Digital Marketing through Influencers and Content Creators and its Role in Building a Sustainable City Brand

View Dubai Experience

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Abstract:

This study aims to identify the role of social media for influencers and content makers in building a sustainable city brand through digital marketing strategies and its potential to contribute to sustainable urban development. The study also highlights the importance of designing the sustainable city model, addressing its challenges, and enhancing the competitive position of these areas through digital marketing strategies.

This study relied on Dubai's experience of sustainable cities. Dubai successfully used digital marketing strategies to enhance its initiatives and improve its global image in this field. The study also provides insights and suggestions on how to build a sustainable city brand locally and internationally and how it contributes to its economic and social development.

Keywords: Digital Marketing, Influencers, Content Makers, City Brand. Dubai City

Introduction:

More than 87% of the world's population is expected to live in cities by 2025 (United Nations, 2018), as digital marketing has become increasingly important in the branding of cities and essential for their future, helping to improve the competitive position of urban areas and promote sustainable development (Paula, 2023). The brand has transcended traditional boundaries, finding a new digital space (Gregory & Mihalis, 2010). The sustainable city model, by the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, also seeks to balance economic growth, social inclusion, and environmental protection (United Nations, 2015).

Social media and other digital platforms have become crucial tools in this area (Ramadhani & Indradjati, 2023). On the other hand, the growing importance of influencers and content creators in this process cannot be ignored, as they can reach a wide audience and shape the public perception of the city in a short period (Palazzo et al., 2021), creating a paradigm shift in how cities are viewed and marketed not only as destinations but also as sustainable and livable spaces.

This research paper identifies the role of influencers in creating cities' images through digital marketing strategies and how to contribute to the development of sustainable cities. It will also address the importance of designing the sustainable city model, addressing its challenges, and strengthening its competitive position through the adoption of digital marketing strategies.

The problem of the study: Based on the above, the following problem can be raised:

How do social media, influencers and content creators contribute to improving the sustainable city brand?

Objectives of the study: This study seeks to achieve a set of objectives, which are:

- Identify the foundations of a sustainable city and develop a roadmap for emerging cities;
- Highlight the importance of digital marketing, influencers, and influencers in shaping the city's brand;
- Provide insights and suggestions to improve Algeria's image and attractiveness locally and internationally.

I. Theoretical framework for the concept of digital marketing

Digital marketing refers to using digital channels, such as social media, search engines, email, websites, and other tools. It is defined as a marketing activity that uses the Internet and electronic means to promote products, services, and ideas (Chaffey & Smith, 2017).

The theoretical framework of digital marketing includes various strategies to reach online audiences, such as email marketing, content creation, video streams, and social media advertising. Another aspect of digital marketing is customer-led positioning theory, which emphasizes the importance of understanding customer needs and preferences to create personalized marketing strategies (Dave, 2020). Digital marketing strategies must be continuously improved and updated to remain up-to-date and effective in reaching target audiences.

1- Content marketing:

It is a form of marketing that focuses on creating, publishing, and distributing content to a targeted online audience. This type of marketing aims to attract attention, attract potential customers, expand the customer base, increase online sales, promote brand awareness or credibility, and engage the online user community (Rowley, 2008a).

It is also a marketing strategy that involves creating, publishing, and distributing valuable and relevant content to attract and retain target audiences online. Its goal is to interact with potential customers by providing them with useful information, building brand awareness, establishing authority, and ultimately prompting customers to take action (Rowley, 2008b).

Content marketing can take many forms, including blog posts, videos, social media posts, email newsletters, infographics, case studies, podcasts, and more, provided that the content is tailored to the needs of the target audience and consistently delivered within a given strategy.

2- Social Media Marketing:

It is a digital marketing strategy that involves creating and managing content on social media platforms to promote the brand, interact with customers, and increase website traffic. Social media marketing is essential for businesses looking to reach a wider audience and improve customer engagement, allowing them to share valuable information, interact with them, and showcase their products or services (Adam, 2023). It also enables organizations to get customer feedback and establish strong relationships with them (Felix et al., 2016)

3- Importance of Branding, Storytelling and Content Engagement in Attracting Audiences:

Branding, storytelling, and engaging content are essential to engaging audiences because they create a strong emotional bond and leave a lasting impression on the audience. These elements also help distinguish the city, communicate its unique narrative, and create an identity that is hard to forget. By harnessing the power of storytelling and engaging content, cities can evoke emotions, simplify complex messages, and differentiate themselves from the competition (Sakshi, 2023; Valasys, 2023).

