

Sustainability | Individual communication

IC - (20902) - SOCIAL MEDIA INFLUENCERS PROMOTING SUSTAINABLE CONSUMPTION: THE EFFECT OF ARGUMENT QUALITY AND DYNAMIC NORMS ON POST CREDIBILITY AND PERSUASIVENESS

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Background and objectives

Although social media has numerous advantages, these networks are loosely controlled, which can raise concerns regarding content credibility. Social media influencers, although not experts, can also encourage sustainable consumption. Previous studies indicated that both argument quality and the inclusion of dynamic norms can affect the persuasiveness of a message that is positively related to message credibility. This study investigates whether stronger arguments such as reference to a well-known sustainability expert and the presence of dynamic norms affect perceived credibility and persuasiveness.

Process and methods (for empirical research)

We designed a 2 (control vs strong arguments) x 2 (control vs dynamic norm) online mixed-method experiment. The sample comprised 386 participants ($M_{age}=22.0$, 71.9% female). A real Instagram post about reducing the consumption of single-use plastic was selected, posted by a lifestyle-fitness influencer, which was modified to correspond to the experiment's goals. Highly reliable open-ended and Likert measures were used to assess the credibility and persuasiveness.

Main results (or main arguments in the case of critical reviews)

Spontaneously mentioning that the post is not credible was influenced by the interaction of argument quality and dynamic norms: dynamic norms improved the credibility if the message lacked strong arguments. We also found a robust positive main effect of argument quality regarding quantitative assessment of post credibility and persuasiveness.

Implications for research and practice/policy | Importance and originality of the contribution

Stronger arguments improve the credibility and persuasiveness of a social media influencer's post promoting sustainable consumption. However, the dynamic norms can improve the post's credibility without strong arguments.

This study contributes to the emerging field of influencers' sustainability communication. This pioneering study simultaneously examines the effect of argument quality and dynamic norms on the credibility and persuasiveness of their posts.

Palavras-chave : social media, influencer, sustainable consumption, dynamic norms, argument quality