

FROM DIGITAL ENGAGEMENT TO SUSTAINABLE CHOICE: AN INTEGRATIVE MODEL OF MARKETING COMMUNICATION WITH GENERATION Z

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Key words: digital marketing, Generation Z, sustainable consumption, circular economy, advertising ethics, engagement, loyalty.

Abstract: Digitalization has changed how consumers search for information, evaluate brands, and make purchasing decisions. This transformation is particularly visible among Generation Z, whose members expect fast, personalized, and two-way communication while also expressing concern for sustainability, ethics, and corporate responsibility. This paper uses an integrative analysis of the author's previous theoretical and empirical studies to examine how digital engagement can develop into trust, sustainable choice, and long-term loyalty. The review includes studies of conversational marketing, targeted communication through Viber, organic and paid Instagram advertising, advertising ethics on social networks, Generation Z's attitudes toward the circular economy and eco-products, and customer satisfaction and loyalty. The synthesis indicates that message visibility alone is insufficient. Effective communication emerges when relevant content, response speed, channel selection, transparency, and sustainable value are aligned. An integrative model is proposed in which digital engagement influences sustainable choice indirectly through perceived relevance, trust, and actionable opportunity. Particular attention is paid to the gap between positive environmental attitudes and actual behavior. This gap cannot be reduced through promotional messages alone; it requires education, accessible infrastructure, credible evidence, and a simple user experience. The paper formulates eight research propositions and provides recommendations for companies communicating with young consumers in Western Balkan markets.

INTEGRATIVNI MODEL MARKETINŠKE KOMUNIKACIJE SA GENERACIJOM Z

Ključne riječi: digitalni marketing, generacija Z, održiva potrošnja, cirkularna ekonomija, etika oglašavanja, angažovanost, lojalnost.

Sažetak: Digitalizacija je promijenila način na koji potrošači traže informacije, procjenjuju brendove i donose odluke o kupovini. Ova transformacija posebno je izražena kod generacije Z, čiji pripadnici očekuju brzu, personalizovanu i dvosmjernu komunikaciju, dok istovremeno pokazuju interesovanje za održivost, etiku i korporativnu odgovornost.

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U ovom radu se, kroz integrativnu analizu prethodnih teorijskih i empirijskih istraživanja autora, ispituje na koji način digitalna angažovanost može prerasti u povjerenje, održiv izbor i dugoročnu lojalnost. Pregled obuhvata istraživanja konverzacijskog marketinga, ciljane komunikacije putem Vibera, organskog i plaćenog oglašavanja na Instagramu, etike oglašavanja na društvenim mrežama, stavova generacije Z prema cirkularnoj ekonomiji i ekološkim proizvodima, kao i zadovoljstva i lojalnosti potrošača. Sinteza rezultata pokazuje da sama vidljivost poruke nije dovoljna. Efikasna komunikacija nastaje kada su relevantan sadržaj, brzina odgovora, izbor komunikacionog kanala, transparentnost i održive vrijednosti međusobno usklađeni. Predlaže se integrativni model prema kojem digitalna angažovanost posredno utiče na održiv izbor putem percipirane relevantnosti, povjerenja i mogućnosti za konkretno djelovanje. Posebna pažnja posvećena je jazu između pozitivnih stavova prema zaštiti životne sredine i stvarnog ponašanja potrošača. Ovaj jaz nije moguće smanjiti isključivo promotivnim porukama, već su potrebni edukacija, dostupna infrastruktura, vjerodostojni dokazi i jednostavno korisničko iskustvo.

U radu je formulisano osam istraživačkih propozicija i date su preporuke kompanijama koje komuniciraju sa mladim potrošačima na tržištima Zapadnog Balkana.

1. Introduction

The purpose of the paper is not to present previously collected data as a new empirical study. Instead, it offers a new conceptual synthesis of findings generated through several independent research projects. Its central contribution is the proposed sequence from exposure and engagement to trust, actionable opportunity, sustainable behavior, and loyalty. The model treats ethical transparency and the practical possibility of action as essential links between communication and behavior. This approach allows marketing metrics, sustainability attitudes, and relationship outcomes to be interpreted within one coherent framework.

