



UNIVERSITÀ POLITECNICA DELLE MARCHE
FACOLTÀ DI ECONOMIA “GIORGIO FUÀ”

Corso di Laurea Magistrale in International Economics and Commerce

How Italian food companies communicate sustainability:

A Content Analysis on Instagram and LinkedIn.

Come comunicano la sostenibilità le aziende alimentari italiane:

Un’analisi di contenuto su Instagram e LinkedIn.

Relatore: Chiar.mo
Prof. Sara Bartoloni

Tesi di Laurea di: Norma
Nicole Guapacasa Macas

Anno Accademico 2020 – 2021

Table of Content

Abstract.....1

Introduction3

Chapter 1: The concept of sustainability

1.1 The concept of sustainable development6

 1.1.2 Sustainability's roots: definition and evolution of the term.....13

1.2 Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR).....21

1.3 The Triple Bottom Line (TBL).....29

1.4 Global Reporting Initiative (GRI).....33

 1.4.1. Sustainable Development goals.....37

Chapter 2: When marketing became sustainable

2.1. The history of Green Marketing.....42

2.2 The unsustainable marketing.....44

 2.2.1. Greenwashing.....47

2.3 The main elements of green marketing.....51

2.4 The sustainable consumer.....58

 2.4.1 Sustainable behavior models.....60

 2.4.2 Recent consumers updates.....63

Chapter 3: New communication for sustainable companies

3.1 Social media: an effective platform for communication.....	65
3.1.1 Challenges and opportunities of social media.....	71
3.2 Relevance of consumer engagement.....	72
3.3 Sustainable corporate communication.....	74
3.3.1. Sustainable corporations on social media.....	81
3.4 Principles for an effective communication.....	82

Chapter 4: Content Analysis of sustainability communication on social media in the agri-food sector

4.1 The role of sustainability in the agri-food industry.....	87
4.2 What drives agri-food companies to be sustainable?.....	89
4.3 Research context: online communication in sustainable agri-food Italian companies.....	91
4.4 Research design and methodology.....	95
4.5 Data collection and analysis.....	99
4.6 Findings.....	102
4.7 Discussion.....	115

<i>Conclusion</i>	119
-------------------------	-----

<i>References</i>	121
-------------------------	-----

Abstract

La sostenibilità rappresenta per l'azienda una vera e propria linea guida di sviluppo necessaria per rispondere alle esigenze ambientali, ad un quadro normativo più esigente e a un consumatore sempre più sostenibile.

Una delle sfide per le aziende che si definiscono sostenibili è la comunicazione.

Oggi la comunicazione ha a sua disposizione molti canali, compresi i social media che hanno trasformato la comunicazione tradizionale.

La domanda di ricerca è la seguente: *Come e quanto comunicano le aziende alimentari italiane i contenuti di sostenibilità nei social media?*

Per rispondere a questa domanda, è stata eseguita un'analisi qualitativa dei contenuti presenti nelle pagine social ufficiali di dieci aziende italiane del settore alimentare, per esaminare il coinvolgimento degli utenti in relazione con la condivisione di contenuti sociali e ambientali. I risultati di questo studio hanno indicato un uso limitato dei social media da parte delle dieci aziende, dovuto allo scarso aggiornamento di contenuti e la tendenza a condividere soprattutto contenuti di natura sociale e non ambientale o finanziaria. Inoltre, evidenzia un uso ristretto di Instagram nonostante mostri un ottimo riscontro in relazione alle tematiche sostenibili in termini di engagement. Questo studio sottolinea l'importanza della comunicazione sostenibile e ne incoraggia un uso consapevole e strategico sui social media.

Abstract

Nowadays, sustainability represents a development guideline that all companies should implement to meet environmental needs, higher-standard goals set by European Framework, and the rise of a new sustainable consumer.

One of the challenges for sustainable-oriented organizations is how to communicate their sustainability commitment.

In this context, social media plays a central intermediary role.

The thesis aims to understand *how and to what extent do Italian food companies communicate sustainable content on social media*. To address this topic, a content analysis of the social media profiles of several Italy's most sustainable food companies was performed to examine user engagement in relation to the posting of social and environmental content. The findings of this study indicate a limited use of social media by the ten Italian food companies. The poor content updating of content, along with the tendency to use social media to mainly address social issues, disregarding of environmental and financial contents confirm such the results. Furthermore, the analysis highlights a restricted use of Instagram despite the positive reactions in relation to sustainable issues. This paper enhances the importance of sustainable communication and encourage the use of social media as a tool for promoting transparency, diffusing corporate sustainability while communicating with a conscious and strategic approach.

Introduction

Since the Brundtland Report, the concept of sustainable development has been widely recurrent in everyday life. After three decades, sustainability continued to be one of the main concerns in the world. It is of fundamental importance for human well-being that the environment continues to be the source of life for all those interconnected ecosystems. In order for sustainable development to meet the needs of present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own, it is essential that this progress is also integrated at company level. Over time, this ethical attitude has become source of advantages both in terms of social sustainability, which nourish the trust that internal and external stakeholders have towards the company, and benefits related to the environment as a choice for low impact practices with positive effects on the economy.

It is essential to communicate this sustainability orientation since there is a growing trend to highlight environmental friendliness and social collaborations.

Sustainability is a prominent and trending topic in Italy. Despite this, there are currently not many studies in the literature on sustainable communication via social media. For this reason, the aim of the present work is to understand how Italian Food companies communicate sustainability contents on their social media and widening the knowledge of this topic that is currently limited in the literature.

In addition, sustainability has become an integral part in the life of each one of us.

Nowadays, people no longer choose iconic brands solely and exclusively for the brand names. Consumers prefer brands that are consistent with their value system, such as sustainable development, ethic, and respect to the environment. Transparency and sustainable communication show consumers the brand's commitment, and social media is the right channel to connected with them.

The first chapter explores the concept of sustainability and its evolution, from the factors that influenced the need for a *concept* of sustainable development then evolving to regulations in the current European framework. In the second chapter, the encounter between marketing and sustainability is thoroughly explored. The focus of this section is on the elements that have led marketing to become *sustainable*, considering the over-consumption of marketing and the misuse of key sustainability terms, known as greenwashing, have characterized our society. The characteristics of sustainable consumers are also reported.

The third chapter discusses the relevance of social media as a new wave of communication for marketing and sustainability. Social media as a space where communication acquires power, which can involve both opportunities and challenges. Sustainable communication at the corporate level needs clear objectives, coherent strategies, and principles of communication on which it must be based. The fourth and final chapter is divided into two parts. The first part concerns the agri-food industry, its trend in the Italian market as well as the elements that push companies to be sustainable and their presence in the social

world. In the second part, a content analysis of the social media platform most used by ten major Italian food companies was performed. The research examines the frequency of postings, the categories to which they refer, their tone of voice used and message framing, last but not least the engagement based on the interactions obtained in the platforms. This analysis will provide us with information about how Italian food companies exploit the use of social media and their online narratives related to the sphere of sustainability as well as the potential of sustainable contents on social media channels.

Chapter 1: The concept of sustainability

1.1 The concept of sustainable development

We have been hearing about sustainability for many years, but only recently we find this term present in every single aspect of our life. When we think about sustainability, we tend to associate this term with the conditions of the earth and our lifestyle, and then later on to business.

Sustainability is a concept that comprises several spheres/dimensions, and therefore there are hundreds of definitions. This term recalls immediately many fields of knowledge: environmental, ecological, economic, social, and cultural. The concept of sustainability does not refer only to ecological issues, but actually Kidd (1992) affirmed that for countries as the United States of America and The United Kingdom, such notion emerged as a goal from social, economic, and political reasons rather than ecological motivation. There has always been a debate on the clarity of the term sustainability due precisely to the indeterminacy and versatility of the concept because of its being rooted, at the same time, in systems of thought and practices of an economic, social, technological, and political nature. Since sustainability is a concept that comprises several dimensions, there are hundreds of definitions. Ehrenfeld (2008, p. 1) has identified up to 300 connotations of this term, specifying that “*is confused or*

conflated with “green” in many places”. It is used more-or-less interchangeably in publications focused on the notion of “sustainable development”.

The idea of *sustainability* or better *sustainable development* become popular in the late 1980s, specifically, on March 20, 1987, when it was published the first document about sustainability by the United Nations through the Oxford University Press. It was Gro Harlem, president of the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED), who designated the Report “Our common future” also known as the Brundtland Report, with which formulated the first guiding principles for sustainable development. This document put environmental concerns on the political agenda because it remarked that global environmental issues were particularly caused by the poverty located in the South and the non-sustainable way of consumption and production in the North. For this reason, when the issue was recognized, it became necessary to think about a strategy for environmental conservation. Consequently, the concept of sustainable development – which comprehend the environmental issue – was defined as the “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (Brundtland, 1987, p. 54). There are two key concepts:

- The concept of “needs”, in particular the essential needs of the world’s poor, to which overriding priority should be given; and

- The idea of limitations imposed by the state of technology and social organization on the environment's ability to meet present and future needs.¹

That simple definition includes the awareness that natural resources are not unlimited and the importance of being responsible and precautionary in using them. The principal motive to introduce sustainability was linked to cross-generated concerns and the opinion that economic development should be considered in the long run rather than as usual. In fact, the report of the National Commission on the Environment proposed that The United States should go in for *“a strategy for improving the quality of life while preserving the environmental potential for the future, of living off interest rather than consuming natural capital. [...] Sustainable development mandates that the present generation must not narrow the choices of future generations but must strive to expand them by passing on an environment and an accumulation of resources that will allow its children to live at least as well as, and preferably better than, people today. Sustainable development is premised on living within the earth's means”* (NCE 1993:2). Therefore, the main objective of development is the satisfaction of human needs. The European commission felt the need of coining this term because there was a real problem caused by many factors that were, and still are, not functioning well as they should in the whole world. Despite we all live in the

¹ Our Common Future, Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development

same world and consequently depend on one biosphere, each country thinks about itself, about consuming and surviving without taking care of the others, indeed even to the detriment/at the expense of other populations. On one hand, there are people who consume without leaving anything to the future generations. On the other hand, there are many others who consume less and suffer from misery, starvation, disease and premature death.

From the report emerged several motivations that have led that in the world not all the essential needs are being met. In developing countries, the needs such as food, clothing, shelter, and jobs are not being met. Poverty and inequity are rooted in our society, once and now. As a result, the world was at risk of ecological crises. Higher living standards can be considered sustainable only if they have regard for long-term sustainability. It is clear that sustainable development will require economic growth in those places where needs are not being met. In other places, economic growth should reflect the principles of sustainability and non-exploitation of others. It is important to be careful when talking about economic growth because high levels of productivity can damage the environment and increase poverty. For this reason, ensuring equitable opportunities is one of the key concepts of sustainable development. The problem is not the population size but the distribution of resources. Indeed, according to sustainable development principles, demographic development should be in harmony with the changing productive potential of the ecosystem.

Technology can be used as a mean for solving urgent problems, but it might lead to greater ones. Human activities such as settled agriculture, the extraction of minerals, the diversion of watercourse, and the emission of heat and noxious gases into the atmosphere have already damaged the natural systems over the years. One of the main goals of sustainable development is not endanger the natural system essential for living on the earth that are the waters, the soils, the atmosphere, and the living beings. There are not fixed limits about population size or resource use, but of course at some point the excess of them will lead to ecological disasters. Sustainable development's objective is to guarantee equitable access before reaching ultimate limits. On one side, renewable resource belong to a complex and interconnected ecosystem; thus, it is important to consider system-wide effects of exploitation with regard to economic growth and development because they without doubt include alterations in the physical ecosystem. On the other side, non-renewable resources should be use taking into account their criticality in order to not continue to reduce the stock available for future generations. About this regard, technology and substitutes might minimize depletion.

Other reasons to pursue sustainable development is to conserve plant and animal species that are endangered and to sustain the ecosystem's overall integrity like the quality of air, water and other natural elements.

A sustainable development implies a progressive transformation of economy and society. Economic and social goals must be sustainable both in developed and

developing countries, sharing general features and consensus on the basic concept of sustainable development. In order to reach a sustainable development, the exploitation of resources, the direction of investments, the orientation of technological development and institutional change should be in harmony. The aim of sustainable development is to give to everyone the opportunity to satisfy its basic needs for a good living standard. In the light of all these issues at economic, social and environmental level, there was the need of developing a strategy that permit nations to change their policies and their processes. For this, critical objectives were established for the environment and development of policies deriving from the concept of sustainable development (Brundtland, 1987, p. 59-60):

1. Reviving growth
2. Changing the quality of growth
3. Meeting essential needs for jobs, food, energy, water, and sanitation.
4. Ensuring a sustainable level of population
5. Conserving and enhancing the resource base
6. Reorienting technology and managing risk; and
7. Merging environment and economics in decision making ²

² Our Common Future, Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development

From a deep analysis of the critical objectives to comply with, it came out some requirements needed for achieving of sustainable development, that are the following:

- A political system that secures effective citizen participation in decision making,
- An economic system that is able to generate surpluses and technical knowledge on a self-reliant and sustained basis,
- A social system that provides for solutions for the tensions arising from disharmonious development,
- A production system that respects the obligation to preserve the ecological base for development,
- A technological system that can search continuously for new solutions,
- An international system that fosters sustainable patterns of trade and finance, and
- An administrative system that is flexible and has the capacity for self-correction.

Therefore, at the end the purpose of the strategy is to encourage harmony among human beings and between humanity and nature.

Sustainable development is a broad concept that takes care of many dimensions, it is not just about taking care for the present without harming the future, but it will include stakeholders, corporations as it will involve many actors, policies, tools

and strategies. Although this concept has been considered a “vague” or “elusive” term, and it is still today subject to different interpretation (Brown,2016), it became a significant expression of concern. So much so that this concept has been integrated into the framework of the OECD and by the UN.

1.1.2. Sustainability’s roots: definition and evolution of the term.

But sustainability, over the decades, has also been described as:

- (i) An overarching conceptual framework that describes a desirable, healthy, and dynamic balance between human and natural systems.
- (ii) A system of policies, beliefs, and best practices that will protect the diversity and richness of the planet’s ecosystems, foster economic vitality and opportunity, and create a high quality of life for people and,
- (iii) A vision describing a future that anyone would want to inhabit.³

As it is possible to notice from definitions, the concept of sustainability embraces three main dimensions:

- *economic dimension* refers to the ability to produce income and work for supporting of the population
- *social dimension* refers to the ability of ensuring conditions of human well-being equitably distributed by class and gender.

³ Sustainability and Tripple bottom line: an overview of two interrelated concepts, article.

- and *environmental or ecological dimensions* refers to the capability of ensuring quality and reproducibility of natural resources. ⁴

These dimensions are known also as the three dimensions of sustainability, which are the pillars of the notion of sustainability. If any one of the pillars is weak the system is weak and can become unsustainable. Sustainability has been described in many different ways, in the form of pillars, in the form of intersecting circles or concentric circles as can be seen in the Figure 1.

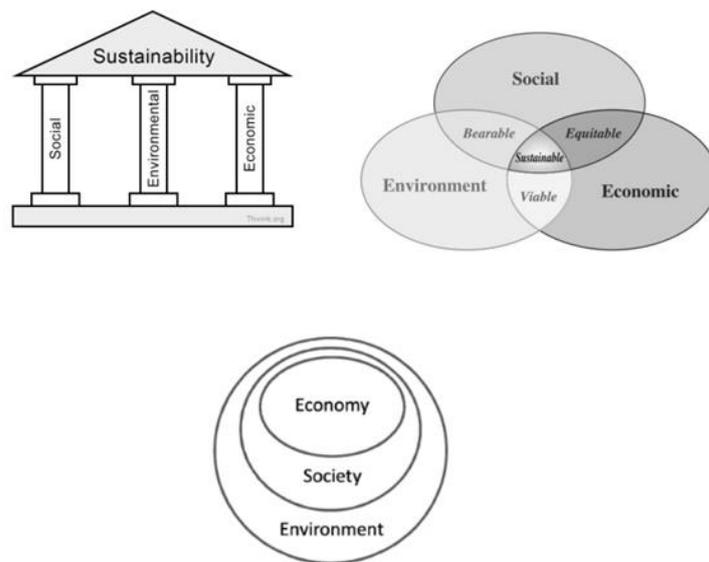


Fig. 1. The three representations of sustainability.

Source: Purvis et al., (2019). Three pillars of sustainability: in search of conceptual origins.

⁴ Perrini F., (2018), *Sostenibilità*, Egea Editore, Milano.

Regarding the figure 1, it is possible to notice that the tripartite description is presented in different forms:

1. sustainability as the overlapping-circles which recognized the intersection of society, economy, environment, and sustainability positioned at the intersection.
2. sustainability as three nested circles model, without the presence of sustainability in the representation, reflects the co-dependent reality between social, environmental and economic factors, that means the society is a wholly owned subsidiary of the environment.
3. sustainability as literal three pillars as sustainability goals or indicators that support sustainability.

Thus, these representations prove that these components coexist, an entity should respect the three spheres. Indeed, Ken E. Portney (2015) declared in his book that “sustainability can be achieved only simultaneously protecting the environment, preserving economic growth and development, and promoting equity. [...] achievement in one pillar cannot and should not be accomplished by sacrificing another”. Although the three pillars are often depicted as separate, the representation favored is that of intersecting circles known as the Venn diagram of sustainability developed by practitioners to represent the three pillars and their interconnectedness and it presents the idea that sustainable development can be achieved when economic development is conducted in a manner that preserves

and protects the environment and its resources while supporting individual and community well-being because the main condition to be sustainable is to satisfy the requirements of all three sectors simultaneously (Purvis et al., 2019). Sustainability basis are three interconnected “pillars”, to which many authors have referred with different terms such as “dimensions”, components, aspects, and stool legs. These terms are used in a way that can be exchanged without making any difference. The reason why this intersection, interdependence and interconnectedness will not be immediately accepted by all, especially mainstream neo-classic economics, is because biophysical environment and its ecological service are the main irreplaceable factors for economic product. Consequently, if the services of the environment are reduced and degraded, that will cause damage to the economic growth.

