

Corporate Sustainability: Analyzing Social Media in Green Marketing Strategies

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Abstract – The rapid technological and industrial growth has transformed modern business operations while simultaneously triggering critical environmental challenges, including pollution, global warming, and climate change. In response to heightened environmental consciousness among modern consumers, organizations are increasingly compelled to adopt green marketing practices. Driven by the proliferation of digital communication and social media, businesses strive to demonstrate corporate sustainability—balancing people, planet, and profit—by leveraging multimedia content such as images and videos to substantiate their eco-friendly claims.

This exploratory study utilizes secondary data and a case study-based methodology to examine five companies across diverse industrial domains. The primary objective is to identify and analyze prominent green marketing strategies deployed across major social media platforms, including Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube. Through this analysis, a conceptual framework is developed to map specific green marketing strategies to corresponding social media channels. The findings provide actionable insights for organizations seeking to optimize their digital sustainability initiatives, secure a sustained market presence, and contribute to the broader development of a sustainable economy.

Key Words: Social media, green marketing, corporate sustainability, IKEA, Starbucks, Patagonia, TOMS, Burt's Bees

1. INTRODUCTION

In the era of mobile internet, platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube have achieved unprecedented popularity and prominence (Mittal and Kumar, 2018). The functionality of social media mirrors fundamental human behaviors: forming communities, exchanging information, sharing engaging content, and participating in collective experiences (Chui et al., 2012). These characteristics have deeply embedded social technology into daily life, with social networking now commanding a major share of total consumer internet browsing time. This widespread engagement is further amplified by corporate marketing efforts. Today, social media enables firms to collaborate directly with customers on product and service development.

Marketing professionals constantly scan the landscape for emerging opportunities and risks (Bhardwaj and Kumar, 2022), driving the continuous adaptation of social platforms. Because customer satisfaction remains paramount for long-term survival (Kumar and Ayodeji, 2021), marketers strive to build positive, relationship-driven connections with target audiences through their offerings. To capitalize on new market prospects, businesses must embrace innovative concepts—one of the most vital being green marketing. Many organizations

now adopt this strategy to secure long-term viability (Kumar and Gupta, 2021).

Research highlights the profound influence of digital channels on eco-friendly consumer behavior. Bedard and Tolmie, (2018) observed that social media usage and online peer pressure significantly shape purchase intentions for environmentally friendly goods. Modern consumers possess a heightened awareness of environmental risks, and peer recommendations heavily influence shopping choices, particularly among millennial (Malik and Singhal, 2016). For instance, brands like Chipotle utilize digital channels to promote eco-conscious merchandise, such as organic cotton apparel (Chipotle, 2020).

According to Mishra and Sharma, (2014), escalating concerns regarding global warming, pollution, and the accumulation of non-biodegradable waste have driven the evolution of green marketing. This concept promotes the production, consumption, and disposal of goods with minimal environmental impact (Lata and Gupta, 2020). Because green marketing and sustainable development share overlapping objectives, ecological stewardship can be effectively advanced by promoting environmentally safe goods and services.

To engage consumers who fulfill their social responsibilities through eco-friendly and organic purchases, businesses deploy a variety of digital techniques. Social media has emerged as the premier communication channel for this purpose, facilitating massive information exchange (Kumar and Lata, 2022) and serving as an essential tool for stakeholder engagement (Haegeman et al., 2012). Given the rapid expansion of the internet, numerous enterprises feature green advertisements across social networks. Competitiveness across global markets is increasingly anchored in corporate sustainability.

Göçer and Turul (2015) investigated how brands communicate sustainability messaging, utilizing content analysis to examine digital strategies in developing markets. Their findings indicate that brands heavily emphasize social and economic factors in their sustainability narratives. Similarly, Khan et al. (2019) examined how graphics, information, ethics, and security shape consumer perception and behavior within sustainable marketing frameworks.

