

Do consumers buy into your green messages? Firm media legitimacy and social media engagement

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Abstract

The goals set by the EU require a huge commitment of firms to a more sustainable production. At European level, a new taxonomy is enacted in 2018 to distinguish between sustainable and unsustainable investment (Och, 2020). While many firms take pride in their progress, and communicate their efforts and successes to the public, consumers might question whether the firm is sincerely dedicated to the green cause (Tost, 2011). To gain legitimacy, the firm needs to walk the line between reporting their efforts, capturing consumer attention, matching the ensuing consumer expectations, and responding to critical external voices. To capture this dynamic relationship between firm's communication and the audience's reception of their efforts, we gather news articles and social media messages by 33 firms across several large industries. We holistically approach this dyadic relationship between the firm and consumer that is the foundation of the firm's environmental legitimacy.

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