

Sustainable Business Study and Its Presentation on the Social Network Instagram

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Abstract—This article explores the growing trend of sustainable business practices and their presentation on the Instagram social network, a platform increasingly favored by companies to communicate with their stakeholders. In the research portion of this thesis, we will conduct a content analysis of posts from selected companies and perform a sentiment analysis of their followers and profiles on Instagram.

Keywords—sustainable business, Instagram, social networks, content analysis, sentiment analysis

I. DEFINITION AND CONCEPT OF SUSTAINABLE BUSINESS

The concept of sustainable business has evolved from early notions of corporate social responsibility to encompass broader goals, including environmental protection, social equity, and economic growth. Key milestones in shaping the modern sustainable business landscape include Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* (1962), the establishment of the Environmental Protection Agency (1970), and the adoption of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (2015) (Kopnina *et al.*, 2023). Elkington introduced the *Triple Bottom Line* framework, encouraging companies to evaluate their performance across three dimensions: **profit** (economic viability), **people** (social responsibility), and **planet** (environmental sustainability). This approach aims to promote long-term business success while fostering environmental stewardship and social equity (Elkington, 1999). Ray Anderson (2009) expands this concept with his idea of *restorative sustainability*, arguing that businesses should go beyond merely minimizing environmental harm to actively restoring the natural resources they affect. Anderson advocates for a fundamental transformation of business practices, aligning them more closely with the planet's ecosystems (Anderson, 2009). Paul Hawken emphasizes the need for a paradigm shift in business operations. He critiques traditional industrial practices as inherently unsustainable, often resulting in ecological damage and social inequality. Hawken defines sustainable business as aligning economic activities with principles of ecological integrity, social justice, and economic vitality. He argues that businesses should adopt sustainability not as a charitable endeavor or regulatory obligation, but as a strategic imperative for long-term survival and profitability. This perspective recognizes the finite nature of Earth's resources and the interconnectedness of all living systems (Hawken, 2010).

Lovins proposes a transformative framework for sustainable business grounded in four core principles:

1. **Radically Increasing Resource Productivity:** Companies should adopt innovative technologies

and practices to minimize waste and maximize the value of inputs.

2. **Shifting to Renewable Energy:** Utilizing renewable energy sources like solar, wind, and biomass reduces reliance on finite fossil fuels and mitigates the environmental damage caused by their extraction and use.
3. **Moving to Closed-loop Systems:** Businesses should transition from a linear "take-use-dispose" model to a circular economy, where materials are reused, recycled, or otherwise repurposed to minimize waste and pollution.
4. **Reinventing Business Models:** Lovins advocates for rethinking traditional profit-maximizing strategies. Companies should prioritize creating long-term societal value by fostering innovation, social responsibility, and environmental sustainability.

According to Lovins, integrating these principles into business practices not only protects the planet but also drives economic growth and enhances human well-being. This approach empowers companies to thrive in harmony with nature while contributing to a more sustainable future (Lovins *et al.*, 2000).

II. THE GROWING IMPORTANCE OF SUSTAINABLE BUSINESS

Organizations can no longer overlook the impact of climate change on supply chains, while rising customer expectations demand that companies adopt meaningful sustainability measures. Studies show that businesses operating sustainably foster innovation, build brand equity, and achieve higher profitability (Grayson *et al.*, 2022). Sustainable business practices are critical not only for protecting the environment but also for promoting social well-being and ensuring economic resilience. Growing environmental awareness among consumers and businesses has underscored the urgent need to address climate change and other environmental challenges. Consumer preferences have shifted markedly towards ethically produced, environmentally friendly products, placing increased pressure on companies to adopt greener practices. Governments worldwide are introducing stricter environmental regulations, compelling organizations to transition to sustainable models to remain compliant. In addition, nations are prioritizing investments in businesses that integrate sustainability into their operations. Advances in technology have also facilitated the adoption of sustainable practices, making them more accessible and cost-effective (Rifkin, 2011).

Global initiatives such as the Paris Agreement and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

further incentivize businesses to incorporate sustainability into their strategies. These frameworks encourage organizations to align their operations with global efforts to combat environmental and social challenges. Moreover, sustainability serves as a strategic approach to risk management. By addressing risks related to resource scarcity, regulatory changes, and reputational damage, companies can enhance their long-term viability and resilience. In essence, the transition to sustainable business is driven by a convergence of environmental, social, and economic factors. This movement represents not just a moral or regulatory obligation but a strategic imperative for businesses aiming to thrive in a rapidly evolving global landscape.

