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PIETRO DE GIOVANNI
ESLI SPAHIU
LORENZO SPINOSI
BEHZAD MALEKI VISHKAEI

AN ANALYSIS OF STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

COMMUNICATING SUSTAINABILITY THROUGH ACCOUNT-BASED MARKETING

Communicating sustainability initiatives effectively is a way to inspire transparency, trust, and credibility among stakeholders. This is a well-documented fact. Traditional tools, such as reports and events, often fail to capture stakeholders' attention. This paper examines new communication techniques for marketing sustainability, focusing on how Account-Based Marketing (ABM) can enhance stakeholder engagement with sustainability initiatives. Based on a four-month experiment involving one core company and 23 managers from its five main stakeholders, our study reveals that ABM can significantly improve information completeness, communication effectiveness, and stakeholder awareness about sustainability. Nevertheless, our findings also highlight several challenges, including the need to adapt communication strategies to account for gender differences and audiences with less experience. Moreover, ABM works best in building solid relationships by supplementing sustainability messages with both effective communication and involvement in other initiatives, such as resilience-based projects.

ACCOUNT-BASED MARKETING (ABM)//SUSTAINABILITY//RESILIENCE//STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT//COMMUNICATION

PIETRO DE GIOVANNI
is Professor of Practice in Operations and Supply Chain Management at SDA Bocconi School of Management.

ESLI SPAHIU
is a researcher at Bocconi University in Milan. Her research interests focus on sustainability, business management, and organizational innovation.

LORENZO SPINOSI
is a consultant and founder of Spinosi Marketing Strategies, a firm specializing in strategic marketing, corporate communication, and Account-Based Marketing (ABM) strategies. He collaborates with companies and institutions in designing sustainable communication initiatives and strategic innovation projects.

BEHZAD MALEKI VISHKAEI
is an Assistant Professor (RTDA) in the Department of Management and Technology at Bocconi University. He has collaborated with several companies as a consultant, specializing in strategic planning and project management.

INTRODUCTION

Communicating sustainability projects and initiatives to stakeholders has become a key item on every company's agenda (Reilly, 2009; Allen, 2016). This aspect of sustainability is essential for promoting transparency and trust among partners, intensifying collaboration, improving brand reputation, increasing the possibility of receiving constructive feedback, and attracting external resources (Vishkaei and De Giovanni, 2024). Accordingly, effective sustainability communication can boost stakeholder participation with respect to organizational sustainability objectives (Bose et al., 2024). Since it bolsters the ability of companies to anticipate and respond to environmental, social and economic difficulties, resilience communication is considered equally vital for stakeholders in the

context of sustainability (Negri et al., 2021; Corrales-Estrada et al., 2021).

However, despite the need to roll out effective strategies to communicate sustainability and sustainability-related projects such as resilience-based initiatives, companies still rely primarily on things like publishing reports and holding periodical events and meetings, which hardly capture the interest of stakeholders (Borges et al., 2023). Furthermore, in the era of social platforms and digital technologies, individuals and businesses are constantly exposed to reams of information from various sources, making it challenging to stay up to date (Ott et al., 2017; Romagnoli et al., 2023). Consequently, more surgical approaches to efficiently deliver specific information on sustainability-related initiatives could result in more meaningful communication (Borges, et al., 2023; Vishkaei and De Giovanni, 2024).

Nevertheless, much of the current literature focuses on highlighting the importance of communicating sustainability, while making limited attempts to provide strategies for effectively doing so (Robertson, 2018; Borges et al., 2023). The lack of research in this regard leaves a considerable gap in actionable insights for organizations striving toward their sustainability goals with proper stakeholder engagement. What's needed to bridge this gap is an investigation of alternative communication strategies that enable more captivating sustainability communication.

Among the array of currently available marketing tools, Account-Based Marketing (ABM) is a structured, go-to-market tactic that involves coordinating the sales and marketing departments to create personalized, targeted marketing campaigns and content. Instead of covering a broad range of potential audiences, ABM concentrates resources on a specific set of accounts that matter most for the business; doing so augments the likelihood of converting prospects to sales, compared to using lead-focused models alone (Burgess and Munn, 2021). Studies suggest that ABM can lead to higher ROI and greater efficiency, as time and resources are funneled onto accounts that have better odds of generating revenues (Vajre and Spett, 2019; Bacon, 2021).

Research on marketers who deploy ABM reveals appreciable improvements in brand perception, awareness, and knowledge (Shwartz, 2017). In addition, as ABM can be adapted to onboard stakeholders in different campaigns, it can have positive repercussions on communication around sustainability efforts (Galpin et al., 2015). However, despite the rising interest in ABM, no research to date has attempted to apply this methodology in the context of sustainability. Consequently, this study aims to explore the potential of ABM in communicating a company's sustainability efforts by investigating the following research questions:

1. How does the ABM approach compare to non-ABM methods in effectively conveying information, fostering awareness, and facilitating communication about the core company's sustainability initiatives within the value chain?
2. What is the impact of gender on the effectiveness of ABM in communicating sustainability?
3. How do the audience's work experience and managerial type affect the impact of ABM in communicating sustainability?
4. How does the ABM approach perform when communicating other topics, such as resilience, alongside sustainability initiatives?

To investigate the efficacy of the ABM methodology in conveying sustainability, we designed and conducted a four-month experiment. In our study, we collaborated with a core company to evaluate how well its sustainability-related projects and initiatives were communicated to its five key stakeholders, comparing the results between managers with and without exposure to ABM. Ultimately, the findings from our work indicate that although ABM is an effective tool for engaging stakeholders in sustainability and resilience initiatives, several challenging aspects must be addressed to ensure more impactful implementation.

The rest of the paper is organized as follows: First, we provide a literature review of the related research

regarding the value of communicating sustainability and the potential of ABM as a strategic tool. Next, the methodology section outlines the design and execution of the ABM experiment. Section 4 presents the main results we obtained from the experiment and a discussion of their implications, and finally, we conclude by outlining the main findings drawn from this research, as well as limitations and directions for future research.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Today, companies are increasingly focusing on formulating more sustainable strategies, and communication in this regard is thought to play a vital role in advancing sustainability-related initiatives (Genç, 2017). Environmental and social priorities are essential to maintaining a competitive advantage in the market. To achieve this goal, companies must integrate innovative strategies to shore up their operations and capabilities around sustainability (Longoni and Cagliano, 2015). In addition, by cultivating resilience in their practices, organizations are better positioned to endure disruptions and ensure stability in their sustainability initiatives (Grando and De Giovanni, 2025). These strategies enhance sustainability with regard to critical topics such as environmental issues, human rights, and compliance with child labor laws. Moreover, they also help to improve salient performance-related areas such as lead time, quality, and reliability (Mani and Gunasekaran, 2018).

