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The Triple Bottom Line is Obsolete. The Quintuple Bottom Line Represents the Future

Maria Silvia Avi

Full Professor in Business Administration Management Department- Ca'Foscari Venezia S. Giobbe – Cannaregio 873- 30121 Venezia (Italy)

*Correspondence author
Maria Silvia Avi
Full Professor in Business Administration
Management Department- Ca'Foscari Venezia
S. Giobbe – Cannaregio 873- 30121
Venezia (Italy)

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Abstract

Sustainability is a hotly debated topic in science, doctrine, society and politics. We often hear or read that sustainability, although not implemented by various categories of actors, physical or legal, is widespread thanks to the communication implemented in recent years. When addressing this issue, all scholars refer to the Triple Bottom Line . This article will show how this concept is now obsolete, as sustainability, to be implemented by companies of any size, requires two elements that are not considered in the Triple Bottom Line: culture and ethics. The article will show how the Triple Bottom Line must be superseded by the Quintuple Botton Line , which, by now, represents the future.

Keywords : Triple Bottom Line, Quintuple Bottom Line, sustainability, green washing, sustainable corporate behaviour, integrated report.

Financial/income or sustainability-related corporate communication: introductory concepts

Outward-looking corporate communication has undergone an extremely significant evolution in recent decades. Before illustrating how this evolution has developed, it is appropriate to highlight the concept of communication. According to most scholars, the concept of communication must be used in a broad sense to encompass all processes through which one thought, or form of communication can influence another [1]. In general, communication is identified as a transfer of coded information, i.e. transmitted through a code that may or may not is understood by the interlocutor. In this context, information passes from one subject to another by means of a process of emission transmission-reception and interpretation of the data provided. It is evident how interpretation, in this context, is essential because if the coding is not understood, the information, although supplied correctly, is not received by the third-party receiver and therefore, the communication process can be said to have failed. The starting point for any consideration of communication is masterfully expressed by Watzlawich, Beavin and Jackson when they state that "first of all, there is a property of behaviour that could hardly be more fundamental and, precisely because it is too obvious, is often overlooked: behaviour has non opposite [2]. In other words, there is no such thing as non-behaviour or, to put it even more simply, it is not possible not to have behaviour. Now, if one accepts that the whole of behaviour in an interaction situation has the value of a message, i.e. it is communication, it follows

that, however one tries, one can not communicate'.

This theory created a true scientific revolution, in the Kuhnian sense of the term, and caused a profound break with the studies developed previously; in fact, the definitions of communication for¬malised in the 1940s and 1950s, although they hinted at a remarkable evolutionary process, had never specifically highlighted this particular aspect of human behaviour.

Watzlavich, Beavin and Jackson, on the other hand, analysed the consequences of what one might call an individual's 'passive behaviour' and stated that every individual, regardless of whether or not he or she has the goal of sending messages to third parties, communicates with the outside world by simply adopting or not adopting a certain behaviour.

From the axiom of Watzlavich, Beavin and Jackson derive the need for every individual to devise a real communication strategy since this is the only way in which subjects are able to plan and thus somehow keep under control the messages they voluntarily or involuntarily and continuously send to the outside world.

It is understandable how such statements, having considerable relevance in every field of human action, acquire particular importance in the corporate world. Thus, whether a company

implements an information policy aimed at the outside world or no communication policy at all, it actually communicates. The difference is that the lack of communication will be interpreted by third parties if the issue not dealt with is considered to be of major importance, as an element that provides the company's desire to keep within its privacy some information that it does not want to disclose. This can greatly influence the corporate image that the company builds with all the acts that it puts into practice. It is clear that the absence of communication causes the creation of a negative image of the company, at least with regard to the issue that the company refuses to deal with in the documents intended for third parties outside the company.È pertanto nell'interesse dell'azienda stessa programmare l'attività di comunicazione, in quanto solo così evita il pericolo di inviare ai terzi, in modo magari inconsapevole, dei mes¬saggi sfavorevoli.

Shannon and Weaver continued their investigation by identifying what can be called a 'communication system' [1]. For these scholars, "the source of information chooses the desired message [...], the transmitter converts this message into the signal, which is sent to the receiver via the communication channel [...]. It is, unfortunately, characteristic that in the course of transmission, certain things are added to the signal that was not intended by the source of information [...]. Any alteration in the transmitted signal is referred to by Shannon and Weaver as noise'. The communication system illustrated above was represented by Shannon and Weaver as follows:
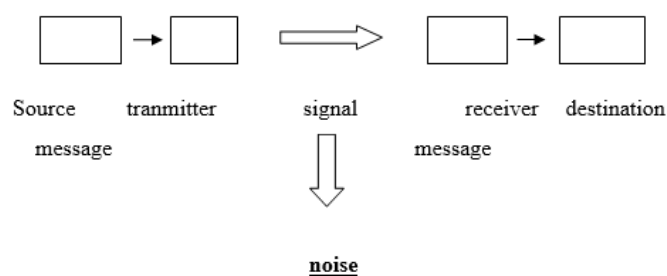
Outline from Shannon-Weaver, The Mathematical Theory of Communications, p. 6

The system described above was intended to illustrate communication according to a cybernetic approach. Albeit with some fortifications, which, however, do not distort the system itself, the principles set out by Shannon and Weaver can also be applied to the field of corporate communication of an economic-financial nature. The source of information, identifiable in the board of directors and/or the company management, focuses its attention on the message it intends to convey to the receiver. This message, in order to be transmitted, must be converted into a signal, which is then sent to the receiver via a communication channel. In the context of communication by means of financial statements, the message is represented by the company's situation in terms of its income statement, the channel is the financial statements, and the receiver is the party to whom the financial statements are addressed. In the case of communications of internal company data, the message and channel may be different (e.g. message alpha: the unit cost

of a product, a channel for message alpha: cost construction tables; message beta: comparison between target data and results achieved, a channel for message beta: standard cost accounting; etc.), but the principles do not change. In the latter hypothesis, the receiver is the internal party to whom the data is addressed.

In the system illustrated by Shannon and Weaver, the alteration of the signal due to noise is related to an unintended disturbance. By 'translating' the aforementioned principles, referring to a cybernetic system, to a theory of communication applicable in the business sphere, it is possible to hypothesise that noise can identify a disturbance, even partially voluntary, of the signal. In the presence of such a disturbance, it is evident how the signal 'picked up' by the receiver is attributed a meaning that is apparently correct insofar as it is connected to the signal sent but is actually distorted when read in the light of the code that, due to the noise, is different from what it appears to be. Consider, for example, the problem of end-of-year evaluations. If the message contained in the communication channel "integrated report" is substantiated by this sentence: "The company implements all the policies regarding sustainability provided for by law and regulations concerning the various issues falling under the concept of sustainability", and if by practice, or the will of the company management, or even bad faith and/or good faith, many company actions are contrary to these regulations and implement, for example, gender discrimination racial discrimination, negative impact on the environment, etc.). , it is evident that signal noise prevents the correct reception of the message [3-7].

