenomena. According to (De Veirman, Cauberghe, & Hudders, 2017), influencers whether they are mega-celebrities or specialized micro-influencers are now important players in value communication because they can humanize corporate messaging and establish emotional connections with target audiences. Influencer marketing provides a more genuine and approachable platform for promoting sustainable products, lifestyles, and behaviours as consumers grow increasingly wary of traditional advertising and overt greenwashing (Lou, & Yuan, 2019).

The potential of influencer marketing to advance sustainability goals is particularly relevant in light of the growing need to address global environmental and social challenges. Brands are searching for innovative ways to sway consumer behaviour toward sustainable choices, and influencers have emerged as strategic mediators who can transform complex sustainability messaging into narratives that are both approachable and actionable (Carroll, & Brown, 2018). This chapter looks at the effectiveness, challenges, and strategic implications of influencer marketing as a way to promote sustainability.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Influencer marketing has evolved from traditional celebrity endorsements to a more nuanced form of peer-to-peer communication facilitated by social media platforms (Brown, & Hayes, 2008). Influencers are individuals who possess the ability to affect purchase decisions by virtue of their authority, knowledge, or relationship with their audience (Freberg et al., 2011). Research highlights the importance of influencer attributes such as trustworthiness, expertise, and authenticity in shaping consumer attitudes and behaviors (Ohanian, 1990; Lou, & Yuan, 2019). Moreover, the rise of micro-influencers has introduced a shift towards more niche, engaged communities where sustainability messaging can be more effectively tailored and trusted (Casaló, Flavián, & Ibáñez-Sánchez, 2020).

Sustainability marketing integrates environmental and social responsibility into the marketing mix, aiming to promote products and behaviors that contribute to sustainable development (Peattie, & Belz, 2010). Consumers today are more aware of sustainability issues and exhibit varying degrees of willingness to engage in eco-friendly consumption (Niinimäki, 2020). However, an attitude-behavior gap persists, wherein positive sustainability attitudes do not always translate into sustainable purchasing decisions (Carrington, Neville, & Whitwell, 2014). Effective communication strategies are thus essential to bridge this gap and drive behavioral change.

Influencers play a critical role in promoting sustainability by providing relatable narratives and authentic endorsements that resonate with followers (Djafarova, & Foots, 2022). Influencers who demonstrate genuine commitment to sustainable practices are more likely to build trust and influence eco-conscious behaviors (Glucksman, 2017). The choice of platform and content format also impacts message effectiveness, with visual platforms like Instagram being particularly suited for showcasing sustainable lifestyles (De Veirman, Cauberghe, & Hudders, 2017). Social media influencers, or simply “influencers,” are independent endorsers who shape audience attitudes through blogs, tweets, and other social media channels (Freberg et al., 2011). Influencers as individuals who emerged on social media and maintain direct relationships with multiple users (Belanche et al., 2021). This distinguishes them from traditional celebrities, known for cinema, sports, and music (Dhanesh, & Duthler, 2019). Influencers, as content creators, shape audience opinions and are seen as trustworthy advisers.

As consumer choices significantly impact sustainability outcomes, like reducing greenhouse gas emissions, focus has turned to sustainable consumer behavior and pro-environmental habits (White, Habib, & Hardisty, 2019). Sustainable consumer behavior includes purchasing, using, and disposing of products in ways that minimize environmental and societal harm. It is seen as rational behavior aimed at environmental protection, even at personal cost (Zhang, & Hung, 2020). These behaviors influence many aspects of life and address issues like climate change and resource scarcity (Essiz, & Mandrik, 2022). Marketing strategies that emphasize sustainable consumption shape consumers' purchase intentions by highlighting “green attributes” that set sustainable products apart from traditional ones. In this study the author will explore the influencer's role in driving sustainability to develop strategies that promote environmentally friendly and socially responsible consumption. This study also explores how various industries are engaging influencers in promoting sustainability.

Types of Influencers Promoting Sustainability

Sustainability influencers can be differentiated on the basis of audience size, niche, and style of interaction with followers. Brands usually go for the type that aligns best with their campaign purposes, for each type works uniquely for the conveyance of sustainability messages. The following are key types of influencers actively promoting sustainable values and practices:

Mega Influencers (1M+ followers) - Mega influencers, who have one million or more followers, include celebrities, well-known public personalities, and other social influencers with human-level fame. Mega influencers are by definition utilizing their influence to disseminate sustainability issues to a broad audience that crosses several boundaries. Mega influencers usually work with the largest projects and organizations, like UN environmental programs and advocacy efforts for global climate action. Celebrities that support zero-waste

lifestyles, ethical fashion, and climate change awareness can motivate millions of people to embrace eco-friendly practices (Li et al., 2024).

Macro Influencers (100K–1M followers) - Macro influencers have specialized in fields like sustainable travel, plant-based diets, drain technology, and eco-loyal fashion. Even while macro influencers and mega influencers are equally effective, their global reach is incomparable. They are trusted and regarded in their fields (Lou, & Yuan, 2023). As a result, their perspectives are crucial in establishing how customers perceive sustainable practices and goods in their niche (El-Shihy & Awaad, 2025). For example, a macro influencer in ethical fashion may significantly affect the choices made by consumers of eco-friendly apparel (Giambastiani, Romito, & Vurro, 2025).

