

Greenhushing: A Systematic Literature Review

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Abstract. Research suggests that green marketing and communication are essential today to show the corporate engagement in sustainability. Green communication is linked to several positive effects, and it may ultimately improve firms' reputation and performance (Gatti et al. 2019). However, to obtain the positive effects of green communication the authenticity of the message is not always mandatory. Green communication may indeed improve firms' reputation regardless of the actual company's green conduct (Seele & Gatti 2017). This is why an increasing number of organizations today are "not walking the talk" (Walker & Wan 2012), meaning they engage in greenwashing. However, in the last few years a new trend in corporate green communication is entering the scene: Greenhushing.

Greenhushing, considered a reaction to greenwashing, refers to the practice of organizations deliberately under-communicating or remaining silent about their environmental efforts (Ginder et al. 2021). While it is relatively recent, greenhushing seems to play a critical role in understanding consequences of greenwashing and the evolution of green marketing and communication. However, to our knowledge, there are no studies that analyze how the phenomenon has been discussed in literature so far. Therefore, for the very first time, this Systematic Literature Review (SLR) will critically analyze management and business-related academic articles about greenhushing to summarize evidence and findings of existing research and to identify directions for future studies.

To identify scientific articles about greenhushing, we employed keyword searches using the following databases: SCOPUS, Web of Science (WoS), Springer Link, and Wiley online library. We applied the following keywords "greenhash OR greenhushing OR green hush OR green hushing" to all the fields (including the title, abstract, keywords and full text of articles) and we selected English articles published in scholarly journals. After eliminating duplicate results, 114 relevant papers remained. We applied the same keyword search on the top academic management journals, selected based on the Cohen's (2006) list of the highest quality journals¹. Finally, because the topic is link to social/environmental/ethical issues in management, following the Montiel & Delgado-Ceballos' approach (2014), we searched for greenhushing-related articles in four social/ethical issues journals²; and in two environmental management journals³. Duplicate results were eliminated. The final sample comprises 121 academic papers.

The next step of this work-in-progress research will be to manually code the final papers using descriptive and thematic analysis of the full texts. The descriptive analysis will provide an overview of the current state of art of literature about greenhushing. It will focus on author, journal area (based on the Academic Journal Guide of 2018), journal, publication date, and methodology of research. The thematic analysis will focus on codifying the content with the objective of 1. identifying common elements and conflicting views of greenhushing definitions, 2. clustering contributions to understand antecedents and consequences of greenhushing, and 3. identifying critical gaps in knowledge which need to be addressed in future studies.

¹ Academy of Management Journal, Academy of Management Review, Administrative Science Quarterly, Organization Science, Journal of Management, and Management Science.

² Journal of Business Ethics, Business and Society Review, Business Ethics Quarterly, and Business & Society.

³ Organization & Environment, and Business Strategy and the Environment.

Through a SLR, this study will provide an overview to both practitioners and researchers to understand the meaning of greenhushing and its current implications.

Keywords: greenhushing, greenwashing, green communication, green marketing

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