

AN OVERVIEW OF STUDIES ON IMPRESSION MANAGEMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY PERFORMANCE

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Abstract

Sustainability has an important place in the business world and the sustainability-oriented strategies adopted by companies have a significant impact on stakeholders' perceptions of companies. Companies' contributions to sustainability create value by increasing financial success, reputation, positive consumer attitudes and employee loyalty. Companies with high corporate sustainability performance gain competitive advantage and their ability to withstand challenges is increased. The main purpose of the current study is to explain the relationship between sustainability performance and impression management based on the studies in the literature. For this purpose, the Web of Science database was searched using the terms "impression management" and "sustainability performance", and 6 articles in which both terms were included together in the study abstract were examined in detail. The studies reveal that sustainability reports are used as a communication tool to shape stakeholders' perceptions of companies' sustainability performance. In order to have a better impression in the eyes of stakeholders, companies show their achievements in their sustainability reports and may apply to defensive impression management tactics against negative situations they are in. Companies generally emphasise the positive aspects of their sustainability performance in their reporting processes and provide comprehensive explanations about their achievements and efforts. However, when it comes to negative events or issues related to performance, this information is either omitted or dealt with in a very limited manner. The optimism and certainty of CEO messages in sustainability also have been increasing over time and the language of the texts is used for impression management purposes rather than reflecting the company's sustainability performance. However, while managing impressions, companies are not limited to written content, they can also present their sustainability performance to readers in a more positive way through infographics. Studies show that companies also utilise integrated reports to convey information on sustainability performance. Companies with low sustainability performance provide less and more ambiguous information about their sustainability performance in their integrated reports in order to hide negative impressions. Therefore, there is a relationship between sustainability performance and impression management, and companies with low sustainability performance try to offset negative impressions by applying impression management tactics.

Keywords: Impression Management, Sustainability Performance, Self-Presentation

*This study was supported within the scope of the project numbered SDK-2023-5604 accepted by Yıldız Technical University Scientific Research Projects Commission.