

## Models for sustainability communications: a comparative study in Chile, Colombia and Ecuador

### *Modelos de comunicación para la sostenibilidad: un estudio comparativo en Chile, Colombia y Ecuador*

Melita Vega

Professor and researcher at Universidad del Azuay (UDA), Ecuador  
mvvega@uazuay.edu.ec  
<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6501-4011>  
<https://ror.org/037xrmj59>

Lorena Solange Retamal-Ferrada

Professor and researcher at Universidad Católica de la Santísima Concepción (UCSC), Chile  
lorenaretamal@ucsc.cl  
<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5714-1507>  
<https://ror.org/03y6k2j68>

Jaime Alberto Orozco-Toro

Professor and researcher at Universidad Pontificia Bolivariana (UPB), Colombia  
jaime.orozco@upb.edu.co  
<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8152-7474>  
<https://ror.org/02dxm8k93>

Caroline Ávila

Professor and researcher at Universidad del Azuay (UDA), Ecuador  
cavila@uazuay.edu.ec  
<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4514-4860>  
<https://ror.org/037xrmj59>

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**Abstract:** this study analyzes the communication contexts in which large organizations in Chile, Colombia, and Ecuador manage their sustainability communications, as well as their main characteristics, strategic orientations, and structural differences within the Latin American organizational landscape. A non-experimental, quantitative methodology was adopted through a survey of 75 organizations in the three countries. The instrument was adapted from the Communication and Sustainability Convergence Model, which evaluates the level of integration between sustainable practices within organizations, their communication formats, and relationships with society. The results show a general recognition of the strategic value of sustainability, but with variations in implementation and impact in each country. Chilean and Colombian organizations mainly execute symmetrical and participatory communication models in which sustainability is aligned with the institutional purpose and reflected through dialogue with stakeholders. In contrast, Ecuadorian organizations show a more instrumental orientation in their practices, with one-way dialogues focused primarily on strengthening corporate reputation and achieving business objectives. These differences stem from contextual factors such as the maturity of regulatory frameworks, social pressure, and the organizations' track record in sustainability. The study concludes that sustainability communications can reach its transformative potential when it is integrated into organizational culture through two-way communication practices.

**Keywords:** sustainability communication, organizational communication, strategic management, stakeholders, Latin America.

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**Resumen:** este estudio analiza los contextos comunicacionales en los que grandes organizaciones de Chile, Colombia y Ecuador gestionan su comunicación para la sostenibilidad, así como sus principales características, orientaciones estratégicas y diferencias estructurales en el ámbito organizacional latinoamericano. Se adoptó una metodología cuantitativa de tipo no experimental mediante la aplicación de un cuestionario a 75 organizaciones de los tres países. El instrumento se basó en el Modelo de Convergencia de Comunicación y Sostenibilidad, el cual evalúa el nivel de integración de las prácticas sostenibles de las organizaciones, sus formatos comunicacionales y relaciones con los públicos. Los resultados muestran un reconocimiento general sobre el valor estratégico de la sostenibilidad, pero con variaciones en su implementación e impacto en cada país. Las organizaciones chilenas y colombianas ejecutan principalmente modelos comunicativos simétricos y participativos en los que la sostenibilidad se alinea con el propósito institucional mediante diálogos con los públicos. En contraste, las organizaciones ecuatorianas muestran una orientación más instrumental en sus prácticas con diálogos unidireccionales centradas en el fortalecimiento de la reputación corporativa y cumplimiento de objetivos comerciales. Estas diferencias se deben a factores como la madurez de los marcos regulatorios, la presión social y la trayectoria institucional en materia de sostenibilidad. El estudio concluye que la comunicación para la sostenibilidad alcanza su potencial transformador cuando es integrada a la cultura organizacional junto con prácticas de comunicación bidireccionales.

**Palabras clave:** comunicación para la sostenibilidad, comunicación organizacional, gestión estratégica, stakeholders, Latinoamérica.

## Introduction

Communication and sustainability aim to establish strong, lasting bonds between an organization and its various stakeholders, ensuring the achievement of its objectives and even its survival. Therefore, it is essential that communication management fosters a direct relationship characterized by constant interaction and genuine understanding of the people within the involved groups, thereby strengthening the link between sustainability processes and the strategies implemented by organizations (Miller *et al.*, 2018; Schmeltz, 2017).

Although communication and sustainability have traditionally been studied as complementary fields (Bartlett *et al.*, 2007; Roper, 2012), in recent years there has been an increase in research addressing their strategic convergence (Orozco-Toro *et al.*, 2023). As a result of this approach, conceptual frameworks have been developed, such as the Model of Sustainability and Communication Contexts proposed by Durán and Mosquera (2016), grounded in public relations theories by Grunig and Hunt (2000), corporate social responsibility by Garriga and Melé (2004), and strategic collaboration by Austin *et al.* (2005). The following sections will address the preeminence and cross-cutting nature of communication and sustainability in organizations.

## Communication for Sustainability

In organizations, communication is understood as a key and relevant process for achiev-

ing proposed goals and guiding stakeholders toward objectives, thereby facilitating the fulfillment of organizational commitments (Cervajal-Ordoñez *et al.*, 2025; Heredia and Sulca-Tapia, 2022). According to Weder (2024), the relationships between organizations and their environment are unique in terms of the direction of communication, its function, and its participatory nature. Consequently, information and communication are the primary foundations for disseminating knowledge about environmental issues and encouraging behavioral changes toward more sustainable practices within organizations (Pinzón-Castro and Maldonado-Guzmán, 2023; Wedayanti *et al.*, 2024), which generate an impact on society.