III. THE IMPACT OF SUSTAINABLE BUSINESS

Societies rely on collective action, as individuals alone cannot effectively address the sustainability challenges facing the global community (Andersson *et al.*, 2022). Sustainable societies adopt a long-term perspective, prioritizing enduring goals and fostering strong relationships and networks over short-term profitability (Enquist, 2006). Sustainable businesses play a crucial role in supporting social and environmental development while maintaining a balance between economic growth and the preservation of the planet's resources. They prioritize resource efficiency, the adoption of renewable energy, and ethical working conditions. These practices not only minimize ecological footprints but also contribute to creating a more equitable society (Esty *et al.*, 2011). The positive impacts of such businesses include increased biodiversity, reduced greenhouse gas emissions, and enhanced community well-being. Moreover, sustainable businesses often lead by example, setting industry benchmarks that encourage other companies to adopt greener practices. Their efforts amplify positive outcomes on both local and global scales. By committing to sustainability, these businesses demonstrate that economic success can align with environmental stewardship and social progress, paving the way for a more inclusive and sustainable future (McDonough *et al.*, 2002).

However, sustainable businesses face numerous ethical challenges. Ethics are integral to the concept of sustainability, ensuring that economic activities contribute positively to society and the environment. Meanwhile, consumers are also evolving in their preferences, increasingly applying ethical and environmental criteria to their purchasing decisions. Businesses that recognize this shift and offer ethical or greener alternatives differentiate themselves through their organizational values, not merely through marketing strategies. Consumers, employees, and investors are now more inclined to support sustainable initiatives, aligning themselves with brands that embody strong values and sustainable policies. This growing alignment underscores the significance of integrating ethical and environmental considerations into business strategies, ultimately shaping a more conscientious and value-driven marketplace (Charter, 2006).

IV. SOCIAL NETWORKS AND THE PROMOTION OF SUSTAINABLE BUSINESS

Social media offers sustainable companies direct channels

to communicate their values, initiatives, and innovations. This transparency fosters brand trust and engagement with current and future customers. By leveraging social media, sustainable companies can build and maintain communities of supporters. Social media facilitates discussions, shares success stories, and supports community-driven sustainability initiatives. At the same time, companies that effectively use social media to highlight their sustainability efforts can increase brand loyalty among environmentally and socially conscious consumers. They provide valuable information about preferences, trends, and offer direct feedback from consumers, allowing companies to tailor their products, services, and communications to market demands.

Finally, social media serves as a platform for sharing ideas, fostering innovation, and collaborating with other organizations or individuals who want to contribute to sustainability. Integrating social media into the marketing strategies of sustainable companies is not only beneficial but also essential in today's digital age, expanding the reach of the company, strengthening its identity and connecting marketing strategies with key principles of sustainability and corporate responsibility. Social media is an effective tool for sustainable businesses to promote their green and socially responsible initiatives. By using strategic communication, engaging with communities, gathering consumer insights and directly addressing challenges, businesses can effectively use social media to achieve sustainability goals and build a more sustainable future (Shetty, 2020).

Businesses can promote sustainability through social media marketing by sharing their sustainable practices with customers. This approach allows them to demonstrate their commitment to sustainable practices and attract customers who value a green approach. This will help businesses build a strong brand reputation and increase customer loyalty. Customers are more likely to support businesses that prioritize sustainability and align with their values (Sarmiento, 2023). They also serve as a direct channel for receiving feedback from consumers on sustainability initiatives, allowing businesses to adapt and improve their products or services based on real-time input. Therefore, we foresee the contribution of social media as a trigger and support tool for disseminating knowledge and information to promote the adoption of green lifestyles within a value co-creation approach.

Sustainability leaders are now coming up with creative ways to reach consumers. Below, we offer suggestions for individual strategies, along with successful examples of companies (Cohen, 2020). Share data on the company's sustainability activities: If a brand has sustainability initiatives, their results should definitely be shared on social media. Specificity in the examples given: companies have gotten into trouble with authorities because they couldn't prove that the products they claim are sustainable actually are. More specifically, if companies clearly state in their posts why their products are sustainable, these posts will resonate more with their social media audience.