The noise, which in this specific case would be represented by the implementation of a corporate strategy contrary to what was communicated externally, would cause what could be called a "short circuit" of communication, the consequence of which would be that the message sent through a signal is perceived by the receiver for what it appears from the signal itself, which, however, does not correspond to the substance of the message itself. One might wonder whether, instead of noise, it would not be more correct to speak of a message 'disguised' as another message. It is also possible that the disturbance is, perhaps, voluntary but implemented in the absence of consciousness of the error. Consider, for example, the case in which a company communicates externally that it is implementing an anti-pollution policy for air and water and that, without being aware that a certain chemical element considered by the company to be non-polluting, is, in fact, an element that creates pollution in the air and water. In these cases of perfect good faith, the disturbance is exactly the noise identified by Shannon and Weaver. In the writer's opinion, in full awareness of the perfectibility of this assertion, it is, however, possible to assert that, in the field, we are investigating, the disturbance defined as noise can also be used in cases where a partial or total intention to create a micro-crash in communication is discernible. However, it is evident how, in these cases, the demarcation line between noise and 'deception' is blurred, thin and often evanescent.

It should be noted that noise can also result from the use of two different codes by the sender and receiver of the message, respectively. In this regard, there is an obvious connection with Jakobson's statement, who obviously attributed essential importance to the code in any communication process. Jakobson states in this regard: "A normal communication process operates with a cypher and a decipherer. The decipherer receives a message: the message is new to him, but, thanks to the code he knows, he interprets the message [...]. The receiver (then) understands the message on the basis of the code........In order to be operative, the message [...] requires a code wholly, or at least partially, common to both sender and receiver (or, in other words, to the encoder and decoder of the message)" [8].

If the sender and receiver think they are using the same code but, in reality, interpret the message using different codes, the disturbance Shannon and Weaver speak of could also be identified in the unconscious diversity of the code used by the sender of the message and the receiver. With reference to the problem of tax pollution in financial statements, it can be assumed, not deviating much from reality, that the preparer of the financial statements uses, either as a matter of practice or out of misplaced good faith, tax principles to determine income and asset values, and the recipient of the information believes that valuations are made by slavishly applying national and/or international accounting principles, as well as civil law. In this specific case, the noise would obviously be related to a different code of the sender and the addressee, which is not apparent as it is implicit in the message.

Regardless of whether or not one adheres to the above considerations, it is in any case established that information that translates into communication if intended for a user can be genuinely useful if it is free of false signals received from the recipients of the communication itself In reports intended for users outside the company it is, therefore, possible that one may encounter
1. unintentional noise: in this case, the observations made above regarding external company communication apply;
2. 'voluntary' noise: in this case, one should assume, rather than a diversity of code, a real intention to provide information that differs from what is apparently communicated to the addressee. This occurs, for example, when the sender knows that the outgoing message is X and will be interpreted as such by the recipient but performs the sending operation in the knowledge that, in reality, the real concept sent is Y. However, in this specific case, the concept of noise does not fit well with the illustration of what is happening in the communication process. It would be better to use the terms deception, trickery or even fraud - situations, the latter extraneous to the issue we intend to address and investigate.

To conclude, we would like to recall a concept expressed by Sanders Peirce, the man who is considered by most scholars to be one of the fathers of modern semiotics. This scholar is known, among other things, for having expounded the concept of the triad, or rather, for having illustrated various facets of this notion, since in the Collected Papers, the publication of which was posthumous to his death, various notions of the triad can be identified. According to the concept most studied by the doctrine as used by the author, the so-called triad can be understood as the set of three elements: sign, interpreter and object. Without claiming to delve into such a complex subject, it is nevertheless interesting to note how the scholar defines the sign (also identified with the term representamen) as "[...] something which stands to somebody for something in some respect or capacity. It addresses somebody, that is, creates in the mind of that person an equivalent sign or perhaps a more developed sign. That sign which it creates I call the interpretant of the first sign. The sign stands for something, its object". Da quanto riportato dall'opera di Sanders Peirce, il segno identifica qualcosa che sta secondo a qualcuno per qualcosa in qualche contesto o aspetto o capacità. Il segno è quindi qualcosa che si rivolge a qualcuno e in questo qualcuno crea ciò che lo studioso chiama "equivalent sign", i.e. a more developed sign.

The latter represents the interpreter of the first sign. The interpretant or representamen stands for something: its object. The object is, therefore, what the sign stands for or, as many authors state, what the sign refers to. Signs can be of various kinds: in the subject matter of our interest, such elements identify symbols, as they can only be associated with their meaning by convention. The correlation between the form and meaning of the sign is only the result of a general 'agreement'/'understanding'/'compromise'. This is the case with all numbers, for which no logical or explicit relationship can be identified between the structural elements of the sign and the meaning normally attributed to it.

Very relevant is the continuation of the above quotation. Sanders Peirce, in fact, states that the sign "stands for that object not in all respects, but in reference to a sort of idea, which I have sometimes called the ground of the representamen". Reading other parts of his work, one understands that the scholar believes that the sign cannot produce a direct, objective and universally accepted form of knowledge of the object. In reality, the object of the sign must belong to a complex of 'knowledge', broadly understood, of the interpreter (who is not to be confused with the interpreter). Only when this is the case can the sign provide notions/information/communication through the interpreter. According to Sanders Peirce, this consideration makes it perfectly conceivable that a sign is 'filled' with objects differentiated according to the interpreters, who are the recipients of the sign. This is the logical consequence of the fact that the different interpreters are characterised by different knowledge and experiences, which fill the object of the sign with different contents, despite the perfect equality of the sign itself.

From these brief considerations, it is clear how communication, understood in the broadest sense, depends both on how it is disseminated and 'how it is received by the interpreter'.

This issue related to the interpretation of communication

is particularly relevant in the field of financial reporting since, in the various documents that make-up the company's financial, income and asset communication, communication is implemented through accounting signs that, if misinterpreted by the external user for whom they are intended, invalidate the communication itself.

It may be asked whether, when addressing the issue of sustainability communication, this issue is relevant. The answer is certainly positive. In fact, communication concerning sustainability is also implemented through signs, even if often, the form used is verbal and not merely through symbols. If, however, socio-environmental communication is complete, signs have considerable relevance, as communication can be said to be complete if, alongside verbal descriptions of the phenomena being analysed, quantitative and qualitative data are provided, which, by necessity, must be formalised through symbols and signs and codes that the external user must be able to interpret. If the information concerning, for example, the environmental impact is implemented in an extremely technical manner, through the use of terminology understandable only to experts in the field and through symbols not commonly used in the language and communication implemented between subjects who are not experts in the field analysed by the document in question, one can easily understand how communication intended for the outside world probably fails in its informative intent. One has to wonder how much this is voluntary or how much unintentional compared to what the company intended. We will dwell on this particular issue in the following section.

Corporate communication to third parties outside the company: from no information to integrated reporting consisting of financial reporting and the sustainability report

Corporate communication to the outside world, whether it relates to profitability, balance sheet and financial data or sustainability, has developed in various countries with many difficulties, as companies have always tended to be reluctant to disclose information about their activities.

