

THE HONG KONG POLYTECHNIC UNIVERSITY DEPARTMENT OF MANAGEMENT AND MARKETING

Departmental Research Seminar

Managing ESG Mandate Complexity Through Standardized Convergence:
Supplier Responses in Global Supply Chains

By



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Date : 11 Sep 2025 (Thu)
Time : 10:30 am – 12 noon
Venue : GH120c, PolyU

Abstract

Organizations increasingly face diverse ESG demands across national contexts, where variations in regulations and expectations complicate response strategies. While prior research emphasizes conflicting demands across institutional spheres, we focus on the challenges posed by nuanced differences within a shared ESG domain. This study examines how buyer-country ESG disclosure mandates influence Chinese suppliers' strategic responses—specifically, whether they pursue direct ESG improvements or adopt standardized certifications. We argue that regulatory diversity heightens the appeal of standardized responses, which offer broadly recognized legitimacy, over direct, resource-intensive ESG improvements. Using panel data linking 1,388 Chinese suppliers to ESG policies across 86 buyer countries, we find that suppliers significantly increase standardized certification adoption in response to stronger ESG mandates. The preference for standardized responses intensifies with greater regulatory diversity among buyers. Our findings extend institutional research by identifying a distinct form of complexity within a common domain and offering new insight into ESG governance in global supply chains.

Prof. Heli Wang is the Janice Bellace Professor of Strategic Management at Singapore Management University. Her research explores the resource-based view of the firm, strategic human capital, stakeholder management, technology management, and corporate social responsibility and sustainability. Her work has appeared in leading management journals, including the *Academy of Management Journal*, *Strategic Management Journal*, *Academy of Management Review*, and *Organization Science*, among others. She is currently serving as an area editor for *Journal of International Business Studies*. She has also previously served as a consulting editor for *Management and Organization Review* and as an associate editor for both the *Academy of Management Journal* and the *Academy of Management Review*.

All interested are welcome.



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