

Follow the genuine leader: the “green imitation”

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Abstract-

The combined effect of coercion (public and private pressure), self-interest (competitive advantage) and conviction (intrinsically motivated or genuine) explain why environmental issues have become a key priority for companies. While research has explored coercion and competitive advantage, the role of conviction has received little attention. This paper aims to address this gap. Conviction, which has been correlated with institutional and individual drivers, offers more stable results and a potential multiplier effect as good examples are disseminated by imitation throughout an industry. While the role of imitation has drawn increasing attention of business management studies, it has received scant attention in research on sustainability. This is the second gap this paper aims to address, contributing to the literature on sustainability in two ways: firstly, we will further explore the role of conviction in environmental sustainability; secondly, employing a compartmental model of epidemic propagation, used for other social phenomena, we model the role genuine examples by leaders can play within an industry and the dissemination of good behavior by imitation. Defining genuine conviction as the voluntary mitigation of the externalities of a firm's operations beyond that required by law or the market, substantiated in the responsible behavior of its leaders, our model discovers patterns that policymakers could use to create a “sustainability epidemic”. We suggest mathematical models of epidemics can be applied to sustainability, offering a fresh perspective on the phenomenon of imitation, allowing us to discover how some cultural and social habits can be used.

Index Terms-

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