The contemporary consumer is no longer a passive recipient of promotional messages. Consumers search, compare, comment, publicly evaluate, and create content that shapes brand meaning. This change has emerged through the simultaneous development of social networks, mobile applications, e-commerce, and conversational technologies. Product information has become widely available, real-time interaction is expected, and the range of alternatives is nearly unlimited. Market power has consequently shifted toward the customer, while the quality of the relationship has become as important as the quality of the product itself (Miroslavljević & Milovanović, 2022). This environment is particularly compatible with the behavioral patterns of Generation Z. It is the first generational cohort that has not experienced a world without the Internet. Its members receive information from multiple sources, move quickly between platforms, and share experiences with companies through their personal networks. They evaluate not only the functional benefits of an offer but also a company's values, treatment of stakeholders, and impact on society and the environment. Priporas et al. (2017) argue that smart retail interactions must address Generation Z's expectations regarding technology, speed, and personalization. Technological sophistication, however, does not automatically create trust. The growth of digital communication coincides with increasing concern about sustainable consumption. A survey of 1,338 Generation Z respondents in Serbia and Republic of Srpska found that 89.5% were concerned about the future of the planet and 96.4% considered recycling good and useful. Nevertheless, only 39.2% separated waste for recycling, and only 26.5% knew what the circular economy was (Milovanović et al., 2021). These results demonstrate that a positive at-

titude is not equivalent to knowledge, and knowledge is not equivalent to behavior. Digital marketing and sustainable consumption intersect at precisely this point. Social networks and mobile platforms can increase message reach, but reach does not necessarily produce understanding, trust, or behavioral change. An organic post may generate more interaction than a paid advertisement without necessarily producing a purchase. A personalized message may be useful but can also be perceived as an intrusion into privacy. Sustainability may be an important motive, yet it remains a declarative preference when infrastructure is unavailable and evidence is not credible. The subject of this paper is the relationship between digital engagement, ethical communication, and the sustainable choices of Generation Z. The aim is to build an integrative conceptual model based on prior research findings and relevant literature. The paper assumes that digital engagement does not exert an immediate and automatic effect on sustainable behavior. Its effect depends on content relevance, trust in the source, transparency of claims, and the consumer's practical ability to perform the desired behavior.

2. From one-way promotion to relationship-based communication

The traditional promotional model was based on message control and distribution to large audiences. Digital platforms disrupted this logic because a message no longer ends when it is published. It becomes a trigger for comments, recommendations, criticism, and user-generated content. Conversational marketing should therefore not be reduced to the use of chatbots. Its essence lies in establishing and maintaining personalized dialogue across channels to improve customer value and marketing effectiveness (Miroslavljević & Milovanović, 2022). Dialogue transforms the consumer's role at three levels. First, the consumer becomes a source of information about needs and experiences. Second, the consumer becomes a public interpreter of offer quality because reviews and comments affect other users. Third, the consumer may become a collaborator in product and communication development. This transformation increases the value of engagement while reducing the company's ability to control its reputation. An unanswered question, inaccurate claim, or inappropriate employee response can spread faster than a planned campaign. A relationship perspective further emphasizes that value does not exist only in the product. It also emerges through search, purchase, delivery, use, complaint handling, and customer support. Research involving professional customers in the automotive aftermarket showed that service quality is related to satisfaction and loyalty, although these relationships are not always simple or linear (Milovanović et al., 2019; Perić et al., 2020). For customers in Bosnia and Herzegovina, product range, delivery, and the price–quality ratio were particularly important, while complaint resolution and other service factors differed in importance across the markets studied (Perić et al., 2020).

These findings also apply to digital communication. A fast message cannot compensate for poor delivery, just as attractive content cannot conceal inadequate complaint resolution over time. Digital channels can facilitate a relationship, but they cannot replace real value. Engagement should thus be understood as an entry stage rather than the final result of a relationship. Views, reactions, and comments indicate that content attracted attention; they do not prove that trust, satisfaction, or loyalty was created. Four sequential outcomes should be distinguished: exposure, engagement, trust, and behavior. Exposure

represents contact with content; engagement denotes a reaction or interaction; trust is an assessment of the credibility of the message and sender; and behavior includes purchase, recommendation, recycling, repeat purchase, or another observable action. A common analytical error occurs when high values for the first two groups of indicators are treated as evidence of the latter two.