Many authors have faced the topic of sustainability and the many facets that conceals that theme since 1950 before the world “sustainable” itself was used. Many roots were fully elaborated, excluding normative values and based on physical concepts, before a proper notion was used and explained, and each of them claim their validity. Intellectuals who dealt with the physical concepts of sustainability were firstly biologists, ecologists and environmental scientists. Brown et al. (1987) examined the concept of sustainability and the use of terms as “sustainable, sustained, sustainability” in the global context. What they did was to

compare different meanings and intellectual roots of the general concept to have a common perception and knowledge for everyone. Brown et al. focused on:

- Sustainable biological resource use: the concept of maximum sustainable used from foresters and fisheries biologists means making harvest decisions, which is difficult to estimate since forestry depends on the variability of the climate, soils and disease as well as fish harvest depend on the problem in assessing ocean stocks.
- Sustainable agriculture: trade-offs between land conservation and economic and social viability.
- Carrying capacity: optimum and maximum ability of Earth's systems to support human life and well-being.
- Use of renewable energy: focus on the transition from nonrenewable energy sources to renewables alternatives.
- Sustainable society and sustainable economy: maintaining human systems to support economic and human well-being
- Sustainable development: Promoting economic growth as long as do not provoke deterioration of natural systems.

From this review, emerged three aspects of sustainability: social, ecological and economic. In the light of this, there were taken into account three kind of definitions. From the social side, sustainability is defined as *“survival and happiness of the maximum number of people, or the provision of minimum needs*

to even the poorest groups” (Brown et al.,1987, p 716). The ecological side focus on sustainability as *“natural biological processes and the continued productivity and functioning of ecosystems”* (p. 716). Lastly, the economic side, defined it taking into account the inevitability of economic growth without consideration of sustainability except as a recognition of ecological limits which are placed on economic growth.

In this respect, the authors identified six essential elements in defining sustainability:

1. The continued support of human life on earth.
2. Long-term maintenance of the stock of biological resources and the productivity of agricultural systems.
3. Stable human populations.
4. Limited growth economies.
5. Emphasis on small-scale and self-reliance.
6. Continued quality in the environment and ecosystems.

A sustainable world would be a place where human beings can survive without putting in danger future generations in the term of leaving a healthy environment *“one in which humans can survive without jeopardizing the continued survival of future generations of humans in a healthy environment”* (Brown et al., 1987 p 717). They also pointed out that if population growth is not under control, then survival will become unsustainable, so there will be need of an efficient and

functioning infrastructure, services and government that encourages and supports the sustainable use of the biosphere and the fair use of resources.

Similarly, Kidd (1992) examined the six strains of thought, the same studied by Brown et al., which had emerged since 1950. They are the following:

- Ecological/carrying capacity: maintenance of natural systems so that they can support human life and well-being.
- Resource/environment: promoting economic growth only to the extent and in ways that do not cause deterioration of natural systems.
- Biosphere: concern with the impacts of human activist on the health of the earth and its ability to support human populations.
- Critique of the technology: rejection of the notion that science and technology themselves, will protect and save the earth, but instead recognition if its dehumanizing and disorganizing effects.
- No growth – slow growth: limits to the ability of the earth to support the health and well-being of ever-growing populations.
- Ecodevelopment: adapting business and economic development activities to realities of natural resource and environmental limits.

The aim of the paper for Kidd, was to analyze every keystone that belong to the concept of sustainability. He believed that searching for a single definition of sustainability was pointless because the term itself has roots in different valid strains of thought that were at the same time not only distinct but also conflicting.

In addition, those strains of thought have also contributed to current concepts of sustainability. For this reason, according to the author, “those who use the term sustainability should always state precisely what they mean by the term”. The notion sustainability that in some way we can describe as concerns for the planet came out after the World War II due in part/above all to the continuing expansion of the economies. In the early 1970s many authors promoted the “No growth” philosophy, prompted by the book “Limits to Growth” (Donella H. Meadows et al, 1972), which focused on conveying the message that the world would collapse due to population growth, depletion resources, pollution degradation of the environment or some combination of these. This way of thinking put emphasis on the importance of taking a drastic action as the cessation of economic growth. All these works followed the same philosophy and focused on some assumptions:

- Growth must stop sooner or later because continuous growth is physically impossible.
- No-Growth economy can promote ethical values and superior goals.
- Energy conservation is imperative, especially in industrial countries.

Later, this ideology was replaced by the idea that sustainable growth is possible and that ethical principles are an inevitable part of the concept of sustainability.

The term sustainability appeared for the first time in the book “Blueprint for survival” (1972), where the subject was addressed as a significant objective of the society. At the beginning, the academic literature did not announce any definition

or publication, and this is one of the main reasons why different concepts of sustainability have been developed in that period.

Then the notion can be found also in other publications such as The IUCN 1972 Yearbook, The Woodlands Conferences and Prizes, The Magnuson Act 1976, The U.N. Conferences and Reports (1968-1976), The U.N. Report 1978 until the 1987 when the sustainability emerged as the central theme and accomplish legitimacy in the final report titled “Our Common Future” of the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED). Charles Kidd ended its paper pointing out that *“Sustainability is a worthy goal, but no a very useful one if the level of productivity is low. [...] Finally, sustainability and productivity combined cannot meet the ultimate goal of removing hunger unless food is distributed equitably* (p.24).

1.2 Corporate Social responsibility

Sustainable development strategy must consider economic, and ecological considerations in decision-making process. It almost always occurs to lose compatibility with environmental and economic goals when trying to obtain individual or collective benefits. For this reason, governmental policy should convince commercial enterprises to take more into account environmental factors in the technologies they develop and consider this as a great opportunity. Most of the technology research of corporations focuses on product and manufacturing

methods that have a commercial value, instead of focusing on “social goods” such as better air quality or an increase of vital products, or even keeping accounted for the cost of pollution or waste disposal. Usually, organizations pursue their objectives and do not consider the side effects on other sectors.

It is well known that the industry is fundamental in modern societies because it is the motor of growth. It provides basic needs to humans through the production of goods and services. But it introduces both products and pollution in the environment.

The industry will always deteriorate and improve the environment. First, it deteriorates the environment since its production has a negative impact on the natural resource base of civilization due to exploration, extraction, transformation into products, energy consumption, waste generation. Secondly, it improves the environment by extending the use of a resource and improving their quality. At first, negative environmental effect that is pollution concerned the free goods that are air, water and land. When people became aware of this problem, they required environment conservation and economic growth. Nevertheless, environmental protection and resource conservation policies, only few countries use them because some thought the cost was high, and could reduce investment, growth, jobs, competitiveness, and trade.

The first author who address the concept of social responsibility was Howard R. Bowen with his book “Social Responsibilities of the Businessman” in 1953.

Bowen's publication pointed out the fact that many businesses in the United States had a lot of power and had effects on the population in different ways. The main question was: "What responsibilities to society may businessmen reasonably be expected to assume?". The concept became more significant subsequent to influential social movements of the 1960s, specifically environmental movement, the civil rights movement, women's movement and consumer movement. Later, many other authors such as Gray, Lehman, Miller and Ahren, in that time realized that business should not be focused only on profits, but there was more like moral and ethical obligations. Businesses have a responsibility towards people and planet, a social responsibility, thus they should take into account the interests of all parties (stakeholders) affected by their actions.

This was how the concept of Corporate Social Responsibility was born. From that moment, to meet the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of the next generations to meet their own needs, became a new goal for firms too transparent, accountable, by putting sustainability principles into practice. Organizations became a key factor in the sustainable development debate since they were considered responsible for many negative impacts of both the environment and societies. In general, the concept of CSR makes reference to policies and practices with the purpose of protecting the strategies and operations of business owners as well as society and stakeholders. One of the clearest and most used definitions is that from Carroll (2016), who described CSR as *"the*

social responsibility of business encompasses the economic, legal, ethical and discretionary that society has of organizations at a given point in time” (p.2).



Fig. 2. The four responsibility: the CSR Pyramid.

Source: Carroll, Archie. (2016). Carroll’s pyramid of CSR: taking another look. International Journal of Corporate Social Responsibility.

The Carroll’s pyramid is the representation of the fundamental aspects of the CSR definition, and therefore highlights four blocks. The pyramid is depicted in a way that indicate the essential roles played and expected by business in society. At the base, there is the economic responsibilities as the fundamental condition in business. The following part that is legal responsibilities are standing for laws and regulations must be upheld in a civil society. Ethical responsibilities refer to

having a right and fair behavior in order to not harm stakeholders. Finally, philanthropic responsibilities mean to be a good corporate citizen, that is give your financial, physical and human resources contribution to the communities. Each part relates to a specific category. Therefore, economic component affects shareholders and employees, legal component refers to owners, employees and consumer stakeholders, ethical component affects all stakeholders' groups, while philanthropic component most affect the community and nonprofit organizations. However, the pyramid was too broad and could cause misunderstanding because of the use of the hierarchy and overlapped issues. The purpose of Carroll was to make business accomplish with all responsibilities at the same time, not in a hierarchical and subsequent ways. This representation can be seen as sustainable because the responsibilities are long term obligations also extended to future generations of stakeholders. The total social responsibility of business entails the concurrent fulfillment of the firm's economic, legal, ethical and philanthropic responsibilities. This might be illustrated in the form of an equation as follows:

$$\begin{aligned} & \textit{Economic Responsibilities} + \textit{Legal Responsibilities} \\ & \quad + \textit{Ethical Responsibilities} + \textit{Philanthropic Responsibilities} \\ & = \textit{Total Corporate Social Responsibility} \end{aligned}$$

In addition to many advocates of social responsibility, there were also opponents to this idea, including Milton Friedman and Theodore Levitt. The first one, argued that corporate social responsibility would impose unjustified and undemocratic

taxation on corporate shareholders and that the costs of implementing CSR would exceed benefits, which would in turn result in misallocation and misappropriation of valuable company resources. The latter, Levitt believed that business has only two major functions:

1. To engage in face-to-face civility such as honesty and good faith and
2. To seek material gain.

In his publication “The danger of Social Responsibility”, Levitt (1958) stated that the long-run profit maximization is the one dominant objective in practice as well as in theory.

In 2006, the Commission of the European Communities went into more detail about the definition of CSR:

“Corporate Responsibility is a concept whereby companies integrate social and environmental concerns in their business operations and in their interaction with their stakeholders on a voluntary basis. It is about enterprises deciding to go beyond minimum legal requirements and obligations stemming from collective agreements in order to address societal needs.” (European Commission, 2006/0136).

Therefore, this definition highlights that CRS include social and environmental issues, and it does not refer just to corporate social responsibility; CSR and business strategy operations must go together in order to work well; CSR is a voluntary concept; an important part is how enterprises interact with their

stakeholders. In that year, the Commission established a European Alliance for CSR to advocate CSR within European large, small and medium-sized enterprises and their stakeholders. It was introduced as means to collocate resources and capacities of enterprises and stakeholders on behalf of sustainable development, economic growth and job creation.

The European Commission recognizes that without the active support and constructive criticism of non-business stakeholders, CSR will not flourish. The Commission presented actions to promote more CSR practices by drawing attention to the international dimension of CSR, SMEs, education, research, consumer information and transparency, cooperation with member states, support to multi-stakeholder initiatives, and awareness-raising and best practice exchange.

⁵ After many conflicting opinions, during the years, especially today the concept of CSR became central in the business world.

The notion of CSR has evolved during the years because social consciousness and expectations have changed during the year by requiring an acceptable corporate behavior. Indeed, during the years the CSR reporting expanded, organizations began to produce annual sustainability reports.

⁵ Implementing the partnership for growth and jobs: making Europe a pole of excellence on corporate social responsibility COM (2006) 136 final, Commission of the European Communities. Corporate Social Responsibility in the EU — EUbusiness.com | EU news, business and politics.

According to KPMG (2017), the percentage of firms that voluntarily issues CSR reports has increased considerably, from 65% in 2015 to 78%, compared to only 35% in 1999. Corporate Social Responsibility documents/reports were and are essential because through this document a company could inform stakeholders about their sustainable actions, usually referring to employment equity, environmental impact, human right and community engagement.

Nevertheless, since the report was voluntary and unregulated, Huang and Watson (2015) defined it as neither comprehensive nor stringent compared with their verification of corporate annual reports. For this reason, there was the necessity of international initiatives that support CSR reporting such as the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI). Once CSR reporting becomes measurable then it could be part of the corporate performance measurement. In any business environment where a company wants to be socially responsible and follow sustainable development principles, need to synergy between social, environmental, and financial concern, and in that sustainability reporting matters. Major sources of sustainability accounting guidance comprise:

- The Global Reporting Initiative Reporting Standards
- The OECD Guidelines for multinational enterprises
- The United Nations Global Compact
- The International Organization for Standardization (ISO 26000)
- The International Integrated Reporting Council (IIRC)

- The Carbon Disclosure Project (CDP)

1.3 The Triple Bottom Line (TBL)

The concept of the triple bottom line became popular with John Elkington's book, which is entitled "Cannibals with Forks: The Triple Bottom Line of 21st Century Business (1998)". The author Elkington claimed the three keys to the 21st century that are the following:

- Business will progressively be operated in a high visibility environment.
- Voluntary reporting will help fuel demands for much higher levels of corporate disclosure.
- Stakeholders will demand more active involvement in all aspect of a company's life, including its target setting and reporting approach.

In addition, according to the author, a sustainable society needs to meet three conditions:

1. Its rates of use of renewable resources should not exceed their rates of regeneration.
2. Its rates of use of non-renewable should not exceed the rate at which sustainable renewable substitutes are developed; and
3. Its rates of pollution of emission should not exceed the assimilative capacity of the environment.

Elkington elaborated the seven revolutions, seven dimensions of a sustainable future that are markets, values, transparency, life cycle technology, partnerships, time, and corporate governance. These dimensions are interlinked and represent an obstacle for a transition. There was the need to shift to a new paradigm based on cooperation, soft values, transparency, inclusive governance, symbiosis, and longer time frames.

The term triple bottom line refers to the theory according to which business should consider other bottom lines such as environment and society rather than just “bottom line” meaning profits. Elkington stated that TBL expresses the expansion of the environmental agenda in a way that integrates the economic and social lines. In its definition the author used the terms profit, people and planet as the three lines. Indeed, the Triple Bottom Line concept is also known as “People, Planet, Profit” as can be seen in the figure 3.

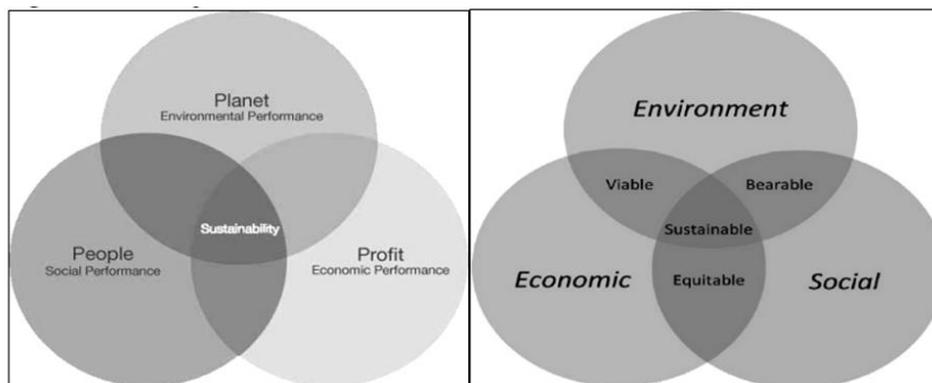


Fig. 3. Triple Bottom Line Statement.

Source: R. Venkatasamy (2017) The Triple Bottom Line attempting to regulate corporate performance and ensure sustainable development.

John Elkington defined the triple bottom line as a concept that focuses not just on the economic value they add, but also on the environmental and social value they add – and destroy. At its narrowest, the term triple bottom line is used as a framework for measuring and reporting the performance.

As its broadest, the concept is used to capture the whole set of values, issues, and processes that companies must address to minimize harm resulting from their activities and to create economic, social and environmental value ⁶. This strong parallels with three pillars encouraged firms to take into consideration longer-term perspectives in their decision-making. The structure of TBL give the same degree of importance to each factor. For this reason, it is considered a balanced a coherent sustainability-related construct. The profit line relate to the impact of the organization's business actions on the economic system. This line links the growth of the organization to the growth of the economy because the contribution of organization produces economic value to the system and make it possible to support future generations. The people line relates to the management of business practices, that should be fair and beneficial, in respect of labor, human capital and to the nation and the community. The social value produced should have a positive effect on the community such as fair wages or health care. The

⁶ Archie B. Carroll, Ann K. Buchholtz. (2017) Business and Society: Ethics, Sustainability, and Stakeholder Management.

environmental line relates to practices that control that the use of resources does not exceed and threaten future generations, thus the protection and conservation of the natural environment. Goel refers to it as the efficient use of energy recourses, reducing greenhouse gas emissions, and minimizing the ecological footprint (Goel, 2010). Moreover, a control over the proper use of a resource without exploiting it for one's own interest will result in an advantage for the company. Indeed, this is what resulted from a survey conducted by A.T. Kearney in 2009 named "Green Winners: the performance of sustainability-focused on financial crisis". The research revealed that companies truly committed to sustainability achieve better results than others. The analysis was carried out on 99 companies of 18 different industries that were part the Dow Jones Sustainability Index ⁷. The financial advantage stem from reduced operational costs such as water or energy usage and increase revenues from the development of innovative green products. Using TBL as an accounting method extend the criteria for measuring organizational accomplishment apart from profits and losses. Indeed, it evaluates and analyses financial, social and environmental effects of an organization's actions that are the following:

⁷ The Dow Jones Sustainability Index is a publicly acclaimed index that measures the sustainability performance of 500 of the largest companies in 20 different countries. It is made up of then different indices to measure the performance of companies. | ESG | The Report (esgthereport.com)

- TBL is widespread in nonprofit and government sector because there social and environmental responsibilities are more important than the financial aspect.
- TBL reporting is essential for the decision-making process since it gives information to investors.
- TBL highlights the relevance of the fair management of employees through safe work environment and fair wages.
- TBL makes companies show itself socially and environmentally responsible and this represents a competitive advantage in respect of their competitors, and it will reduce the possibility of bad publicity.