Thus, it is necessary to distinguish three dimensions to understand the core of communication and sustainability in organizations: communication on sustainability issues as part of public discourse (i.e., deliberative; ensuring open discourse, transparency, and the construction of meaning), communication as a one-way transmission of a specific sustainability issue or policy to achieve a specific effect or objective (instrumental), and finally, communication for sustainability, understood as “a call to action” (Weder *et al.*, 2021).

According to Porter and Kramer (2006), organizations can develop specific communication strategies that convey their commitment to sustainability with the aim of communicating their social commitment to stakeholders. These strategies also allow organizations to demonstrate their performance in comparison to competitors and to various stakeholders

(Bettiol *et al.*, 2024). Consequently, an organization's legitimacy will depend on whether its audiences perceive it to operate ethically, legally, and appropriately within society's system of norms and values (Overton *et al.*, 2022). Organizations committed to sustainability need to provide concrete evidence of their sustainable practices and communicate their commitment effectively (Kim *et al.*, 2024). Therefore, it is important that those responsible for developing and executing sustainability communication plans take into account organizational objectives, including economic, social, and environmental issues, as well as alignment with the corporate purpose.

The creation of relevant and accurate sustainability messages targeted at different stakeholders is fundamental to sustainability communication, as it generates a "call to action" that not only raises awareness but also drives behavioral change toward more responsible practices aligned with sustainable development goals (Mendoza-Solis *et al.*, 2025). Consequently, an effective message (content, channel, target audience) and a coherent organizational discourse (saying and doing) build strong and lasting relationships that reinforce the commitment established with different stakeholders, based on transparent, two-way communication with an emphasis on dialogue with stakeholders (Estanyol *et al.*, 2025; Oliver-González and Martín-Herrero, 2025).

## Sustainability

The growing importance of sustainability is evident in the agendas of countries and private and governmental organizations, under global frameworks such as the 2030 Agenda. In this regard, sustainability has also permeated business discourse, particularly in large companies, which develop policies and actions that impact environmental management as well as social and economic aspects (Costa-Sánchez and Peñafiel-Saiz, 2024). Unfortunately, the relevance of sustainability increased, in part, due to the environmental crisis facing the planet and the various social and economic factors that impact sustainable development.

Debates surrounding sustainability have emerged from various perspectives, including epistemological discussions in Spanish regarding whether the term should be spelled "sostenibilidad" or "sustentabilidad." Ambivalence regarding which term to use is frequently encountered, especially in the Latin American business context. When addressing the topic of development linked to environmental, social, and economic aspects (triple bottom line), authors tend to favor the term "sostenibilidad" (Aguado *et al.*, 2009), while other researchers lean toward the concept of "sustentable" (Foladori and Tommasino, 2000), and finally, there are those who use them interchangeably in their research (Leff, 2004).

From the perspective of organizations, the issue of sustainability has become essential for their own future, and in some sectors it is common for them to also implement or launch other initiatives such as social marketing, corporate social marketing, and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), among others (Barrio-Fraile *et al.*, 2024).

Given this context of sustainability, it is crucial to understand that responsibility for the planet's problems must be assumed by all its inhabitants (Leff, 2004), and is not solely the duty of governments or large companies. However, from a business perspective, the greatest responsibility should fall on large companies, as they should be encouraged to work toward the planet's sustainability, since, after all, they are the ones capable of taking on the challenge of addressing economic, social, and environmental challenges (Ibáñez-Hernández *et al.*, 2025).

Likewise, it can be observed that the current environmental crisis is due to a variety of factors, such as politics and culture (Aguado *et al.*, 2009), globalization, and consumerism (Bauman, 2010). There are even authors who consider large global corporations to be the primary causes of this environmental crisis (Cortina, 2005).

Both public and private sector companies, non-governmental organizations, and citizens have an obligation to embrace sustainability as a daily commitment, and no effort should be spared in this regard (Acevedo-Duque *et al.*,

2023; Bondi and Turnbull, 2025; Eljadue, 2024; Fernández, 2023; Quiles-Soler *et al.*, 2025). Beyond the debate on global warming, the future of the planet is determined by what has been termed “planetary boundaries,” where the Earth has exceeded the limits necessary to sustain life, and it is everyone’s responsibility to reverse this condition (Sachs, 2016).

The objective of this study is to comparatively analyze the communication contexts in which large organizations in Chile, Colombia, and Ecuador manage communication for sustainability, in order to identify strategic orientations, levels of integration, and structural differences between countries. To this end, the following research questions are formulated to guide the study:

1. In what communication contexts for sustainability do the Chilean, Colombian, and Ecuadorian organizations under study operate?
2. What are the differences and similarities between the sustainability communication contexts of the Chilean, Colombian, and Ecuadorian organizations under study?

## Materials and methods

### Design and Participants

This study followed a non-experimental quantitative design. It included 75 large organizations from Chile (n=27), Colombia (n=33), and Ecuador (n=15), selected through a non-probabilistic convenience sampling process. The selection of countries was based on academic and contextual criteria, as they correspond to the researchers’ institutional and professional environments, which facilitated access to organizational networks and ensured the study’s relevance to specific Latin American contexts.

For the selection process, the researchers developed their own database by compiling the 500 largest organizations in Latin America, using rankings published by leading economic

and financial journals in Chile, Colombia, and Ecuador as a reference. Based on this database, organizations with at least 200 employees were identified, based on the assumption that large organizations have greater economic, human, and structural resources to establish sustainable development practices in their management (Sedovs *et al.*, 2025).