Difficulties as companies have always tended to be averse to disclosing information about the conduct of their business. In recent years, there has also been a change in corporate behaviour, especially with regard to large companies, which have realised how communicating can be a winning strategic element that allows them, among other things, to increase their profitability.

Nowadays, we can state that, with particular reference to Financial reporting, all nations have evolved economies and have legislation that regulates, in a more or less stringent manner, the drafting and content of Financial reporting and of the documents that make-up this corporate information system. In most countries, Financial reporting consists of the balance sheet, the profit and loss and the cash flow statement. In many countries, such as Italy, Financial reporting is completed by a document that illustrates in detail the items in the financial statements and provides other useful information to users outside the company.

The evolution of the disclosure of information intended for the outside world through the disclosure of financial reporting has, in all nations, been long and littered with bitter disputes between the doctrine and the corporate legislature. At the beginning of the last century, in most nations, there were no regulations governing Financial reporting, so each company identified the content of this document, often providing only a few accounting items which, of course, had almost zero information content. Around the 1930s, in the United States of America, due to the great crisis of 1929, the SEC imposed regulations on corporate financial and earnings reports. In Italy, for example, at that time, the judges considered that they could not intervene in clearly false financial reporting, stating that such a document was a private document of the company and, as such, no one, not even the judiciary, could interfere in this field. That situation, criticised by the doctrine but much appreciated by companies, has changed over the decades and in various nations in different ways. Obviously, in the various nations, the evolution has taken place at different times and in different ways, but it can be stopped that in the following decades, each nation has seen legislation impose rules, more and more rigid, concerning the form and substance of financial reporting with a tendency to increase more and more the information that had to and must currently be contained in such externally informed systems.

With regard to reporting on sustainability and all the problems that are connected to this issue and which are well summarised in the SDG goals issued by the UN, which we will discuss in the next section, the evolution of communication intended for external use has been even more opposed by companies. Even the beginning of the perception of third parties external to companies to have a communication concerning the socio-environmental sustainability of the company occurred decades after the perceived perception of being able to come into possession of information of a company's financial, income and asset nature.

Since the last two decades of the last century, in various ways and with varying degrees of awareness, scholars have begun to address the issue of corporate disclosure regarding sustainability. Even before this date, some scholars had begun to address certain issues that are generally included in the concept of socio-environmental sustainability, such as the right of workers to be able to work in a healthy environment and with fair remuneration. The topic of socio-environmental sustainability in the broadest sense, however, can be traced back to the last two decades of the last century. Since that date, the evolution in this field has been extremely fast and cumbersome. Third parties external to the company began, through the creation of real organisations, to make people feel the need for information that, generically speaking, we can bring under the umbrella of sustainability. By way of example, we can recall how consumer associations began to highlight the need for companies to provide information on the products

they sold, and organisations concerned with the environment began to support an action that would lead to a substantial increase in information regarding the impact, for example, on the pollution that the production activity of each company produced each year.

It is evident that the beginning of the process of perceiving these needs was characterised by unformalised and unorganised demands. With the passage of time, however, the need for broad and complete communication on the socio-environmental sustainability of the company has become increasingly organised outside the company through the creation of national and international organisations, which set themselves the objective of organising communication requests into reports governed by principles shared within the organisation itself, both national and international, that set themselves the goal of creating report formats concerning sustainability that allow for complete, truthful and analytical communication and dissemination of news concerning this issue by companies.

It should be noted that in some countries, legislation concerning the information system of financial reporting and compulsory annexes has already imposed, albeit often in a somewhat superficial manner, the obligation to provide information concerning the environment and other socio-environmental topics for several decades. In Italy, for example, for companies not listed on the stock exchange, there is an obligation to attach to Financial reporting the so-called management report in which it is stated that, 'where appropriate', information of a socio-environmental nature must be provided. This implies that the interpretation of the phrase used by the legislator means that a company may or may not provide social and environmental information in the management report. Thus, in unlisted companies, we are currently witnessing the preparation of legally obligatory documents in which social and environmental information is provided, but in a superficial or extremely concise manner. The situation is different for listed companies in which many countries, certainly in all countries belonging to the European Union, provide for the preparation of a report of the so-called non-financial information that has its origins in an EU directive of 2014 (Directive 2014/95/EU of the European parliament and of the council of 22 October 2014 amending Directive 2013/34/EU as regards disclosure of non-financial and diversity information by certain large undertakings and groups), which then led each country to issue laws or decrees to regulate this report.

Therefore, if we want to summarise the situation with regard to corporate reporting of a financial and income nature and regarding socio-environmental sustainability, it can be said that in the last century, we have gone from a situation in which this information was totally absent to a situation today in which financial reporting and the documents attached to it are regulated in great detail, and the report related to information on the socio-environmental impact produced by the activity of companies has the characteristic of being a truly informative document only in certain companies, especially large companies. However, there are exceptions also in small and

medium-sized companies where the culture of sustainability permeates both the strategy implemented by the company and the communication made by it.

In particular, however, with regard to socio-environmental communication, there is a 'leopard-spot' situation: in fact, while there are companies, even medium-sized ones, that adequately disseminate information on sustainability, there are also companies that communicate nothing or, worse, implement the so-called greenwashing policy, which we will discuss in the next paragraph.

It should be emphasised that on 10 November 2022, the EU sustainability directive (CSRD, Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive) was definitively promulgated, which will oblige large and medium-sized companies in the European Union (and, with reference to certain sizes, also companies that are generally considered to be small) to draw up a report with particular characteristics regarding sustainability ap. in fact, this directive no longer speaks of non-financial information, but rather this term is replaced by the term sustainability.

As can be seen, therefore, the evolution in sustainability reporting has been much quicker and faster than the evolution in financial reporting, where it took almost a century to oblige companies to disclose analytical documents on income, financial and balance sheet data.

The question arises as to whether the sustainability and social and environmental impact of companies must have particular characteristics in order for these issues to be implemented in the company's strategy on the one hand and communicated externally on the other. Up to this point, we have always spoken of the Triple Bottom Line, but, as we will show below, this concept is obsolete and must be replaced by a more comprehensive notion, which will be the subject of the next section.

From the Triple Bottom Line to the Quintuple Botton LIne: a necessary evolution so that sustainability does not remain a wish but becomes an action, strategic and communicative, of every company.

As we have already highlighted the socio-environmental impact and sustainability represent, in the present day, a particularly debated topic by both doctrine and a pitch multiplicity of international bodies [9-11]. When people started talking about stakeholders some 30 or 40 years ago, the issue of the relationship between business, the environment and the community, which at that time was not yet referred to as socio-environmental sustainability, was dealt with in a simplified, albeit analytical manner. Nowadays, however, the issue of sustainability is characterised by a set of systematic approaches of various subjects that can support the indispensable interventions so that sustainability can spread at the level of scholars, of analyses of international bodies and finally within the companies.

