

# Stakeholders as Determinants - How Multi-Brand Corporations Manage Tensions in Corporate Sustainability

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## **Abstract**

Companies are increasingly required to implement corporate sustainability (CS) initiatives, creating tensions in addressing divergent sustainability issues that must be managed. Existing research on CS tensions focuses primarily on a single, unified corporation's perspective. We consider corporations as complex entities composed of multiple consumer brands that face more complex and higher-level tensions than single-brand companies due to their dual focus on corporate and brand-level stakeholders. We conducted a qualitative, multiple-case study of 14 semi-structured interviews with managers from four fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) companies. We show that multi-brand corporations encounter four tension types - performing, belonging, organizing, and learning (Smith & Lewis, 2011). Stakeholders (e.g., governments or consumers) act as determinants while managing tensions. CS tensions can be managed by canceling, refocusing, and relocating initiatives, as well as product innovation.

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