Micro Influencers (10K–100K followers) - Micro are those whom audiences perceive with authenticity and operate in highly specialized domains. This could be down to those professionals who indulged in waste-free living, eco bloggers, environmental educators, or local sustainability advocates. Though they boast of a smaller following as compared with the other two types of influencers, this following is exceptionally engaging and loyal, establishing micro-influencers as unique tools in grassroots initiatives that demand trusted relations for success.

Nano Influencers (<10K followers) - A nano-influencer has a rather smaller audience but is said to have a highly engaged audience. This audience consists, however, of family, friends, and other close-knit online groupings of people. Nano-influencers are predominant in championing sustainable efforts that are deeply localized and community-oriented, taking for instance supporting local eco-friendly businesses or promotion of local plastic-free initiatives. Such relationships provide huge leverage in connecting them to sustainability campaigns through consumers.

Industries Leveraging Influencer Marketing for Sustainability

1. **Consumer packaged goods (CPG) Industry** - In the consumer packaged goods (CPG) industry, influencer marketing is increasingly used to promote sustainability by making everyday eco-friendly choices like refillable bottles, recyclable packaging, plant-based products, or reduced plastic use feel convenient and relatable to consumers. Since CPG items are purchased frequently, influencers play a vital role in shaping habits by sharing practical demonstrations of sustainable alternatives, such as using compostable food wrappers, concentrated detergents, or refill pods, and showing how these choices save both money and waste. Influencers build trust by simplifying sustainability information, bridging the gap between corporate environmental claims and consumer understanding (Wu, Lim, & Lim, 2025). Consumers are more receptive to sustainability cues when presented by influencers who frame them as small, achievable lifestyle shifts rather than sacrifices.
2. **Fashion & Apparel Industry** - In the fashion and apparel industry, influencer marketing has become a central force in promoting sustainability by challenging fast fashion norms and encouraging more mindful consumption. Fashion influencers increasingly spotlight practices such as thrifting, clothing rental, upcycling, and supporting brands with transparent supply chains, making sustainable style feel aspirational rather than restrictive. Research shows that social media creators strongly influence purchase decisions in fashion, and when they frame sustainability through personal storytelling like showcasing “30 wears” outfit challenges or styling second-hand clothing audiences are more willing to embrace eco-friendly habits (Kapoor, Balaji, & Jiang, 2023). By blending creativity with transparency, influencers in fashion not only raise awareness but also drive tangible behavior shifts normalizing second-hand shopping, capsule wardrobes, and slower fashion cycles, thereby positioning sustainability as both stylish and socially responsible.
3. **Beauty & Personal Care Industry** - In the beauty and personal care industry, influencer marketing can effectively promote sustainability when campaigns are designed with authentic creators, transparent messaging, and measurable outcomes. The method begins with selecting values-aligned influencers, especially micro-influencers, who naturally advocate for eco-conscious lifestyles and resonate with audiences seeking authenticity. Campaign briefs should provide clear sustainability evidence such as life-

cycle data, refill system benefits, or verified certifications to help influencers educate rather than simply endorse. Content formats that work well include refill-swap tutorials, “use-it-up” or empties challenges, ingredient explainers, and take-back program demonstrations, as these link daily routines with visible environmental benefits. To avoid greenwashing, communication must be specific, evidence-backed, and transparent about trade-offs, while encouraging mindful consumption instead of over-promotion. Key performance indicators (KPIs) go beyond likes and reach: they include engagement rates on sustainability content, percentage of refills versus first-time purchases, number of take-back or recycling redemptions, completion of sustainable beauty challenges, and traffic to brand sustainability pages.

4. **Cleaning & Household Products** - In the cleaning and household products industry, influencer marketing has emerged as a powerful tool to promote sustainability by shifting consumer attention toward eco-friendly alternatives in an approachable and trustworthy way. Unlike traditional advertising, influencers create relatable narratives such as showing how biodegradable cleaners, refillable sprays, or DIY natural solutions fit seamlessly into everyday routines which makes sustainable practices feel both practical and aspirational. Studies highlight that when influencers share authentic experiences and demonstrate product efficacy, consumers are more willing to adopt green cleaning solutions (Lim, Youn, & Eom, 2021). Research also shows that social media storytelling reduces consumer skepticism around “green” claims, particularly when influencers provide evidence or comparisons rather than vague sustainability labels (De Veirman et al., 2020). By emphasizing small, actionable changes like reusing bottles or switching to concentrated detergents these campaigns help reduce perceptions of sustainability as costly or inconvenient.
5. **Home & Furniture Industry**- In the home and furniture industry, influencer marketing is playing a growing role in promoting sustainability by encouraging consumers to think about durability, ethical sourcing, and mindful consumption rather than fast, disposable trends. Lifestyle and interior influencers often share personal stories of choosing reclaimed wood furniture, upcycled décor, or responsibly sourced textiles, making sustainable choices aspirational and relatable to everyday households. Research highlights that consumers are more likely to trust sustainability claims when communicated through authentic influencer narratives rather than corporate messaging, as influencers are seen as peers offering lived experiences. For example, IKEA has collaborated with eco-conscious creators to highlight circular initiatives like furniture take-back programs and recycled material collections, which normalizes sustainable practices while showing affordability (Nash, 2024). Studies also note that social media storytelling in this sector can reduce skepticism by demonstrating how eco-friendly furniture is both stylish and long-lasting, helping to challenge the stigma that sustainable products are less attractive or less practical (Lim, & Lee, 2023).
6. **Travel & Hospitality Industry** - In the travel and hospitality industry, influencer marketing has become an important avenue for promoting sustainability by reframing eco-friendly choices as enriching experiences rather than compromises. Travel influencers often showcase practices like staying in eco-certified hotels, choosing local and seasonal food, supporting community-based tourism, or opting for slower travel such as trains over short flights, which makes responsible travel both aspirational and accessible. Research shows that social media storytelling has a strong impact on shaping travel decisions, and when influencers highlight authentic experiences tied to local culture and environmental stewardship, audiences are more inclined to adopt sustainable behaviors (Font, & McCabe, 2017). For instance, partnerships with eco-travel influencers by brands like Airbnb and Intrepid Travel have highlighted low-impact accommodations and carbon-conscious itineraries, normalizing the idea that sustainable travel can still be adventurous and comfortable. Studies also note that travelers are more receptive to sustainability cues when they are tied to personal well-being, authenticity, and immersive cultural experiences rather than abstract environmental claims (Gössling, & Higham, 2021).
7. **Tech & Electronics** - In the tech and electronics industry, influencer marketing is increasingly being used to promote sustainability by encouraging mindful consumption, responsible disposal, and the adoption of eco-friendly innovations. Tech influencers often highlight practices such as choosing energy-efficient devices, extending product lifecycles through repair and software updates, or responsibly recycling e-waste, which helps make sustainability feel practical and achievable in a sector often associated with rapid consumption (Sharma, & Singh, 2025). Research suggests that influencers can reduce consumer skepticism around corporate sustainability claims by providing transparent demonstrations, such as showing how refurbished gadgets perform just as well as new ones. Brands like

