

ENHANCING SUSTAINABILITY REPORTING IN GREEN UNIVERSITIES THROUGH SOCIAL MEDIA: A CASE STUDY OF BAGHDAD UNIVERSITY ON ADVANCING SDG

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ABSTRACT

Objectives: This study aims to evaluate the role of social media in promoting awareness of green university initiatives and assess the effectiveness of sustainability reports in engaging students at Baghdad University. In alignment with Sustainable Development Goal 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production), It seeks to provide recommendations for enhancing digital platforms for sustainability communication.

Theoretical Framework: The study is grounded in the Green University Model, Social Media Engagement Theory, and the Sustainability Reporting Framework, which emphasize integrating sustainable practices in education, using digital platforms for community engagement, and leveraging sustainability reports for transparency and trust-building.

Method: A quantitative research design was employed, involving a structured questionnaire administered to 100 elite students at Baghdad University. The study analyzed social media usage patterns, awareness of sustainability initiatives, and perceptions of sustainability reporting.

Results and Discussion: The findings reveal a significant association between social media engagement and increased awareness of green initiatives. Key results indicate that 94% of participants follow the university's official social media outlets, and 70% reported behavior changes due to exposure to sustainability-related content. However, gaps in communication about sustainability-focused student groups were identified. The results align with existing literature while emphasizing the need for improved visibility and strategic communication.

Research Implications: This study underscores the critical role of social media and sustainability reporting in fostering environmental awareness and behavior change among students. It provides a localized perspective that can guide other universities in Iraq and similar regions in adopting effective sustainability communication strategies.

Originality/Value: By focusing on Baghdad University, this study addresses a research gap in understanding the unique challenges of sustainability communication in developing regions, offering actionable insights for enhancing academic and community engagement in green practices.

Keywords: sustainable reports, green universities, social media, consumption and production, sustainable development goals (SDGs).

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1 INTRODUCTION

Universities are vital organizations that reflect the reality and nature of the societies in which they are located and are a cradle for the education of future leaders and meet the different needs of the global and local community, as it has become necessary to shift to the roles of universities in community service in the light of the green economy to turn into green universities that achieve sustainable development, and in light of the increasing concerns related to environmental issues, if universities have to respond to these variables through the production of knowledge in education and scientific research (Othman, 2022). Having recently witnessed remarkable technological developments in which visual, audio and written communications flourished, as modern technology was employed to promote and spread the culture of sustainable development, which has an effective and positive role through targeted brochures and read messages for the importance of the culture of sustainable development, as social media contributes to spreading and promoting the culture of preserving the environment, awareness, guidance and guidance. and promote sustainable practices in curriculum, campus operations, teaching and research as well as community engagement and accountability (2023, Abumalah).

This study seeks to answer the following question: How does engagement with social media platforms influence students' awareness and participation in green university initiatives at Baghdad University? By addressing this question, the study aims to provide insights into the effectiveness of digital platforms in promoting environmental stewardship among academic communities, offering a model for other universities in Iraq and the region."

The current study seeks to raise issues related to sustainability and provide users with relevant information by transferring the most important news and topics and following up on all actions and decisions that are taken

and reporting on them through the sustainability report (Wahabi, 2015). Universities enhance their reputation as institutions committed to sustainability as well as interact with students, staff and the local community and receive feedback and suggestions on sustainability reports, which helps in improving the quality of these reports and making them more relevant to the needs of beneficiaries. Based on that the study objectives will be as follows:

1. "To evaluate the role of social media in promoting awareness of green initiatives among students."
2. "To assess the effectiveness of sustainability reports published by Baghdad University in engaging students."
3. "To provide recommendations for enhancing the use of digital platforms for sustainability communication."

2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS

The theoretical framework serves as the foundation of this study, providing a structured and critical analysis of existing literature relevant to green universities, sustainability reports, and the role of social media in promoting environmental awareness. By integrating theories, models, and previous research, this section contextualizes the key concepts, highlighting their interconnections and relevance to the objectives of this study. It further identifies gaps and contradictions within the literature, establishing the need for focused research on how social media platforms influence student engagement with sustainability initiatives at Baghdad University. This framework underpins the analysis and guides the development of recommendations, ensuring alignment with the study's overarching goals.

