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The Influence of Corporate Sustainability and Social Responsibility Strategies on Product and Service Innovation

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Research Question/Purpose - Corporate social responsibility and sustainability are increasingly becoming a part in the discussion of competitiveness and the creation of value in a growing number of companies. This paper focuses on the question which sustainability and CSR-issues are of relevance for different corporations and the influence of the corporate sustainability and responsibility strategies on the process and service innovations of multinational companies.

Theoretical Framework – The models and framework for this contribution are the shared value framework (Porter/Kramer 2011), the five-stages-process to become more sustainable by Nidumolu/Prahalad and Rangeswami (2009) and the approach to sustainable innovation by Jonker (2012).

Method – This is a conceptual paper that presents discussions and conclusions at the level of the theoretical frameworks and models. Based on this discussion a multi-case-study of four multinational firms was conducted.

Findings: A deeper understanding of sustainability challenges and global trends in responsibility arising from the core business of corporations could lead to a pioneering role in the industry. Products, services and processes based on the social responsibility of a corporation could unlock the potential not only for innovative products but also for new services, systems/processes and social innovations.

A core finding is that after starting with sustainable products in the medium to long term the corporate processes and the supply chain are challenged by the CSR- and sustainability strategy to achieve long-term competitive advantages. The individual strategic approaches to CSR and sustainability could contribute to an increasing competitive advantage.

Keywords: Corporate sustainability, Corporate social responsibility, Innovation, Competitive advantages