With regard to the attitude of companies in particular, however,

it should be noted that there is a discrepancy between what is advocated by academics and international bodies responsible for issuing sustainability-related standards and what is practised by companies.

The problem concerning companies is particularly relevant because, as long as companies recoil against this evolution of sustainability-related communication, third parties can never be offered complete information about the socio-environmental impact of each company's business activity. Our misgivings about the actual corporate action in the social and environmental sphere of most companies stem from research conducted on samples of thousands of companies and concerning the relationship between companies and sustainability. This research shows that, on the one hand, so-called greenwashing is widespread, i.e. corporate action that communicates a positive attitude towards sustainability to third parties when in reality, this is only window dressing [14,15]. In addition to this, research currently being published shows how many companies admit to talking a lot about sustainability but implementing few actions in the socio-environmental sphere, mainly for economic reasons. In other words, many companies are still anchored in the opinion that it is better to consider immediate profit as pre-eminent than to incur sustainability-related costs that, perhaps, will only bear fruit years later.

With regard to sustainability, it has been pointed out "that only action-oriented knowledge for sustainability emerges when working in an integrated manner with many types of knowledge involved in the shared design, implementation and realisation of change" [16,17].

The scholars emphasise that social and environmental sustainability should not be understood as something to be implemented through complex and bureaucratic processes but that excellent social and environmental goals can only be achieved if individuals, whether they work within or outside the company, and the various institutions in the region are actively involved in implementing not only sustainability communication but also the implementation of a strategic policy that includes social and environmental goals among the various objectives to be achieved. Only in this case can sustainability actually have an impact on the community, the companies and, consequently, on the communication that companies will voluntarily provide to third parties outside the companies, considering this not an obligation but a duty towards the community at large [18].

Sustainability, if interpreted as outlined in the preceding pages, can also be achieved by small and medium-sized enterprises, but only if governmental and non-governmental organisations help to identify the problems and solutions to be adopted in order for sustainability to be sustainable for enterprises. This means that the enterprise, in order to implement sustainability, must be able to live and develop and must therefore be characterised by an optimal financial and asset situation. Only in this case will companies be able to incur further costs in order to develop management actions to improve the socio-environmental impact of their business activities. As long as companies experience a disastrous economic period due to health pandemics or wars that have a significant impact on company costs, even if they are not fought in the state in which the company operates (think, for example, of the war between Ukraine and Russia and the impact on the cost of energy that has created chains of bankruptcies of companies due to the cost of energy that is no longer sustainable by the company itself) it will be impossible to hope for widespread action in favour of the environment and in favour of socio-environmental policies and, even less so, it will be difficult for companies to concern themselves with effective communication regarding sustainability because the problems that these companies have to solve are so significant that they put the problem of communication in the background, especially if it is not compulsory by law [19].

In this regard, it must be remembered that, for twenty years now, the so-called Triple Bottom Line has been advocated.

The Triple Bottom Line advocated by Elkington, The Triple Bottom Line envisages that corporate behaviour should be the result of three elements that must necessarily interact with each other [20-22]. These elements can be summarised as follows [23]:

1. strategic-managerial action aimed at maximising profitability
2. strategic-managerial action aiming at social improvement
3. strategic-managerial action aiming at environmental improvement

The interaction of profitability-oriented behaviour with social and environmental improvement behaviour means that sustainability can be implemented as a management action and thus can, in turn, be the subject of analytical communication to third parties outside the company.

This is only true, however, if you have three elements and add a fourth. The fourth element that must permeate every actor within the company is the culture of communication and the culture of sustainability. If there is no culture of communication and sustainability, it will never be possible to achieve socio-environmental goals because companies tend to perceive the right to privacy in their business actions and the right to be able to maximise profit while respecting the laws in force as essential. Such an attitude towards communication and sustainability will never lead to the achievement of effective entrepreneurial action in terms of strategies aimed at increasing sustainability implemented within the company and strategies aimed at increasing communication to third parties outside the company of such strategies and implemented at the entrepreneurial level.

The dissemination of culture identifies an indispensable element for sustainability to be achieved and attained in every part of society and in all countries, more or less industrialised.

It can be deduced from this that the Triple Bottom Line

concept is largely outdated. The Triple Bottom Line alone does not allow excellent objectives to be achieved in terms of the socio-environmental impact of companies' business activities, and in terms of communication, this sustainability-related management action is not relevant.

The Triple Bottom Line can therefore be said to be obsolete. This concept must be replaced by a new and more evolved concept. This new concept is the Quintuple Botton line, i.e. the union of the three elements of the triple bottom line, culture and another element, the absence of which undermines any possibility of implementing sound corporate social and environmental strategies. The fifth element that is essential for sustainability policy to be transformed from a subject studied and analysed by doctrine and international bodies responsible for issuing standards to be followed in the communication or implementation of socio-environmental policies to a policy actually applied by companies is ethics.

The Triple Bottom Line must therefore be transformed into Quintuple Botton LIne, in which everything is permeated by the culture and ethics of each individual. In the Quintuple Botton LIne, culture permeates every element of the Triple Bottom Line.

It should be noted that in Quintuple Botton LIne, the culture of sustainability must permeate not only every individual within the company but every individual in the community. In fact, if the quintuple bottom line is to be truly achieved, the culture that must permeate every element of the three characterising the Triple Bottom Line is not just a specific culture concerning sustainability and concerning communication but is a concept of tour culture.

Elsewhere, I have already pointed out how only an educated populace can understand and thus address all the issues that directly or indirectly concern socio-environmental sustainability [14,15]. The absence of culture, understood in a general sense, makes understanding sustainability issues extremely complex and difficult, not to say almost impossible. We all know that culture is not necessarily linked to a concept of educational attainment, as there are cases in the history of extremely acculturated individuals who did not have academic qualifications and who probably did not even have a minimum of schooling. Although the concept of culture is not necessarily connected to the concept of attainment of an academic qualification, there is evidence that only in countries with a high rate of schooling is culture an element that permeates every subject in the community that forms the nation's citizenship. Schooling, in fact, makes it possible for a culture to be disseminated at every social level and to all citizens, even if this concept, in reality, must be interpreted in a broad sense since there are cases in which schooling does not produce culture. In fact, one should not confuse culture with notions, and often in schools, notions are preferred, and culture is not disseminated.

Culture represents an overall feeling of issues that go far beyond the notion. Culture is wisdom, and it is an understanding of the whole; it is an overview of the various types of study activities performed by man.

In the Quintuple Bottom Line, culture permeates every constituent element of the Bottom Line. This includes social behaviour, environmental behaviour and the goal of maximising corporate profitability. But this element is still not sufficient to achieve a structured purpose consisting of profitability, social and environmental elements.

As we have pointed out in the previous pages, the evolution of the Triple Bottom Line into quintuple bottom online presupposes that the culture permeates every subject of business and the citizenship of a nation in the presence, however, of the fifth element, the absence of which prevents the creation and implementation of a complete Quintuple Botton LIne and, consequently, the diffusion of perception of the need for a global implementation by every subject of actions aimed at improving the socio-environmental impact of every action carried out by every person, physical or legal.