3. Channel selection, content relevance, and engagement

The study of targeted communication through Viber demonstrates the importance of matching a channel with a specific segment and business situation. The research included 553 professional customers. Among retail-channel respondents, 79.5% considered Viber or SMS messages concerning working hours and delivery very useful, and 85.7% stated that a combination of image and text made the message easier to understand. Furthermore, 46.5% opened the message within five minutes and another 33.4% within ten minutes (Milovanović & Mamula Nikolić, 2022). Despite the speed and perceived usefulness of mobile messages, direct telephone calls to branches and the free information line remained the most useful source in the retail channel, whereas the webshop was the most useful source in the wholesale channel. In retail, 46.5% selected direct calls as the most useful method and 41.6% selected the Viber service. In wholesale, 38% identified the webshop, 32% direct calls from sales representatives, and 28% the Viber service as the most useful source (Milovanović & Mamula Nikolić, 2021). These results confirm that there is no universally superior channel. Channel usefulness depends on the type of information, urgency, segment habits, and stage of the buying process. A mobile message is suitable for rapid notification, a webshop for checking availability and placing orders, and employee contact for complex questions or problem resolution. The most effective system allows channels to complement each other rather than forcing every task through a platform selected by the company. Omnichannel communication therefore means continuity of experience, not merely simultaneous presence on several platforms. A study of organic and paid Instagram advertising reached a comparable conclusion. Five organic and two paid methods were tested over seven weeks on a vegan-food profile. The findings showed that some organic methods produced better results on certain indicators, while paid methods performed better on others (Milovanović et al., 2022). Paid distribution can accelerate reach, but it cannot substitute for content relevance or authentic interaction. For Generation Z, relevance has an additional identity dimension. Content should be visually clear and immediately understandable, but it should also be meaningful enough to share. An environmental message does not become credible simply by using green design or the word sustainable. It must explain what is changing, who is responsible, and how the consumer can participate. Leckie et al. (2021) link engagement with green brands to behaviors that extend beyond purchasing, including advocacy and voluntary support.

P1: *Perceived content relevance positively affects the relationship between exposure to a digital message and Generation Z engagement.*

P2: *The fit between a communication channel and the user's task positively affects customer experience and trust.*

4. Generation Z and the attitude-behavior gap

Generation Z is frequently characterized as environmentally aware and socially engaged. This description has an empirical basis but requires careful interpretation. In the survey conducted in Serbia and Republic of Srpska, almost all respondents supported recycling, while actual waste separation was considerably less frequent. Among respondents who did not separate waste, 93.6% cited the absence of separate recycling containers in their surroundings as a reason (Milovanović et al., 2021). The barrier was therefore not only attitude or motivation but also the practical opportunity to act.

The discrepancy between attitudes and behavior is a central problem in sustainable-consumption research. The theory of planned behavior proposes that intention depends on attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control (Ajzen, 2020). A young consumer may support recycling but fail to act when containers are unavailable or disposal instructions are uncertain. The same reasoning applies to eco-product purchasing when sustainable alternatives are expensive, difficult to find, or inadequately labeled. The comparative results also provide important context. Concern about the planet was reported by 91.9% of respondents in Serbia and 85.2% in Republic of Srpska. Respondents in Serbia more frequently identified global warming as the greatest threat, while those in Republic of Srpska more frequently selected polluted air. Although several differences were statistically significant, their associations were small, indicating more similarity than difference between the two groups (Milovanović et al., 2021). A later confirmatory factor analysis based on the same broad research domain found a statistically significant and relatively strong relationship between sustainability and circular-economy attitudes and corresponding behavior. In contrast, the relationship between sustainability and circular-economy behavior and awareness of the circular economy was relatively weak and statistically insignificant. Respondents knew more about companies that recycle products than about the circular economy as a concept, while most expressed a willingness to learn more (Mamula Nikolić et al., 2022). These findings show that sustainable behavior may occur without developed conceptual knowledge, but limited knowledge can reduce consistency and range. Environmental claims must therefore be understandable, verifiable, and connected to a product, its packaging, supply chain, use, or disposal. Eco-labels can simplify evaluation only when consumers understand and trust them (Taufique et al., 2019). Vague or exaggerated claims increase the risk of greenwashing and can weaken attitudes and beliefs concerning green consumption (Braga Junior et al., 2019).

P3: *A positive attitude toward sustainability has a stronger influence on behavior when the sustainable option is available, understandable, and easy to use.*

P4: *Credible evidence of sustainability mediates the relationship between an environmental message and trust in a brand.*

5. Ethics, privacy, and trust in digital communication

The growth of precise targeting allows marketers to tailor messages according to interests, location, behavior, and previous purchases. The same capability raises questions about privacy, transparency, and the boundary between useful personalization and manipulation. Data may increase message relevance while simultaneously producing discomfort if users

do not understand how those data were obtained or why they are seeing a particular advertisement. Advertising ethics must therefore be treated as part of campaign design rather than an additional compliance step.