Apple and Samsung, for example, have collaborated with tech reviewers and content creators to highlight repair programs, trade-in systems, and carbon-neutral commitments, making sustainable technology choices visible to mainstream audiences. Studies also show that digital storytelling plays a critical role in shaping consumer trust in this sector, as audiences rely heavily on influencer reviews before making high-involvement purchases (Lim, & Rasul, 2022).

Content Strategies and Platforms

In the realm of sustainability promotion, the success of influencer marketing significantly hinges on the alignment of content strategies with the values of authenticity, transparency, and educational impact. Influencers aiming to advocate for environmental consciousness and sustainable practices often tailor their content to resonate deeply with their audience while inspiring behavioral change.

Content Strategies

- a. **Storytelling and Personal Narratives** - Sustainability influencers commonly use personal stories to humanize environmental issues. By sharing their own sustainable lifestyle transitions, eco-friendly choices, and daily routines, they create relatable content that builds trust and emotional connection with audiences (De Veirman, Cauberghe, & Hudders, 2017). Influencers like Neeti Mehra (@bejliving) share their own sustainability journey their why, their struggles, and their small wins. These stories feel personal, not performative, and invite others to take the first step without fear of judgment
- b. **Educational Content** - Providing factual, research-backed information about sustainability, such as the impact of fast fashion, carbon footprints, or zero-waste living, is crucial. This positions influencers as thought leaders and supports informed decision-making among followers (Lou, & Yuan, 2019). Instead of overwhelming people with data, influencers simplify big issues like fast fashion waste or plastic pollution into short videos, carousel posts, or infographics. These snackable pieces of content help followers absorb and share eco-knowledge easily.
- c. **Product Demonstrations and Reviews** - Influencers promote sustainable brands through honest reviews and tutorials on how to use eco-friendly products. These campaigns often include information about sourcing, manufacturing, and environmental impact, reinforcing credibility (Schorn, Vinzenz, & Wirth, 2022). Sustainable influencers often review eco-friendly products like bamboo toothbrushes, organic skincare, or slow fashion brands but what sets them apart is honesty. They highlight pros, cons, and whether something is truly necessary, helping audiences avoid overconsumption in the name of “green.”
- d. **Value-based Advocacy and Call-to-Actions** - Campaigns often include broader advocacy efforts such as supporting climate legislation, community clean-up initiatives, or petition sharing. Sustainable influencers don’t just post “eco tips” they advocate for causes they genuinely care about, like climate justice, ethical fashion, zero waste, or indigenous knowledge. Their values shine through in every piece of content whether they’re composting, thrifting, or protesting single-use plastic. An influencer who values fair labor might say, “Fast fashion isn’t just a pollution issue it’s about people.
- e. **Transparency and Authenticity** - Openly disclosing partnerships, sourcing, and personal sustainable limitations helps maintain authenticity. Audiences value influencers who are honest about their journeys rather than portraying a flawless eco-lifestyle (Audrezet et al., 2020). Sustainable influencers rarely claim to be “zero-waste” or perfectly eco-friendly. Instead, they openly share their learning curves missed compost days, failed DIYs, or moments of doubt. This vulnerability builds trust and makes followers feel, "If they can try, I can too.

