

Article

The Role of Communication Tools in the Knowledge and Diffusion of Sustainable Development Goals: Insights from Multiple Correspondence Analysis

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Abstract: The Sustainable Development Goals are the core of public debate due to their crucial aims of combating poverty, inequality, and climate change. Communication, strategies, and tools play a crucial role in spreading awareness about the 17 goals, but communication campaigns remain ineffective and unattractive. This study aims to analyze the importance and the role that Italians attribute to communication tools for disseminating information about sustainability and the SDGs. In particular, this work seeks to examine whether there is a connection between age and the importance given to sustainability, and how communication tools influence citizens' perceptions of the significance of sustainability. An online questionnaire was carried out to collect responses, which were then subjected to Multiple Correspondence Analysis. The results show how the importance given to sustainability is linked to age and identify the communication tools through which citizens have learned about sustainability and the SDGs. Furthermore, respondents confirm that communication campaigns are still ineffective, and that there is still little engagement from stakeholders in their creation. The study produces implications for stakeholders to create adequate communication campaigns that help raise awareness and encourage citizens to pay more attention to the world around them.



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Keywords: SDGs; communication tools; multiple correspondence analysis (MCA); survey; Italy

1. Introduction

In a world characterized by poverty, marginalization of poorest rural areas, inequality, and environmental neglect, the attainment of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) plays a crucial role. In 2015, 193 countries, members of the United Nations, endorsed the 17 SDGs to combat these disparities [1], which hinder equality among citizens and between rural areas and urban ones. In particular, Goal 2 aims to end hunger, achieve food security, improve nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture that in turn can reduce climate change. SDGs call for considering how people can minimize environmental impacts by dropping waste and making wisely well-versed, sustainable choices [2]. Specifically, Agenda 2030 revolves around the “5 Ps”: People, aiming to eradicate hunger and restore dignity and equality; Prosperity, ensuring all citizens have fulfilling and harmonious lives; Peace; Partnership, fostering collaborations between diverse countries and citizens; and finally, Planet, necessitating the safeguarding of resources to preserve their usability for future generations [3]. Respect natural resources such as water, land, and biodiversity, while simultaneously ensuring nourishment for human beings despite the impact of climate change and the increase in population on earth are the objectives of sustainable agriculture, where the word sustainability does not refer only to the environment, but also to the social sphere. Therefore, ensuring people's health, the quality of life of those involved in production, the human rights of those who work in the sector, and social equity [4]. For these issues, SDGs play a central role in public debate [5,6] and the actions undertaken by

various countries are often closely linked to the objectives and targets of Agenda 2030. Research highlights that governments should adopt more policies that prioritize sustainability, encompassing not only environmental concerns, but also economic and social aspects: a crucial role is played by digital innovation, information, and communication technologies adopted in a strategic and aware way [7,8]. This endeavor would enable a comprehensive understanding on what the SDGs aspire to accomplish for the planet, thereby empowering active participation in the realization of the goals outlined in the Agenda 2030. Specifically, businesses can achieve the 17 SDGs by orienting themselves towards environmental, economic, and social priorities, adopting strategies towards sustainable and inclusive production and consumption models and establishing partnerships for the creation of innovation [9]. According to Goal 16, governments have the task of becoming efficient, responsible and inclusive over all labels and, according to Goal 17, as a consequence, they have to build a better world based on support, empathy, inventiveness, passion and above all cooperation. In Italy, numerous initiatives have led to notable advancements in gender equality (Goal 5), education (Goal 4), renewable energy (Goal 7), decent work (Goal 8), innovation and infrastructure (Goal 9), and combating climate change (Goal 13). Health (Goal 3) and the circular economy (Goal 12) have demonstrated significant progress in Italy [10]. However, considerable efforts are still needed to achieve acceptable results for the remaining objectives. In order to foster the attainment of the objectives, Italy, alongside all nations globally, should invest towards disseminating knowledge regarding the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to businesses, institutions, and citizens alike. In addition, the idea of sustainability in the marketing communication strategies and research has been gained bulge standing point over times: a life-threatening success aspect for research, policies and strategies becomes the capability to well communicate to selected target by providing clear and correct information on environmental respect [11]. Communication plays a crucial role in spreading the SDGs' knowledge, and it is not possible to achieve the goals without it [12]. Various communication tools, such as television, social media, the internet, etc., allow users to build relationships and share ideas [13], but they also allow all users to become aware of what is happening in the world. Specifically, social media platforms are the main means of communication for reaching younger population who will be the part of population should fight the future consequences of environmental, social, and economic issues [14]. Communication has to be without barriers, destined for all citizens, even those with disabilities, in order to allow inclusion, equality, peace and development [15]. This study aims to analyze the importance of communication and its utility in spreading knowledge about Sustainable Development Goals from the point of view of Italian citizens. Specifically, the attention is on the two following questions:

- RQ1: is there a connection between age and the importance given to sustainability?
- RQ2: do the communication tools have an impact on how people perceive the significance of sustainability?

The research questions at the core of this study examine two different aspects, one at the socio-demographic level and the other related to communication tools used for the spreading of sustainability, in order to determine how they affect this latter topic. Despite the numerous literature studies on the relationship between age and importance given to sustainability, there are few articles that analyze at the same time the socio-demographic aspects, their impact on the importance of sustainability, and the role of communication for the related dissemination. This paper attempts to define the relationship between age and the importance given to the concept of sustainability and to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including directly the communication tools. Taking these into consideration, the research determines which communication tools influence citizens' perception and awareness of sustainability, providing useful insight to academics as well as private and public stakeholders. The findings could encourage the academics to investigate other socio-demographic factors, not only focusing on age, and could enrich, at the same time, the stakeholders with information that allows them to increase advertising campaigns for

the promotion of Sustainable Development Goals, using thus the suitable communication tools to address all the citizens.

This paper describes the research conducted to answer these research questions in specific sections; the first investigates sustainability and its role in public debate, the role of communication tools for spreading knowledge of SDGs, and how they could be effective for affecting consumers' behavior towards the environmental, societal, and economical aspects. The second section describes the methodology used, including chi-square test and Multiple Correspondence Analysis (MCA). The discussion is presented in the third section, which contains the link between age and the importance of sustainability and the affection of communication tools on people's perceptions about the significance of sustainability. The implications, limitations, and future impacts for future research are presented in the last section.

2. Literature Review

2.1. *The Importance of the SDGs in the Decision Making Process of Stakeholders and in Public Debate*

Nowadays, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are one of the priorities of countries of the world and, for their reaching, it is important to involve different stakeholders who live in the countries, such as national governments, local governments, businesses, public institutions, universities and, above all, citizens [16]. For each specific challenge to face (like the reduction of poverty in the marginal rural areas, climate change, gender equality, social inclusion, etc.), in the decision making process, every stakeholder should try to adopt some strategies that allow them to obtain certain results which approach more and more to the construction of a sustainable world. The national governments play a crucial role not only in the decision making process, but also in the different phases such as implementation, monitoring, and involvement of the stakeholders mentioned above [17,18]. For this aim, the utilization of indicators becomes essential for tracking SDGs trends inside a country and comparing them with data from other nations [19]. In this specific context, two definitions are important to understand the difference between the government and the role that it performs. Government means a group of people who organize and manage a country, while their functions are part of governance definition. According to Meadwcroft [20], it means governance for the sustainability when policy-making and its relative implementation includes complex interactions between country and society with the aims to reach a sustainable future. Despite national governments playing a crucial role, local governments create close collaboration among country and society, because they know needs of the community and, as a consequence, they face challenges for the promotion of sustainable development [21]. Their nearness to citizens allow knowing the needs and challenges as compared to the national governments, and they have the possibility of establishing solid relationships, even with companies, for a full achievement of common objectives. The creation of collaborations among various stakeholders is important for the construction of local, national, and international communities oriented towards the adoption of strategies and decisions that allow the achievement of 17 SDGs. Taking Italy as an example, in recent years, it has recorded both improvements and worsening from the point of view of reaching the SDGs. According to Rapporto SDGs 2022 [22], comparing the last years (2020–2021) with the previous year and with data from 10 years earlier, Italy has recorded predominantly positive trends, but also contextually stationary trends and worsening. A positive change has recorded for Goals 17 (Partnership for the Goals), 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production), 7 (Affordable and Clean Energy), 5 (Gender Equality), 9 (Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure), and 2 (Zero Hunger), while it has recorded negative trends for Goals 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities), 13 (Climate Action), 4 (Quality Education), and 1 (No Poverty). The Rapporto SDGs 2022 [22] also analyzes the growth of sustainable development in Italian regions, showing once again the difference between the north and south islands of Italy. Despite improvements, Italy ranks in twenty-sixth place of the thirty-four OCSE countries.