Research on advertising ethics on social networks, conducted among 350 respondents, emphasized the need for clearer ethical guidelines and rules that protect user interests and advertiser integrity (Milovanović et al., 2023). Sensitive areas include deceptive claims, hidden advertising, personal-data use, targeting of children and other vulnerable groups, and failure to disclose the commercial nature of influencer content. Digital format does not reduce the obligation of truthfulness; the speed and scale of distribution increase the potential harm. Transparency has at least three forms. Sender transparency means that users know who is communicating and on whose behalf. Commercial transparency requires paid and sponsored content to be recognizable. Evidence transparency requires claims about quality, savings, recyclability, or emissions reductions to have an adequate factual basis. Ethical communication does not eliminate persuasion; it respects the consumer's autonomy to decide using accurate and sufficiently complete information (Laczniak & Murphy, 2019). Trust connects communication with loyalty. Consumers may react once to provocative or inaccurate content, but such engagement rarely builds a stable relationship. Conversely, a consistent response, admission of error, and fair complaint resolution can strengthen trust even after a service failure. Research on professional customers found that delivery and complaint resolution had important roles in predicting loyalty in particular Balkan markets (Perić et al., 2020). A digital channel should make these processes more visible and convenient rather than replacing them with automated messages that offer no solution. The ethical risks of datafication extend beyond individual advertisements. Van Dijck (2014) describes how datafication can normalize surveillance-oriented interpretations of social activity.

P5: *Transparency regarding data processing and commercial intent positively affects trust, even when it reduces the short-term persuasiveness of a message.*

P6: *Perceived manipulation negatively moderates the relationship between personalization and engagement. Personalization is beneficial only while the user experiences it as assistance rather than surveillance or exploitation.*

6. Methodology of the integrative review

The paper is designed as an integrative literature review followed by conceptual synthesis. This approach was selected because the research problem encompasses several related streams: digital channels, engagement, service quality, satisfaction, loyalty, advertising ethics, sustainable consumption, and Generation Z behavior. The objective is neither to retest hypotheses from earlier studies nor to present existing data as newly collected evidence. The objective is to connect their findings and derive a model suitable for future empirical testing. The primary corpus consisted of eight papers in which the author of the present study was an author or co-author. The selected papers directly examined: conversational marketing; targeted communication through Viber; organic and paid advertising on Instagram; ethics of social-network advertising; Generation Z attitudes toward the circular economy; awareness, attitudes, and behavior regarding eco-products; and two studies of

service quality, satisfaction, and professional-customer loyalty. Other submitted publications were assessed for thematic relevance but excluded from the central synthesis when their inclusion would have broadened the subject without a clear contribution to the model.

The analysis was conducted in four stages. First, the research objective, sample, method, and principal findings of every study were extracted. Second, findings were coded into the following categories: channel, content, speed, personalization, engagement, transparency, sustainable attitude, opportunity to act, satisfaction, and loyalty. Third, relationships and apparent contradictions across categories were examined. Fourth, conceptual relationships and research propositions were formulated. Sources cited in the original papers were incorporated only when they directly explained a relationship included in the proposed model. The source studies used different research designs. The Generation Z survey included 1,338 respondents aged 12 to 26 from Serbia and Republic of Srpska and applied descriptive statistics, Chi-square tests, and T-tests (Milovanović et al., 2021). The eco-product study applied both maximum-likelihood and Bayesian confirmatory factor analysis to the same general research field (Mamula Nikolić et al., 2022). The Viber case study included 553 professional customers and used descriptive statistics (Milovanović & Mamula Nikolić, 2022). The Instagram study tested seven methods over 49 days (Milovanović et al., 2022).

Methodological limitations arise from the heterogeneity of these studies. Samples differ by age, customer type, country, and market; methods range from theoretical review and descriptive statistics to predictive modeling and confirmatory factor analysis. Their results cannot be statistically aggregated as a meta-analysis, and no common effect size can be calculated. The proposed model should thus be interpreted as a theoretically grounded framework for new testing, not as a causal model already confirmed by the combined data. An additional limitation concerns the time context of research conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic. Channel-use habits under restricted operations may not transfer completely to normal market conditions. Nevertheless, these studies clearly reveal how usefulness, speed, and continuity of information shape channel evaluation, which remains relevant outside a crisis.

