Article:
Leonidou, L.C., Theodosiou, M., Nilssen, F. et al. (2 more authors) (2024) Evaluating MNEs' role in implementing the UN Sustainable Development Goals: The importance of innovative partnerships. International Business Review, 33 (3). 102259. ISSN 0969-5931

https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ibusrev.2024.102259

Evaluating MNEs' role in implementing the UN Sustainable Development Goals:

The importance of innovative partnerships

Abstract

This article focuses on the role that MNEs play in the implementation of the 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Using input collected from the corporate websites of selected MNEs, a review of the extant literature, and views by academics in the field, we provide a synthesis of knowledge referring to the past, present, and future role of MNEs in accomplishing these SDGs. The literature review revealed that 'responsible consumption and production', 'no poverty', 'peace, justice and strong institutions', and 'climate action' were among the most frequently examined SDGs. Also, the analysis of the content of corporate websites and the views of academics showed a similar pattern as to the emphasis put on the role of MNEs in achieving SDGs, with 'responsible consumption and production' and 'climate action' attracting the highest attention. Important theoretical and managerial implications are derived from the study findings, while directions for future research are also recommended.

Keywords

Multinational enterprises (MNEs); Sustainable development goals (SDGs); Literature review.

1. Introduction

This article focuses on the role of Multinational Enterprises (MNEs) in implementing the sustainable development goals (SDGs) proposed by the United Nations (UN). This is an important area of research because time has never been so crucial for these organizations to play a dominant role in helping to make the planet sustainable, as a result of the existence of serious problems, such as increasing environmental pollution, climate changes with catastrophic effects, rising migration flows from poor countries, scarcity of critical natural resources, and exacerbated poverty levels (Montiel et al., 2021; Pels and Sheth, 2021). It also reflects a growing demand by various stakeholders (e.g., governments, communities, customers) that MNEs should adopt a more socially responsible approach and strive not only to reduce their negative impact on society, but also to make positive contributions to it (Wettstein et al., 2019).

To accommodate these "grand challenges", in 2015 the UN revised its previous set of Millennium Sustainable Goals (MSGs) (which had experienced very slow progress in their accomplishment) to form a new agenda comprising 17 SDGs (broken down into 169 indicators) to be implemented by 2030 (Mio et al., 2020; Sachs and Sachs, 2021). This UN Sustainability Development Agenda covers major issues facing humanity today that require immediate international action, representing one of the most authoritative inter-governmental agendas ever signed by UN member states (de Villers et al. 2021; van Zanten and van Tulder, 2018). However, since this agenda is not legally enforceable, it largely depends on the willingness of each signatory nation to contribute toward its implementation, but also on the role of non-governmental initiatives to help resolve today's sustainability challenges (de Villers et al. 2021).

MNEs can play a pivotal role in this regard, because: (a) due to their large size, they have the power to make significant and disruptive societal changes, resulting from their global

experience, extensive knowledge, and abundance of financial, human, and other resources (Sachs and Sachs, 2021); (b) their value chain operations spread in multiple countries, where they need to fulfil their obligations stemming from the "social contract" they have with host communities (Sinkovics et al., 2017); and (c) they have been repeatedly accused of being responsible for many of the social, environmental, and economic crises worldwide and therefore their participation in this endeavor would help to both restore their image and improve their reputation and performance (Jamali and Karam, 2016).

This topic has attracted the attention of numerous scholars within the business field in general and the international business (IB) field in particular, producing dozens of studies on the subject. This has resulted in several efforts to review extant knowledge, with those of Kolk et al. (2017), Sinkovics et al. (2022), and Celone et al. (2022) specifically focusing on the association of MNEs with SDGs.[1] Despite the useful insights offered, these reviews were limited on various grounds: (a) they did not exclusively focus on SDGs, but covered additional issues pertaining to MSGs and/or CSR; (b) they included either a limited number of articles published in specific journals or an extensive range of heterogenous publications (e.g., articles, reports, interviews); (c) they provided either a very general or a narrow-specific approach in their analysis, without offering an in-depth examination of the whole spectrum of SDGs; (d) they covered time periods that were extended well-before the introduction of the UN Sustainability Development Agenda; and (e) did not complement their findings with extra information gained from other sources.

In light of these limitations, our study provides a comprehensive synthesis of knowledge referring to the role of MNEs in accomplishing SDGs, using input collected from corporate websites, a review of the extant literature, and views by academics on the subject. Specifically, our study has three objectives to achieve: (a) to evaluate the extent of the current involvement of a selected group of influential MNEs in implementing SDGs, through

information derived from their corporate websites; (b) to provide a critical review of the extant research covering the period 2016-2023 on the involvement of MNEs in accomplishing these SDGs; and (c) to assess the priority of studying each of these SDGs and recommend directions for future research, based on input received from scholars specializing in this field.

2. Research method

The methodology adopted in our study consists of three major parts: (a) an exploratory study where we analyze the corporate websites of a selected group of MNEs, with a particular focus on implementing the various SDGs; (b) a review of the extant literature on SDGs, from 2016 up to 2023; and (c) a survey among academics with an interest in this area of research, seeking their views on various issues pertaining to SDGs. This tripartite methodology was deemed necessary in order to have a more complete picture of the subject, by examining SDGs from the perspective of what practitioners have actually been doing in implementing these goals (website analysis), what has been investigated, found, and known until now regarding them (literature review), and what directions academic research has to take in the future to push this line of investigation forward (academics' views).

2.1. Company website analysis

To evaluate the current practice of implementing the 17 UN SDGs by MNEs, we analyzed the corporate website content of firms selected from Forbes' (2020) directory (which provides a list of MNEs engaged in sustainability practices) that met the following criteria: (a) to be multinational organizations with a great impact on the world market; (b) to have the location of their headquarters in different geographic regions; (c) to have operations in a large number of foreign markets; (d) to belong to different industrial sectors; and (e) to show evidence that they are involved in the implementation of SDGs. This sampling procedure has ensured a

representative sample of MNEs appropriate for the purpose of our study and helped to obtain variability in the input derived from their corporate websites.

Altogether, 32 MNEs were selected, having their headquarters in North America (28.1%), Europe (56.3%), or Asia (15.6%), and belonging to industries focusing on consumer non-durables (43.7%), consumer durables (25.0%), industrial goods (21.9%), or services (21.8%). Each corporate website was content analyzed for the purpose of coding issues referring to SDGs. For this reason, we have carefully designed a special coding protocol comprising the 17 UN SDGs, broken down into 64 specific targets (see **Appendix 1**).[2] This protocol was accompanied by a coding manual which provided definitions and detailed explanations of the nature of each of these SDGs and their targets. The content of each website was coded by selecting the specific target falling under each SDG as referred to (or inferred in) each MNE's website.

The coding of the corporate websites was undertaken by two experienced coders with knowledge of the subject. Before embarking on the actual coding, both coders underwent a rigorous training, in which the purpose of the coding protocol and content of the coding manual were fully explained, and clarifications provided. The coders worked independently on coding the content of the websites, while on completion of the coding process, the information collected was compared and contrasted to identify and resolve any discrepancies. The results of this analysis at the SDG level are presented in **Table 1**, while a more detailed analysis of the specific 64 targets operationalizing the various SDGs is provided in **Web Appendix A**.[3]

…insert Table 1 about here…

2.2 Literature review

Our review of the literature covered articles published from 2016 (i.e., the year after the UN Sustainability Development Agenda was signed) to 2023. For a publication to be included in our literature review, the following eligibility criteria had to be met: (a) to focus on broad or

specific aspects of SDGs in relation to MNEs; (b) to take the form of an academic article, having either a conceptual or empirical nature; (c) to have been written in English; and (d) to appear in journals included in the Academic Journal Guide of Chartered Association of Business Schools (ABS) in the United Kingdom. Our review excluded: conference proceedings; books, book chapters, and articles in books; editorial comments, research notes, and reply notes; reviews, meta-analyses, bibliometrics; and monographs, theses, and dissertations.

To identify relevant articles for the study, we searched the titles, abstracts, and keyword fields of several electronic databases, namely, ABI/Proquest, ScienceDirect, EBSCO, Scopus, and Web of Science. Our search used keywords that refer to SDGs in a broad way, namely, "sustainable development goals" OR "SDGs" OR "UN sustainable development agenda" OR "sustainability" OR ''sustainable development", as well as keywords referring to specific aspects of SDGs, namely, "no poverty'' OR "zero hunger'' OR "good health and well-being'' OR "quality education" OR "gender equality" OR "clean water and sanitation" OR "affordable and clean energy" OR "decent work and economic growth" OR "industry innovation and infrastructure'' OR "reduced inequalities", "sustainable cities and communities" OR "responsible consumption and production" OR "climate action" OR "life below water" OR "life on land" OR "peace, justice and strong institutions'' OR "partnerships for the goals". These two sets of keywords were connected with the Boolean operator AND, using the following keywords referring to MNEs: "international business" OR "multinational corporations" OR "multinational enterprises" OR "multinational firms" OR "transnational corporations'' OR "transnational enterprises" OR "transnational firms" OR "global corporations" OR "global enterprises" OR "global firms". To eliminate the possibility of excluding relevant articles not captured by our electronic search, we also manually examined the reference sections of all articles selected, as well as reviewed the tables of contents of

journals specializing in IB (published during the period 2016-2023). **Appendix 2** provides a detailed explanation of the procedure used to identify eligible publications.

The outcome of this procedure was the collection of 116 articles published in 39 different journals, the top five contributors being *Journal of Cleaner Production* (19.0%), *Business Strategy and the Environment* (7.8%), *Sustainability* (7.8%), *Transnational Corporations* (7.8%), and *Journal of International Business Studies* (6.9%) (see **Figure 1** for the number of articles included in our literature review for each of the years under investigation and **Appendix 3** for the list of journals contributing these articles). To analyze the content of the articles selected, we followed the same coding procedure as in the case of coding corporate websites. In doing so, the same coders were used, who proceeded with their coding using the same coding protocol and coding manual employed in the company website analysis. The two coders again worked independently on content analyzing the articles selected, while any discrepancies in their coding results were discussed until reaching a commonly agreeable code. The list of articles coded is presented in **Web Appendix B**, while the key thematic issues identified with regard to each SDG are provided in **Table 2**.

…insert Figure 1 about here…

…insert Table 2 about here…

2.3 Survey among academics

To identify which new directions research on SDGs should take in future and what priorities need to be set, we conducted a survey among scholars in the field. For this purpose, we developed a brief online questionnaire, focusing on the 17 UN SDGs and their 64 targets, which comprised three parts (see **Appendix 4**). In the first part, respondents were requested to select five SDGs that they considered most important for future research. In the second part, they were asked to select three specific targets (using the same list included in the coding protocol) where particular research attention should be paid in future. In the final part, they were

requested to suggest possible new areas of research within each SDG. Structuring the questionnaire in this way helped to reduce the possibility of participant academics confining their views only to those issues that referred to their own research interests.

To avoid the potential of self-selection bias and generate further variability in academic views regarding future research emphasis, only the authors of the articles included in the literature review were invited to participate in the survey. The questionnaire was electronically sent to the e-mail addresses of 203 authors, accompanied by a cover letter explaining the purpose and importance of our study, and, following two reminders, we managed to receive 51 completed responses (i.e., 25.1% response rate). Respondents belonged to a wide array of disciplines, ranging from management and marketing to finance and economics, hence generating additional diversity in their views regarding future research on the subject. The results of this analysis are presented in **Table 3.**[4]

…insert Table 3 about here…

3. Study findings

This section presents the findings of the three components of our research, namely company website analysis, literature review, and survey among academics, for each of the 17 SDGs. The latter were categorized using the fivefold typology adopted by UN, namely SDGs related to people (5), the planet (5), prosperity (5), peace (1), and partnerships (1) (see **Figure 2**).

…insert Figure 2 about here…

3.1 People-related SDGs

Under the "people" category falls the declaration of the UN on alleviating poverty and hunger in the world, as well as ensuring that all human beings can fulfil their potential in dignity, equality, and a healthy environment (UNF, 2021). This category encompasses: SDG 1 ('no

poverty'), SDG 2 ('zero hunger'), SDG 3 ('good health and well-being'), SDG 4 ('quality education'), and SDG 5 ('gender equality').

3.1.1 SDG 1 – No poverty

Since the early 1990s, there has been a significant decrease in the number of people who live in poverty. Evidence shows that the percentage of the world's population living in extreme poverty conditions decreased from 36% in 1990 to 10% in 2015, and 8.3% in 2018 facing an increase due to covid-19 pandemic and reaching 9.3% in 2020. Currently, extreme poverty levels are 8.4% (UN Statistics Division, 2023). However, one out of five children still live in extreme poverty and based on a recent study published by the UN World Institute for Development Economics (2020), the economic consequences from the coronavirus pandemic crisis could further increase global poverty levels. Our website analysis revealed that 19 out of the total 32 MNEs examined paid attention to this specific SDG. For example, *Marks & Spencer* claims in its webpage that its target is to identify and understand "work-poverty" (i.e., its employees who are poor) in the foreign societies in which it operates and provides a "living wage", while at the same time encouraging its supply chain partners and franchisees to do the same. *Siemens* has also implemented a project to provide humanitarian aid to communities suffering from poverty, while *GSK* is committed to support poor people hit by humanitarian disasters through the donation of medical supplies.

This SDG was among the most widely studied, with almost half (49.1%) of the articles reviewed focusing on it. Some articles (e.g., Donoher, 2017; Hendricks, 2017) examined the role of MNEs in alleviating poverty through employment, such as preventing unemployment caused by new technologies, taking care of artisans and communities to avoid displacement, and providing micro-finance and moneylending options. Other researchers (e.g., Donoher, 2017; Kolk et al., 2018; Selmier and Newenham-Kahindi, 2021) focused on internal and external factors driving the development of core or peripheral strategies by MNEs to

accommodate various types of problems associated with poverty, such as material deprivation, lack of education, and ill health.

