

Communicating Sustainability on Social Media: A study on leading turkish and global brands in Turkey

Sostenibilidad en los Medios Sociales de Comunicación: Un estudio sobre los líderes de las marcas turcas y marcas globales en Turquía

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ABSTRACT

This study explores leading brands' sustainability-themed communication messages on social media, considering the impacts of brand value and industry types from a country of origin and triple-bottom-line perspectives. An across-stage mixed-model research design is used in the study. Firstly, sustainability-themed messages on corporate Facebook accounts of leading 62 Turkish and 31 global brands in Turkey were analyzed by using content analysis. Then, regression, one-way Anova, and chi-square analyses were performed for the quantified data. The results show that (a) brand value is not a significant driver of communicating sustainability-themed messages on social media; (b) economic sustainability is emphasized more than environmental and social dimension in social media messages of global brands, whereas Turkish brands highlight social responsibility; and (c) there are differences among industry sectors in terms of communicating messages about economic dimension of sustainability within leading Turkish brands. Sustainability communication on social media was examined in the context of corporate Facebook messages. This issue needs to be further explored considering different social media platforms. It is implied that leading brands in emerging markets need to understand the connection between sustainability dimensions, not only meet expectations but also stimulate interests of key stakeholders by communicating all aspects of sustainability in a nested approach. This study generates a more in-depth and nuanced understanding of sustainability communication of leading brands on social media by conducting a multi-dimensional investigation that considers the effects of country of origin and industrial differences in an emerging market context.

Keywords: Sustainability, Social Media, Sustainability-Themed Messages, Cross-Industry Sector Study.

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RESUMEN

Este estudio explora los mensajes de comunicación con temas de sostenibilidad de las marcas líderes en las redes sociales, teniendo en cuenta los impactos del valor de la marca y los tipos de la industria de un país de origen y las perspectivas del resultado final triple. Un diseño de investigación de cruz de modelo mixto de la fase se utiliza en el estudio. En primer lugar, los mensajes con temas de sostenibilidad en cuentas corporativas de Facebook de 62 primeras marcas turcas y 31 marcas mundiales en Turquía fueron analizados utilizando un análisis de contenido. Entonces, se realizaron los análisis de regresión, Anova unidireccional y de chi-cuadrado, para los datos cuantificados. Los resultados muestran que (a) el valor de la marca no es un factor importante de los mensajes con temas de sostenibilidad de comunicación en las redes sociales; (b) la sostenibilidad económica destaca más que la dimensión ambiental y social en los mensajes de los medios de comunicación social de las marcas globales, mientras que las marcas turcas resaltan la responsabilidad social; y (c) existen diferencias entre los sectores de la industria en términos de comunicar mensajes sobre la dimensión económica de la sostenibilidad dentro de las marcas principales turcas. La comunicación de sostenibilidad en las redes sociales ha sido examinada en el contexto de mensajes corporativos de Facebook. Este tema debe ser explorado con más detalles teniendo en cuenta las plataformas de medios sociales diferentes. Se implica que las marcas principales en los mercados emergentes necesitan comprender la relación entre las dimensiones de la sostenibilidad, no sólo cumplir con las expectativas sino también estimular intereses de los actores clave comunicándose todos los aspectos de la sostenibilidad en forma anidada. Este estudio genera un entendimiento más profundo y matizado de la comunicación de la sostenibilidad de marcas líderes en las redes sociales mediante la realización de una investigación multidimensional que considera los efectos del país de origen y de las diferencias industriales en un contexto de mercado emergentes.

Palabras claves: Sostenibilidad, Medios Sociales, Mensajes con Temas de Sostenibilidad, Estudio de la Industria Intersectorial.

Received on: 2016.10.18

Approved on: 2016.12.30

Evaluated by a double blind review system

1. INTRODUCTION

Increasing environmental concerns are putting pressure on companies to reexamine and revise their current marketing practices in the pursuit of sustainability (Kotler, 2011). Industry-leading companies, in other words, the most visible and successful brands, are among the targets of environmental activists, concerned citizens and governments in their efforts to promote sustainability (Esrock & Leichty, 1998; Porter & Kramer, 2006). Large global companies also serve as examples of best sustainable business practices for smaller, local firms operating in respective industries (Sweeney & Coughlan, 2008). Today, most large companies use the Internet and corporate websites to communicate sustainability-themed messages (e.g., Capriotti & Moreno, 2007; Tang & Li, 2009). Yet,

despite the increasing number of firms using, or planning to use, social media platforms for communication purposes (Culnan et al., 2010; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010), research to date has mainly focused on website disclosures of corporate social responsibility (CSR) information (e.g., Esrock & Leichty, 1998; Capriotti & Moreno, 2007; Jose & Lee, 2007; Wanderley et al., 2008; Kim et al., 2010). Therefore, there is a need for additional research to examine the ways, and the extent to which large entities, such as leading brands, communicate sustainability-themed messages on social media.