Today, social media marketing encompasses online green marketing to promote eco-friendly goods and services. These platforms allow businesses to showcase environmentally responsible manufacturing processes, thereby preserving their green reputations among conscious consumers (Kang and Kim, 2017). Green marketing represents a core tactical focus for advertising eco-friendly products and corporate responsibility programs. Social media platforms provide a visual window into these sustainability initiatives—often detailed on corporate websites—through images, videos, and hypermedia that substantiate corporate environmental claims (Mittal and

Kumar, 2022). As businesses increasingly rely on social networks for information dissemination, significant opportunities remain to pioneer new techniques that persuade consumers to support environmental sustainability campaigns. The consumer dimension of green marketing is explored in the following section.

Consumers are significantly more environmentally conscious today than they were a decade ago. They are increasingly willing to pay a premium for green products, fueling the rapid expansion of green marketing. For instance, while LED lights are more expensive than traditional incandescent bulbs, environmentally aware consumers readily purchase them. Similarly, individuals have adopted reusable bamboo utensils and transitioned from plastic to Styrofoam (or biodegradable) containers for takeaway food.

Green marketing impacts every sector of the economy; it not only advances environmental protection but also creates new market segments and employment opportunities. Investigating consumer engagement, Shin and Ki (2022) analyzed Twitter posts from both for-profit and nonprofit organizations, discovering that for-profit communications actively promote eco-friendly goods. Their findings indicate that tweets from for-profit entities that strongly emphasize environmental products generate high levels of user interaction, measured by likes and replies. Consequently, integrating social media platforms with green marketing strategies is critical for companies seeking to enhance long-term sustainability.

2. GREEN MARKETING AND SOCIAL MEDIA USAGE FOR SUSTAINABILITY

Traditionally, businesses have driven marketing by pushing information to consumers through channels such as sponsorships, direct marketing, and commercials. However, the rise of social media allows green enterprises to transparently disclose the eco-friendly processes behind their production, safeguarding their brand reputation a vital priority for eco-conscious consumers (He et al., 2018).

Unlike conventional marketing, green marketing on social platforms typically fosters a collaborative and friendly atmosphere. Through interactive features like "likes," "comments," and "shares," users enhance the social value of content while maintaining transactional anonymity, which helps build genuine social bonds (He et al., 2018). These capabilities also provide businesses with rapid, cost-effective access to valuable quantitative data (Kumar et al., 2022).

A defining characteristic of social media is user-generated content, allowing individuals to effortlessly upload and share information across global networks of relatives, friends, and acquaintances (Nanda and Kumar, 2021). Beyond text, modern platforms support rich media sharing, benefiting both everyday consumers and businesses alike (Wang et al., 2016). According to Moliner et al., (2018), academic understanding of green consumer involvement is still in its infancy, even though a growing number of companies have made sustainability promotion a core objective.

Because corporate activities are visible on social networks, stakeholders can easily monitor business operations, making these platforms an effective tool to evaluate whether firms genuinely fulfill their sustainability commitments. Social media enhances green marketing by allowing businesses to showcase their environmental attitudes and procedures through diverse media formats. Furthermore, these platforms serve as virtual spaces where individuals exchange environmental advice, discuss ongoing ecological challenges, and share

insights on adopting sustainable behaviors (Trivedi et al., 2018).

According to a Greenbiz (2019) report, most companies utilize a blend of social media platforms—predominantly Instagram, LinkedIn, and Facebook—though one study noted that corporate sustainability teams frequently leverage Twitter (X) for communication. That same study specified three key success criteria for assessing social media platforms in this context:

- Effective social media marketing requires a deliberate strategy. As businesses embark on sustainability initiatives, they must clarify their target audience and craft direct, compelling messages using visual and textual content. Consistent publishing is essential for growing a dedicated following; regular visibility raises consumer awareness and attracts the right audience at the right time. Users are particularly responsive to posts that feature expressive and directive acts (Greenbiz, 2019).
- Social media has transformed communication from a one-way broadcast into a two-way dialogue, narrowing the gap between brands and consumers. This allows companies to educate buyers, gauge trends, and invite feedback via likes, follows, comments, and reviews. Organizations use these channels to articulate their values and foster a responsible brand image. For instance, many premium and luxury firms utilize Instagram and influencer marketing to cultivate relationships that enhance brand perception and ensure information remains current and reliable (Greenbiz, 2019).
- Quantity of Generated Engagement (Likes, Shares, and Replies): A primary goal for any enterprise is maximizing social media interaction. The interactive nature of these platforms allows customers to stay updated and actively connect with brand content. Highlighting this shift, Khan et al., (2019) noted a dramatic 35% increase in social media content creation between 2014 and 2015. Moreover, Trivedi et al., (2018) emphasize that customer involvement in the "greening" process is critical to success. Delivery mechanisms on social media include electronic word-of-mouth, feedback management, community building, active network participation, and service co-creation. These elements evoke emotional responses that elevate the customer experience and drive business value.