II. Foundations of the Sustainable City

The Sustainable City is built on several foundations that enable it, as an urban city, to play its role toward its citizens in line with technological developments in this field. Among these foundations and principles are:

1. Fundamental Principles and Elements of a Sustainable City:

The Sustainable City is based on several fundamental principles and elements, including:

- Biophysical boundaries: Cities must recognize that they are part of a finite planet, and their growth and development must not exceed the carrying capacity of the planet (National Academies of Sciences, 2016);
- Urban inequality: Addressing urban inequality is critical to the sustainability of cities, as it undermines sustainability efforts (National Academies of Sciences, 2016);

- Efficient land use and urban planning: Sustainable cities prioritize efficient land use and urban planning to reduce environmental impact and improve quality of life (Patricia, 2023);

- Social well-being: Sustainable cities invest in community centers, public health measures, and cultural facilities to provide their citizens with adequate social support (Christina, 2021);

- Environmental responsibility: Sustainable cities promote environmental responsibility through the use of renewable energy sources, the implementation of sustainable transport, and the preservation of natural environments (Patricia, 2023);

- Governance: Sustainable cities require enduring leadership, citizen engagement, and regional partnerships to address the interconnectedness and impacts of urban sustainability on the planet (National Academies of Sciences, 2016).

2. Modifying City Foundations for Sustainability:

To make the city more sustainable, several adjustments can be made, including:

- Promoting participatory governance: encouraging community participation and inclusion in decision-making processes to ensure sustainability goals are met (Patricia, 2023);

- Adopt sustainable urban design principles: Integrate sustainable design principles into urban planning, such as green roofs, energy-efficient buildings, and walkable neighborhoods (Patricia, 2023);

- Investing in renewable energy: moving to clean energy sources such as solar and wind to reduce reliance on fossil fuels and reduce environmental impact (Christina, 2021a);

- Implementing effective waste management: improving waste conservation and energy conversion techniques to reduce waste and minimize its impact on the environment (Ruby, 2018);

- Promoting social well-being: Investing in community facilities, public health measures, and cultural facilities to provide residents with the necessary support for a high quality of life (Christina, 2021a).

III. The role of influencers and influencers in urban marketing
   1. How influencers and creators shape and influence the city's image:

Influencers and content creators play an important role in shaping and influencing the city's image. This helps to create a positive image of the city in several ways, including:

- <u>**Showcasing unique sights and events:**</u> Influencers can share stunning and engaging visual content highlighting the city's iconic features, attractions, and events, attracting more visitors and expats (Dawit, 2023);

- **Promoting sustainable practices:** By showcasing the city's commitment to sustainability and environmentally friendly practices, influential people can help raise awareness and encourage others to adopt similar behaviors (van Eldik et al., 2019);

- **Community Engagement:** Influential people can engage with residents and stakeholders through social media platforms and online forums, fostering a sense of community and connection to the city (Putu et al., 2020);

- **Highlighting urban identity:** Influencers can help promote urban identity by highlighting the city as the background and context for their videos, engaging themselves with local cultural trends, and affiliating with other local influencers (van Eldik et al., 2019);

- **Encouraging investment and tourism:** By sharing positive experiences and city highlights, influencers can attract more investors, tourists, and talent, contributing to the city's long-term support with the concept of success and sustainability (Dawit, 2023).

2. The Power of Social Media in Urban Marketing:

Social media is a powerful tool for urban marketing, enabling cities to reach a broad audience and present their unique offerings. By leveraging social media platforms, cities can promote local attractions, events, and businesses, helping to promote tourism, investment, and inclusive economic growth. Moreover, social media enables cities to engage with their audience, strengthen the community, and gather valuable feedback, which can help guide future urban development strategies (Joshua, 2021; Whitney, 2022).

IV. Successful experiences in digital marketing strategies for a sustainable city

We review a range of urban marketing strategies for a range of cities as follows:

1. Dubai City Case Study, U.A.E.:

Social media has become very popular in the U.A.E., and it is becoming harder for people to imagine life without its apps. For companies, these platforms are of great importance. They are an essential part of their marketing mix because they help generate revenues and reach customers around the world efficiently and inexpensively.

Influencer marketing in the Middle East is expected to become a $1.3 billion industry by the end of 2023 (Affable.ai, 2023). Proxy rack also officially calls the U.A.E. the social media capital of the world (G.M.I., 2023). Many entrepreneurs and influencers in Dubai share their lives on social media to garner a large following, contributing to the city's expanding influencer marketing industry.