Approximately a third (31.4%) of the participants in our survey among academics reported that this goal certainly needs to be further investigated, stressing its contributing role to sustainability. In particular, they emphasized the need to study more the following issues: the development of specific strategies and initiatives by MNEs aiming to alleviate poverty in the host country (such as the provision of fair payment to small-scale suppliers); the offering of products and services at a lower price (or even free of charge) to low-income people in poor countries; the role of acquisitions made by MNEs in host countries (e.g., land, capital, etc.) in influencing poverty levels; the potential effect of relationships, value co-creation, and appropriation between MNEs and other actors to combat poverty in Base of the Pyramid (BoP) markets; and the promotion of business, product, and other innovations by MNEs and their subsidiaries aiming to provide solutions to poverty-related problems.

3.1.2 SDG 2 – Zero hunger

This goal aims to reduce hunger by developing appropriate mechanisms that will ensure uninterrupted food supply, through sustainable agriculture, husbandry, and fishery, which is essential to end hunger. Although nowadays the total production of food is more than enough to cover the needs of the whole world, developed countries (and particularly their households) waste about 17% of global food, while at the same time more than 650 million people in developing countries suffer from hunger (UN Hunger Report, 2021; UN Food Waste Index Report, 2021). Only 13 (out of the 32) corporate websites referred to this goal, mainly firms involved in food business. A case in point is *Nestlé*, which has introduced the "Farmer connect program", focusing on educating farmers in underdeveloped countries on sustainable practices, healthy nutrition, and intercropping (growing two or more crops in one field). *Henkel* helps smallholder farmers to get certification for sustainable agricultural practices, while at the same

time closely collaborates with UNICEF to promote good nutrition and healthy development in children. *IKEA,* recognizing the negative impact of the recent coronavirus pandemic on hunger levels, has set a goal to reduce food waste by 50% in all its stores selling food by 2022.

This goal received attention by more than two-fifths (41.4%) of the articles reviewed, with the emphasis being primarily on finding out how food security can be accomplished through investment in land and/or by MNEs providing agricultural support. Specifically, Santangelo's (2018) study investigated the effect of FDI on expanding crop production, revealing positive outcomes in developed countries (due to home institutional pressures for respect of human rights and responsible farming), but negative effects in the case of developing countries. Another group of articles examined the type of MNEs' support (e.g., training, funding, motivation) on smallholder farmers and local suppliers, in order to encourage them to use new technologies in their agricultural production, thus providing them with more jobs and a better living wage (van Holt et al., 2021). In relation to this, Selmier and Newenham-Kahindi (2021) found that lack of a job and/or sustainable income is highly associated with an inability to afford food.

Slightly more than a tenth (11.8%) of the academics who participated in our study considered this goal an important topic of research, with sustainable food production, agricultural productivity of small-scale suppliers, and actual/potential impact of MNEs' initiatives on local communities suggested as promising areas of research. Future research can complement current findings by investigating specific ways in which MNEs can help to reduce global hunger and develop appropriate capabilities of local communities toward upgrading their agricultural production and farming. Participant scholars also found it illuminating to examine the effect of the recent coronavirus pandemic on exacerbating hunger levels and achieving food insecurity in foreign countries, as well as the role MNEs can play in alleviating extreme negative circumstances on food supplies.

3.1.3 SDG 3 – Healthy lives and well-being

This goal aims *"to ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages*". It also encompasses a number of more specific targets, including the reduction of newborn deaths, offering vaccination against epidemic diseases to all, funding R&D to support healthcare needs (especially in under-developed countries), and training the healthcare workforce (World Health Organization, 2018). This goal has been among the most frequently cited SDGs in corporate websites, reported in 28 out of the 32 MNEs examined. For example, through its Pampers brand, *Procter & Gamble* reports the offering of Tetanus vaccination to newborns in Africa by collaborating with UNICEF, while *Nike* has embarked on a program to "get kids moving" by undertaking a number of actions (e.g., transforming stores into massive playgrounds) and collaborating with various NGOs, such as the America Alliance for Health and Physical Education, the Alliance for a Healthier Generation, and Childhood Obesity 180. Another example is *Marks & Spencer*, which has set as a target: (a) to increase the proportion of healthier food choices within their stores to improve people's health; (b) to contribute money to charities supporting people suffering from certain diseases (e.g., cancer); and (c) to encourage its employees to undergo a health risk assessment, as a prevention to the development of health problems.

More than two-fifths (41.4%) of the articles focused on this goal, indicating that MNEs characterized by a high level of internationalization and operating in a well-functioning institutional environment tend to take care of the health and safety concerns of their subsidiaries' employees, as well as establishing human resource policies integrating programs providing healthcare benefits (e.g., Selmier and Newenham-Kahindi, 2021). However, in the case of MNEs belonging to polluting resource-intensive industries and operating in foreign countries with loose and non-accountable institutional structures (which are unable to properly monitor their activities), it is possible to exacerbate environmental degradation (e.g., air and

water pollution), with all the detrimental effects that this may have on human health and/or displacement of local populations.

Approximately a fifth (19.6%) of the participants in our academic survey stressed the research importance of this goal, particularly as regards health-care services and medicines for all and the provision of healthy and sufficient food for low-income people. Some recommended areas for future research include the role of contextual factors in influencing MNEs to take measures in improving the well-being and safety of both their employees and customers, a strategy reassessment to take into consideration trade-offs between health-related and economic-related objectives, and the offering of fair wages to combat health- and well-being-related problems.

3.1.4 SDG 4 – Quality education

This goal focuses on the importance of high quality educational and lifelong learning opportunities to serve as means for sustainable development. Without proper and basic education free of discrimination elements (based on gender, occupation, housing area, and country) during a person's life, other important SDGs, such as overcoming gender inequalities, cannot be achieved (Ike et al. 2019; Salvia et al. 2019). The vast majority (28 out of 32) of the MNE corporate websites examined paid particular attention to this specific goal. For example, *Siemens* has initiated an international program for educating children and young adults in underdeveloped countries, training more than 8,000 educators and benefiting more than a million children. *Volvo* has also embarked on a vocational training scheme, aiming to improve the technical skills of technicians in different countries and developing a professional program in South Africa (called "Iron Women") to encourage women to become heavy-duty truck drivers. *Henkel* provides training and engagement programs to its employees, focusing on sustainability, as well as promoting scientific knowledge on the subject by involving elementary schoolchildren to related activities.

More than two-fifths (42.2%) of the articles reviewed focused on how MNEs provide support in improving the quality of education in the host countries where they operate. For example, some researchers (e.g., Donoher, 2017; Ike et al., 2019) showed that MNEs collaborate with other external partners (e.g., NGOs) or even local partners (e.g., civil society organizations) to donate funds aiming to improve educational infrastructure and programs of study in foreign countries, as well as resolving any educational inconsistencies. Support for educational activities in host countries was also revealed to rely on resource acquisition linked to improving employees' wellbeing and quality of life (Donoher, 2017). MNEs were also found to support various educational initiatives, especially in developing countries where there is an insufficient infrastructure (Bello and Othman, 2019).

Only a small proportion of academics (15.7%) who participated in our study considered this goal an important area of future research. Their emphasis was mainly on shedding more light on how MNEs can facilitate children's access to education in underdeveloped countries, as well as providing rigorous training and education to their subsidiaries abroad. Some of their suggestions for future research are the following: (a) What educational programs do MNEs need to develop in order to provide the skills and capacity to local communities to understand concepts relating to sustainability, such as renewable energy and circular economy? (b) How MNEs can be motivated to offer vocational programs to the members of local communities in which they operate? (c) In what ways can MNEs step in to provide quality education to children and life-long learning opportunities in host countries that are not capable of doing so on their own?

3.1.5 SDG 5 – Gender equality

This goal aims to eliminate all forms of discrimination and violence against women and to undertake reforms to provide women with equal rights to economic resources (UN Report, 2020). Notably, all corporate websites examined dealt with this goal, reflecting the fact that

gender inequalities are still deeply rooted in many societies, with many women facing social segregation and discrimination in various aspects of social life. This resulted in many MNEs embarking on programs aiming to reduce gender gaps, as in the case of the *L'Oreal Foundation*, which partnered with UNESCO to implement the "For Women in Science" program, through which more than 250 female researchers have been financially supported on a yearly basis to address gender gap issues within the science field. Similarly, *Johnson & Johnson* has recently launched the WiSTEM2D project in Benelux, aiming to advance women's involvement in science, technology, engineering, mathematics, manufacturing, and design. *Sanofi* has also developed a similar program, particularly focusing on increasing the role of women in science in Egypt.

This goal was the subject of more than two-fifths (42.2%) of the articles reviewed. One group of them revealed that despite steps taken during recent years for greater involvement of women in social and political life, many MNEs still have a discriminative approach toward women when operating in various foreign markets. For example, there is evidence indicating that there are larger gender pay gaps against women in MNE subsidiaries in developing, as opposed to developed, countries (Vahter, 2019), while technological innovations adopted by MNEs tend to widen the gender gap by providing inadequate training and less flexible working options for women (Endl et al., 2019). However, some articles (e.g., Kiefner et al., 2022; Terpstra-Tong, 2017) indicated that the extent to which the pursuit of gender equality adds strategic value and/or legitimacy to an MNE is a determining factor for its subsidiaries to provide fair treatment for both genders in terms of promotion, board participation, and work/life benefits.

Notwithstanding the significance of this goal in alleviating gender inequalities, only 17.6% of the participants in our academic survey consider this worthy of further investigation, paying particular attention to issues like providing equal pay and opportunities for men and

women at all levels, women anti-discrimination laws and policies across countries, and measures to prevent workplace violence and harassment against women. Some useful recommendations for future research regarding this goal are the following: the role of institutional distance and cultural distance in MNE adoption of gender equality policies across host countries; the way subsidiaries' policies on gender equality and women's empowerment practices are transferred to headquarters; motives to adopt evidence-based policies to promote gender equality within MNEs and local communities in host countries; and facilitators/inhibitors in adopting gender-equality initiatives by the subsidiaries of MNEs.

3.2 Planet-related SDGs

Under the "planet" category, there are SDGs aiming to protect the environment and preserve life on earth to support the needs of both the present and future generations. This category includes SDG 6 ('clean water and sanitation'), SDG 12 ('responsible consumption and production'), SDG 13 ('climate action'), SDG 14 ('life below water'), and SDG 15 ('life on land').

3.2.1 SDG 6 – Clean water and sanitation

This goal emphasizes the need of people to have access to drinking water of high quality, as well as maintaining high levels of sanitary conditions. This is particularly true for local populations in developing countries, BoP communities, and people living in rural areas, where they face problems not only of having clean water, but also obtaining access to water resources *per se* (Montiel et al., 2021; Sadoff et al., 2020). It is estimated that approximately two billion people do not have adequate accessibility to clean water and suffer from poor hygienic conditions, leading to various serious diseases, such as dysentery (UN Report, 2021). This goal was mentioned in more than half of the corporate websites reviewed, providing some good examples of how MNEs were addressing it. A case in point is *Coca-Cola*, which, through its

WASH program, aims to provide vulnerable communities with water that is safe and clean to drink, coupled with better sanitation and hygiene conditions. A similar approach is undertaken by its main competitor, *PepsiCo*, which, through its PepsiCo Foundation, claims that during the last 15 years has given access to safe water (through special distribution, purification, and conservation programs) to more than 55 million people all over the world, while by 2030 its target is to reach the 100 million mark. During the recent coronavirus pandemic, the company has set in place new water programs, including helping to build water infrastructures and water systems in poor countries in Asia, Africa, and Latin America.

This goal was reported by 41.4% of the articles reviewed, with their focus being primarily on the activities of MNEs in the oil and mineral extraction business and the negative impact that they have on the quality of water resources. For example, extensive mineral extraction by certain MNEs paying little attention to local community's needs and protection was found to be responsible for the appearance of various chronic health issues, such as bilharzia, cholera, and malaria (Selmier and Newenham-Kahindi, 2021). It was also revealed that there are regions in the world where investments concerning the provision of clean water and sanitation remain stagnant or are even reduced. Another study indicated the crucial role of sanitation and water supply which highly depends on the unique characteristics of each local community, how the attempt to fulfill this goal motivated the implementation of other SDGs, and how the importance of interaction with international stakeholder networks affects SDG implementation (Dziubaniuk et al., 2022).

Little research priority was also assigned to this goal by participants in our academic survey, as demonstrated by the fact that it was mentioned by approximately a fifth (19.6%) of them. Some areas of particular attention reported by these academics were the supply of clean water, sanitation, and hygiene, efforts to reduce air, water, and soil pollution, and embarking on sustainable water management. Suggestions for future research regarding this goal included:

How can national policies on clean water in host countries affect MNEs' intentions to establish goals relating to the offering of clean water and sanitation? What measures are taken by MNEs in countries where institutions and regulations are relaxed with regard to managing water pollution? What actions should MNEs take in collaboration with local governments to reduce plastic pollution in oceans, lakes, and rivers? Which MNE initiatives are the most appropriate to increase sustainable fishery practices worldwide?

3.2.2 SDG 12 – Responsible consumption and production

This goal stresses the importance of having more sustainable consumption and production to enable a better future for the next generations. To be able to accomplish this goal, MNEs need to address resource efficiencies across their value chains, respect international environmental agreements, and report their sustainability practices (UN Report, 2021). Interestingly, this SDG, which includes targets such as reducing pollution, socially and environmentally responsible sourcing, and publishing sustainability reports, was reported in all corporate websites examined. For example, in its website, *Procter & Gamble* claims to have managed to achieve and maintain zero manufacturing waste to landfill at its production sites from 2020 and 90% recyclability of its product packaging with a target to reach 100% by 2030. *Henkel* reports its efforts to achieve sustainable packaging, while at the same time referring to activities aiming to help their customers reduce emission and calculate environmental footprint. Another example is *3M*, which stresses its innovating efforts to achieve a recyclable content in its products and packaging and using bio-based plastics and designs to decrease overall plastic use.

Approximately three-fifths (57.8%) of the articles reviewed examined this goal, the emphasis being on how MNEs can reduce their negative impact on the planet, by having in place sound environmental management systems and eco-friendly technologies, measuring and controlling their environmental impact, and adopting a green approach to their supply chain

and marketing policies (Ajwani-Ramchandani et al. 2021; D' Souza et al., 2020; Endl et al., 2019). Other researchers (e.g., D' Souza et al., 2020) examined the role of external pressures from surrounding institutions and/or internal pressures from headquarters on responsible production and management. A third group of studies (e.g., Ike et al. 2021) investigated the role of MNEs reporting their social and environmental activities to fulfil legal and legitimacy requirements.