If culture, understood in the broadest sense and as a concept illustrated in the preceding pages, must permeate every subject within companies and every citizen of the nation, ethics must also necessarily permeate all the subjects that work within companies and all the subjects that make-up the community of a country. Only when culture and ethics permeate the entire community will it be possible, truly, for sustainability to become an issue that everyone perceives as their own, with the consequence that every action will be aimed at improving the socio-environmental impact of each subject. Among these subjects will also be the companies that, as a result of this situation of the presence of culture and ethics in every subject inside and outside the companies, will perceive sustainability as a primary need on a par with corporate profitability.

In this context, ethics is as fundamental as culture. If one could make a scale of priorities, however, ethics surpasses culture in importance. Without ethics, it will never be possible to achieve and attain global socio-environmental sustainability and thus implement by companies and individuals in the national community. In this regard, it should be noted that an act against socio-environmental sustainability implemented by a company is conceptually as serious as an act with a negative socio-environmental impact implemented by an individual citizen. The difference lies in the quantitative measurement of the negative socio-environmental impact. It is clear that a strategic action by a large company that has a negative socio-environmental impact causes much more damage than the action of an individual citizen who has a negative socio-environmental impact because, for example, he does not separate waste correctly or because he pollutes the environment by using his own means of transport instead of public ones, or because he throws plastic objects into the sea that will remain in the water for millennia and that, in a direct way, have a negative impact on the marine environment and the living beings that live in it. Although the quantification is

different, it can be stopped that conceptually the action of the company with a negative socio-environmental impact is the same as the action of the individual person who implements a negative socio-environmental behaviour. And for this reason, the personal ethics of each person who composes the entire national collectivity is the fifth fundamental element so that the Quintuple Botton LIne can be implemented and, with it, socio-environmental sustainability objectives can be pursued effectively and efficiently, allowing the entire globe to improve the social and environmental situation.

Defining the concept of ethics is extremely complex and does not fall within the scope of this article. In synthetic and perhaps superficial terms, one can stop those ethics are interrelated with the conduct of human beings and with the various ways in which people relate to one another. Every relationship is guided by a set of principles that enable the interrelation between human beings. This is not the right place to go into the concept of ethics, the issue of ethics in business and the concept of personal ethics [25]. The aim of this paper is only to emphasise how ethics is an indispensable element for sustainability to be applied in the business sphere. The writer is aware that this sentence does not identify the concept of ethics. This is not due to the fact that this concept has nothing to do with what we are writing about but is rather related to the fact that the concept of ethics changes over time and geographical location. What is ethical in one place may not be ethical in another . and what is ethical in one time may not be ethical a century before or a century after.

When we talk about ethics, we mean values and morals, i.e. a set of human behaviours that living beings put into practice in everyday life. With human evolution, the need to ensure that one's own life does not harm the lives of other living beings has also evolved. Harmonious coexistence has therefore become a fundamental aim of the social life of communities. As Orland points out, it must assume the consensus previously established in every human culture to be essential. According to this author, a person is not born ethical, nor does he or she have a pre-established morality supported by values, judgements and statements. This is proven because the concept of ethics changes over time and has different characteristics depending on the geographical locations we consider. What may be regarded as desirable in one country may be highly damaging in another culture. Ethics does not escape this rule, even if the issues involved are far more complex than what has been stated above and what will be illustrated in this short article.

With human evolution, every subject must evolve as the concepts of market, profit, competitiveness and civil rules of human coexistence evolve. All these issues change as historical periods and geographical locations vary. Therefore, it is difficult to write in a few lines about ethics in financial reporting as this issue is deeply rooted in the rules of life accepted as moral and ethical in the historical period in question [26,27].

Ethics is one of the most complex philosophical issues addressed by scholars in the humanities. The aim of this article is in no way to examine the historical evolution of the concept of ethics in the human being as a whole.

This article aims merely to make a few remarks concerning business ethics or to use Drucker's concept, ethics in business. Drucker was one of the first scholars to explore this issue in the field of business. He pointed out that, in his opinion, it would be correct to speak of ethics in business rather than ethics in the business itself.

Some scholars point out that for ethics to work in an organisation, it is essential that there is synergy between vision statements, mission statements, core values, general business principles and code of conduct [28]. Such a code must have several benefits for both the company and third parties. A practical, ethical programme cannot be determined at a certain point and then left to its own devices. Such a programme requires the continuous reinforcement of solid values and the continual review of corporate objectives set as the mission of the whole enterprise. Therefore, business organisations must act in such a way that their employees and, above all, management absorb the codes of ethics and moral values that the organisation feels it is essential to achieve.

The proper ethical climate requires a combination of structural rules and the continuous and constant dissemination of moral values. Only an appropriate mix of these can ensure that, within a given company, one can speak of the existence of ethics in business.

Ethics would therefore not be linked to the business itself but would result from the behaviour of the people working in the various businesses. Ethics, therefore, is the result of human conduct within a business. It is related to how human beings relate to each other in businesses and how they act in businesses when they have to have inter-relationships outside the business entity. Such relationships, sometimes non-consensual, allow the collectivity to free itself from chaos or from the behaviour of sub-aggregates of subjects that, essentially, a harmonious life of the collectivity itself. In reality, up to now, in the writer's opinion, no founding elements have been reached in terms of universal principles that would allow a precise circumscription of ethical behaviour. In the context of this issue, we should not underestimate the interrelationships that can identify between the subject we are concerned with and the religions that are widespread in the world. Even though there is a large grey area of ethical behaviour, which depends on cultural, religious and human factors, the author believes that it is possible to identify unanimously accepted ethical behaviour. It should emphasise that the grey area is frequently more significant than the area in which behaviour is undoubtedly ethical or unethical.

As many scholars have pointed out, business ethics saw its birth in the 1960s and its dramatic development in the 1970s and 1980s. This circumstance shows how the academy, the scholars and the community itself, already in the '60s and 70's, began to perceive the necessity of facing the theme of ethics,

even in the awareness of the complexity of this theme and, above all, in the presence of a grey zone where many attitudes can be placed which some consider ethical against others who consider them unethical.

As Reuben Grace masterfully points out, business ethics, or rather ethics in business, developed by including the investigation of six levels of observation [29].

Reuben Grace points out that the first level concerns the individual. And this level of observation addresses the question of what a human being should do when faced with ethical and moral problems in business, in companies and in the micro or macro-communities (such as the family, local communities and the community as a whole) to which he or she belongs. Reuben Grace identifies the second level of ethics at the level of the business entity within which the individuals operate. This level is related to the problems of the internal structures of the enterprise that aim to support ethics on the part of employees or, on the contrary, to facilitate unethical practices. Reuben Grace states that at the level of corporate policy, corporate culture and responsibility towards the various stakeholders of a company, corporate social responsibility can be considered an ethical responsibility.

The third level concerns particular industries that have an undeniable impact on the environment. The third level involves specific sectors that have a pronounced effect on the environment.