This database was cross-referenced with the researchers’ professional and academic networks to identify key contacts—primarily professionals with experience in communications and/or sustainability—who were most likely to respond. In total, 245 invitations were sent by mail across the three countries. After making follow-up calls and sending institutional reminders, and taking into account the data collection period established by the study’s sponsoring entity, a final sample of 75 organizations that completed the survey by May 2024 was obtained (response rate: 30.6%). Although respondents agreed to provide their organizations’ names for categorization purposes, this information was kept confidential.

### Development and updating of the instrument

The instrument was a questionnaire based on the Convergence and Sustainability Model by Durán González and Mosquera López (2016), which establishes four contexts or orientations in which an organization may be situated based on its communication and sustainability practices. It is important to note that the model proposed by these authors has an evolutionary nature marked by the continuum of collaboration by Austin *et al.* (2005), meaning that the contexts do not develop sequentially, i.e., they can evolve over time according to the changing environment and the direction of the organizations (see Table 1).

The original questionnaire, developed by Durán, Mosquera, and Vega (2017) and administered to 16 Ecuadorian organizations, features a constant-sum mechanism and underwent two updates by the researchers of this study. The first update took place in 2019 and

involved revising and updating the original questions to adapt them to a new research context. Subsequently, in 2024, a second update was carried out, which included the demo-

graphic items and adjustments to the wording of some statements, with the aim of increasing their precision and comprehensibility.

**Table 1**  
*Communication and sustainability contexts*

Context/ Orientation (Code)	Approach	Perspective on Social Responsibility	Type of Business
<b>Business (N)</b>	Achievement of business objectives.	Competitive advantage Collaboration: philanthropic	Press agent with one-way communication; communication integrated into marketing and advertising.
<b>Accountability (AC)</b>	Strengthening of corporate image and reputation.	Political-institutional instrument Collaboration: transactional, aligned with organizational interests.	Information for the public through one-way communication for transparency.
<b>Stakeholder interests (SI)</b>	Interest in the needs of stakeholders.	Management that prevents a crisis. Collaboration: transactional.	Two-way asymmetric information with communication practices that seek feedback from the public.
<b>Common good (CG)</b>	Satisfaction of social needs.	Guided by organizational values and recognition of the impact of actions on society. Collaboration: integrative with dialogue.	Symmetrical, two-way communication to foster dialogue with audiences.

Note. Adapted from Durán González and Mosquera López (2016).

The final version of the 2024 questionnaire consisted of 17 questions, seven of which pertained to demographic information and 10 addressed the same sustainability and communication items as the original questionnaire,

with adjustments to the wording. To optimize the processing and analysis of the information, a specific code was assigned to each item (see Table 2).

**Table 2**  
*Items and codes for the communication and sustainability contexts sections of the instrument*

Communication (code)	Sustainability (code)
Information flow within the organization. (C_IF)	Perception of sustainability. (PS)
Communication objectives. (C_CO)	Type of collaboration within the organization. (TC)
Communication strategies. (C_CS)	Planning and resources for SR (PRS)
Ideal profile of the professional communicator. (C_PC)	Planning for environmental preservation (PEP)
Organizational discourse on sustainability. (C_OD)	Respect for human rights. (RHR)

Note. Adapted from Durán González and Mosquera López (2016).

As seen in Table 2, the areas of communication and sustainability each have five items (variables), and each item presents the respondent with four statements corresponding to one of the four contexts or orientations proposed in the model by Durán González and Mosquera López (2016). The survey followed a scoring design called “constant sum,” meaning participants had to distribute up to a maximum of 10 points among the four statements. It should be noted that respondents had the option to assign most or all 10 points to a single statement if it best described the practices used in their organization. In other words, it was possible to assign zero points to one of the statements representing a context or orientation.

A pilot test was conducted to evaluate the items included in the questionnaire and obtain constructive feedback. In November 2024, the researchers sent the survey via Survio to six of their professional and academic contacts, including journalists, communications managers, and sustainability engineers. The selection criteria were based on having experience in the areas of strategic communication and/or sustainable management, considering that in some organizations these areas are not necessarily integrated into the same department. The feedback received focused on two main aspects: (1) the format and functionality of the survey on the Survio platform and (2) the wording of certain titles and statements. Regarding the format, it was recommended to expand the instructions on how to allocate the 10 points among the four statements, in order to avoid confusion and explicitly specify that it was possible to assign zero points to any of them. Likewise, it was suggested to incorporate an “accept” button to reinforce informed consent and the confidentiality of the responses. Regarding the wording, the reviewers pointed out the need to clarify certain terms used in the question titles. Consequently, the title “conceptual framework” was replaced by “conception of sustainability,” and “public relations” by “communication,” as these were considered broader and more understandable concepts. In addition, certain expressions were adjusted to improve semantic clarity; for example, the phrase “we usually do” was replaced by

“frequently.” After incorporating these observations, the average response time was reduced from 14 to 12 minutes on average. It should be noted that the researchers did not change the constant summing mechanism established by the authors of the original questionnaire.

The survey was emailed to the participant database between November 2024 and May 2025. During this period, which was set to meet the deadlines specified by the study’s sponsoring institution, the researchers made follow-up calls to encourage participation and reinforce the confidentiality of the information provided. Finally, the participants’ responses were aggregated and averaged to enable the analysis of each of the variables in the areas of communication and sustainability.