Consistent with the results of the website analysis are the views of academics who consider this as the top priority area of research on SDGs (reported by 43.7% of the participants). Some special areas suggested to need particular attention are in descending order of importance: ways to reduce air, water, and soil pollution by MNEs; sustainable waste management practices; socially responsible and environmentally sustainable sourcing; and supporting education to promote sustainable development. Many ideas for future research were offered with regard to this goal, such as: What factors drive MNEs to adopt new technologies (e.g., artificial intelligence) to reduce packaging waste in host countries? How can MNEs promote the circular economy concept in foreign countries and move away from "waste management" throughout the product life-cycle? How can MNEs interact with NGOs in order to promote activities relating to responsible production and consumption? What are the differences between MNEs acknowledging and committing sustainability and their counterparts adopting sustainability in a symbolic way to support their legitimacy?

3.2.2 SDG 13 – Climate action

This goal makes explicit reference to the need to adopt new technologies and enhance capacity building, aiming to reduce emissions and other pollutants that are responsible for global warming. Engaging in actions related to reducing climate disasters and/or taking risk management measures also falls within this goal's aims (UN Report, 2021). It follows the Paris Agreement of 2015, which has provided a framework for global action by signatory nations to

restrict global temperatures from rising beyond two degrees Celsius, above pre-industrial levels. For years, this goal has been calling upon MNEs to reduce their global footprint and, as a result, it was the second most frequently mentioned in the corporate website analysis (reported by 30 out of the total 32 companies examined). For example, *GSK* has managed to reduce its environmental and carbon footprint across the value chain, decoupled its growth in business operations from producing an equally environmental burden, and set a long-term objective to become carbon neutral by 2050. This goal is also part of *Nestlé'*s environmental sustainability program, with information about its actions relating to combat climate change being accessible to consumers.

The role of climate action by MNEs has received an extensive amount of research, reported by about half (48.3%) of the articles reviewed. Some researchers (e.g., Bag, Rahmnan Rogers, Srivastava and Pretorius, 2023; Donoher, 2017; Forcadell and Aracil, 2019) outlined efforts by MNEs (e.g., reducing greenhouse-effect emissions and/or other polluting/contaminating substances) to combat global climate change, including an adaptation approach by their subsidiaries to develop locally embedded strategies against climate change and mitigating risk within their supply chain. Other studies (e.g., Kolk et al, 2017) examined how global connectedness can provide MNEs with knowledge- or entrepreneurship-related advantages, which can enable developing green capabilities and managing stakeholder pressures. Also, Endl's (2019) study among mining companies revealed that the implementation of innovation concepts can help reduce their emissions and become more efficient in their operations in terms of resources and energy use.

The criticality of this goal for sustainable development, coupled with the crucial role played by MNEs to combat climate change, can explain the fact that it was set among the top priorities for research by respondents in our academic survey (reported by 43.1%). According to them, the focus should be primarily on the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions by MNEs

and disaster and emergency planning to address climate-related hazards. Some suggestions for future research provided include: the role of innovative capacities and technologies used by MNEs to combat climate change and how these can be spread into the network of interconnected subsidiaries; the effect of supra-national agreements, such as the Kyoto and Paris Agreement, in shaping the way MNEs understand and accommodate climate change problems; and the legitimacy effect of MNEs that engage in combating climate action in host countries.

3.2.3 SDG 14 – Life below water

Oceans, seas, lakes, rivers, and other marine sources are vital in supporting the economic, social, and environmental needs of populations living in many countries. However, decades of irresponsible exploitation of fishery, contamination of water with chemicals, plastics, and other waste, and extensive mineral extraction have led to an alarming level of degradation, threatening life below water. In response, the goal is to "conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas, and marine resources leading to a sustainable development" (UN Report, 2021). This goal has received attention by approximately half of the websites examined. One example is *Toyota*, which, under its Environmental Social Governance strategy, has set a program focusing on the cleaning of oceans to protect life below water. *Nike*, in collaboration with Ocean Conservancy, financially supports a program aiming to protect the arctic ecosystem by asking companies to commit to not intentionally sending their ships through that area. *Siemens*, through its RE-THINK program, has been systematically engaged in beach clean-up events (as in the case of its employees helping to clean one of the worst hit beaches in Taiwan) in order to reduce the damaging effects on life below water.

More than a third (37.1%) of the articles reviewed examined this goal, which was also part of a holistic discussion of how MNEs can contribute to the achievement of SDGs (especially in the Belt and Road initiative in China) by providing various support services, such

as engineering and construction (Lewis et al., 2021). This is also supported by research conducted by UN Global Compact (2020) and WBCSD (2018), showing that the type of goals that require and enable a systemic change are those to which MNEs pay the least attention (van Zanten and van Tulder, 2020).

Our survey among academics also indicated relatively low priority given to the study of this goal (mentioned by 17.6% of the participants), emphasizing as specific areas of research the sustainable management and protection of marine and coastal ecosystems, socially responsible and environmentally sustainable sourcing, and the prevention of marine pollution. Some guidelines provided for future research are: What specific environmental actions should MNEs take in specific industries to protect life below water? How can they adopt new technologies and latest research on marine life to support blue sustainability? Which initiatives should be taken by MNEs to prevent and/or manage ocean pollution?

3.2.4 SDG 15 – Life on land

This goal aims to promote a sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, a sustainable management of forests, and ways to combat desertification, reduce land degradation, and suspend biodiversity loss (UN report, 2021). The implementation of this goal is vital, not only because it greatly affects people's quality of life and prosperity, but also due to the exposure to economic risks resulting from violent human treatment of the land. This goal was referred to in more than half of the corporate websites examined. *IKEA* provides a good example of a company dealing with this goal: since wood is the primary material used by this company to produce its goods, it strives to become "forest positive" by reusing wooden residuals to make pellets/briquettes and generate biofuel for heating its plants. Another example is *Syngenta,* which works with farmers in host countries under its Good Growth Plan to improve soil health, by keeping carbon dioxide levels low and striving to enhance biodiversity. *3M* also has in place

a target to achieve "zero landfill" status for more than 30% of its manufacturing sites located in various parts of the world.

About two-fifths (40.5%) of the articles reviewed focused on this goal, with some of the topics covered being: biodiversity in new projects, with a particular focus on protecting the Amazon forest (Lewis et al. 2021); the impact of hazardous waste and other dangerous substances on the environment by products manufactured by MNEs (Abdelhalim and Eldin, 2019); and the limited attention paid by MNEs to reporting issues relating to biodiversity (Nara et al. 2019).

This goal was also assigned low research priority by participants in our academic survey, mentioned only by a tenth (9.8%) of the respondents, with primary focal areas being the examination of ecosystems and biodiversity on land and halting or reversing deforestation and/or desertification. Some suggested ideas for future research include: the way environmentally resilient strategies pursued by MNEs contribute to protecting life on land; MNE location decisions in host countries and their impact on local biodiversity, lands, and forests (especially when foreign institutions are weak); and MNEs' practices contributing to the reduction of trafficking of protected species.

3.3 Prosperity-related goals

This category includes goals aiming to ensure that all human beings will be able to enjoy prosperity, while at the same time ensuring that economic, social, and technological progress takes place in harmony with nature (UNF, 2021). Five goals fall under the prosperity-related category, namely, SDG 7 ('affordable and clean energy'), SDG 8 ('decent work and economic growth'), SDG 9 ('industry innovation and infrastructure'), SDG 10 ('reduced inequalities'), and SDG 11 ('sustainable cities and communities').

3.3.1 SDG 7 - Affordable and clean energy

The aim of this goal is for people worldwide to have access to *"clean and affordable energy"*. Unfortunately, as opposed to developed countries that have a 100% access to energy, less-developed countries, such as those of sub-Saharan Africa, suffer from severe shortages. Also, while efforts by many countries to use renewable energy sources have accelerated in recent years, this accounts for only 17% of the world's total energy (with the target being to reach 85% by 2050) (CDP, 2021). Three-quarters (24 out of 32) of the corporate websites examined refer to this goal, particularly in the case of MNEs consuming large amounts of energy. For example, *Ford* targets to use 100% of locally sourced renewable energy (e.g., wind, solar, hydro) for all of its manufacturing plants globally by 2035, while *Dessault* has established an innovative start-up (EEL Energy), which produces electricity from marine or river currents, using an undulating membrane based on the bio-mimicry concept (i.e., the motion made by fish swimming).

More than two-fifths (42.2%) of the articles reviewed examined this goal, focusing on both internal company factors (e.g., technological capabilities, international experience, state ownership) and host country-related factors (e.g., demand growth, public incentives, environmental policies) in using sustainable sources of energy (Patala et al., 2021). Some articles (e.g., Ramirez, 2021) focused on the challenges faced by MNEs in making investments in clean energy, with a particular emphasis on corruption, monitoring, and accountability. How companies invest in projects producing energy by using renewables sources and related technologies to achieve energy efficiency was another area investigated (Forcadell and Aracil, 2019).

This goal was considered by a third (33.3%) of the participants in the academic survey as an important area of research, particularly as regards: renewable energy production, energy efficiency, clean energy R&D, and energy infrastructure. Some promising research topics proposed include the following: What role can MNEs play in implementing host country policy

objectives for energy transition in renewable sources and promotion of energy democracy? How can institutional reforms in the host market with regard to affordable and clean energy drive partnerships between MNEs and local actors? How can MNEs make energy transition from fossil fuels to renewable energy and what technologies should develop (especially in industries difficult to decarbonize) to make this transition?

3.3.2 SDG 8 – Decent work and economic growth

Providing decent employment conditions and reduced unemployment rates contribute significantly to a country's economic growth and better living standards. In this respect, this goal aims to "promote sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment, and decent work for all" (UN report, 2021). Obviously, MNEs can play an important role in accomplishing this goal, which is reflected by the fact that 30 out of the total 32 corporate websites examined referred to this. A case in point is *Vodafone*, which provides digital skills, learning experience, and internships to young people to reduce youth unemployment and enhance their entrepreneurial potential. Another example is *Toyota,* which strives to establish a work environment, where all its employees can work flexibly according to their abilities. *GSK* also offers its employees and their families an inclusive and preventive healthcare package in every country in which it operates.

The critical nature of this goal was responsible for attracting the attention of 45.7% of the articles reviewed. Some researchers (e.g., Yakovleva et al, 2018) found that MNEs tend to switch their strategies in a more cooperative way, by also engaging other members of the supply chain, thus providing more job positions, and achieving the social inclusion of local communities. Other researchers (e.g., D' Souza et al., 2020) examined how internal and external pressures on MNEs in host countries can influence the development of their social practices, such as respect for labor, human rights protection, family friendly policies, and education initiatives. The interplay between MNEs' CSR practices and host government

support in providing employment to local community members, and avoiding the displacement of craftsmen, farmers, and other vulnerable work groups, was the focus of another set of articles (e.g., Donoher, 2017; Selmier and Newenham-Kahindi, 2021).

Approximately a third (31.4%) of the participants in the academic survey consider this goal to be an attractive research topic, primarily as regards issues pertaining to economic growth and productivity (especially when the MNE operates in developing countries), labor rights and practices in the supply chain, and elimination of forced labor and child labor. Some recommended useful research questions that could be asked in relation to this goal are the following: How can MNEs reach low-income markets in fragile states or hostile environments in order to create higher levels of market inclusiveness and provide employment? What specific actions need to be taken by MNEs to improve labor rights and other socio-economic conditions in host markets facing different degrees of institutional voids? What specific policies need to be set by MNEs to identify and create talent within host communities that will subsequently drive positive change in local economies?

3.3.3 SDG 9 – Industry innovation and infrastructure

This goal aims to build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization, and foster innovation. This is an area where MNEs can contribute a lot, since, apart from generating and disseminating knowledge, they have both the resources and capabilities to promote technological advances, employ responsible research, and adopt sustainable innovative practices (Nylund et al, 2012; Lashitew et al, 2020). More than three quarters of the corporate websites examined referred to this goal. For example, *Dassault* has developed a unique 3D and virtual experience platform, which offers users sustainable solutions for lowering their carbon footprint, production waste, and developing sustainable packaging through the acquisition of efficiency-related capabilities. *Ford* has also redeveloped one of its industrial plants to have a "living roof" (i.e., energy conserved by absorbing

pollutants from rain and snow travelling into the nearby river), while at the same time altered its production line to become more efficient and reduce chemical usage.

A bit less than a half (46.6%) of the articles reviewed dealt with this goal. One group of studies (e.g., Donoher, 2017; Narula, 2018; Nylund et al., 2021) focused on how sustainable innovations undertaken by MNEs help to improve profitability and societal outcomes, as well as how the targeting and advancing of marketing practices leads to organizational legitimacy and sustainable growth. Some articles (e.g., Nylund et al, 2021) highlighted the role of inter-organizational networks with social actors and foreign government pressures to produce cutting-edge technologies in emerging economies. Hendricks (2017) also examined how host countries take advantage of the expertise that MNEs bring with them in organizing infrastructure projects. Other studies (e.g., Lippolis, Ruggieri and Leopizzi, 2023) showed that innovation concepts are important to drive social and environmental positive impact to local communities and achieve implementation of various SDGs, although there is room for more innovative practices for companies to adopt a proactive and cautious approach to climate changes (Endl, 2019).

The significance of this goal was also underlined in our academic survey, reported by 31.4% of the participants, who highlighted as particular areas of interest the development of sustainable technologies and sustainable industrial processes by MNEs, the development of certain scientific research and technological capabilities, and their contribution in developing resilient and sustainable infrastructure in host countries. Some ideas for future research suggested include: How can regulatory and policy-related measures boost innovation in relation to infrastructural development in foreign countries by MNEs? What specific incentives can be provided by host governments to MNEs to encourage innovation outcomes and enhance infrastructural development? What is the role of MNEs in creating responsible research and development, as well as innovation activities and ecosystems, in host markets?

