



## FIGHTING CLIMATE CHANGE THROUGH GREEN COMMUNICATION AND ECO INFLUENCERS: WILL SQUARED PICTURES SAVE THE PLANET?

### **Discover our conference:**

Firstly, the conference aims to evaluate the role of social media and eco-influencers in fighting climate change. Secondly, we would compare the different approaches used by traditional and social media in communicating the urgency of the problem and the respective impact that they have on their audience (e.g. Boomers vs GenZ). Thirdly, we would investigate to what extent "green communication" contributes to increase "**climate anxiety**". Finally, given the growing importance of social media in raising awareness of climate change, we would like to discuss future perspectives for "green communication".

### **Why is it important talking about ...?**

Although environmental activists have always existed, social media clearly played a role in boosting the spread of their ideas. People became aware of the urgency of the issue also due to a change in the activists' approach towards the matter. And with that, a new figure entered the public debate, seizing the potential offered by social media: **eco-influencers**.

Their role is key when bringing people closer to the cause: an aggressive communicative approach can easily distance people. On one hand, their approach is practical and free from the traditional media's authority, allowing people to get close to the issue. On the other hand, they don't have the polarizing approach that some movements against climate change have: organizations such as Just Stop Oil carry out a strategy that solely aims at reaching out to as many people as possible, and the consequent controversial actions polarize the debate, with outrage or detachment on one side and complete support on the other.

Nevertheless, the permanent exposure to information elicits a variety of emotional responses: the crisis might represent a threat for both physical health and the general well-being of individuals.

The conference aims to investigate the above discussed points: the urgency of the problem calls for our attention. Hikma aspires to encourage the debate and further raise awareness on the role of communication in fighting climate change.

### **Key Words:**

- **Climate Anxiety:** chronic concern and fear related to the environmental crises, mostly experienced by younger people. Rather than a rational awareness for the planet, it shows that climate change consequences can seriously affect mental health.
- **Greenwashing:** it can be difficult to distinguish between green marketing and misleading greenwashing strategies. Both aim to attract the consumer, but the latter just sells a fake commitment to the environmental cause.
- **Lifestyle politics:** citizens can be daily engaged in politics, for example, when they decide about the consumption of certain products rather than other ones on the basis of deeper ethical, moral and political motivations.
- **Eco-influencers:** the difference with traditional activists becomes evident when eco-influencers are paid to do a partnership. They encourage their followers to choose a brand over another one because they picture that as a conscious purchase.
- **Bothsidesism:** the act in which the media present both sides of the matter, regardless of what the facts show. This damages the ability of ordinary citizens to critically view the problem and contributes in making them doubt the scientific evidence on issues such as climate change.



# HIKMA SUMMIT 2023 OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

## Statistics:

[https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanplh/article/PIIS2542-5196\(21\)00278-3/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanplh/article/PIIS2542-5196(21)00278-3/fulltext)

Respondents across all countries were worried about climate change:

- 59% were very or extremely worried
- 84% were at least moderately worried.
- More than 50% reported each of the following emotions: sad, anxious, angry, powerless, helpless, and guilty.
- More than 45% of respondents said their feelings about climate change negatively affected their daily life and functioning, and many reported a high number of negative thoughts about climate change (eg, 75% said that they think the future is frightening and 83% said that they think people have failed to take care of the planet).

<https://www.insidemarketing.it/influencer-marketing-e-sostenibilita-dati-2021/>

- According to “Influencer marketing e sostenibilità”, environmental issues work best on Instagram: over 76% of the content related to sustainable and more eco-friendly lifestyles has been posted on this app. Perhaps the platform makes it easier to realize tutorials and guides - thanks to the function ‘Guides’ and through Stories or Reels as well - about avoiding food waste or extending the life of a low-cost fashion item through upcycling. Of course, it is evident that there is a large gap with the other platforms: just 12% of the sustainability-themed contents has been posted on Facebook, while on Twitter it drops to 8%. The reason can be that Instagram remains the platform privileged by the influencers and the main ground for the advertising campaigns in which they collaborate with the brands.

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- Hotter days bring out hotter tempers, research finds -Washington Post
- Cutting disaster risk will boost equality, improve resilience -UN News
- IEA says fossil fuel demand will peak soon but urges faster action -CNN
- [https://sciencepolicy.colorado.edu/icecaps/research/media\\_coverage/summaries/special\\_issue\\_2022.html](https://sciencepolicy.colorado.edu/icecaps/research/media_coverage/summaries/special_issue_2022.html)