2.2. Citizens' Awareness of SDGs and the Importance of Communication Tools for the Spreading of Knowledge About SDGs

To record improvements in the next years, the stakeholders involved in the reaching process of SDGs have to be informed and, above all, aware of SDGs, sustainability and various themes treated by each goal of 17. Indeed, in Italy, the level of knowledge and awareness about the term “Sustainability” and also the “Sustainable Development Goals” is still lower. As Global Survey on Sustainability and the SDGs, a small proportion of population knows about SDGs, recording an average percentage about the level of awareness about SDGs less than 50%. The citizens' lack of knowledge about the 17 goals of Agenda 2030 could depend on socio-demographic factors. As some studies confirm [23], the young population with a good level education is more careful and aware of the themes of sustainability and, as a consequence, support them. Secondly, the lack of knowledge is linked also to a lack spreading of information. Citizens are less informed, they do not know about the current challenges that the world is called to face, they do not know in relation to the impact of their actions produce that do not allow us to reach the 17 SDGs and, as a result, to create a sustainable waste world [24]. Spreading knowledge could allow us to change citizens' priorities and values and to adopt actions that should have a positive impact [12]. As some studies confirm [25], the dissemination of information should be associated with advertising and its effects. Indeed, citizens learn and are more influenced by advertising; for example, in the purchase of certain products, they could be oriented to buy products which respect the environment and workers' rights. This is already a different vision mood with a positive impact on the environment. It should be useful to adopt targeted strategies towards the spreading of knowledge of 17 SDGs and the creation of citizens' awareness about the impact of their actions produce for the achievement of a sustainable world. The dissemination could happen with the use of communication tools, both traditional and not. Through these tools, users could learn information from contents that are published and, as a consequence, they could develop new knowledge and create new debates. The acquired knowledge could allow users to adopt actions that could produce impacts considerably different respect to impacts that the same actions would have produced if they had not acquired that knowledge. Communication and dissemination of contents to citizens represent important aspects that have to be valorized for concrete achievement of the 17 goals [26]. The use of social media or traditional media have to encourage major learning, exchanges of information and, above all, have to be usable for all citizens, which means that communications have to reach every citizen, without the exclusion of gender, disability, etc. This could already be considered one of the first steps toward Goal 10, “Reduce Inequalities”. Among the communication tools, the most used are: television, social media, newspapers, events, radio, podcasts, etc. These tools allow us to spread advertising campaigns related to SDGs. As some studies demonstrate, the use of Facebook, Twitter/X and Instagram could increase the dissemination of information about sustainability and, as a consequence, the SDGs [27]. Despite this, “there is still too little sustainability content in social media” [28]. Often, sustainability-related content on social media is either poorly presented or unattractive, which leads to the inefficient use of these platforms. Indeed, the advantages and potential of social media are still not fully used in terms of teaching the younger population about sustainability.