Platform Selection and Utilization

To some extent, the type of sustainability content produced is ideal for specific social media channels. Instagram is still one of the most popular platforms for community interaction, short videos, and beautiful images. On the other side, YouTube can dig deeper into sustainability topics through longer instructional videos, tutorials, and documentary-style ones. TikTok is perfect for challenges and quick tips because, as its name suggests, it contains short, entertaining, and trend-focused content. This is where most sustainability advocates and corporate social responsibility professionals go to share the latest on industry insights and thought leadership. Blogs and podcasts

are intended to have more thorough discussions, expert interviews, and in-depth analyses of sustainability issues to reach audiences desiring more elaborative information.

| Platform | Description | Relevance to Sustainability |
|-----------|--|---|
| Instagram | Visual storytelling, widespread eco-influencer presence, strong engagement via Reels and Stories | Showcasing sustainable fashion, lifestyle |
| YouTube | Long-form educational videos, vlogs, unboxing, product reviews | In-depth explorations, tutorials |
| TikTok | Short, viral content; trend-driven, highly shareable | Quick sustainable hacks, DIY content |
| Blogs | Detailed posts, search-engine visibility, evergreen educational content | Deep dives into sustainable topics |
| Facebook | Group/community building, live streaming, sharing campaigns | Community engagement, Q&A |
| Pinterest | Inspiration boards, visual-first format | Sustainable fashion, home ideas |

Measuring Effectiveness and Engagement

To measure the Effectiveness of influencer marketing both quantitative and qualitative ways are required. Quantitative indicators often include metrics such as reach, impressions, click-through rates, and conversion rates that show how widely the message spreads (De Veirman, Cauberghe & Hudders, 2017). However, sustainability-focused campaigns require going beyond vanity metrics; for example, analyzing comment quality, sentiment, and conversations initiated can reveal whether audiences are reflecting, questioning, or sharing the sustainability message.

Key Performance Indicators (KPI's) for Sustainable Influencer Campaigns - Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for sustainable influencer campaigns go beyond traditional marketing metrics to measure not only reach and engagement but also the real-world impact of eco-conscious messaging. At the awareness level, KPIs include impressions, reach, and brand mentions, which show how widely sustainability messages are disseminated through influencers' platforms (Evans et al., 2017). For engagement, important KPIs are likes, comments, shares, saves, click-through rates, and participation in interactive content such as polls or quizzes, reflecting whether audiences are actively connecting with sustainability narratives (De Veirman & Hudders, 2020). Conversion-oriented KPIs assess tangible actions, including purchases of eco-friendly products, sign-ups for recycling or take-back programs, usage of discount codes for sustainable items, and completion of challenges like "refill or reuse" initiatives. Brands can holistically evaluate the effectiveness of influencer campaigns in promoting sustainability, ensuring that efforts translate into awareness, engagement, and meaningful environmental action by combining following ways.

- **Engagement Metrics with Depth** - Traditional metrics like likes, shares, and comments remain important, but for sustainability campaigns, engagement depth matters more. Tracking the quality of comments (e.g., thoughtful discussions around sustainable practices instead of emojis) and share rates reflects whether audiences are genuinely connecting with the message.
- **Audience Sentiment and Perception** - Measuring how audiences feel about a campaign through sentiment analysis of comments, mentions, and online discussions helps gauge whether the sustainability message is being perceived as authentic. If sentiment skews positive, it reflects credibility and resonance; if negative, it may signal greenwashing perceptions or distrust. Sentiment-based KPIs are increasingly used to assess ethical alignment.

- **Transparency and Disclosure Compliance** - An often overlooked KPI is how transparently influencers disclose brand partnerships and sustainability claims. Monitoring whether influencers follow advertising guidelines (e.g., FTC/ASA disclosures) and whether audiences acknowledge or reward this honesty can serve as a benchmark for ethical success. Research highlights that transparent disclosure enhances trust and long-term engagement.
- **Behavioral Change Indicators** - Beyond awareness, the true test of a sustainable campaign lies in its ability to influence consumer behavior. KPIs here include tracking eco-friendly product purchases, participation in brand-led sustainability initiatives (e.g., recycling programs), or uptake of practices promoted by the influencer (e.g., clothing rental, refill systems).
- **Conversion and ROI with Sustainability Context** - Conversion metrics should move beyond pure sales. For sustainable campaigns, ROI can include repeat purchases of eco-friendly products, subscription to sustainable service models (like refill packs or rentals), or donations to environmental causes promoted by influencers. Patagonia's "Worn Wear" campaign, for example, uses repair and reuse program participation as a key success indicator.
- **Community Growth and Advocacy** - Sustainability thrives on community building. Tracking KPIs such as growth in eco-conscious follower communities, number of user-generated posts about sustainable practices, and advocacy actions (like petitions signed or causes supported) reflects a campaign's collective impact.
- **Environmental Impact Indicators** - Finally, the most holistic KPIs tie directly to environmental outcomes. Brands increasingly attempt to measure metrics like estimated carbon savings, reduction in single-use products, or waste diverted due to influencer-led actions.
- **Consumer engagement, awareness, and conversion metrics** - Measuring the effectiveness of influencer marketing in promoting sustainability requires looking beyond vanity metrics and focusing on how campaigns drive genuine awareness, engagement, and long-term behavior change. At the awareness level, key indicators include impressions, reach, and brand mentions, which capture how widely sustainability messages are being disseminated through influencers' platforms (Evans et al., 2017). Moving deeper, engagement metrics such as likes, comments, shares, saves, and click-through rates provide insight into whether audiences are not just seeing but actively interacting with sustainability content research shows that authentic storytelling and educational posts often achieve higher engagement than purely promotional ones (De Veirman, & Hudders, 2020). Finally, conversion metrics reflect whether influencer campaigns are driving tangible sustainable actions, measured through unique discount codes, affiliate links, or tracking purchases of eco-friendly products like refills, recycled goods, or carbon-neutral services. .
- **Use of analytics and feedback mechanisms** - Brands increasingly rely on social media analytics to track metrics such as reach, engagement rates, sentiment analysis, and content shares, which help gauge how well sustainability campaigns capture attention and encourage dialogue (Evans et al., 2017). Beyond surface-level metrics, behavioral analytics including clicks on eco-product links, participation in take-back programs, or sign-ups for green challenges offer insight into whether influencer content drives tangible sustainable behaviors. Feedback mechanisms, such as polls, surveys, comment analysis, and direct consumer responses, provide qualitative understanding of audience perceptions, trust, and motivations, helping brands refine messaging and ensure credibility. By combining quantitative data with real-time feedback, companies can continuously optimize campaigns, identify which influencers and content formats are most impactful, and demonstrate accountability in sustainability efforts. Ultimately, analytics and feedback transform influencer marketing from a one-way promotional tool into an interactive system that not only raises awareness but also measures and encourages authentic sustainable action.
- **Return on Investment (ROI) in sustainability focused campaigns** - ROI can be assessed through a combination of financial and non-financial outcomes. Financially, brands may track incremental sales of eco-friendly products, uptake of refill or recycling programs, or participation in subscription-based