Effective communication is crucial for supporting sustainable development and engaging with stakeholders (Mefalopulos, 2005). In this context, communication on resilience has also been recognized as extremely relevant for stakeholders in moving forward with their sustainability efforts (Negri et al., 2021; Corrales-Estrada et al., 2021). Consequently, organizations need to prioritize onboarding stakeholders and informing them about sustainability-related initiatives (Reilly, 2009; Allen, 2016). In this regard, Brønn and von Kutzschenbach (2006) emphasize the significance of clear, transparent communication with stakeholders to accurately frame their perceptions. Similarly, Robertson (2018) further explains how framing serves to ensure stakeholder understanding and engagement; the idea here is to make sustainability-related developments and initiatives accessible and comprehensible. Consequently, given the importance of communicating sustainability, recent research underlines the fact that companies must find new tailored approaches for conveying information (Borges et al., 2023), while offering limited insight on how to actually do so (Robertson, 2018; Borges et al., 2023).

ABM denotes a particular marketing strategy that targets specific accounts through personalized campaigns tailored to their unique characteristics (Burgess and Munn, 2021). The strength of this approach consists of the ability to concentrate on the most pertinent clients and produce messages that resonate around their goals and needs (Golec et al., 2019). In this sense, ABM offers many advantages, including upgraded efficiency and higher return on investment (Vajre and Spett, 2019; Bacon, 2021). In addition, the effectiveness of ABM has been measured in terms of deeper account engagement, higher conversion rates, and considerable pipeline growth (Golec et al., 2019). Other studies show that 84% of the marketers who implemented ABM report a boost to reputation in terms of brand perception, awareness, and knowledge, and 74% of responders indicate improved relationships due to an increased number of connections across accounts (Shwartz, 2017).

More specifically, Table 1 presents a collection of case studies across various industries, illustrating the diverse applications and outcomes of ABM strategies deployed to meet a range of organizational goals. As we can see, DocuSign and Schneider Electric multiplied their income by over 20% by using consolidated data and targeted messaging to appeal to their audience and improve customer relationships. Similarly, PitchBook, a Fintech company trying to align with changing customer profiles, used a multichannel outreach strategy involving machine learning, account scoring, and personalized content, resulting in account engagement that soared 220%

and generating a remarkable 170% upsurge in opportunities. Furthermore, companies that used intent-based targeting and customized content, such as Snowflake and Tipalti, saw engagement rates escalate, while companies like Invoca and iRidiumMobile employed a range of ABM techniques to raise brand recognition and increment sales prospects.

Consequently, based on the reported benefits associated with ABM, this strategy presents enormous potential for our study as it enables personalized communication to guarantee that sustainability messages actually reach key stakeholders. This supports Hermann's (2023) assertion that ABM is a potent tool for effectively interacting with accounts. Moreover, as businesses emphasize the importance of correctly conveying and incorporating social and environmental factors into their operational plans (Galpin et al., 2015), organizations can be expected to benefit from ABM in conveying their social and environmental projects in a more meaningful way. This is thanks to tailored communications leading to enhanced stakeholder commitment.

TABLE 1. ABM APPLICATION: CASE STUDIES

Company	Industry	Objectives	ABM Strategy	Benefits
DocuSign[1]	e-Signature Solutions	Appeal to diverse customer base across six industries	Segmented web content and industry-specific messaging	22% increase in sales pipeline[1]
Invoca[2]	Tracking & Analytics	Make memorable impressions at a conference	Direct mail marketing with high-value gifts	Exceeded lead generation and pipeline targets[2]
iRidiumMobile[3]	Smart Home & Automation	Increase brand awareness and sales opportunities with limited budget	Hosted a five-day virtual summit targeting their ideal customer profile (ICP)	2,320 sign-ups; 39% of attendees were net new accounts; 34 sales-qualified opportunities[3]
PitchBook[4]	FinTech	Adapt to evolving customer profiles in a remote world	Personalized content, account scoring, machine learning, and multi-channel outreach	170% increase in opportunities; 79% rise in website visits; 220% surge in account engagement[4]
Propeller Aero[5]	Engineering & Construction	Enhance lead targeting and personalized buying experience due to rapid growth	Aligned marketing and sales with HubSpot and analytics tools for precise targeting	23% increase in average deal size; better market penetration[5]
Robin[6]	Office Tools & Software	Increase client acquisition	Featured attractive office spaces of existing customers	50% rise in website traffic; 20% improvement in lead generation[6]
Schneider Electric[7]	Energy Management	Obtain clearer audience insights	United reporting tools and consolidated data	21% increase in revenue from target accounts; Faster sales cycle; Accelerated pipeline velocity[7]
Snowflake[8]	Cloud Data Warehousing	Manage multiple campaigns simultaneously	Personalized and customized content; public credibility building	Significantly higher engagement and conversion rates[8]
Tipalti[9]	Tech Operations	Improve customers engagement	Intent-based targeting, customized product demonstrations, and aligned marketing and sales efforts	26% increase in engagement rates[9]

1 finemediabw.com.
2 unboundb2b.com.
3 cxl.com.
4 lakeone.io.
5 lakeone.io.
6 finemediabw.com.
7 cxl.com.
8 unboundb2b.com.
9 lakeone.io.

Moreover, Koetler and Keller (2016) discuss how high-impact tools such as ABM allow companies to precisely target their key suppliers, partners, and stakeholders, fostering sustainable practices and building time-resistant relationships. As a result, this method can enable overall sustainability performance and strengthen relationships with stakeholders who wish to understand the environmental and social impacts of partners and collaborators. When implementing ABM, companies can use personalized emails and customer-specific ads to inform stakeholders about their progress (Kohli et al., 2019; Pophal, 2023), fueling a deeper connection and commitment to their sustainability efforts. Companies could also adopt industry-specific messaging to deliver curated sustainability information to different stakeholder groups, bolstering engagement. By making certain every stakeholder receives the most pertinent information, such an approach increases the likelihood of their support and participation in sustainability-related initiatives or developments (Burgess and Munn, 2021). This makes ABM a promising solution for more effective sustainability communication.