The next level is the national level, where there are problems related to legislation, controls on the business activities carried out by the various companies, and the protection of those who have relations with companies, such as workers, consumers, and the community in general.

The fifth level is the international level. Reuben Grace points out, in a particularly radical way, how these ethical problems concern, above all, multinationals from developed countries operating in underdeveloped countries with no laws or regulations to protect the local community of the country in which these companies operate.

The sixth and final level is the global level. In this respect, we speak of the ethical responsibility of companies concerning global problems such as those related to the environment and the eco-system of the entire globe and connected to companies that have a worldwide impact.

As Reuben Grace points out, the history of ethics, of business or in business, goes back as far as ethics itself. The author points out how we can imagine the first swaps based on the concept of fair exchange. This is from both a secular and a religious point of view. As it evolved, the idea of ethics addressed the issue of property and its moral acceptability.

We do not intend to go into this issue in-depth as it does not fall within the scope of our interest. However, we cannot fail to mention that John Locke worked hard to defend property. At the same time, Marx, on the other hand, developed a very targeted attack on its ethical and moral acceptability. It is not the purpose of this article to go into these positions in depth. But it cannot deny that historical evolution has led to opposing concepts of ethics [30].

In particular, business ethics has undergone two topologies of approach in recent decades: the philosophical approach and the descriptive approach. In the author's words, the philosophical branch of business ethics has emphasised business ethics by observing and describing the practices present in the company. However, the descriptive approach has proved more agreeable to business ethics as it is more empirical and more pragmatic. It is, therefore, more suitable for the study of business ethics. Graces state that the philosophical approach has been approached with much suspicion in the business world. Often, saw the philosophical approach as antithetical to the business itself [28,31-33].

On the other hand, the descriptive approach has proved, as Graces says, to be more agreeable to business because it is more empirical and more pragmatic and therefore more suited to the study of business. Today, scholars approach ethics from various angles, sometimes leading to conflicting considerations. Over the past thirty years, the study of ethics has been increasingly deepened and has become increasingly widespread in both the business and pragmatic spheres. This is not the place to list all the various global organisations that address this issue and seek to identify the characteristics of ethical business behaviour.

This attempt has been underway for more than 40 years without achieving a unanimously accepted result in terms of the opinion expressed by scholars, companies and the general public. The problem of ethics has accelerated with the spread of the concept of corporate social responsibility. Ethics has become an element that should characterise the behaviour of every company, or rather of the management in charge of running the company, so that the company itself not only does not harm the community and the environment, but, on the contrary, improves both society in the global sense and the ecosystem of the entire globe.

Adapting behaviour to a vast number of variables makes ethical behaviour in business or business challenging to circumscribe and define. In this respect, Aubert's statement in which this dichotomy is suggested (1963) is exciting: ''A conflict of interests between two actors arises from a situation of scarcity.

(Both) ... want 'the same thing', but there is not enough availability for each to get what he wants. In this general sense, the basis for a conflict is present in all commercial transactions. The seller would like to have more money than the buyer is willing to part with ... This potential for conflict is eliminated through the operation of the market, usually so smoothly that no obvious signs of conflict appear. If a conflict does come to light, the solution will often be a compromise... It is a type

of social interaction in which solutions seem to be reached by discouraging actors from becoming morally involved in an important aspect of the interaction. The condition is that the interests are not diametrically opposed... Competing or opposing interests do not in themselves imply any disagreement between Ego and Alter regarding values. It can also be said that a conflict of interests presupposes a consensus, at least on the value of the good, sought by both parties... A conflict of value is based on a disagreement about the normative status of an object. ... (The) illegitimate nature of compromise on the level of value and empirical truth makes it difficult to discuss the issues candidly enough ... It is especially when ... issues of factual responsibility, fault and merit, become parts of value conflicts ... that a solution through compromise becomes so difficult..." [34].

It is understandable from the above that the number of variables involved is so high as to make a precise definition of ethical behaviour in business or affairs almost impossible, just as it is regarding ethics interpreted as the subject's behaviour in everyday life. The numerousness of the variables in play prevents the delineation, in a precise and perfect way, of an ethical behaviour insofar as, shifting the attention to variables perhaps hitherto not considered, one can note how the concept of ethical behaviour is transformed, on the contrary, into a non-ethical act.[9,35,36].

On the basis of the above, one can stop how, with regard to ethics, there are behaviours that are certainly ethical and behaviours that are certainly unethical. Between these two poles, however, there is an extremely large grey area in which it is a very difficult task to identify whether a behaviour is ethical or unethical. In a general sense, we pointed out earlier how the concept of ethics changes over time and also geographically. But even if we consider a given time and place, the grey area of behaviour that is difficult to identify with certainty as ethical or unethical is extremely vast. Whereas the area of definitely ethical behaviour and definitely unethical acts is extremely small.

The ethicality of behaviour derives from the consideration of a series of interrelated factors, which must be considered in order to be able to pass judgement on an action by a physical person or a company. These elements can be summarised in the political, financial, moral, sociocultural, and religious variables connected to the attitude that individuals have towards animals, connected to the attitude that each person has towards the community, connected to the attitude that groups of individuals have towards other groups of individuals that make up the entire community, cultural, environmental, behavioural, gender, economic, connected to relations that each person imposes with every other individual in the community, etc.

To assess ethical behaviour based on the above table, it should note that each of the variables listed would have to be subdivided into sub-groups of variables that would inevitably have a considerable impact on the judgement of a given subject's behaviour.

At the end of this brief digression on ethics, we must ask ourselves whether human prosperity is necessary or an optional extra concerning other elements. We agree with those who regard prosperity as a fundamental need [35]. If a person prevented from prospering limits his life to mere survival, he often ends this agony by simply letting himself live.

In this context, private property must therefore be seen as the basis of human prosperity. This also explains the motivation for many human activities. We have already pointed out that personal property has been the subject of much academic and theoretical controversy. Nevertheless, the writer considers it a fundamental need since human beings, in most cases, try to satisfy their need to prosper precisely through private property.

However, this issue has many facets, the analysis of which is beyond the scope of this article. Nevertheless, it should not be overlooked that, in some instances, specific situations create the conditions under which business ethics can neither be made nor flourish. Consider, for example, the issue of economic competition. Ruthless or abnormally competitive levels of competition can undermine the moral elements underlying ethical behaviour. Abnormal competition or the absence of competition provokes or, instead can encourage, highly negative impacts on ethics in business. In markets where there is no competition, there is no perception of the possibility of prosperity, which hurts ethics as a whole.

On the contrary, competition is fierce. It is easy to detect unethical business attitudes, which are perceived as the only elements useful for the economic survival of the business entity. Ideally, competition should be regulated so that, without reaching abnormal levels, it is at levels that help productive efficiency and effectiveness, creativity and productivity, all carried out ethically [37].