Ultimately, social media and Web 2.0 serve as powerful catalysts for increasing public environmental awareness and promoting sustainable behavior (Ballew et al., 2015). As Smith (2022) notes, several leading brands are currently executing social media green marketing with notable effectiveness:

2.1. IKEA (<https://www.ikea.com/>)

As a prominent Swedish furniture retailer, IKEA has maintained its position as a global market leader for over a decade, currently operating over 400 stores across 41 countries. In recent years, IKEA has significantly elevated the role of sustainability within its core business and marketing strategy, setting an ambitious goal to become climate-positive by 2030. Specifically, the company aimed to reduce absolute greenhouse gas emissions across its entire value chain by at least 15% by 2020, even while maintaining corporate growth (Source: IKEA Climate Positive Strategy).

To effectively communicate these initiatives, IKEA maintains a robust presence on major social media platforms, including Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. These channels serve as vital tools for broadcasting in-store promotions, showcasing new product lines, and highlighting sustainable practices. The company's digital reach has grown exponentially; for instance, its Facebook following surged from approximately 24,800 in August 2012 to nearly 978,000 by August 2015 (Source: Statista). By providing a space where customers can post questions and share comments, IKEA fosters a two-way dialogue that enhances consumer engagement and brand loyalty (Source: StudyCorgi).

2.2. Patagonia (<https://www.patagonia.com>)

Patagonia is an American apparel company specializing in outdoor and athletic wear. At the core of its operations is a commitment to creating high-quality products while safeguarding the environment and utilizing commercial success to address urgent ecological challenges. As a prominent advocate of ethical business practices, Patagonia has established itself as a leading global retailer.

Apparel brands like Patagonia leverage social media by publishing visual and textual content that promotes sustainability initiatives and campaigns while highlighting the natural landscapes that complement their products. Originating from a modest workshop in Ventura, California, the company maintains a robust global presence, operating factories in over 16 countries and 70 stores worldwide as of 2022. Its digital footprint is equally substantial, boasting over 2 million Facebook fans and 4.7 million Instagram followers in 2021 (IIDE, 2021).

Patagonia has become synonymous with outdoor recreation and environmentally friendly corporate practices. According to the 2021 Axios Harris Poll rankings, it secured first place among apparel companies for corporate reputation. A premier example of its green marketing strategy via social media is its signature Black Friday campaign (The Strategy Story, 2021). By utilizing digital channels to promote eco-centric consumerism—such as donating 100% of Black Friday sales to grassroots environmental organizations—the brand successfully expanded its consumer base, engaged environmentally conscious buyers, and generated extensive positive media coverage. In the U.S., this event shattered prior benchmarks, helping Patagonia achieve a record \$10 million in sales during the 2021 Black Friday event (Forbes India). Across platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube, Patagonia consistently reinforces an overarching brand statement dedicated to environmental stewardship and amplifying the voices of grassroots activists.

2.3. Starbucks (<https://www.starbucks.com>)

Starbucks is a globally recognized coffeehouse chain operating extensively across international markets. By 2020, the company served approximately 100 million customers weekly across more than 31,000 locations, supported by 400,000 partners worldwide Starbucks Stories, 2020.

- Aligning its business model with corporate sustainability, Starbucks outlined ambitious environmental goals for 2030, focusing on:
- Expanding plant-based and eco-friendly product options.
- Transitioning toward reusable packaging solutions.
- Investing in regenerative agriculture, water conservation, and reforestation.

- Enhancing in-store and community waste management systems.
- Greening operations across supply chains, manufacturing, and retail stores.