7. The proposed integrative model

The synthesis supports a model composed of five connected domains: marketing stimulus, digital engagement, credibility assessment, sustainable action opportunity, and relationship outcome. Marketing stimulus includes content, channel, format, timing, and personalization. Digital engagement includes attention, viewing, reaction, commenting, sharing, and conversation. Credibility assessment covers transparency, ethicality, message-practice consistency, and trust. Sustainable action opportunity includes product availability, acceptable cost, understandable labeling, infrastructure, and process simplicity. Relationship outcomes include sustainable choice, satisfaction, recommendation, and loyalty.

The first part of the model is based on evidence that format, speed, and channel fit increase message usefulness. The Viber study found rapid opening rates and a strong preference for combined image-and-text messages, while also demonstrating the continuing value of telephone contact and the webshop (Milovanović & Mamula Nikolić, 2022). The Instagram study showed different advantages for organic and paid approaches (Milova-

nović et al., 2022). Their shared implication is that engagement rises when communication corresponds to the user's immediate task.

The second part explains how engagement develops into trust. Transparency and consistency are decisive at this stage. Users evaluate not only a message but also the company's conduct. When a brand communicates sustainability but cannot substantiate claims regarding materials, packaging, production, or recycling, engagement can turn into skepticism. When personalization is based on opaque tracking, usefulness may be displaced by a sense of surveillance. Ethics is therefore not a restriction on effectiveness; it is a condition for a durable effect.

The third part explains the transition from trust to behavior. Positive attitudes and trust remain insufficient in the presence of a practical barrier. The contrast between 96.4% support for recycling and 39.2% actual waste separation, combined with the dominant infrastructure explanation, illustrates the importance of situational factors (Milovanović et al., 2021). Companies must offer more than a message: returnable packaging, accessible collection points, clear declarations, simple procedures, and reasonable economic value.

The fourth part connects sustainable action with relationship outcomes. A successful sustainable action can reinforce satisfaction because the consumer experiences congruence between personal values and brand conduct. Repeated congruent experiences may encourage recommendation and loyalty. The relationship nevertheless depends on core service quality. Evidence from professional-customer studies indicates that product range, delivery, value, and complaint handling remain central loyalty factors (Milovanović et al., 2019; Perić et al., 2020). Sustainability cannot compensate for persistent operational failure.

P7: Digital engagement positively influences sustainable choice and loyalty indirectly through trust and perceived action opportunity.

P8: Consistency between an environmental message and a company's operational practices strengthens the relationship between trust and loyalty.

8. Discussion

The proposed model connects research domains that are frequently examined separately. Digital-marketing research usually measures reach, clicks, and interaction; sustainability research examines attitudes and intentions; and relationship marketing tracks satisfaction and loyalty. The consumer journey, however, combines all these levels. A user first encounters a message, evaluates its relevance and credibility, checks whether the proposed action is feasible, and only then purchases, recommends, recycles, or develops loyalty. The reviewed evidence warns against three misleading conclusions. First, high engagement does not necessarily represent a positive brand relationship. Controversial content can generate reactions while damaging trust. Second, a positive environmental attitude does not necessarily produce purchasing or recycling. Missing infrastructure, price, and unclear labels can prevent behavior. Third, automation cannot fully replace human contact. Conversational agents provide availability and speed, yet users continue to value live interaction when a problem is complex or emotionally sensitive (Miroslavljević & Milovanović, 2022).

For Western Balkan markets, the relationship between global digital patterns and local conditions is especially important. Young respondents in Serbia and Republic of Srpska

displayed more similarities than differences in circular-economy attitudes and behavior, and the observed differences were generally small in strength (Milovanović et al., 2021). This supports regional communication frameworks but does not justify fully standardized campaigns. Infrastructure, purchasing power, product availability, and trust in institutions and labels may still differ by market. Professional-customer findings provide additional evidence that loyalty drivers are not identical across countries. Delivery was important in several markets, while product range, price–quality ratio, and complaint resolution differed in predictive relevance (Perić et al., 2020). Sustainable marketing should likewise identify the most important barrier in each segment. Price may dominate in one segment, lack of knowledge in another, and distrust of environmental claims in a third.