Therefore, this work tries to understand if there is a relation between age, the importance given by citizens to sustainability, and the communication tools that allowed the knowledge of it. Insights from the reviewed literature produce the aforementioned analysis, which is closely related to the research questions. Investigating the relation between age and the importance given to concept of sustainability, taking into account the communication tools used for the spreading of knowledge of this topic, allows us to answer the questions. Indeed, the first is concerned with the connection between age and the importance given to sustainability, which is consistent with the first section of the analysis. On the other hand, the second investigates the impact of communication tools on the citizens' perceptions about sustainability and SDGs, satisfying the second part of the consideration.

2.3. Use of Communication Tools to Create an Effective Communication

The most used tools for spreading knowledge are advertising campaigns created by both public institutions and private organizations with the aim to spread information related to sustainability and to Goal of Agenda 2030. Indeed, these tools are adequate for the promotion of positive attitudes toward the natural and social environment. Considering two impactful advertising campaigns—ActNow by the United Nations, and The World's Largest Lesson by UNICEF and Project Everyone—both stand out for their effective use of communication tools and the results they achieved. These campaigns differ in aim: the first encourages the citizens to accomplish climate-friendly actions, aiming to transform every daily behavior into tangible contributions to the environment (SDG 13). Instead, the second one is addressed to the younger population, aiming to raise their awareness on the sustainability topic and inspire concrete actions and solutions (SDG 4). Both campaigns leveraged diverse communication tools tailored to their specific target audiences to spread awareness about the SDGs. Specifically, "The World's Largest Lesson", directed at children and students, used animated videos, interactive lessons, group activities, and school partnerships like communication tools in order to engage the younger population all over the world, while ActNow addressed a wide citizens target, and has used social media, interactive platforms, and apps, which have been accessed and downloaded by thousands of users. Through these tools, ActNow has increased awareness of the environmental impact of individual actions, also encouraging further engagement with sustainability through these tools.

Despite this, as some studies confirm [29], information in the advertising campaigns could not produce desired effects without associating concrete solutions of improvement. Citizens could not be able to translate acquired information from advertising campaigns in concrete solutions because they could not have the appropriate tools and could not involve information and knowledge in their life [30]. As some studies confirm, citizens' lack of knowledge is linked to advertising created by governments because the campaigns are inadequate, ineffective and, above all, not linked to citizens' needs [31]. To improve advertising campaigns, the European sustainable development network has written a dossier which underlines the importance of effective communication and gives different recommendations to local and national governments [32]. They should follow specific good practices that could allow the creation of adequate advertising campaigns and the creation of effective communication for promoting SDGs. First of all, they have to individuate a target group of people to which addressing advertising campaigns. Every citizen often has needs that are different from other citizens' needs, but it is possible to find common needs for producing homogeneous groups and, as a consequence, share the population. This partition could allow local and national governments to clarify citizens' needs and to elaborate effective advertising campaigns targeted to every single detected group. Additionally, advertising campaigns should transmit positive emotions, and they could be based on storytelling that encourages constructive actions to be adopted by users in their life [33]. On the contrary, creating stories that underline negative aspects could produce negative feeling in citizens, and they do not change their behavior. Furthermore, advertising campaigns should transmit messages that stimulate change by citizens and, above all, they should reproduce information related to daily actions. In this way, users will see that what was transmitted by advertising campaigns could be actually inserted into daily life, and also produce steps towards sustainability. Advertising campaigns do not only transmit information through traditional communication tools, but they should also use all of the tools used by citizens every day. Last but not least, creators have to be informed about sustainability, SDGs, and effective communication. This will allow us to create advertising campaigns targeted at citizens with clear and comprehensible messages. Apart from these good practices, a solution for changing citizens' behavior and for addressing them to sustainability and SDGs could be Social Marketing [34]. This is a discipline that allows to disseminate information and to concretely attend to consumers' behavior related to a specific topic and, in this case, related to Goals of Agenda 2030. As

has been defined by Kotler and Zaltman in 1971 [35], Social Marketing is “the design, implementation and control of programs calculated to influence the acceptance of social ideas and implies considerations of product planning, price, communication, distribution and marketing research”. Despite some researchers [30,36,37] supporting the idea that Social Marketing could help the achievement of SDGs and pro-environmental behavior, it is not exploited to its full potential. In effect, the use of Social Marketing does not obtained the expected impact, and its effectiveness is limited. Often, Social Marketing does not obtained the expected impact, and some studies failed due to not correctly individuating target behavior and, as a consequence, the target group to which the message is addressed is not correctly individuated in terms of barriers and benefits, and there is no distinction of internal and external barriers and benefits [38–40].