3.3.4 SDG 10 - Reduced inequalities within and among countries

This goal supports inclusion at all levels of social, political, and economic spheres, in order to remove any barriers due to disability, sex orientation, race, ethnicity, religion, age, or other status among people within countries and among countries. This goal was addressed in 18 out of the 32 corporate websites examined, although one would expect a much higher number, due to the fact that MNEs operate in many different cultures and are confronted by various diversity issues. *Allianz* has adopted policies to systematically combat racism and inequalities that vulnerable members of the society experience through the provision of grants. *Samsung* also uses programs to raise their global employees' understanding of what diversity and inclusion are, while at the same time running Diversity & Inclusion (D&I) Campaigns on topics such as unconscious bias and microaggression.

This goal has received attention by 38.8% of the articles reviewed, with the emphasis being on various issues, such as: the role of FDI gains and how these are not evenly distributed across countries, due to differences in their institutional and socio-technological environments (Narula, 2018); "income inequality" and how this affects employee performance in the MNE's subsidiaries (Andrews and Htun, 2018); and how differences in required skill levels can negatively affect job opportunities for people in the local community (Endl, 2019).

About three-tenths (29.4%) of the participants in the academic survey underscored the importance of this goal, particularly focusing on accessibility to financial services for all (including the most vulnerable), equal pay and opportunities for men and women at all levels, the offering of social protection systems for all, and the provision of responsible finance. Some future research actions recommended by them are: What is the role of MNEs in remedying inequality within the context of differences in country institutions and subsidiary motivations? Do MNEs deliberately promote inequality within their subsidiaries or is this due to their focus

on profit-maximization? What is the role of host country culture in having economic inequalities and what actions need to be taken by MNEs to accommodate them?

3.3.5 SDG 11 - Sustainable cities and communities

Through this goal, the UN seeks to achieve better quality of life for people and communities, aiming at transforming cities to become more "inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable" (UN Report, 2021). This goal was the focus of more than half of MNEs, as demonstrated by the fact that it was reported in 19 out of the 32 corporate websites examined. One company that focuses on this goal is *IKEA*, which aims to reduce air pollution in the major cities where it operates through the development of an affordable air purifier (FÖRNUFTIG), first introduced in China in 2020. *Geberit*'s sustainability strategy also addresses this goal, using a program that supports green building efforts, such as better water management, improvement of hygiene conditions, and increasing drinking water quality.

More than two-fifths (43.1%) of the articles reviewed referred to this goal. Some researchers focused on examining the role of negative externalities produced by the network of interactions among local, national, and global actors that end up in threatening the sustainability of local communities in host countries (because of aggravating environmental pollution) (Babatunde, 2020). Other articles paid attention to specific strategies adopted by MNEs aiming to alleviate existing challenges and boost sustainability in both cities and communities. For example, Ciasullo et al. (2020) investigated how structural international ambidexterity as an MNE strategy can contribute toward building sustainable communities and its impact on economic and social outcomes, while Uduji and Okolo-Obasi (2017) examined how the MNEs' socially responsible strategies relating to agricultural production can overcome problems faced by farmers.

More than a quarter (27.4%) of the participants in the academic survey stressed that this goal should be an important area of research, particularly focusing on access to affordable and

sustainable transport for all, access to affordable and safe housing for all, and planning for disaster and emergency situations. Other useful areas for future research recommended include an investigation of the type of investments that need to be made by MNEs in order to make cities and communities in host countries safer (e.g., providing light at night), as well as support programs for preserving cultural and natural heritage and diversity.

3.4 Peace-related goals

This category encompasses only one goal (namely SDG 16), which aims to "promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable, and inclusive institutions at all levels" (UN Report, 2021). This goal is crucial for fostering peaceful societies and alleviating social conflict, which are fundamental to sustainable development. Twenty-nine firms in our sample referred to this goal in their websites. One of these companies is *L'Oreal*, which has adopted policies on corruption prevention, responsible lobbying, and human rights protection. *Samsung* also established practices to treat its partners within the principles of the Standard Subcontractor Contract and a labor-management committee to create an appropriate culture in handling management issues fairly.

In consistence with the wide reference in corporate websites, this goal was among the most widely investigated ones by researchers in the field, addressed by almost half (48.3%) of the articles reviewed. One group of researchers (e.g., Babatunde, 2020; Oetzel and Miklian, 2017) highlighted various conflicts and insecurities caused by MNEs to local communities, which are aggravated by the ineffectiveness of the measures taken by foreign governments to combat them. MNEs taking an active role in preventing and alleviating the consequences of social conflicts and establishing social justice has been the object of another set of studies, such as those focusing on exacerbating inequalities by pushing women deeper into poverty (e.g.,

Uduji et al. 2019) and how MNEs can use the political capabilities obtained from their home country environment to reduce conflict in challenging and risky host countries (e.g., Albino-Pimentel et al., 2021).

The importance of this goal was reported by 19.6% of the participants in our academic survey, which is relatively low compared to the degree of attention received by extant research. In descending order of importance, areas where emphasis should be placed include: accountable and transparent governance, responsive and inclusive decision-making at all levels, the prevention of corruption and bribery, and adoption of laws/policies against discrimination. Some of the suggested areas for future research include: To what extent can MNEs bring institutional change and make institutions more effective and efficient in both home and host countries? How can MNEs proactively (versus after an institutional pressure) promote peace, ensure justice, and reduce corruption in host countries? What is the process adopted by MNEs in conflict-areas of the world to manage crisis and risk, improve market conditions, and create value that promotes peace and stability?

3.5 Partnerships-related goals

This category also includes a single goal, namely SDG 17, aiming to promote "a spirit of strengthened global solidarity" and serving as the connecting element which contributes to the implementation of all previously analyzed SDGs (UN Report, 2021). Reference to this goal was made in all corporate websites examined, underscoring its crucial role. For example, *Bombardier* collaborates with industrial partners to achieve sustainable transportation and reduce environmental burden. *Nike,* apart from NGOs, academic institutions, and governments, even collaborates with competitors to overcome the barriers and find solutions to SDG implementation, as in the case of the Fashion Industry Charter for Climate Action project which targets 'net-zero emissions by 2050'.

This goal was tackled by 44.8% of the articles reviewed, with some of the key issues addressed being: (a) motives and barriers in forming partnerships between MNEs and NGOs (Abderlhalim and Eldin, 2019; Liu et al., 2020); (b) building MNEs' strategies with the purpose of developing relationships with non-traditional stakeholders (Kolk et al., 2017) and traditional stakeholders (Hamilton, 2022); and (c) collaborating with host governments (especially in emerging markets) to find social solutions, build local capacity, and improve infrastructure (Yin and Jamali, 2016). The importance of cooperation and alignment between MNEs and governments to accomplish SDGs has been particularly stressed in light of the challenges created by the recent Covid-19 pandemic (Zhan et al, 2021).

About a quarter (23.5%) of the participants in our academic survey stressed this goal as an important research area, particularly focusing on partnerships of MNEs with the public and civil society sectors, enhancing foreign direct investments in developing countries, transferring sustainable technologies by MNEs to under-developed economies, and developing tools that will help to monitor impacts on sustainable development. Suggestions for future research provided include: What new types of partnerships and their micro-foundations do MNEs need to pursue to achieve their SDGs? What policy measures need to be taken by MNEs to form partnerships with other organizations to accomplish specific SDGs? What is the extent, type, and outcomes of collaboration between MNEs and SMEs in host countries to achieve sustainability goals? How does the volatility of the host country environment create uncertainties in establishing partnerships between MNEs and local partners to implement SDGs?

4. Discussion and conclusions

This article aimed to shed light on how and to what extent MNEs participate and fulfil their commitments toward the 17 SDGs set by the United Nations to become a universal guide for

companies operating across the world. It addresses several calls in the literature (e.g., Celone et al., 2022; Mio, Panfillo and Blundo, 2020; Sullivan et al., 2018) to synthesize extant knowledge on how companies, particularly MNEs, can advance the sustainable development of the planet. The multimethod approach employed, combining information taken from selected MNEs' corporate websites, a review of pertinent studies on the subject, and input provided by academics in the field, made it possible to have an all-round picture of what has been done and what is expected to be done, with regard to research on MNEs to accomplish these goals.

The *corporate website analysis* revealed that the majority of the MNEs in our sample, although showing an active interest in implementing the UN SDGs in various ways, tend to pay greater attention to those which are more relevant to their corporate mission, strategic focus, and operating scope. This can be attributed to a number of factors, such as: (a) the large amount of investment, expertise, and coordination required to deal simultaneously with all SDGs; (b) the greater impact that sustainability efforts have on both the MNE's socially responsible reputation and the targeted host country when focusing on the most suitable SDGs; and (c) the different nature of industry groups, host country characteristics, and local communities' needs, which requires a more concentrated and adapted approach to their sustainability efforts. However, irrespective of MNEs' individual preferences to accommodate specific SDGs, three goals were addressed in all websites examined, namely, 'responsible consumption and production' (SDG 12), 'partnerships' (SDG 17), and 'gender equality' (SDG 5), while other more frequently reported goals were 'decent work and economic growth' (SDG 8), 'climate action' (SDG13), and 'good health and well-being' (SDG 3). With regard to the specific targets employed within each SDG, our analysis revealed that the emphasis was mainly on those that are "internally actionable", rather than "externally focused", which is in line with the results reported in van Zanten and van Tulder's (2018) study.

Our *review of the pertinent literature* revealed a large number of articles written on the subject, experiencing an increasing momentum since the announcement of the new sustainability agenda by the UN in 2015. This indicates that the role of MNEs in contributing to the accomplishment of the UN SDGs has been an attractive research area for many IB scholars, and that this is an area that is expected to receive more attention in the future. Although about half of the studies covered all 17 SDGs in their analysis, the remaining studies only focused on specific SDGs. The SDGs that attracted the attention by the majority of the articles reviewed were 'responsible consumption and production' (SDG 12), 'no poverty' (SDG 1), 'peace, justice and strong institutions' (SDG 16), 'climate change' (SDG13), 'industry, innovation and infrastructure' (SDG9), 'decent work and economic growth' (SDG 8), and 'partnerships for the goals' (SDG 17). Notably, Lee and Zhou's (2022) review of the literature on the intersection of the business and management and SDGs revealed a similar emphasis on these SDGs, indicating that these are attractive areas of research irrespective of whether the firm's orientation is domestic or international.

The *survey among academics* provided expert views regarding the priority that needs to be given to SDGs, with the most important being in descending order: 'responsible consumption and production' (SDG 12), 'climate action' (SDG 13), and 'affordable and clean energy' (SDG 7), while greenhouse gas emission reductions, resilience to climate-related hazards, socially responsible and environmentally sustainable sourcing, renewable energy production, and sustainable technologies/industrial processes were considered as the most "hot" topics to study. Participants in this survey suggested fruitful and challenging areas within each SDG that would guide future research on the subject. With this systematic mapping of the main research areas we aimed to initiate a targeted discussion on where an emphasis should be channeled by future studies within the wider framework of UN sustainability agenda and MNEs.

To have a more holistic picture of the findings of our study, **Figure 2** provides a pattern match analysis of the results obtained from the three methods employed with regard to SDGs (i.e., website analysis, literature review, academic views) (Sinkovics and Reuber, 2021).[5] A comparison of these results indicates that certain SDGs received the highest degree of attention in all three methods used. For instance, 'responsible consumption and production' (SDG12) and 'climate action' (SDG13) were highly rated in all methods employed. On the other hand, 'zero hunger' (SDG2), 'life below water' (SDG14), and 'life on land' (SDG15) received relatively low attention, which is surprisingly considering their importance for people and the planet. Also, despite differences in the percentage frequencies obtained for each SDG among the three methods employed, a similar pattern emerged indicating that those SDGs which turned out to be the most (least) important for MNEs attracted also the most (least) attention in previous research, while at the same time received a high (low) priority in the survey among academics.

…insert Figure 2 about here…

In brief, our analysis has shown that research and practice exhibit an increasing interest in the role of MNEs in achieving the 17 UN SDGs. This reflects the crucial role that MNEs are expected to play to restore stability and sustainable growth in a world characterized by high complexity, fragility, and uncertainty with regard to issues pertaining to the society, the environment, and the economy. The adoption of our tripartite methodological approach to the study of SDGs has helped to develop a pattern development approach among what practitioners have been doing with regard to implementing these goals, what researchers have investigated and found until now in relation to these goals, and what are the views of academics in the field as to future research directions regarding these goals. In this way, we have provided a synthesis of past, present, and future knowledge on the subject that we expect to facilitate theoretical advancement and practice development in this crucial emerging field of research.

5. Implications

5.1. Theoretical implications

The fact that SDGs cut across both macro-level and micro-level issues implies that the role of MNEs should be seen within the context of national policies, institutional reforms, changed business models, new collaborative platforms, radical innovations, and knowledge/technology transfers. Taking into consideration all these factors will facilitate a better understanding of the various forces surrounding SDGs, that would help MNEs to demonstrate greater commitment in successfully implementing them (Galeazzo, Miandar and Carraro, 2023). However, as Web Appendix D indicates, only about three-fifths (57.8%) of the studies reviewed were theory-based, necessitating the adoption of a more theoretical approach to the subject. For example, the use of institutional/neo-institutional theory, stakeholder theory, and legitimacy theory could be extended to include other variables and combine other theories to capture this interaction between MNEs and the various external forces that influence their decision to select specific SDGs. Organizational theories (e.g., resource-based view, the natural resource-based view) can be used in combination to the above to examine resources, capabilities, and internal constraints to determine the nature, degree, scope, and success of SDGs implementation.

A number of studies have shed light on how MNE collaborations and multi-stakeholder platforms can help to create innovative solutions to the implementation of SDGs. For example, some scholars (e.g., Ghauri et al., 2023; Guttierez et al., 2023; Oliver and Rittblat, 2023) investigated the structure and role of private actors within local communities in accomplishing SDGs, while others (e.g., Nylund et al., 2021; Williams and Blasberg, 2022) emphasized the innovation potential and the resulting value creation from such collaborations. A study by Williams and Blasberg (2020) also revealed that these collaborations bear an innovation stimulus (whereby the exchange of ideas and knowledge among interacting parties helps to

accommodate SDG challenges), stressing the fact that the expected speed and extent of innovation tends to be greater within these collaborative platforms, as opposed to acting alone or engaging in time-specific contracts with external stakeholders. All these indicate that innovation is a crucial driving force toward accommodating the 'wicked problems' or 'grand societal challenges' of today and innovation-related theories can help to further understand its role.