In this sense, Dubai has activated a comprehensive digital strategy that relies on digitizing all aspects of life in the city and creating a reliable and strong digital system that enhances the economy and enables society. The strategy is based on seven main pillars: Digital City, Digital Economy, Data and Statistics, Digital Talent, Digital Infrastructure, Cybersecurity, and Digital Competitiveness. It aims to accelerate digital transformation,

fostering a trusted ecosystem and an excellent digital economy and society (Hamdan, 2023). This strategy creates consistent digital experiences for citizens, residents, visitors, and entrepreneurs, focusing on user privacy and integrated digital services (News, 2023).

Since the end of 2019, tourism has been very popular. Although all regions of the world have approached the threshold, and spending on the tourism industry has not slowed down in Dubai, these features have made it more popular among influencers, content creators, and thus the target audience (Sıla, 2020).

To further clarify the role of social media in digital marketing and achieving the U.A.E. Sustainable Digital City, the following statistics for 2023 can be included as shown in the tables:

Table 1: Demographics, Internet use, and social media in the U.A.E. (G.M.I., 2023)

Category	Number (million)	Weight (%)
U.A.E. Population	10.17	100
Internet users	10.07	99
Users of social media	9.97	98.99

Table 2: Shows the most popular social media platforms in the U.A.E. (G.M.I., 2023)

Social Media Platforms	Number (million)	Weight (%)
YouTube	6.73	79.60
Facebook	6.65	78.70
Instagram	6.21	73.40
TikTok:	5.70	67.40

Reasons for using social media	Number (million)	Weight (%)
Reading news stories	2.731	32.30
Search for inspiration and purchases	2.570	30.40
Follow events and conversations	2.384	28.20

Table 3: Reasons for using social media in the U.A.E. (G.M.I., 2023)

Table 4: Daily Time of Internet and Social Media Use in the U.A.E. (G.M.I., 2023)

| Daily Time of Use	Time (per capita)
Internet	7:29
Social media	2:50

Table 5: Shows the total number of Instagram influencers in Dubai and their engagement rates. (Affable.ai, 2023)

Number of Influencers	Marketing Participation Rate (%)
22.121	3.73

Top 10 Influencers in Dubai					
	Name & Surname	Country		Name & Surname	Country
1	Huda Qattan	Iraq	6	Noor Arida	Lebanon
2	Joel Mardinan	Lebanon	7	Nareen Amara	Syrian
3	Sheikh Hamdan bin Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Crown Prince of Dubai	U.A.E.	8	Karen Wazen Bakhazi	Lebanon
4	Noor Naim	Iraq	9	Mehra Lafti	U.A.E
5	Noha Nabil	Kuwait	10	Rawan bin Hussein	Kuwait

Table 6: Shows the ranking of the top ten influencers in Dubai. (Amra & Elma, 2023)

Graph 1: Top Leading Influencer Marketing Industries in the U.A.E. (Affable.ai, 2023)
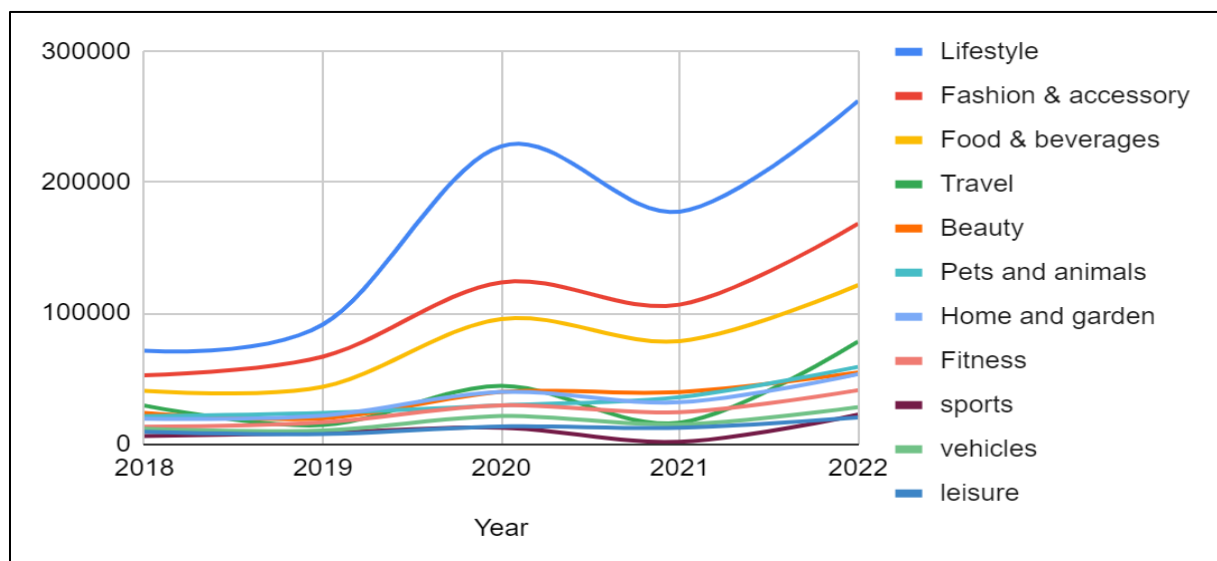
a. **Interpretation of Statistics:**