1.4 Sustainability reporting: The Global Reporting Initiative (GRI)

The global reporting initiative (GRI) was founded in 1997 by the Coalition for Environmentally Responsible Economics (CERES) in collaboration with the Tellus Institute, which is a nonprofit research and consulting organization made up of social investment professionals, environmental groups, religious organizations, public interest groups and pension trustees. In partnership with the United Nations Environment Program, CERES could develop this initiative so that companies elaborate and improve applicable sustainability reporting guidelines called the Global Reporting Initiative. The Global Reporting Initiative Sustainability Reporting Guidelines was launched in June 2000. These guidelines

were created to be a long-term, multi-stakeholder international. Current participants include corporations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), consultancies, accountancy organizations, business associations, universities, and other stakeholders from around the world (GRI, 2000). This initiative offers to companies a framework for voluntarily reporting on the economic, environmental activities. It delineates the main responsibilities involved in increasing the quality of information provided to stakeholders and which produce many benefits for companies that follow the given regulations. It guides companies in the need to testify both positive and negative outcomes from their sustainable growth policies. The GRI's stated mission is to enhance responsible decision making by promoting international harmonization in reporting relevant and credible corporate economic, environmental, and social performance⁸. The history of GRI is very long.

After its official released in 2000, the second version was released at the World Summit for Sustainable Development in Johannesburg in 2002. Later in 2013, the GRI published its guidelines known as G4, and recently in 2016 the Global Sustainability Standards Board (GSSB) known as the reporting framework of the GRI. Over time this reporting model has changed a lot, and today it has a modular

⁸ Robert H. Colson, PhD, CPA – The CPA Journal
<https://www.proquest.com/openview/2e2c4c3b7b3f22259eb68de2448f828b/1?pq-origsite=gscholar&cbl=41798>

structure so that it is easier to adopt and adapt. GRI Standards help organizations to produce a sustainable report, a huge step towards ensuring corporate sustainability. Inclusiveness, open dialogue, and collaboration are key words in this program. In addition to increasing transparency about sustainable development, standards are important to other stakeholders such as investors, policy makers, capacity markets and civil society.

There are three different types of standards as can be seen in the figure 3, that are the following:

1. The universal standard, its tasks is to incorporate human rights and environmental reporting in line with intergovernmental expectations
2. The sector standards, its task is to carry out a more coherent reporting of the specific impacts of the sector (oil and gas, agriculture, aquaculture, and fishing).
3. The topic standards can be used with universal standard, and its task is to detect important information about a specific topic (waste, tax, occupational health and safety).

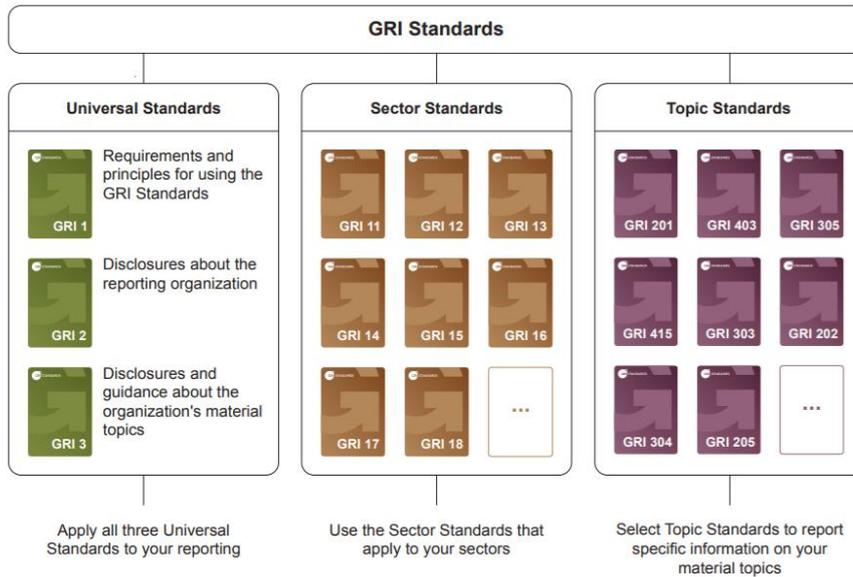


Fig. 4. GRI Standards: Universal Sector and Topic Standards.

Source: Global Reporting Initiative

The foundation of sustainability reporting is for an organization to identify and prioritize its impacts on the economy, environment, and people - to be transparent about their impacts⁹. The GRI is an organization involving a variety of global government and non-government stakeholders who have come together to standardize TBL reporting. The final result has been the development of voluntary reporting guidelines (GRI-GSSB 2019). Therefore, the objective of GRI standards is to create a clear and detailed guideline that can be easily followed by corporations and used to report on the economic, environmental, and social

⁹ Global Reporting Initiative, <https://www.globalreporting.org/>

activities of a business in this way a company's true sustainability efforts can be declared and recognized by all interested parties and false claims will be avoided.

1.4.1 Sustainable Development Goals

The achievement of sustainable development is not easy at all, it requires different tools such as reporting, strategies, goals, and people willing to pursue them. The achievement of sustainable development requires a close interconnection of environmental, social, and economic goals to reach the main objective. For this reason, 193 States members of the United Nations (UN) at the historic Summit held in New York in September 2015 decided on new global Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) known also as the 2030 Agenda. With the agenda 2030 they committed to achieve economic, social, and environmental goals in a balanced and integrated way trying to address the off-track objectives of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which were 8 goals that UN Member States had agreed to try to achieve by the year 2015. The eight goals they committed to were hunger, to combat poverty, disease, illiteracy, environmental degradation, and discrimination against women. Today the goals Member States have agreed to work towards 17 goals, as depicted in the figure 5, with 169 targets, which are more global in comparison to the MDGs. The new 17 goals proposed as SDGs are as follows:

1. End poverty in all its forms everywhere.

2. End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition, and promote sustainable agriculture.
3. Ensure healthy lives and promote wellbeing for all at all ages.
4. Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.
5. Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.
6. Ensure the availability and sustainable management of clean water and sanitation for all.
7. Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all.
8. Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment, and decent work for all.
9. Build a resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialisation, and foster innovation.
10. Reduce inequality within and among countries.
11. Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable
12. Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns.
13. Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts (taking note of agreements made by the UNFCCC forum).

14. Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development.
15. Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification and halt and reverse land degradation and biodiversity loss.
16. Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable, and inclusive institutions at all levels.
17. Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development. ¹⁰

¹⁰ <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/>



Fig. 5. UN Sustainable Developments Goals (SDGs).

Source: Sustainable Development Goals – the United Nations

Z. Wysokińska after analyzing the MDGs and SDGs affirmed *“This new, wider approach better reflects the global changes and is based on the conviction that the elimination of poverty and sustainable development are strictly interconnected and mutually reinforcing. For these reasons SDGs are focused on three dimensions: social, economic, and ecological”* (p. 110). The agenda 2030 focus on five subjects: people, planet, prosperity, peace, and partnership. And goals are created in a way to be complimentary, that means they are interconnecting so that achieving one goals leads to the accomplishment of another. Kumar et al. defined them as indispensable pieces in a big and complex puzzle. The SDGs are aimed at developed and developing countries, thus poor, rich or middle-income

populations. Their goals are to promote prosperity by protecting the environment and addressing climate change. In all of this, they will pay greater attention to the treatment of children, minorities, disadvantaged populations, and the equity of women, supported also by private sector and NGOs.

Chapter 2: When marketing become sustainable

2.1 The history of green marketing

The green marketing concept became popular for the first time in the late 1980s and early 1990s after a seminar on “Ecological Marketing” held by the American Marketing Association in 1975. The definition of sustainable development in the Brundtland Report made the concept more prominent.

Two important books became milestone during the first wave “*Green Marketing*” (Ken Peattie, 1992) and “*Green Marketing: challenges & opportunities for the new marketing age* (Jacquelyn Ottman, 1993)”. At the beginning, being a green consumer just made out of fashion, consumers saw it as a fashion accessory or statement and that trend became known as the “green consumer bandwagon” (J. Grant, 2007, p 21). The most important concepts during that period were sustainability, clean technologies, environmental performance and green consumers.

A few years later, a United Nations Conference in Rio de Janeiro underlined again how sustainable development cannot be limited to environmental aspects but must also concern economic justice and social equity. Then, since the end of the 1990s more actions have been taken in favor of environmental sustainability according to the Kyoto Protocol (1997).

According to Peattie K. (2001), green marketing has three stages:

- “*ecological*” *green marketing phase*: marketing activities’ purpose is to deal with environmental problems and be a remedy for them.
- “*environmental*” *green marketing phase*: the core is clean technology, innovative new products for reducing the emission of pollution and waste.
- “*sustainable*” *green marketing phase*: its focus is on developing new products that meet consumers need, that includes delivering a good product in terms of quality, pricing, performance, and environment friendly. This phase became popular in the late 1990s and early 2000.

Green marketing emerged because of increasing awareness and concern of people for the environment. Belz and Peattie (2009) defined the green marketing’s purpose as that of make products and packaging more environmentally friendly, apart from the production process. Therefore, it consisted of activities set up to give rise to changes so to satisfy needs and expectation producing no damages to the natural environment. Green marketing is a new thinking or one of the first philosophy that encourage sustainable development by considering the three dimensions of it, thus the economy, the society, and the environment. Ehrenfeld (2008) referred to sustainability as the possible chances of human to flourish on the earth forever.

Many authors as Belz and Peattie considered green marketing the new sustainable marketing able to displace the old traditional marketing and that it will add value to the customers in a sustainable way. One of the obstacles to green products and

environmental efforts was that people were not willing to pay extra money for green products. As well as the fact that it was common in business to think that sustainable processes were too expensive and not profitable, but over the time research has indicated that sustainable practices actually strengthen competitive advantage over time (Martin and Schouten 2012). Some companies started to recognize the importance of green marketing and eco-sustainability as competitive advantage.

In 2007, the term marketing was defined by the American Marketing Association (AMA) as *“the activity, set of institutions, and processes for creating, communicating, delivering, and exchanging offerings that have value for customers, clients, partners, and society at large”*. From that definition emerged the main goal of marketing that is create value not only for clients but the society as a whole. The encounter between marketing and ecology was called by the author John Grant *“a lucky meeting”*. He believes that these two sciences are compatible thanks to innovation that creates compatibility between environment and business. As well as sustainability is not considered incompatible with the maintenance of economic prosperity.

2.2 The unsustainable marketing

The encounter between marketing and sustainability is working because there is an active consumer that is willing to co-create and participate to this process, the

so-called *prosumer*. Whether green marketing is taken seriously this time, unlike others, depends on the consumer. Today prosumers are increasingly aware of human rights, in favor of the environment, with a firm ethic. This transformation has fueled the interest in companies to become sustainable, to find alternatives, not only for a niche of people, and not only for advertising, which can be dangerous, but because customers buying patterns were changing and now there are more consumers ready to pay extra for a product less detrimental to the health of consumers and the environment.

A lot of people want to reduce consumption that over time is consuming the Earth. Consumerism is seen as one of the major causes of waste and therefore of unsustainable behavior. Consumption plays a very specific role in the life of individuals and has influence on the society and the economic system. M. Martina and W. Schouten (2014) deemed marketing as a culprit in the over-consumption of resources among inhabitants of the Earth's wealthiest countries, and in the spread of western-style insatiableness for goods among the world's developing nations. The use of the model take-make-waste¹¹ is promoted by marketing and the problem is that it implies the assumption that there is an infinite supply of energy, labor and raw materials. This phenomenon is certainly not sustainable, it

¹¹ The take-make-waste model is the basis of the linear economy, in which raw materials are collected, transformed into products which are used briefly, and then thrown away.

<https://www.whatdesigncando.com/stories/how-bad-design-is-driving-the-take-make-waste-economy/>

is not possible to eliminate it, and it is almost impossible to return this phenomenon to the past, what can be done is renovate it and all depends on individuals. If a consumer is interested in buying in an ethical way, he or she will certainly get to know what is behind a specific product, thus who create a product and how it is produced. Pursuing an ethical philosophy will affect consumerism and will penalize companies who are not environmentally friendly. Since today the consumer plays a lead role, companies will listen to them and marketing is the linkage between manufacturing and consumption with a lot of power to influence customers. The increased awareness about sustainability is due to environmental challenges, in those years we began to talk about the consequences of global warming, the rise in temperatures due to greenhouse gas emissions, the weight of the ecological footprint and so on. All of these motivations lead to a radical change between the old marketing and the new one. The old one was focused on “*imagewashing*”, that means being focus on images, personality and attractive descriptions, like what happened in the green marketing boom in the late 1980s. The classic gesture to clear one’s conscience is what green has meant and still is for many. There have been three waves of sustainability and there has been this trend of taking actions just to give a green touch without any foundation and as a consequence with poor results also known as green washing. On the other hand, green marketing, the new ones, focuses on creating new alternatives, ideas, strategic concepts and not just being good and effective in communication,

bearing in mind that when we talk about sustainability, we also include the social dimension (health, education, integration, development) not just climate change. Using green marketing has a great purpose, companies must have real goals, slowly transform their structure, otherwise the risk is threefold: wasting money, losing credibility, and being accused of greenwashing. Marketing is at the heart of business and green marketing is at the heart of the new business paradigm.

2.2.1. Greenwashing

The greenwashing expression was coined in 1986 by the environmental activist Jay Westerveld, who defined that concept as *“practice of promoting environmentally friendly programs to deflect attention from an organization’s environmentally unfriendly or less savoury activities”*. The research conducted by American Marketing Association (AMA) in 1991 concluded that 58% of environment-related advertisements possessed at least one misleading green claim. This phenomenon has been defined as “the intersection of two firm behaviors: poor environmental performance and positive communication about environmental performance”. Since the imminence of <<sustainable development>>, the demand of green products, ethical enterprises, environmental reporting, and transparency motivate companies to develop green marketing strategies. Many organizations decided to invest in green marketing, focusing on green communication, in order to be recognized as an eco-friendly company that

is socially engaged. However, green communication and advertising does not mean to be socially and environmentally engaged and this create great skepticism in customers. For instance, in the United States of America, the Federal Trade Commission called on “use clear and prominent qualifying language to convey that a general claim refers only to a specific and limited environmental benefits” because there was a wrong use of media advertising about sustainability.

Greenwashing could be implemented at two levels: firm-level and product-level. The former refers to deceive consumers about the environmental practices of a society, while the second one refers to the environmental benefits of a product or service (Delmas M, Burbano V - 2011).

Greenwashing can be used by many companies and therefore it can refer to a variety of situations. By focalizing in the most common ones, there exist four types of greenwashing (Lippert, 2011):

- **Products** – an organization present a product as eco-friendly and environmentally friendly in comparison with competitive products.
- **Processes** – an organization declares that its process has a positive impact on the environment because reduce their damage on the earth. This refers to end-of-pipe processes and integrated processes. The former consists of putting into practice environmental protection measures as add-ons to the existing production process. As a result, the original negative process is still there.

- **Symbols** – an organization use a symbolic action to define itself sustainable, but that symbolic action does not solve a real problem but serves as a facade of falsity.

- **Structures** – an organization is transformed into being environmentally friendly in a structural or systemic level. For instance, green markets appropriating “playground” for capitalist relations. It is itself a contradiction.

In 2009, a north American environmental marketing consultancy named TerraChoice in order to help customers to identify greenwashing actions classified the seven sins of greenwashing:

1. **Sin of hidden trade-off:** committed when the marketer depicts only a limited range of qualities to divert the attention of consumers from other significantly negative environmental impacts.

2. **Sin of no proof:** committed when the marketer makes claims which cannot be verifies through conveniently available information.

3. **Sin of vagueness:** committed by the marketer when he uses broad misleading words like “pure”, “natural”, “organic”, “eco-friendly” etc.

4. **Sin of irrelevance:** committed when the marketer makes a green claim which is either insignificant or made under regulatory pressure.

5. **Sin of lesser of two evils:** committed by the marketer when he makes a true claim in a particular group but has an overall hazardous impact on the environment.

6. **Sin of fibbing:** committed by the marketer make untrue green claim.
7. **Sin of worshipping false labels:** committed by the marketer when he demonstrates the environment friendliness of the product through fake labels and certificates.

Later, Scalan (2017) after having conducted an analysis in the oil gas industry (OGI) communication on hydraulic fracking and suggest new sins as those of TerraChoice: the sin of false hopes, the sin of fearmongering, the sin of broken promises, the sin of injustice, the sin of hazardous consequences, the sin of profits over people and the environment.

In the same period, Contreras-Pacheco and Claasen (2017) drew five-firm level of greenwashing:

1. **Dirty business** – unsustainable enterprises that advocate sustainable actions and products unfairly.
2. **Ad bluster** – the use of advertising to *overemphasize* accomplishments or alternative programs that do not pertain to the sustainability issues.
3. **Political spin** – manipulate government rules to gain benefits that have ab impact on sustainability.
4. **It's the law, stupid!** – announce sustainability achievements and responsibility which are already mandatory by law.

5. **Fuzzy reporting** – use of sustainability reporting and the one-way communication channel to distort information in order to convey an eco-friendly image.

There are many definitions of greenwashing, and it has been much debated in various areas. The classifications done during these years is useful both for green organization in order to avoid unfounded accusation and non-green organization to understand the importance of communication and sustainability. Nowadays, if companies want to compete in highly competitive market, they have to go through major changes to integrate the necessary modification so as to make products which comply with the government regulations and meet the consumers expectations. Business organization need to innovate consistently in order to preserve the environment. Marketing has always influence on buyer's behavior, and green marketing as well can change the lifestyle and buying behavior process of individuals. Marketing and advertising have the power to help people making the transition, and for this reason they should promote the acceptance and adoption of low carbon alternatives.