2.1 KEY CONCEPTS AND DEFINITIONS

- 1) Green Universities: The term green universities was first proposed in China in 1972 (The Declaration of the Human Environment) and in 1998 they proposed the dimensions of implementation, as it was signed by 32 universities in China to transform into green universities (2015).al et



Ruimin). Green universities have a key role in achieving a more advanced level of sustainability by using the Green University's campus maturity rating tool, and it is known as the university that features a green campus to build environmentally friendly sustainable living practices in educational institutions around the world (Osman, 2022). Green universities are also defined as academic institutions that eradicate environmental illiteracy on campus and promote sustainability by using hybrid energy systems and relying on photovoltaic energy and wind turbines as well as solar energy and supporting scientific research to serve the environment (Dursun, 2018) There are many Reasons and justifications for switching to green universities;

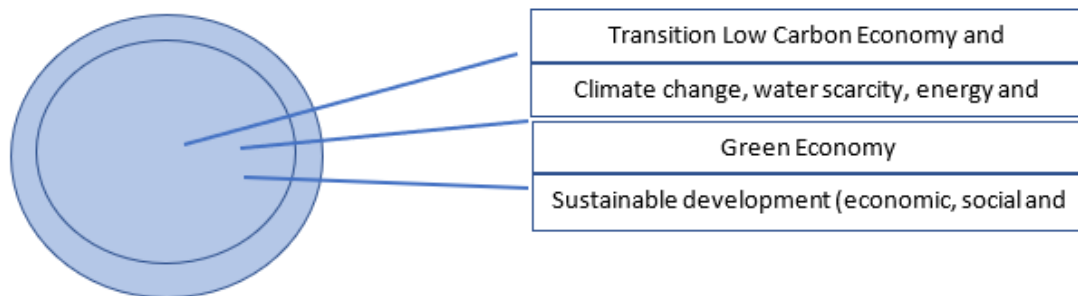
- a. The rapid development in all economic and social activities due to technology with changing patterns of progress and life, which negatively affected the environment as well as the exposure of the environment to danger in human sustainable development, hence the role of green universities in meeting the needs of the environment and sustainable development and the pursuit of human welfare in order to inherit knowledge and culture to know the so-called sustainable campus (2021, Chia);
 - b. Society is facing many environmental challenges in the social and economic fields that require governmental organizations and communities to respond quickly and participate in reclamation and sustainable development, which has become very important globally (2020, silvia *et al*);
 - c. The growing need for a more sustainable society has affected the higher education sector significantly, as it represents an increasing challenge for academics, students and policymakers by reducing the negative effects of university activities on society as well as promoting sustainable practices in curricula and scientific research (Othman, 2022);
- 2) Green Campus : The green campus is defined as the campus that is characterized by the integration of the education system with scientific research as well as the sustainable environment and societal framework and that has a positive impact on the economy, environment and society,

applies best practices in green sustainable development, and has the intellectual ability to integrate scientific and environmental values into its programs and tasks (2019, Lourrinx). From the above, it is clear that green universities have a major role in achieving green sustainability and their contribution to reducing its negative effects on the environment through the green campus, in which the green education system and green scientific research integrate together and promote positive practices and cultural awareness inside and outside the university (Othman, 2022).

Green Economy: The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) defined a green economy as one that improves human well-being and social justice while significantly reducing environmental risks and can be considered a low-carbon, resource-efficient, pollution-reduced, socially inclusive economy that promotes energy and resource use (2011, United Nations Environment). The World Bank has defined green economy as everything necessary for green growth, which is effective in the use of natural resources and cleanliness, and which reduces environmental impacts and air pollution, as well as the role of environmental management in dealing with it, which is inclusive growth (Rosa and Marti, 2019). The green economy aims to link the requirements of achieving development of all kinds, including human development and environmental protection, and it is one of the important tools in achieving sustainable development and enhancing the ability to manage natural resources in a sustainable manner, increase the efficiency of resource use and achieve economic prosperity and social security, and it can be said that the relationship between the green economy and sustainability is a relationship of the part with the whole, so sustainability is achieved only through the achievement of environmental rehabilitation, as the latter is considered part of Integral to the sustainability process (Boutoura *et al.*, 2023)

Figure 1

The Relationship Between The Green Economy And Sustainability.



Source: Boutoura, Fadila, Blao, Haider Hamid, Boutoura, Fatima Al-Zahra, Abed, Miqdad Jassem, 2023. Green universities as a mechanism for developing sustainable infrastructure: a sample study of the experiences of Arab universities, Al-Muthanna Journal for Administrative and Economic Sciences. Volume 13 - Issue 3. pp. 38-48.