Moreover, research has demonstrated that country of origin and industry are important determinants of CSR practices and communications (e.g., Gray et al., 2001; Jose & Lee, 2007; Perrini et al., 2007; Sweeney & Coughlan, 2008; Wanderley et al., 2008; Tang & Li, 2009). On the other hand, it has been argued that studies examining the relationship between corporate characteristics, such as size, profit and industry, and their social and environmental disclosures are generally inconclusive, elusive or inconsistent (Gray et al., 2001). In addition, it was found that there are strategic approach differences between leading national and global companies in terms of communicating sustainable business practices on the web (Tang & Li, 2009). Additionally, large companies may take different approaches to providing sustainability information on social media (Capriotti & Moreno, 2007). For instance, economic responsibility is shown to be the least communicated aspect of sustainability on the websites of the most significant enterprises that represent more than 95% of the total capitalization of the Spanish Stock Exchange (Capriotti & Moreno, 2007). However, triple-bottom-line sustainability approach emphasizes the importance of balancing and integrating environmental, social and economic concerns into business decisions for sustainable development (Elkington, 1998: 2004). Therefore, in order to generate a more in-depth and nuanced understanding of the sustainability-themed messages communicated on social media by leading, global and national brands in an emerging market, it is clearly important to conduct a multi-dimensional investigation considering both country of origin and industry sector effects. As a result, this study investigates the following main research questions, which are further elaborated for the perspectives of leading global and Turkish brands in the light of different dimensions of sustainability:

RQ1: Does the value of a brand impact its tendency to communicate sustainability-themed messages on social media?

RQ2. Do industries differ in terms of the tendency of leading brands to communicate social media sustainability-themed messages?

RQ3: What is the main dimensional focus, if any, of the social media sustainability-themed messages of leading brands?

2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

2.1. Brand value differences

The way in which organizations present their sustainability principles, activities and achievements to the various, and particularly key, stakeholders impacts corporate reputation and company-customer relations (Middlemiss, 2002; Golob & Barlett, 2007; Tang & Li, 2009; Bortree et al., 2013). Currently, communicating sustainability has become increasingly important in building and maintaining brand image, trust and reputation (Lewis, 2003; Du et al., 2010; First & Khatriwal, 2010; Park & Kim, 2016). As brands grow, business activities become more difficult to control, which ultimately increases the vulnerability of their reputation. Therefore, growing brands are increasingly concerned to safeguard their reputation by identifying the most influential trends in their market arena. This motivation has placed sustainability at primary task level on the business agenda of major brand companies. Sustainability is an expected brand attribute (Gad & Moss, 2007), and therefore companies are currently competing to tag sustainability to their brands, and become global leaders in the field (Dauvergne & Lister, 2012). To maintain the leadership position, larger companies tend to disseminate greater mass of sustainability information (Amran et al., 2015).

“The globalization of commerce has increased the public’s awareness of the social and environmental impacts of large corporations” (White, 1999, p. 32). Managing corporate reputation appears as another primary concern of large entities (Esrock & Leichty, 1998). Organization size could explain the variations in firms’ willingness to define and implement specific and formal sustainability strategies (Perrini et al., 2007). Larger, more profitable companies generally have greater resources to support the implementation of sustainability initiatives, and can therefore disclose more sustainability information (Amran et al., 2015). According to the KPMG International Survey of Corporate Responsibility Reporting (2013), reporting sustainability performance to the public is a mainstream business practice among the world’s largest companies. Moreover, these firms make relatively more use of the several CSR

instruments, to foster the dialogue with internal and external stakeholders, and improve their reputations (Graafland et al., 2003). CSR refers to corporate level sustainability supporting the sustainability concept in general (Málovics et al., 2008), as it basically requires businesses to shift focus away from profitability onto voluntarily support non-economic initiatives related to social and environmental sustainability practices both at corporate level in their operations and in the interactions with their stakeholders (Kleine & Von Hauff, 2009). It is critical for companies to effectively communicate their sustainability initiatives, credentials and performances to stakeholders to create reputational advantage, enhance stakeholder–company relationships and strengthen brand names (Du et al., 2010; First & Khatriwal, 2010; Amran et al., 2015).