2.3 The main elements of green marketing

One of the milestones of green marketing is the book “The Green Marketing Manifesto” by John Grant in 2007. This publication is fundamental to understand and embrace the new concept of green marketing. Grant firmly believed that in

that period a turning point had been reached because of the presence of an active consumer, who was willing to make conscious choices towards the environment and to support eco-friendly companies.

Grant defined the five I's of green marketing: intuitive, integrative, innovative, invited, and informed.

1. **Intuitive**, it is about making accessible and comprehensible green products as normal products and not as an alternative. For instance, over the time counting calories has become normal and an intuitive decision to balance the diet.
2. **Integrative**, it regards the innovative idea of sustainability of combining commerce, technology, social effects, and ecology with the aim of improving the quality of life. In addition, according to this vision, one evil (distance between place of production and consumption) cannot be replaced by another (human rights).
3. **Innovative**, it creates new products and new lifestyles (Grant, 2007). An example is the case of Freecycle, a web platform where people can sign up and donate items they no longer use to other members in the area. Encouraging people to donate is a social innovation.
4. **Inviting**, it regards a design challenge. It's important to develop a culture of green lifestyle and present them in a different way and not as an unpleasant medicine, said Grant in his book. Green products are not only more effective, long-lasting, healthy, and economical but also pleasant products.

5. **Informed**, which has to do with ignorance, that is what deceive people's behavior. Education and participation are key elements.

Another fundamental element provided by John Grant is the green marketing matrix. This tool helps sustainable organizations to identify and analyze different strategies by conveying the correct message in line with the offered product and marketing objectives. Grant identified three types of green marketing actions, as can be seen in the figure 5, based on environmental and commercial objectives.

A) **Green** – setting new standards for responsible products, policies and process, means setting commercial objectives. In the part “setting new standards”, organizations want to be more sustainable than other competitors for a commercial purpose. This column represented the public's new interest in green products and sustainable businesses.

B) **Greener** – sharing responsibility with customers, means setting environmental and commercial objectives. This is an approach that aims at building customer loyalty to the company through tools such as brand events, social networks and creation of communities, which encourage participation and enthusiasm around the products. In this way, barriers between company and consumers are low and it is possible to change customer behavior.

C) **Greenest** – supporting innovation, it is an approach for companies that want to change the lifestyle of consumers i.e., new habits, new services, new

business models. This approach leads to commercial, environmental and cultural objectives.

	A. Green	B. Greener	C. Greenest
1. Public Company & Markets	<i>Set an Example</i>	<i>Develop the Market</i>	<i>New Business Concepts</i>
2. Social Brands & Belonging	<i>Credible Partners</i>	<i>Tribal Brands</i>	<i>Trojan Horse Ideas</i>
3. Personal Products & Habits	<i>Market a Benefit</i>	<i>Change Usage</i>	<i>Challenge Consuming</i>
	Set new Standards Communicate	Share responsibility Collaborate	Support Innovation Culture Reshaped

Fig. 6. The Green Marketing Matrix.

Source: Grant. J (2007). The Green Marketing Manifesto.

The main columns develop a 3x3 matrix that represents different strategies for each company. This matrix proposes two visions for one goal, one relevant of the company or brand, the other to the product. Grant explores 18 combinations of green strategies:

A1. Set an Example, which consist of communicating the principles and values to other organizations and consumers, certifying the commitment to the environment and ethical problems through business actions (framing) or developed products (pointing).

A2. Credible Partners, which consists of having partners who have been dealing with environmentally issues helps to create a corporate identity for the company. Environmental certifications or joining an NGO organization or a charity are tools to create a sustainable corporate identity and this strategy is called cause-related marketing (CRM).

A3. Market a Benefit, which consist of whether publishing the benefits that derive from designing a product following a specific process, placing the product either in a or economic range. The difficulty in selling green products is the fact that they do not bring personal benefits to the consumer but have secondary benefits such as resistance or simplicity. For green products there is a “minus approach” and a “plus approach”. The first one is about valuing convenience, practicality, durability or being affordable. The other approach is about premium products with high value added, which are more genuine, healthier, sophisticated and so on (Grant 2007, p. 118).

B1. Develop the Market, companies can take advantages of a green program because in this way they develop a new market for that sector. This is possible to achieve through customer education encouraging them towards a sustainable approach. Militancy is another essential concept, thanks to it is possible to achieve sustainability goals.

B2. Tribal Brands, a link between the brand and a particular group of users, their collaboration creates the brand, in an exclusive and elite way, or in an inclusive

way. Tribal represent the symbols of membership. The envy approach (exclusive) aims at making the green style attractive and superior in terms of design and functionality for the majority of people. The empathy approach (inclusive) aims at making the green style as original, inclusive, almost childish, in the opposite sense of consumerism.

B3. Change Usage habits, it refers to the collaboration with customers, encouraging them to reduce, reuse and recycle, with an adjustment towards a better habit or with a clean break from old habits. Participation in an initiative might have cultural benefits, that pour into society in a positive way, in changes. The conversion approach consists of the combination of compatible behaviors, cost minimization, sacrifice and effort. It is limited to purchasing choices. The “cutting” approach, on the other hand, consist of reducing purchases or use of the goods purchased.

C1. New Business Concepts, companies should seek new green markets, which has a lower ecological footprint, by changing operations and processes, either in a non-profit or for profit-making way.

C2. Trojan Horse Ideas, that is an approach for companies that want a cultural change to make their innovations accepted, both by revolutionizing tradition, reformulated, while maintaining familiarity so as not to drive consumers away, and by creating a sustainable fashion that consumers follow. The first is the “traditional approach”, while the second is the “cool” approach”.

C3. Challenging Consuming styles, it is about a greener strategy, which involves changing the style of consumption or inventing new ways of living, convincing people to keep objects, or encouraging the sharing of goods. The “sharing” approach, which consists of seeing sharing as normal and logical, and it is an antagonist of consumerism. The second one is “hoarding” approach, which consists in extending the average life of the products.

Before undertaking each of these strategies an organization must bear in mind that sustainability is a philosophy that needs strong values. When a business becomes sustainable it means making decisions that are not based solely on financial factors but also on the social and environmental impact.

The advantages of a properly implemented green marketing might be (Persico and Rossi (2016), p.14):

- Industrial benefits: apart from analysis and environmental validation of production processes, there is the opportunity to identify areas of improvement and efficiency in terms of less impact on the planet but also significant economic savings in the long term.
- Regulatory benefits: advantage that allows a timely adjustment to the increasingly demanding environmental regulations.
- Competitive advantage: ranging from eco-sustainable development to processes and products requested by the market as a distinctive and lasting

competitive edge to the access to Green Public Procurement (GPP), to the increase in reputational capital.

2.4 The sustainable consumer

In the literature, there are a myriad of terms aimed at defining environmental behavior. The most important is considered the contribution of Stern (2000), who based the definition of environmental behavior in accordance with its impact. The author considered environmental behavior the extent to which the availability of materials or energy from the environmental changes or alters the structure and dynamics ecosystems or the biosphere itself.

Another important contribution was that of Steg and Vlek (2009) who defined pro-environmental behavior as “*a behavior that harms the environment as little as possible, or even to the benefit of the environment*”¹².

Both definitions spotlight that consumers must protect or at least cause less damage to the environment in order to behave in a sustainable way. When analyzing sustainable behaviors, one of the first questions to focus on was what factors influence individuals to choose sustainable behavior. In the figure 2.2 is possible to see a general outlook of a decision-making model of sustainable consumption.

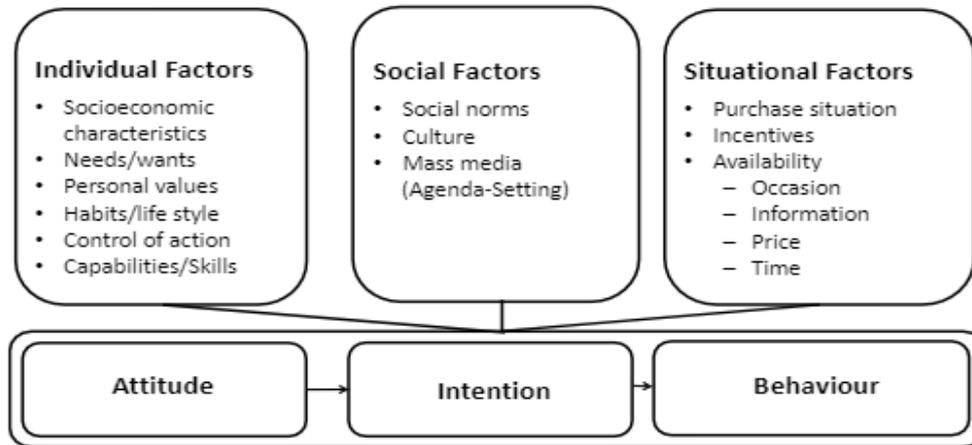


Fig. 7. Decision-making model of sustainable consumption.

Source: Rielaboration of Balderjahn, 2013; Carrington et al., 2010; Vermeier and Verbeke, 2006.

Although there has been a great awareness on the part of consumers, countries, institutions of the need for a change in daily life regarding unsustainable behaviors, there is still a significant problem today: attitude-behavior gap or attitude-intention-behavior gap. (Blake, 1999; Kennedy et al., 2009; Kollmuss e Agyeman, 2002; Vermeir e Verbeke, 2006).

Indeed, the European survey (European Commission 2019-2020) confirmed that 94% of the Europeans say that protecting the environment is important to them personally, but just over a fifth of the respondents (21%) say they have taken seven or more environmentally friendly actions in the past six months.

This is a confirmation of the continuing discrepancy between sustainable attitude and the real behavior of individuals, still in the twenty-first century.

*“Why do people act environmentally and what are the barriers to pro-environmental behavior?”*¹³. These questions seem to have not answers. Although there have been thousands of searches, the results of the studies have always pointed out uncertainty on the ability to predict consistent behaviors.

2.4.1 Sustainable behavior models

The first study models, and the simplest ones, of pro-environmental behavior were based on a linear progression of environmental knowledge that led to awareness and concern and therefore to an environmental attitude that resulted in pro-environmental behavior (Kollmuss and Agyeman, 2002, p. 241). Over time, it was clear that knowledge and awareness were not enough because there are many other variables that influence the decision-making process of individuals as was depicted in the previous figure. Nevertheless, there are four models of environmental o pro-environmental behavior that are the most important patterns so far.

The firs one is **the theory of reasoned action (TRA)**, that it is based on the assumption that an individual’s behavior is determined by the individual’s

¹³ Kollmuss, Anja & Agyeman, Julian. (2002). Mind the Gap: Why Do People Act Environmentally and What Are the Barriers to Pro-Environmental Behavior? Environmental Education Research. 8. 239-260. 10.1080/13504620220145401.

behavioral intention (BI) to perform that behavior, which provides the most accurate prediction of behavior (Fishbein and Ajzen, 1975).

The behavioral intention is the result of the attitude toward behavior and subjective norms. Thus, people behave based on their beliefs about the results of their behavior and the values they attach to those results. Sheppard et al. (1998) stated that the main limitation of TRA lies in the validity of the prediction whether the behavior under study is not under full volitional control.

TRA has been utilized to predict the intentions in green marketing areas, such as recycling behaviors (Davies et al. 2002), green energy behavior (Bang et al., 2000).

The second theory is called **the theory of planned behavior (TPB)**, that is always a contribution of Ajzen, is an extension of the TRA in the case that the actions are not under voluntary control. Indeed, the author added a new variable that is perceived behavioral control (PBC), an additional indicator of both intention and action. According to this model, the intentions of a given behavior are influenced by a favorable or unfavorable assessment of the behavior, perceived social pressure to execute the behavior or not, and self-efficacy in relation to the behavior. Ajzen (1991) adds the new variable since he argues that behavioral performance is determined jointly by motivation (intention) and ability (behavioral control).

The basic assumptions of the model are as follows: intention precedes real behavior; intentions are determined by the attitude towards behavior, subjective norm and perceived behavioral control; these factors are a function of underlying behavioral, regulatory, and controlling beliefs; behavioral regulatory, and controlling beliefs vary other underlying factors.

In empirical research, scholars have validated the contribution of TPB in green consumption behavior, for example green hotels (Han and Yoon, 2015), organic food choice behavior (Ha and Janda, 2012).

Then, **the theory of Norm Activation (NAT)**, its premise is that personal norms are the only direct determinants of pro-social and altruistic behaviors (Schwartz, 1977). Personal norms are therefore the core and are recognized that not acting might have negative consequences for the environment and others. The individuals feel responsible for these negative consequences. While social norms (TRA) depend on the social environment, personal norms stem from the individual himself. Awareness and responsibility lead the individual to pro-social behavior. Several studies suggest that moral norms contribute to explaining pro-environmental behavior such as: pro-environmental buying (Thøgersen, 1999), recycling (Guagnano et al. 1995).

Last but not least, **the theory Value-Belief-Norm (VBN)** by Stern et al. (2000) that is based on the Value theory of Schwartz. According to the VBN, values are the first link in a casual chain that influences the behavior of the individual. These

variables are personal values, the ecological vision of the world, awareness of undesirable consequences, the attribution of personality towards oneself, and personal norms for action in favor of the environment.

According to this perspective, environmental behavior derives from personal norms, activated by beliefs that environmental conditions threaten individual values, and beliefs that the individual can act to reduce this threat. The VBN theory has managed to explain various environmental behaviors, including consumer behavior, environmental citizenship, the will to sacrifice and the desire to reduce car use (Stern et al., 1999; Nordlund e Garvill, 2003).

2.4.2 Recent consumers updates

For what concerns today, consumers do not look for iconic brands, but for brand consistent with their value system, among which there should be sustainable development, ethic, and respect to the environment. Consequently, attention to the environment is not just an ethical issue, but a business one.

An IBM Research showed that consumers are looking for brands that shared their same values. Moreover, those individuals who considered “extremely important” sustainability, over 70%, would pay a premium of 35% on average. There are four segments that characterized consumers: value-driven consumers (41%), purpose-driven consumers (40%), brand-driven consumers (13%), and product-driven consumers. Most consumers are part of value-driven consumers, whose aim is to

get their money's worth and select convenient brand based on price; and purpose-drive consumers, whose aim is to choose brand according to their personal values and who act in a proper way when it comes to sustainability.

Moreover, another interesting result that emerged is that every age is concerned about environmental issues, however millennials might be leading the charge in sustainability awareness with 79% as a result of the survey about the importance of sustainability, while Gen X 77%, Gen Z 75% as well as Boomers.

Regarding Italy, the EY Future Consumer Index (2020) keeps track of changes in consumers attitude and behaviors over time and identifies emerging consumer segments. In the twenty-first century, consumer behaviors have been most influenced by the presence of the global pandemic COVID-19. From the research, emerged that 71% of people in Italy are changing their pattern of buying, 53% of consumers are changing products that they buy and 39% buy just essential products. Italian consumers are changing and 63% of them are focused on sustainability, they are more likely to buy from a company that shares the impact that products have on the planet and people.

It is more than clear that companies should incorporate sustainability into its strategy and operation. Transparency and traceability are a way to show consumers their commitment so as to earn their confidence. As well as align sustainability to the core competency.

Chapter 3: Communication for sustainable companies

3.1 Social Media: an effective platform for communication

The advent of the internet, but above all the innovation to follow have transformed the society as it is today. Online information has evolved over time, starting from a world where users searched for and consulted information to a world where people are now able to generate and disseminate information themselves. The advent of Web 2.0 represented a new form of interaction between consumer and companies and consequently reconceive the way of communicating between companies and their stakeholders.

The metamorphosis (that saw the mobile phone into smartphone as the protagonist has) not only impacted the functional elements that characterized it, but it has also redefined the user's interactions with the surrounding environment. Indeed, social interaction is one of the most common motivation for using the internet and the introduction of social media intensify this approach (Vollenbroek et al. 2014). This transformation has represented a functional implementation and a real change in the meaning of the tool with respect to its function. The use of online applications and social interactions put attention to the importance of physical appearance and physical proximity of the sender (McKenna and Bargh, 2000). With the transformation of the smartphone comes the phenomenon known as "always on", that is the condition of users who are always connected to the

Internet. This gives rise to a service model that is based on the use of the services offered at any time, from anywhere. This phenomenon has not only defined a new mode of communication, but it has, therefore, contributed to redefining the social interaction paradigm in its completeness and complexity. The traditional one-way flow of information is no longer the only channel/used, now receivers can interact through social media with the source, the medium and importantly with each other (Winer, 2009). From a marketing point of view, the evolution of opportunities of communication provided by the development of the internet implies the need to conceive new methods/ways of dialogue and promotion. These new methods can be based on the corporate reputation on the issues of sustainability and the green economy, but also on empowerment and the consumer's ability to reward virtuous green companies.

Social media was defined as *“a group of internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundation of web 2.0 and that allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content”*¹⁴.

Social media have become an important communication platform because has a great power that consists of the capability on transferring the content generated by both organizations and stakeholders. This, in turn, allows the interested parties to build interactions and engage one with another. At one time, social media was

¹⁴ Kaplan AM, Haenlein M (2010) Users of the world, unite! The challenges and opportunities of social media. *Bus Horiz* 53(1):59–68

considered as a form of amusement/entertainment for young generations, but sooner it began to involve the increasing availability of data from social application (Peters, Chen, Kaplan, Ognibeni, & Pauwels, 2013) such as user profiles, habits, corporate or user-generated content and information. As well, organization began to have the feeling that individuals in the social media domain/area have influence over the corporate reputation and there are lot of anecdotes grounds for this belief (Gillin and Gilmore, 2012). The main social media characteristics are:

- **Interactivity** – there are two kinds of interactivity. The first one is called functional interactivity allowed by functional features such as like, links, and shares to external sites and the ability to post comments (Sundar, Kalyanaraman and Bruno, 2003). The second one is message-based named “contingency interactivity”, that means the exchange of contents (Rafaeli, 1988).
- **Vividness** – social media means to post multimedia content that enhance the sensory perception immediately and that mimics real and in-person experience (Coyle&Thorson, 2001). Vividness attracts attention an increase the efficacy of information processing (Jiang&Benbasat, 2007).
- **Connectedness** – means always connected. Individual that might be companies, or friends, professional or family always try to be connected with their networks. Connectedness on social media create communities. Li and Bernogg (2008) referred to this social trend as the “groundswell movement”, where people

use technology to get what they need from each other because people more trust the information provided by their communities.