The observations in the preceding pages allow us to state, with certainty, that the Triple Bottom Line is now outdated and obsolete from both a doctrinal and pragmatic point of view. If companies are still stuck at this Triple Bottom Line, there will be no hope of seeing, in the near future, a real improvement in the socio-environmental impact of the business activities of all companies of any size. To complete this thought, it can be added that if the lack of culture and ethics characterises the entire population, global sustainability will never be achieved at a national level because the culture of sustainability, culture in general, and ethics at a general level are lacking, sustainability will remain only a doctrinal wish not applied on a practical level with the consequences that are constantly brought to our attention but seem to be of no particular relevance to the governments of the various countries since even the most important meetings such as COP 27 failed to achieve unanimity on the implementation of pragmatic actions to improve the environment and climate. If such goals are not achieved at the international governmental level, it will be very difficult for them to be achieved with ease by individual companies or the individual constituents of a nation's citizenry.

Concluding these considerations on the need for the Triple Bottom Line to be considered outdated and replaced by a Quintuple Botton line, in which culture and ethics identify two essential elements for sustainability to be pursued by companies, we must summarise, in a very succinct manner, as they are now known to all, the founding elements of sustainability. There are diverse positions on the subject. In order to get an overview of the elements that characterise sustainable management, it was decided to refer to the SDGs issued by the UN, also known as the 2030 Agenda:

1. No poverty ;
2. Zero huger;
3. Good health and well-being;
4. Quality education ;
5. Gender equality;
6. Cleal water and sanitation;
7. Affordable, and clean energy;
8. Decent work ab economic growth for all;
9. Industry innovation and infrastructure;
10. Reduced inequalities Sustainable cities and communities;
11. Responsable consumption and production;
12. Climate action;
13. Life below water;
14. Life on land;
15. Peace , justice and strong institution;
16. Partnerships for the goals.

As can be seen from reading the 17 goals identified by the UN, they are, rather than goals, mere wishes [38]. These goals are unlikely to be achieved by 2030 as they are too complex to achieve. However, there is no doubt that even today, some points can be managed in such a way as to make human life more sustainable in its entirety. Among these goals that are at least partially attainable within the next few decades (hardly by 2030), we can mention goal no. 5; 6; 7; 8; 9; 14; 15 and 17. It is with regard to these goals that companies should act to implement sustainable policies.

As we have had occasion to point out in the previous pages, sustainability can only be implemented by companies and individual citizens in their daily lives if culture and ethics support their actions.

It should be noted that the imposition of a legal obligation of positive socio-environmental actions can help but is not decisive. It is certain that the enactment of laws obliging companies to implement certain more sustainable policies helps to ensure that sustainability can be diffused at the company level. But it is well known that if an action is implemented only because of a legislative imposition, what is done is strictly limited to the indication of the legislation, which, by its nature, can never be very analytical and in-depth [39,40].

The mere presence of legal obligations does not guarantee the dissemination of the principle that sustainability should be considered essential for states, companies, all national or international bodies, governmental or non-governmental, and individual citizens [41].

Only the dissemination of culture, understood in the broadest sense, will make every citizen realise that sustainability is no longer an optional extra but has become a goal that, if not achieved soon, will lead to consequences that can no longer be altered on a global scale.

The culture and, in a special way, of course, the culture of sustainability must permeate every individual. Only in this way will sustainability become a concrete element to be achieved and maintained over time. Culture can do nothing, however, if it is not accompanied by ethics. Many cultured people perform unethical acts that can if they are linked to one of the 17 UN SDG goals mentioned above, impede the achievement of sustainability or part of it.

By way of example, we can mention two cases of Italian companies whose ethics, in essence, prevent them from being considered brilliant companies in the area of sustainability. A large company in the food sector had, in past years, based its advertising on the fact that it pursued environmental sustainability by using recycled plastic. A few years ago, it was fined several tens of thousands of euros for false communications with reference to the aforementioned advertising. Another company in the pharmaceutical sector, famous for its impeccable integrated reporting, was accused of tax evasion and had to pay a sum of hundreds of thousands of euros because of this illegal behaviour. One may ask why tax evasion falls under the issue of sustainability. In the writer's opinion, it falls under it because, by evading taxes, it prevents the state itself from implementing policies that foster sustainability. The fact that for years a splendid integrated report, more than 50 pages long, made of glossy paper and full of information on the company's sustainable social and environmental strategies, as well as dozens of photographs that had nothing to do with concrete sustainability (photos of the company, of smiling people, of flowers, of blue skies, of magnificent waterfalls, etc.), did not make this company a company that, in reality, set itself true global sustainability goals. Many elements related to sustainability were present in this company, but ethics were absent. This circumstance makes it impossible to say that sustainability characterised this company.

When, for example, a company draws up a wonderful integrated report, achieves gender equality but, at the same time, buries drums of poisons in inhabited areas where, probably, children and the elderly will live, i.e. fragile subjects by definition, one cannot speak of sustainability. Ethics are absent, and this means that the Quintuple Botton line is not completed and, consequently, that sustainability remains a foreign element to the company, even in the presence of individual acts that might suggest the full achievement of this policy of helping the earth and the life of the individual.

To conclude these considerations regarding the Quintuple Botton LIne and the socio-environmental impact of companies' business activities, it is worth pointing out that

reading what scholars write; it would seem that sustainability is a topic that is particularly felt by companies and therefore implemented by most companies. It has already been stated that many companies adopt impeccable social and environmental behaviour and implement extremely effective and comprehensive communication on this topic. While this is true, it is equally true that many companies display a negative attitude towards sustainability both at the level of management action to be implemented and at the level of communication to be made to third parties outside the company.

Another element that seems to distinguish the current doctrine is the opinion that, in most companies, regardless of the publication of an integrated report, they seek to implement sustainable strategies because they are convinced that everyone is aware of a truth verified with statistical samples: namely that implementing sustainable policies creates a virtuous circle that also has positive repercussions on company profitability. However, two observations must be made in this regard: firstly, a company can only implement strategic management actions with a positive socio-environmental impact if, profitably, it can afford to allocate funds to incur costs to implement such policies. This may seem a specious argument. Looking at the company reality from the inside, one can see how many companies these days have difficulty in sustaining the costs necessary to implement production, so much so that, by way of example, there are judgments in Italy that acquit entrepreneurs or managing directors who have not paid contributions or taxes due to the financial impossibility of doing so. From this, we can understand how at state of the art, after the pandemic caused by covid 19 and after the disastrous consequences of the war between Ukraine and Russia, many companies do not have the funds to implement even the basic operations to continue production. It is unthinkable to propose to such companies to incur further costs to make business more socio-environmental. To impose new costs would be like forcing the company, sent live, to close down its business. When addressing this issue, therefore, every element must be considered, and among these elements is also the income, financial and asset situation of the companies.

Secondly, it can be seen that many scholars write articles from which it can be deduced that companies that publish an effectively structured integrated report in terms of communication have, by definition, a sustainable behaviour of a different profile. It is evident from the above examples that this is not the case. Sometimes the publication of reports that are particularly appealing in terms of communication conceals a lack of entrepreneurial action on the socio-environmental level. Of course, this is not the rule, and it cannot be denied that in many cases, companies that pay particular attention to sustainability reporting implement particularly effective and positive socio-environmental strategies in Monte. But this is not always the case. One should not be misled by glossy reports with wonderful photos that would highlight management action aimed at socio-environmental sustainability and the well-being of workers. The diffusion of greenwashing in the business environment is proof of this [9,14,42-49].