3. Materials and Methods

This work carried out a survey aimed at investigating the role of communication in the diffusion of knowledge on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), thus examining the relationship between age and the importance attributed to sustainability and assessing how communication tools influence people’s perception of sustainability. To achieve this goal, an online survey was conducted using a customized questionnaire, specifically created for this study, between September and November 2023. The questionnaire was distributed via Google Forms and sent via email and social media channels to a sample of Italian citizens. Participation was voluntary, anonymity was guaranteed, and no identifiable information about the respondents was recorded. The resulting sample was a convenience, non-probability sample, selected based on accessibility rather than random sampling, but is still considered valid for exploratory purposes [41]. The questionnaire consisted of 5 sections: the first collected socio-demographic information, the second focused on the topic of Sustainability, particularly with regard to knowledge of the concept and the communication channels that enabled awareness of it. The third section focused on the importance attached to the topic by the respondents using a five-point Likert scale [42], where 1 means “None” and 5 means “High”. Finally, the fourth section collected opinions on the most effective tools to ensure sustainable production and consumption patterns. With the exception of the Likert scale rating, almost all variables investigated are categorical. The total number of responses was 569. After having conducted the survey, the data were analyzed using the chi-square test of independence in order to examine the relationships between categorical variables considered two at a time, within a contingency table. For a more in-depth exploration of these associations, Multiple Correspondence Analysis (MCA) was subsequently applied to the relationships identified as significant by the chi-square test [43]. MCA was applied because it is particularly suited to visualizing and interpreting complex associations between multiple categorical variables, particularly through the construction of a graph illustrating the associations between categorical variables. In the graph, the proximity of two points suggests that the corresponding row/column combination in the contingency table appears more frequently than would be expected if the row and column variables were independent. Conversely, points that are far apart indicate a combination with a lower frequency than would be expected based on the assumption of independence. Furthermore, points further from the origin reveal stronger and more distinctive associations between categories, while those closer to the origin represent more neutral or common combinations, which approximate the average behavior of the data. MCA was, therefore, an ideal tool for this exploratory study, as it allowed to visually interpret complex, multivariate relationships in a way that simpler statistical tests could not. All analyses were conducted using STATA Release 16.0.

4. Results

A total of 569 people took part in the survey. Among these participants, 61.09% were women and 38.91% were men. The age range varied from 18 to 70 years, with a predominance of younger interviewees: in fact, 51.36% of interviewees were under 30 years

old. Regarding to education level, findings show that 271 up to 569 of respondents have obtained high-school diploma and 43.49% of them have obtained degrees, both bachelor's and master's degrees. The major percentages of interviewees were employees and students; specifically, 245 respondents were employees and 125 were students, due to the young age of the interviewee and interviewees. Table 1 shows a detailed overview of the demographic characteristics of the respondents described above.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics of socio-demographic characteristics.

Characteristics	Items	n	%
Gender	Male	221	38.91%
	Female	347	61.09%
Age	18–30	283	51.36%
	31–40	127	23.05%
	41–50	54	9.80%
	51–60	73	13.25%
	61–70	14	2.54%
Education Level	Bachelor's Degree	114	20.07%
	High-School Diploma	271	47.71%
	Master's Degree	133	23.42%
	MS Diploma	50	8.80%
Job	Employee	245	62.82%
	Housewife	5	1.28%
	Retired	5	1.28%
	Student	125	32.05%
	Unemployed	10	2.56%

