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Social Media Strategies for Sustainability and ORM: Insights from the Czech Automotive Sector **Stratégie sociálnych médií zamerané na udržateľnosť a ORM: Poznatky z českého automobilového sektora**

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Abstract: *This study examines the strategies used by leading automotive companies in the Czech Republic - Škoda, Hyundai, Audi, Kia, and BMW to integrate sustainability and green promotion into their online reputation management (ORM). By analyzing social media content from August to October 2023, this research evaluates the proportion of sustainability focused posts, their engagement metrics and alignment with corporate sustainability goals. The study utilizes a mixed-methods approach, including content analysis and quantitative evaluation. Findings indicate Hyundai and BMW as leaders in green promotion, leveraging interactive and visually compelling strategies to enhance engagement and ORM. Conversely, Audi and Kia demonstrate limited engagement with sustainability themes. These findings provide practical insights for leveraging sustainability to improve online reputation, while highlighting the importance of platform specific strategies, particularly on Instagram. Future research could explore broader temporal and geographical contexts to further validate these findings.*

Key words: *Sustainability strategies. Automotive industry. Social media marketing. Reputation management.*

JEL Classification: M31. Q56. L86.

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Introduction

The Czech automotive sector operates within a robust institutional framework shaped by both national and European Union policies. As one of the largest automotive producers in Central Europe, the industry contributes almost 9% to the country's GDP and employs over 260,000 people (Czech automotive industry association, 2022). This strategic importance has driven government initiatives such as the National Action Plan for Clean Mobility (NAP CM), which supports the transition to sustainable transport through subsidies for electric vehicles and investment in charging infrastructure (Ministry of Industry and Trade of the Czech Republic, 2024).

In addition, the EU's stringent CO₂ emissions regulations are playing a key role in shaping the strategies of car manufacturers. Companies are required to align their operations with evolving environmental standards, ensuring compliance while balancing economic viability. Efforts by the Czech government, such as the introduction of the Electromobility Guarantee programme, further underscore the institutional push towards green mobility by providing significant subsidies to companies for the introduction of electric vehicles (Czech Trade Offices, 2024). This broader regulatory environment has a direct impact on ORM strategies, as companies seek to leverage their sustainability initiatives to align with consumer expectations and enhance brand reputation. In addition, as consumers become more aware of environmental issues, their preferences have shifted towards brands that demonstrate a genuine commitment to sustainability. This has necessitated a shift in ORM practices, emphasizing transparency, data-backed claims and alignment with institutional goals.

Sustainability and green promotion have become integral to the online reputation management (ORM) strategies of companies in industries under public scrutiny, such as automotive manufacturing. ORM involves managing perceptions on digital platforms and sustainability has emerged as a key component in building consumer trust and loyalty. This study investigates how leading automotive companies in the Czech Republic leverage sustainability initiatives to enhance ORM. Specifically, it aims to analyze the proportion of sustainability-related content, the engagement it generates and how these efforts align with broader sustainability goals. The study also examines platform specific differences between Facebook and Instagram in promoting sustainability themes effectively. The integration of sustainability and green promotion within online reputation management (ORM) has become increasingly critical in contemporary business practices. As digital platforms spread, the management of corporate reputation has evolved into a multifaceted challenge that necessitates