sustainable services. Non-financially, ROI includes enhanced brand reputation, increased consumer trust, higher engagement rates on sustainability content, and measurable shifts in sustainable behaviors, such as more frequent recycling, reduced single-use product consumption, or adoption of energy-efficient practices. Campaigns led by authentic influencers who educate and demonstrate tangible environmental benefits often generate higher ROI because consumers perceive both credibility and practical value, leading to stronger brand-consumer relationships and repeated sustainable choices (De Veirman, & Hudders, 2020). Thus, evaluating ROI in sustainability campaigns requires a holistic lens that balances immediate sales with long-term social impact and consumer loyalty, capturing the full value of influencer-led initiatives.

Influencer Marketing and Sustainable Consumer Behavior

Influencer marketing has a far-reaching role into making consumers be aware, form attitudes, have purchases and thus leave behind changes into their way of life that would have been permanent. Sustainability influencers are the ones connecting environmental knowledge with actions, really educating and motivating the audience through their contents and engagements.

- **Creating Awareness** - Influencers excel at demythologizing and humanizing challenging and complex sustainability subjects because increasing consumer knowledge is the first step in guiding them toward sustainable behaviour. This is how content makers use easily comprehensible formats, such as YouTube explainers, TikTok videos, or Instagram reels, to encourage conversation on sustainable energy, ethical sourcing, slow fashion, and waste reduction. Such fundamental information is necessary to pique curiosity, which exposes and revolts consumers regarding the decisions they make on a daily basis.
- **Framing Perceptions and Attitudes** - Customers' opinions of green products and practices start to shift as a result of their constant, gradual exposure to sustainability knowledge. The idea that environmentally sustainable solutions are invariably more costly or unfeasible can be dispelled by influencers (Muna, Mitariani, & Telagawathi, 2025). For example, a food influencer who frequently shares inexpensive plant-based dishes might inform and comfort the public about sustainable eating.
- **Instilling Intentions for Purchase** - Sustainability advocates that promote products or services that align with ecologically sustainable ideals have a substantial impact on consumers' purchasing decisions (Giambastiani, 2025). Most influencers build a strong enough relationship with their audience due to their perceived authenticity and dependability to encourage people to do things like look for green products or services that they otherwise might not have thought of. These products might include those that support eco-friendly styles that are influenced by eco-friendly fashion influencers, which would boost sales for those firms.
- **Inspiring Changes in Behavior Adoption** - A sustainable lifestyle is usually determined by purchase behaviour, thus these variables will again compel followers to form enduring sustainability-related habits (Fauziah, & Marsasi, 2024). Some examples of such behaviours include adopting minimalist lifestyles, reducing the use of single-use plastics, utilizing reusable home items, and assisting local businesses that have less of an impact on the environment. Proactive community-minded influencers often endorse campaigns such as "Meatless Mondays" and "Plastic-Free July."
- **Strengthening Social Proof and Norms** - Social proof is an additional tactic for encouraging individuals to embrace sustainable practices (Vilkaite-Vaitone, 2024). When these followers see their preferred manufacturers and coworkers implementing green practices, they are more likely to follow suit. The impact of collaborative effort accelerates changes in consumption patterns across demographic and group boundaries.
- **Sustaining Long-term Behavior Change** - The most remarkable sustainability influencer is the one who will write a story about sustainable living that lasts a lifetime and isn't just a fleeting trend. By continuously sharing information about ethical consumption, waste reduction, and climate action, for example, they help their followers understand and apply these concepts to their daily decision-making, so promoting a cultural shift towards sustainability.

