Geophysical Research Abstracts
Vol. 17, EGU2015-1676-1, 2015
EGU General Assembly 2015

SUstaiNability: a science communication website on environmental research

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Environmental news mainly reach not specialist people by mass media, which generally focuses on fascinating or catastrophic events without reporting scientific data. Otherwise, scientific data on environment are published in peer-reviewed journals with specific language, so they could be not understandable to common people. In the last decade, Internet spread made easier to divulge environmental information. This allows everyone (scientist or not) to publish information without revision. In fact, World Wide Web includes many scientific sites with different levels of confidence.
Within Italian scientific websites, there are those of University and Research Centre, but they mainly contain didactic and bureaucratic information, generally lacking in research news, or reporting them in peer-reviewed format.
University and Research Centre should have an important role to divulge certified information, but news should be adapted to a general audience without scientific skills, in order to help population to gain knowledge on environmental issues and to develop responsible behavior. Therefore, an attractive website (www.sunability.unina2.it) has been created in order to divulge research products of Environmental, Biological and Pharmaceutical Sciences and Technologies Department (DiSTABiF) of Second University of Naples-SUN (Campania, Southern Italy). This website contains divulgation articles derived from peer-reviewed publications of DiSTABiF researchers and concerning studies on environmental, nutrition, and health issues, closely related topics. Environmental studies mainly referred to Caserta district (Southern Italy), where DiSTABiF is located. Divulgation articles have been shared by main social networks (Facebook: sunability, Twitter: @SUNability) and accesses have been monitored for 28 days in order to obtain demographic and geographic information about users and visualization number of both DiSTABiF website and social network pages.
Demographic and geographic analysis showed that social network users mainly were from Campania and they were 18-44 years old. In the observation period, almost 62600 users were reached thanks to social networks; while the number of website visualization was lower (3306). However, social buttons revealed that people appreciated website articles more than Facebook posts and tweets.
Data suggest that social networks could be useful to reach many web users interested in environmental topics, but science communication needs more space than that available in social networks. Therefore, an institutional website is more suitable and qualified to refer scientific topics to common audience, including all essential information.