3) Sustainability Report: The concept of sustainability report is defined as "a tool used to bridge the information gap arising from the lack of information provided by the economic unit and the demands of stakeholders" (Younes, 2021). It is also defined as "reports that contain information on the performance of the economic unit in three main areas, namely economic, social and environmental, and the total constitutes the net added value of society" (Al-Mubaideen, 2016). Radi and Ibrahim believe that the sustainability report is a key platform for communicating sustainability performance that presents the values of the economic unit and clarifies the link between its strategies and commitment to a sustainable global economy, as well as it helps the economic unit to measure and understand economic, environmental and social performance and then set goals and manage change in a more effective way (Radi and Ibrahim, 2022). Sustainability reports are integrated into the traditional annual report, prompting some to demand standards for reporting on sustainability (Abbas and Al-Dabbas, 2020), as well as providing sufficient information on all aspects of the performance of the economic unit to stakeholders to enable them to know its vision, future direction and current and future strategy (Abdullah and Wadi, 2018), improve reputation, gain trust and respect, and contribute to rationalizing decisions. (Hassan and Jawad, 2021);

- 4) Social media and its awareness role: Modern technology, including social media, has become the ways of thinking of the emerging digital generations, and adhering to the traditional methods of education will lead to a sharp separation between the ways in which students learn in educational institutions and their ways of thinking in the outside world, so it must be imperative for educators to mitigate this separation only, but also to take advantage of the power of technology for the purpose of achieving educational gains for the fundamental transformation of educational systems to adapt to the surrounding world (Saelik and the customer, 2013). Social networking sites have become a medium of communication and they provide economic units with new ways to perform their work in a way that leads to the development of awareness and submission of proposals (Al-Shaher, 2018). According to the vision of specialists, social media has several types, the first is concerned with communication and information exchange, such as blogs published in periodic articles or partial blogs such as Twitter or networking sites such as (Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram and others), while the second type is concerned with a work team, for example, Wikipedia, and the third type is concerned with multiple communication sites such as YouTube. The fourth type is represented by opinion and review sites such as Yahoo, Ask.com and the fifth is social sites of an entertainment nature, represented by gaming sites (2023 Abu Maleh). The role of social media in promoting and building sustainable awareness:
- a. Environmental awareness: It consists of several elements that in turn contribute to the formation of environmental awareness, including:
 - b. Environmental education: This stage starts from the child's upbringing and depends on the role of parents and then the role of educational institutions to the stage of university education to build competencies among members of society and teach them in dealing with environmental problems in scientific ways;
 - c. Environmental culture: It stems from the role of intellectuals and specialists in environmental sciences through training courses and



- scientific meetings in everything related to environmental issues related to Society;
- d. Environmental media: It is an important role in publishing and broadcasting issues related to the environment and is of great importance in publishing audio and print environmental issues, newspapers, magazines and other means (Wahabi, 2015);
 - e. Health awareness: Health education improves the quality of life of the individual and society alike by disseminating data and concepts related to health in society and adopting the correct behavior to prevent diseases and identify their health problems, and that social media has an effective role in promoting messages that urge the preservation of public health and contribute to raising the level of health education (Abu Maleh, 2023);
 - f. Consumer awareness: Social media of all kinds is considered one of the effective mechanisms in combating negative consumer habits because of the strength and influence of the media in the ranks of society, as television and radio programs and social media contribute to spreading awareness among consumers and working to avoid them for a strong and sound society, and that social media is a platform for educational programs and community awareness of the seriousness of negative consumption habits that sweep societies today (Mahmoud, 2018).

2.2 THEORIES AND MODELS

The foundation of this study draws upon key theories and models related to sustainability and social media's role in promoting environmental awareness. One prominent framework is the **Green University Model**, which emphasizes the integration of sustainable practices in education, research, and campus operations to foster environmental stewardship. This model underscores the importance of resource efficiency, renewable energy adoption, waste management, and biodiversity conservation within academic institutions.

Additionally, the **Social Media Engagement Theory** highlights how digital platforms can influence behavior and attitudes by providing accessible, engaging, and interactive content. Social media platforms enable organizations



to disseminate information, build communities, and inspire collective action toward sustainability goals.

The study also considers the **Sustainability Reporting Framework**, which provides guidelines for organizations to measure and communicate their environmental, social, and governance (ESG) performance. This framework is particularly relevant to universities as they leverage sustainability reports to enhance transparency, foster trust, and engage stakeholders in green initiatives.

By combining these theories, the research aims to explore how Baghdad University's use of social media and sustainability reporting aligns with these established models to promote awareness and participation among students, addressing both the theoretical and practical aspects of sustainable development in academia.

2.3 IDENTIFICATION OF RESEARCH GAPS

Despite the growing body of literature on sustainability and the role of social media in promoting environmental awareness, several gaps remain unaddressed. First, while existing studies have explored the use of sustainability reports in various organizational contexts, limited research focuses specifically on their application within higher education institutions, particularly in the context of green universities. This leaves a gap in understanding how universities can effectively use these reports to engage their communities and foster a culture of sustainability.