The fact that several studies (e.g., Guttierez et al. 2022; Stubbs et al., 2022) focused on the role of partnership interactions to create societal change and assist private actors to redefine their purpose and contribution to the society underscores the importance of networks in successfully implementing SDGs. Using network theory, systems theory, and other relevant theories could help to better understand the interrelationships, power dynamics, structures, and information exchange among network members. Also, the highly complex and dynamic nature of SDGs necessitates the use of complexity theory, which views organizations as 'self-organizing actors' and 'adaptive systems', to explain how MNEs transform their business orientations and core values toward solving social problems, as well as restructure their processes to achieve SDGs effectively and efficiently.

Our evaluation of the pertinent literature, together with recent independent reports, indicate that the progress of MNEs in achieving the targets set out in SDGs is relatively slow, with many of them not expected to be accomplished by 2030 (the year set by the UN to finalize their achievement). This is due to a misalignment between SDGs and their targets and the priorities set out by MNEs, which mainly focus on channeling their resources and capabilities toward more traditional business-oriented goals. These realities provide a fertile ground to investigate how to shift existing organizational resources and capabilities (and even generate new ones) toward the accomplishment of SDGs, as well as how can these be managed by MNEs' headquarters and their subsidiaries (Beamish and Chakravarty, 2021). In doing so,

useful insights can be obtained from the resource-based view theory and its natural resource-based view extension (which can also be upgraded into a 'sustainability resource-based view').

5.2. Managerial implications

Our study has shown that MNEs are 'to a greater extent' committed (evident from the number of programs and practices employed) to those SDGs that are mostly relevant to their core operations and key processes, rather than trying to equally contribute to all of them. There is a need therefore for their management to carefully identify those SDGs that are more suitable and capable to accomplish in the foreign markets they operate, as well as acquire the necessary expertise, knowledge, and resources to be able to successfully implement them. In addition, gaining formal certification by third-party qualified bodies and/or subscribing to various prestigious sustainability initiatives (e.g., Global Reporting Initiative) is of paramount importance for MNEs to improve their image and gain legitimacy associated with the successful implementation of SDGs (Mio, Panfilo and Blundo, 2020).

It was also evident from our analysis that the successful accomplishment of the UN SDGs cannot be done alone by MNEs, but requires the concerted effort of many different parties, such as governments, local communities, and institutions. To ensure the proper implementation of the SDGs selected, it would be also useful to join forces with supply chain partners, customers, and even competitors, as well as closely collaborate with NGOs. It is also recommended to promote the establishment of a "think tank", consisting of representatives not only from MNEs, but also from other interested parties, under the auspices of the UN, that would help to provide directions and support on how the various SDGs can best be achieved. This will also contribute to reduce the uncertainty surrounding the translation of broad, higher-level SDGs into more specific, lower enterprise-level goals (Mio, Panfillo and Blundo, 2020; Sullivan et al., 2018).

Throughout our analysis, there were hints that to make MNEs more incentivized and involved in the accomplishment of SDGs there is a need to stress their beneficial effects on their market, financial, and financial market performance. In doing so, it is vital to develop an appropriate mission and vision, as well as sound objectives, strategies, and policies, that will be socially oriented, with a particular focus on the various SDGs' targets (Rygh et al., 2022). In addition, adopting a more systematic, proactive, and genuine approach to SDGs by MNEs will help to accelerate progress on the level of goal achievement, while at the same time minimize the effect of possible "concerns" regarding social-washing and green-washing (Lashitew, 2021; Sachs and Sachs, 2021). Our **Web Appendix E** provides some indicative cases of MNEs that not only declared in their websites their involvement in programs related to SDGs, but also provided concrete evidence about the resulting outcomes from the achievement of these goals.

It is also crucial for MNEs to provide sound innovative solutions through the development of multi-stakeholder partnerships (e.g., with governments, social movements, NGOs, private actors, investors, and other agencies) (De Almeida et al., 2023; Guttierez et al., 2022). This is the specific focus of SDG 17, which stresses the need to create collaborations among different stakeholders to implement the remaining sixteen SDGs effectively and efficiently. Such collaborations are vital in the sense that: (a) they incorporate these goals within an overall MNE strategy to achieve a greater positive social impact, taking into consideration the multiple complexities relating to an isolated SDG implementation and the necessity to cater for the individual needs of foreign countries (Williams and Blasberg, 2022); (b) they develop important ecosystems where innovative solutions can flourish and greater value can be created by stimulating interactions among various stakeholder groups (Guttierez et al., 2022); and (c) to overcome the problems relating to the slow progress of accomplishing

these goals, resulting from delays or interruptions caused by exogenous crisis situations (Stubbs et al., 2022).

6. Limitations and future directions

Our findings should be seen within the context of certain limitations that could provide an impetus for further research. *First*, the limited time period covered by our literature review, the relatively small sample of MNEs included in the website analysis, and the fact that not all researchers doing work on the intercept of MNEs and SDGs participated in our academic survey indicate that our study findings are exploratory in nature. This, coupled with the fact that in the future more MNEs are expected to engage in implementing SDGs and more studies are expected to be conducted on the subject, necessitates a replication of our study.

Second, our corporate website analysis could not specify the degree of implementing the various SDGs by the various MNEs examined nor distinguish between major versus minor goals/targets. To shed light on these issues, there is a need to carry out primary research, taking the form of in-depth interviews with key informants in these organizations, who could provide this information in a more detailed and documented way. In relation to this, there is a need to check whether managers face any difficulty in accurately evaluating their firm's degree of implementing the various SDGs.

Third, one of the problems identified throughout our analysis is the general way of treating SDGs and their targets by MNEs, as well as the absence of standards that could be used to monitor the progress in achieving them. Such standards should be specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and clearly stating the time period for these to be obtained. Beyond a self-reported assessment by MNEs, it is important to establish an independent authority that would provide an external evaluation (and even a certification) of the firm's contribution in implementing the SDGs and their targets (Mio, Panfillo and Blundo, 2020; van Zanten and van

Tulder, 2018). Such third-party evaluation will help to minimize incidences of social-washing and green-washing.

Fourth, although the corporate website analysis indicated whether each SDG/target has been tackled by the MNEs included in our sample, it would be more appropriate to specify the extent to which these were successfully materialized. Future research could evaluate this success rate using multiple information sources, such as interviews with key decision-makers, annual company reports, and secondary databases (e.g., Thomson Reuters' ASSET4). The views of consumers and other stakeholders (e.g., investors) in various countries could also provide useful input as to the MNEs' genuineness in materializing SDGs. It would also be interesting to measure the impact of successfully implementing SDGs on company reputation and business performance (especially in financial markets).

Fifth, our corporate website analysis focuses on the MNE organization as a whole, although it is understood that the implementation of SDGs may vary between headquarters and their subsidiaries, as well as among subsidiaries located in different countries. Of particular importance is to investigate the factors influencing decisions as to which SDGs should be selected for implementation, as well as the degree of standardizing or adapting the MNE's efforts to materialize SDGs across foreign markets.

Sixth, although for quality control reasons, our literature review covered articles published only in journals included in the UK ABS Journal list, there are studies that appeared in other journals or other publication outlets (e.g., book chapters, doctoral theses, conference proceedings) that could have also investigated the MNEs' involvement in implementing SDGs. The same is also true for studies included in non-English publications, which, due to language limitations, we could not access.

Seventh, the purpose of this review was not to provide any hypotheses regarding the impact of each of the 17 SDGs (expected pattern) to be compared with their actual

implementation (observed pattern). However, what was feasible to do was to compare and contrast the frequency of implementing these SDGs by MNEs (as obtained from the website analysis) and the frequency of the emphasis put on these by research (as obtained from the academic survey). It would be interesting therefore to examine differences between expected pattern and observed pattern of SDG implementation using a specially designed empirical and/or meta-analytical study.

Finally, in sustainability research, an external event (e.g., a flood disaster caused by climate change) and/or crisis (e.g., food shortage due to war conditions) may attract researchers to demonstrate more urgency for and greater interest in studying a specific SDG. Although understanding the impact of these externalities on the emphasis put on SDGs would yield additional insights in the literature analysis performed, the relatively short time period (eight years) covered by this stream of research makes this difficult. However, in the future, with the accumulation of more studies on the subject, this could be the object of a longitudinal research that would monitor over time the effect of such externalities on the priorities given by MNEs to the implementation of SDGs.

Notes

1. There were also three other reviews that focused on the role of business organizations in general in implementing SDGs, without, however, having a particular emphasis on MNEs. Pizzi et al. (2020), based on the Scopus database, identified 266 articles published by business and management scholars on SDGs during the period 2012-2019, which were categorized into four thematic clusters: technological innovation, new policies and business models; entrepreneurs, SMEs, MNEs and cities' contribution to SDGs in developing countries; non-financial reporting; and education. Mio, Panfillo and Blundo (2020), also using the Scopus database, identified 101 studies published during 2015-2020 focusing on the role of businesses in tackling SDGs, stressing issues relating to disclosure, partnerships, relevance, benefits, adoption, implementation, industry role, and entrepreneurship. Finally, Lee and Zhou (2022) identified from the Web of Science 237 publications on SDGs covering the period 2015-2021, which were clustered (using systematic literature network analysis) into five areas: technology and innovation; education and human resource management; CSR and firm performance; supply chains and governance; and business strategies.

2. Van Zanten and van Tulder (2018), using a sample 81 European and North American firms drawn from the Financial Times Global 500 Companies, reduced the number of the initial set of 169 targets set by the United Nations to operationalize the 17 SDGs down to 59 in order to be more relevant in a business context. These were augmented with five additional targets also found to be relevant for business, thus increasing the total number of targets to 64.

3. Since a corporate website is a company-owned communication medium, there is always a possibility for firms to introduce bias in the information provided regarding their sustainability practices and even engage in green-washing and/or social-washing practices. However, the fact that the firms included in our analysis are large MNEs with an international exposure and business activities constantly monitored and scrutinized by various 'watchdogs' (e.g., governmental organizations, regulatory bodies, pressure groups, mass and social media,

investors, etc.) reduces this possibility, because of the fear of damaging their reputation and suffering from negative implications on their business performance. Moreover, the majority of these firms have certifications from external independent bodies, such as the ISO 14001 (which denotes actions to respect the environment), the GSK Modern Slavery Act Statement, and the Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) reporting, that verify the truthfulness of most of their sustainability efforts.

4. The fact that certain SDGs were studied in the past by a large number of researchers does not necessarily imply that future research should shift its focus to other SDGs. On the contrary, there is the case of some SDGs (e.g., 'decent work and economic growth' (SDG 8), 'responsible consumption and production' (SDG 12), and 'partnerships to achieve the goals' (SDG 17)) that, due to their critical, dynamic, and complex nature, warrant continuous attention, monitoring, and investigation. It is also worth noting that many authors (e.g., Das Gupta et al. 2017; Topple et al., 2017; Vazquez-Maguirre and Benito, 2022) used in their analysis the full set of the 17 SDGs, for the purpose of evaluating the relative emphasis given to them by MNEs.

5. We also performed a more detailed pattern match analysis between the input received from the corporate website analysis and the survey among academics, having as a basis the 64 targets operationalizing the 17 SDGs. To compare the percentage frequencies for each target obtained from each approach, we carried out a statistical analysis using the χ^2 statistic, revealing significant differences in 40 out of the 64 targets examined, with 35 of them being higher in the case of corporate website results (see **Web Appendix C**). However, these results should be treated with caution since academics were restricted to choose only three targets from a selection of five SDGs that they considered most important for future research.

References

Abdelhalim, K. and Eldin, A.G. (2019). Can CSR help achieve sustainable development? Applying a new assessment model to CSR cases from Egypt. *International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy,* 39(9/10), 773-795.

Ajwani -Ramchandani, A., Figueira, S., de Oliveira, R, T., Jha, S., Ramchandani, A., and Schuricht, L. (2021), Towards a circular economy for packaging waste by using new technologies: The case of large multinationals in emerging economies. *Journal of Cleaner Production,* 281, 125-139.

Albino-Pimentel, J., Oetzel, J., Oh C.H. and Poggioli, N.A. (2021). Positive institutional changes through peace: The relative effects of peace agreements and non-market capabilities on FDI. *Journal of International Business Studies*, 52(7), 1256-1278.

Ali, S., Hussain, T., Zhang, G., Nurunnabi, M., and Benqian Li, B. (2018). The implementation of Sustainable Development Goals in "BRICS" countries. *Sustainability,* 10(7), 1-14.

Amador, J. & Cabral S. (2016). Global value chains: a survey of drivers and measures. *Journal of Economic Surveys,* 30(2), 278–301.

Andrews, T.G. and Htun, K.T. (2018). Economic inequality, cultural orientation and base-of-pyramid employee performance at the MNC subsidiary: A multi-case investigation. *Management International Review*, 58(2), 337-357.

Arp, F., Ardisa, A., and Ardisa, A. (2017). Microfinance for poverty alleviation: Do transnational initiatives overlook fundamental questions of competition and intermediation? *Transnational Corporations,* 24(3), 103-117.

Babatunde, A.O. (2018). Oil pollution and water conflicts in the riverine communities in Nigeria's Niger Delta region: challenges for and elements of problem-solving strategies. *Journal of Contemporary African Studies*, 38(2), 274-293.

Bag, S., Rahman, M.S., Rogers, H., Srivastava, G., Pretorius, J.H.C. (2023). Climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction in the garment industry supply chain network. *Transportation Research Part E,* 171, (103031).

Beamish, P.W. and Chakravarty, D. (2021). Using the resource-based view in multinational enterprise research. *Journal of Management*, 47(7), 1861-1877.

Beddewela, E. and Fairbrass, J. (2016), Seeking legitimacy through CSR: Institutional pressures and corporate responses of multinationals in Sri Lanka. *Journal of Business Ethics,* 136(3), 503-522.

Bello, I. and Othman, M.F. (2020), Multinational corporations and sustainable development goals: Examining Etisalat Telecommunication intervention in Nigeria's basic education, *International Journal of Educational Management,* 34(1), 96-110.

