



In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy
Shirley-Ann Augustin-Behravesh

Will defend her dissertation

The Discovery of Effective Sustainable Business Practice Bundles: An Empirical Study of Their Configurations and Relationship to Organizational Culture

Abstract

In recent years, corporations have been charged with reducing their impacts on the environment and society to address sustainability challenges. Stakeholders look to them to also solve environmental and social problems and to contribute to larger sustainability goals. Sustainability has become a business concern, but still primarily due to the competitive advantages it confers upon the business, in forms such as waste minimization, green product design, reduced fines for violating environmental regulations, and improved community and stakeholder relations.

Despite the growing need for businesses to address global sustainability issues, research in the field has not provided further advances than generic prescriptions for implementing sustainability practices; and the result has been superficial corporate sustainability endeavors, with little consequence on our growing sustainability problems. Researchers argue that corporations can only contribute to global sustainability by implementing initiatives that gradually alter attitudes and organizational culture to ultimately align with sustainability principles.

My dissertation research utilizes configuration theory to explain the need to focus on bundles of sustainable business practices rather than individual ones, and contingency theory to realize the effect that organizational culture may have on the relationship between sustainable business practices and sustainability performance. Content analysis using Center Resonance Analysis is applied to over 1000 Global Reporting Index(GRI) reports for over 200 firms worldwide. Cluster analysis is initially applied to discover the existing synergistic bundles of sustainability practices, which are thereafter aligned with the organizational culture data, which is also extracted from the same reports. Subsequently, the culture-practice bundle fit is illuminated by comprehensive statistical analyses and then current financial data

is used to determine whether the strength of fit between culture and practices, correlate with financial performance.

The findings of this work are a significant contribution to the Business and Sustainability field, and contradict the prevailing 'one-size-fits-all' prescriptions for corporate sustainability. Empirically derived bundles of sustainable business practices have never been attempted before; furthermore, little research has examined the relationship between culture and sustainable business practices. The results offer a crucial discovery to both the academic and practitioner disciplines, with the aim that it will become a critical first step in redefining the way in which businesses adopt sustainable business practices. A radical transformation of sustainable business practice adoption will eventually lead to major ensuing improvements in sustainability strategies, and therefore start to drive positive global change for sustainability in business.

Tuesday, April 4, 2017
1:00 p.m.
WGHL, Room 401

Faculty, students, and the public are invited.

Supervisory Committee:
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