However, despite the growing interest in ABM, there are currently no studies examining its potential impact in the context of sustainability. We fully believe that sustainability requires ad hoc initiatives to be understood and successfully communicated to stakeholders; among the various available marketing tools, ABM can surely help raise awareness and provide clear results that are being achieved on sustainability. Considering that ABM is a relatively new technique in this field, with this paper we present an experiment to explore its effectiveness in communicating sustainability to the corporate ecosystem.

METHODOLOGY

To investigate the impact of ABM in communicating sustainability, we ran a four-month experiment aimed at assessing how well it captures stakeholder attention on this and resilience-related topics. In our study, we collaborated with a core company to communicate its sustainability projects and initiatives to its five main stakeholders, i.e., its partner companies in the under-analyzed value chain. We selected the partners and identified the main topics to communicate via ABM by analyzing the messages, interests, and objectives of the CEOs and leading managers of these firms.

We considered various communication channels to contact the stakeholders we chose, centering on the main projects and sustainability initiatives that the focal company pursued during the period of investigation. The communication strategies exploiting these channels were deployed without informing the stakeholders that they were part of a research project. We launched the experiment in April 2024, and the communication activities continued until the end of July 2024; this four-month time horizon aligns with our core company's communication cycles regarding sustainability and resilience. This period also provided sufficient time to interact with stakeholders through a variety of communication channels, which would result in a more accurate assessment. To ensure the validity of our study, we partnered with a marketing company based in Italy, Spinosi Marketing Strategies, which is specialized in ABM. The organization provided support in developing targeted communication (in line with current ABM best practices), assessing the responses, and evaluating the ultimate impact more effectively. Figure 1 below provides a summary of the main steps of our methodology.

In the first step, we recognized the recent lead projects and initiatives the core company has implemented or is developing to achieve its sustainability goals. During the first step, we also conducted several rounds of interviews with company representatives to assess their key stakeholders. Ultimately, by mapping their interests and objectives, five main organizations emerged as the most relevant for the experiment, each playing a crucial role in the value chain of the core company. Subsequently, we distributed a questionnaire to the company representatives,

dividing them into two groups: those who were subject to ABM-targeted communication and those who were not.

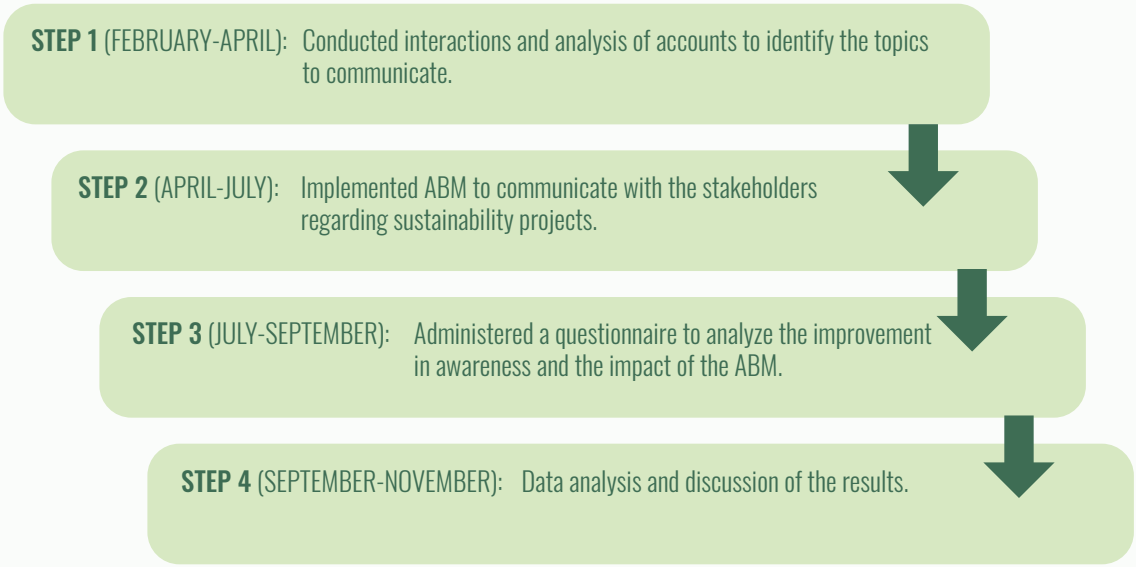
In the second step, we communicated the results of the projects in the seven iterations below:

- *Iteration 1 (18 April 2024).* Inviting the target via email to meet with a Life Cycle Assessment (LCA) expert to discuss the results of the projects.
- *Iteration 2 (30 April 2024).* Publishing the results of the core company's projects in an article on LinkedIn.
- *Iteration 3 (15 May 2024):* Inviting the target via WhatsApp to participate in a conference on to the core company's sustainability initiatives and resilience projects.
- *Iteration 4 (6 June 2024).* Inviting the target via institutional email to participate in an event at the core company to discuss the results of sustainability and resilience projects.
- *Iteration 5 (21 June 2024).* Publishing the results of a project related to environmentally sustainable procurement projects in a report on the core company's LinkedIn page.
- *Iteration 6 (3 July 2024).* Publishing the results of projects related to social sustainability aspects of sourcing and procurement in a report on the core company's LinkedIn page.
- *Iteration 7 (10 July 2024).* Inviting the target via WhatsApp to participate in a research project with the research division of the core company.

In the third step, we sent a survey to the accounts who were involved in the experiments, as well as managers who were not subject to ABM. The questionnaire included many items, but for the purpose of this research, we only focus on the following three as they are linked to sustainability awareness, communication, and comprehensive information:

1. The core company's communication strategy clearly explained the goals and objectives of its sustainability projects.
2. The communication helped me understand how my company can benefit from participating in the core company's projects.
3. The core company's projects seem valuable for my company's sustainability initiatives.