a robust strategy, particularly in the context of sustainability. Research indicates that a company's online reputation significantly influences its competitive advantage and overall performance, especially when sustainability practices are effectively communicated and integrated into the corporate identity (Gómez-Trujillo et al., 2020; Obioha, 2024). The importance of sustainability in ORM is underscored by the findings of various studies that highlight the positive correlation between sustainable practices and corporate reputation. For instance, companies that actively engage in sustainability reporting not only enhance their reputation but also build trust with stakeholders, which is essential for long-term success (Salvador, 2024; Oncioiu et al., 2020, Dorčák et al., 2017). This is particularly relevant in sectors such as food exports, where the transparency of sustainability practices can account for a substantial portion of a company's online reputation and consequently, its market performance (Flores, 2023). Furthermore, the implementation of environmental strategies has been shown to positively affect stakeholders' perceptions, thereby reinforcing the company's reputation within its network (García et al., 2022; Ramos-González et al., 2017, García-Melón et al., 2016). Moreover, the role of social media in ORM cannot be overstated. Social media platforms serve as critical channels for companies to engage with consumers and manage their reputations in real time. The strategic use of social media can enhance brand trustworthiness and customer loyalty which are vital components of a sustainable business model (Dijkmans et al., 2015; Garrido-Moreno et al., 2018). The ability to monitor and respond to user-generated content (UGC) effectively allows organizations to mitigate negative sentiments and amplify positive feedback thus maintaining a favorable online reputation (Ratnayaka, 2024, Pollák et. al., 2023). This dynamic interaction emphasizes the necessity for businesses to adopt proactive ORM strategies that align with their sustainability goals.

The main objective of this research is to evaluate how leading automotive companies in the Czech Republic – Škoda, Hyundai, Audi, Kia and BMW, use sustainability and green promotion in their social media strategies to manage their online reputation. By analyzing content shared on Facebook and Instagram, the study aims to identify the proportion of sustainability related posts, assess engagement rates for different content types and understand how companies align their messaging with sustainability goals to connect with consumers and enhance their brand image.

1 Literature review

ORM and sustainability intersect as companies increasingly leverage digital platforms to communicate their commitment to environmental practices. Sustainability is defined here as the adoption of practices that reduce environmental impact while contributing to long-term ecological balance. ORM refers to strategies aimed at shaping public perception through online channels. Recent trends emphasize the role of social media in shaping consumer perceptions where platforms like Instagram enable brands to highlight sustainability through visually engaging content. However, the risk of greenwashing making misleading claims about sustainability, necessitates transparency and data-backed assertions. Effective ORM strategies integrate advanced tools like sentiment analysis and real-time engagement metrics to align sustainability messages with consumer expectations, reinforcing trust and loyalty.

The automotive sector is increasingly recognized for its potential to implement sustainable practices that not only improve operational efficiency but also enhance corporate reputation. Research suggests that sustainability initiatives are becoming essential for companies seeking to maintain a positive online reputation as consumers and stakeholders increasingly scrutinize corporate behavior and practices (Велинов & Štrach, 2022, Vojtasová & Solej, 2023). For example, the implementation of diversity and inclusion practices in automotive companies has been shown to positively influence sustainability outcomes, which in turn can improve the companies' reputation in the market (Велинов & Štrach, 2022). This relationship highlights the need for automotive companies to adopt comprehensive sustainability strategies that resonate with their stakeholders, thereby fostering a robust online reputation. Furthermore, the credibility of sustainability claims of paramount importance in shaping online reputation. Studies have shown that the perceived authenticity of a company's sustainability efforts has a significant impact on its online reputation (Oncioiu et al., 2020).

In the Czech automotive sector, companies that transparently communicate their sustainability practices and achievements are more likely to cultivate consumer trust and loyalty (Becker, K., & Lee, J. 2019). This is particularly relevant in an era where misinformation can easily spread online, making it crucial for companies to adopt proactive ORM strategies that not only highlight their sustainability efforts, but also address potential reputational risks associated with greenwashing or unsubstantiated claims (Mazzucchelli, A., & Chiacchierini, C.2018). The role of social media in ORM cannot be overstated, as it serves as a platform for both engagement and scrutiny. Automotive firms in the Czech Republic need to use social media to effectively communicate their sustainability initiatives while monitoring public

sentiment (Dijkmans et al., 2015). Engaging with consumers through social media allows companies to build a narrative around their commitment to sustainability, which can improve their overall reputation (Dijkmans et al., 2015, Paetsch et al., 2017). Furthermore, the strategic use of social media can facilitate real time feedback and dialogue, allowing firms to address concerns and reinforce their sustainability messages (Peco-Torres et al., 2023). This dynamic interaction is essential for maintaining a positive online reputation, particularly in competitive industries where consumer preferences are rapidly evolving. In addition to social media engagement, the integration of advanced technological tools for ORM is becoming increasingly important. The use of sophisticated analytics and social media tools can provide automotive companies with valuable insights into consumer perceptions and emerging trends related to sustainability (Iglesias-Sánchez et al., 2019).

