

Customer Perceptions of Firm Sustainability

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Abstract

We investigate the relationship between firm characteristics and perceived sustainability using 64,000 customer ratings from 180 firms over the period 2020–2024. A significant portion of customers (32–41%) indicated they were unable to assess the sustainability of their providers, responding with “do not know” to sustainability-related questions. Our analysis reveals that local and non-profit firms, as well as those operating in service and utilitarian industries, are perceived as more sustainable. Interestingly, environmental certifications and the presence of sustainability information on firm websites show no association with perceived sustainability. Customer satisfaction, however, is strongly correlated with perceived sustainability.

Keywords: Sustainability, Firm Characteristics, Customer Perceptions

Track: Social Responsibility & Ethics