Social media offers various opportunities for enhanced corporate visibility, transparency and engagement with multiple stakeholders (Yang & Kent, 2014). Both internal and external communications of sustainability activities and performance indicates the strategic nature of an organization's sustainability efforts and emphasis (Amini & Bienstock, 2014). Thus, this form of media is an important influence on public opinion, with the potential to significantly impact corporate reputation (Kietzmann et al., 2011). Companies of all sizes are now using social media to improve reputations and gain business value (Culnan et al., 2010). Social media has become a mass media vehicle for reflecting fundamental organizational values (Mangold & Faulds, 2009). The evidence from the corporate website public disclosures of some of the world's largest companies suggests corporations have started to become more environmentally conscious over the years (Jose & Lee, 2007; Kim et al., 2010). Given the strong positive influence of brand value on profitability (Yeung & Ramasamy, 2008), and significant impacts of company size and profitability on online sustainability information disclosure (Amran et al., 2015) in the current business environment, strongly branded companies in particular are expected to make efforts to actively integrate sustainability into both management and communication strategies. In addition, because of their scale and visibility to the public and the media (Graafland et al., 2003), larger companies and leading brands appear to be in a better position to benefit more from social media in communicating their responses to stakeholder demands of CSR and accountability. Therefore, highly valued brands are expected to communicate sustainability-themed messages on social media more frequently than less valued brands.

H1: There is a positive relationship between brand value and frequency of communicating sustainability-themed messages on social media.

2.2. Industry sector differences

The recent reporting rates show that communicating publicly available corporate responsibility information is becoming standard practice, irrespective of industry, among the world's largest companies (KPMG, 2013). However, much previous research points out that corporate sustainability strategies and communications vary by industry sector (Jose & Lee, 2007; Perrini et al., 2007; Sweeney & Coughlan, 2008; Wanderley et al., 2008; Tang & Li, 2009). One company alone cannot solve all society's problems, and thus must choose which social issues to address, bearing in mind that a company's potential impacts may vary from industry to industry (Porter & Kramer, 2006).

In addition, according to stakeholder theory, firms are more inclined to focus on certain stakeholders, and thus, their CSR reports will be in line with the expectations of these key interest groups (Sweeney & Coughlan, 2008). For instance, B2C companies are more likely to take an ad hoc or strategic public philanthropy approach in CSR communications on corporate websites, while companies targeting other businesses are more likely to present CSR as ethical business conducts (Tang & Li, 2009). Similarly, companies in environmentally sensitive industries, such as automotive, oil & gas, utilities and other areas of manufacturing are more likely to disclose environmental performance information on corporate websites than those in less sensitive industries, such as finance, securities and insurance (Jose & Lee, 2007). Firms that operate in such industries have been traditionally perceived negatively in terms of environmental impacts; however, they can enhance their corporate reputations and competitive advantages more effectively by strategically integrating environmental concerns into marketing policies and practices (Menon & Menon 1997). In addition, because CSR is responsive to national differences (Robertson, 2009), sustainability communication strategy of a particular sector may vary according to country. For example, in the credit-insurance industry, Italian firms in particular have an excellent record on reporting and disclosing their CSR behaviors (Perrini et al., 2007). Moreover, industry is an important determinant of the use of instruments, used to facilitate the communication of corporate responsibility values, policies and strategies; for example, metal manufacturing and

construction firms tend to emphasize ISO certification, social reporting and use of social handbook, compared to those in the financial service and retail sectors (Graafland et al. 2003). In addition, recent research has shown that large companies' public use of the popular social media platforms to interact with customers varies according to industry (Culnan et al. 2010). Based on the preceding discussion, differences across sectors are expected in social media and sustainability communication objectives and strategies of leading brands, and thus, their tendencies to communicate sustainability-themed messages on social media.

H2: Frequency of communicating sustainability-themed messages on social media differs by industry sector.

