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What determines sustainability reporting in SMEs?: The experts' view

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Palabras Clave:

Non-financial reporting, sustainability, multi-criteria decision-making, small and medium enterprises, experts.

RESUMEN:

On the corporate level, the complex societal challenge of sustainable development involves communicating social and environmental information to firms "stakeholders". In this sense, it is necessary to go deeper into the reasons behind disclosing this type of information, particularly in SMEs where there are fewer well-known examples of sustainability reporting (SR) than in large firms. Thus, the aims of this paper are to identify the whole set of costs and benefits that could be derived from implementing SR in SMEs, how they are perceived (prioritized) by two groups of experts (academics and practitioners) and the possible differences in the prioritization of costs and benefits between the two groups of experts. The empirical study is conducted in the Spanish field of SR, using the recently developed best-worst multi-criteria decision-making technique. The results show that while academics directly point out the "economic cost" of developing a sustainability report as the main criterion in order to implement SR, practitioners consider a fuzzy combination of different criteria taken into consideration previous to SR implementation. Overall, this study provides a holistic checklist in order to help SMEs in their decision-making processes related to SR implementation.