

Platform Enterprise Sustainability Assessment Study

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Abstract

How to conduct sustainability evaluation based on stakeholders' expectations is a common concern for both academics and enterprises. Based on stakeholder theory, the article discusses the importance of stakeholders from two perspectives of manufacturing platform enterprises and sustainable development, elaborates the role played by stakeholder theory in sustainable development evaluation, determines the types of primary stakeholders and expectations of platform enterprises, and constructs a sustainable development evaluation index system for manufacturing platform enterprises. Questionnaires were distributed to the primary stakeholders of the enterprises, and the final evaluation index system was determined by extracting the common factors and eliminating the redundant indicators through the principal component analysis.

Keywords

Platform Enterprise; Sustainability Assessment; Stakeholder.

1. Introduction

The national strategy of "Made in China 2025" requires China's manufacturing industry to adhere to innovation-driven, intelligent transformation and green development, accelerate the transformation from a large manufacturing country to a strong manufacturing country, and maintain sustainable development. In response to the national development strategy, manufacturing enterprises, led by Haier, have chosen to carry out platform transformation to promote innovation and intelligent development, making platform enterprises an important carrier of sustainable development [1]. Compared with traditional manufacturing enterprises, platform enterprises face a more complex internal and external environment, and require continuous investment in technology, capital, and human resources in the process of enterprise development [2]. Compared with traditional enterprises, in order to ensure the long-term and sustainable development of enterprises, platform enterprises need to pay more attention to the sustainable development of enterprises at all times and make sustainable development of enterprises a major enterprise strategy activity.

Scholars generally believe that corporate sustainability mainly involves meeting the needs of shareholders and stakeholders. As an open system, platform enterprises, in the process of operation and development, stakeholders will decide to stay or leave themselves according to the degree of satisfying their own needs, and take some actions to influence the sustainable development of enterprises, for example, the government will make fines, suspensions and other punishments for enterprises that damage the ecological environment. However, scholars investigating corporate sustainability have found that many stakeholders believe that existing corporate sustainability evaluations are not sufficient to meet their needs, resulting in corporate development being compromised [3, 4]. The reason for this gap between research and practice is that most scholars set evaluation indicators more from the perspective of experts and do not fully consider or even ignore the expectations of stakeholders, resulting in indicators that do not reflect the needs of stakeholders. Therefore, in order to solve this gap between research and practice, this paper will analyze the importance of stakeholders for the

evaluation of sustainable development of platform enterprises from the perspective of stakeholders, classify stakeholders, consider the expectations of various types of stakeholders, and combine the research basis of previous scholars for the construction of evaluation index system.

2. Importance of Platform Stakeholders

2.1. From the Perspective of Sustainability

Stakeholders are critical to the sustainability of platform enterprises, and the sustainability of platform enterprises depends on stakeholders. As sustainability becomes an important business activity for enterprises, corporate sustainability is more often described as meeting the expectations of stakeholders. Lozano summarizes previous scholars' research on corporate sustainability and summarizes the definition of corporate sustainability as an enterprise meeting the needs of current direct and indirect stakeholders without compromising future stakeholders' needs of future stakeholders. The reason why corporate sustainability is defined from a stakeholder perspective is that as scholars have studied corporate sustainability, they have found that corporate sustainability is not an absolute concept, but should be viewed in the context of stakeholders and stakeholder expectations. Therefore, more and more scholars are calling for the application of stakeholder theory to the study of corporate sustainability by integrating the issue with the stakeholders of the firm and their expectations and by fully considering the needs and expectations of the stakeholders. Sureeyatanapas [5] et al. in their study on the sustainability of sugar industry firms found that The extent to which a firm can sustain itself indefinitely depends on the extent to which the firm satisfies its stakeholder groups currently and in the future.

Analyzed from the triple bottom line perspective of corporate sustainability, stakeholders influence the economic, social, and environmental sustainability of platform companies, and when companies neglect their stakeholders, the economic, social, and environmental performance of the company will produce a decline [6, 7]. First, firms that value their stakeholders outperform economically than those that focus only on shareholders' interests [8]. For platform firms, their main economic benefits come from the users of the platform's bilateral market. When platform enterprises ignore the needs of users, it will lead to a gradual decline in user satisfaction and flow to other platforms of the same type, resulting in a decline in economic revenue and affecting the normal operation of platform enterprises. Compared with non-platform enterprises, the impact of the stakeholder group of users on the economic benefits of platform enterprises appears to be more significant. Secondly, the expectations and demands of stakeholders influence the degree of attention to environmental issues by platform enterprises. For platform companies, the extent of their environmental protection efforts depends on the degree of attention paid by stakeholders. With the awakening of people's awareness of environmental protection, more consumers are demanding green consumption, more countries are enacting environmental policies and regulations, and more environmental organizations are emerging, resulting in increasing pressure on companies to protect the environment, platform companies must make more environmental efforts under the pressure of these stakeholders to achieve environmental performance to the satisfaction of stakeholders. Finally, companies that are more closely connected to their stakeholders tend to have better social performance, and Preble [9] found that companies that neglect their stakeholders or manage them poorly suffer from social reputation and corporate interests, which seriously affects their social performance. Therefore, in order to achieve better economic, environmental and social performance and sustainable development, platform companies must perceive and meet the expectations and needs of stakeholders as much as possible and pay attention to the role of stakeholders.