## Validation process

The instrument employs the constant sum mechanism for each question, as originally designed by Durán, Mosquera, and Vega (2017), with the aim of identifying the relative importance assigned to the presented statements. It was decided to retain this format in order to maintain methodological fidelity to the theoretical reference model. By allowing for the capture of internal priority configurations rather than absolute levels of agreement, the mechanism does not meet the necessary conditions for conducting an internal consistency validation using Cronbach’s Alpha (Clow and James, 2014). This is primarily because the assignment of points among four possible statements creates a forced dependency among them, even though they represent different characteristics of the communication and sustainability contexts. Due to these characteristics, the researchers used the Entropy and Gini indices to detect possible automatic or random responses across the two dimensions of the instrument ( $n=10$ ) and thus assess the instrument’s validity.

Entropy has been used in several studies on organizational information management (Morillo Sánchez, 2024; Tchupo and Macht, 2023) to measure the degree of dispersion or uncertainty in a set of survey responses. A high entropy index reflects a balance among the responses

given to the presented options—i.e., the surveys do not show a preference for any particular option (index close to 1)—while a low entropy index reflects a concentration of responses on one or two options, indicating a clear preference (index close to 0).

On the other hand, the Gini index measures the level of inequality in a distribution of responses and has been used in surveys that assess preferences among participants (Wagner *et al.*, 2025). A low Gini index (close to 0) indicates a balanced distribution of responses; a high index (close to 1) indicates that responses lean toward a single category or preference. The statistical software R was used to calculate these indices.

## Data Analysis

To compare variations in the responses collected from each country, the nonparametric Mann-Whitney U test was used, which is suitable for small, independent samples without a normal distribution. The calculations were performed in Jamovi, an open-source statistical software, setting a significance level at  $p < 0.05$ ; i.e., there is statistical significance when the p-value is less than 0.05. The following hypotheses were formulated:

1. **Null hypothesis (Ho):** There are no statistically significant differences between the communication and sustainability practices reported by the organizations in the study.
2. **Alternative hypothesis (Ha):** There are significant differences between the communication and sustainability practices reported by the organizations in the study.

## Results and discussion

### Validation results

In the Sustainability (S) dimension, the results of the responses showed a solid and consistent distribution across the four possible contexts and, in turn, revealed clear differences in intensity. In the Communication (C) dimension, the responses exhibited a balanced distribution

with moderate and well-defined ranges across the four contexts. Overall, the questions generated consistent Gini and Entropy patterns (no percentages were found at the high extremes of Gini  $> 0.80$ , and there were few percentages near the extreme range of entropy  $< 0.25$ ), i.e., respondents understood and answered the instrument's questions without generating automatic responses or anomalies, which is considered a good indicator of validity.

### Organizational profile

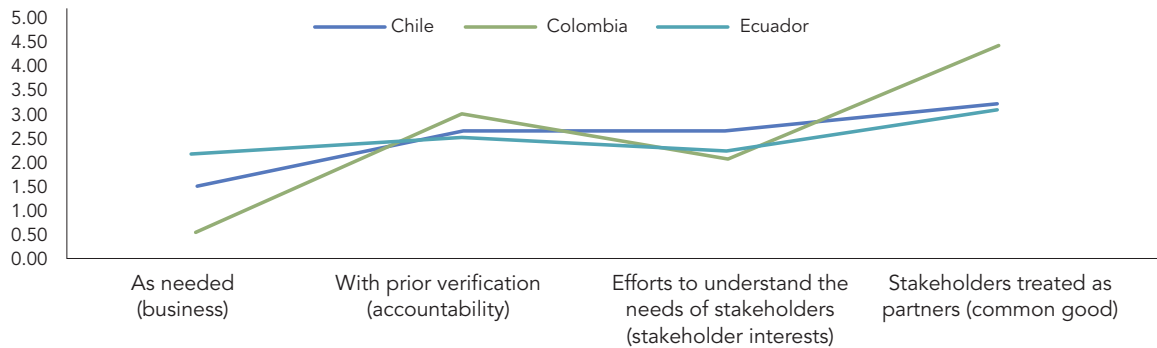
The most representative economic activities in the sample were education (17.33%), industry (12%) (textiles, wood, metals, plastics, etc.), communications and technology (9.33%), food and beverages (8%), logistics and transportation (6.67%), commerce (6.67%), energy (5.33%), government and public service organizations (6.67%), construction (4%), mining and/or oil (4%), fishing and agriculture (4%), healthcare (4%), brokerage (1.33%), consulting (4%), cosmetics (1.33%), funeral services (1.33%), insurance (1.33%), vehicle sales and rentals (1.33%), and tourism (1.33%).

### Results in the field of communication

#### *Variable: Information processes and flows (C\_IF)*

Although there was no statistical significance for this variable, the graph shows that information flows in organizations across the three countries trend toward the Common Good context, particularly in Colombia. On the other hand, Ecuadorian organizations showed the strongest orientation toward Business (Figure 1).

**Figure 1**  
Information Flow



Note: Prepared by the authors based on data from the 2025 survey.

Some of the respondents from the participating organizations offered the following comments, which reflect certain variations among the three countries:

- They should improve in the areas of communication, human relations, and other matters so that they can succeed with their employees, who are the ones driving the company forward. (Respondent 61 from an Ecuadorian organization).
- The company seeks to continuously communicate strategic objectives across all areas to promote clarity in processes, motivate quality in their roles, and enable them to be key players in everyone's growth. (Respondent 39 from a Colombian organization).

- Communication should aim to convey the organization's purpose and the shared value creation initiatives it undertakes. (Informant 2 from a Chilean organization).