FIGURE 1. METHODOLOGY



Data were collected at the end of July 2024, after the final interaction. Based on the availability and willingness of the five stakeholder organizations, a total of 23 company representatives engaged in the study and provided the data we collected. Out of the 23 representatives, 11 were exposed to ABM and 12 were not. In terms of gender representation, 12 of the participants were female and 11 were male. As regards organizational roles held at the time of the experiment, 17 of the participants were functional managers and six were sustainability managers. Their years of experience varied markedly, with 10 participants having between 6-10 years of experience, seven participants with 11-15 years of experience and six participants with 16-20 years of experience. For the purpose of this research, we will classify participants with up to 10 years of experience as having limited experience, while those with 11 years or more as having extensive experience. Moreover, in our experiment, we aimed to ensure a diverse representation across industries, with 30.4% of the respondents coming from the energy sector, manufacturing comprising 26.1% of the sample, shipbuilding representing 17.4% and aerospace and engineering making up 13% of the dataset.

The answers to the survey questions were measured using a 7-point Likert scale (1-strongly disagree, 7-strongly agree) since odd-number responses, especially 7-point scales, are considered the most effective in reducing central tendency biases and allowing for greater sensitivity and variation in responses (Kusmaryono et al., 2022). Ultimately, we analyzed our findings in terms of gender, managerial roles, and expertise. Gender-related behavior is considered be a salient factor in marketing communications (Koc, 2010), while competencies, skills and experience are essential for effectively enhancing sustainability (Wesselink et al., 2015) and organizational resilience (Hu et al., 2022).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The application of ABM in this study highlights its general effectiveness in improving communication, raising awareness, and providing relevant information regarding the projects in question to the stakeholders. Our findings emphasize how useful ABM is in formulating communication strategies to reach out to selected companies or people (accounts) on sensitive issues such as sustainability and resilience.

Comparing the two approaches in communicating the objectives and projects to the stakeholders, we observe better results with the ABM strategy. (See the Box 1 for the ANOVA.) As illustrated in Figure 2, the stakeholders subject to ABM had a significantly higher score (6.10) than non-targeted accounts (3.77). This implies that with a personalized approach, ABM provides clear information to the stakeholders about goals and objectives. ABM conveys more focused and relevant communication by targeting specific accounts and taking information from them through various sources. Indeed, there was greater awareness among stakeholders (6.10) regarding sustainability and resilience compared to the stakeholders who had not been exposed to ABM.

Finally, the results also show that the ABM approach yields more pertinent information (6.30) compared to the group with no ABM (4.00). This suggests that the stakeholders targeted with ABM felt they received sufficient information on how projects at the core company align with their company's strategy, which is vital in engaging business representatives and ensuring meaningful collaboration. This result aligns with the findings of Correia et al. (2023), which demonstrate that women are more attentive to companies' green marketing communications and look for more detailed messaging, indicating that their expectations of the communication level differ from those of men.

In all three dimensions – communication, awareness, and information – the scores for the ABM strategy were significantly higher than those from a more generalized, non-targeted marketing approach. Among the key factors that make ABM so effective, one is its focus on personalized communication at the account level. In contrast to traditional marketing, in fact, ABM delivers

messages that are highly applicable to the needs, challenges, and goals of each target company. This leads to sharper clarity in communication and helps stakeholders better comprehend how the content directly fits into their company's strategy. Noteworthy is also the fact that ABM personalization allows for deeper knowledge and understanding of the client, who receives ad hoc input suited to its interest. Indeed, ABM brings efficiency when homing in on a small number of high-value accounts instead of casting a wide net. In so doing, ABM assures maximum effectiveness of marketing efforts, putting the most relevant information in front of the right stakeholders.

Gender and ABM effectiveness

Variations based on gender differences, displayed in Figure 3, provide noteworthy results, particularly regarding communication. (See Box 1 for the ANOVA.) While ABM has proven effective in enhancing overall engagement, there are significant variations with regard to its impact on male and female respondents in the communication dimension.

The results indicate that male respondents rated communication higher, with a score of 6.75 for men versus 5.67 for women. These findings corroborate that ABM was more effective in engaging male representatives in terms of communication. The evidence rating gap suggests that there is much room for granular improvement in communication approaches. The overt messaging, tone, or channels used in ABM might have resonated more with male respondents. Therefore, revising the strategies to better engage female representatives in ABM, especially in communication, is crucial to maximize its effectiveness. This could involve adjusting the content or the delivery.

Surprisingly, there was no statistical difference in the information dimension, with males