2.3. Dimensional focus differences

Sensing a growing global consumer segment, many companies have embraced a global consumer culture positioning strategy that stresses a global brand image (Alden et al., 1999). Perceived brand globalness is also considered as an important intangible asset that leads to increased sales and enhanced brand value (Alden et al., 1999; Steenkamp et al, 2003). To develop a unique brand image across countries, similar marketing strategy and mix elements are used across all target markets (Schuiling & Kapferer, 2004). Brand communications and message strategies in different markets are, therefore, generally similar and centrally coordinated to build a unified perception globally (Steenkamp et al, 2003).

CSR can be considered as a global brand insurance that strengthens brand-consumer bond, lessens a brand's vulnerability to management lapses, and thus, protects brand value (Werther & Chandler, 2005). CSR communication is also important in managing the corporate image, reputation and public relations factors that dominate brand value creation and value loss (Middlemiss, 2002). Multinational firms tend to apply a uniform set of CSR practices worldwide, due to the practice of global monitoring (Robertson, 2009). Thus, operating in a global context requires considering different expectations of stakeholders from various countries and giving due consideration to all possible dimensions of the social responsibility concept, thus contributing to a global reputation (Popoli, 2011). On the other hand, brands are cultural, ideological, and sociological objects that shape cultural rituals, economic activities, and social norms (Schroeder, 2009). Thus, societal expectations about brands in terms of their responsiveness to

social issues are also dependent on contextual factors. Following a purely global approach in the management of CSR may cause companies to fail to respond effectively to country-specific needs and expectations (Husted & Allen, 2006). In contrast to the argument that global corporations regard the entire world as a single market and take a standardized approach to selling standardized products (Levitt, 1983), current business practices in fact follow a localized approach in maintaining public relations and building brand image (Maynard & Tian, 2004).

The paradigm behind sustainability holds the combined idea of “people, planet and profits (3P)”, termed as the triple-bottom-line approach, and a nested system where environmental, social and economic concerns are integrated and reconciled in making business decisions (Elkington, 1998: 2004). Therefore, sustainability communication is a strategic business issue for leading brands, involving the decision whether to give equal importance to economic, environmental and social dimensions, or to pursue a globalized strategy in different markets to emphasize local societal priorities and expectations. For instance, a research on Turkish society’s CSR expectations (Capital, 2009) demonstrates that in social responsibility efforts, private sector companies should give priority to education and teaching (29.9%), health and health services (20.7%), environment and nature conservation (11.9%). Another study on the leading 30 companies of Istanbul Stock Exchange (ISE) National 100 Index show that culture and arts (23%), environment (23%) and education (18%) are the three CSR topics that primarily concern business practices (UNDP, 2010). It should be noted that the main reason underlying the environmental sustainability focus of Turkish private companies relate to the requirements of international customers and the Turkish government as a part of the process of integration into the European Union. Therefore, leading Turkish brands may feel pressure to prioritize social and environmental sustainability principles and activities in public announcements, as the expense of economic responsibility messages on social media.

H3: The proportions of economic, social and environmental sustainability messages communicated on social media are equal.

3. METHODOLOGY

An across-stage mixed-model research design is used in the study. In mixed-model designs, qualitative and quantitative approaches are combined within and/or across

research stages; for example, qualitative data is analyzed by quantitative methods (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). In this context, firstly, sustainability-themed messages on corporate Facebook accounts of leading brands in Turkey were analyzed by using content analysis, and then, regression, one-way Anova, and chi-square analyses were performed for the quantified data.

3.1. Sample

The top 100 local and top 100 global brands listed in 2013 Brand-Finance Global 500 and Brand-Finance Turkey 100 rankings were selected as the sampling frame. The list rank orders the brands in terms of their values ranging from \$2,380 to \$13 million among local brands, and from \$87,304 to \$7,068 million among global brands operating in Turkey. 62 Turkish and 31 global high-value brands with Turkish-language Facebook accounts were included in the sample. Brand Finance assesses brand value by using the “Royalty Relief” approach which is compliant with the requirement under the International Valuation Standards Authority and ISO 10668 Brand Valuation Standards (Heberden, 2011; Brand Finance, 2016). This is the most frequently used method of brand valuation, because value is calculated by reference to documented, third-party transactions and based on publicly available financial information, and many comparable licensing agreements exist in the public domain (Brand Finance, 2016; Haigh, 2004).