#### Variable: Communication Objectives (C\_CO)

Figure 2 shows that Ecuadorian organizations exhibit a stronger sales orientation regarding communication objectives, i.e., a business-oriented context. In Chile, there is a greater inclination toward the common good. Despite these variations, these differences were not statistically significant.

**Figure 2**  
Communication Objectives



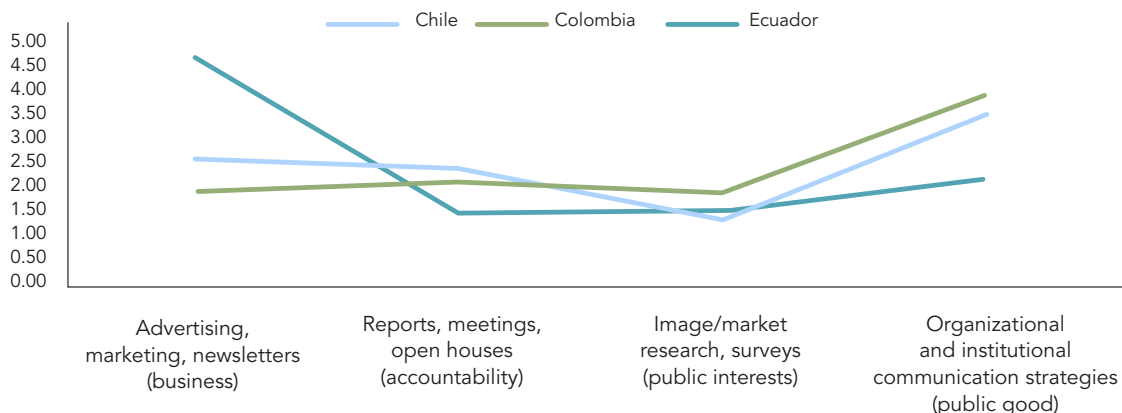
Note: Prepared by the authors based on data from the 2025 survey.

**Variable: Communication Strategies (C\_CS)**

Figure 3 shows that respondents' answers in the three countries point toward the more evolved context—i.e., the Common Good con-

text—especially in Colombia and Chile. On the other hand, in Ecuadorian organizations, an orientation toward the Business context is observed. These differences regarding the Business context are statistically significant ( $p=0.014$ ).

**Figure 3**  
Communication Strategies



Note. Prepared by the authors based on data from the 2025 survey.

Respondent comment:

The sustainability policy in my organization is very well integrated with strategic communication, both at the corporate level and in advertising messages, as well as at different levels such as internal and external communication. (Respondent 26 from a Chilean organization).

**Variable: Profile of the Ideal Communicator (C\_PC)**

Figure 4 shows a preference for two main profiles situated in two opposing contexts: Business and Common Good. The results of the statistical calculations show no significant differences among the three countries, meaning they all follow the same trend.

**Figure 4**  
Profile of the ideal communicator



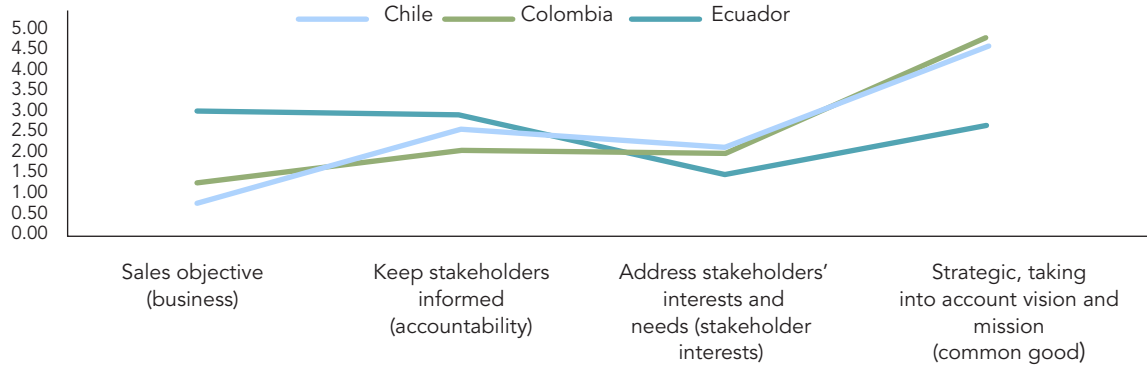
Note. Prepared by the author based on data from the 2025 survey.

**Variable: Organizational Discourse (C\_OD)**

Organizations in Chile and Colombia lean primarily toward the Common Good context

(Figure 5). In contrast, in Ecuador, a greater tendency toward the Business context is observed. In this regard, the difference between Ecuador and the other countries is significant ( $p=0.037$ ).

**Figure 5**  
Organizational discourse



Note. Prepared by the author based on data from the 2025 survey.