Communicating about sustainability: It's important to highlight the specific actions and initiatives the company is taking to promote sustainability and how these actions contribute to the overall environmental, social and economic impact of the product. It's then important to take customer

feedback into account and constantly look for ways to improve and innovate products and services from a sustainability perspective. Share company goals publicly: Even if companies haven't yet achieved their sustainability goal, it's still worth sharing benchmarks on social media. If companies want to be seen as sustainable, sharing goals is important, and social media audiences see this as action.

Using sustainability in recruiting: According to a 2019 Fast Company survey, nearly 40% of millennials said they chose a job in the past because the company had a better sustainability record than the competition. Hiring campaigns often use sustainability as a way to increase interest among potential employees, thereby attracting them.

Show commitment to the environment: People used to buy used clothes mainly out of necessity or when looking for a bargain, but as sustainability has become more important in the fashion industry, more and more brands are selling old collections.

V. CONTENT OF SOCIAL NETWORKS OF SUSTAINABLE COMPANIES

Sustainable businesses use social media to share content that highlights their sustainability goals, achievements, and challenges. This includes sharing stories about green products, sustainable sourcing, and community engagement initiatives. The content often revolves around showcasing their commitment to environmental, social, and economic principles, as well as their sustainability and corporate responsibility efforts. It must reflect the company's values, commitment to sustainability, and efforts to create a positive social, economic, and environmental impact.

It is important to have quality content; in the book "Jak na síť" (How to Network), the authors (Vyhnánková *et al.*, 2019) created 5 basic types of content:

Entertainment, inspiration, and lifestyle: users most often go to social media to relax, and that is why entertaining content is the most attractive. It should be content that leaves the user amazed, surprised, inspired, or entertained. At the same time, the content should still be related to the brand. A common problem with this type of content is that users get used to it and anything related to the business will annoy them.

Education: this category includes professional articles, research, industry information, or tips and tricks. Everything that broadens users' horizons. Such posts have two basic functions: they strengthen the brand's expertise and educate users. People like to use services or buy products from people who understand their industry, so this type of content should be preferred for sustainable businesses.

Behind-the-scenes, testimonials: as the authors say, everyone wants to see behind-the-scenes, and this is an ideal opportunity to better present the company. There are no limits to how far a company can let users in, but behind-the-scenes content can include, for example, the company's history, work achievements, who the company's employees are, or client references.

Help: this type of content is often displayed for sustainable companies. Brands show how the product will help the user or the public. They usually respond to the most common problems of users. This content is created by itself, you just need to listen to the users.

Sales, product and discounts, competitions: writing

good and non-violent sales posts is difficult, and therefore the authors recommend using this type of content only if a solid base of users or fans has already been created. These posts help to present the products and their use. They can include various discounts and discount codes (Vyhnánková *et al.*, 2019).

Chomsky (2023) adds one to these types of content that is very popular today:

Collaboration with influencers: who have a large following in a specific industry, is currently an excellent way to reach the target group. Influencers create content that feels natural and effectively addresses the given audience (Chomsky, 2023).

Based on the above theoretical background, we decided to conduct research that analyzes the content of the Instagram social network of profiles of sustainable companies selected by us.

VI. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The main goal of the research is a content analysis of selected profiles of sustainable companies on the social network Instagram, as well as an analysis of the sentiment of comments that followers of selected companies leave under their posts.

Sentiment analysis, also known as attitude analysis, is the process of identifying, extracting, and quantifying subjective information primarily from textual data. In practice, this means analyzing people's opinions, feelings, evaluations, attitudes, and emotions toward given subjects. The analysis focuses primarily on opinions that express or imply positive or negative feelings (Bing, 2020). In our case, we will focus on emotions in text form—in comments.

We also focused on the content of shared posts, which we evaluate through content analysis. Krippendorff (2018) defines content analysis as a systematic and objective approach to analyzing text, audio, visual, or any other form of communication. For content analysis to be successful, it is important to define clear coding schemes and categories that are consistent with the research goals and theoretical framework (Krippendorff, 2013).

The research material consists of selected sustainable companies. We chose the clothing industry, which is considered one of the biggest polluters. If nothing changes, the fashion industry will produce a quarter of CO₂ emissions by 2050. People buy around 80 billion pieces of clothing every year, which seriously burdens the environment with their production. This is also why many clothing companies have started to deal with sustainability (Otajovičová, 2019). The research file was selected based on the ranking compiled by Sustainability Magazine, which defined the best clothing companies of 2023. Although the clothing industry is known as one of the biggest polluters, contributing to 10% of the pollution that causes climate change, there are many global brands that are eager to make a difference (Buchholz, 2023). We selected six companies from the list of ten companies. The selected companies are: *Patagonia, Tentree, Reformation, Pact, Quince, Whimsy + Row*.