Bose, S. and Khan, H.Z. (2022), Sustainable development goals (SDGs) reporting and the role of country-level institutional factors: an international evidence. *Journal of Cleaner Production*, 335, 1-13

Celone, A., Cammarano, A., Caputo, M. and Michelino, F. (2022), Is it possible to improve the

international business action towards the sustainable development goals? *Critical Perspectives on International Business*, 18(4), 488-517.
de Villiers, C., Kuruppu, S., and Dissanayake, D. (2020). A (new) role for business – Promoting the United Nations' sustainable development goals through the Internet-of-Things and blockchain technology. *Journal of Business Research*, 131, 598-609.
Claro, P.B.D.O. and Esteves, N.R. (2021), Sustainability-oriented strategy and Sustainable Development Goals. *Marketing Intelligence & Planning,* 39(4), 613-630.
Ciasullo, M.V., Montera, R., Cucari, N. and Polese, F. (2020). How an international ambidexterity strategy can address the paradox perspective on corporate sustainability: Evidence from Chinese emerging market multinationals. *Business Strategy and the Environment,* 29(5), 2110-2129.
Das Gupta, R., Kumar, S. and Pathak, R. (2022), Multinational enterprises' internationalization and adoption of sustainable development goals. *International Journal of Managerial Finance,* 18(4), 617-638.
D'Souza, C., McCormack, S., Taghian, M., Chu, M., Mort, G. S., and Ahmed, T. (2020), An empirical examination of sustainability for multinational firms in China: Implications for cleaner production. *Journal of Cleaner Production,* 242, 1-12.
De Almeida, F.P., van Tulder, R. and Rodriques S.B. (2023). *Walking the talk: making the SDGs Core Business - an integrated framework*. In P. Ghauri (Ed.), International Business and Sustainable Development Goals: Progress in International Business Research, 17 (49-82). Emerald.
Donoher, W.J. (2017), The multinational and the legitimation of sustainable development. *Transnational Corporations,* 24(3), 49-60.
Dziubaniuk, O., Ivanova-Gogne, M. and Berdysheva, E. (2022), Challenges of network interaction in managing sustainable development projects in developing countries: case of an international consulting company. *Critical Perspectives on International Business*, 18(4), 546-573.
Eden, L. and Wagstaff, M.F. (2021), Evidence-based policymaking and the wicked problem of SDG 5 Gender Equality, *Journal of International Business Policy,* 4, 28–35.
Enderwick, P. and Buckley, P.J. (2023). Accelerating achievement of the SDGs: international business and the deployment of traditional knowledge. *Transnational Corporations*, 30(3), 1-27.
Endl, A., Tost, M., Hitch, M., Moser, P., and Feiel, S. (2019), Europe's mining innovation trends and their contribution to the sustainable development goals: Blind spots and strong points. *Resources Policy,* 10, 1-11.
Forcadell F.J. and Aracil E. (2021), Can multinational companies foster institutional change and sustainable development in emerging countries? A case study. *Business Strategy and Development*, 2(2), 91-105.
Galeazzo, A., Miandar, T., and Carraro, M. (2023), SDGs in corporate responsibility reporting: A longitudinal investigation of institutional determinants and financial performance. *Journal of Management and Governance*, https://doi.org/10.1007/s10997-023-09671-y.
Gallego-Alvarez, I., Lozano, M.B., and Rodríguez-Rosa, M. (2018), An analysis of the environmental information in international companies according to the new GRI standards. *Journal of Cleaner Production,* 182(1), 57-66.
Gallego-Álvarez, I. (2018), Assessing corporate environmental issues in international companies: A study of explanatory factors. *Business Strategy and the Environment,* 27(8), 1284-1294.
García-Alaminos, A., Ortiz, M., Arce, G., and Zafrilla, J. (2020), Reassembling social defragmented responsibilities: the indecent labor footprint of US multinationals overseas. *Economic Systems Research*, 33(4), 536-554.
Ghauri, P., Hatani, F., Zhang- Zhang, Y., Rohlfer, S. and Bu, M. (2023). *International business and the SDGs: current issues and future directions*. In P. Ghauri (Ed.), International Business and Sustainable Development Goals: Progress in International Business Research, 17 (17-30). Emerald.
Gutierrez, L., Montiel, I. Surroca, J.A. and Tribo, J.A. (2022). Rainbow wash or rainbow revolution? Dynamic stakeholder engagement for SDG-driven responsible innovation. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 180, 1113-1136.
Hamilton, S.G. (2022). Public procurement - price-taker or market-shaper? *Critical Perspectives on International Business*, 18(4), 574-615.

Hendricks, G. (2020), The sustainable development effects of investment by emerging-market multinationals: shaping beneficial outcomes for home and host country. *Transnational Corporations*, 24(3), 73-88.
Hult, G.T.M., Mena, J.A., Gonzalez-Perez, M.A., Lagerström, K., and Hult, D.T. (2018), A ten country-company study of sustainability and product-market performance: Influences of doing good, warm glow, and price fairness. *Journal of Macromarketing,* 38(3), 242–261.
Ike, M., Donovan, J.D, Topple, C., Masli, E.K. (2019), The process of selecting and prioritizing corporate sustainability issues: Insights for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. *Journal of Cleaner Production*, 236, 1-13, 117661.
Ike, M., Donovan, J.D., Topple, C. and Masli, E.K. (2021), Corporate sustainability reporting in Japanese multinational enterprises: a threat to local legitimacy or an opportunity lost for corporate sustainability practices? *Multinational Business Review*, 30(1), 127-151.
Jamali, D. and Karam, C. (2016), Corporate social responsibility in developing countries as an emerging field of study. *International Journal of Management Reviews*, 20, 32-61.
Jung, J.C., and Lee, K.P. (2018), Host country sourcing of multinational enterprises: A Corporate Social Responsibility perspective. *Journal of Business Ethics,* 152, 683–701.
Kiefner, V., Mohr, A. and Schumacher, C. (2022). Female executives and multinationals' support of the UN's sustainable development goals. *Journal of World Business*, 57(3), 101304.
Kolk, A., Kourula, A., and Pisani, N. (2017), Multinational enterprises and the Sustainable Development Goals: What do we know and how to proceed? *Transnational Corporations,* 24(3), 9-32.
Kolk, A., Rivera-Santos, M. and Rufin, C. (2018). Multinationals, international business, and poverty: A cross-disciplinary research overview and conceptual framework. *Journal of International Business Policy*, 1, 92-115.
Lartey, T.A., Amankwah-Amoah, J., Danso, A., Adomako, S., Khan, Z., and Tarba, S.Y. (2020), Environmental sustainability practices and offshoring activities of multinational corporations across emerging and developed markets. *International Business Review*, 30(5), 101789.
Lashitew, A. A., Bals, L., and van Tulder, R. (2020), Inclusive business at the base of the pyramid: The role of embeddedness for enabling social innovations. *Journal of Business Ethics,* 162(2), 421–448.
Lashitew, A. (2021), Corporate uptake of the Sustainable Development Goals: Mere greenwashing or an advent of institutional change? *Journal of International Business Policy*, 4(1), 184–200.
Lee, S.H., and Zhou, Y. (2022). The outlook for Sustainable Development Goals in business and management: a systematic literature review and keyword cluster analysis. *Sustainability*, 14, 11976.
Lewis, D.J., Yang, X., Moise, D., and Roddy, S.J. (2021), Dynamic synergies between China's Belt and Road Initiative and the UN's Sustainable Development Goals. *Journal of International Business Policy,* 4, 58–79.
Liou, R.S. and Rao-Nicholson, R. (2021), Multinational enterprises and Sustainable Development Goals: A foreign subsidiary perspective on tackling wicked problems. *Journal of International Business Policy*, 4, 136–151.
Liu, S.Y.H., Napier, E., Runfola, A., and Cavusgil, S.T. (2020), MNE-NGO partnerships for sustainability and social responsibility in the global fast-fashion industry: A loose-coupling perspective. *International Business Review*, 29(5), 1-12.
Lopez, B. (2020), Connecting business and sustainable development goals in Spain. *Marketing Intelligence and Planning,* 38(5), 573-585.
Luomaranta, H., Cantu, F., MacFeely, S., and Peltola, A. (2021), UNCTAD Insights: The role of multinational and trading enterprises in employment and the gender pay gap: Evidence from Finland. *Transnational Corporations,* 27(3), 203-239.
Mio, C., Panfilo, S., and Blundo, B. (2020), Sustainable development goals and the strategic role of business: a systematic literature review. *Business Strategy and the Environment*, 29(8), 3220-3245.
Montiel, I., Cuervo Cazurra, A.C., Park, J., Antolín-López, R., and Husted, B.W. (2021), Implementing the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals in international business. *Journal of International Business Studies,* 52, 999-1030.
Nara, E.O.B., Gelain, C., Moraes, J.A.R., Benitez, L.B., Schaefer, J.L., and Baierle, I.C. (2019), Analysis of the sustainability reports from multinationals tobacco companies in southern Brazil. *Journal of Cleaner Production,* 232, 1093-1102.

Narula, R. (2018), Multinational firms and the extractive sectors in the 21st century: Can they drive development? *Journal of World Business*, 53(1), 85–91.
Nylund, P.A., Brem, A., and Agarwal, N. (2021), Innovation ecosystems for meeting sustainable development goals: The evolving roles of multinational enterprises. *Journal of Cleaner Production*, 281, 125329.
Nylund, P.A., Agarwal, N., Probst, C. and Brem, A. (2022), Firm engagement in UN Sustainable Development Goals: introduction of a constraints map from a corporate reports content analysis. *Journal of Cleaner Production*, 371, 133446.
Oetzel, J. and Miklian, J. (2017), Multinational enterprises, risk management, and the business and economics of peace. *Multinational Business Review,* 25:4, 270-286.
Oliver, A.L. and Rittblat, R. (2023), Facilitating innovation for complex societal challenges: creating communities and innovation ecosystems for SDG goal of forming partnerships. *Sustainability*, 15(12), 9666.
Ordonez-Ponce, E. and Talbot, D. (2022), Multinational enterprises' sustainability practices and focus on developing countries: Contributions and unexpected results of SDG implementation. *Journal of International Development*, 35, 201-232.
Patala, S., Juntunen, J.K., Lundan, S., and Ritvala, T. (2021), Multinational energy utilities in the energy transition: A configurational study of the drivers of FDI in renewables. *Journal of International Business Studies*, 52, 930–950.
Pels, J. and Sheth, J.N. (2021), Serving the invisible poor: Segmenting the market. *Journal of Global Marketing*, 34(4), 270-281.
Perrot, F. (2017), Multinational corporations' strategies at the base of the pyramid: An action research inquiry. *Journal of Business Ethics,* 146, 59–76.
Pizzi, S., Caputo, A., Corvino, A., Venturelli, A. (2020). Management research and the UN sustainable development goals (SDGs): A bibliometric investigation and systematic review. *Journal of Cleaner Production*, 276, 124033.
Prashantham, S. and Birkinshaw, J. (2020), MNE–SME cooperation: An integrative framework. *Journal of International Business Studies,* 51, 1161–1175.
Rajic, S., Đorđevic, V., Tomasevic, I. and Djekic, I. (2021), The role of food systems in achieving the sustainable development goals: Environmental perspective. *Business Strategy and the Environment*, 31, 988-1001.
Ramirez, J. (2021), Governance in energy democracy for Sustainable Development Goals: Challenges and opportunities for partnerships at the Isthmus of Tehuantepec. *Journal of International Business Policy*, 4, 119–135.
Rygh, A., Chiarapini, E. and Segovia, M.V. (2021), How can international business research contribute towards the sustainable development goals? *Critical Perspectives on International Business*, 1742-2043.
Sachs, J.D. and Sachs, L.E. (2021), Business alignment for the "Decade of Action", *Journal of International Business Policy*, 4, 22–27.
Sadoff, C.W., Borgomeo, E. and Uhlenbrook, S. (2020), Rethinking water for SDG 6, *Nature Sustainability*, 3, 346-347.
Saeed, A., Riaz, H. and Baloch, M.S. (2023). Pursuing sustainability development goals through adopting gender equality: Women representation in leadership positions of emerging market multinationals. *European Management Review,* 20 (2), 273-286.
Salvia, A.L., Filho, W.L., Brandli, L.L.m and Griebeler, J.S. (2019). Assessing research trends related to Sustainable Development Goals: local and global issues. *Journal of Cleaner Production*, 208, 841-849.
Santangello, G.D. (2018), The impact of FDI in land in agriculture in developing countries on host country food security. *Journal of World Business,* 53, 75-84.
Schönherr, N., Findler, F. and Martinuzzi, A. (2017), Exploring the interface of CSR and the Sustainable Development Goals. *Transnational Corporations,* 24(3), 33-47.
Scuotto, V., Chin, T., Pezzi, A. and Pironti, M. (2022), CSR best practices for global multi-tier sustainable supply chain integration of Chinese MNEs. *Corporate Social Responsibility and Environmental Management,* 29(6), 2038-2052.