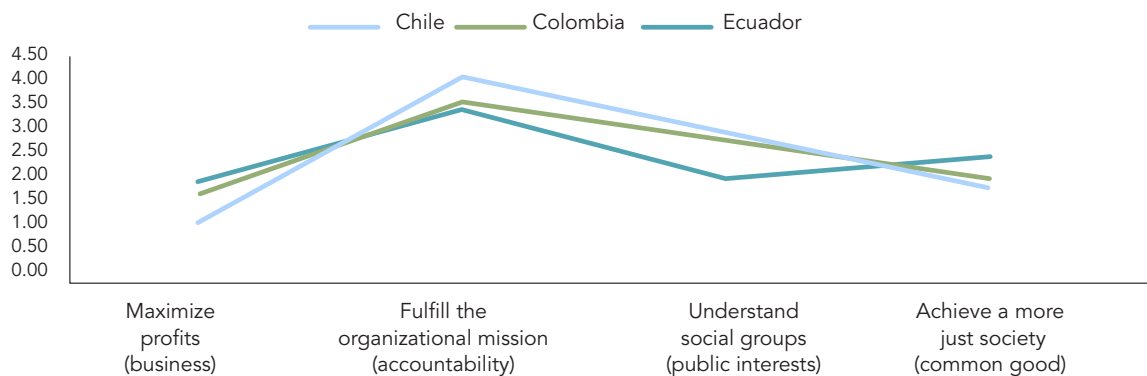
**Results in the area of sustainability**

orientation toward the accountability context in terms of their conception of sustainability (see Figure 6).

**Variable: Perspective on sustainability (PS)**

The responses reflect insignificant differences between countries, as all demonstrate an

**Figure 6**  
Conception of sustainability



Note. Prepared by the author based on data from the 2025 survey.

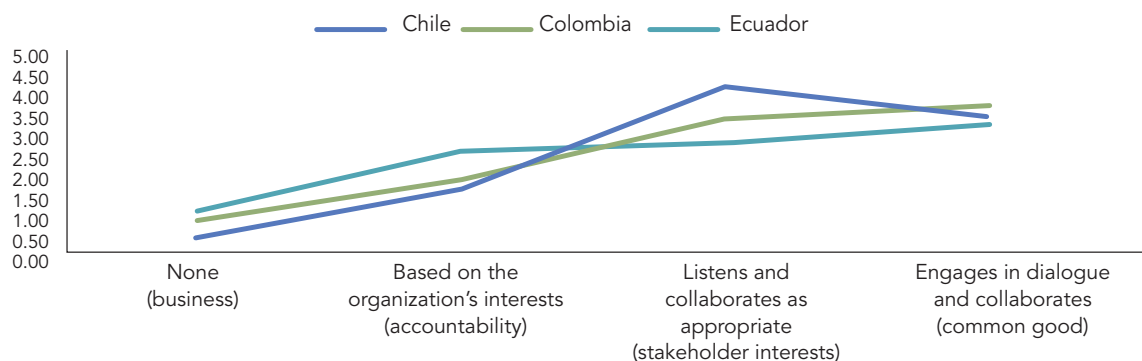
Respondent comment:

(...) it is a company that has truly demonstrated its interest in working on sustainability and implementing it, being very consistent with its value of integrity and putting into practice what it promotes. (Respondent 45 from a Colombian organization).

**Variable: Type of collaboration (TC)**

The responses reflect non-significant differences between countries, as they point toward the context of Stakeholder Interests, i.e., they listen to requests for collaboration to decide whether they can be addressed without losing sight of the organization’s needs (Figure 7).

**Figure 7**  
Type of collaboration



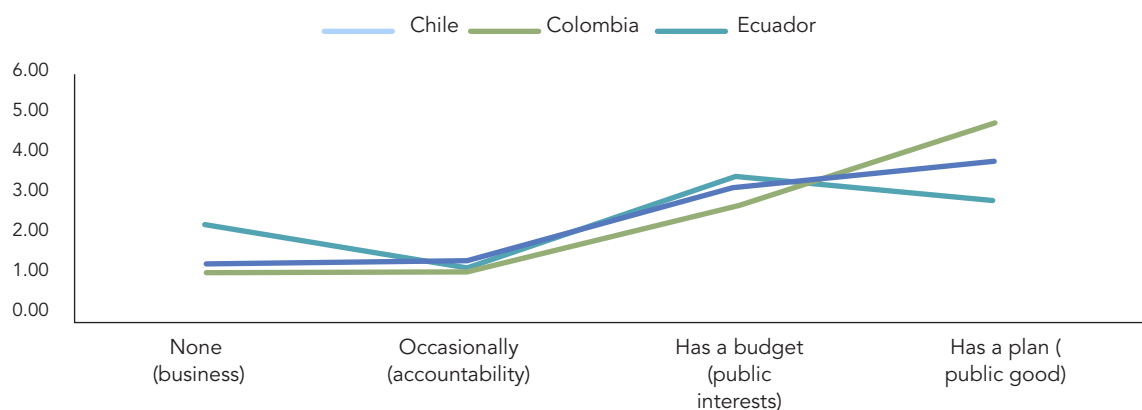
Note. Prepared by the author based on data from the 2025 survey.

**Variable: Planning and Resources for Sustainability (PRS)**

in Ecuador an orientation toward the Public Interests context is observed. However, these differences are not significant (see Figure 8).

Organizations in Chile and Colombia appear to be oriented toward the Common Good, while

**Figure 8**  
Planning and resources for social responsibility



Note. Prepared by the author based on data from the 2025 survey.