As a very attractive emerging market for global players (Ozsomer et al., 1991; Bilgin et al., 2004; Eren-Erdogmus et al., 2010), Turkey was chosen as the market of analysis. Sustainability is no longer a matter of choice, but a necessity in emerging markets to ensure competitiveness in the international arena (Sheth, 2011). Nevertheless, sustainability idea remains only partially integrated into strategies of companies, highlighting the need for a greater academic attention on sustainability practices of brands in emerging markets (Baskin, 2006; Amran et al., 2015). There is an increasing expectation that companies will embrace a broader notion of CSR and engage in more comprehensive sustainability practices, such as foreign investment and international trade, although there are still emerging areas in Turkey (Robertson, 2009). In addition, Turkey has been exposed to values, standards and practices of global institutions through the continuity of the European Union membership application process (Ararat, 2007; Robertson, 2009). In addition, Turkey is ranked fourth in the world in terms of

social media use (Comscore, 2011). According to a recent study, among the world's largest companies, Facebook is one of the most frequently used social media platforms for gaining business value (Culnan et al., 2010). Similarly, as the most popular social media site in Turkey, it is used by over 40 percent of population (Internet World Stats, 2012). Therefore, corporate Facebook pages were considered suitable for examining social media sustainability-themed message strategies of leading brands operating in Turkey.

3.2. Data collection and transformation

Boomsonar software program, implemented by a social media tracking company (Tick Tock Boom Digital Public Relations and Reputation Management Agency), was used to detect Facebook messages containing sustainability keywords derived from previous studies (e.g., Azapagic & Perdan, 2000; Chabowski et al., 2011). In total, 76 keywords were identified for the manifest search, 24 of which referred to the economic dimension, 18 to environmental dimension, 25 to social dimension, and the remaining 8 to sustainability in general (Table 1).

Dimensions	Keywords
Sustainability - Main	Sustainability, Certificate, Reporting, Innovation, Quality, Social Responsibility, CSR, Project
Environmental	Environment, Green, Organic, Ecologic, Waste, Carbon, Emission, Energy, Environmental, Pollution, Warming, Water Consumption, Resource, Climate Change, Eco-, Recycle, Environmental Friendly, Renewable
Social	Social, Society, Ethical, Welfare, Conduct, Child Labor, Labor Union, Fair, Harassment, Safety, Health, Corporate Social Performance, NGO, Human Rights, Charity, Voluntary, Rights, Female Worker, Reliability, Reputation, Corporate Social Investment, Equality, Education/Training, Discrimination, Cultural Value
Economic	Economic, Stakeholder, Shareholder, Value Added, GDP, GNP, Investment, Efficiency, Consumption, Finance, Capital, Cost, Profit, Revenue, Share, Income, Stability, ROI, Growth, Transparency, Risk, Crisis, Competitiveness, Investment Profitability

Table 1. Sustainability keywords searched on facebook messages

In the data transformation stage, one of the researchers acted as the primary coder, and coded messages for the sustainability context, dimensions of sustainability (social, environmental and economic), and frequencies through content analysis. In addition, each brand was identified in terms of brand value, global-context, and industry sector as cited in the 2013 Brand-Finance lists. As a result, Facebook messages were transformed into quantitative data that can be represented statistically (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998). Although it serves many purposes, content analysis is considered to be fundamental to communication research (Berelson, 1952; Lombard et al., 2002), and has been widely used in CSR communication research (e.g., Esrock & Leichty, 1998; Maignan & Ralston, 2002; Capriotti & Moreno, 2007; Jose & Lee, 2007; Sweeney & Coughlan, 2008; Wanderley et al., 2008; Tang & Li, 2009; Kim et al., 2010). As a research tool, it has been increasingly used in the studies of a relatively new communication medium, social media (e.g., Waters et al. 2009; Yang & Kent, 2014). Therefore, in this study, content analysis was conducted on the sustainability content of social media messages of leading brands. Specifically, manifest content analysis was conducted in which researchers are more concerned with the visible, surface content of communication which can be quantified. Here, the main focus is frequency; i.e. identifying the most frequently occurring words (Weber, 1990).