Sebhatu, S.P. and Enquist, B. (2022), Values and multi-stakeholder dialog for business transformation in light of the UN Sustainable Development Goals, *Journal of Business Ethics*, 180, 1059-1074.
Selmier, W.T. and Newenham-Kahindi, A. (2017), Under African skies – mining TNCs in Africa and the Sustainable Development Goals. *Transnational Corporations,* 24(3), 119-133.
Selmier, W.T. and Newenham-Kahindi, A. (2021), Communities of place, mining multinationals and sustainable development in Africa. *Journal of Cleaner Production*, 292, 125709.
Silva, S. (2021), Corporate contributions to the Sustainable Development Goals: An empirical analysis informed by legitimacy theory. *Journal of Cleaner Production,* 292, 125962.
Sinkovics, N. and Reuber, A.R. Beyond disciplinary silos: A systematic analysis of the migrant entrepreneurship literature. *Journal of World Business,* 56(4), 101223.
Sinkovics, R., Forsgren, M., Sinkovics, N. and Holmström-Lind, C. (2020). Guest editorial: Social value creation in international business, *Critical Perspectives on International Business*, 16(1), 1-6.
Sinkovics, N., Vieira L.M., van Tulder, R. (2022). Working toward the sustainable development goals in earnest-critical international business perspectives on designing and implementing better interventions. *Critical Perspectives on International Business*, 18(4), 445-456.
Srinivasan, N., Eden, L. (2021), Going digital multinationals: Navigating economic and social imperatives in a post-pandemic world. *Journal of International Business Policy,* 4, 228–243.
Stubbs, W, Dahlmann, F. & Raven, R. (2022). The purpose ecosystem and the United Nations sustainable development goals: Interactions among private sector actors and stakeholders. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 180, 1097-1112.
Sullivan, K., Thomas, S., & Rosano, M. (2018). Using industrial ecology and strategic management concepts to pursue the sustainable development goals. *Journal of Cleaner Production,* 174, 237–246.
Symeou, P., Zyglidopoulos, S., and Williamson, P. (2018), Internationalization as a driver of the corporate social performance of extractive industry firms. *Journal of World Business,* 53(1), 27-38.
Terpstra-Tong, J.L.Y. (2017), MNE subsidiaries' adoption of gender equality and women empowerment goal: a conceptual framework. *Transnational Corporations,* 24(3), 89-102.
Topple, C., Donovan, J.D., Masli, E.K, and Borgert, T. (2017), Corporate sustainability assessments: MNE engagement with sustainable development and the SDGs. *Transnational Corporations,* 24(3), 6171.
Uduji, J.I. and Okolo-Obasi, E.N. (2017), Multinational oil firms' CSR initiatives in Nigeria: The need of rural farmers in host communities. *Journal of International Development,* 29(3), 308-329.
UN Food Waste Index Report (2021), United Nations Environment Program. Nairobi.
UN Global Compact (2020). Uniting business in the decade of action: Building on 20 years of progress found at https://unglobalcompact.org/library/5747. Accessed on 26th June 2023.
UN The Sustainable Development Goals Report (2021). United Nations publication issued by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs found at https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2021/The-Sustainable-Development-Goals-Report-2021.pdf. Accessed on 26th June 2023.
UN Statistics Division, "No Poverty", UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2023 found at https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2023/Goal-01/. Accessed on 10th October 2023.
van Holt, Delaroche, M., Atz, U., and Eckerle, K. (2021), Financial benefits of reimagined, sustainable, agrifood supply networks. *Journal of International Business Policy,* 4, 102–118.
van Tulder, R. and Keen, N. (2018), Capturing collaborative challenges: Designing complexity-sensitive theories of change for cross-sector partnerships. *Journal of Business Ethics,* 150, 1–18.
van Zanten, J.A. and van Tulder, R. (2018), Multinational enterprises and the Sustainable Development Goals: An institutional approach to corporate engagement. *Journal of International Business Policy,* 1, 208–233.
van Zanten, J.A. and van Tulder, R. (2020), Beyond COVID-19: Applying ''SDG logics'' for resilient transformations. *Journal of International Business Policy,* 3(4), 451–464.
Vahter, P. and Masso, J. (2019). The contribution of multinationals to wage inequality: foreign ownership and the gender pay gap. *Review of World Economics*, 155, 105-148.
Vazquez-Maguirre, M. and Benito, A.E. (2022). Impact or outputs? Exploring Multinational's CSR activities in Mexico. *Sustainability*, 14, 4140.
Wettstein, F., Giuliani, E., Santangelo, G.D., and Stahl, G.K. (2019), International business and human rights: A research agenda. *Journal of World Business,* 54(1), 54-65.

WBCSD & DNV-GL (2018). Business and the SDGs: A survey of WBCSD members and Global Network partners. Geneva: WBCSD.
Williams A. and Blasberg, L.A. (2022). SDG platforms as strategic innovation through partnerships. *Journal of Business Ethics,* 180, 1041-1057.
World Health Organization (2018). World health statistics 2018: monitoring health for the SDGs, sustainable development goals found at https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789241565585. Accessed on 26th June 2023.
Yakovleva, N., Vazquez-Brust, and Diego, A. (2018), Multinational mining enterprises and artisanal small-scale miners: From confrontation to cooperation. *Journal of World Business,* 53(1), 52-62.
Yin, J., Jamali, D. (2016), Strategic Corporate Social Responsibility of multinational companies' subsidiaries in emerging markets: Evidence from China. *Long Range Planning*, 49(5), 541-558.
Zhan, J.X. and Santos-Paulino, A.U. (2021). Investing in the Sustainable Development Goals: Mobilization, channeling, and impact. *Journal of International Business*, 4(1), 166-183.

Figure 1 – Evolution of research on MNEs and SDGs (2016-2023)

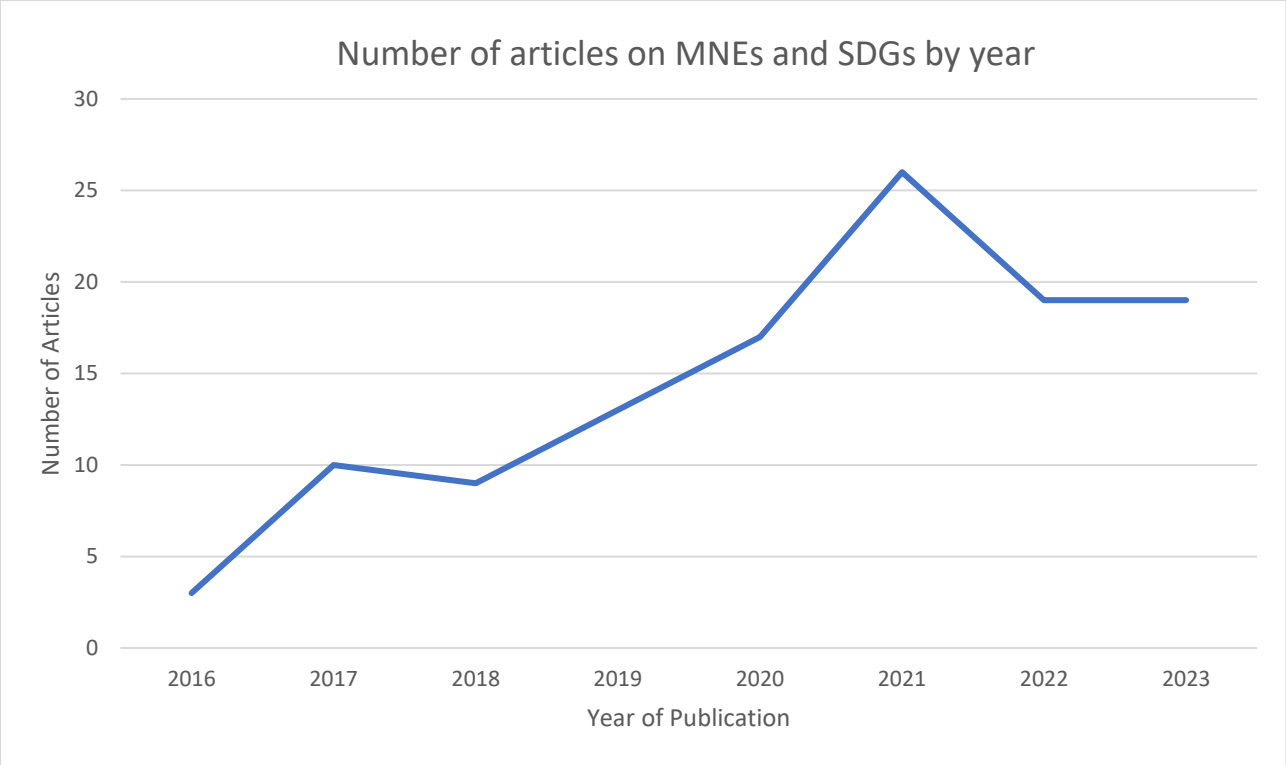

Figure 2 – Classification of UN SDGs

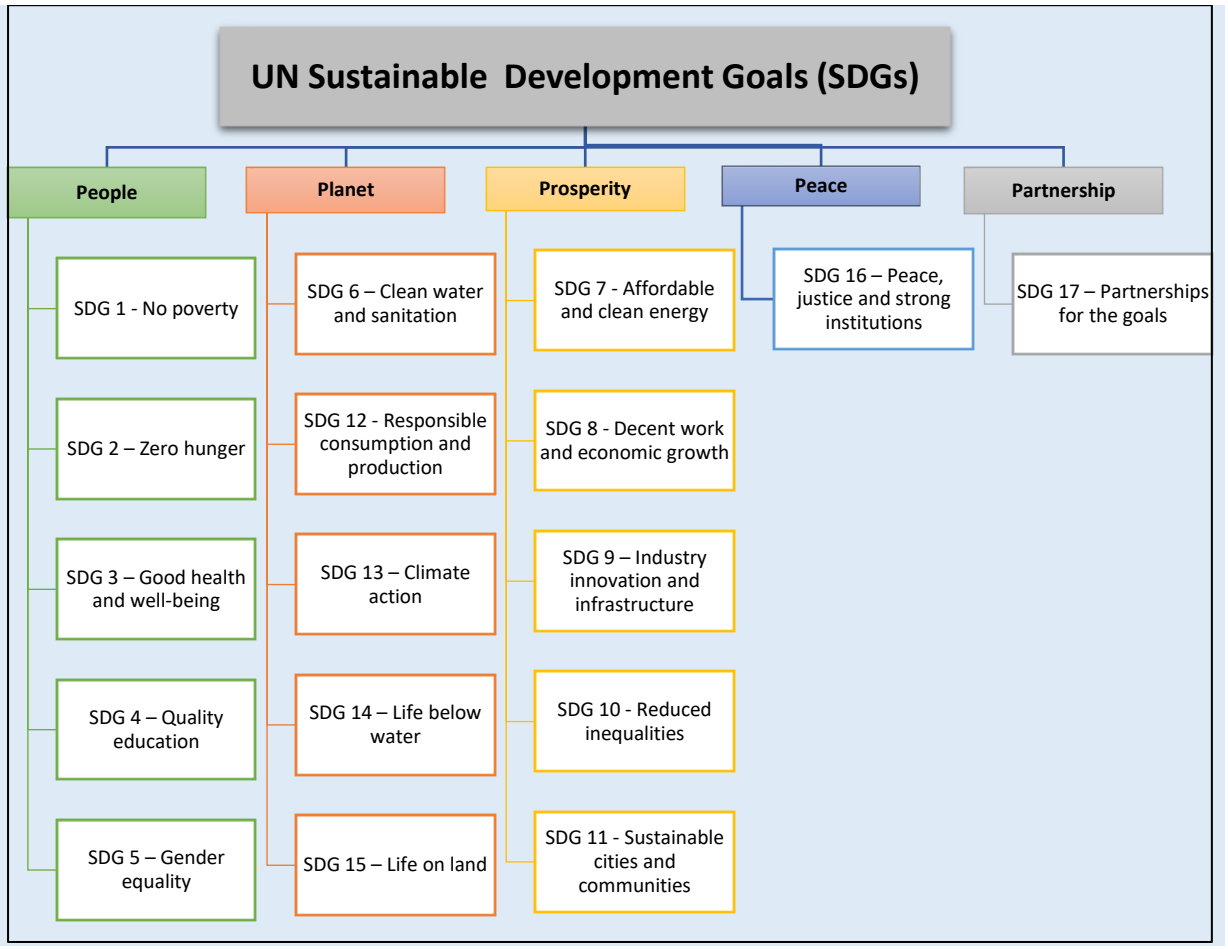

Figure 3 – Comparison of results for each of the 17 UN SDGs obtained from corporate websites, the literature review, and academic views

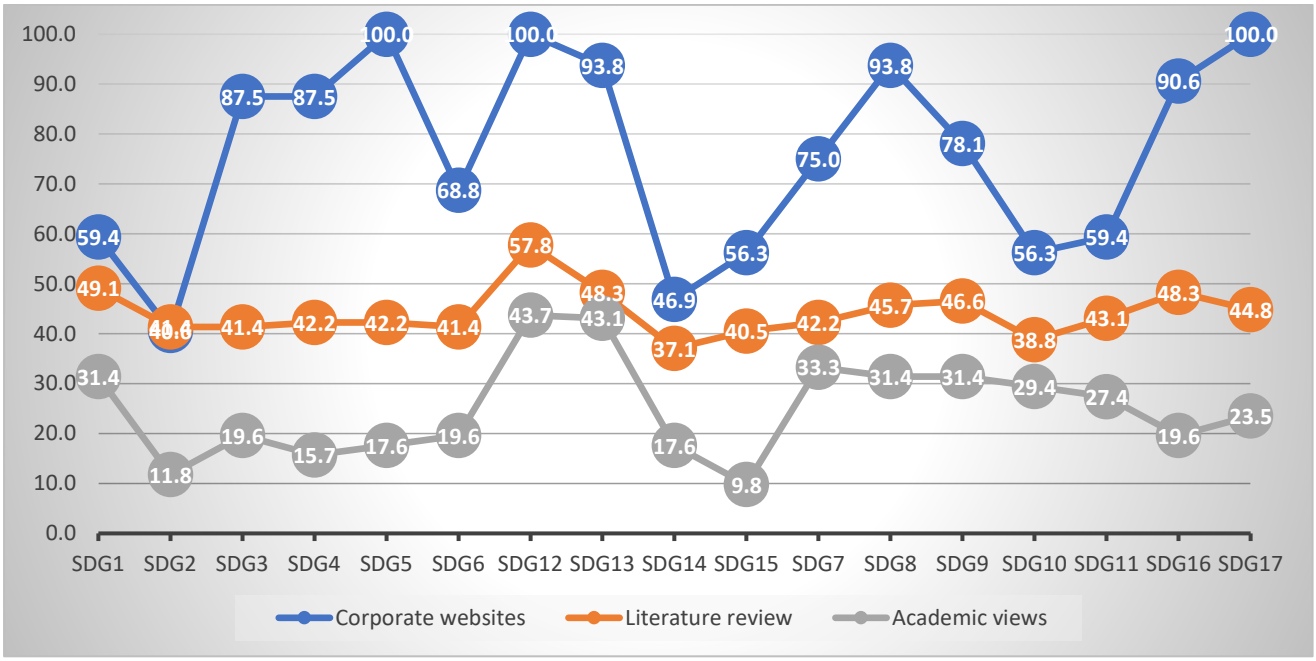

Table 1 - MNEs' website declaration of contribution to the implementation of SDGs