FIGURE 2. COMPARISON BETWEEN APPROACHES WITH/WITHOUT ABM

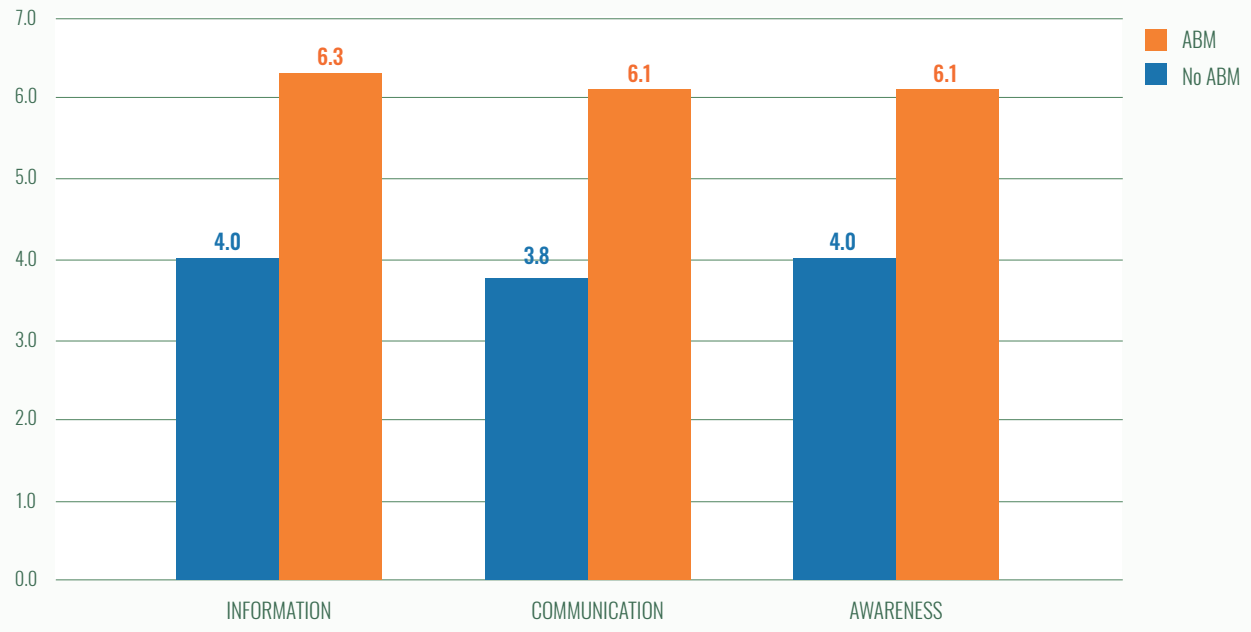
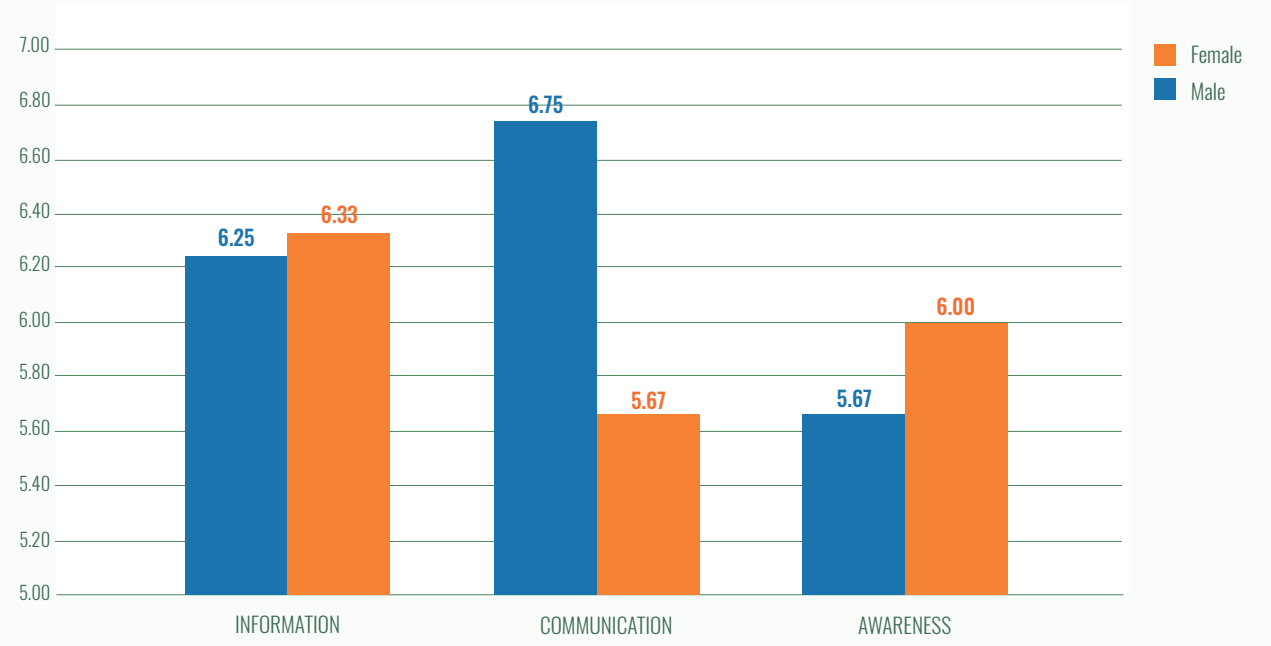


FIGURE 3. THE IMPACT OF GENDER ON ABM EFFECTIVENESS



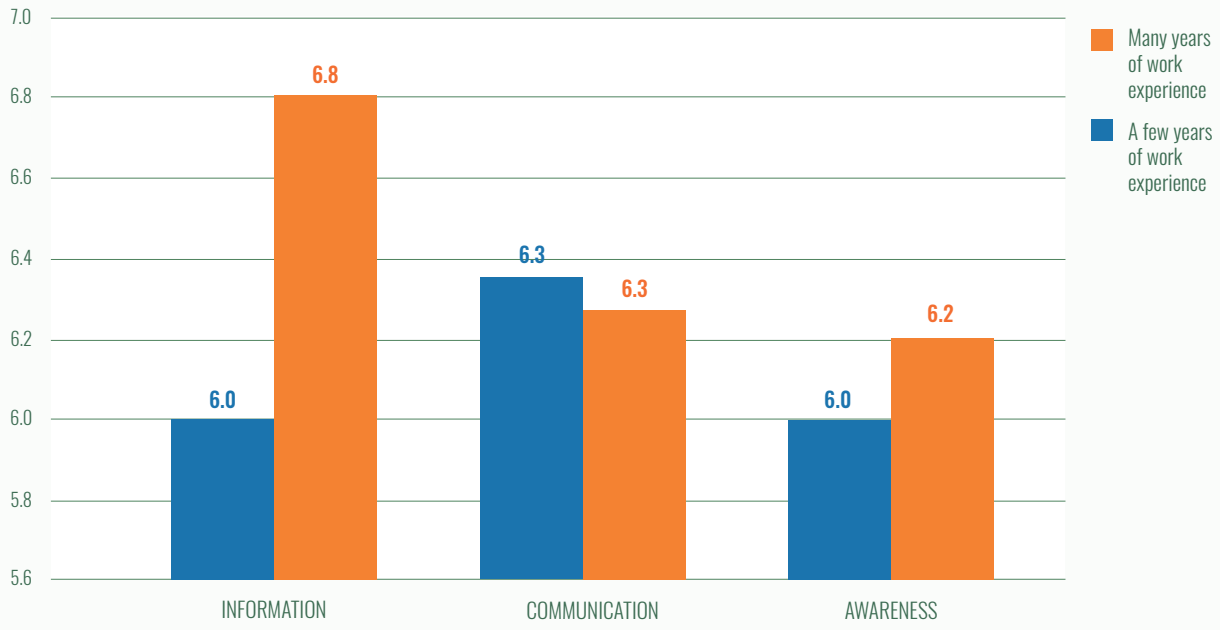
recording an average of 6.25 and females 6.33. Both genders seem to have benefited equally from the ABM strategy in achieving adequate information on how the projects of the core company aligned with the strategies of their companies. This means that the information in question was structured and relevant enough to affect both groups equally. There is, therefore, no pressing need to adjust message delivery, though continued attention to maintaining this balance is essential. Similarly, the variation in awareness is quite marginal, with females scoring slightly higher (an average of 6.00), compared to males (an average of 5.67 – although this number is not significant at the 0.05 level). From this datum we can conclude that awareness for both men and women was effectively raised through the ABM approach. In addition, the fact that the awareness levels are quite consistent implies that the aim of shining a light on these projects is successful across all divides.