Challenges

There are several challenges faced by the influencers in promoting sustainability comes with . A key concern is authenticity, as consumers often question whether influencers genuinely care about the sustainable values they endorse or if their support is driven mainly by financial incentives, which can weaken trust and engagement (De Veirman, & Hudders, 2020). Closely tied to this is the problem of greenwashing, where influencers may highlight eco-friendly practices while the partnering brands fail to meet those standards, creating skepticism and reducing credibility (Nyilasy, Gangadharbatla, & Paladino, 2014). Another difficulty is the measurement of impact, since sustainability campaigns aim not only at boosting sales but also at fostering awareness and long-term behavioral change, outcomes that are complex to track and quantify (Casaló, Flavián, & Ibáñez-Sánchez, 2018). In addition, audience diversity poses a challenge because perceptions of sustainability differ across cultures, demographics, and social groups, meaning a message that resonates with one audience may not connect with another (White, Habib, & Hardisty, 2019). Finally, there is the matter of ethical responsibility, as influencers promoting sustainability are expected to live by those values themselves, and any inconsistency between their personal practices and their online messaging can lead to backlash and reduced effectiveness of their campaigns.

- **Greenwashing Risks** - One of the major challenges in leveraging influencer marketing for sustainability is the risk of greenwashing, where brands exaggerate or falsely claim their eco-friendly practices to appeal to conscious consumers. Influencers, knowingly or unknowingly, may endorse such claims without verifying their authenticity, which can lead to a breach of consumer trust. Greenwashing undermines genuine sustainability efforts by misleading stakeholders and diluting the credibility of sustainable messaging (Lyon, & Montgomery, 2015). When audiences discover discrepancies between a brand's claims and its actual practices, it not only damages the brand but also affects the influencer's reputation, making authenticity a crucial concern. Influencers like Camille Charrière have begun shifting away from trend-focused promotions toward advocating for reuse, rental, and timeless wardrobe pieces a proactive stance against greenwashing.
- **Transparency Need** - Transparency emerges as another pressing challenge in influencer-driven sustainability campaigns. Consumers today expect clarity in both the influencer's relationship with brands and the environmental claims being made. Transparent communication is vital for reducing skepticism and building long-term trust among consumers (Ertz, Karakas, & Sarigöllü, 2016). This includes clear disclosures of paid partnerships, substantiating sustainability claims with verifiable data, and demonstrating actual efforts rather than vague promises. Without transparency, even well-intentioned campaigns risk being perceived as manipulative marketing tactics rather than genuine advocacy for sustainability. Further, advancements in NLP (natural language processing) aim to detect misleading sustainability claims by linking claims explicitly to actions, such as product recycling or carbon reduction efforts. Initiatives like the A3CG framework help parse corporate ESG language more accurately, enhancing transparency across industries.
- **Measuring the Real Impact of Campaigns** - Measuring the actual impact of influencer-backed sustainability projects is still challenging. Though they provide surface-level information, likes, shares, and comments don't always reveal whether or not consumers are genuinely adopting sustainable practices. In addition to engagement metrics, sustainability marketing performance should be assessed using long-term behavioural changes and actual environmental outcomes (Agrawal, & Gupta, 2018). Developing reliable frameworks to track such effects such as changes in purchasing patterns, reduced waste, or increased awareness remains a persistent challenge for researchers, marketers, and influencers.

Ethical Considerations in Promoting Sustainability

There are ethical responsibilities associated with influencer marketing in sustainability since businesses and producers need to ensure that eco-friendly messaging is clear, credible, and does not mislead consumers. Steer clear of greenwashing. Sustainability claims should be supported by facts like certifications, product lifetime statistics, or confirmed environmental effect measurements rather than vague or overstated language (Delmas, & Burbano, 2011). Authenticity and openness are especially important because audiences are highly sensitive to perceived manipulation. Influencers ought to talk about the benefits and drawbacks of sustainable products and

openly reveal any affiliations (De Veirman, & Hudders, 2020). Promoting deliberate consumption rather than excessive consumption in the name of sustainability is another problem, as this can contradict the campaign's declared environmental goals (Kapoor, Balaji, & Jiang, 2023). Furthermore, ethical ads respect social and cultural contexts, ensuring that sustainability-related messaging doesn't minimize regional traditions or exploit underprivileged groups. Finally, accountability tools like analytics, reporting, and feedback loops let marketers and influencers understand the real impact of their work and adjust their strategies to align with environmental outcomes. Incorporating these ethical values into influencer marketing can increase engagement while also fostering trust and long-term behavioural change in support of sustainability.

FINDINGS & DISCUSSION

Influencer marketing plays a powerful and multifaceted role in advancing sustainability awareness, shaping consumer attitudes, and encouraging eco-friendly behaviors. Across industries and social media platforms, sustainability-focused influencers whether mega, macro, micro, or nano are increasingly viewed as trusted mediators who simplify environmental issues and translate them into practical lifestyle choices. A recurring insight from the analysis is that authenticity remains the most critical determinant of influence. Audiences consistently resonate with influencers who demonstrate genuine commitment to sustainable living, openly share their imperfections, and maintain transparency about brand partnerships. This authenticity builds trust, reduces skepticism, and makes sustainability appear more accessible and less intimidating.

The findings also show that content style and communication strategies strongly shape engagement. Influencers who use storytelling, personal narratives, and relatable lifestyle examples create deeper emotional connections with followers. Influencers also foster behavioural intentions and real-world actions. Many followers adopt eco-friendly products, try plant-based recipes, switch to refill systems, or participate in challenges such as "Plastic-Free July" because they see influencers modelling these behaviors consistently. The study also shows that influencer credibility significantly enhances green purchase intentions, especially when influencers highlight product functionality, long-term savings, or genuine environmental benefits.