The other sections of questionnaire are based on the topic of sustainability and the spreading knowledge with the communication channels. In order to create this part of questionnaire, insights from [44] were taken and then were modified to fit the aims of the work and in consequence of the research questions. Although 13 interviewees lack information about sustainability's knowledge concept, the findings show positive answers, recording 377 "Yes". As Table 2 shows, the main communication tools are internet and mass media that represent almost the 75% following by school with 54 answers and social network and public events with a total of 38 answers. The findings are in line with the age of interviewees, and even with the common use of these communication channels. Despite almost 10% of 569 respondents considering sustainability to be less important, the remaining percentage demonstrates the high importance of it. In line with this, interviewees regard sustainability as an important topic that is frequently discussed in public, despite the fact that almost 20% of them think the topic is seldom or never discussed in public debates. Despite the positive opinion received from interviewees, in almost all of the previous questions, unfortunately, findings about communication campaigns show that it should be performed more to make them more effective. Indeed, only 8% of respondents thought positively about communication campaigns, whereas over 60% thought negatively about them; some respondents (16%) indicated that they are unsure about the efficacy of communication campaigns. Furthermore, the respondents also emphasize how important it is for stakeholders them engagement in the dissemination of knowledge about sustainability.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics of sustainability.

Characteristics	Items	n	%
Sustainability Have you ever heard about Sustainability?	No	13	3.33%
	Yes	377	96.67%
Communication Tools In which context?	School	54	14.06%
	Internet	148	38.54%
	Mass Media	141	36.72%
	Other	3	0.78%
	Public events	12	3.13%
	Social	26	6.77%
Importance of Sustainability How important is sustainability to you?	None	2	0.37%
	Little	3	0.55%
	Moderate	49	9.02%
	Discrete	170	31.31%
	High	319	58.75%
Sustainability in Public Debate Is sustainability central to public debate?	Never	14	2.46%
	Seldom	87	15.32%
	Sometimes	121	21.30%
	Often	204	35.92%
	Almost Always	142	25.00%
Effective Communication Campaigns Are communication campaigns for pro- moting SDGs effective?	Never	266	49.44%
	Seldom	118	21.93%
	Sometimes	86	15.99%
	Often	25	4.65%
	Almost Always	43	7.99%
Stakeholder Commitment How committed are national stakehold- ers to promoting the SDGs?	None	55	17.13%
	Little	88	27.41%
	Moderate	145	45.17%
	Discrete	4	1.25%
	High	29	9.03%

Considering some socio-demographic characteristics, age was significantly associated with communication tools (Chi square = 275.58, $p < 0.001$), while gender was significantly associated with the importance attributed to sustainability (Chi square = 20.34, $p < 0.01$). Furthermore, an association was found between this last item, both with a question relating to the centrality of sustainability in the central debate (83.766, $p < 0.01$), and with stakeholder commitment (Chi square = 136.36, $p < 0.001$). Stakeholder involvement was also significantly associated with the question about effective communication campaigns (Chi square = 201.1, $p < 0.001$). The graphical representation of MCA in Figure 1 helps simplify the process of interpreting the associations between age, the importance given to

sustainability, and the communication tools through which interviewees learned about the topic of SDGs. The first two MCA dimensions explain 68.9% of all data variance. The closer the points in the graph, the stronger the association between the categories they represent. In particular, it is highlighted that the youngest class, from 18 to 30 years old, learns about the topic of sustainability in a school environment and via the internet. Furthermore, it is young people who give greater importance to sustainability, as in the graph the point relating to the 18–30 class is very close to the high label. The next age group, from 31 to 40 years, as well as the classes from 51 to 60 years and from 61 to 70 years, albeit to a lesser extent, appear more linked to the mass media environment, as the main communication channel for acquiring information on sustainability.

However, it is noted that while the age group from 51 to 60 attaches little importance to the topic, the class from 31 to 40 is positioned closer to higher scales, such as high and fair, therefore demonstrating greater interest in the topic. The average age group (i.e., from 41 to 50 years old) demonstrates that they are acquiring awareness of sustainability issues especially through public events. Finally, the social communication channels appear more isolated, perhaps reflecting the limited usefulness of these channels in disseminating news on the topic.