- **Openness** – each platform has its own way of openness; it can be open or semi-open environment. Obviously, according to the openness of social media there are advantages and challenges. Word-of-mouth is one of the positive effects of openness, but it can be both positive and negative. When it is positive, it will generate a greater effect because it will allow third parties to be reached beyond the network of a single individual. When it is negative, its impact is strong as it will prevent potential customers from approaching a brand or even alienate them and alarm shareholders and investors.

Exist a lot of social networking, more than 150 that are in use, out of these LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, Messenger, YouTube and Google+ are the most popular. What they do is to *“give credence for consumers to share their experiences in their social networks and also to review the recommendations given by others on products and services”*¹⁵.

¹⁵ Leong, B. & Gligorijevic, B., 2011. Trust, Reputation and Small Firm: Building online brand reputation for small firms. Research. Canberra: Association for the advancement of artificial intelligence Smart

Social media are not only popular, but over the time there has been a high increase in the amount of time people spend on applications online, which affect how people behave, share and interact within their normal daily life (Nielsen, 2009). Moreover, the covid-19 pandemic has had a major impact on the lives of people not only by changing people’s habits but also their relationship with technology. From the research (Digital Report 2021), it emerged how technologies have become a fundamental component of people daily life in the last year as can be seen in figure 3.1. Users of social platforms have grown by 13% in the last year, with almost half a billion new users, or 1.3 million people every day, or 15 per second. In short, there are 4.2 billion of people who are connected via social networks.

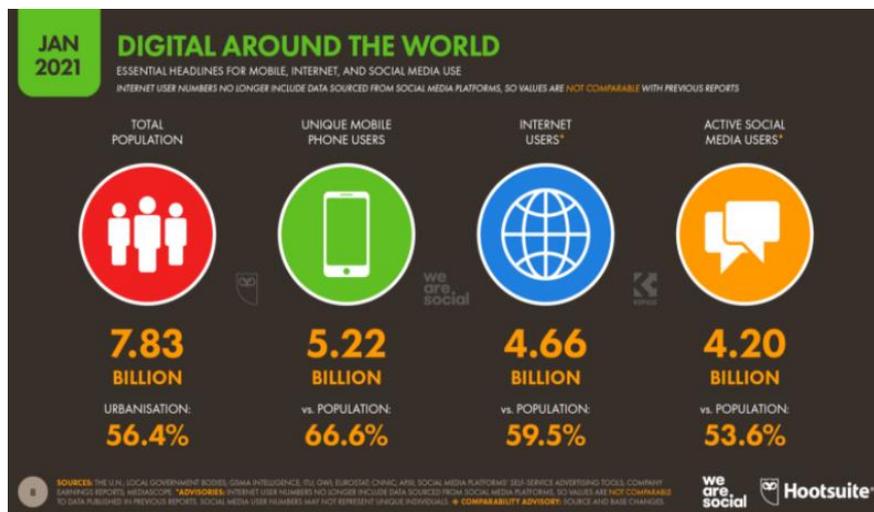


Fig. 8. Digital around the world.

Source: We are Social, Global digital report 2021.

About Italy, from the search emerged that 98,5% of Italian citizens is present in at least one social network. Among the most used platforms, the leadership of Facebook and google remains strong. Indeed, Youtube, WhatsApp and Facebook all exceed 80% of adoption, followed by Instagram (67%) and Messenger (55.9%).

The reasons that motivate people to be always connected are the same locally as globally, that is, searches in engines and consumer reviews. Indeed, before making a purchasing more and more people read comments and opinions by other users on consumer review sites, social platforms, forums or Q&A services. The power of social media is that two-way interaction, personalized messages and the influence of one individual (in social online communities) on the corporate reputation can be significant.

For these reasons, during the last years, marketing practitioners have integrated social media as marketing instruments into their marketing programs. From a marketing perspective, it is fundamental to test different social platforms in order to understand what types of social media fit best within the policies and strategies of the company (Waters et al., 2009).

Furthermore, social media importance also lies in its use social media monitoring, so as to 'listen' to customer voice and interactions on social media (Constantinides and Fountain, 2008). Voices might be negative or positive. On one hand, negative voices in the social media can lead to negative publicity, which is difficult to handle. On the other hand, positive voices of product or brand support can improve/enhance the corporate reputation. Social media as a communication tools present opportunity as well and challenges and pitfalls.

3.1.1 Challenges and opportunities of social media

Social media as a crowd-casting tool offer opportunities and challenges (J. Cornelissen, 2020, p.50-52). First of all, social media is the step that helped to advance towards an integration of marketing and public relationship under the umbrella of corporate communication (Libro). Second, social media help companies to engage directly and in a more interactive way with customer, stakeholders and employees. Companies through social media can present a more human image of themselves. Moreover, social media allows the creation of a group of supporters of the company thanks to the possibility given to stakeholders to speak loudly. This might be bad or good according to the opinion of stakeholders and the type of news they spread.

Indeed, the first challenge regards stakeholders being against the organization, because this can influence the communities. For this reason, companies should keep under control what people are saying about them to avoid a crisis through constant monitoring of social media.

Challenges or opportunities that a company might face mainly depends on how communicators perceive the role of social media, thus whether social media are framed as reputation risks or opportunities? Cornelissen (2020) affirmed that communicators see social media in two ways: social media as a vehicle for disclosing and exposing information and social media as a conversation starters and co-creation of corporate reputation. The first approach can be dangerous for

the organization since it does not include active consumers and do not collaborate with them. The second one, that is the co-creation view established by organization and stakeholders is the best one. It is important to choose the best mind-set because then this way of thinking will also reflect in the implementation of the strategies and tactics of the organization.

Furthermore, social media that differ on their level of social presence, when it is high then it has a greater degree of involvement and vice versa.

3.2 Relevance of consumer engagement

Brodie (2011) defined consumer engagement as a “psychological state, attained from customers *“experiences with an agent or focal object (such as a brand) with dynamic process features, based on the value generated from a co-creation, multidimensional nature (cognitive emotional and behavioral) perspective”*¹⁶.

- Cognitive engagement: cognitive processing; a consumer’s level of brand-related thought processing and elaboration.
- Emotional engagement: affection (gratitude, empathy, trust); a consumer’s level of positive brand-related affect.

¹⁶ Brodie, R. J., Hollebeek, L. D., Juric, B., & Ilic, a. (2011). Customer Engagement: Conceptual Domain, Fundamental Propositions, and Implications for Research. *Journal of Service Research*, 14, 252–271. doi:10.1177/1094670511411703.

- Behavioral engagement: a consumer's level of energy, effort, and time spent on using a brand.

Schultz and Peltier (2013) claimed that there are several relationships constructs that can be used to see the engagement of consumers that include brand loyalty, relationship marketing, concentric marketing, marketing orientation, customer relationship management and social media networks.

Later, Hollebeek (2014) and other colleagues enhanced the fact that consumer engagement can be seen as a voluntary investment of cognitive, emotional and behavioral resource into brand interaction, which can be both positively and negatively balanced.

As we can see, after Brodie many other studies and definition have originated in marketing literature. On the one hand, consumer engagement is considered from a behavioral point of view and is a manifestation towards a company or a brand. On the other hand, authors like Brodie and Hollebeek that see consumer engagement as a psychological state that occurs along with a customer's interactive experience with a specific brand, together with a multidimensional construct that include cognitive, emotional, and behavioral dimensions.

Finally, there is an additional interpretation of consumer engagement as psychological process, which focuses on the mechanisms in motion when a customer's forms loyalty for the first time or maintains loyalty (Bowden, 2009). The perception of consumer engagement as a psychological state is the most

relevant. Over the years, several studies to understand consumer-brand engagement on social media have been carried out. One of the benefits of “real social media data” as Voorveld (2019) states is the fact that it explains consumer’ reactions to brand communication in a natural setting and as a consequence it is easy to reduce self-report bias. The downside is that data do not obtain invisible reactions through the social media platforms, therefore studies are based only on public reactions (Martínek, 2021). Nevertheless, consumer engagement has always been considered positive for brands, the negative part may emerge during their engagement with a brand.

The introduction of digital media made stakeholder engagement one of the ambitions on the agenda of marketing studies. Engagement stakeholder became as well as important for companies that understood that a positive stakeholder relationship meant support from stakeholder.

3.3 Sustainable corporate communication

In the past, corporate communication was considered it an operational activity intended to implement the strategy define by the top management of the organization. Communication depended on a linear, cause-and-effect relationship between marketing strategy and communication. Nowadays, communication means interdependence between corporate strategy and corporate

communication., and therefore a circular relationship where they mutually influence each other.

For sustainable corporation, as can be seen in figure 3.3.1., there are two essential activities in communication (Siano, 2012):

- Environmental scanning, that is the listening activity of the public in order to get knowledge about emerging changes in the reference environment (social, cultural, political and technological).
- Translating activity, that include the translation into useful information and transferring of elements deriving from listening to the stakeholder groups.

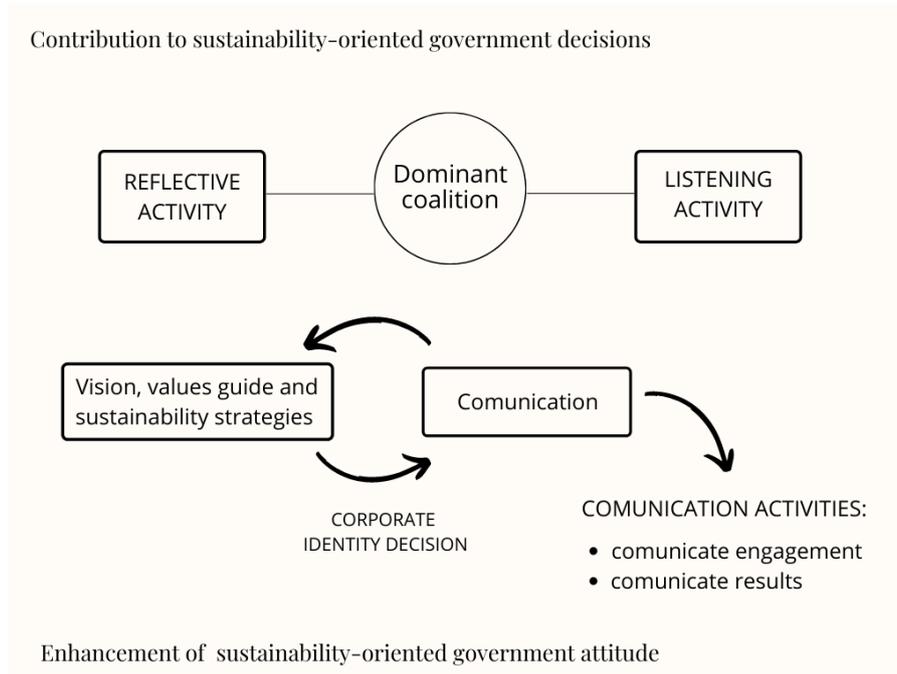


Fig. 9. The stratgic role of communication in sustainable business.

Source: Siano, A. (2012) “La comunicazione per la sostenibilità nel management delle imprese. Sinergie”.

As it has already been pointed out in the previous chapters, the sustainable corporation has established itself as a new business paradigm, considered essential for the development and competitiveness of organizations (Elkington, 1994; Iasevoli e Massi, 2012).

Why does an enterprise need to communicate its environmental actions?

At the beginning, the main motive were regulatory obligations, authorizations or as a response to exceptional events such as environmental accidents. For a decade, its use has been due to commercial and image aspects, to distinguish its products towards customers and its company profile towards various stakeholders compared to competitors. Therefore, corporate communication was intended to the creation of an image, which could only be limited to marketing and advertising communication actions, to achieve short-term effects. Over time, however, it has been recognized that the real purpose of corporate communication is the construction and consolidation of corporate reputation (Dolphin, 1999; Invernizzi, 2004; van Riel and Fombrun, 2007; Conrelissen, 2008). Reputation construction is seen as a fundamental corporate asset for maintaining the company's competitive advantage as it involves a constant, lasting and consistent commitment over time. Siano (2012) stated that the concept of reputation appears less fugitive and more substantial, since it involves stakeholder judgments based

on the perception and evaluation of the conduct of the organization and its members, with reference to a not short period of time.

As of this date, communicating one's commitment in online context has become one of the main objectives for organizations as over time corporate stakeholders have shown greater interest and sensitivity towards sustainability (Moreno e Capriotti, 2009; Illia et al., 2005).

For sustainable corporation the development of reputational capital involves the use of specific communication tools such as financial statement or sustainability reports, that are documents that contain information regarding the actions taken by the company. It is of fundamental importance to avoid a misalignment between commitments undertaken promises, objectives, and results as it is a source of reputational risks. This reputational risk is greater for sustainability-oriented organizations, Corporate reputation for sustainability attracts consumers who are socially conscious, therefore sustainability must be incorporated as a central mission, not only to their product, but it must include also the culture and decision-making processes.

What are the consequences of adopting a false sustainable communication behavior?

As mentioned before, reputational capital is one of the first thing that can be affected and as a consequence the increasement of reputational risk when incorrect practices are implemented. Reputation is an intangible capital that is

made up of company communication, behaviors consistent with the messages communicated and how it is perceived by its stakeholders.

Siano (2012) states that the risk occurs when a company worsens its relationship with stakeholders as a result of events that negatively affect trust and credibility of the company. In order to reduce reputational risks, it is necessary to minimize the triggering cause, including corporate communication.

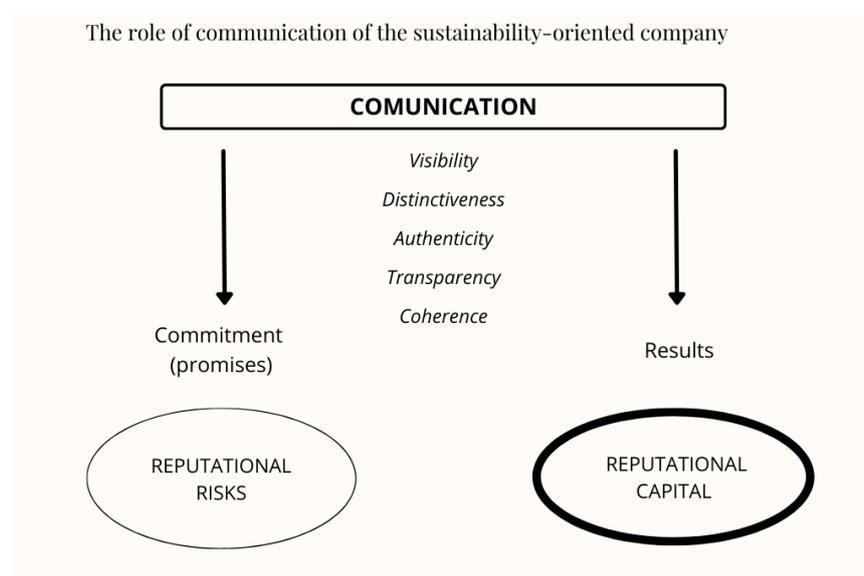


Fig. 10. Communication in a sustainable company.

Source: Siano, A. (2012) "La comunicazione per la sostenibilità nel management delle imprese. Sinergie".

Reputational risk occurs when there is no correspondence between promises and performance (results), as depicted above. Sustainable companies face high risk due to the fact that this type of business involves making promises about the “3

Ps” to its stakeholders. On the one hand, a green company has many possibilities to create and develop reputational capital. On the other hand, it is subject to a high risk. Higher potential returns, higher risk investments.

Communication needs to convey and make clear to all the targets and states every effort, action and green behavior performed by a company (Persico, Rossi, 2016). And for this reason, the goals of communication are those possible to see in figure.2.

The characteristic of the green message to communicate lies in the fact that, on the one hand, it must contain a balance between technical information (transparency) required by the type of communication, and, on the other side, it must be able to push the consumer to review his lifestyle and purchasing habits.

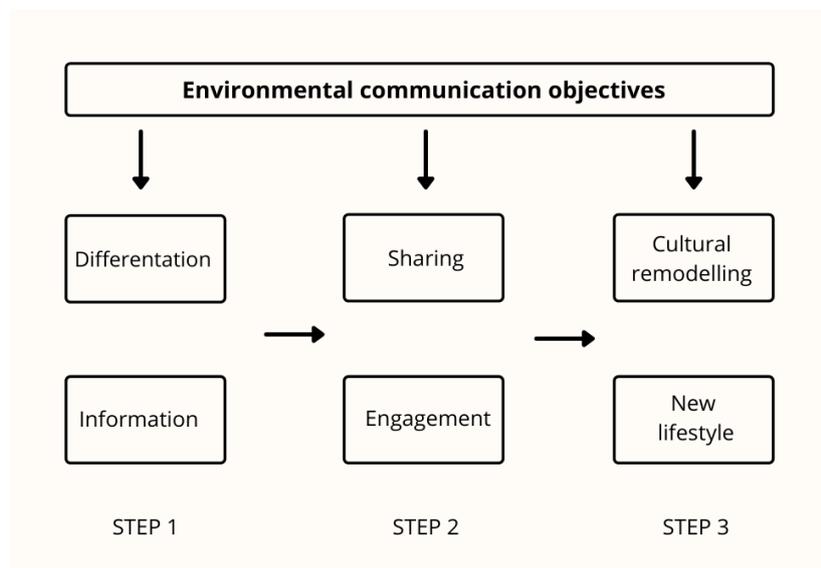


Fig. 11. The objectives of the communication of sustainability.

Sources: Persico, M. G., Rossi, F. (2016) "Comunicare la sostenibilità. Comunicare il nuovo paradigma per un nuovo vantaggio competitivo".