These tools enable firms to continuously assess their online reputation and make informed decisions about their sustainability strategies. By utilizing a data-driven approach, companies can identify areas for improvement and capitalize on opportunities to enhance their reputation as a sustainable organization. The relationship between sustainability and online reputation is further complicated by the need for transparency and accountability. Consumers are more likely to support brands that demonstrate a genuine commitment to sustainable practices and this expectation extends to their online presence. For automotive companies, this means that maintaining an authentic online reputation requires not only the implementation of sustainable practices but also the transparent communication of these efforts (Flores, 2023). Companies that fail to align their online messaging with their current practices risk damaging their reputation and losing consumer trust (Etter, M., Ravasi, D., & Colleoni, E. 2019). As such, ORM needs to be seen as a strategic component of sustainability initiatives, rather than a separate or secondary concern.

The implications of these findings extend beyond individual companies to the broader automotive sector in the Czech Republic. As the industry grapples with the pressures of sustainability and reputation management, the need for collaborative efforts among stakeholders is increasingly recognized. Industry associations and regulatory bodies can play a pivotal role in promoting best practices for sustainability and ORM, fostering an environment where companies can learn from each other and collectively improve their reputations (Pechancová, 2017). This collaborative approach can lead to the establishment of industry standards that prioritize sustainability and ethical practices, ultimately benefiting the sector.

2 Data and Methodology

This study analyzed the social media content of five leading automotive brands - Škoda, Hyundai, Audi, Kia, and BMW on Facebook and Instagram, focusing on posts made between August and October 2023. This study uses a mixed methods approach to evaluate the online reputation management (ORM) strategies of leading automotive companies. The methodology integrates qualitative content analysis with quantitative metrics to provide a comprehensive understanding of how sustainability initiatives impact brand reputation. The content analysis was conducted by categorizing social media posts into thematic groups, such as sustainability campaigns, product innovations and user interaction posts. Keywords such as 'eco-friendly', 'green technology' and 'carbon neutral' were used to identify sustainability-related content. On the quantitative side, the study analyzed average engagement rates (likes, comments and shares) to measure user interaction, while sentiment analysis was performed on user comments to assess the tone of public responses (positive, neutral or negative). In addition, the share of voice metric was used to assess the proportion of conversations and mentions for each brand compared to competitors, highlighting their relative visibility in online discussions. By combining these metrics, the study findings ensure an evaluation of ORM strategies, taking into account the multidimensional nature of brand reputation and the effectiveness of sustainability messaging. Tools like Social Blade and SimilarWeb were used to extract data, ensuring consistent measurement across brands and platforms. This methodological framework enables a comprehensive evaluation of sustainability's role in ORM.

The data for this study were collected from the official Facebook and Instagram profiles of the five automotive companies targeting the Czech market. The analysis covered the period from August 1 to October 31, 2023. These platforms were chosen because of their wide reach and their importance in engaging with digital audiences.

To achieve the research objectives, the study employs a combination of content analysis and quantitative evaluation. The methodology is structured as content categorization, posts were analyzed and grouped into four main categories - product presentation, user interaction, sustainability campaigns and informative videos. Sustainability-related posts were identified using keywords such as “sustainability,” “green technology,” “eco-friendly,” and “carbon-neutral.”

Calculation of Sustainability Focus: The proportion of sustainability-related posts for each company was calculated using the following formula:

$$\text{Percentage of Sustainability Related Posts} = \frac{\text{Sustainability - Related Posts}}{\text{Total Posts}} \times 100 \quad (1)$$

This formula allowed us to compare how much of each company's content was focused on sustainability.

By applying this methodology, the study provides insights into how automotive companies are using social media platforms to integrate sustainability into their digital marketing strategies. The analysis not only highlights the differences between companies but also identifies opportunities to improve their green marketing efforts.