Years of experience and ABM effectiveness

In this section, we explore the links between years of work experience and ABM effectiveness. (See Box 1 for the ANOVA.) According to our results, which are displayed in Figure 4, the more years of experience of the representative, the more they perceive the information shared through ABM as thorough and comprehensive. In fact, on this point more experienced people scored 6.8 while their less experienced counterparts scored 6.0. This could indicate that the more experienced representatives find the information carried across via ABM more relevant and more in line with their expectations or strategic thinking. These results imply that individuals with longer careers might be better equipped to evaluate the depth and relevance of information, underscoring the importance of devising ABM strategies that also consider the seniority of the stakeholders.

Conversely, the results of communication and awareness do not appear to be significantly dependent on the stakeholders' years of experience. Regardless

FIGURE 4. THE IMPACT OF YEARS OF WORKING EXPERIENCE ON ABM EFFECTIVENESS



of seniority, communication through ABM to raise awareness on sustainability projects appeared to be greatly appreciated with regard to both goals and objectives. This is evidenced by the fact that the difference in average communication and awareness was not statistically significant. Therefore, the ABM consistently performed well in sustaining consistent levels of clear communication and awareness among the stakeholders in all stages of their careers.

Management's role and ABM's effectiveness

As summarized in Figure 5, we also compared the effectiveness of ABM over two groups of professionals: line managers and sustainability managers. According to our findings, information delivered via ABM is effective for both groups, with 6.167 points for line managers and 6.500 for sustainability managers, respectively (See Box 1 for the ANOVA.) This means that ABM delivers useful information irrespective of the role of the stakeholder. Importantly, the language used in ABM is extremely precise and customized; the ABM developer made sure that the messages were consistent with the account, which meant the stakeholders could comprehend the content regardless of their knowledge of sustainability.

The same does not apply when dealing with communication and awareness. Sustainability managers rate communication as sufficient (6.5) compared line managers (5.83). This indicates that the ABM developers should put more effort into communication particularly when the stakeholder is not a sustainability manager. Also, at a more general level, this also tells us that for line managers, sustainability needs to be communicated differently; alternatively, they need more messages to better understand and appreciate the sustainability efforts of companies.

Interestingly, line managers proved to be more generally aware of projects that involve both sustainability and resilience than sustainability managers (6.33 and 5.75 respectively). This may suggest that line managers tend to be more engaged

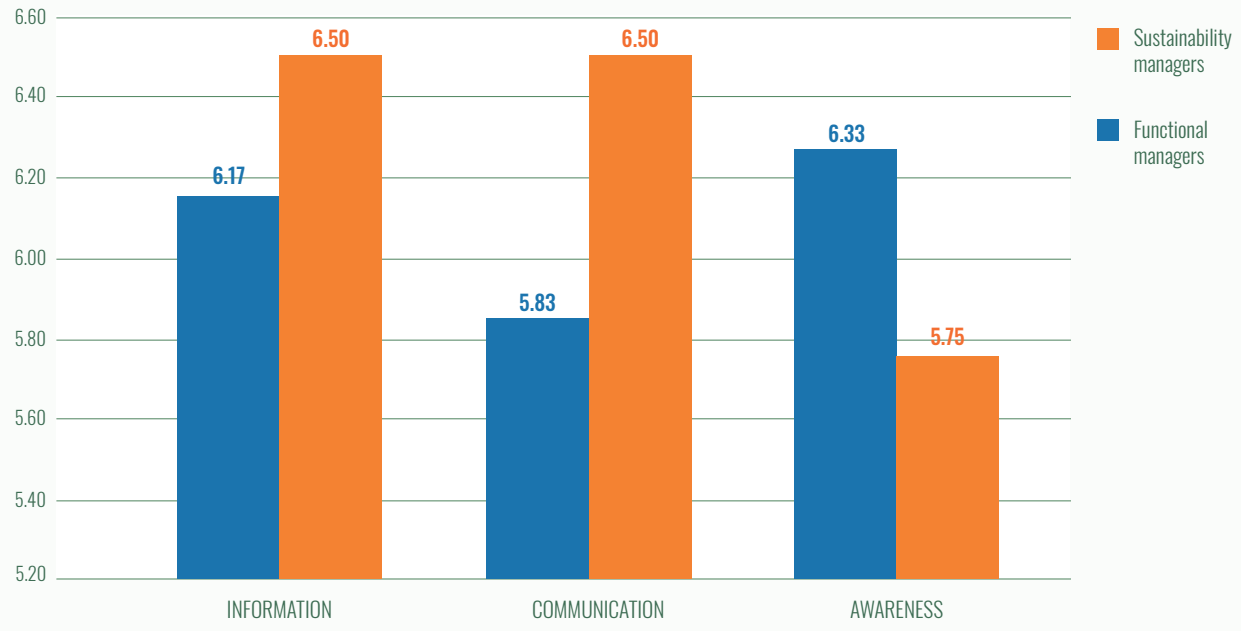
by the ABM messaging when the content has connections with resilience, likely because the latter focuses more on functions. For example, ABM based on the firms' ability to recover after a supply chain strike triggers more awareness for a supply chain manager than for a sustainability manager. Therefore, ABM developers should tailor their strategies carefully when dealing with messages that create awareness on specific topics (e.g., sustainability and resilience) which might have different objectives for different stakeholders, depending on their role.

Involvement in a resilience-based project and ABM effectiveness

Some of the respondents who took part in our study were also involved in another project on resilience. Therefore, in this section, we compare their average scores to the parties who did not collaborate on this initiative. (See Box 1 for the ANOVA.) Our results, which are displayed in Figure 6, show that the scores on information and communication are independent of stakeholder involvement. Accordingly, ABM developers can devise marketing content without having to consider any further involvement of the account in other projects. In fact, the information will be considered complete and the communication will be effective in any case.