Overall, the study demonstrates that influencer marketing, when ethical and value-driven, acts as a cultural catalyst for sustainability. Influencers humanize environmental issues, reduce psychological barriers to behavior change, and create social norms that legitimize eco-friendly lifestyles. While challenges around authenticity, transparency, and measurement persist, the study affirms that influencer-driven sustainability communication has substantial potential to build more conscious, informed, and responsible consumer communities. When brands collaborate intentionally with authentic creators, influencer marketing becomes not just a promotional tool but a meaningful driver of long-term sustainable behavior.

CONCLUSION

Influencer marketing has enormous potential as a catalyst for long-lasting change in a time when digital influence impacts not only buying decisions but also beliefs and behaviours. Because audiences frequently seek to influencers for advice on lifestyle choices, influencer marketing has emerged as a potent force in the promotion of sustainability. Customers are more likely to trust influencers who seem sincere, open, and dedicated to sustainable living. Micro- and nano-influencers are especially successful because of their more intimate and intimate interactions with their followers. Campaigns that emphasize genuine tales, useful eco-friendly advice, and values-based advocacy are more likely to be embraced than ones that seem unduly commercial or at odds with the influencer's persona. However, audiences can spot greenwashing easily, thus credibility and consistent use are essential for impact. Influencer collaborations assist companies in making their sustainability efforts tangible and approachable, especially for younger, socially conscious consumers. However, there are still problems to be tackled, like determining the actual behavioural impact of these initiatives, avoiding deceptive advertising, and ensuring authenticity. All things considered, the study shows that when influencer marketing is done right, it can promote collective efforts to build a more sustainable future as well as environmentally conscious purchasing.

REFERENCES

1. Ajzen, I. (1991). The theory of planned behavior. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, 50(2), 179–211.
2. Agrawal, R., & Gupta, S. (2018). Consuming responsibly: Exploring environmentally responsible consumption behaviors. *Journal of Global Marketing*, 31(4), 231-245.
3. Balakrishnan, J., & Foroudi, P. (2020). Does corporate reputation matter? Role of social media in consumer intention to purchase innovative food product. *Corporate Reputation Review*, 23(3), 181-200.
4. Belanche, D., Casaló, L. V., Flavián, M., & Ibáñez-Sánchez, S. (2021). Understanding influencer marketing: The role of congruence between influencers, products and consumers. *Journal of business research*, 132, 186-195.
5. Dhanesh, G. S., & Duthler, G. (2019). Relationship management through social media influencers: Effects of followers' awareness of paid endorsement. *Public relations review*, 45(3), 101765.
6. Delmas, M. A., & Burbano, V. C. (2011). The drivers of greenwashing. *California management review*, 54(1), 64-87.
7. De Veirman, M., & Hudders, L. (2020). Disclosing sponsored Instagram posts: the role of material connection with the brand and message-sidedness when disclosing covert advertising. *International journal of advertising*, 39(1), 94-130.
8. De Veirman, M., De Jans, S., Van den Abeele, E., & Hudders, L. (2020). Unravelling the power of social media influencers: a qualitative study on teenage influencers as commercial content creators on social media. In *The regulation of social media influencers* (pp. 126-166). Edward Elgar Publishing.
9. Djafarova, E., & Fouts, S. (2022). Exploring the role of social media influencers in promoting ethical and sustainable fashion. *Journal of Fashion Marketing and Management: An International Journal*, 26(2), 342–358.
10. El-Shihy, D., & Awaad, S. (2025). Leveraging social media for sustainable fashion: how brand and user-generated content influence Gen Z's purchase intentions. *Future Business Journal*, 11(1), 113.
11. Essiz, O., & Mandrik, C. (2022). Intergenerational influence on sustainable consumer attitudes and behaviors: Roles of family communication and peer influence in environmental consumer socialization. *Psychology & Marketing*, 39(1), 5-26.
12. Evans, N. J., Phua, J., Lim, J., & Jun, H. (2017). Disclosing Instagram influencer advertising: The effects of disclosure language on advertising recognition, attitudes, and behavioral intent. *Journal of interactive advertising*, 17(2), 138-149.
13. Ertz, M., Karakas, F., & Sarigöllü, E. (2016). Exploring pro-environmental behaviors of consumers: An analysis of contextual factors, attitude, and behaviors. *Journal of business research*, 69(10), 3971-3980.
14. Font, X., & McCabe, S. (2017). Sustainability and marketing in tourism: Its contexts, paradoxes, approaches, challenges and potential. *Journal of sustainable tourism*, 25(7), 869-883.
15. Fauziah, S., & Marsasi, E. G. (2024). Trust and Subjective Norms to Optimize Loyalty to Influencers through Social Exchange Theory. *APMBA (Asia Pacific Management and Business Application)*, 13(2), 167-188.
16. Giambastiani, G., Romito, S., & Vurro, C. (2025). When does collaborating with green influencers backfire? An experimental analysis of how authenticity components shape consumer reactions to sponsored content. *Business Strategy and the Environment*, 34(3), 3385-3399.
17. Goodman, M. B., Booth, N., & Matic, J. A. (2011). Mapping and leveraging influencers in social media to shape corporate brand perceptions. *Corporate communications: An international journal*, 16(3), 184-191.
18. Glucksman, M. (2017). The rise of social media influencer marketing on lifestyle branding: A case study of Lucie Fink. *Elon Journal of Undergraduate Research in Communications*, 8(2), 77–87.
19. Gössling, S., & Higham, J. (2021). The low-carbon imperative: Destination management under urgent climate change. *Journal of Travel Research*, 60(6), 1167-1179.
20. Hassinen, M. (2018). A critical approach to Kotler and Sarkar's brand activism: a comparison to a theoretical framework of CSR, CC, and activism.
21. Hovland, C. I., & Weiss, W. (1951). The influence of source credibility on communication effectiveness. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 15(4), 635–650.