Data collection method from the social network Instagram of selected companies, we analyzed user reactions during one month (20.1.2024–20.2.2024), the file is sufficiently

The analysis indicates that Instagram post formats elicit varied responses from users. Reels and videos emerge as the most positively received, with a significant majority of positive comments (1,058) compared to negative (270) and neutral (160). Carousel posts with photos follow, generating a higher number of positive comments (291) than negative (148) and neutral (101). Similarly, photo posts garner favorable feedback, with positive comments (371) surpassing neutral (91) and negative (19) ones.

Other formats, such as Carousels combining photos and videos, infographics, and Carousels with videos only, receive fewer overall comments but maintain a positive sentiment predominance. Notably, infographics, despite their lower engagement levels, attract very few negative responses, suggesting they are generally well-received, though less discussed than more dynamic formats.

Overall, Instagram users exhibit a clear preference for visual and dynamic content, with Reels and videos being particularly effective in generating positive reactions. While negative sentiment exists, it remains relatively limited compared to positive and neutral responses. These findings underscore the value of engaging, visually dynamic content for sustainable companies aiming to connect with their audience.

Research Question 3: How are individual types of post content perceived by users on social networks based on the sentiment expressed in comments on Instagram?

Table 1. Sentiment analysis: Perception of the content of Instagram posts

	Positive	Neutral	Negative
Education	285	72	387
Influencer	618	42	25
Product	282	241	39
Lifestyle	287	121	74
Testimonial	157	21	4
Motto	28	9	6
Fun	9	14	17
Sale	15	5	0
Inspiration	6	11	2
Event	9	0	0

Source: Own processing

Educational posts are the most positively received category on social networks, with a significant majority of positive comments (618) compared to negative (72) and neutral (285). This indicates a strong engagement and favourable reception of educational content among users. Influencer posts and product posts also generate a high number of positive comments (282 and 287, respectively); however, they also attract relatively higher numbers of negative comments (42 and 39) compared to other categories. This suggests that while these posts are popular, they may provoke more controversy or differing opinions. Lifestyle and testimonial posts show a similar distribution of positive and neutral comments, reflecting a generally favourable but more reserved user response. Posts categorized as entertaining content receive fewer positive comments overall. Meanwhile, sales posts, inspirational content, and posts about events tend to garner a low volume of comments, potentially indicating reduced user interest in these types of content.

Research Question 4: What format of posts within sustainable companies gets the most likes from users on the social network Instagram?

Table 2. Occurrence of formats in relation to user interaction (Likes) on Instagram

	Number of Likes
Reelsvideo	414910
Carousel-photo	230462
Photo	74243
Carousel-photo + video	36456
Carousel-video	6778
Infographic	1648
Carousel-infographic	118

Source: Own processing

The total number of posts on the Instagram social network of the six selected companies was 146 posts over a period of one month. No post was duplicated and shared multiple times. All shared posts of the selected sustainable companies were included in this research. From the graphic display, we can clearly see that the most preferred format in terms of liking posts is the Reelsvideo format (414,910 likes). The results indicate that users prefer this format to static formats. Moving formats with music displace more traditional formats such as photos or infographics and are very engaging and resonate with Instagram users. An interesting finding concerns the Carousel format, which allows you to present multiple images or graphics in one post, but forces users to click through the content. The user is therefore not just a passive recipient, but wants to learn more about the issue. Sustainable companies are trying to reach and target users who are interested, as we demonstrated in the theoretical part. Other formats, such as single photos, combined carousels, or infographics, have significantly lower like counts, indicating that they are less preferred among sustainable companies on Instagram.

Research Question 5: What format of posts within sustainable companies has the highest number of comments from users on the social network Instagram?