Greenwashing, as defined by a famous Italian dictionary (Dizionario Treccani), is, therefore, a "communication or marketing strategy pursued by companies, institutions, and entities that present their activities as environmentally sustainable, attempting to conceal their negative environmental impact. "Examples of greenwashing are the use of labels on products sold that use pictures of waterfalls, water, blue skies, and green meadows. Well, despite the fact that the notion of greenwashing presented in the application voluntarily with a negative connotation, 89% of the companies stated that they implement such a policy [50]. Only 11% denied that they let the outside world see anything other than what actually exists in the company.

The prevalence of greenwashing is planet-wide as all companies have realised that the issue of sustainability affects the community but, despite this, they are unwilling, on an operational level, to implement real eco-sustainable strategies due to the costs and organisational changes this would cause in the company [51-55].

Trivially, this widespread attitude can be seen by looking at product labels. Increasingly, the colour green or blue, water, the sky or mountain landscapes appear where grass, flowers and trees fill the entire label space. Seeing a landscape with these elements on a detergent leads the consumer to believe that the product is eco-friendly, But this is not always true [56]. Very often, a change in the label or advertising is not matched by a change in the product, the production process and the company organisation. With the consequence that what is subliminally intended to get across to the consumer is a false message that has nothing sustainable behind it. It has only colours and landscapes that unintentionally call to mind clean air, ecological products and eco-friendly policies [57-65].

Regardless of the implementation of greenwashing, research carried out on a sample of European and US companies has shown that for the vast majority of companies, profit still represents the main objective to be achieved, and sustainability-related actions are only interpreted as a means to achieve the primary objective of maximising company profitability [14]. Many researches have shown that acting sustainably can also have excellent consequences from a profit and financial point of view. The above-mentioned research has shown that: the primary goal of as many as 85% of companies is profit. Sustainability in itself has no relevance, or rather it is only experienced as a means of gaining publicity and an improvement in corporate image. Sustainability, therefore, is understood not as an essential element for the future of the world but as a strategy to improve the difference between company costs and revenues. It is evident that the implementation of a sustainability policy carried out for profit alone does not have the socio-environmental impact it would have if it were carried out without ulterior motives. The lack of internalisation of the sustainability issue that results from these answers and from answers given to some questions that we will analyse later makes it clear that sustainability is still more a doctrinal than an

operational topic. Most companies are interested in profit, and sustainability is therefore understood as a mere tool to achieve the company's primary goal, which is not the improvement of the environment and society but the maximisation of profit. This goal must be achieved in every possible way, even using a subject that is fashionable today: sustainability. But this attitude debases the sustainability policy that may be implemented, as the inner feeling of those called upon to develop such a strategy is not to improve the environment and society but to make a profit. In this context, sustainability is only a means to this end. There is no need to add more to understand how the 'substance' of the strategy changes radically from the concept of sustainability popularised by doctrine and scholars. It becomes a mere advertisement that improves the corporate image and, consequently, creates the basis for increased profit.

With these research findings, one can stop how the road to widespread implementation among companies of a positive social-environmental activity with a positive impact on both society and the environment is still very long and strewn with many obstacles. The implementation of an eco-sustainable and socially positive strategy is still not a primary goal for the majority of companies, at least of the European and US companies studied by the above-mentioned research. This means that it is still necessary to act very profoundly on the culture and ethics that must permeate all subjects of citizenship and, in particular, those who operate within companies and who decide on the policies to be implemented and the communication, consequently, to be made to third parties.

The hope that can be made in this regard is that the culture in general and the culture of sustainability in particular, and ethics can increasingly spread throughout the community and those operating within companies. If this happens, we will surely see a flourishing of sustainability activities that really are what they appear to be and are not cloaked in a patina of greenwashing that hides a different reality [66-73].

The transition from the Triple Bottom Line to the Quintuple Botton LIne is therefore essential for all companies to perceive sustainability not as a negative burden but rather as a primary objective which, although in the medium term, can also lead to positive profitability effects [74]. Culture and ethics will be the keys that will open the door to a time when sustainability will become a normal situation that will no longer even need to be talked about as it permeates every subject in the community. This time is not near, but we can bring it closer if all those who have the power to educate the youngest subjects and act by convincing adults of the need that sustainable behaviour should be perceived not as a burden and obligation but as a primary objective of one's actions, act in such a way that children grow up with the perception of normality also with reference to sustainability and adults grow up in a culturally elevated environment where culture tries to make them understand how ethical behaviour can improve the situation of an entire nation [75-92].

Conclusion

To conclude these brief considerations on sustainability, it can be stated that in a company, the objectives of maximising profit, improving social behaviour and implementing a management strategy aimed at the environmental sustainability of the business activity carried out by the production unit must coexist. These three concepts have always been emphasised by the so-called Triple Bottom Line that, for more than twenty years, has represented a basic concept for those dealing with socio-environmental sustainability issues at present. However, the implementation of an efficient and effective eco-sustainable management strategy and effective communication of the actions implemented by companies in terms of sustainability, communication intended for third parties outside the company, must be completed by two other elements, the lack of which totally invalidates the possibility of widespread implementation by small, medium and large companies of an eco-sustainable policy that has a real impact on the social and environmental situation of a nation. The two elements that are absent from the concept of the online triple-bot are the electric culture. In the previous pages, we pointed out that the culture that must be present in order to effectively and efficiently implement a sustainability policy on the part of companies and individual citizens across nations must be a general culture is culture of sustainability. It is not enough to have a culture of sustainability; it must be permeated by the general culture of the population. Alongside the presence of culture, there must be 1/5th element, the lack of which totally invalidates any socio-environmental policy that can be disseminated nationwide. The fifth element is ethics. Without the dissemination of ethics, it is impossible to assume that sustainability will become a primary objective of companies of any size and of the personal actions of every citizen. Ethics, therefore, represents 1/5 of the elements, alongside profit maximisation, social improvement, environmental improvement, and culture, that enables the dissemination and implementation of a sustainability policy implemented by companies and the citizens of a nation. This is why the online triple bottom, in which culture and ethics are absent, is an outdated concept. The future will be the online quintuple button in which the five elements are present and are characterised by equal priority. It is only by applying the basic principles of the quintuple bottom line that sustainability will become an objective that will have equal relevance to the company's income, asset and financial goals. Culture and ethics are, therefore, indispensable elements for a sustainable strategy to be implemented by all companies and to be effectively communicated to third parties outside the companies [93-100].

It is said that beauty will save the world. I, on the other hand, affirm that the world will be saved by the widespread implementation of sustainable policies from an eco-environmental point of view, which, in turn, can only be disseminated in the presence of culture and ethics; characteristics that should distinguish not only those operating within companies but all the citizens of a nation.

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