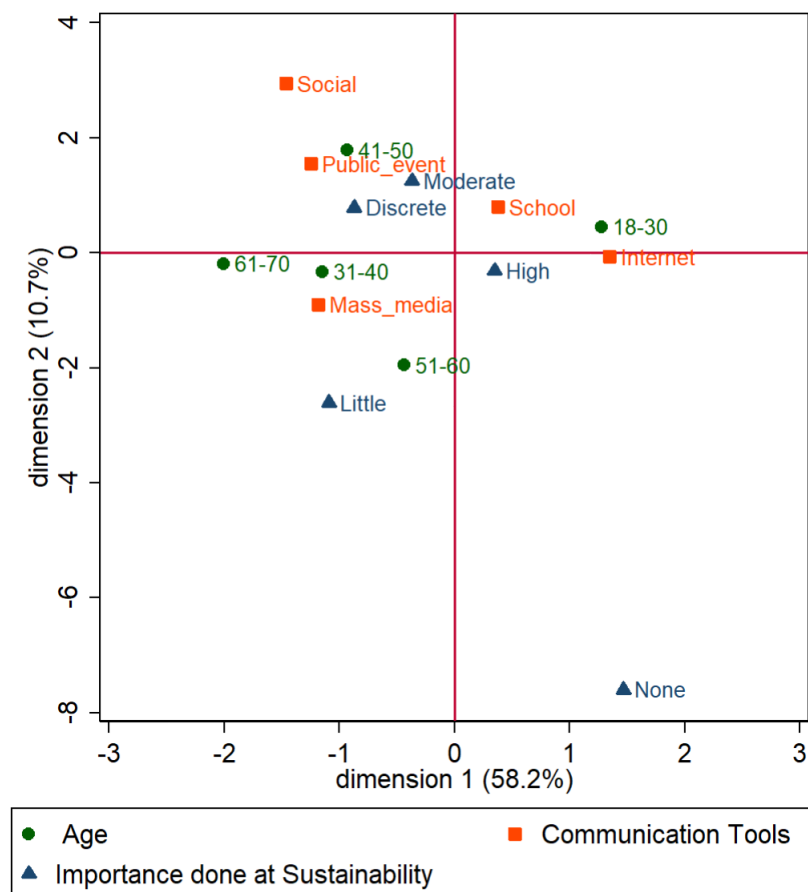


Figure 1. Multiple Correspondence Analysis results.

5. Conclusions

5.1. Evidence Obtained and Implications

This work aims to analyze the importance Italian citizens place on communication for the spreading of information about sustainability and the Sustainable Development Goals. Specifically, it investigates the connection between age and the importance assigned to sustainability, aiming to understand if different age groups perceive and prioritize sustainability topics differently which, in turn, influences their knowledge of these issues.