The message of environmental communication has three fundamental objectives:

- **Differentiation:** sustainable communication must act with the aim of marking the difference between what the competitors offer in the market and what the sustainable offer in the market, creating awareness of the value of the product for customers.
- **Share environmental responsibility:** involve consumers in all the business process is the key. In this way, a two-way communication can be created, and it can become more engaging and participatory. The interaction with consumer not only requires that they understand the company's processes but also that the latter listens to them in their consumption experiences and puts into practice what is recommended to them also through reviews, to ensure that they are fully satisfied.
- **Cultural remodeling:** this last goal (long-term objective) assumes to use communication to reconfigure the habits and lifestyles of consumers. This can be achieved through the lasting involvement of the consumer through participation in sustainable projects that will make them feel part of the change.

3.3.1 Sustainable corporations in social media

In recent decades, the importance of the internet and digital environments has grown. Digital innovation highlighted the importance of communication, in this case, communication of sustainable corporations. Profound changes have occurred given the need for adequate communication to its stakeholders regarding sustainability. The development of Web 2.0 put corporate communication in a difficult situation. As it is well known, we have moved on to polycentric communication, where contents are not generated only by companies, but by individuals. The phenomena of user-generated content and consumer/stakeholder-generated content modify the way organizations plan and implement online communication activities (Vollero, 2010). Social media are the space in which inconsistencies can be reported and the ease and speed with which this can be done threatens specially sustainability-oriented companies. At the same time positive WOM might be a result of a good communication through social media. Positive WOM can influences individuals or users' attitude and behaviors more than any other communication channel, and it has become more significant with the rise of social media platforms (Mangold&Fauls, 2009).

Social media also simplify the provision of consumer feedback, which allows for a more in-depth understanding of how consumers react to current communication of an issue and enables the communicator to understand better public.

Important characteristics in communication are that of honesty, openness, and transparency (Seeger, 2006). This not only refers to the content of the message, which undoubtedly needs to be fact based and accurate, but also the process of communicating the information itself. The act of providing consumers with information instils a quality of transparency in those doing the communicating (Renn, 2006). Social media gives the opportunity to reinforce the quality of transparency, by letting communicators to have a voice on many different social media channels. In this way they show a strong presence in transferring information when most needed and when most expected. If consumers see the effort that communicators make to get information across, this may build credibility and trust in the message and the communicator.

3.4 Principles for an effective communication

Communicating means trigger a mutual exchange of information and messages between two or more subjects. Especially in the case of sustainable communication, mutual exchange is essential since it requires participation and consensus so that information can be shared and integrate.

Compliance with the requirements of adequate communication contributes decisively to the success of the stakeholder relationships of the sustainable company and to relational development.

There is a big difference between commercial communication and communication of sustainability. On one hand, commercial communication's objective is to favor economic exchange, that is convincing or even deceive, especially in the past, the target about the quality of a product or company compared to the competition. On the other hand, communication of sustainability's objectives is information and cultural dissemination and the development of a new model of consumption and new lifestyle. In this case, the communication needs to divulge the company's sustainable approach and make it understandable to different targets, highlighting its value system. But at the same time, it must push and accelerate for the development of a new philosophy. Obviously, this type of communication and these values can be communicated only if clear, measurable, comparable, replicable and certified data are available in order to avoid the accusation of greenwashing. If sustainability is communicated correctly, then it can build a credible, strong and coherent brand accepted by the market.

Balzaretti (2009) refers to communication as a tool that must build a new imaginary and a new shared value system that gives centrality to the environment, to sociality and to ethics. To do this, there are two tools useful to create engagement and a shared drive. In addition, in this context the consumer prosumer plays a major role as they have the will to communicate with the company, to influence the processes, thus, to have a real relationship with organizations. Social

media and the digital world are the perfect scenario for contents to be translated into values for consumers.

Iraldo and Melis (2012) stated that a successful communication of sustainability needs to exploit the strength of creativity, ideas and the means of communication that are selected consistently with the type of message, in that what it is possible to transfer messages that are correct, truthful, reliable, clear, accurate, relevant and coherent. By conveying a message, it is not intended to state whether a specific company or products is more or less green than other but to demonstrate it and insert it into your system of values. Therefore, communication must respond to some specific aspects (Fombrun and van Riel 2004; Persico M. G. and Rossi F. 2016)

1. **Correctness, truthfulness, reliability, and comparability** – since the goal of communication is to inform and spread a new culture, reality cannot be altered, otherwise communicating false arguments can later threaten a strong relationship with stakeholders. Although communication is based on a creative basis, it is essential that there is coherence and objective foundations when it comes to analysis, data, and real results following procedures at international level, which are verifiable, certifies by third party bodies “super partes”, and replicable. In addition, there is the aim of comparability regarding specially the reasons underlying the communication in order to facilitate an objective and impartial evaluation.

2. **Clarity** – a key element for a correct and truthful communication of sustainability is clarity since the contents that are addressed can be complex, technical and specialized. Given that the target is non-homogenous, it is important to make complex concepts clear for a target of generalists, without falling into simplistic explanations, and to deepen the explanation for the target of specialists. It is essential to be specific about the issues and eliminate the risk of ambiguity and misunderstanding.

3. **Accuracy** – punctual, detailed, and precise are adjective that belong to the communication of sustainability. It is important to keep in mind not to overlook the details and not to change the reality of the facts. Communication must be unambiguous and supported by objective scientific evidence. Finding a balance between technical data and a more generic treatment/explanation is the challenge to be faced. The more accurate the scientific basis and the more coherent the communication that derives/stem from it, the greater the possibility of being positively received by the public and not being subjected to criticism, negative evaluations, or accusations of greenwashing.

4. **Relevance** – the treatment of significant issues for stakeholders, for the real impacts of processes and products. It is important not to focus on secondary and uninteresting aspects only for the convenience of the result. Equally important is not to enhance/exalt performance or benefits that are the same for all competitors and nor an applied strategy. Furthermore, the level of relevance is

decided by the recipient and not by the company. The company must regulate communication and content ensuring consistency according to the characteristics of the target.

A company must be capable of acting as a spokesperson for the new sustainable society through impressive communication. Having an effective strategy, as discussed in the previous chapter, is a fundamental requirement to guarantee to the company a long-term permanence in the market. The company renounces the mere creation of profit to move to a global vision where a wide system of relationships intersects, sometimes understood as human relationship which by their nature are strongly influenced by the reputation of the company. The socially responsible company, aware of the importance assumed by the corporate image, must confer/show and explain its ideas to the community, inform them of the operations carried out. Having a good communication plan allows the sustainable company to make this feasible.

Chapter 4: Content Analysis of sustainability communication on social media in the agri-food sector

4.1 The role of sustainability in the agri-food industry

Agri-food sustainability and conscious nutrition are today the most relevant elements of good communication in the Food & Beverage sector. By “good communication” is meant acting as the result of an ethical reflection, where the interlocutor is stimulated to become more aware of his possibilities of discernment and critical choice.

The issues of agri-food sustainability begin to be known in the second half of the twentieth century with the essay of Carson R. (1962), which focuses on the environment and the massive use of synthetic remedies in agriculture and new sensitivities and duties of human beings to the Earth.

Since the 1980s people in some parts of the Earth has lived above its means in environmental terms. For this reason, at a certain point sustainable development became important for all human beings including all spheres of their daily life. In 1972, the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment was held in Stockholm and during the following years more and more strategies for the conservation of the world were discussed. Since the end of the Nineties, actions in favor of greater environmental sustainability have intensified (Kyoto Protocol .40, Plan 20-20-20).

For the agri-food chain, the term sustainability is the watchword. With the Green Deal and the Farm to Fork strategy, the European Union requires a reduction of 50% of pesticides, 20% of fertilizers and 50% of antibiotics on farm by 2030¹⁷.

Agri-food markets perform many fundamental functions, from production, processing to distribution to the consumer for consumption, and therefore play a crucial role in the process of economic development. Nowadays, they are at the heart of an interconnected global environmental, economic and social problems and are essential in addressing various sustainability challenges such as climate change, population growth, food insecurity and malnutrition, resource scarcity, ecosystem degradation and biodiversity loss (HLPE. 2020). The relevance of markets in general, and the agri-food sector in particular, in achieving sustainable development is demonstrated by the fact that they are mentioned in the Framework of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Agri-food markets have rapidly changed in recent decades under the convergence of many factors which are globalization, trade liberalization, population growth, urbanization, rising incomes, changing policies, changing patterns of food consumption and diets, technological changes and environmental degradation. All these facts have remarkably influenced the structure and functioning of the agri-

¹⁷ EU's Farm to Fork strategy impacts climate, productivity, and trade. | <https://www.cleanenergywire.org/factsheets/eus-farm-fork-strategy-impacts-climate-productivity-and-trade>

food industry. One of the most significant processes that influenced this sector is globalization, which has had both positive and negative effects. On the one hand, it has impacted positively on food security, food prices in real term and their volatility. On the other hand, it has increased the gap between rich and poor countries, aggravated difficulties related to world hunger as well as the standardization of dietary patterns.

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), chosen by the Member States of the United Nations in 2015, confirmed that transition towards sustainability of the current agriculture and food system, including agri-food market is essential to achieve sustainable food and nutrition security

The constant change and innovation of the agri-food markets provoke both challenges and opportunities for the agri-food supply chains. This market can play an essential role in adapting the global agri-food system to climate change.

In this context, firms and industries can develop markets that can help enabling sustainability transitions by, among others, supporting marketing campaigns or “green” research and development (R&D).

4.2 What drives agri-food companies to be sustainable?

Sustainability and the impact on the environment, on local communities, on workers’ rights have become a central theme in every activity, especially for

industries. However, what are the main drivers that led firms to care about sustainability?

To begin with, the fact that the European Union itself is aware of the need and requires sustainable approach in all sectors, including that of food, is one of the main reasons for integrating a sustainable strategy in a company. In addition, consumers today are aware of the impact of their consumption choices on the planet. Indeed, in the last few years there has been an increase in consumer adhesion to “sustainable diets” that are *“diets with low environmental impact that contribute to food and nutritional security, as well as a healthy life for present and future generation”*¹⁸. It is possible to observe these changes taking into account the news in the food sector such as fake meat or catalogs with more and more 100% vegetable alternatives that show how important it is already and even more so it will be in the future to know tastes, consumption habits, needs, desires, but also causes and issue that are most important to their typical consumers in the food environment.

Commitment to sustainability and safeguarding the planet have become drivers towards implementation of sustainable business model by companies and purchasing by consumers. Consumers tend to be particularly attentive to the

¹⁸ Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), (2010): Dietary guidelines and sustainability [Dietary guidelines and sustainability | Food-based dietary guidelines | Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations \(fao.org\)](#)

reduction of food waste, the reduction of the impact of packaging, the quality and origin of the ingredients, the way of production and its social and environmental impact (Inside Marketing, 2021). In fact, it emerges that 35% of Italians show interest in more sustainable ingredients, in view of respecting the environment, the workforce (social and health) and they are also willing to pay more for food products that are compliant with those characteristics. For this reason, operators in the food sector must be able to communicate in a simple and transparent way aspects such as the characteristics of the production chain and the criteria for choosing raw materials and suppliers. Therefore, it is of fundamental importance for companies in the digital environment to communicate their commitment to these issues as more sustainable food sector, while at the same time encouraging the adoption of “environmentally friendly” consumption habits.

All these factors encourage food companies to adapt to these needs and adopt a more sustainable business models and encourage consumers to adopt more eco-friendly lifestyles.

4.3 Research context: online communication in sustainable agri-food Italian companies

During the last years, the Food and Beverage industry has keep growing at fast rate in the Italian economy. Particularly, in 2019 it was one of the leading sectors of the manufacturing system with a growing production (+3%) and a raise in

exports (+6.6%) at the end of the year (Federalimentare, 2019). Despite the pandemic of Covid-19, in 2020 the food sectors recorded a contraction in growth of 1%, which is a contained value when compared to the -8.9% of the Italian economy (Food Industry Monitor, 2021). Now, 2021 and 2022 will be years of strong recovery. The secrets of its success can be found in various elements:

- the good quality of the products.
- the transparency of labels and production processes.
- the solid collaboration between industry and agricultural production.
- the reputation of Italian food excellence on world markets in terms of quality, safety, tradition, and sustainability.

According to the Food Industry Monitor (2021), 80% of the food companies surveyed consider themselves a “sustainable company” and 56% have already implemented a formalized sustainable strategy.

Companies that have invested in sustainability have a proactive approach to innovation, particularly process innovation, and this is reflected in growth performance, both in the medium and long term. On average, Italian companies have increased their investments in sustainability by 38.8% in the last 5 years.

Companies that have a formalized sustainability strategy, have increased investments in sustainability over the past 5 years, and effectively communicate their choices have superior growth performance. It was found that 32.7% of organizations do external communication on sustainability issues, 43.3% do it

partially only on some topics and 24% do not communicate about sustainable topics.

These data highlight the importance of communicating sustainability actions and goals achieved by food companies.

Social media can play a key role in sustainability by using these channels to communicate sustainability issues and improve stakeholders' engagement.

However, the Italian food sector is categorized in a fairly primitive era of digitalization, that is known as <<the Neanderthal era>> (Solution Group, 2019).

This classification suggest that the food sector is placed in an era, where even if they are dynamic, processes are too structured, and it takes too much time to adapt to the speed and smart of changes in digital communication. Indeed, technology arrives today at <<the Sapiens Sapiens Era>>, which show an infinity of innovative tools channels and activities, such as Artificial Intelligence.

The use of social networking in the food sector has grown in recent years with nearly 82.6% of companies owning at least one active social network, and with only 17.4% of companies not active in social network (Figure 12).

APERTURA DI ALMENO UN SOCIAL NETWORK per singolo settore

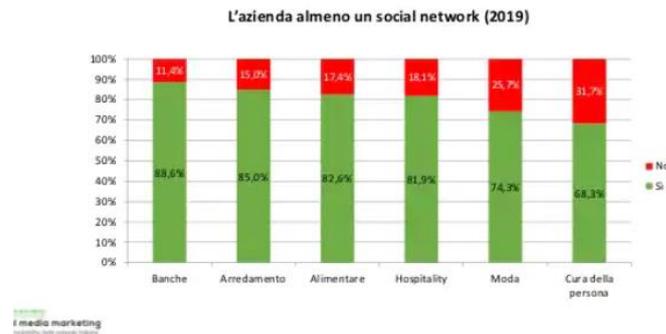


Fig. 12. Opening of at least one social network for each sector.

Source: Fraia Di G. (2019): *Socialmediability delle aziende italiane – The visual era.*
Osservatorio Social Media Marketing.

However, considering the increase in the use of social media by food companies in these last years, that is illustrated in the figure 13., it is expected a higher use now and, in the years, to come.

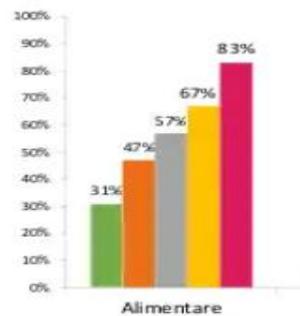


Fig. 13. Use of social network comparison for year.

Source: Fraia Di G. (2019): *Socialmediability delle aziende italiane – The visual era.*
Osservatorio Social Media Marketing.

4.4 Research design and methodology

Most organizations have embraced social media as a new wave of communication to share their sustainability improvement and achievements (Manetti and Bellucci, 2016). However, even though the agri-food sector has proven to be one of the first to embrace sustainability, there is a lack of studies about the use of social media to communicate sustainability content in this particular industry. For this reason, this study focuses on the analysis of corporate communication about sustainability in social media on behalf of Italian food companies. The aim of this analysis is to extend the existing literature by examining the type and level of food companies' sustainability communication on social media and how users react to such content. To address this question, a content analysis of the social media profiles of some of the most sustainable Italian food companies was performed.

The first step of the research was the sample selection. In order to select real sustainable companies and not green for appearance, the research relied on the intersection of two valid sources: the "ESG Perception Index" and "Il Sole 24ORE – Statista".

The "ESG Perception Index" is the indicator that measures the perception of sustainability of companies. "ESG" stands for Environmental, Social and Governance, as the three fundamental dimensions for verifying, measuring, controlling and supporting the commitment in terms of sustainability of an organization. Regarding the evaluation method, the criteria are environmental,

social and governance. The first one evaluates how a company behaves towards the environment in which it is located and the environment in general. The second refers to the social impact and examine the impact and the relationship with the territory, people, employees, suppliers, customers and in general with the communities with which it operates or with which it has a relationship. The last one concerns to the issue of corporate management, it includes good practices and ethical principal, thus the examination is about the remuneration of managers, respect for the rights of shareholders, transparency of decisions and business choices, and respect for minorities.

The ESG criteria are relevant because they are standardized and shared parameters, that allow a more precise measurement. The ESG Perception Index examined the main companies on the Italian market to produce a raking of the best sustainable companies on the web. The analysis model evaluates the proximity of the brand to the 17 pillars of sustainability defined by the UN and produces for each one an indicator. The interesting factors are the volume of content that reports the association between the brand and sustainability, the reputational impact of this content, the association of the brand identity with sustainability on search engines and the extent to which the company describes sustainability through its channels (e.g., website, social profiles). Today perception represents the factor that most influences stakeholder decision with

respect to the various technical ratings. The ESG Index classification was drawn up in June 2021.

The second source is the “leader of sustainability” classification, a rating created by Statista and Il Sole 24ORE which collaborated in order to analyze and evaluate Firms’ Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). It took into account three dimensions: environmental, social and economic and the research was based on the analysis of 35 indicators of the three dimensions.

The data collected referred to the year 2018-2019 and were aggregated and evaluated through scoring. Each company received a total score in the three areas. In each area, the “top company” received the maximum score of 100. The 150 companies with the best final score were recognized as “Sustainable Leaders”. For this study, ten were the companies selected as it is possible to see from the Table I, where it is indicated the sources.

During the selection process of the companies, some of them such as Andreani S.p.a., Gruppo Orsero, La Doria S.p.a., and Monini, were not taken into consideration because they do not have a company profile on Instagram or LinkedIn, the ones of main interest.