2.2. From the Perspective of Sustainability Assessment

Stakeholders have a significant influence on the sustainability evaluation of platform companies, and identifying stakeholder expectations is an important activity in sustainability evaluation. Moldavska and Welo [10] argue that when conducting sustainability evaluation of manufacturing companies, stakeholders are usually able to influence the development and use of the evaluation system, and at the same time are influenced by the development and use of the evaluation system, and this Silva divides the sustainability process into three phases: design and establishment, implementation and application, and communication and research, from which the importance of stakeholders is analyzed.

In the design and establishment stage of sustainability evaluation, the main task of enterprises is to determine evaluation indicators and methods and build evaluation systems. Enterprises need to determine relevant, reasonable and effective evaluation indicators, select scientific and robust evaluation methods, and build reasonable evaluation systems according to the expectations of internal and external stakeholders. Secondly, in the implementation and application stage of sustainability evaluation, the main task of the enterprise is to ensure the smooth implementation of the evaluation process and make appropriate adjustments according to the problems found in the evaluation process. The company needs to strengthen the contact with stakeholders, perceive the changes in stakeholders' expectations, and make appropriate adjustments to the evaluation system according to the changes in expectations to ensure the effectiveness and quality of the evaluation. Finally, in the communication and research phase of sustainability evaluation, the main task of the enterprise is to summarize the effectiveness of the evaluation, identify the problems in the evaluation process, and determine the shortcomings of the enterprise's sustainable development. In this stage, enterprises need to obtain feedback from stakeholders in a timely manner, determine the effect of this evaluation through stakeholder feedback, identify the sustainable development of the enterprise and the shortcomings of the evaluation, and make timely adjustments to ensure the sustainable development of the enterprise. In order to ensure the efficiency and effectiveness of the sustainability evaluation, the company must fully perceive and capture the expectations of the stakeholders, and closely integrate the expectations of the stakeholders with the evaluation process..

3. The Stakeholder of Platform Enterprise

Due to the limited resources at the disposal of platform companies, it is not possible to consider all stakeholders' expectations when conducting sustainability evaluation, therefore, this paper focuses on the primary stakeholders that influence the sustainability of platform companies based on the classification of stakeholders by Clarkson and the initial determination of stakeholders' expectations based on the article by Silva, as follows specific stakeholder classifications.

(1) Users. Users are the most important stakeholders of the platform enterprise and are closely related to the normal operation of the platform. Generally speaking, the user groups of platform enterprises are mainly divided into two categories: buyer users and seller users. The expectations of buyer users mainly include: high-quality products and services, suitable prices, perfect after-sales service, network security and protection of customer privacy. The expectations of seller users mainly include: a level playing field, more buyer users, and lower operating costs.

(2) Shareholders and investors. Shareholders and investors provide the capital and various resources needed for the development of platform companies. For shareholders and investors, they expect good business performance, enhanced corporate risk control, substantial investment returns and shareholder dividends, and sustained investment returns.

(3) Managers. Managers control the development direction of the platform enterprise and ensure the smooth operation of the platform enterprise, and their interests are often closely linked to the enterprise. Therefore, the manager expects the enterprise to grow rapidly, have a large scale of users and make considerable profits.

(4) Employees. Employees are the cornerstone of the development of the platform enterprise, handling the development of the platform enterprise and affecting the daily operation of the platform enterprise. Employees expect substantial salaries, stable and comfortable working environment, benefits, opportunities for self-development, equal promotion opportunities, and safety and health protection.

(5) Local government. Local governments are the customizers and maintainers of laws and regulations, the supervisors of the development of platform enterprises, and the representatives of the interests of future generations, and are the stakeholder groups most concerned about sustainable development issues. Local governments expect enterprises to operate legally and compliantly, create employment and wealth, pay attention to environmental issues, and pay taxes in a timely manner.

(6) United Nations and NGOs. The United Nations and NGOs represent the interests of various groups, issue programmatic documents on sustainable development, and set standards for sustainable development. The UN and NGOs expect companies to focus on their contribution to the UN's sustainable development goals, their economic, social and environmental contributions, and the transparency of sustainability information.

4. Conclusion

The importance of stakeholders to a company cannot be overstated, and their influence on whether a company can grow in a healthy and sustainable manner. Therefore, it is particularly important to evaluate the sustainability of manufacturing platform enterprises using stakeholder expectations. However, most scholars chose to construct the evaluation index system from the experts' perspective when conducting enterprise sustainability evaluation earlier, ignoring the stakeholders' expectations, resulting in a gap between the enterprise sustainability evaluation and stakeholders' expectations, and many stakeholders think that the existing enterprise sustainability evaluation is not enough to meet their needs. Based on the stakeholder theory, this paper discusses the importance of stakeholders for sustainability evaluation from the perspectives of both manufacturing platform enterprises themselves and sustainable development, and illustrates the impact of stakeholders' expectations on enterprise sustainability.

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