

TESTING THE “SUSTAINABLE NARRATIVE - TRUST - BEHAVIORAL RESPONSE” MODEL IN THE MARKETING COMMUNICATIONS OF AGRICULTURAL PRODUCERS

Burkovska A.I., PhD

Mykolayiv National Agrarian University

<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0563-6967>

Abstract: The testing of the “sustainable narrative – trust – behavioral response” model in the marketing communications of agricultural producers has been examined. The interrelationship between the use of environmental and sociocultural narratives in the branding of agricultural products and the formation of brand trust has been identified, as well as the impact of this trust on purchase intention and consumer behavioral responses. It has been substantiated that semantic markers of sustainability (particularly environmental labels, linguistic framing, and appeals to local identity) shape consumer associations with product quality, safety, and the producer’s social responsibility. It has been demonstrated that trust serves as the key link between the sustainable narrative and behavioral response, as it transforms symbolic messages into concrete purchase intentions and brand loyalty.

Keywords: sustainable narratives, marketing communications, brand trust, consumer behavior, purchase intention, eco-labeling, food marketing.

Problem statement. In the contemporary development of the agricultural sector, marketing communications no longer serve solely an informative function; they have become a tool for shaping meanings, values, and long-term relationships with consumers. The integration of sustainable development principles into the communication strategies of agricultural producers has gained particular importance. Environmental and sociocultural narratives form the foundation of brand positioning, influencing not only product perception but also the formation of trust and subsequent consumer behavior. In this context, the “sustainable narrative - trust - behavioral response” model explains the mechanism by which symbolic messages are transformed into concrete purchase intentions.

Presentation of the main research findings. The sustainable narrative in marketing communications is manifested through the use of semantic markers that appeal to ecological safety, responsible production, support for local communities, and the preservation of cultural identity. These markers can be embedded in product names, linguistic design, graphic systems, or through labels such as “ECO.” They function as symbolic signals, activating associations in the consumer’s mind with quality, naturalness, and social responsibility. As a result, the product is perceived not merely as a commodity but as a carrier of specific values [1].

Trust serves as the key link between the sustainable narrative and behavioral response. It enables the transformation of semantic signals into emotional and cognitive acceptance of the brand. Trust develops when declared values align with consumer

expectations [2]. If an ecological or social message corresponds to the cultural context and the audience's beliefs, confidence in the product's quality, safety, and producer integrity increases. Research on consumer perceptions indicates a strong connection between trust in quality and expectations of better taste, as well as between trust and perceptions of ecological safety and contributions to local community development. This shows that trust has a multifaceted nature, combining both individual and societal aspects of product evaluation [3].

Behavioral response is the final stage of the model, manifested in purchase intention, increased product appeal, and brand loyalty. When the sustainable narrative strengthens trust, consumers are more willing to choose that product over alternatives [4]. At the same time, ecological markers can raise audience expectations, as sustainability-oriented consumers tend to critically evaluate the brand's adherence to declared values. Therefore, the effectiveness of the sustainable narrative depends on its authenticity and actual support through production practices [1].

Moreover, the application of the "sustainable narrative – trust – behavioral response" model highlights the strategic importance of authenticity and transparency in marketing communications [1]. Consumers are increasingly able to detect inconsistencies between a brand's claims and its actual practices. Misalignment between the promoted sustainable values and the observed reality can erode trust, diminish purchase intentions, and even provoke negative word-of-mouth, undermining the brand's reputation. Therefore, sustainability messaging must be carefully supported by verifiable actions, such as adopting eco-friendly production technologies, fair labor practices, and community engagement initiatives.

The model also emphasizes the role of consumer segmentation in the effectiveness of sustainable narratives. Different groups respond differently to environmental and sociocultural appeals depending on their values, knowledge, and prior experiences. For instance, environmentally conscious consumers may prioritize ecological labels and carbon footprint information, while culturally oriented consumers may respond more strongly to appeals related to local traditions and heritage. Tailoring communication strategies to match the expectations and priorities of specific segments enhances the likelihood of building trust and influencing behavior [1].

Finally, the findings suggest that sustainable narratives are not only a tool for individual sales but also a mechanism for long-term brand equity development. Brands that consistently deliver on their sustainable promises can strengthen emotional bonds with consumers, encourage repeat purchases, and foster advocacy, which cumulatively contributes to market stability and resilience. For agricultural producers, this means that sustainability-focused marketing is a dual-purpose strategy: it drives immediate commercial outcomes while also reinforcing the social legitimacy and ethical credibility of the brand.

Conclusions. Thus, the "sustainable narrative – trust – behavioral response" model demonstrates a logical and empirically supported sequence of marketing communication effects on consumers. Environmental and sociocultural narratives create a positive brand image, which, through trust, translates into purchase intentions and concrete behavioral actions. For agricultural producers, this implies that integrating sustainable development principles into communication strategy is not only a

reputational measure but also a factor that enhances competitiveness and ensures long-term market resilience.

Funding: The thesis contains the results of the research obtained during the implementation of the project “Research into the impact of sustainable development narratives on the promotion of agricultural products on the Ukrainian market based on the application of a semantic approach to food marketing in the context of ensuring food security” No. 2025.05/0019 of the competition “Competition for grants from the President of Ukraine to support scientific research and development of young scientists - Doctors of Philosophy/Candidates of Sciences (up to 35 years old)” under the grant support of the National Research Foundation of Ukraine.

Acknowledgments: The author is grateful to the National Research Foundation of Ukraine for the financial support of this research.

References

1. Burkovska A., Burkovska A. Semantic approach to food marketing: the influence of sustainable development narratives on the Ukrainian market. *Agricultural and Resource Economics*. 2025. Vol.11. No.1. Pp.317–347. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.51599/are.2025.11.01.12>.
2. Alzu'bi R. M., Kontor E., Kovács S. A qualitative study of using green marketing practices within Jordanian food companies: a content analysis approach. *Discover Sustainability*. 2025. 6(1). DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1007/s43621-025-01301-x>.
3. Nguyen Q. C., Næs T., Le, V. V. M., Asioli D., Varela P. Consumer preferences for upcycled foods: The role of product attributes and label information. *Food Quality and Preference*. 2025. 105611. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.foodqual.2025.105611>.
4. Maksan, M. T., Gerini, F., Šprem, N. Investigating Consumer Attitudes About Game Meat: A Market Segmentation Approach. *Sustainability*. 2025. 17(7), 3147. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.3390/su17073147>.

Анотація: Досліджено тестування моделі «сталій наратив - довіра - поведінкова реакція» у маркетингових комунікаціях сільськогосподарських товаровиробників. Визначено взаємозв'язок між використанням екологічних і соціокультурних наративів у брендингу аграрної продукції та формуванням довіри до бренду, а також вплив цієї довіри на намір купівлі та поведінкові реакції споживачів. Обґрунтовано, що семантичні маркери сталості (зокрема екологічні позначення, мовне оформлення та апеляція до локальної ідентичності) формують у свідомості споживачів асоціації з якістю продукції, її безпечністю та соціальною відповідальністю виробника. Доведено, що довіра виступає ключовою ланкою між сталим наративом і поведінковою реакцією, оскільки саме вона трансформує символічні повідомлення у конкретні наміри придбання та лояльність до бренду.

Ключові слова: сталі наративи, маркетингові комунікації, довіра до бренду, поведінка споживачів, намір купівлі, екомаркування, маркетинг харчових продуктів.