The theoretical contribution lies in treating action opportunity as an equal link between communication and sustainable behavior. Marketing research often emphasizes message quality while treating infrastructure as an external factor. If a company invites consumers to return packaging, however, the location and procedure of the return become part of the market offer. Service design, logistics, and communication jointly determine whether sustainable intention becomes sustainable behavior. The model also clarifies the role of trust. Trust is not an abstract attitude that follows automatically from frequent communication. It is a cumulative judgment based on evidence, transparency, and experience. A brand may gain visibility through paid reach and still lose credibility through greenwashing. Conversely, a smaller organic community may generate stronger advocacy when communication and business conduct are consistent.

9. Managerial implications

Campaign objectives should first be separated by stage. Reach can be evaluated through impressions and unique users; engagement through reactions, comments, shares, and initiated conversations; trust through qualitative feedback, complaints, and perceived transparency; and behavior through purchases, repeat purchases, packaging returns, or participation in recycling programs. Mixing these indicators creates an illusion of success and weakens managerial decisions. Channels should be combined according to the user's task. A short mobile message can provide an urgent notification; Instagram can visually demonstrate a product and its values; a webshop can support search and purchase; and an employee can resolve a complex issue. Customer databases must be regularly updated, and user consent must be clear. Messages can be adapted to segments without collecting excessive data. Users should retain control over the type and frequency of communication.

Every sustainability claim should be linked to evidence and a specific action. Instead of describing a product merely as environmentally friendly, a company should state the proportion of recycled material, possibilities for reuse, disposal instructions, or a measurable reduction in resource use. Eco-labels should be explained in plain language. When complete evidence is unavailable, disclosing the limitation is more ethical than using a broad and unverifiable claim. Reducing the attitude–behavior gap requires connecting educational content with an available option. Examples include a map of recycling points, a return code, a discount for returned packaging, a reminder, or clear step-by-step instructions. Digital communication is most useful when it removes uncertainty and effort. Generation Z does not need only an explanation of why sustainability matters; its members need to

know precisely what they can do and what result their action produces. Companies should introduce an ethical review before a campaign is published. The review should assess truthfulness, sponsorship disclosure, privacy protection, the position of minors, possible discrimination in algorithmic targeting, and consistency between visual presentation and the actual product. Long-term reputation is more valuable than a temporary increase in clicks. In sustainability communication, one exposed inconsistency can undermine years of investment in trust.

Finally, marketing departments require closer cooperation with procurement, production, logistics, legal functions, and customer service. A claim about recyclability cannot be managed by communication specialists alone. Evidence must originate in the processes that create the product and service. The most credible message is one that translates verified operational performance into language that consumers can understand and act upon.

10. Future research and conclusion

The proposed propositions should be evaluated through a new empirical study. A structural-equation model could include content relevance, perceived personalization, ethicality, trust, perceived behavioral control, sustainable intention, actual behavior, satisfaction, and loyalty. The sample should be stratified by country, age group within Generation Z, and purchasing power. Self-reported behavior should be distinguished from objective evidence such as transaction records or registered packaging returns.

An experimental design could compare four versions of the same message: a general environmental claim; a claim supported by specific evidence; a claim with evidence and a clear call to action; and a control message without environmental content. Sponsorship disclosure and personalization levels could also be manipulated. This would help determine when personalization increases relevance and when it creates privacy concern. Longitudinal observation would show whether initial engagement develops into repeat purchasing and loyalty.

Future research should also examine the organizational perspective. Relevant questions include whether marketing departments have access to verifiable sustainability data, how they cooperate with supply and logistics functions, and who approves environmental claims. Sustainable communication cannot be reliable when separated from the processes that create products and services. Organizational capacity to substantiate claims is likely to become an important determinant of reputation.

The integrative analysis demonstrates that digital engagement is important but insufficient for sustainable choice. Speed, visual clarity, and personalization can attract attention and initiate conversation. Trust emerges only when transparency, credible evidence, and consistency between communication and company conduct are present. Trust itself remains insufficient when a sustainable alternative is unavailable, expensive, or difficult to use.

Generation Z displays substantial concern about the future of the planet alongside a clear gap between support for sustainability and everyday practice. The gap should not be interpreted simply as indifference. It indicates that communication must be connected with education, infrastructure, and a simple user experience. Companies seeking long-term re-

lationships with young consumers should stop treating sustainability solely as a campaign topic and begin treating it as a characteristic of the entire offer.

The principal conclusion is that sustainable loyalty cannot be purchased through reach. It develops when consumers receive relevant information, recognize ethical intent, can verify a promise, and have a realistic opportunity to act. Digital marketing plays a powerful role in this process, but its value depends on the quality of the business practice it communicates.

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