22. Kapoor, P. S., Balaji, M. S., & Jiang, Y. (2023). Greenfluencers as agents of social change: The effectiveness of sponsored messages in driving sustainable consumption. *European Journal of Marketing*, 57(2), 533-561.
23. Kelman, H. C. (1958). Compliance, identification, and internalization: Three processes of attitude change. *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 2(1), 51–60.
24. Kartajaya, H., Kotler, P., & Hooi, D. H. (2019). *Marketing 4.0: moving from traditional to digital*. World Scientific Book Chapters, 99-123.
25. Kumar, V., & Christodoulopoulou, A. (2014). Sustainability and branding: An integrated perspective. *Industrial Marketing Management*, 43(1), 6-15.
26. Lee, B. X., Kjaerulf, F., Turner, S., Cohen, L., Donnelly, P. D., Muggah, R., ... & Gilligan, J. (2016). Transforming our world: implementing the 2030 agenda through sustainable development goal indicators. *Journal of public health policy*, 37(Suppl 1), 13-31.
27. Li, J., Chiu, D. K., Ho, K. K., & So, S. (2024). The use of social media in sustainable green lifestyle adoption: Social media influencers and value co-creation. *Sustainability*, 16(3), 1133.
28. Lim, D. J., Youn, N., & Eom, H. J. (2021). Green advertising for the sustainable luxury market. *Australasian Marketing Journal*, 29(4), 288-296.
29. Lim, W. M., & Rasul, T. (2022). Customer engagement and social media: Revisiting the past to inform the future. *Journal of Business Research*, 148, 325-342.
30. Lyon, T. P., & Montgomery, A. W. (2015). The means and end of greenwash. *Organization & environment*, 28(2), 223-249.
31. Lim, R. E., & Lee, S. Y. (2023). “You are a virtual influencer!”: Understanding the impact of origin disclosure and emotional narratives on parasocial relationships and virtual influencer credibility. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 148, 107897.
32. Muna, N., Mitariani, N. W. E., & Telagawathi, N. L. W. S. (2025). Eco-Conscious Consumers and Influencer Marketing: Understanding the Path to Green Purchases through the Theory of Planned Behavior. *International Journal of Analysis and Applications*, 23, 86-86.
33. McNeill, L., & Venter, B. (2019). Identity, self-concept and young women’s engagement with collaborative, sustainable fashion consumption models. *International Journal of Consumer Studies*, 43(4), 368-378.
34. Nash, K. (2024). Exploring the impact of self-concept and IT identity on social media influencers’ behavior: A focus on young adult technology features utilization. *International Journal of Human–Computer Interaction*, 40(22), 6941-6952.
35. Nyilasy, G., Gangadharbatla, H., & Paladino, A. (2014). Perceived greenwashing: The interactive effects of green advertising and corporate environmental performance on consumer reactions. *Journal of business ethics*, 125(4), 693-707.
36. Ohanian, R. (1990). Construction and validation of a scale to measure celebrity endorsers’ perceived expertise, trustworthiness, and attractiveness. *Journal of Advertising*, 19(3), 39–52.
37. Peattie, K., & Belz, F. M. (2010). Sustainability marketing—An innovative conception of marketing. *Marketing Review St. Gallen*, 27(5), 8–15.
38. Sharma, R., & Singh, A. (2025). Integrating AI, Green Marketing, and Influencer Strategies: Shaping Sustainable Consumer Behavior in the Digital Age. In *Strategic Brand Management in the Age of AI and Disruption* (pp. 325-342). IGI Global Scientific Publishing.
39. Sümer, S. I., & Parilti, N. (Eds.). (2023). *Social media analytics in predicting consumer behavior*. CRC Press.
40. Sarkar, C., & Kotler, P. (2020). *Brand activism: From purpose to action*. Idea Bite Press.
41. Schorn, A., Vinzenz, F., & Wirth, W. (2022). Promoting sustainability on Instagram: How sponsorship disclosures and benefit appeals affect the credibility of influencers. *Young Consumers*, 23(3), 345-361.
42. Sudha, M., & Sheena, K. (2017). Impact of influencers in consumer decision process: the fashion industry. *SCMS Journal of Indian Management*, 14(3), 14-30.
43. Vilkaite-Vaitone, N. (2024). From likes to sustainability: How social media influencers are changing the way we consume. *Sustainability*, 16(4), 1393.
44. Williams, J. P., & Schwarz, K. C. (Eds.). (2021). *Studies on the social construction of identity and authenticity*. New York: Routledge.

45. Wu, S., Lim, A. F., & Lim, W. Y. (2025). The role of green influencers in shaping green brand image: a mediation analysis of green consumer trust. *Journal of Information & Knowledge Management*, 2550051.
46. Zhang, K., & Hung, K. (2020). The effect of natural celebrity–brand association and para-social interaction in advertising endorsement for sustainable marketing. *Sustainability*, 12(15), 6215.