Table 3. Occurrence of formats in relation to user interaction (Comments) on Instagram

	Number of comments
Carousel-photo	15625
Reelsvideo	4414
Photo	3630
Carousel-photo + video	227
Infographic	84
Carousel-video	18
Carousel-infographic	4

Source: Own processing

The Carousel-photo post format received the highest number of comments from users on the Instagram social network with 15,625 comments. This type of post shows the highest level of interaction compared to other formats, which suggests that presenting multiple photos in one post can arouse greater interest and stimulate discussion among users. The carousel format allows companies to present a series of photos at once, which are thematically aligned, which provides richer context and can support deeper discussion among users. This may be the result of a change in Instagram's algorithm, as we mentioned in the theoretical part of the thesis, Instagram prefers the carousel format. At the same time, the Reelsvideo format follows with 4,414 comments, which is less than the photo carousel, but still represents a significant number of interactions, which indicates the popularity of video content. Reelsvideos offer a dynamic and often entertaining way to share information. The

individual photos received 3,630 comments, proving that even simple visual content can be effective in generating user comments. Other formats have significantly lower comment counts, signaling that these types of content are less engaging for Instagram users in terms of discussion and interaction.

Research Question 6: What content of posts within sustainable companies do users like the most on the social network Instagram?

Table 4. Content occurrence in relation to interaction (Likes) of Instagram social network users

	number of likes to content
Education	327764
Lifestyle	189901
Influencer	113537
Product	61065
Fun	23090
Motto	15829
Inspiration	8001
Event	7870
Sale	7140
Testimonial	6836
Giveaway	3327
Promo code	255

Source: Own processing

In the selected research set (146 posts) on the social network Instagram, the content of the post focused on Education (327,764 likes) dominates. This also confirms the claims in the theoretical part of the thesis that consumers who are interested in sustainability are people who are educated and are not just passive recipients. Instagram users have a high preference for content that provides information and education about sustainability and related topics. This is followed by Lifestyle content with 189,901 likes, which indicates that posts that integrate sustainability into everyday life and offer inspiration for lifestyle are also very popular among users. Posts with content from Influencers (113,537 likes), who are a current phenomenon on social networks and can attract the attention of social network users, also have a strong response. This also points to the importance that these personalities have in spreading awareness about sustainability. The categories Sale, Testimonial, Giveaway, and Promo Code received the fewest likes, which may indicate that direct marketing and calls to action are not as effective on Instagram as content that is more focused on brand values and builds community.

Research Question 7: What content of posts within sustainable companies do users comment on the most on the social network Instagram?

Table 5. Content occurrence in relation to user interaction (Comments) on Instagram

	number of coments to content
Education	17493
Giveaway	3328
Influencer	887
Lifestyle	860
Product	819
Testimonial	205
Event	153
Sale	87
Inspiration	67
Fun	54
Motto	49
Education	17493

Source: Own processing

According to the results collected from the available data of the graph, it was shown that users on the social network Instagram comment the most on the content of posts related to Education with a total of 17,493 comments. This shows that educational posts generate a high level of engagement and are likely to be perceived as valuable and stimulating discussion among users. The second most commented type of content is giveaways - competitions with 3,328 comments, which indicates that competitions are an effective way to encourage user interaction. Posts from influencers with 887 comments indicate that influential personalities on social networks can effectively engage their audience in the discussion about sustainability. Other forms of content received significantly fewer comments, which indicates that these topics may not be as stimulating for users to discuss as educational content or interactive competitions.

VIII. CONCLUSION

Based on the data presented, our research concludes that social media users generally hold a positive perception of companies focused on sustainability. This favorable view is supported by the high number of positive reactions and comments on posts related to sustainable practices.

Educational content that effectively communicates sustainable initiatives and their significance demonstrated particularly high levels of interaction and engagement, as evidenced by increased numbers of likes and comments.

The sentiment analysis of Instagram comments about selected sustainable companies reveals that the majority of users appreciate these companies' sustainable initiatives and social responsibility. This indicates a strong association between sustainability and positive brand perception, which is crucial for building and enhancing brand strength in the public eye.

The content analysis further highlights notable differences in user engagement based on post formats. Dynamic content such as Reels videos and Carousel posts achieved significantly higher "like" metrics, reflecting greater user interaction compared to static single-content posts.

These findings underline the effectiveness of Instagram as a platform for sharing sustainable initiatives and engaging audiences. Frequent posting and the ability to generate user responses in the form of likes and comments demonstrate the platform's potential to amplify sustainability-focused communication.

We believe that this research offers valuable insights into the growing importance of sustainable business and the increasing role of social networks in corporate communication. The results highlight innovative strategies that companies can adopt to align with today's trends and enhance their sustainability messaging.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

No conflict of interest was reported in this work.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

All authors had approved the final version.

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