Since coding reliability is critical in content analysis, and specifically in the study of mass communication messages (Lombard et al., 2002; Neuendorf, 2002), a randomly selected subsample of 119 messages was coded by the second researcher. Although there is no set standard for the reliability assessment sample size decision, 10% to 20% of the total sample is recommended (Neuendorf, 2002). Considering the nominal value characteristic of the data and the number of coders, Scott's pi index was chosen to assess reliability (Lombard et al., 2002). The coefficient of .85 indicated a high level of inter-coder agreement (Neuendorf, 2002). The disagreements for all units in the reliability assessment sample were resolved by taking a codetermination approach.

4. DATA ANALYSES AND RESULTS

4.1. Presence of facebook account, and frequency of industry sector and sustainability messages

A preliminary examination of the Facebook messages indicated that sustainability-

themed messages were communicated by 51 out of 62 Turkish brands, and 22 out of 32 global brands communicated sustainability messages. Therefore, 51 Turkish and 22 global brands were included in the data analysis. The total of 73 Turkish and global brands were further classified by industry sector as follows: financials (26%), technology & telecommunication (24.7%), travel & leisure (15%), automobiles & parts (13.7%), retail (8.2%), oil & gas & chemicals (6.9%) and food & beverage (5.5%). Sector classification was based on Dow Jones Indices (Dow Jones, 2012). Table 2 presents the results of the content analysis for sustainability-themed messages communicated on corporate Facebook accounts in terms of the frequencies of the environmental, social and economic dimensions, industry sector and country of origin categories.

INDUSTRY	SUSTAINABILITY DIMENSIONS						TOTAL	
	Environ-mental (ENV)		Social (SOC)		Economic (ECO)			
	TR	GL	TR	GL	TR	GL	TR	GL
Technology&Telecommunication	17	69	18	38	13	10	48	117
Automobiles&Parts	47	10	4	5	1	1	52	16
Financials	10	6	31	14	102	35	143	55
Travel&Leisure	17	4	190	3	62	2	269	9
Retail	19	0	6	0	1	0	26	0
Oil&Gas&Chemicals	5	0	27	0	3	0	35	0
Food&Beverage	2	0	9	0	2	0	13	0
TOTAL	117	89	285	60	184	48	586	197

Table 2. Frequencies of facebook sustainability message contents

4.2. Results for brand value effect

Regarding hypothesis one, a series of regression analyses were conducted. The first analysis of all leading global and Turkish brands in the sample asserted that brand value is not significantly associated with the frequency of communicating sustainability-themed messages on social media ($F_{TOTAL} (1, 71) = 68.279, p > .005$). Three further similarly showed that brand value is not significantly associated with environmental ($F_{ENV} (1, 71) = 50.053, p > .005$), social ($F_{SOC} (1, 71) = 74.752, p > .005$) or economic

($F_{ECO} (1, 71) = 44.783, p > .005$) dimensions of social media sustainability messages. Moreover, different tests conducted among subsamples of leading global and Turkish brands demonstrated that an insignificant brand value effect on the frequency of all sustainability messages ($F_{TR} (1, 49) = 134.186, p > .005$; $F_{GL} (1, 20) = 5.197, p > .005$); frequency of environmental sustainability messages ($F_{TR} (1, 49) = 1.743, p > .005$; $F_{GL} (1, 20) = 5.489, p > .005$); frequency of social sustainability messages ($F_{TR} (1, 49) = 58.463, p > .005$; $F_{GL} (1, 20) = 11.536, p > .005$); and frequency of economic sustainability messages ($F_{TR} (1, 49) = 6.851, p > .005$; $F_{GL} (1, 20) = 11.968, p > .005$).

4.3. Results for industry sector effect

To examine hypothesis two, three different one-way Anova tests were conducted. The first examined impact of industry sector on the frequency of communicating social media sustainability messages, taking into account the three dimensions of sustainability. Results revealed a significant difference in group means at the $p < 0.05$ level in only the economic dimension of sustainability message numbers for seven industries [$F_{ECO} (6, 19.23) = 4.109, p = 0.008$; $F_{ENV} (6, 19.20) = 1.974, p = .120$; $F_{SOC} (6, 17.78) = 2.127, p = .101$; $F_{TOTAL} (6, 20.92) = 2.332, p = .070$]. Due to unbalanced sample sizes and unequal group variances, it was decided to conduct a Games–Howell post hoc test with 95% bias corrected confidence intervals on the mean differences, which indicated that the number of economic sustainability messages communicated on social media was significantly higher for financials ($M_{FINANCIALS} = 7.21, SD = 7.28$) compared to other five industry sectors except service ($M_{AUTOMOBILES\&PARTS} = .20, SD = .42, p = .008$; $M_{FOODS\&BEVERAGE} = .50, SD = 1, p = .014$; $M_{OIL\&GAS\&CHEMICALS} = .60, SD = .55, p = .014$; $M_{RETAIL} = .17, SD = .41, p = .008$; $M_{TECHNOLOGY\&TELECOMMUNICATIONS} = 1.28, SD = 1.90, p = .035$; $M_{SERVICE} = 5.82, SD = 8.84, p = .99$). There were no statistically significant differences in mean scores between other industry groups.