While maintaining an active digital presence across multiple platforms—including Twitter/X, Instagram, and legacy networks—Starbucks strategically concentrates its primary green marketing campaigns on Facebook. Facebook serves as the central hub where the brand showcases its sustainability initiatives and community-driven environmental actions. To promote reusability and waste reduction, Starbucks launched targeted initiatives such as offering a free cup of brewed coffee or tea to customers who brought their own reusable mugs or tumblers. By integrating conscious consumer incentives with targeted social media messaging, Starbucks leverages digital platforms to reinforce its commitment to environmental stewardship.

2.4. TOMS (<https://www.toms.com>)

Headquartered in Los Angeles, California, TOMS is a for-profit enterprise renowned for its footwear, eyewear, apparel, and accessories, as well as its deep-rooted commitment to philanthropy and sustainable innovation. The TOMS Earth wise collection features versatile everyday designs manufactured using sustainable and eco-friendly materials. The brand's ethical production framework prioritizes the creation of sustainable footwear and certified vegan options. Reflecting its ongoing commitment to social and environmental accountability, TOMS achieved a 25% increase in its B Corporation score in 2021.

- TOMS achieved global recognition through its guiding principle of donating one pair of shoes to a child in need for every pair purchased.
- Since 2011, TOMS has partnered with Save the Children to integrate footwear donations into broader domestic and international health, nutrition, and education programs, contributing over 1 million pairs of shoes and winter boots to children in countries such as the United States and Australia.
- This initiative invites consumers to go barefoot to generate global awareness for children's health and education.

TOMS successfully leverages multi-channel social media marketing to engage its community and amplify its social mission. By actively involving supporters in its social awareness programs, TOMS serves as a primary industry benchmark for sustainable branding and digital green marketing.

2.5. Burt's Bees (<https://www.burtsbees.com/>)

Established in 1984, Burt's Bees manufactures beeswax and honey by-products, offering a portfolio of over 150 personal care items rooted in a deep respect for nature. The brand's product formulations are entirely or predominantly composed of natural substances. To drive environmental awareness, the company has launched several high-profile social media initiatives.

In 2016, Burt's Bees launched the #BringBackTheBees campaign on Twitter, urging users to drop the letter "b" from their tweets to highlight the declining bee population. Subsequently, the 2019 #ChangeForNature campaign, executed in collaboration with National Geographic, targeted single-use plastics, animal products, and excessive consumption. Coinciding with the UN Climate Conference, the

partners implemented a temporary social media blackout before prompting supporters to sign a digital pledge committing to behavioral changes regarding water usage, food waste, and plastic consumption.

These initiatives exemplify how brands can leverage social media to foster consumer participation and champion environmental causes, yielding powerful messaging for both corporate identity and ecological advocacy. By sharing core narratives on platforms like Facebook—where users can actively engage through comments—alongside visual storytelling on Instagram and YouTube, businesses can effectively execute green marketing campaigns. Ultimately, leading enterprises utilize top social media platforms to promote sustainability and secure long-term market presence.

The Table 1 below provides estimated social media follower and engagement metrics across major platforms (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter/X, and YouTube) for the five analyzed companies (IKEA, Starbucks, Patagonia, TOMS, and Burt's Bees).

Table 1: Social Media Follower Numbers for the 5 Case Companies (Smith. (2025))

Company	Facebook	Instagram	Twitter / X	YouTube
IKEA	30M+ total likes (across global channels)	~1.8M – 2M+ followers (main handle)	150K+ followers (combined regional)	100K+ subscribers
Starbucks	37M+ likes	~17.4M followers	6.5M followers	35K+ subscribers
Patagonia	3M+ followers	~5.5M followers	250K+ followers	300K+ subscribers (focused on environmental films)
TOMS	4M followers	1M followers	2M followers	50K+ subscribers
Burt's Bees	3.7M followers	230K – 300K followers	Niche campaign-driven traction	20K+ subscribers

Table 1 outlines the follower metrics for each analyzed case company across major social media platforms as of February 2025.

3. SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS AND GREEN MARKETING

Social media has evolved into an indispensable global arena for companies and brands to raise awareness regarding pressing environmental issues affecting millions worldwide. Research findings indicate that businesses tailor their sustainability communications to fit the unique affordances of each digital platform; for instance, sustainability messaging deployed on Facebook differs significantly from content shared via corporate blogs.