Through previous statistics, it is clear that the use of social media in the United Arab Emirates has witnessed significant growth over the past decade, as the number of users increased from 4.40 million in 2014 to 9.97 million in 2022, accounting for 98.99%of the country's population. This growth was driven by young and tech-savvy people and the widespread use of mobile devices to access social media platforms, demonstrating that the U.A.E. population relies heavily on the Internet and social media to meet their digital needs and daily requirements.

The average daily time spent on social media is 2 hours and 50 minutes, the same as the global average, according to Statista (Stacy, 2023);

In terms of demographics, 33.7% of social media users in the U.A.E. use it to read the latest news (G.M.I., 2023);

The gender distribution of social media users is reported as 70.20% for males and29.80% for females (G.M.I., 2023);

It should be noted that the use of social media is influenced by the country's high internet connectivity and the availability of cutting-edge technology, which has contributed to the explosion of video consumption in recent years (G.M.I., 2023);

Looking at the leading industries for influencer marketing between 2018 and2022, it is clear that the influencer scene is taking great patterns of growth and creating consistent content on Instagram across different product categories, especially content that is concerned with the lifestyle and travel industry, which surpassed the 320,000 content barrier posted in 2022;

As for influencers' nationalities, 8 out of 10 prominent influencers in Dubai are of foreign nationalities. This confirms Dubai's strategy to attract this category from around the world and rely on it to improve the city's image and attractiveness.

According to a recent YouGov.com survey, 3 in 4 U.A.E. residents are following some type of social media influencer. A few years ago, a similar survey of 1,000 residents conducted by Dubai's public relations agency B.P.G. Cohn and Wolfe found that 71% of residents aged 18-40 were happy to take advice from influencers before purchasing (Amra & Elma, 2023). This shows that social media platforms are essential in transmitting news, seeking inspiration, and keeping in touch with current events.

These statistics indicate the importance of digital marketing strategies and the role of influencers in building relationships with the public and improving the brand of the city of Dubai. This led to thinking about developing a road map to attract influencers and use them for urban marketing indirectly, some of which we review below:

b. Strategies to attract influencers in Dubai Sustainable City:
❖ Golden Residency for Creators and Influencers:

There are many ways to obtain a residence visa in Dubai, including the Golden Visa program, which is granted to specialists, including influencers, who have made significant

contributions to the country's growth. The aim is to enhance their status and stimulate their production and interaction with the city (Ministry of Culture, 2023).

- **Advantages:**

- **Luxury Accommodation and Premium Facilities:** Providing accommodation in luxurious places with multiple options to suit different lifestyles;

- **Recreational facilities:** a range of recreational and cultural facilities such as museums, theatres, etc.;

- **Exclusive offers:** Provide exclusive opportunities to participate in cultural and artistic events;

- **Financial support:** Providing financial support for creative projects and artistic initiatives.

- **Practical examples.**

- **Artist-in-Residence Program:** This program provides artists with a distinguished residency in dedicated art complexes and opportunities to exhibit and participate in exhibitions (Al Qasimi, 2023).

- **"Culture and Creativity Grants" Program:** It targets creators in the fields of authorship and publishing, music, film, and television, performing arts and theater, visual arts and design, video games, and cultural heritage with the provision of co-working spaces and training courses (U.A.E., 2023).

In order to regulate the process of attracting influencers and content creators, the National Media Council (N.M.C.) has introduced the licensing of influencers to organize them in the U.A.E. This license is mandatory for any resident of the country, through which the influencer receives financial benefits or gifts from promotional work on social media (InZone, 2023).

