

Aligning Corporate Strategies with the Sustainable Development Goals

Introductory article by the special issue editors

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Introduction

The preceding three decades have been characterised by several social, technological, and environmental changes, which have customized the operational environment of corporations. One of those changes is the emergence of green sustainability (Gray, 1994; Abbas, 2019), which has an interlacing effect on creating customer value and sustaining companies' environmental, social, and financial performance. The responses to these important issues are gaining relevance, increasing the impetus for companies to develop new business models consistent with this paradigm and share this information with external stakeholders, including the public. Such an approach will help create a holistic, integrated view of implementing sustainable development practices and foster a new culture consistent with a large-scale transition to a green sustainable future.

The age of the digital era, which eliminated the geographical boundaries for businesses as well as for customers, has resulted in mass globalization. In this era, not only can customers easily contact different suppliers around the world, they can also find substitutes that fulfil their needs at a lower cost (Singh, 2020; Mather, 2020), making the acquisition and maintenance of competitive advantage a real challenge for firms. Such an ambitious task is driven by the commitment to follow the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the consequential need

to align business strategies with the SDGs. Therefore, to fulfil the needs of customers and achieve the SDGs, dynamic organizations adopt multiple strategies with proven success in enhancing organizational performance, such as re-orienting business plans and the development of capabilities.

In 2015, all United Nations (UN) member states ratified and adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development as a plan of action to end poverty, protect the planet, and ensure prosperity for all people worldwide (UN, 2015). At the core of the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development are 17 integrated sustainable development goals (SDGs) and 169 associated specific measurable targets. A prominent feature of the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is the emphasis on the role of the private sector in advancing and achieving sustainable development initiatives, working in partnership with governments, civil society, and other stakeholders. In relation to this, business and industry, working with political leaders and civil society, were significantly involved in, and contributed to the design of, the SDGs (UN, 2015).

Effective green sustainability models can promote the diffusion and integration of SDGs into business practices, thus helping one to achieve the SDGs (Mangena, 2012; Pirzada, 2017). In this context, it is important to provide an understanding of whether and how green sustainabil-

ity models affect or influence the corporate sector's engagement with SDGs (including environmental, social, and governance aspects).

Overview of the Special Issue Papers

This special issue of *Corporate Strategies* comprises eight papers examining the role of corporate strategy arrangements for sustainable green development and knowledge generation on SDGs in the context of Asian and Eastern Europe countries.

The first paper by Wong Wai Khuen, Teh Boon Heng, and Tan Siow-Hooi examines the impact of organizations disclosing important environmental, social, and governance (ESG) issues. The continued flatlining of ESG reporting quality has led some parties to call on policymakers to take advantage of the distinct contextual pressure from external stakeholders to improve corporate ESG commitment. However, the relationship between external stakeholders and ESG disclosure remains theoretically and empirically ambiguous. Grounded in stakeholder theory, legitimacy theory, resource-based theory, and slack resource theory, this article reconceptualizes the Ullmann (1985) model of corporate social performance and presents a novel conceptual framework to examine the external stakeholders-ESG disclosure relationship. The empirical exploration of the framework will assist policymakers to identify salient external stakeholders to collectively promote greater ESG commitment amongst corporate organizations. Future research could entail a longitudinal study using regression techniques to test and validate the conceptual framework.

The second paper by Kiet Hong Vo Tuan Truong, Van Pham Huynh, and Huy Dang Nguyen, focuses on the crucial role of universities in training and educating future businesspeople to holistically comprehend sustainable thinking. This demonstrates the importance of preparing the next generation of businesspeople with factual knowledge, practical skills, and a sense of responsibility toward sustainability. This study examines the ideas of economics students and compares these with the opinions of professionals (international and local scholars and transporter/logistics) toward sustainable business practices. The findings show that students, in general, are highly aware of the principles of sustainable development and ready to implement them in practice during business planning. With the help of matrices of factor analysis, four alternative realistic patterns of corporate strategies for sustainable development, with appropriate recommendations for their implementation, were compiled. They serve as a basis for decision-making by current and future entrepreneurs when forming their own business plans.

The third paper by Roslee Uyob, Ku Maisurah Ku Bahador, and Ram al Jaffri Saad examines evidence from Malaysia to investigate how incentives for Extensible Business Reporting Language (XBRL) affect the relationship between intention to use and user behavior when filing submissions. In this regard, a survey was implemented among company employees involved in the preparation and submission of filings to Suruhanjaya Syarikat Malaysia

(SSM). The results indicate that incentives strengthen the positive relationship between XBRL filing intentions and usage behavior. The study also discovers that intent to use significantly impacts XBRL filing behavior. Compared to perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use was found to have a greater influence on XBRL filing intentions. Perceived ease of use was also found to be a significant indicator of XBRL filing perceived usefulness. The results of this study provide guidelines for incorporating XBRL technology into the practices of government authorities and policymakers. The paper's findings can also be used to develop strategies to encourage filers to submit voluntary filings using the XBRL platform.