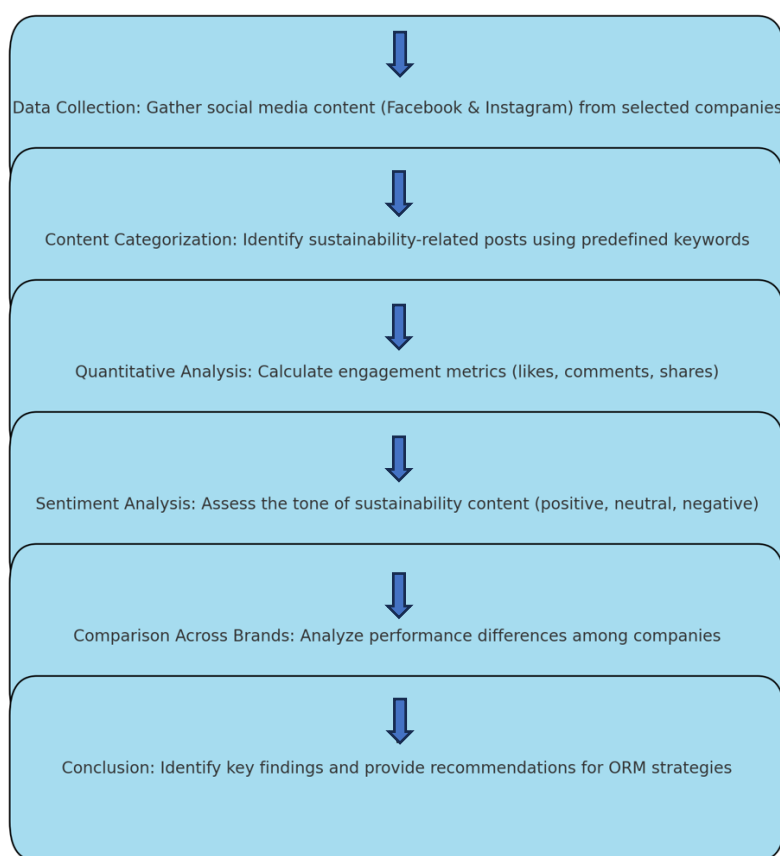


Figure 1 Methodological flow

Source: own elaboration

The figure 1 represents a systematic process for analyzing sustainability-related social media content from companies.

3 Results and Discussion

The results section presents an in-depth analysis of the sustainability related content and green promotion strategies employed by Škoda, Hyundai, Audi, Kia and BMW on their

Facebook and Instagram profiles between 1 August and 31 October 2023. It focuses on the thematic distribution of posts, user engagement metrics, and the alignment of each company's messaging with its sustainability goals.

Table 1 Company Profiles and Sustainability Initiatives

Company	Revenue Sales 2023 (€ Billion)	Target Audiences	Sustainability Initiatives
Škoda	26.53	Families and environmentally conscious buyers	Electric vehicles and carbon-neutral factories
Audi	69.86	Professionals and thought leaders	Digital premium mobility and sustainability innovation
BMW	155.50	Tech-savvy millennials and Gen Z consumers	Significant investment in electric mobility
Hyundai	115.00	Younger consumers aged 21-44	Green technologies and sustainability campaigns
Kia	66.00	Young professionals and families	Electric vehicles and sustainable mobility solutions

Source: own elaboration

To understand the role of sustainability in ORM, Table 1 summarizes key details, including revenue, audience focus, and sustainability initiatives of analyzed companies.

Table 2 Number of posts on social media during the investigation period (August 1 - October 31, 2023)

Automotive Company	Number of posts		
	Facebook	Instagram	Total
Škoda	76	74	150
Hyundai	79	98	177
Audi	129	87	216
Kia	63	56	119
BMW	74	80	154
Total	421	395	816

Source: own elaboration

An analysis of the Facebook and Instagram activity of Škoda, Hyundai, Audi, Kia and BMW in the Czech market highlights notable differences in their use of these platforms. The results show that Audi stands out as the most active company, with a total of 129 posts shared between 1 August and 31 October 2023. On Instagram, Hyundai led the way with 98 posts,

indicating a strong focus on visual content and interactive engagement. In contrast, Kia was the least active on both platforms, publishing 63 posts on Facebook and 56 on Instagram, reflecting a more limited content strategy. Škoda, Audi and Kia concentrated their efforts on Facebook, while Hyundai and BMW showed a preference for Instagram. These findings illustrate the different strategies automotive brands use to engage with their target audiences on social media platforms.