Table 1. Selection of the best sustainable companies. (October 2021)

Company Name	Social Network	Source
Ferrero	LinkedIn, Instagram, Facebook	ESG Perception Index Il Sole 24ORE – Statista
Barilla	Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram, Facebook	ESG Perception Index Il Sole 24ORE – Statista
Lavazza	LinkedIn, Instagram, Twitter, Facebook	ESG Perception Index Il Sole 24ORE – Statista
Granlatte Granarolo	LinkedIn, Instagram, Facebook	ESG Perception Index Il Sole 24ORE – Statista
Fileni	LinkedIn, Instagram, Facebook	Il Sole 24ORE – Statista
Campari Group	LinkedIn, Instagram, Twitter, Facebook	ESG Perception Index Il Sole 24ORE – Statista
Segafredo (Zanetti Group)	LinkedIn, Instagram, Twitter, Facebook	Il Sole 24ORE – Statista
IllyCaffè	LinkedIn, Instagram, Twitter, Facebook	ESG Perception Index Il Sole 24ORE – Statista
San Benedetto	LinkedIn, Instagram, Facebook	ESG Perception Index
Cameo	LinkedIn, Instagram, Facebook	ESG Perception Index

4.5 Data collection and analysis

Once the sample is defined, the data collection analysis begun.

The initial screening phase is important to understand which platforms are the most active and used by the major companies and then consider the most up-to-date ones for the analysis. Although Facebook is one of the world's largest social networking site, and most frequently used social media, it immediately emerged that it was commonly used to promote products, promotions or activities rather than commitment to sustainability. For instance, companies profile on Facebook such as Barilla or Lavazza present insufficient contents or not recent contents. While Granarolo's facebook profile focuses more on products or discounts.

The same inspection was performed for Twitter, which currently ranks as one of the leading social networks worldwide based on active users (Statista, 2022). However, it was possible to observe a scarce presence of food companies.

Indeed, three out of ten companies do not have a twitter account namely Cameo, San Benedetto and Fileni. Then two out of ten have a twitter account but do not contain updates contents for at least one or two years and they are Granlatte Granarolo.

As a consequence, Facebook as well as Twitter were not selected because it was possible to notice that the content sharing on these channels is not updated and therefore there was not enough material to analyze in the last six months.

The data collection derived from content published by food companies that related exclusively to sustainable topics on two platforms. The monitoring period lasted six months, from July to December 2021.

Generally, the units of data collection were posts and videos posted by the companies concerning social and environmental issues. Additionally, responses by users in the terms of likes and comments were also considered to assess the use of the dialogic potential of social media.

After the initial screening that decide which platforms were the most suitable for the study, as mentioned above, there was the analysis of the total number of posts published by platforms to evaluate companies social presence.

Subsequently, it follows the codification/categorization of the postings according to three dimensions: social, environmental and social and environmental posts (Lodhia, Sumit & Kaur, Amanpreet & Stone, Gerard, 2020).

The categorization of the content represents the in-depth study.

In this part, we carried out a “content analysis” that is the technical system of data analysis that does not consist in counting the words to examine the problem but rather allows those who apply the system to contract texts into categories that represent similar meanings based on explicit rules of coding (Krippendorff, 2004; Stemler, 2001; Weber, 1990).

The “open coding” (Boeije, 2010) was used in order to identify the key codes from the study of the two social media platforms. According to Boeije (2010)

through the use of this coding, it was possible to read the data and divide it into fragments so as to assign each piece to a group and aggregate the same thematic. Here, a tool from previous relevant methodological approaches was applied to social media analysis and specific constructs:

- disclosure classification - social, environmental, or social and environmental (SE);
- topic discussed in the post (thematic analysis was used to develop an inductive list of key issues raised in these disclosures; e.g., water, waste, climate change responses, employee engagement, and community engagement);
- and users' use of the dialogic features of social media (likes, comments, and shares)¹⁹;

Afterwards, the study pays attention to the tone of voice used by companies, which can be “conversational human voice” or “organizational voice”. As well as the message framing, which can be of two types: loss-framed messages or gain framed messages.

Last but not least, engagement has been observed. Engagement is based on the number of likes and comments.

¹⁹ Lodhia, Sumit & Kaur, Amanpreet & Stone, Gerard. (2020). The use of social media as a legitimization tool for sustainability reporting: A study of the top 50 Australian Stock Exchange (ASX) listed companies. *Meditari Accountancy Research*. ahead-of-print. 10.1108/MEDAR-09-2019-0566.

To achieve the objectives, the following research questions have been formulated:

1. What are the platforms most used by Italian food companies?
2. How many postings about sustainability are published by Italian food companies?
3. What social and environmental issues do companies address the most?
4. What type of tone of voice do they use in their contents?
5. What type of message framing do they use in their contents?
6. How many reactions, in terms of comments and likes, do companies get when they post sustainable content on both Instagram and LinkedIn?

The results of the content analysis are presented in the next section.

4.6 Findings

The section addresses the study general question: *“How do Italian food companies use social media to communicate sustainability commitment?”*.

a) Context overview: companies' sustainability commitment

Among the companies selected, many of them have been committed to promoting sustainable goals for a longer period of time and others have started recently.

Barilla, is one of the largest groups that, in order to promote the objectives of the 2030 Agenda, invests in the “made in Italy” supply chain of wheat and other quality ingredients, promotes equal opportunities, and hires refugees and integrates them in several countries where it operates. Illycaffè, which recently has become a

B Corp, relies on a system of direct relationships with its suppliers of arabica, to whom it gives prices above the average market price in exchange for a commitment to raise quality standards. The Lavazza company, on the other hand, has its own foundation for the achievement of 2030 Agenda goals. It has also launched the “Roadmap to Zero”, a project to complete the neutralization of its carbon footprint by 2030 with an investment.

Fileni, on the other hand, invests in recycable packaging, the reduction transport costs and the goal of achieving 100% energy from renewable sources.

Furthermore, its meat is raised without the use of antibiotics and the feed used in the farms is all non-GMO. Granarolo has a multi-year strategic plan based on the 12th goal of the UN’s 2030 Agenda. The first concrete effect was the launch of a new fresh milk package that reduces plastic by 16% and uses 25% recycled PET. Finally, the Campari Group, the world of spirits, is also committed to sustainability, and it has reduced energy consumption and emissions. Segafredo Storia offers transparency and traceability thanks to blockchain technology, able to reveal to the consumer the story behind each cup. It has a system with the intrinsic ability to certify the origin of the data: a registry that guarantees an immutable sharing of all the transactions that take place on the supply chain, allowing the final consumer to have total visibility of the history of the product. San Benedetto follows the principle of the 4R’s: rationalization, reduction,

recycling, and responsibility. This policy aimed at protecting the environment has led them to reduce greenhouse gas emission on Ecogreen Line products.

Cameo, with the implementation of the “Charter of Sustainability”, promote a conscious lifestyle for consumers, ensure fair and sustainable working conditions throughout the entire production chain and, at the same time, minimize our environmental footprint.

b) Frequency of posting sustainable content

In terms of frequency analysis, as it is possible to see from Table I., the social presence of companies is linked to the number of postings shared, and the result is that a total of 249 social and environmental post were made by these ten companies from July to December in 2021.

Despite their focus on communicating sustainability only on LinkedIn and their little attention to posting on Instagram, Barilla emerged as the company who posted the highest number of social and environmental posts. Instagram Barilla’s profile is mainly used to promote products and other values.

Then, also Granarolo Group is a winner because it is present in both platforms, and it is focused especially on employees and describing their business. On the other hand, Segafredo and Cameo give less attention to sustainable communication via social media, especially Instagram.

Out of the two social media platforms analyzed in this paper, LinkedIn resulted as the most preferred social medium for communication about sustainability

compared to Instagram. This is probably due to the fact that LinkedIn was born for companies and for corporate communications. LinkedIn presents an average of three postings per month, while Instagram presents an average of one posting per month over six months. However, it is not an excellent result since we are analyzing big and sustainable companies.

Table 2. Number of social and environmental posts made by the 10 companies.

Company	Rank	Instagram	LinkedIn	<i>Total posts</i>
Fileni	5	12	13	25
Campari	7	10	13	22
Granarolo	2	24	17	41
Barilla	1	1	46	47
IllyCaffè	6	10	14	24
Lavazza	3	12	17	29
Segafredo	10	1	0	1
Ferrero	8	7	14	21
San Benedetto	4	9	19	28
Cameo	9	0	11	11
<i>Total posts</i>		86	163	249

c) Data categorization

The second stage, the most in-depth phase of the study, indicate in Table II the number of social and environmental posting made by the organization on both Instagram and Facebook. The total of the posts shared are 249. In terms of content types, of the total posts 41per cent related to social issues, 23 per cent related to environmental issues and 36 per cent related to social and environmental issues.

Table 3. Social and Environmental posts on social media in the year 2021.

DIMENSIONS	TOPICS	Instagram No.	LinkedIn No.
<i>Social Issues</i>			
	Community	6	13
	Diversity(LGBT, aboriginal engagement and multiculturalism)	1	10
	Employees	5	15
	Gender equality	5	4
	Health and safety	3	4
	Supply chains		1
	Corruption		
	Community partnerships	8	7
	Human rights	3	1
	Ethics	2	

Customers	2	1
Technology	1	
Sustainable finance		
General	6	5
<i>Total Social Issues</i>	42	61
<i>Environmental Issues</i>		
Conservation		3
partnerships		
Climate change	4	1
Clean energy	2	11
Sustainable finance		1
Waste	2	9
Water	2	
Awards	1	1
Technology	3	3
Supply chains	5	9
Ethic		
Incident reporting		
General	1	
<i>Total Environmental Issues</i>	20	38
<i>Social and</i>		

Environmental Issues

Sustainable Finance		2
Reporting	11	15
Awards	3	11
Partnerships	6	15
Ethics	3	7
Customers		1
Society	1	2
General	3	8
<i>Total SE Issues</i>	<i>27</i>	<i>61</i>
<i>Overall disclosures</i>	89	160

More specifically, regarding the use of Instagram, companies posted 89 contents about sustainability. Of the total posts 47 per cent refers to social issues, 12 per cent refers to environmental issues and 30 per cent refers to social and environmental issues. The analysis of contents on the platforms indicated the following categories as the most discussed topics: reporting, partnerships, supply chains, community partnerships and community. In figure 14, it is possible to see three different types of common postings.



Fig. 14 Contents posted on Instagram: community partnership, community, and supply chain.

Source: Gruppo Granarolo, Fileni_Official, Sanbenedetto_official.

Regarding the use of LinkedIn, it is possible to observe that 38 per cent refers to social issues, 23 per cent refers to environmental issues and 38 per cent refers to social and environmental issues. The study of the contents of social postings in the platform indicated the following categories as the most discussed topics: community, employees, clean energy, waste, partnerships and reporting and it is

possible to see an example in Figure 15.

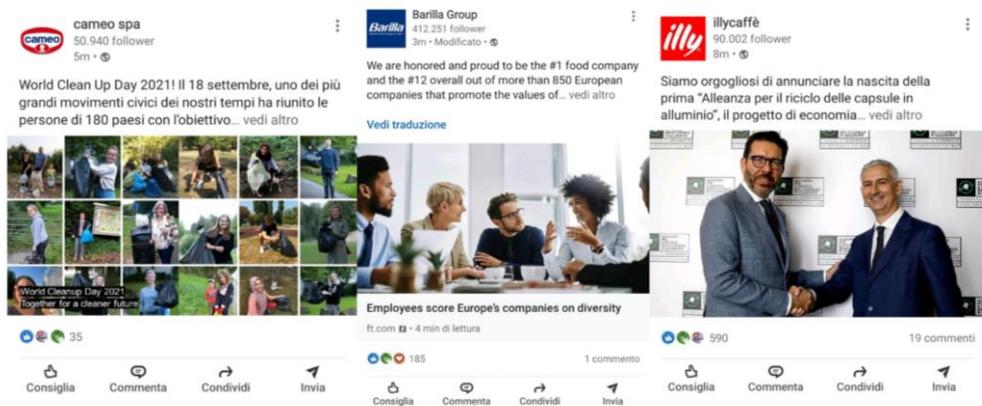


Fig. 15.Contents posted on LinkedIn: waste, awards, partnership.

Source: Cameo spa, Barilla Group, Illycaffè.

Therefore, as it can be seen from the Table II, Italian food companies primarily report social issues. There are very frequent topics regarding contribution to local communities and to young generations as well as the importance of people in an organization. Issues such as clean energy and waste are mostly present on LinkedIn as we can see from the Figure 15.

d) Tone of voice analysis

Another important part is the analysis of companies' tone of voice (Table III), which confirmed the expectation. Nearly all the companies use a conversation human voice, and this is probably because using direct person pronouns such as second-person first-person allows to create a friendly and inviting tone. This is important since the tone of voice influence how people perceive you as a

company. However, companies such as Lavazza and Campari decide to use an organizational voice, addressing few times or almost never in a direct way. Indeed, as it is possible to see in Figure 16. Fileni invites users to discover more about an article, a program, or achievements in a direct way, while Lavazza group tone of voice appear more formal and distant from the recipient.

Table 4. Tone of voice used on social media by the ten companies.

TONE OF VOICE	Conversational human voice	Organizational voice
LinkedIn	8	2
Instagram	8	2

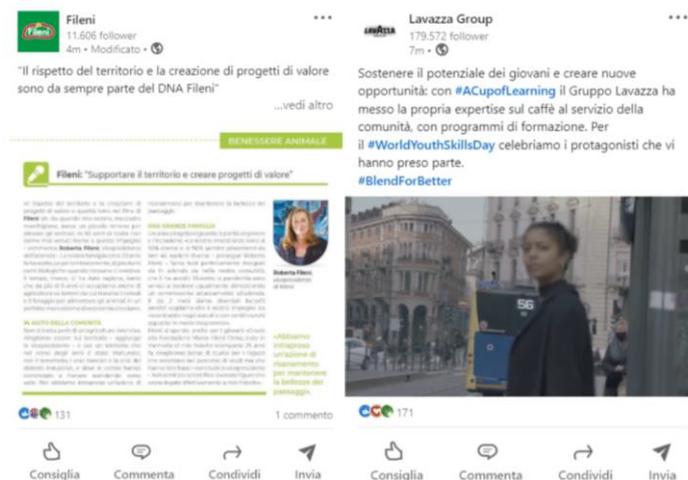


Fig. 16. Tone of voice examples. Source: Fileni, Lavazza Group.

e) Message framing analysis

In addition, the message framing of the content was analyzed in Table IV, and it was found to be totally gain-framed messages. This is because companies nowadays prefer to emphasize achieved goals and continuous improvements rather than focusing on negative aspects and it is illustrated in Figure 17.

Table 5. Table IV. Message framing used on social media by the ten companies.

MESSAGE FRAMING	Good-framed messages	Loss-framed messages
LinkedIn	10	0
Instagram	10	0



Fig. 17. Good – framed messages example. Source: Barilla.

Finally, the last analysis is summarized in Table V, which includes the reactions that companies' profiles received (*engagement*). These interactions represent the engagement of company in the social environment and how many users they can attract.

Table 6. Total number of interactions on Instagram and LinkedIn.

Company	Likes	Comments	Total Reactions
Ferrero LinkedIn	11238	214	11452
Ferrero Instagram	8382	69	8451
Barilla LinkedIn	10045	118	10163
Barilla Instagram	0	0	0
Lavazza LinkedIn	4229	58	4287
Lavazza Instagram	1998	58	2056
Granarolo LinkedIn	1668	21	1689
Granarolo Instagram	1814	17	1831
Filetti LinkedIn	1753	37	1790
Filetti Instagram	18198	92	18290
Campari LinkedIn	2292	12	2304
Campari Instagram	312	4	316
Segafredo LinkedIn	0	0	0
Segafredo Instagram	1618	10	1628

Instagram			
IllyCaffè LinkedIn	3002	73	3075
Illycaffè Instagram	3213	51	3264
San Benedetto	1110	30	1140
LinkedIn			
San Benedetto	370	8	378
Instagram			
Cameo LinkedIn	549	9	558
Cameo Instagram	0	0	0
Ferrero LinkedIn	11238	214	11452
LinkedIn posts			36458
Instagram posts			36214

In terms of engagement, LinkedIn posting attracted approximately 36458 reactions from users, not much difference with the reactions on Instagram that are equivalent to 36214.

Despite the fact that the frequency of sustainable contents posted on LinkedIn are three time as much of those shared on Instagram, the latter has obtained good results in terms of engagement in comparison LinkedIn has received only 0.67 per cent more than Instagram by posting three times per month versus one time per month. Furthermore, the Table V show surprisingly companies such as Barilla, Cameo or Segafredo that do not share sustainable content on their companies'

profile on Instagram, but they focus more on product promotion based on other values such as “Made in Italy”.

4.7 Discussion

This study delved into the use of social media for sustainability purposes. It points out current use and the potential of social media for communication sustainability topics.

In terms of social postings, the analysis shows a limited use of social media platforms by food companies. Commonly, companies use LinkedIn as an effective way to engage with commercial stakeholders, but they only give little attention to non-commercial stakeholders. This is probably due to LinkedIn being created *ad hoc* for interacting with professionals, and companies have recognized this new wave of communication as an opportunity to improve their business engagement.

On the other hand, the results revealed that companies tend not to use frequently Instagram as a platform for sharing sustainable-oriented contents.

This strongly suggest that companies still consider Instagram an informal platform where there are no commercial targets to reach. However, data demonstrate that even though Instagram companies’ profiles are less active regarding sustainable contents, Instagram users react positively to invitations to interact online about sustainability topics.

Therefore, it is relevant that a social media channel such as Instagram should not only be used for products or service promotion, but also to communicate, inform and educate users about sustainability and other related topics.

Sustainability communication via social media puts sustainability issues on the agenda of people's mind set and supports them in understanding complex topics.

Therefore, in light of this, companies should broaden their horizons and address sustainable postings to different actors in general, by defining a strategy that includes the simplification of the language, making it more accessible to all kind of users. Companies should integrate sustainability communication via social media since the main players of sustainable development are all the ones who can contribute to the cultural change that changes production, life and consumption style. On this basis, many studies have stressed that sustainability has influence on behavioral changes.

