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Presenting a model of persuasion in social media messages in promoting green products

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Abstract

The present study sought to provide a model of persuasion in social media messages in promoting green products. The research method is applicable in terms of its purpose, quantitative in terms of implementation, and descriptive-correlational in terms of nature and method. A standard questionnaire based on a 5-point Likert scale was used to collect research data. The content validity of the tool was confirmed by specialists and experts, and Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability were used to measure the reliability of the tool. By distributing the questionnaire, the validity of the tool was measured with three methods: construct validity (external model), convergent validity (AVE), and divergent validity. The AVE value for all variables should be greater than 0.5. SPSS and PLS software were used to analyze the data. The results of structural equation modeling with SmartPL software showed that trust-building, audience interaction, narrative, and visual design all play an effective role in strengthening the audience's environmental attitude and behavior and supporting green products. Also, technical infrastructure and new technologies facilitate the path of persuasion and acceptance of a sustainable lifestyle.

Keywords:

Persuasion,
Social Media,
Green Products,
Trust,
Visual Design

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Extended Abstract

Introduction

Today's world is constantly changing; changes that are mainly the result of scientific advances and emerging technologies and have a wide impact on the individual and social lives of humans. Communication and information technologies have grown significantly in recent years (Jafari et al., 2017). Since the 1970s, with the beginning of the communication and information technology revolution, tools such as satellites, the Internet, and mobile phones have entered the field, changing the level of expectations, norms, and social interactions (Bastani et al., 2017). At the same time, social networks have provided an efficient and low-cost space for communication and interaction, which has become more effective than other media due to the possibility of access at any time and active participation of users (Mahmoud et al., 2020).

Today, citizens are able to receive and analyze information at the lowest cost and at the highest speed, and this can create appropriate or sometimes distorted perceptions (Lin et al., 2020; Hamidi Zadeh, 2019). Social networks have become large databases that increase the rapid circulation of information and decision-making power in various fields, including marketing. By producing attractive content, these media play an effective role in attracting and persuading audiences (Kim et al., 2016) and, as a low-cost platform, they provide the opportunity to reflect persuasive messages and influence customer beliefs, attitudes, and behavior (Labbafi et al., 2016).

Since networks host diverse groups with different interests, the reflection of persuasive messages can promote the acceptance and support of green products. Marketing on social networks not only strengthens customer attitudes and satisfaction, but also affects their purchase intention and repeat purchase (Ghaforian Shagerdi et al., 2016). The development of green products through these messages can increase collective perceptions and social responsibility in environmental protection (Matthes et al., 2014). Attention to the environmental impacts of products has also become an important criterion in purchasing decisions, so that price is not the only determining factor (Joshi et al., 2015). The global and Iranian situation shows an increase in environmental pollution and waste, highlighting the necessity of developing green products (Du et al., 2020).

Given the importance of environmental protection, this study seeks to investigate the role of persuasive messages on social networks in promoting support for green products, and its main goal is to explain the conceptual model of persuasion and its impact on the development of green products. In a situation where the global market is sensitive to customers' environmental demands and considerations, companies are forced to formulate their marketing strategy based on customer attitudes and perceptions and social expectations (Limk & Louizao, 2014). Creating customer-friendly values and a coherent identity between the company, customers, and society are key principles for business survival and growth (Talari et al., 2018). The development of green products can increase social awareness and pave the way for positive behavioral changes in consumers (Wu et al., 2020). Despite previous research that has emphasized the importance of social awareness and persuasion in supporting green products (Ogbeibu et al., 2020), there is still a lack of research about the topic.

Theoretical foundations

Persuasion

As a multidimensional process in human communication, persuasion deals with changing the audience's attitudes, emotions, and behavior, and its success requires understanding the

audience's cognitive, emotional, and cultural backgrounds so that the message has the greatest impact (Lin et al., 2020).

Trust-building and brand credibility

Brand credibility and trust are key components of marketing and brand communications that shape consumers' attitudes and behaviors. Brand trust includes assurance of the truthfulness of promises and social responsibility, and brand credibility refers to the audience's perception of the brand's reliability (Kim et al., 2016; Huang et al., 2024). Research has shown that reputable brands can increase green behaviors and customer satisfaction, and strengthen individual motivations for sustainable consumption (Ogbeibu et al., 2020; Hu et al., 2024; Mahmoud et al., 2020).