Table 3 Content distribution across companies

Company	Total Posts	Sustainability-Related Posts (%)	Focus Areas
Škoda	150	24%	Electric vehicles, eco-friendly factories
Hyundai	177	31%	Green technology, eco-awareness campaigns
Audi	216	22%	Product innovation, green partnerships
Kia	119	20%	Eco-friendly collaborations, contests
BMW	154	27%	Visual storytelling, sustainability videos

Source: own elaboration

Analysis of the distribution of content highlights the different approaches to promoting sustainability among the five automotive companies. Hyundai leads with the highest proportion of sustainability related posts (31% out of 177), focusing on green technologies and environmental awareness campaigns to engage and educate its audience. BMW follows with 27% of its 154 posts focused on sustainability, using visually compelling storytelling and videos to appeal to younger, tech savvy consumers. Škoda adopts a balanced strategy, devoting 24% of its 150 posts to electric vehicles and eco-friendly factories, reflecting a commitment to green innovation within a broader content mix. In contrast, Audi and Kia devote a lower proportion of their content to sustainability with 22% and 20% respectively. Audi's content emphasizes product innovation and green partnerships, while Kia relies on green collaborations and competitions to drive engagement. These findings highlight opportunities for Kia and Audi to strengthen their green messaging while Hyundai and BMW stand out as leaders in using sustainability to enhance their online reputation.

Table 4 Engagement metrics by post type

Post Type	Average Engagement Rate (Likes, Comments, Shares)
Product Presentation	32% (Highest for Hyundai, Audi)
User Interaction	25% (Notable for Kia and BMW)
Sustainability Campaigns	30% (Highest for Škoda)
Informative Videos	35% (Leading for BMW)

Source: own elaboration

Engagement metrics show clear patterns across post types, highlighting the effectiveness of different social media strategies. Informative videos achieved the highest average engagement rate (35%), with BMW leading this category with visually compelling and interactive content that resonates with audiences. Product presentation posts followed with an engagement rate of 32%, particularly strong for Hyundai and Audi, demonstrating the appeal of promoting green technologies and innovative features. Posts focusing on sustainability campaigns scored a solid 30% engagement rate, with Škoda excelling in this category by highlighting its commitment to environmental responsibility and eco-friendly production processes. Meanwhile, user interaction posts such as competitions and quizzes achieved an engagement rate of 25% with Kia and BMW using these formats effectively to encourage audience participation and build relationships. These results highlight the importance of matching post formats to audience preferences to maximize engagement and improve online reputation.

The findings reveal significant disparities among automotive brands in their use of sustainability to enhance ORM. Hyundai and BMW emerged as leaders, leveraging visually engaging, interactive content that resonated well with younger, eco-conscious audiences. BMW's emphasis on high-quality video storytelling and Hyundai's focus on green technology campaigns generated the highest engagement rates, particularly on Instagram, where visually compelling content thrives. In contrast, Audi and Kia underperformed in their sustainability narratives and overall engagement strategies. Audi, despite emphasizing product innovation and green partnerships, lacked the interactive and immersive features required to attract sustained audience engagement. This shortcoming highlights a missed opportunity to capitalize on Instagram's potential for storytelling and audience interaction. Audi's high volume of posts also raises questions about content strategy while sheer activity is commendable, it must be complemented by quality and resonance with target audiences. Similarly, Kia's approach relied heavily on collaborations and competitions while potentially engaging, failed to establish a cohesive and recognizable green narrative. The lack of a clear thematic focus likely lowered