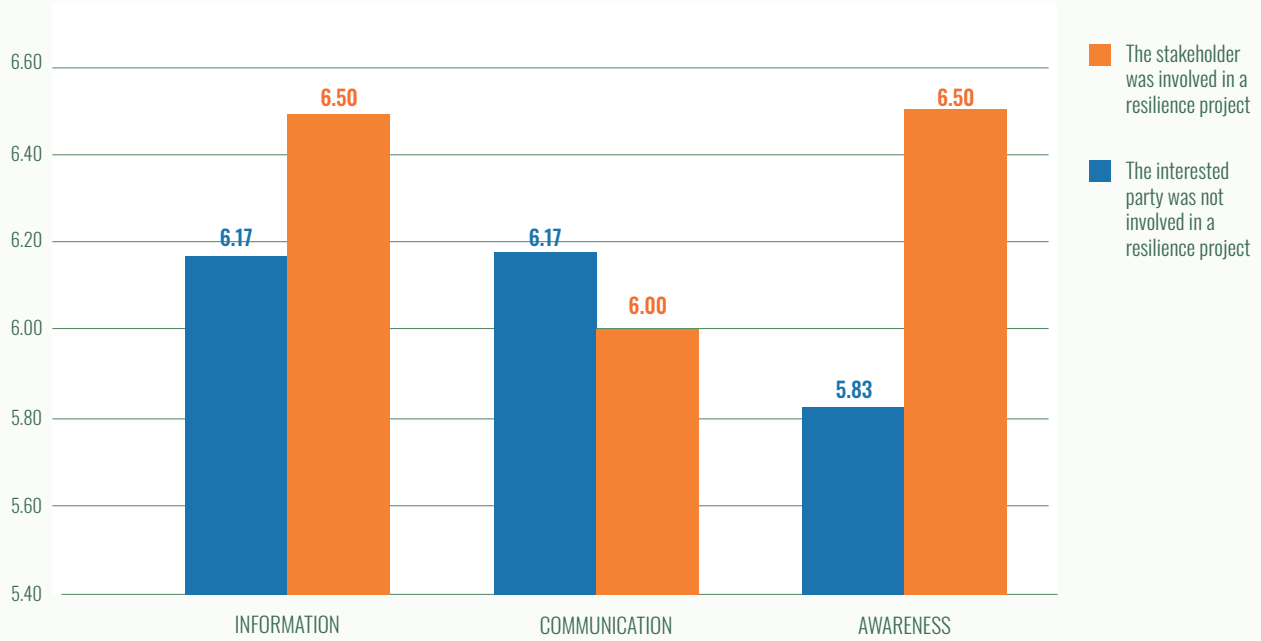
In contrast, based on Figure 6, the stakeholders show greater awareness of the sustainability- and resilience-based initiatives when additional projects centering on resilience are carried out. This result seems intuitive, since it implies that complementing the full set of sustainability projects with additional initiatives on other topics will generate higher awareness in those areas. Consequently, our results suggest that ABM developers should take advantage of any kind of contact, action, or proposition made by the company jointly with the account to foster awareness. In fact, our findings indicate that the stakeholders who did not participate in any resilience projects found it more difficult to

FIGURE 5. THE IMPACT OF MANAGEMENT ROLES ON ABM EFFECTIVENESSM



understand the contexts and implications involving sustainability and resilience simultaneously. Furthermore, the average awareness and information score for managers involved in resilience programs is the same, but for managers not engaged in resilience topics these values differ. This result may be due to the strong link between sustainability and resilience (Negri et al., 2021), which simultaneously supports information sharing and increases awareness for individuals involved in both.

FIGURE 6. THE IMPACT OF STAKEHOLDERS' INVOLVEMENT ON A RESILIENCE-BASED PROJECT ON ABM EFFECTIVENESS



BOX 1. METHODOLOGICAL INSIGHT: RESULTS OF THE ANOVA ANALYSIS

Below are the results of the analyses of variance (ANOVA) conducted to support the figures presented in the document. The values reported in the "Pr > F" column indicate the level of statistical significance associated with the F-statistic.

ANOVA for Figure 2. Comparison between ABM and no-ABM approaches

Information

Source	DF	Sum of squares	Mean squares	F	Pr > F
Model	1.000	29.900	29.900	39.000	<0.0001
Error	21.000	16.100	0.767		
Corrected Total	22.000	46.000			

Communication

Source	DF	Sum of squares	Mean squares	F	Pr > F
Model	1.000	30.705	30.705	70.030	<0.0001
Error	21.000	9.208	0.438		
Corrected Total	22.000	39.913			

Awareness

Source	DF	Sum of squares	Mean squares	F	Pr > F
Model	1.000	24.926	24.926	35.131	<0.0001
Error	21.000	14.900	0.710		
Corrected Total	22.000	39.826			

ANOVA for Figure 3. The impact of gender on ABM effectiveness

Information

Source	DF	Sum of squares	Mean squares	F	Pr > F
Model	1.000	0.267	0.267	0.366	0.562
Error	8.000	5.833	0.729		
Corrected Total	9.000	6.100			

Communication

Source	DF	Sum of squares	Mean squares	F	Pr > F
Model	1.000	5.400	5.400	6.171	0.038
Error	8.000	7.000	0.875		
Corrected Total	9.000	12.400			

Consapevolezza

Source	DF	Sum of squares	Mean squares	F	Pr > F
Model	1.000	1.067	1.067	1.463	0.261
Error	8.000	5.833	0.729		
Corrected Total	9.000	6.900			

ANOVA for Figure 4. The impact of years of working experience on ABM effectiveness

Information

Source	DF	Sum of squares	Mean squares	F	Pr > F
Model	1.000	15.471	15.471	16.662	0.004
Error	8.000	7.429	0.929		
Corrected Total	9.000	22.900			

Communication

Source	DF	Sum of squares	Mean squares	F	Pr > F
Model	1.000	0.305	0.305	0.202	0.665
Error	8.000	12.095	1.512		
Corrected Total	9.000	12.400			

