

Sabrina Engert

Research Assistant and PhD Student
Email: sabrina.engert@uni-graz.at

Rupert J. Baumgartner

Professor for Sustainability Management
Email: rupert.baumgartner@uni-graz.at

ISIS - Institute of Systems Sciences, Innovation and Sustainability Research
University of Graz
Merangasse 18/1
A-8010 Graz, AUSTRIA

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Sustainable Strategic Management (SSM) – Literature Review and Conceptual Framework

Justification of the paper

Society's increasing interest in companies' sustainability commitment and the consequential activities has led to an increased scientific interest in the subject of Strategic Management (SM) and the planning and implementation process of the concept of Corporate Sustainability (CS) in the company's strategy, vision and culture.

Sustainable Strategic Management (SSM) has its roots in strategic management (SM) and is therefore based on the adoption and extension of concepts in the field of Strategic Management. The role of companies in society has been at the centre of SM research ever since scholars became interested in organizational phenomena (Ratiu et al., 2009). In considering the traditional SM approach, it is clear that management decisions are conducted on objective achievement and affected by future uncertainty. Considering sustainability aspects in strategic decision processes automatically increases complexity as well as uncertainty. From the companies' perspective, it is important to structure and reduce uncertainty and create consistency in order to foster cognitions of stability. In terms of sustainability uncertainty could be identified in economic, ecological and social "fields" although, it has to be pointed out that those areas are highly linked with each other. The interdependencies of several foci of sustainability could even increase complexity.

In business context SSM is one approach to deal with the aforementioned challenges and lead a company into the future. One approach of this kind of management are strategies. Strategies explain the meaning and vision of a company to internal and external stakeholders while defining boundaries of corporate policies and contributing to a better understanding of the corporate identity (Mintzberg, 1987). Therefore, the integration of the concept of CS into SM is essential because it is part of corporate vision, culture and identity. At the same time, this changing process is linked with power loss in terms of dropping off something old and picking up something new.

Purpose

The purpose of the paper is to determine the state of the art in SSM research by using the research method of a systematic literature review on the basis of Mayring (2002, 2003). We identify the essential knowledge that has been established in the field of SSM, particularly distinguishing what has been done from what needs to be done. This means that key results of the paper are identified future research options/questions based on the results of the literature review. By reviewing the relevant literature in the field of SSM we also identify a set of variables which are relevant for the discussion of SSM, both within science and practice. Furthermore, we demonstrate a conceptual framework including a discussion about the established variables and the identified research gaps. Consequently, the research questions to be answered are:

- (1) What are the main findings of descriptive analysis of sustainable strategic management (SSM)?
- (2) What are the major topics and characteristics in the existing literature of sustainable strategic management (SSM)?
- (3) What are the identified research gaps in the research field of SSM and what is relevant for further research?

Literature

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