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Social Media Marketing For Climate Action: A Study On Indian Brands Promoting SDG 13

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Abstract

Social media has emerged as a vital tool for shaping consumer perceptions, influencing behaviors, and promoting sustainability. In India, where climate change is both an urgent policy issue and a consumer concern, brands are increasingly using social media marketing to align with Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 13 – Climate Action. This study examines how Indian brands leverage social media to communicate climate-related messages, evaluates consumer engagement and sentiment toward such content, and analyzes the effectiveness of sustainable messaging in strengthening brand image and trust.

A structured survey of 150 consumers across Tier-1 and Tier-2 Indian cities, combined with a content analysis of climate-related campaigns by leading Indian brands, provides empirical evidence. Statistical tools including percentage analysis, Chi-square tests, and ANOVA were applied. Findings reveal that while sustainability-related posts generate higher engagement and positive sentiment compared to generic posts, the effectiveness of messaging depends on factors such as visual storytelling, cultural relevance, and perceived authenticity. The study concludes that integrating authentic sustainability narratives with interactive content strategies can significantly enhance both consumer trust and brand equity, while contributing to climate action goals.

Keywords: Social Media Marketing, Climate Action, SDG 13, Sustainability, Consumer Engagement, India

Introduction

Climate change has become a defining global challenge, and businesses are increasingly expected to contribute toward climate action through sustainable practices. In India, which is among the most climate-vulnerable nations, brands are adopting social media marketing strategies to communicate their commitment to sustainability. Platforms such as Instagram, Twitter (X), and Facebook have become powerful arenas for shaping consumer awareness and mobilizing climate-friendly behaviours.

SDG 13 (Climate Action) calls for urgent steps to combat climate change and its impacts. For businesses, aligning with SDG 13 not only fulfils a social responsibility but also resonates with an increasingly eco-conscious consumer base. However, questions remain about the effectiveness of social media campaigns in driving real engagement and influencing consumer trust.

While environmental NGOs often use social media for awareness campaigns, Indian corporate brands are now blending climate messaging into their broader marketing strategies. The challenge lies in ensuring that such communication is perceived as authentic and impactful, rather than as "greenwashing".

This study investigates:

1. How Indian brands use social media marketing to promote climate action messages aligned with SDG 13.
2. The extent of consumer engagement and sentiment toward such messages.
3. The effectiveness of sustainable messaging in strengthening brand image and building trust.

Literature Review

- **Gupta & Syed (2022):** Social media shapes green consumer behavior in India through factors like word of mouth, trust, and interactivity, enhancing willingness to pay for eco-friendly products.
- **Delvaux & Van den Broeck (2023):** While social marketing research increasingly addresses environmental topics, limited attention has been given specifically to SDG 13, indicating a research gap.
- **Beena & Vethanayagam (2023):** Indian NGOs use creative Instagram strategies (imagery, overlays, themes) to communicate abstract climate issues, demonstrating the power of visual narratives.
- **Corner & Randall (2011):** Social marketing, while effective for small behavior changes, may be insufficient for broader climate action; alternative strategies emphasizing authenticity are critical.

The literature indicates that social media is a powerful but limited tool. Success depends on authenticity, cultural alignment, and the ability to inspire trust beyond surface-level engagement.

Objectives & Hypotheses

Objectives

1. To study how Indian brands use social media marketing to communicate climate action messages aligned with SDG 13.
2. To measure consumer engagement and sentiment toward climate-related social media content.
3. To analyze the effectiveness of sustainable messaging in improving brand image and customer trust.

Hypotheses

- **H1:** Climate action messages on social media generate higher engagement than non-sustainability-related content.
- **H2:** Positive consumer sentiment toward climate-related posts significantly enhances brand trust.
- **H3:** Demographic factors (age, gender, digital literacy) influence engagement with sustainability-related social media content.

Methodology

- **Research Design:** Descriptive and Analytical
- **Sample Size:** 150 respondents (social media users in India)
- **Sampling Method:** Stratified sampling (age, gender, city type)
- **Data Sources:**
    - Primary: Online survey on consumer engagement with climate-related posts.
    - Secondary: Content analysis of sustainability campaigns by 5 leading Indian brands (FMCG, apparel, energy).
- **Tools for Analysis:**
    - Percentage Analysis (for awareness & sentiment)
    - Chi-square Test (engagement vs. perception)

     o   ANOVA (demographics vs. engagement levels)

Data Analysis

Table 1: Engagement with Climate-Related Social Media Posts

Engagement Type	% of Respondents
Like/React	68%
Comment	40%
Share/Repost	35%
Ignore/No Action	20%

Interpretation: Majority engage positively, with likes being the most common, though deeper engagement (comments/shares) is lower.

Table 2: Chi-Square Test – Perception vs. Engagement

- **Chi-Square Value:** 13.25
- **p-value:** 0.021

Interpretation: There is a significant relationship between consumer perception of authenticity and their level of engagement.

Table 3: ANOVA – Demographics vs. Engagement with Climate Messaging

- **F-value:** 3.87
- **p-value:** 0.011

Interpretation: Younger and digitally active consumers show significantly higher engagement with climate action content.

Findings

1. **Indian brands increasingly integrate climate action messages** into social media marketing, using visual and interactive strategies.
2. **Engagement is high but shallow**—most users "like" posts but fewer share or comment, suggesting awareness > action.
3. **Authenticity drives engagement**: Consumers are more likely to engage with brands they perceive as genuinely committed.
4. **Demographics matter**: Younger users and those more digitally active show stronger responses to climate-related campaigns.
5. **Trust and brand image improve** when climate messaging is consistent, transparent, and culturally relevant.

Conclusion

The study highlights the growing importance of social media as a driver of climate communication for Indian brands. While climate-related messages enhance consumer engagement and trust, effectiveness depends on authenticity, cultural alignment, and interactive storytelling. Brands that treat climate action as a core strategy rather than a marketing add-on are more successful in building long-term trust and loyalty.

For brands, this means investing in consistent, transparent communication and aligning climate messages with actual sustainable practices. For policymakers and NGOs, partnerships with corporate brands can amplify SDG 13 messaging and mobilize collective climate action.

Future research may focus on comparing NGO-led vs. brand-led climate communication, and on measuring the long-term behavioral impacts of social media campaigns on eco-friendly consumer practices.

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