Second, most studies on social media engagement and environmental awareness emphasize global trends or focus on developed regions. There is a lack of research addressing the unique challenges and opportunities in developing countries, such as Iraq, where infrastructure, cultural attitudes, and technological adoption may differ significantly.

Lastly, while some studies highlight the impact of social media on individual behavior, they often neglect to assess how these platforms can be leveraged strategically to achieve organizational sustainability goals, especially within academic settings. The role of social media in bridging communication

gaps and increasing the visibility of sustainability-focused student groups also remains underexplored.

This study aims to address these gaps by investigating how Baghdad University utilizes social media platforms and sustainability reports to enhance student awareness, engagement, and participation in green initiatives, providing a localized and practical perspective on the issue.

3 METHODOLOGY

To achieve the study goals the study used quantitative research design to investigate the relationship between participation in social media and awareness of green initiatives among students of the University of Baghdad.

The sample consisted of 100 elite students from Baghdad University. Elite students were selected based on their academic performance and involvement in extracurricular activities, ensuring a diverse representation of the student body. Participants were chosen through purposive sampling to ensure the inclusion of individuals with varying degrees of social media engagement and awareness of sustainability initiatives.

The research used a structured questionnaire to collect data on students' use of social media, awareness of the university's sustainability efforts, and attitudes towards sustainability reports on social media platforms. The study focused on analyzing the content of the current sustainability reports of the University of Baghdad, evaluating their effectiveness in communicating with the public via social media, identifying best practices and challenges in creating effective sustainability reports for universities. Through the case study of the University of Baghdad and providing recommendations to improve the content of sustainability reports and ways to publish them through social media to increase awareness and community engagement as well as providing a practical case study of the University of Baghdad as a role model for other universities in Iraq and the region.

Participants were approached in person and provided with information about the study objectives and procedures. They were then asked to voluntarily participate by completing a structured questionnaire either online or in print



format, based on their preference. The questionnaire comprised items related to social media usage patterns, awareness of university sustainability efforts, and perceptions of sustainability reporting on social media platforms. Data collection took place over a specified period to ensure consistency in responses.

4 RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The study reveals a strong association between social media engagement and awareness of Baghdad University sustainability efforts among the sampled students. Results indicate a prevalent and substantial engagement with social media platforms, with 94% of participants actively subscribing to the official social media outlets affiliated with Baghdad University. These findings align with (Us, Pimonenko *et al.* 2022), who highlight the importance of universities using social media effectively to increase awareness of environmentally friendly living and interact with their audiences effectively. Table1 illustrates this association. Moreover, the study shows that 57% of respondents express favorable sentiments towards encountering sustainability reports-related publications on social media, highlighting the informational value perceived in university sustainability reports shared through digital channels. This study replicates the findings of (Filippo, Benayas *et al.* 2020), who found that mentions of sustainability reports in social media have increased dramatically over the past decade.

Table 1

Association between Social Media Usage and Awareness of Baghdad University's Green Initiatives

Questions	Answers	Samples (n=100) Frequency
Social Media Usage	Never	1
	Rarely	3
	Occasionally	24
	Frequently	52
	Very Frequently	20
Follow Baghdad University Pages	Yes	94
	No	6
Seen Sustainability Reports Posts	Yes	57
	No	43
Perceived Informativeness of Posts	Not informative	12
	Informative	13
	Very informative	75
Awareness of University's Green Initiatives	Slightly aware	3
	Moderately Aware	23
	Aware	27
	Very aware	47

In the context of fostering a unified community centered on environmentally conscious initiatives, Table 2 elucidates 48% of surveyed students underscored the pivotal role of sustainability reports disseminated via social media platforms of Baghdad university. This observation resonates with the findings of (Gori, Romolini *et al.* 2020), who assert the instrumental nature of social media in advancing sustainability endeavors within university settings, they explain that the University utilize social media channels to publicize their green initiatives, with a particular emphasis on fostering community engagement.

However, despite this recognition, a mere 31% of students reported familiarity with existing student groups dedicated to environmental and sustainability themes, indicating a potential gap in communication or visibility surrounding such initiatives within the university community. Nonetheless, 58% of respondents emphasized the transformative role of sustainability reports on social media in spurring student involvement in green initiatives on campus. This sentiment aligns with the observations of (Pérez-Pérez, Benito-Osorio *et al.* 2023), who contend that the Sharing Economy holds promise in facilitating countries' sustainability objectives and advancing towards more sustainable consumption and living models. This is evidenced by the analysis of government

action plans and the anticipated contributions of sharing platforms to sustainability efforts.