The second test explored the industry sector effect among global brands using a subsample of 21 global brands. Since, only one service sector global brand was identified, it was excluded from the subsample. Results indicate that there were no statistically significant differences at the $p < .05$ level in the mean number of messages related to different dimensions of sustainability [$F_{GL-ENV} (2, 11.85) = 1.747, p = .216$; $F_{GL-SOC} (2, 18) = 1.941, p = .075$; $F_{GL-ECO} (2, 7.94) = 3.616, p = .076$] and in total [$F_{GL-TOTAL} (2, 7.88) = 3.773, p = .071$] for three industry groups.

In the final test, a subsample of 51 Turkish brands was examined for the industry sector effect. Results only yielded a significant effect of the industry sector for the frequency of communicating the economic dimension of sustainability in social media messages [$F_{TR-ECO}(6, 15.50) = 4.109, p = 0.049$; $F_{TR-ENV}(6, 14.29) = 1.434, p = .269$; $F_{TR-SOC}(6, 15.34) = 1.022, p = .448$; $F_{TR-TOTAL}(6, 14.94) = 1.767, p = .174$]. Due to unbalanced sample sizes and unequal group variances, it was decided to conduct a Games–Howell post hoc test, which revealed that the mean score for financials ($M_{FINANCIALS} = 7.29, SD = 7.60$) was significantly different from retail ($M_{RETAIL} = .17, SD = .41, p = .046$). There were no statistically significant differences in mean scores between other industry groups.

4.4. Results for dimensional focus effect

Addressing hypothesis three, a chi-square goodness-of-fit analysis was conducted to examine whether leading global brands were equally likely to emphasize all three dimensions of sustainability. Result showed that there is a statistically significant difference in the number of leading global brands' social media messages related to the three different dimensions of sustainability [$\chi_{GL}^2(2) = 13.53, p < .05$]. A closer examination of the data suggests that leading global brands communicate economic ($N_{GL-ECO} = 89$) sustainability messages more frequently than expected, but emphasize social ($N_{GL-SOC} = 60$) and environmental ($N_{GL-ENV} = 48$) dimensions less frequently than expected. On the other hand, another chi-square test of the expected versus observed frequencies demonstrated that leading global Turkish brands have a stronger focus on social sustainability ($N_{TR-SOC} = 281$) compared to economic ($N_{TR-ECO} = 182$) and environmental dimensions ($N_{TR-ENV} = 114$) on social media communication messages [$\chi_{TR}^2(2) = 73.3, p < .05$]¹.

5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The first major finding is that brand value has no significant impact on tendency to communicate sustainability-themed messages on social media. This is in contrast to the view that more strongly branded companies, as large corporations, have a correspondently greater concern with reputation, and therefore greater levels of social responsibility information (Esrock & Leichty, 1998). At first, this might be associated

¹ To control possible effect of being a local brand on sustainability-themed message strategy, the only three local brands that operate only in Turkey were excluded from the data, leading to minor differences in the total number of environmental, social and economic sustainability messages from 117 to 114, 258 to 281, and 184 to 182, respectively.

with the sample of the study, Turkey, but sustainability is known to equally as important in emerging markets as in developed markets (Sheth, 2011). However, the result supports the argument that sustainability is still not well integrated into companies' social media communication strategies in emerging markets (Baskin, 2006; Amran et al., 2015). From a practical perspective, the findings suggest that leading brands should act as a pioneer for a better use of social media, as a medium for emphasizing the sustainability facet of their products, to create public awareness, and then foreground the issue of sustainability on the consumer side communication, and thus make sustainability an inherent part of society and businesses in general.