the impact of Kia's sustainability messaging. For both Audi and Kia, the absence of consistent, visually dynamic, and interactive content limited their ability to connect meaningfully with their audiences. Their reliance on Facebook for sustainability-related updates further constrained their reach and engagement, as this platform is less suited for visually driven content compared to Instagram. These findings underscore the critical role of audience alignment and platform-specific optimization in ORM strategies. Instagram, with its interactive features such as reels and carousels, proved significantly more effective than Facebook in engaging consumers with sustainability themes. Hyundai and BMW successfully tailored their content to exploit Instagram's strengths, creating visually rich and interactive posts that resonated with their audiences. In comparison, Audi and Kia's limited use of these features reflects a strategic gap that hindered their ORM outcomes. Moreover, the importance of authenticity and coherence in sustainability messaging cannot be overstated. Hyundai's campaigns around green technologies and environmental awareness effectively built a narrative that was both credible and engaging. BMW's video content, targeted at tech-savvy younger audiences, similarly reinforced the brand's leadership in sustainability. In contrast, the generic nature of Kia and Audi's sustainability efforts likely undermined their ability to build trust and loyalty among consumers. Lastly, Škoda demonstrated a balanced approach, integrating carbon neutrality and eco-friendly production into its content strategy. While not as interactive as Hyundai or BMW, Škoda's emphasis on its corporate sustainability goals resonated positively with its audience, highlighting the value of aligning messaging with company values.

Conclusion

The study provides insights into how leading automotive companies in the Czech Republic - Škoda, Hyundai, Audi, Kia, and BMW, integrate sustainability and green promotion into their social media strategies to manage online reputation. By analyzing content shared on Facebook and Instagram from August to October 2023, the research identifies key patterns in sustainability related messaging, engagement dynamics, and alignment with corporate goals. The findings revealed clear differences in the effectiveness of these strategies. Hyundai and BMW emerged as leaders in leveraging visually compelling and interactive content to engage audiences. Hyundai's focus on environmental awareness campaigns and green technologies garnered strong engagement, particularly through Instagram's dynamic features. BMW distinguished itself with high-quality video storytelling, appealing to younger, eco-conscious consumers. Škoda adopted a balanced strategy, emphasizing electric vehicles and carbon-neutral production while integrating corporate goals into its digital communication. In contrast,

Audi and Kia showed areas for improvement. Audi's product innovation and green partnerships lacked interactive elements necessary to sustain audience interest, while Kia relied on collaborations and contests but struggled to establish a cohesive green narrative. These findings align with existing ORM theories, particularly the importance of authenticity, transparency, and alignment between brand messaging and audience expectations in building consumer trust. The study also reinforces the role of engagement metrics as a proxy for ORM effectiveness, providing empirical evidence that visually engaging and interactive sustainability content can enhance brand perception. By applying the framework of social exchange theory, which emphasizes the reciprocal relationship between brands and consumers. The results highlight how sustainability focused content enhances positive consumer sentiment and loyalty, critical components of ORM success. Platform specific insights further emphasize the strategic importance of tailoring content delivery to the strengths of each platform. Instagram's visual and interactive features proved significantly more effective in driving engagement compared to Facebook, underlining the need for brands to adopt platform specific strategies to maximize ORM outcomes. These findings contribute to the growing body of literature on the intersection of ORM and social media strategies, illustrating how the integration of sustainability into digital communication can amplify reputation building efforts.

Despite these contributions, the research has limitations. It analyzed content on only two platforms, excluding others like TikTok and LinkedIn that could provide additional insights into the broader social media ecosystem. The three-month analysis period limits the understanding of seasonal or long-term strategies, and the study's focus on the Czech market constrains the generalizability of its findings. Future research should expand to include a wider range of platforms, industries and time periods to deepen the understanding of how sustainability and green promotion influence ORM. This study underscores the critical role of sustainability focused content in building consumer trust, enhancing engagement and strengthening online reputation in competitive industries. It bridges theoretical concepts with practical applications, offering actionable insights for companies aiming to integrate sustainability into ORM strategies.

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