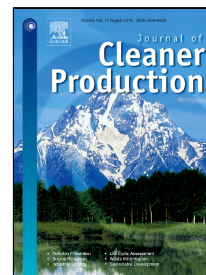


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Success of Voluntary Sustainability Certification Schemes – A Comprehensive Review



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Success of Voluntary Sustainability Certification Schemes – A Comprehensive Review

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Abstract

Voluntary sustainability certification schemes (CS) like the well-known Forest Stewardship Council are valuable approaches to address sustainability issues in different sectors. So far, a wide range of single topic studies exist but few emphasis has been put on analyses investigating factors considered responsible for shaping different dimensions of CS' success across different sectors and scientific disciplines. This study aims at closing this research gap by conducting a comprehensive systematic literature review of this growing body of research. Based on a database research, 226 records were selected to derive a framework explaining generic factors for the success of CS. To unveil broadly discussed factors and success dimensions within the literature, a contingency analysis was performed based on identified text passages. The relationship between specific factors and certain success dimensions is discussed comprehensively in the literature: The influence of the quality of the requirements and the capacity building measures on the problem solving capacity of CS as well as the influence of the characteristics of the adopting entities and to a lower degree governmental influences on the diffusion of CS are widely discussed. Moreover, the influence of the involvement of stakeholders and the transparency of the CS on the acceptance of CS is a main focus of analysis. A barely studied success dimension is the behavioral change towards more sustainable practices. These results enable and foster an interdisciplinary discussion on certification schemes which is necessary for understanding CS comprehensively and eventually driving practical improvements.

Keywords:

Certification Schemes, Sustainability, Literature Review, Contingency Analysis, Cross-sectoral

Highlights:

- Comprehensive literature review of voluntary certification schemes
- Contingency analysis to unveil broadly discussed success factors and success dimensions
- Influence of quality of requirements and capacity building on problem solving is widely discussed
- Influence of broad stakeholder involvement and the transparency of the CS on the acceptance of CS is also a main focus
- Analysis of the success dimension behavioral change is underrepresented

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