This license allows influencers in Dubai and across the U.A.E. to promote or advertise on online social media platforms and earn money legally (Bayut, n.d.).

❖ **Sustainable Infrastructure and Conservation Initiatives:**

- **Sustainable Infrastructure Concept:**

Sustainable infrastructure refers to the planning, design, construction, operation, and decommissioning of infrastructure that ensures economic, financial, social, environmental, and institutional sustainability throughout its entire life cycle (United Nations, 2022).

- **Advantages:**

- **Sustainable projects:** encourage participation in projects that conserve the environment and promote environmental awareness;

- **Clean Energy Technology:** Adopting clean energy technologies in infrastructure to improve sustainability.

- **Practical examples.**

- **Desert Solar Project:** Establishing mega projects to generate solar energy while encouraging investors and innovators to participate (Emirates Development Bank, 2023).

❖ **Creative and Influencer Support Programs:**

- **Concept of Creative Support:**

Creative support can be approached as the development of creative campaigns and building and developing a dedicated support network for artists. A creative concept is an overarching theme or idea that serves as the basis for a marketing campaign or creative project, helps attract the audience's attention, distinguishes the campaign from competitors, and maintains cohesion across all its materials (Katie, 2023).

- **Advantages:**

- **Funding and sponsorship:** Provide programs to obtain funding and financial support for creative projects;

- **Workshops and training:** Organizing workshops and training programs to develop technical and creative skills.

- **Practical examples.**

- **Reading Box 2023** is a fund that provides financial and technical support to stimulate and revive the habit of reading among all members of society (Dubai Culture, 2023).

These strategies clearly reflect the ongoing efforts of the city's curators to make it a popular destination for creatives and influencers, reinforcing its position as a leading hub for sustainable digital marketing.

V. Roadmap for emerging cities to enhance their image and appeal

Emerging cities can enhance their image and appeal by developing a strategic roadmap that includes various elements, including branding, storytelling, engaging content, and digital marketing strategies. Here are some steps that can help improve the image of a sustainable city:

1. Key steps for emerging cities to enhance their image and appeal:

- <u>**City branding:**</u> creating a unique and compelling brand identity that reflects the culture, history, and aspirations of the city (Avraham, 2004);

- <u>**Storytelling:**</u> crafting engaging narratives that showcase the city's journey, values, and impact to resonate with the audience (Sakshi, 2023);

- <u>**Attractive Content:**</u> Developing engaging visual and emotional content to target and connect with audiences (web.com, 2023);

- **<u>Digital marketing strategies:</u>** Use digital marketing tools and platforms to promote the city's attractions, culture, and lifestyle and engage with a wider audience (Bermeo-Giraldo et al., 2022);

- **<u>Attracting influencers and content creators:</u>** Attracting this category is an effective strategy for marketing the sustainable city and reaching a wide audience at the lowest cost.

2. **Ways to attract influencers and content creators to contribute to the urban marketing of the city:**

Money is one of the many ways influencers can be paid and attracted. However, there are other ways to appeal to this category, including:

- Free trial of products and services;

- Invitation to influential parties and lavish trips;

- Featured in flyers;

- Gift cards

Conclusion:

This study addressed the importance of digital marketing, influencers, and influencers in shaping the image and attractiveness of the city through realistic experiences, as seen in the case of Dubai in the United Arab Emirates and other cities. Algeria's success in enhancing its image and attractiveness through strategic digital marketing depends on its reliance on similar marketing strategies to enhance its economic and humanitarian attractiveness. To implement these marketing strategies in Algeria, we came up with these suggestions:

1. Develop a comprehensive digital marketing strategy focused on promoting Algeria's strengths, such as its rich history, diverse culture, and beautiful landscapes;

2. Collaborate with local influencers and influencers who have a strong understanding of the local market and can create engaging content that resonates with the target audience;

3. Leverage social media platforms to showcase sustainable tourism initiatives and destinations in Algeria, highlighting the city's commitment to sustainability and innovation;

4. Continue to organize local events and conferences in partnership with universities and research institutions to discuss the role of digital marketing, influencers, and influencers in shaping Algeria's brand;

5. Share best practices and success stories with other emerging cities and promote collaboration and knowledge sharing among urban planners, marketers, and stakeholders.

By implementing these marketing strategies, Algeria can effectively enhance its image and appeal domestically and internationally, ultimately contributing to its economic growth and human development.

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