Persuasive and interactive tactics

Interactive tactics invite the audience to actively participate and respond and include personalized content, Q&A, surveys, and creating a discussion space (Mahmoud et al., 2020). These tactics increase the level of attention, learning, and trust in the brand and, in green marketing, allow for better understanding of environmental messages (Lin et al., 2020; Ogbeibu et al., 2020).

Environmental behavior and lifestyle

Environmental behavior and lifestyle include purchasing green products, reducing energy consumption, waste management, and participating in environmental activities (Joshi & Rahman, 2015; Du et al., 2020). Positive attitudes towards the environment and external factors such as brand trust, social responsibility and social media messages can strengthen individual motivations to adopt a sustainable lifestyle (Huang et al., 2024; Mahmoud et al., 2020; Ogbeibu et al., 2020; Wu et al., 2020).

Hu et al. (2024) investigated "The role of social media marketing on green product repurchase intention". The research method is descriptive correlational and the sample is 438 people. The results showed that social media marketing activities significantly increase green values, environmental concerns and brand image and positively affect brand involvement. Also, brand involvement mediated the relationship between green values, environmental concerns, brand image and repurchase intention.

Huang et al. (2024) studied the "Effect of Green Marketing on Repurchase Intention and Positive Word of Mouth of Residential Platform Users". The research method is descriptive correlational and the sample size is 488 people. The results showed that consumers' perception of green marketing increased consumer trust and identification with the platform, and as a result, it affected repurchase intention and positive word of mouth. Consumer trust also mediated the relationship between green marketing and repurchase intention and positive word of mouth.

Research Methodology

This research is applicable in terms of purpose and descriptive-correlational in terms of method. The statistical population includes active users of social networks and experts in the field of green product marketing who play a practical role in the process of persuasion and acceptance of messages. Given that there is no information on the exact number of the statistical population; therefore, the population is considered indefinite and according to the Cochran formula sampling method for the indefinite population, the sample size is 384 people. The statistical sample of the research will be selected randomly and by simple sampling method. The findings from the Cronbach's alpha test and composite reliability to measure the reliability of the research tool are reported in Table 1. To examine the validity of the tool, content validity (expert opinion) was used and its validity was confirmed. Then, by

distributing the questionnaire, the validity of the tool was measured with three methods: construct validity (external model), convergent validity (AVE), and divergent validity. The AVE value for all research variables must be greater than 0.5. In order to test the research hypotheses, structural equation modeling was used in the context of smart pls2 statistical software.

Research findings

The present study showed that building trust and brand credibility, along with the use of interactive tactics and emotional narratives, plays a fundamental role in improving the environmental behaviors and attitudes of the audience. Modern messaging infrastructures and technologies and visual design in harmony with green values strengthen the persuasive power of messages and increase the acceptance of a sustainable lifestyle. The findings confirm the importance of integrating trust, interaction, narrative, visual design, and technology in developing green marketing and promoting brand social responsibility, and show that these factors can strengthen individual and collective motivations for sustainable consumption.

Discussion and Conclusion

The research findings showed that trust-building and brand credibility play a central role in shaping audiences' environmental attitudes and behaviors, such that audiences who consider the brand to be credible and trustworthy are more likely to consume green, reduce energy consumption, and participate in environmental activities (Huang et al., 2024; Meysamizad et al., 2023). Also, persuasive and interactive tactics in messaging, along with narratives and emotional messages, increase active audience participation and pave the way for improving green messaging infrastructure and channels (Antoun et al., 2023; Khalaji et al., 2022).

Other findings of the present study showed that persuasive strategies based on narrative and emotion, by enhancing interactive tactics, engage audiences more and increase their level of interaction with messages and the brand. This is consistent with the research of Antoun et al. (2023) and Meysamizad et al. (2023) who have confirmed the role of storytelling and emotional messages in increasing digital impact and participation.

Also, the infrastructure and technical platforms of green messaging are of considerable importance in creating environmental behaviors of audiences and strengthening their understanding of the brand's social responsibility. This finding is consistent with the research of Khalaji et al. (2022) and Hu et al. (2024) and shows that digital tools and channels can strengthen individual motivations for green consumption and adoption of a sustainable lifestyle.

Visual design aligned with green values and the use of digital platform technologies and algorithms also enhance the persuasive power of messages and improve audience acceptance and commitment to sustainable consumption (Hu et al., 2024; Mahmoud et al., 2024).