Because both consumers and businesses exhibit distinct channel preferences, platform selection plays a critical role in campaign efficacy. Huang et al. (2019) examined participant responses across various communication formats and content types, revealing that consumers frequently turn to Twitter (X)

for quick updates and information browsing, whereas they look to LinkedIn for professional, sustainability-related insights and advice. Furthermore, studies indicate that visual assets—specifically infographics—generate substantially higher engagement than text-based formats when communicating complex environmental data (Nabivi, 2020).

3.1. Facebook

As part of their social networking visibility, businesses actively utilize Facebook profiles to build digital presence (Kumar and Nanda, 2019). The platform enables companies to publicly showcase their involvement in real-world environmental initiatives and connect directly with targeted consumer segments, such as individuals interested in green products, through specialized promotional applications. Furthermore, integrated community features like blogs and forums serve as an affordable, rapid feedback mechanism for organizations.

Facebook also acts as a vital tool for peer-to-peer product evaluations, allowing buyers to read consumer reviews while giving businesses a direct channel to address inquiries and clarify misinformation. Corporations frequently share photo documentation of their participation in ecological events on the platform. Regarding specific sustainability tactics, businesses typically advertise eco-friendly goods, highlight supported conservation campaigns, and publicize their environmental milestones. Emphasizing the connection between personal well-being and environmental stewardship, brands like Natura encourage consumers to reflect on corporate sustainability values through initiatives such as their socio-biodiversity campaigns.

3.2. Instagram

Instagram is a predominantly visual platform dedicated to sharing images and videos (Ayodeji and Kumar, 2019). It relies heavily on large, imaginative imagery, allowing users to enhance posts with a wide selection of filters for both photographs and videos. Over the past few years, businesses and creators have increasingly leveraged these elements for storytelling and advertising.

To spread awareness of critical environmental issues, various influencers and public figures have utilized their platforms to champion sustainability. For instance, celebrities like Emma Watson shared Patagonia's posts with their followers, helping rally social media users around the cause using the hashtag #loveourplanet. Emma Watson's reach grew significantly, reflecting a broader shift in digital advocacy.

Instagram Reels also play a vital role in modern retail services. Since December 2020, businesses and creators worldwide have been able to tag products directly in Reels, supplemented by a "View Products" button that allows users to purchase, save, or discover more about featured goods. For example, the sustainable personal care brand Grove Collaborative used Instagram Reels to transparently communicate their rationale for transitioning exclusively to glass and aluminum product packaging.

3.3. Twitter / X

Twitter (X) serves as another critical communication channel for businesses. While corporate messaging often mirrors updates shared on Facebook, Twitter's defining characteristic is its structural brevity. The platform's retweet and hashtag features significantly enhance content variety by

amplifying customer messages that reference company names or specific corporate programs. Furthermore, tweets frequently cross-promote content hosted on other social platforms concerning sustainability issues (Ayodeji and Kumar, 2019).

Businesses primarily employ Twitter to act as a real-time news feed. For example, Starbucks utilized the platform to announce promotional events, such as inviting customers to enjoy a free cup before noon or receive a promotional card with home-coffee purchases. Consequently, the primary objective of Twitter messaging centers on promoting product offerings, corporate events, and breaking business news.

3.4. YouTube

The integration of video clips across company websites and social media platforms—such as Facebook and X (formerly Twitter)—significantly enriches the information businesses provide to consumers (Ayodeji and Kumar, 2019). In 2021, YouTube introduced product-tagging capabilities for video creators, allowing viewers to click on tags to browse product details, view related content, and complete purchases directly (Williamson, 2021). This functionality transforms YouTube from an educational medium into a direct sales channel while offering advertisers valuable engagement insights.