Secondly, the literature suggests the existence of a relationship between CSR communication and industry sectors (Jose & Lee, 2007; Perrini et al., 2007; Sweeney & Coughlan, 2008; Wanderley et al., 2008; Tang & Li, 2009). However, the results presented in this paper revealed no differences between industries in terms of the tendency to communicate sustainability-themed messages in general. This finding is not surprising given that, in contrast to previous research, in this study sustainability is considered in a broader sense, including environmental, social and economic aspects. Therefore, further analyses were conducted to explore the impact of industry on different dimensions of sustainability messages. The only dimension-based message frequency that varies by industries was economic sustainability, and also the financial sector alone was found to place greater emphasis on this issue. Similarly, another analysis conducted among the most valuable Turkish brands showed that industry sector explains the differences in a brand's tendencies to communicate economic aspects of sustainability in social media messages; the only difference was between financial and retail sector Turkish brands; the former sector has a greater tendency to communicate economic sustainability messages. These findings suggest that the most valuable banking and insurance sector brands make intensive efforts to communicate their economic sustainability strategies, practices, and actions to the public through a globally accessible channel. This can be explained by the finance sector's significant involvement in economic activity creating pressure to disclose their economic sustainability standing to key stakeholders. On the other hand, no differences were found among global brands operating in Turkey based on industry in terms of social media sustainability dimension messages. A possible explanation for the lack of

industry effect on global brands may be the adoption of an enhanced level of sustainability management, which aims to attract public attention, not only to the industry specific or more visible impacts, but also to the other aspects of triple-bottom-line approach.

Finally, as expected, the results indicate that leading global Turkish brands' social media messages tend to emphasize social sustainability over economic and environmental responsibility issues. It seems that these brands are responding to the social sustainability expectations of society (Capital, 2009; Robertson, 2009), and therefore, targeting stakeholders in their social sustainability messages, may contribute to enhancing their competitiveness in a globalized world (Sheth, 2011). The environmental dimension was, in contrast, the least communicated aspect of sustainability. This finding may be explained by the proposition of Mitnick (2000), which states that firms tend to provide easily accessible activity or output measures in CSR areas unrelated to their most problematic processes and/or consequences, which can explain the lower level of environmentally-friendly business practices applied in Turkey. On the other hand, contrary to the previous research findings (Capriotti & Moreno, 2007), results demonstrated that economic sustainability is the most communicated aspect of triple-bottom-line responsibility approach on social media messages among leading global brands in Turkey. By focusing on economic sustainability, these brands have the least degree of sophistication with respect to corporate sustainability (Amini & Bienstock, 2014). This finding may be explained by the perceived lack of adequate information and standard reporting on social and environmental performance in Turkey, which means that these parameters are unlikely to be included in brand value analysis (Ararat, 2008). Therefore, it seems leading global brands perceive that social and environmental sustainability communications as being among the less important value-adding brand activities in the Turkish market. In addition, the very fact of that the lower CSR standards and lower levels of public awareness in developing countries may lead corporations to meet only the lowest levels of expectations or requirements (Muller, 2006). However, findings imply that it is important that leading brands in emerging markets understand the connection between the three sustainability dimensions in order to be able to increase the sophistication of sustainability communications with various stakeholders.

This study contributes to academic discussions in terms of the different dimensions of

sustainability approaches of large companies on their social media accounts, and extends these discussions across different industries. Thus, this study raises academic attention on the role of social media in promoting the sustainability content of large companies' messages, and highlights the need for further research to reveal their approaches to the use of social media accounts.

The present study has some limitations. First, only the corporate Facebook pages were investigated to examine sustainability-themed messages communicated on social media. Future studies may examine the level of integration of sustainability communication among different channels of social media. Second, industry sector analysis was based purely on sectoral orientations of leading brands. However, previous research indicated differences between B2C and B2B companies in communicating CSR information (Tang & Li, 2009). Another future research direction is to extend the current investigation to include different classifications of industries in order to explore the corporate sustainability information disclosures of brands.

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How to cite this article:

Tuğrul, T. Ö. & Göçer, A. (2017). Communicating Sustainability on Social Media: A study on leading turkish and global brands in Turkey.. *International Journal of Marketing, Communication and New Media*. 8 (5), 6-27. Available at <http://u3isjournal.isvouga.pt/index.php/ijmcmn>