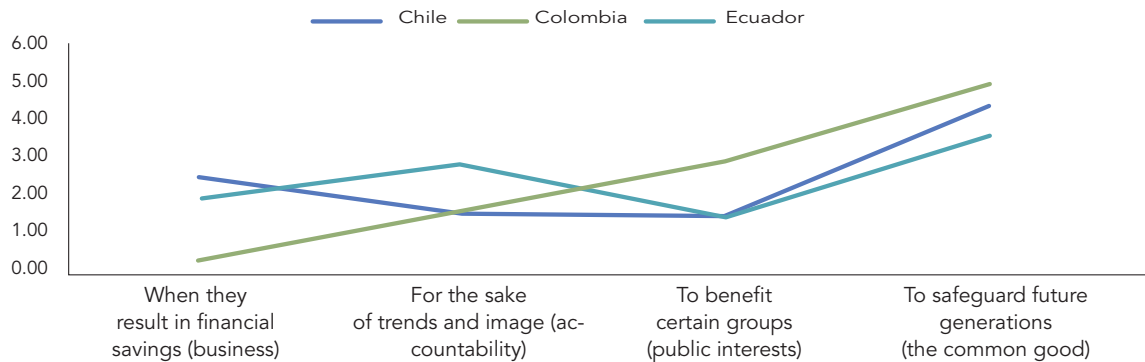
### Variable: Environmental Care Planning (PEP)

the three countries, as all demonstrate an orientation toward the Common Good (Figure 9).

Regarding actions to protect the environment, there are no significant differences among

**Figure 9**

*Environmental Care Planning*



Note. Prepared by the author based on data from the 2025 survey.

Respondent comment:

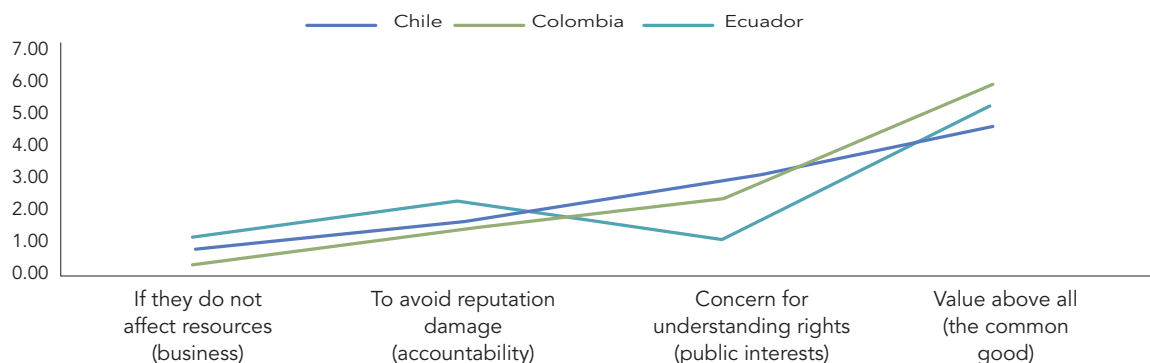
Sustainability is part of the organization's DNA; it is considered a strategic process, has an ESG plan, and aligns with the 2030 Agenda, the 2050 goals, and the SDGs. It is vital to understand that this is not just one aspect but is at the core of how we operate as an industry, caring for people, the business, and the planet so we can be here for another 100 years. (Respondent 66 from an Ecuadorian organization).

### Variable: Respect for the rights of others (RHR)

The responses from the three countries in Figure 10 show a general inclination toward the Common Good context, i.e., they view respect for the rights of others as a value above all others. In Ecuadorian organizations, however, a shift toward the Stakeholder Interests context is observed. This result approaches statistical significance ( $p=0.05$ ).

**Figure 10**

*Respect for the rights of others*



Note. Prepared by the author based on data from the 2025 survey.

## Discussion

This comparative study analyzed how communication practices for sustainability are shaped in organizations across three Latin American countries, based on the perspectives of communication and/or sustainability professionals who participated in the survey. By applying an empirical approach, patterns were identified that reveal that according to respondents' answers, organizations appear to be making progress in integrating sustainability and communication into their strategies and practices, albeit with certain differences in their orientations. With this analysis, we will proceed to answer the research questions posed at the beginning of the study.

### *Q1: Communication contexts for sustainability in which the organizations operate*

The first question sought to identify the communication contexts for sustainability in which the organizations under study operate. The data suggest that in Chile and Colombia, the participating organizations have achieved greater alignment with the context of the Common Good in terms of their communication practices (information communication processes, objectives, strategies, and discourse) and sustainability (resource planning, environmental preservation, and respect for the rights of others). This is reflected in those responses indicating the use of more symmetrical and two-way communication models. The actions in these two countries incorporate diverse strategic communication tools to achieve both internal and external objectives, consistent with the findings of Estanyol *et al.* (2025) regarding the importance of dialogue with stakeholders. In these dialogues, sustainability is conceived as part of corporate strategy and not merely as a reputational tool.

In contrast, the perceptions of professionals in Ecuadorian organizations show a more pronounced business orientation, reflecting a less evolved context characterized by patterns of limited information dissemination—or only that which is convenient for the organization.

Communication management in these organizations shows significant signs of stagnation in this context, where the focus is on traditional strategies such as press releases, advertising, and cause-related marketing that serve reputational objectives. According to Porter and Kramer (2006), this type of action limits innovation and the transformative capacity of communication for sustainability.

At the same time, the responses from Ecuadorian participants show signs of slight progress toward the context of Stakeholder Interests. This finding stems from the emphasis on business objectives in communication through more traditional strategies, and from conceiving sustainability primarily as a tool to enhance image and reputation within the context of Corporate Social Responsibility. While a moderate approach is observed regarding environmental planning and the type of collaboration provided to other entities, an instrumental logic persists that delays the transition toward the Common Good. This observation aligns with the findings of authors such as Schmeltz (2017) and Weder *et al.* (2021), who assert that once organizations transition to more two-way dialogue models, they are able to move beyond a marketing mindset to create genuine commitments to society.