Awareness

Source	DF	Sum of squares	Mean squares	F	Pr > F
Model	1.000	0.043	0.043	0.050	0.829
Error	8.000	6.857	0.857		
Corrected Total	9.000	6.900			

ANOVA for Figure 5. The impact of management roles on ABM effectiveness

Information

Source	DF	Sum of squares	Mean squares	F	Pr > F
Model	1.000	0.067	0.067	0.078	0.787
Error	8.000	6.833	0.854		
Corrected Total	9.000	6.900			

Communication

Source	DF	Sum of squares	Mean squares	F	Pr > F
Model	1.000	7.350	7.350	13.835	0.006
Error	8.000	4.250	0.531		
Corrected Total	9.000	11.600			

Awareness

Source	DF	Sum of squares	Mean squares	F	Pr > F
Model	1.000	13.067	13.067	4.900	0.058
Error	8.000	21.333	2.667		
Corrected Total	9.000	34.400			

ANOVA for Figure 6. The impact of stakeholders' involvement on a resilience-based project on ABM effectiveness

Information

Source	DF	Sum of squares	Mean squares	F	Pr > F
Model	1.000	1.067	1.067	0.256	0.627
Error	8.000	33.333	4.167		
Corrected Total	9.000	34.400			

Communication

Source	DF	Sum of squares	Mean squares	F	Pr > F
Model	1.000	2.017	2.017	1.683	0.231
Error	8.000	9.583	1.198		
Corrected Total	9.000	11.600			

Awareness

Source	DF	Sum of squares	Mean squares	F	Pr > F
Model	1.000	17.067	17.067	12.047	0.008
Error	8.000	11.333	1.417		
Corrected Total	9.000	28.400			

Below are the results of the analyses of variance (ANOVA) conducted to support the figures presented in the document. The values reported in the "Pr > F" column indicate the level of statistical significance associated with the F-statistic.

CONCLUSIONS

Theoretical implications

This study contributes to demonstrating the effectiveness of more sophisticated techniques in reaching particular stakeholders with specific links to sustainability strategies. In detail, we apply the ABM approach to verify whether the communication to stakeholders can be more impactful in terms of information completeness, comprehensible messaging, and level of awareness with regard to projects on sustainability and resilience. According to the literature, access to comprehensive information about sustainability programs bolsters trust, transparency, regulatory compliance, and informed decision-making among the stakeholders in a value chain (Wognum et al., 2011; Biswas et al., 2023; Garcia- Torres, et al., 2024). However, effective information sharing relies on clear communication of sustainability and resilience initiatives (Petrenj et al., 2013; Meacham et al., 2013; Khan et al., 2016; Johnson, 2025). Moreover, developing and extending sustainability and resilience programs along the value chain means enhancing stakeholder awareness on these topics (Tan et al., 2022; Adhikari and Shrestha, 2023). To assess the impact of ABM in facilitating information sharing, providing clear communication, and enriching awareness in the field of sustainability and resilience, we compared the responses of stakeholders who were subject to ABM with those who were not. Our findings demonstrate that ABM is an efficient method for better informing stakeholders about sustainability, effectively communicating strategies, and raising awareness when sustainability can be affiliated with other projects.

Practical implications and managerial takeaways

To implement ABM successfully for sustainable communication, organizations need to personalize relative messaging to achieve more substantial stakeholder engagement, according to our findings. While ABM is generally effective, communication strategies must be refined to account for gender differences as well. In other words, for female stakeholders, the communication strategy that the ABM developers use should be reinforced by more personalized content, delivery, tone, and mode of communication. Organizations should also consider a variety of communication formats, such as narrative-driven content or web content, and explore a range channels to more fully engage female players. As far as information, the difference in experience highlights an opportunity for further finetuning ABM content. Specifically, more experienced respondents appear to have a better grasp on the extent to which the information aligns with company goals. Therefore, when implementing ABM for less experienced stakeholders, organizations should consider delivering clear information, simplifying complex concepts, and providing more contextual background.

Based on our findings, organizations would also be advised to carefully customize content delivery for different management roles. In detail, communication campaigns should be refined to ensure that line managers feel equally engaged during communication efforts as sustainability managers. At the same time, efforts should be made to raise awareness among the latter, who focus too much on sustainability instead of being open to other topics such as resilience. ABM is an extremely valuable tool for ensuring clear and consistent communication on sustainability, regardless of a stakeholder's prior involvement in resilience-related projects. However, those with past experience in this regard benefit more when ABM aligns with that topic. Therefore, to maximize the ABM impact, organizations should complement sustainability messaging with other initiatives to build stronger, longer lasting relationships.

Limitations and future research

This study has a number of limitations that open new avenues for additional research in the future. First, we only looked at one value chain

in our experiment; delving into various value chains and industries could provide additional insights. Second, we restricted our study to three factors: communication, awareness, and information. An equally interesting subject to explore is how the ABM strategy enhances sustainable operational efficiency by onboarding stakeholders in sustainability activities. In addition, focusing on studies of specific sectors, such as energy, shipbuilding and manufacturing, would also deepen our understanding further, possibly corroborating or challenging the findings in this research. A final line of investigation is the connection between the improvement in implementing the Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD) and Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive (CSDDD) and the communication of sustainability projects along the supply chain using the ABM approach. This may also be helpful for business owners and managers seeking to ramp up their sustainability performance.

MANAGERIAL IMPACT FACTOR

- **Personalized engagement enhances stakeholder alignment**: ABM enables targeted, account-level communication that deepens understanding of how sustainability initiatives align with stakeholders' goals.
- **Trust and credibility materialize through tailored sustainability messages**: Customized communication fosters transparency and reinforces corporate legitimacy in sustainability and resilience initiatives.
- **Gender-sensitive communication improves inclusivity**: Organizations should adapt tone, format, and channel for ABM messages to better engage female stakeholders and ensure balanced participation.
- **Experience-based differentiation enhances comprehension**: Less experienced managers require clearer, more contextualized sustainability information; seasoned managers value strategic depth and alignment.
- **Cross-functional customization increases effectiveness**: Tailoring ABM content to functional and sustainability managers strengthens communication and awareness across diverse organizational roles.
- **Synergizing sustainability and resilience builds long-term relations**: Combining sustainability messaging with involvement in resilience or related projects amplifies stakeholder awareness and commitment.

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