Table 2

Social Media and Building a Green Community

Questions	Answers	Samples (n=100)
		Frequency
Social Media for Green Communities	Disagree	1
	Neutral	6
	Agree	45
	Strongly agree	48
Awareness of Green Student Groups	Yes	31
	No	69
Participation in Green Groups	Yes	85
	No	15
Social media for Green Initiatives	Disagree	1
	Neutral	9
	Agree	58
	Strongly agree	32
Importance of Community for Green Practices	Not important	5
	Slightly important	7
	Moderately important	42
	Very important	46

The study found that exposure to positive social media posted and actions related to green university sustainability reporting influenced student behavior. Notably, 36% of sampled students acknowledged encountering sustainability reports via social media channels, with 44% affirming that these reports served as sources of inspiration towards adopting more sustainable behaviors. Research by (Calderon, Manuela Jr *et al.* 2023) indicates that sustainability reporting plays a crucial role in shaping organizational behavior towards sustainability, promoting environmentally and socially responsible actions. Additionally, 70% of respondents reported effecting changes in their daily habits, such as recycling or reducing plastic usage, attributable to their heightened awareness of sustainability narratives circulated through social media platforms. Findings from (Meiksin, Afful *et al.* 2023) highlight that sustainability reports inspire sustainable behaviors by reducing plastic consumption, aligning with global efforts to decrease overall plastic demand for a greener environment.

Table 3

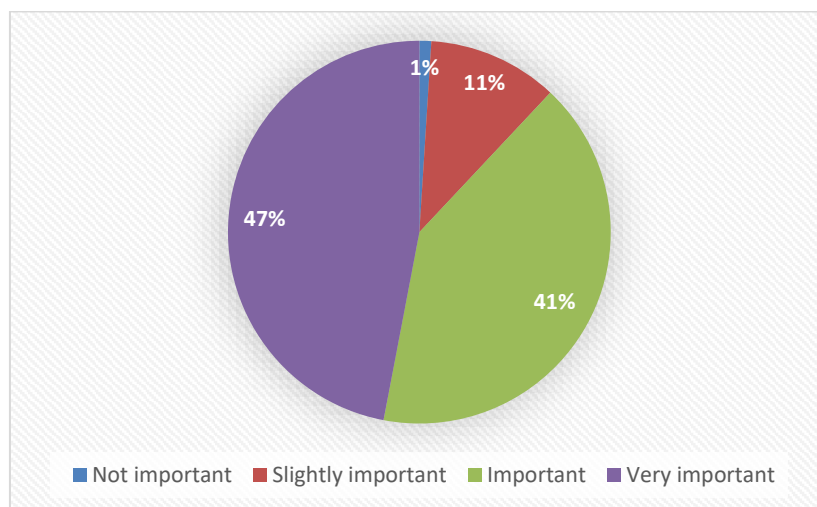
Impact of Social Media Engagement on Students' Sustainability Behaviors and Motivations

Questions	Answers	Samples (n=100) Frequency
Motivation from Green Reports	Never	4
	Rarely	14
	Occasionally	35
	Frequently	44
Behavior Change from social media	Yes	70
	No	30
Peer Influence on Sustainability	Moderate influence	13
	influence	28
	Strong influence	59
Exposure to Green Social Media Posts	Never	2
	Rarely	5
	Occasionally	11
	Frequently	36

Furthermore, as shown in figure 2, 47% of respondents advocated for the activation of student media groups to enhance transparency, accountability, and active participation in sustainability discourse within the university ecosystem as shown in figure 1. Research by (Mason 2020) suggests that student media groups can contribute significantly to enhancing transparency, accountability, and active participation in sustainability discourse by disseminating information and facilitating discussions among stakeholders.

Figure 2

The Role of Student Media Groups in Enhancing Sustainability Discourse



5 CONCLUSION

The research reveals a strong relationship between participation in social media and awareness of sustainability initiatives among elite students at the University of Baghdad. With 94% actively following official channels, social media plays a pivotal role in sharing sustainability reports. Positive social media posts in sustainability reports influence student attitudes, with 70% adopting environmentally friendly habits. The study also highlights the ability of social media to build community cohesion around environmental efforts, although there is a need to improve communication around existing sustainability groups. Student media groups are called upon to promote transparency and participate in sustainability discourse. The University of Baghdad's effective use of social media for environmental stewardship contributes to achieving a sustainable future.

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