### *Differences and similarities between organizational communication contexts for sustainability*

The second question addresses the differences and similarities among the countries under study. It was found that the main similarity is the recognition of sustainability as part of the strategic agenda and as a commitment to fulfilling the organizational mission in society (Costa-Sánchez and Peñafiel-Saiz, 2024). It is also observed among the participating organizations a preference for two ideal profiles for a professional communicator: on the one hand, experts with knowledge in the area of advertising and communications integrated into marketing are valued, and on the other, professionals with a holistic view of the organization's objectives—i.e., communicators who seek con-

sistency between what is said and what is done (Oliver-González and Martín-Herrero, 2025).

However, while organizations in Chile and Colombia appear to be oriented toward collaborative models that prioritize dialogue for the Common Good, in Ecuador a predominantly instrumental, business-oriented approach is observed, particularly regarding communication strategies and organizational discourse. This contrast can be explained by contextual factors such as the maturity of regulatory frameworks, pressure from stakeholders, and differing Corporate Social Responsibility practices in each country (Bondi and Turnbull, 2025; Overton *et al.*, 2022). While there are signs of nascent environmental planning and collaboration with the public in this country, an instrumental orientation persists, in which actions to protect the environment arise because they are trendy and because they help strengthen organizational reputation. This orientation aligns with what several authors have proposed regarding the potential of Corporate Social Responsibility as a competitive differentiator (Bettioli *et al.*, 2024).

In this context, many of the actions carried out under the umbrella of sustainability are symbolic and superficial, as they align more closely with the logic of greenwashing. As Porter and Kramer (2006) warn, these practices do little to earn public trust and hinder the transformative potential of communication for the common good.

## Conclusions

This article, which examines models for communicating sustainability through a comparative study of three Latin American countries (Chile, Colombia, and Ecuador), has identified differences and similarities, offering valuable insights for companies in any business sector.

The study reveals a tension between two approaches: one focused on dialogue and the transformation of stakeholder interests, and the other on market logic and reputation—i.e., on business. The Ecuadorian case highlights the limitations inherent in viewing sustainability as an instrumental resource. Communication follows traditional formats and one-way commu-

nication flows to maintain control over shared information. In certain contexts, some stakeholders are approached from an instrumental logic that emphasizes their status as consumers, which limits the recognition of their diversity and capacity for dialogue during the organizational analysis and decision-making process. To overcome this, it is necessary to review communication channels and power structures to redistribute them and pave the way for a more authentic social dialogue.

Although the study did not aim to analyze the contextual factors behind organizational behavior, these are important variables to consider. In contexts where environmental regulation is weak and the tradition of Corporate Social Responsibility is in its initial phase, as in the case of Ecuador, organizations tend to have more conservative and one-way communication practices. In contrast, in more mature cases such as those observed in Chile and Colombia, sustainability is part of the organization's mission and objectives; they use more open communication channels and strategies that go beyond simply enhancing reputational positioning. Therefore, it can be concluded that it is not enough to incorporate sustainable discourse into corporate media; rather, it is necessary to transform communication into a structural practice, permeating internal culture and strategic decisions. It is advisable to critically review the communicative use of sustainability, as well as to develop better ethical and regulatory frameworks to generate greater coherence in decision-making.

From a theoretical perspective, these findings strengthen the Convergence Model between sustainability and strategic communication by demonstrating that the transition toward contexts oriented toward the Common Good does not respond solely to communicational decisions, but to institutional, regulatory, and cultural conditions that shape the type of dialogue possible. This broadens our understanding of bidirectional models by showing that their implementation depends on the maturity of the environment and the effective recognition of stakeholders as dialogue partners rather than merely as strategic audiences.

In practical terms, the research suggests that organizations that remain stuck in instrumental approaches limit their ability to generate sustained legitimacy. It is necessary to strengthen internal structures that promote dialogue, integrate sustainability into strategic planning, and align communication plans with the evolving environment, so that the entire organization acts coherently toward achieving its objectives and the triple bottom line.

The main practical implication of this study is the need for organizations to continue joining forces to improve dialogue with their audiences, better organize their communication and media plans, understand how the environment is evolving to align communication plans, and ensure that the entire organization works toward achieving its objectives and the triple bottom line.

Among the main limitations of the study is its non-experimental, cross-sectional quantitative design. While this allows for the description of trends and differences among the countries studied, it does not aim to establish causal relationships since it does not analyze the temporal evolution of organizational practices. Furthermore, while the study sample is relevant for including large Latin American organizations, it exhibits an uneven distribution across the analyzed countries (Chile  $n=27$ , Colombia  $n=33$ , and Ecuador  $n=15$ ), which limits the identification of significant differences in some variables—particularly in the case of Ecuador—as well as the generalizability of the results. Additionally, since the data is self-reported by key informants, the results are based on individual perceptions of organizational practices and not necessarily on their actual implementation.

Future research could expand the sample sizes and incorporate contextual variables such as regulatory frameworks and leadership styles to further explain the differences and identify causal relationships across the various dimensions of communication for sustainability.

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Authors	Contributions
Melita Vega	Project supervisor, methodology, data analysis.
Lorena Solange Retamal-Ferrada	Conceptualization, drafting—original draft.
Jaime Alberto Orozco-Toro	Writing, review, and editing: literature review, introduction, theoretical framework.
Caroline Ávila	Writing, review, and editing: discussion, conclusions.

### Statement on the use of artificial intelligence

The authors **DECLARE** that, in the preparation of the article titled: “Communication Models for Sustainability: A Comparative Study in Chile, Colombia, and Ecuador,” artificial intelligence (AI) was not used at any stage of the process.