In terms of data categorization, the results point out that companies communicate mainly social issue such as community projects, partnerships or awards. This outcome suggests that companies should address environmental issues in their postings.

Furthermore, this study underline both the importance of the role of the sustainable communication department and the integration of this kind of

communication into companies' decision-making. In this case, planning is the key word; the communication plan is "*a compass to orient other and ourselves*"²⁰.

Additionally, since data about sustainability dimension do not belong only to the marketing department, but to several sectors, it is important that all these sectors, from production to purchasing and marketing, communicate with each other so to disseminate sustainable information. This would guarantee a great vision of their progress both to the company and to the recipients.

Nonetheless, the research reports a great limit on behalf of the companies that is the tendency of not sharing information about sustainable finance as well as incident reporting or corruption.

Lastly, the current analysis has some limitations.

First, the impossibility to access companies' insights, such as the number of accounts reached by each post. The possibility to compare the performance of a company's profile based on the views and differentiating "normal" post from the "sustainable" ones would allow us to understand the interest of commercial and non-commercial stakeholders.

Second, the analysis considers only two social media platform, Instagram and LinkedIn. Finally, the sample is limited only to large companies of the food sector. Consequently, in the future, the analysis could be further extended to other

²⁰ Sobrero R (2018). *Sostenibilità Competitività Comunicazione: 20 idee per il futuro*.

social media and companies of different sizes to observe their attitude towards the use of social media for sustainable communication.

Conclusion

Sustainability is no longer just a trend but a real need. The use of communication “*to look green*” is over, due to the rise of a new sustainable consumer and the presence of higher-standard goals set by European Framework. Consequently, firms are asked to integrate sustainability into their strategy by addressing all the three dimensions of social, environmental and economic sustainability.

To properly communicate sustainability properly there are principles to be respected such as clarity, accuracy, correctness, truthfulness, reliability and comparability. In the present day, social media has revealed as a new wave of communication, that has transformed communication and has become as an integral part of everyday life. Indeed, most organization have embraced social media as a new medium of communication to share their sustainability improvement and achievements.

In this paperwork, the agri-food sector has proven to be one of the first to embrace sustainability, but there is a lack of studies about the use of social media to communicate this kind of content. Food industry has keep growing at fast rate in the Italian economy and it is at the heart of an interconnected global environmental, economic and social issues, and the sector addresses various sustainability challenges such as climate change, population growth, biodiversity loss. For this reason, this study focuses on the analysis of corporate

communication about sustainability in social media on behalf of Italian food companies.

A content analysis was performed to shed light on the way how ten most important Italian food companies communicate sustainability topics.

The results suggest the relevance of social media not only for business purposes but as an informing and engaging channel that can have positive impacts of consumption and cultural change. The most used platforms are Instagram and LinkedIn, the latter being the most used for social and environmental issues, probably due to it being the platform par excellence that has been create for companies. From the data gathered, it emerges that Instagram reacts well to sustainable content posting, showing a high engagement by users. Therefore, the research invites to reflect upon the potential of these platforms by trying to disseminate sustainable-oriented content to a wider and diverse audience.

Limitations have emerged such as the fact that there are still companies that do not communicate sustainable content, especially on Instagram, which is probably seen as a less formal and more direct channel characterized by a wide and diverse audience.

References

American Marketing Association <https://www.ama.org/the-definition-of-marketing-what-is-marketing/>

Bang, H. K., Ellinger, A. E., Hadjimarcou, J., & Traichal, P. A. (2000). Consumer concern, knowledge, belief, and attitude toward renewable energy: An application of the reasoned action theory, «Psychology & Marketing», vol. 17, 6, pp. 449-468

Blake, J. (1999). Overcoming the ‘value-action gap’ in environmental policy: Tensions between national policy and local experience, «Local environment», vol. 4, 3, pp. 257-27

Belz, Frank-Martin & Peattie, Ken. (2009). Sustainability Marketing: A Global Perspective.

Bernoff, J., & Li, C. (2008). Groundswell: Winning in a world transformed by social technologies. Boston: Harvard Business School Publishing.

Brodie, R. J., Hollebeek, L. D., Juric, B., & Ilic, a. (2011). Customer Engagement: Conceptual Domain, Fundamental Propositions, and Implications for Research. Journal of Service Research, 14, 252–271. doi:10.1177/1094670511411703.

Brown, Becky J., Mark E. Hanson, Diana M. Liverman, and Robert W. Merideth, Jr. 1987. "Global Sustainability: Toward Definition." *Environmental Management* 11 (6): 713-719.

Brundtland, G. (1987). Our Common Future—Call for Action. *Environmental Conservation*, 14(4), 291-294. doi:10.1017/S0376892900016805.

Carrington, M. J., Neville, B. A., & Whitwell, G. J. (2010). Why Ethical Consumers Don't Walk Their Talk: Towards a Framework for Understanding the Gap Between the Ethical Purchase Intentions and Actual Buying Behaviour of Ethically Minded Consumers, «*Journal of Business Ethics*», vol. 97, 1, pp. 139-158.

Carroll, Archie. (2016). Carroll's pyramid of CSR: taking another look. *International Journal of Corporate Social Responsibility*. 1. 10.1186/s40991-016-0004-6.

Contreras-Pacheco O, Claasen C (2017) Fuzzy reporting as a way for a company to greenwash: perspectives from the Colombian reality. *Probl Perspect Manag* 15(2):525–535. [https://doi.org/10.21511/ppm.15\(si\).2017.06](https://doi.org/10.21511/ppm.15(si).2017.06)

De Freitas Netto, S.V., Sobral, M.F.F., Ribeiro, A.R.B. et al. Concepts and forms of greenwashing: a systematic review. *Environ Sci Eur* 32, 19 (2020).
<https://doi.org/10.1186/s12302-020-0300-3>

Constantinides, E. and Fountain, S. (2008) ‘Web 2.0: conceptual foundations and marketing issues’, *Journal of Direct, Data and Digital Marketing Practice*, Vol. 9, No. 3, pp.231–244.

Datareportal website, Digital 2021: Global digital report 2021 overview,
<https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2021-global-overview-report>

Davies, J., Foxall, G.R., & Pallister, J. (2002). Beyond the intention-behavior mythology: An integrated model of recycling, «*Marketing Theory*», vol. 2, 1, pp. 29–113

Delmas M, Burbano V (2011) The drivers of greenwashing. *Calif Manag Rev* 54(1):64–87. <https://doi.org/10.1525/cmr.2011.54.1.64>

Diane M. Martin and John W. Schouten: The answer is sustainable marketing, when the question is: What can we do? (2014)

Donella H. Meadows [and others]. The Limits to Growth; a Report for the Club of Rome's Project on the Predicament of Mankind. New York :Universe Books, 1972.

Ehrenfeld J. E. (2008). Sustainability needs to be attained, not managed, Sustainability: Science, Practice and Policy, 4:2, 1-3, DOI: 10.1080/15487733.2008.11908016

Elkington, J. (1999). Cannibals with forks: the triple bottom line of 21st century business.

ESG Official Page <https://www.esg360.it/>

EU's Farm to Fork strategy impacts climate, productivity, and trade. | <https://www.cleanenergywire.org/factsheets/eus-farm-fork-strategy-impacts-climate-productivity-and-trade>.

EY Future Consumer Index (2020): EY Future Consumer Index Italia. <https://go.ey.com/3sxeb0F>

Ajzen, I. (1991). The theory of planned behavior, «Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes», vol. 50, 2, pp. 179-211

Fasan M., Bianchi S., (2017). L'azienda sostenibile: trend, strumenti e case study.

Federalimtare (2021), FEDERALIMENTARE o Italy's Food & Beverage: the challenges of the future - Italianfood.net

Federal Trade Commission (2012) Guides for the use of environmental marketing claims. [Guides for the Use of Environmental Marketing Claims \(federalregister.gov\)](https://www.federalregister.gov)

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), (2010): Dietary guidelines and sustainability Dietary guidelines and sustainability | Food-based dietary guidelines | Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (fao.org)

Fraia Di G. (2019): Socialmediability delle aziende italiane – The visual era. Osservatorio Social Media Marketing, IULM Milano.

<http://www.osservatoriosocialmedia.com/ricerca-social-media/index.html>

Fino M., Garzia C, (2021) Food Industry Monitor: La sfida della crescita sostenibile per l'industria food Report | Food Industry Monitor.

Fishbein, M., & Ajzen, I. (1975). Belief, attitude, intention, and behavior: an introduction to theory and research. Addison-Wesley Pub. Co

Fuzzy reporting as a way for a company to greenwash
<https://www.researchgate.net/publication/320179184>

Guagnano, G. A., Stern, P. C., & Dietz, T. (1995). Influences on Attitude-Behavior Relationships: A Natural Experiment with Curbside Recycling, «Environment and Behavior», vol. 27, 5, pp. 699-718.

Grant, J., 2007. The Green Marketing Manifesto. West Sussex: John Wiley&Sons.

Grazzani, L. (2016): L'evoluzione del consumatore sostenibile, Nuovi scenari e approcci di marketing per la sostenibilità, Aracne editrice

Haller K., Lee J., and Cheung J. (2020): Meet the 2020 consumers driving change IBM Institute for Business Value.

Jiang, Z., & Benbasat, I. (2007). Research note—investigating the influence of the functional mechanisms of online product presentations. *Information Systems Research*, 18(4), 454- 470.

Kaplan AM, Haenlein M (2010) Users of the world, unite! The challenges and opportunities of social media. *Bus Horiz* 53(1):59–68

Kennedy, E. H., Beckley, T. M., Mcfarlane, B. L., & Nadeau, S. (2009). Why we don't" walk the talk": Understanding the environmental values/behaviour gap in Cana da, «Human ecology review», vol. 16, 2, pp. 151-160.

Kidd, Charles V. (1992). The evolution of sustainability. *Journal of Agricultural and Environmental Ethics*_ 5 (1):1-26.

Kollmuss, Anja & Agyeman, Julian. (2002). Mind the Gap: Why Do People Act Environmentally and What Are the Barriers to Pro-Environmental Behavior? *Environmental Education Research*. 8. 239-260. 10.1080/13504620220145401.

Krippendorff, K. (2004). *Content Analysis: An Introduction to Its Methodology* (2nd ed.) Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Leong, B. & Gligorijevic, B., 2011. Trust, Reputation and Small Firm: Building online brand reputation for small firms. Research. Canberra: Association for the advancement of artificial intelligence Smart.

Levitt, T. (1958) The Dangers of Social Responsibility. Harvard Business Review.

Lippert, Ingmar. (2011). Greenwashing. 10.4135/9781412975711.n67.

Lodhia, Sumit & Kaur, Amanpreet & Stone, Gerard. (2020). The use of social media as a legitimization tool for sustainability reporting: A study of the top 50 Australian Stock Exchange (ASX) listed companies. Meditari Accountancy Research. ahead-of-print. 10.1108/MEDAR-09-2019-0566.

McKenna, K.Y.A. and Bargh, J.A. (2000) 'Plan 9 from cyberspace: the implications of the internet for personality and social psychology', *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, Vol. 4, No. 1, pp.57–75.

Men, Linjuan & Ji, Y. Grace & Chen, Zifei Fay. (2019). Social media communication strategies for startups. 10.4324/9780429274268-8.**

Sundar, S. S., Kalyanaraman, S., & Brown, J. (2003). Explicating web site interactivity: Impression formation effects in political campaign sites. *Communication Research*, 30(1), 30-59.

Leader della sostenibilità_Metodologia - statcdn.com)

Nielsen. (2009). Global faces and networked places: A Nielsen report on social networking's new global footprint. The Nielsen Company. <http://blog.nielsen.com/nielsenwire/> Accessed on 10.03.11.

Nordlung, A. M., & Garvill, J. (2002). Value Structures behind Pro-environmental Behavior, «Environment and Behavior», vol. 34, 6, pp. 740-756.

Orlando E. Contreras-Pacheco and Cyrlene Claasen (2017). Fuzzy reporting as a way for a company to greenwash : perspectives from the Colombian reality. *Problems and Perspectives in Management* (open-access), 15(2-3), 525-535.

P. Aggarwal and A. Kadyan, Greenwashing: The darker side of CSR (2014) (PDF) Greenwashing: The Darker Side Of CSr (researchgate.net)

Persico, M. G., Rossi, F. (2016) “Comunicare la sostenibilità. Comunicare il nuovo paradigma per un nuovo vantaggio competitivo” 1° ed. Milano: FrancoAngeli.

Peters, K., Chen, Y., Kaplan, A. M., Ognibeni, B., & Pauwels, K. (2013). Social media metrics—A framework and guidelines for managing social media. *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, 27(4), 281–298.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.intmar.2013.09.007>

Pieter Rutsaert, Áine Regan, Zuzanna Pieniak, Áine McConnon, Adrian Moss, Patrick Wall, Wim Verbeke, The use of social media in food risk and benefit communication, *Trends in Food Science & Technology*, Volume 30, Issue 1, 2013, Pages 84-91.

Pieter Rutsaert, Áine Regan, Zuzanna Pieniak, Áine McConnon, Adrian Moss, Martinek, P. A., (2021): Mapping methods of research on consumer engagement with brands on social media: A literature review. Volume 14, Issue 1.

Siano, A. (2012) “La comunicazione per la sostenibilità nel management delle imprese. Sinergie” *Italian Journal of Management*, 3-23.

Peattie K. (2001) Towards Sustainability: The third age of green marketing
https://www.researchgate.net/publication/233619700_Towards_Sustainability_The_Third_Age_of_Green_Marketing (Access 20.11.2021)

Perrini F., (2018), Sostenibilità, Egea Editore, Milano.

Persico M. G., Rossi F. (2016): Comunicare la sostenibilità. Comunicare il nuovo paradigma per un nuovo vantaggio competitivo”, FrancoAngeli

Portney, ProQuest, & Ebooks Corporation. (2015). Sustainability. The MIT Press.

Purvis, B., Mao, Y. & Robinson, D. Three pillars of sustainability: in search of conceptual origins. *Sustain Sci* 14, 681–695 (2019).

<https://doi.org/10.1007/s11625-018-0627-5>

R. Venkatasamy (PhD) Enviro Solutions Ltd Mauritius: The Triple Bottom Line attempting to regulate corporate performance and ensure sustainable development

Rafaeli, S. (1988). From new media to communication. *Sage Annual Review of Communication Research: Advancing Communication Science*, 16, 110-134.

Coyle, J. R., & Thorson, E. (2001). The effects of progressive levels of interactivity and vividness in web marketing sites. *Journal of Advertising*, 30(3), 65-77.

Robert H. Colson, PhD, CPA – The CPA Journal

<https://www.proquest.com/openview/2e2c4c3b7b3f22259eb68de2448f828b/1?pq-origsite=gscholar&cbl=41798>

Salvioli L., Cattaneo L., Barbara F., Zitti Pozzi R., Collaborazione Il Sole 24ORE e Statista, Leader della sostenibilità 2021, Aziende e sostenibilità ambientale in Italia nel 2021 | Il Sole 24 ORE

Scanlan S. (2017) Framing fracking: scale-shifting and greenwashing risk in the oil and gas industry. *Local Environ* 22(11):1311–1337. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13549839.2017.1345877>

Sobrero R (2018). *Sostenibilità Competitività Comunicazione: 20 idee per il futuro*.

Statista Research Department (2022)

<https://www.statista.com/topics/737/twitter/#dossierKeyfigures>.

Stemler, Steven. (2001). An Overview of Content Analysis. Practical Assessment, Research, and Evaluation.

Sheppard, B. H., Hartwick, J., & Warshaw, P. R. (1988). The theory of reasoned action: A meta-analysis of past research with recommendations for modifications and future research, «Journal of Consumer Research», vol. 15, 3, pp. 325-343.

Schwartz, S. H. (1977). Normative influences on altruism, «Advances in experimental social psychology», vol. 10, pp. 115 221-279.

Steg, L., & Vleck, C. (2009). Encouraging pro-environmental behaviour: An integrative review and research agenda, « Journal of Environmental Psychology», vol. 29, 3, pp. 309- 317

Stern, P. C. (2000) New Environmental Theories: Toward a Coherent Theory of Environmentally Significant Behavior, «Journal of Social Issues», vol. 56, 3, pp. 407-424.

Stern, P. C. (1999). Information, incentives, and proenvironmental consumer behavior, «Journal of Consumer Policy», vol. 22, 4, pp. 461-478.

Special Eurobarometer 501 “Attitudes of Europeans towards the Environment”

<https://europa.eu/eurobarometer/surveys/detail/2257>

TerraChoice (2010) The sins of greenwashing: home and family edition.

<http://sinsofgreenwashing.org/fndings/the-seven-sins/>

Thøgersen, J. (1999): Spillover processes in the development of a sustainable consumption pattern, *Journal of Economic Psychology*, Volume 20, Issue 1, pp. 53-81, ISSN 0167-4870, [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0167-4870\(98\)00043-9](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0167-4870(98)00043-9).

Vermeier, I., & Verbeke, W. (2006). Sustainable Food Consumption: Exploring the Consumer “Attitude – Behavioral Intention” Gap, «*Journal of Agricultural and Environmental Ethics*», vol. 19, 2, pp. 169-194.

Vollenbroek, W., de Vries, S., Constantinides, E. and Kommers, P. (2014) ‘Identification of influence in social media communities’, *Int. J. Web Based Communities*, Vol. 10, No. 3, pp.280–297.

Waters, R.D., Burnett, E., Lamm, A. and Lucas, J. (2009) ‘Engaging stakeholders through social networking: how nonprofit organizations are using Facebook’, *Public Relations Review*, Vol. 35, No. 2, pp.102–106.

Winer, R. S. (2009). New communications approaches in marketing: issues and research directions. *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, 23, 108e117.

Wysokińska, Zofia. (2017). Millenium Development Goals/UN And Sustainable Development Goals/UN As Instruments For Realising Sustainable Development Concept In The Global Economy. *Comparative Economic Research*. 20. 10.1515/cer-2017-0006.