

**Paper Title:** Reaching Prospective University Students through Sustainability Messaging in Social Media

**Author:** Naesheia Carmichael (Undergraduate; NC State University early college student)

**Advisor:** Elizabeth Bowen (NC State University Employee/Graduate Student)

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**Abstract Text:**

According to the Pew Research Center, 81% of all online teens use some type of social media. Students all over America invest over a thousand hours per year socializing online through Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and other social media websites. This project researches the meaning of sustainability to high school students and how to reach prospective high school students through a means of social media. The goal is to find strategies that will best enable sustainability professionals to connect to high school students through what teenagers enjoy the most: social media. Through this research, professionals will know how to reach high school students and teach students that sustainability is a crucial factor in slowing global climate change. This research will also help to broaden students' horizons and increase student interest in sustainability and the environment.

High school students were asked two main survey questions and one voluntary question. The questions were "What does sustainability and the environment mean to you?" "How do you use social media?" and the optional question, "How can social media be used to connect to high school students?" Most of the results for the question "What does sustainability and the environment mean to you?" and "How do you use social media?" were similar. Several people answered more closely related to sustainability simply meaning the wise and responsible use of resources so that future generations will have the resources that they need to flourish; Most students replied that they use social media to catch up on the lives of their friends while others said that they use social media to show others what they are doing in their own lives. While the responses for the other two questions were fairly similar, for the question "How can social media be used to connect to high school students?" almost every answer was unique and offered something new to the findings. Some students said that school pages and group pages can be created and used for interaction between students and professionals while another student suggested that simple "hashtags" can be used to make a certain movement grow large. The study findings show that while a good number of students may understand what sustainability is, there are still many high school students who do not know but can be informed by using social media.

In conclusion, the research that was conducted can help leaders to reach out to high school students more efficiently by relating to them through the use of social media. The research shows that there are many different ways that social media can be used. Future research can be conducted on how to display information in such a way that high school students will be more attracted and more willing to listen and learn. Conducting such research will allow professionals to reach high school students more efficiently and with more efficacy.

Naesheia Carmichael  
(919)-753-7853  
nncarmic@ncsu.edu

Elizabeth Bowen  
(919)-513-7859  
elizabeth\_bowen@ncsu.edu

#### References:

Joshua Henderson  
(704)-747-4239  
hendersonjd4@gmail.com

Erin Morris  
(919)-247-3326  
emorrislev@gmail.com

Candace Peters  
(919)-801-9132  
cpeters@wcpss.net

Shelley Bailey  
(919)-649-9054  
smbaile4@ncsu.edu