Furthermore, organizations utilize YouTube as a digital funnel to direct visitors to their other official social networking service (SNS) profiles, tailoring the linked networks to match specific campaign goals. To optimize user experience, businesses organize content into categorized playlists. These descriptive playlists help users easily locate topic-specific videos, such as sustainability initiatives. For example, Panera features videos promoting its "Food Chain Reaction" initiative under a playlist titled "Live Consciously," while Starbucks highlights community programs—such as youth-driven vegetable cultivation in Boston through the "Food Project"—in its "Giving back" playlist. Ultimately, corporate YouTube content serves to substantiate and validate broader organizational sustainability objectives through transparent demonstrations of real-world activities.

3.5. Pinterest

Pinterest functions as a visual discovery platform where businesses showcase their core interests and operational scope through categorized "pins" and "boards." Companies frequently establish dedicated boards focused entirely on their sustainability strategies, using clear, illustrative titles to attract eco-conscious consumers.

For instance, Schneider Electric curates boards such as "Green buildings" and "Smart cities," while Philips maintains a board titled "Livable cities." Similarly, IKEA USA features dedicated sustainability content through boards like "Smart Solutions" and "People & Planet," complemented by Electrolux's specialized program boards.

Pinterest also serves as a platform for collaborative social good. For example, American Express leveraged the platform to engage cardholders in a fundraising initiative providing clean drinking water to children via a UNICEF partnership—showcasing a community-driven project sitting at the intersection of environmental sustainability and public health.

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Analysis of the case companies reveals that social media platforms serve as powerful tools for executing green marketing strategies. Specific core variables influence a company's corporate image and provide a sustainable competitive advantage when integrated into digital green

initiatives. The developed conceptual framework demonstrates how these variables interact to optimize organizational sustainability efforts across social media channels:

- Social media sharing features empower users to forge emotional connections and engage in meaningful, two-way conversations. By fostering a sense of social presence and warmth, platforms enable users to experience a feeling of coexistence and digital community, which significantly enhances brand trust.
- Social media platforms offer valuable insights into long-term product and service trends over multi-year periods to evaluate corporate performance. Monitoring real-time customer feedback and public sentiment allows businesses to gauge market trends, directly influencing their online reputation and consumer trust.
- Traditional word of mouth remains one of the most reliable indicators of product performance. Customer reactions, comments, and content shareability amplify the reach of green messaging, driving higher levels of community involvement and brand advocacy.
- Social media facilitates comprehensive, multi-dimensional user engagement. Active participation increases the likelihood of converting casual users into loyal brand advocates and long-term buyers, making deep customer engagement a primary objective of any green marketing campaign.
- Online word of mouth acts as a crucial catalyst for building trust and driving engagement. It generated through user reviews, recommendations, and shared experiences significantly enhance corporate environmental credibility and expand community participation.
- With the evolution of Web 2.0, user interactions have taken center stage, as direct advertising exerts less influence on consumer psychology and behavior compared to peer social relationships (Lambrecht et al., 2018). Customer satisfaction remains a crucial concept heavily impacting marketing strategy, representing an emotional state shaped by consumers' assessments of and reactions to a company's services.
- Research indicates that consumers are more likely to form emotional connections with organizations that participate in community-benefiting CSR projects (Lambrecht et al., 2018). Consequently, consumers tend to place trust in socially conscious businesses, feel comfortable building relationships with them, and show increased openness to transacting with them (Badenes et al., 2019). Empirical studies demonstrate that CSR enhances customer happiness, brand recognition, consumer trust, brand attitudes, and brand loyalty (Susilo 2014).

4. CONCLUSION

Social media advertising continues to expand rapidly, with businesses of all sizes implementing social media campaigns and a fast-rising interest in green advertising through these channels. Social media advertising has not only transformed the green consumption market, but it has also significantly influenced consumer psychology and behavior. Consumer receptivity to highly sociable green newsfeed advertising ultimately determines their openness to trying new green products, while the interactive and sharing capabilities of

social media platforms encourage intuitive users to establish emotional connections with others.

This study contributes to the existing literature by introducing a conceptual framework regarding the role of social media platforms in green marketing and business sustainability. Through this framework, organizations can easily understand how various variables influence their overall corporate image when leveraging social media platforms for green marketing. Ultimately, this research assists organizations in prioritizing social media platforms as a core component of their green marketing initiatives, helping them formulate policies and map specific platforms to targeted green initiatives to secure a competitive advantage and a sustainable existence.

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