The fourth paper by Thomas Turner and Konstantin Bagrationi investigates the resistance of middle managers to innovative digital transformation initiatives and suggests strategies for overcoming such opportunistic behavior in the context of a major Russian transportation company. This study assesses the values and attitudes of middle managers, and identifies patterns of resistance behavior among middle managers. The findings reveal a significant relationship between employees' attitudes toward routine and their resistance to digital transformation. Managers with high scores in tradition, conformity, security, and power values, as well as strong positive attitudes toward routine, were more resistant to change. Conversely, those with high scores in universalism, self-direction, and stimulation values were more open to change. By addressing the values and concerns driving middle managers' attitudes, organizations can better support them in overcoming resistance to digital transformation.

The fifth paper by Fara Adilah Firdaus Mohd Rom and Osamu Soda explores good governance concepts and their relevance for project administration and implementation success. This paper investigates the link between the understanding of good governance concepts and their delivery from the perspective of the management of public projects in affordable housing in Malaysia. The findings identified that most of the managers surveyed understood the concept of good governance and what constitutes it and were aware of the importance of good governance practices in public projects. This paper recommends that a government, through its authorities or agencies, continuously educate organizations and the public in understanding the true concept of good governance for smoother project administration and implementation for the growth of the whole nation.

The sixth paper by Sofi Dinesh and Suddhachit Mitra, relying on the behavioral economics concept, investigates the influence of the Big Five personality traits which include extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism, and openness, in molding the adoption intention of consumers toward electric vehicles (EVs) in India. The study was undertaken in two stages. In the first stage, users and non-users of electric vehicles were surveyed. The results show a significant effect of all Big Five personality traits on adoption intention, except for neuroticism. There was no significant difference in the adoption intention based on the differences in personal-

ity traits between men and women. In the second stage, the study used an expert-opinion based survey that was conceptualized based on the Diffusion of Innovation theory combined with the idea of memetics in new product diffusion. The results from the first stage of the research were bolstered by the fact that the second stage indicated that product attributes influencing diffusion would have a negative influence on adoption intentions of persons with high neuroticism. The paper provides useful insights into consumer behavior based on personality for marketers of electric vehicles and policymakers interested in bringing about sustainable consumption practices.

The seventh paper by Fuad Fakhri Murshudli examines the role of green financial policy in the solving of major global environmental problems with a focus on international banking activities. For developing countries, international bank financing is one of the main sources of environmentally sustainable development. Therefore, this study aims to analyze how international green banking affects the environmental sustainability of developing countries. The data series retrieved from the OECD and World Bank Open Data for the period 2010 to 2020 compiled the information basis of this study. The identified effects can be useful for government officials to determine the benefits of using international green banking toward achieving environmental sustainability.

The eighth and final paper in this special issue is by Shady Shayegan, Ardeshtir Bazrkar and Reza Yadegari. This paper investigates and analyzes the level of realization of sustainable organizational performance of companies active in Iran's automotive industry using new technologies and green human resource management practices. The study surveyed more than 200 senior and middle managers of active companies in the automotive industry of Iran. The results of the research hypothesis tests show that the use of new technologies has a positive and significant effect on sustainable organizational performance and the effective implementation of green human resource management practices of the studied companies. In addition, the re-

lationship between the use of innovative and sustainable organizational performance and variable green human resource management practices has a mediating effect.

Conclusion

The United Nations 2030 Agenda and the SDGs have been heralded as an important and unprecedented step in ending poverty, protecting the planet, and ensuring prosperity for everyone worldwide (United Nations General Assembly, 2015; Tsalis, 2020). A key feature of the UN 2030 Agenda is the acceptance of the huge role played by the private sector in advancing and achieving the SDGs by integrating sustainability principles into their corporate strategies. However, integrating the SDGs into corporate strategies depends on effective firm-level sustainable green development and the knowledge generation of SDGs in the business purpose and values, including sustainable practices in their day-to-day operations.

The papers in this special issue investigate the role of corporate strategies for sustainable green development and knowledge generation in implementing the SDGs or principles in Asian and Eastern Europe countries, including Malaysia, Vietnam, Iran, Japan, India, Azerbaijan, and Russia. Although the papers provide important insights into the drivers of SDGs, they are from seven different countries, highlighting the need for further studies on the contribution of corporate strategies toward the achievement of the SDGs in the context of a wider group of countries. Such studies could also consider a cross-country analysis to provide insights into how institutional differences among countries influence the implementation and achievement of SDGs. There is also a need to understand the role of other corporate strategies, such as integrated reporting and long-term value, on the achievement of SDGs. It is a matter of great importance for companies to explain how their corporation creates value for their key stakeholders in the long term not only to preserve their existence, but to remain in sharp focus for all entities.

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