Additionally, it examines whether communication tools play a strong role in influencing Italian citizens' perceptions of the importance of sustainability and SDGs. The questionnaire results and Multiple Correspondence Analysis allow to identify the relationship between a specific socio-demographic aspect, namely age, and the prioritize given to sustainability. Finally, the 18–30 age group give a high importance on sustainability, the 31–40 age group assigns a considerable importance, and the 41–50 age group gives it moderate importance. Thus, in line with other studies [23], findings confirm that young population is closer to the sustainability issue than older population, which tends to view the topic as less important. Besides this, the findings allow to answer the first research question, supporting the formulated analysis and the literature about the influence of age on sustainability attitudes. The findings confirm the existence of a relationship between age and importance given to sustainability. This study also finds a relationship between age and the communication tools used by respondents to learn about sustainability and SDGs. Indeed, either national or international authorities aim to spread the 'soul' of SDGs, and make citizens aware by means of several strategies towards sustainability. The findings suggest that young people acquire knowledge about these topics primarily through the internet and educational environments. Despite the widespread use of social media among young people, it is not effectively utilized for disseminating knowledge on these topics, resulting in the 18–30 and 31–40 age groups being positioned far apart in terms of awareness. This study highlights and sheds some light on the role of communication tools on the diffusion of Sustainable Development Goals Agenda 2030 by revolving around the "5 Ps": People, Prosperity, Peace, Partnership, and Planet. Therefore, these results highlight that governments, academia, schools, and international policies should assume strategies that make sustainability, and its environmental, economic and social aspects, crucial. These tools can allow users to become aware and consciousness of global issues, and the effects and causes. In recent years, market communications have turned decisively towards sustainability. However, the lack of comparable and verifiable standards can confuse consumers. A proposed EU directive aims to regulate these communications, guaranteeing reliable information supported by scientific evidence for fair and transparent competition. These work findings show that various communication tools affect citizens' perception about sustainability. Sustainability communication tools represent the pledges of firms, citizens, and students to straightforwardly and realistically express their sustainability approaches, aims, and energies. These tools can help all people and, in turn, the firms enhance their reputation. This scenario provides a response to the second research question, and supports the second part of the analysis formulated. In sum, there exists a relation between the age, the importance given by citizens to sustainability and the communication tools that allowed for the knowledge of it. Thus, the literature underlines that social media has a high potential, but the contents are poorer and/or not very attractive [27]. Although Italian citizens think that the 17 SDGs are central in a public debate, at the same time, they think that communication campaigns are ineffective, as evidenced by the negative feedback regarding stakeholder engagement. To improve the dissemination of knowledge about sustainability and SDGs, stakeholders—both private and public—should enhance and actively participate in communication campaigns in order to improve the consequent effects [25,33]. They should not only follow the guidelines from the European Sustainable Development Network, but also conduct preliminary studies on citizens' needs and the limitations of communication campaigns if not properly designed. This approach would enable citizens to gain a deeper understanding of these topics, and provide them with the necessary tools to access information, leading to greater awareness and attention to sustainability and the world they live in [29–31,45,46].

The originality of this work can be found in the analysis of the amazing effects of communication tools on the diffusion of Sustainable Development Goals in Italy. By shedding some light on this perspective, this research contributes to filling the gap in the recent literature by providing practical insights for improving the impact of SDGs on citizens. By uncovering the power of these tools, organizations can take advantage into the

optimal operation of new communication strategies, thereby paving the way to make more and more SDGs understandable and adoptable among people.

5.2. Limitations

Although the findings provide significant insights into the research questions—particularly regarding the relationship between age and the importance placed on sustainability, as well as the role of communication tools in promoting knowledge about the SDGs—this study has several limitations. The first limitation is related to the sample, because it is a convenience sample; this means that it is a sample with a potentially large and unmeasured selection bias, and it could not be defined as representative of the entire Italian population. Another limitation, also related to the sample, is its demographic composition. The sample consists predominantly of young individuals, as the questionnaire was distributed via Google Forms, a platform commonly used by this age group. Consequently, the findings reveal that over 70% of the sample comprises young people.

5.3. Future Research

Starting from the limitations that characterize this work, namely the convenience sample and the prevalence of young people's answers, future steps could be foreseen to overcome them. Specifically, the first step could be the definition of a probability sample in which the participants are chosen with random selection based on specific criteria such as age, education level, country, and more. The computer-assisted telephone interview methodology might then be utilized to reach the entire selected sample and, consequently, the older population. Its features can help break down the barrier that separates older people from digitization. Indeed, this methodology only requires the respondents' possession of a telephone, while the interviewer will use a laptop, a tablet, or other electronic devices for submitting the questionnaire and for recording the answers at the same time. Besides this, this work could be the starting point for future research that would analyze the same aim, but in different countries than Italy, comparing the findings obtained in this research with the future findings of the other works. They could also collect the various advertising campaigns in order to find out technical parameters to define the effectiveness of them, and to analyze the different media used to spread knowledge. By examining these campaigns, it would be possible to assess how different communication channels—such as social media, apps, video content, interactive platforms, and educational partnerships—impact audience engagement, knowledge retention, and behavioral changes.

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