

Strategic Corporate Sustainability - Towards an Integrated Strategy Typology

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Abstract

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and the broader term Corporate Sustainability (CS) are on-going and increasing important topics in management research and for businesses. Even though the research in this field has evolved intensively over the last 10-15 years, CS literature remains still highly fragmented and discordantly, especially in the area of strategic CS and CS as the future business opportunity (Aguinis & Glavas, 2012).

Therefore this research paper moves towards a clearer understanding of CS strategies and under which it does and does not pay off to be good through contributing a configurational model of CS. The proposed typology consists of four types of aligned CS practices (labeled passive, active, proactive, and visionary), which are linked to corporate strategy, as well as external factors and internal interdependencies. Each of the four proposed CS strategy types reflects a unique combination of aligned CS practices, which fits most effectively in a particular given context. Configurational factors and the impact on corporate performance are considered for each CS strategy characteristic.

This configurational approach to CS stays very closely to the strategy typology of Miles and Snow (1978), who argued that different corporate strategies are based on a company's perception of the environment and which adaptive behavior causes the most effective outcome in the given context. The development of our conceptual model is based on a comprehensive literature review in the three main areas: CS and Contingency Theory (Drazin & Van de Ven, 1985; Miller, 1979); CS and Organizational Performance (Barnett & Salomon, 2012; Orlitzky et al., 2003) and models of strategic CS (Baumgartner & Ebner, 2010; Carroll, 1991). In order to embed this CS strategy typology in strategic management literature, it is finally discussed under the main strategic management theoretical lenses: managerial behavior and cognition, competitive dynamics, resource-based view, stakeholder management, Strategic Choice Approach, and theory of the firm. The underlying research questions are: *1. To what extent and why do companies differ in*

their CS strategy, structure and process? What factors influence this decision? 2. Which costs and benefits, financial and non-financial outcomes, relate to each individual CS strategy type?.

Key Words: *(Strategic) Corporate Sustainability, Corporate Sustainability Configurations, Strategic Fit*

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