MNEsc	HQ	A. PEOPLE-RELATED					B. PLANET -RELATED					C. PROSPERITY-RELATED					D.PEACE	E.PARTNER
		SDG 1	SDG 2	SDG 3	SDG 4	SDG 5	SDG 6	SDG 12	SDG 13	SDG 14	SDG 15	SDG 7	SDG 8	SDG 9	SDG 10	SDG 11	SDG 16	SDG 17
3M	US	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Procter & Gamble	US	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
SIMS	US	✓			✓	✓		✓	✓			✓	✓	✓			✓	✓
GSK	US	✓		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
NIKE	US	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				✓				✓	✓
Coca Cola	US	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
PepsiCo	US	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓			✓
FORD	US			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Johnson &Johnson	US	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓		✓		✓			✓	✓	✓
IKEA	NL	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
L'Oreal	FR	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Bombardier	CA				✓	✓		✓	✓			✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
Unilever	GB	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
Volvo group	SE			✓	✓	✓		✓	✓			✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
Novo Nordisk	DK			✓		✓		✓	✓			✓	✓			✓	✓	✓
Philips	NL			✓	✓	✓		✓	✓				✓			✓	✓	✓
Nestlé	CH	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓
Dassault Systèmes	FR			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓			✓	✓
Syngenta AG	CH	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓				✓	✓
Marks & Spencer	GB	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
Allianz	DE	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓			✓	✓	✓			✓	✓
Orange.ORA	FR				✓	✓		✓	✓					✓	✓		✓	✓
Geberit	DE					✓	✓	✓					✓	✓		✓		✓
Siemens	DE	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
Sanofi	FR			✓		✓	✓	✓			✓			✓				✓
Henkel	DE	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Vodafone	GB	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Samsung	KR		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
Hyundai Motor	KR			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Konica Minolta	JP			✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Lenovo	HK	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Toyota	JP			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Total number		19	13	28	28	32	22	32	30	15	18	24	30	25	18	19	29	32
Percentage total		59.4	40.6	87.5	87.5	100	68.8	100	93.8	46.9	56.3	75.0	93.8	78.1	56.3	59.4	90.6	100

Table 2 - Thematic focus of research on the role of MNEs in implementing SDGs

SDG	Thematic focus	Indicative studies
A. PEOPLE-RELATED		
SDG 1 - No poverty	▫ Taking specific CSR initiatives for poverty alleviation, such as opportunities for getting a job, equal treatment of women, avoiding the displacement of artisans and communities and initiatives, to avoid losing a job because of new technologies.	Abdelhalim and Eldin (2019); Arp et al. (2017); Selmier and Newenham-Kahindi (2021)
	▫ Using specific types of strategies, such as the BoP 4.0: Enabling Fortune strategies and/or market creation strategies (rather than market capture ones), to alleviate poverty.	Borchardt et al. (2020); Perrot (2017)
	▫ Drivers (e.g., management system) and moderators (e.g., governmental effects) and strategies to accommodate various types of poverty (e.g., material deprivation, lack of education, ill health, vulnerability, and voicelessness).	Donoher (2017); Selmier and Newenham-Kahindi (2021)
SDG 2 - Zero hunger	▫ Emphasizing the needs, especially nutritional needs, of local people in MNEs CSR-related initiatives.	Selmier and Newenham-Kahindi, (2021)
	▫ Supporting (e.g., through the use of new technologies) small holder framers and local suppliers in MNE global value chains by offering training, motivation, and investment through funding and/or joining forces with NGOs.	van Holt et al. (2021)
	▫ The impact of FDI in land coming from developed country investors on expanding land used for crop production, taking into consideration home institutional pressure for human rights respect and responsible farming.	Santangelo (2018)
	▫ Increase in poverty levels due to displacement of population as a result of MNEs' activities because of having loose institutional structures.	Selmier and Newenham-Kahindi (2021)
SDG 3 - Good health and well-being	▫ Lack of political will and accountable institutional infrastructures in host countries to monitor MNEs' activities have a negative environmental impact in terms of polluting waters and air that can be detrimental to human health.	Selmier and Newenham-Kahindi (2021)
	▫ A private healthcare company heavily promotes within its vision the well-being of all people of all ages and the contribution to health improvement and fight against non-communicable diseases through frugal innovations.	Shan and Khan, 2016
SDG 4 - Quality education	▫ MNEs choose either to delegate health and educational programs to NGOs or abandon them when solutions prove costly.	Selmier and Newenham-Kahindi (2021).
	▫ MNEs are increasingly providing support for education in the developing world, typically in markets they serve or in locations where production occurs, because this will improve the quality of future workforce and open new market opportunities.	Donoher (2017)
	▫ Even when MNEs build schools for local communities in developing countries, this has no value in offering quality education, unless there is a support by host governments.	Symeou et al. (2018)
SDG 5 – Gender equality	▫ The extent to which the pursuit of gender equality adds strategic value and/or legitimacy determines the effort put forth by MNEs in order to transfer such policies to their subsidiaries in order to fulfill the requirements of this goal.	Saeed et al. (2023); Terpstra-Tong (2017)
	▫ Innovation trends by MNEs have usually a negative influence on gender equality, if not paying enough attention to provide training and flexible option.	Endl et al. (2019)
B. PLANET-RELATED		
SDG 6 - Clean water and sanitation	▫ Extensive mineral extraction in foreign countries may cause chronic health issues (e.g., bilharzia, cholera, and malaria), because MNEs do not take into consideration the local community's needs and protection).	Selmier and Newenham-Kahindi (2021)
	▫ The contribution of MNEs in creating local circular economies in host countries by managing waste using new technologies (e.g., blockchain, artificial intelligence).	Ajwani- Ramchandani et al. (2021).
	▫ Internal and external pressures of MNEs in host environments can influence them in developing environmental practices (e.g., environmental management systems, environmental claims in marketing strategies and supplier policies).	D'Souza et al. (2020)
	▫Providing clean water and sanitation in BoP areas constitutes a challenge for companies that want to do good and do well at the same time due to the existence of difficult conditions along with limited or nonexistent technological infrastructure and dirty waters.	Andersen and Åberg (2021)
SDG 12 - Responsible consumption and production	▫ MNEs' embracement of responsible production concept in the host market by using life cycle assessment, practices to minimize waste and use of critical resources.	Endl et al. (2019)
	▫ MNEs' sustainable investments in strategic/green supply chains which can reduce risk, increase resilience, yield sustainable products, and lead to positive environmental performance.	Cotini et al. (2020); Li et al. (2018); Ruey-Jer 'Bryan' et al. (2016); van Holt et al. (2021)
SDG 13 - Climate action	▫ Efforts by MNEs to combat global climate change in host countries, such as reducing greenhouse-gas-related emissions or other polluting or contaminating substances, that can lead others in the market to follow them.	Donoher (2017); Enderwick and Buckley (2023)
	▫ Adaptation approach by subsidiaries in developing climate change strategies depending on managerial cognition and capabilities which is most effective when locally embedded.	Lei et al. (2017)

SDG 14 - Life below water	▫ Extensive mineral extraction from land may cause chronic health issues (e.g., polluted water leading to waterborne diseases, bilharzia, cholera, and malaria) but also affect life below water.	Selmier and Newenham-Kahindi (2021)
SDG 15 - Life on land	▫ Environmental spillovers can take place from manufacturing MNEs to local companies in the host country, with horizontal linkages (with competitors), backward and forward vertical linkages (with supply chain actors) having a positive effect on overall environmental performance.	Li et al. (2018)
C. PROSPERITY-RELATED		
SDG 7 - Affordable and clean energy	▫ Determinants of FDI in wind and solar energy include internal organizational (i.e., technological capabilities, international experience, state ownership) and host country-related (e.g., demand growth, public incentives, environment policies).	Patala et al. (2021)
	▫ Some of the obstacles in energy investment in the host country include corruption, improper monitoring/accountability, and the lack of necessary information.	Ramirez (2021)
SDG 8 - Decent work and economic growth	▫ Pressures to MNEs in the host country promote the development of social practices, including respect for labor and human rights, stress management for employees, flexibility, family friendly policies and education initiatives.	D' Souza et al. (2020); Symeou et al. (2018)
	▫ The MNE's capability of engaging with stakeholders in the home country is high can be extended in the host environment, which leads to choose local sourcing of materials/parts that contribute to economic growth and increase social welfare.	Jung and Lee (2018)
	▫ The need for MNEs to switch their strategy into a more cooperative way to manage the natural resources and engage local suppliers helps to contribute in local economic growth and provide jobs achieving social inclusion and increase the salience of poor communities.	Yakokleva and Vazquez-Brust (2018)
SDG 9 - Industry innovation and infrastructure	▫ MNEs contribute in developing sustainable innovations in developing countries by forming interorganizational networks with appropriate local actors and taking into consideration the ecosystem which the firm is embedded in.	Nylund et al. (2021)
	▫ Sustainable innovations which improve profitability (e.g., better use of technology, supply chain efficiencies) and societal outcomes (e.g., better customer relations, shared infrastructure) and focus on product, process, organizational and marketing practices, achieve organizational legitimacy and sustainable growth.	Donoher, (2017); Endl et al. (2019); Lashitew et al. (2020); Narula (2018); Marcon et al. (2017)
	▫ MNEs' high-tech related foreign direct pressures for investment significantly contributes to emerging countries' ability to produce cutting-edge technologies, but this effect does not exist for leading innovator countries.	Wu et al. (2017)
SDG 10 - Reduced inequalities within and among countries	▫ Gains of FDI are rarely evenly distributed within recipient countries, and also vary depending on each country' s institutional environment and socio technical arrangements in markets.	Chelekis and Mudambi (2021); Vahter et al. (2019)
	▫ The level of multinational oil companies' CSR interventions in the fight against human trafficking and the outcomes of such interventions.	Uduji et al. (2019)
SDG 11 - Sustainable cities and communities	▫ Structural international ambidexterity as a strategy for MNEs to contribute in building sustainable communities and their impact on economic and social outcomes.	Ciasullo et al. (2020)
	▫ The role of negative externalities produced by the network of interactions among localized, national, and globalized actors in aggravating environmental pollution and threatening sustainability of local communities in host countries.	Babatunde (2020)
	▫ The necessity to involve secondary local stakeholders (e.g., government, local community, civil organizations) into decision-making leads to a strategic CSR activity, and its positive social impact on local communities in host countries).	Rhee et al. (2018)
D. PEACE-RELATED		
SDG 16 - Peace, justice and strong institutions	▫ MNEs can leverage their social, environmental, governance and political capabilities to enter conflict areas contributing in institutional arbitrage and thus, promoting peace.	Albino-Pimentel et al., 2021
	▫ Activities of oil MNEs and resulting pollution, fuels conflicts and insecurity in the local communities, which are aggravated by the ineffectiveness of the measures adopted by the state to manage these conflicts.	Babatunde (2020)
E. PARTNERSHIPS-RELATED		
SDG 17 - Partnerships for the goals	▫ Identifying the reasons of forming partnerships between MNEs and NGOs and their beneficial outcomes relating to greater flexibility, adaptability, and innovativeness.	Liu et al. (2020)
	▫ Building MNEs' strategies to focus on developing relationships with non-traditional stakeholders, co-inventing social solutions, and building local capacity and infrastructure in emerging markets.	Jamali and Yin (2016); Sebhatu and Enquist (2022)
	▫ Re-engagement of MNEs with local communities employing loose governance structures to achieve greater social benefits, which can increase when nations invest to promote their local advantages (e.g., knowledge infrastructure and human capital).	Narula (2018)
	▫ Cooperation and alignment between governments and MNEs to achieve investment in SDGs, the challenges posed by Covid-19, and need for supportive programs and funding.	Zhan et al. (2021)

Table 3 – Academic views about prioritization of future research on MNEs and SDGs (by broad SDG area and specific SDG target)

Broad SDG area	%	Specific SDG target	%
A. PEOPLE-RELATED			
SDG 1 - No poverty	31.4	Fair payment to small-scale suppliers	21.43
		Goods and services for those on low incomes	14.29
		Agricultural productivity of small-scale suppliers	11.9
		Small-scale producers' ownership over land and other property	11.9
SDG 2 – Zero hunger	11.8	Actual and potential impacts on local communities	7.1
		Healthy and sufficient food for those on low incomes	2.4
		Sustainable food production	16.7
SDG 3 – Good health and well-being	19.6	Mental health and well-being	4.8
		Health-care services and medicines for all	19.0
SDG 4 – Quality education	15.7	Children's access to education	19.0
		Employee training and education	16.6
		Education to promote sustainable development	9.5
SDG 5 – Gender equality	17.6	Equal pay and opportunities for men and women, at all levels	19.0
		No workplace violence and harassment	11.9
		Childcare services and benefits	9.5
B. PLANET-RELATED			
SDG 6 – Clean water and sanitation	19.6	Water, sanitation, and hygiene	16.6
		Water use efficiency	9.5
		Protect and restore water-related ecosystems	9.5
		Reducing water pollution, chemicals and hazardous materials in water and dealing with wastewater	16.6
SDG 12 - Responsible consumption and production	43.7	External reporting on sustainability	14.3
		Reducing air and soil pollution	-
		Sustainable waste management throughout the life cycle	26.2
		Reducing air, water, and soil pollution	28.6
		Tools to monitor impacts on sustainable development	14.3
		Socially responsible and environmentally sustainable sourcing	19.0
SDG 13 – Climate action	43.1	Greenhouse gas emission reductions	47.6
		Funding for developing countries' climate change actions	16.7
		Resilience to climate-related hazards	35.7
		Climate Hazards and natural disasters and emergency planning	7.1
SDG 14 – Life below water	17.6	No overfishing and illegal-, unregulated- and destructive-fishing	4.7
		Sustainable management and protection of marine and coastal ecosystems	14.3
SDG 15 – Life on land	9.8	Ecosystems and biodiversity on land	9.5
		Halt poaching and trafficking of protected species	2.4
		Halt or reverse deforestation and/or desertification	7.1
C. PROSPERITY-RELATED			
SDG 7 - Affordable and clean energy	33.3	Energy efficiency	21.4
		Renewable energy production	33.3
		Energy infrastructure	19.0
		Clean energy research and development	21.4
		Access to energy for all	9.5
SDG 8 - Decent work and economic growth	31.4	Labor rights and practices in the supply chain	9.5
		Elimination of forced labor and child labor	9.5
		Economic growth and productivity, particularly in developing countries	19.0
		Employment for all, particularly young people and people with disabilities	9.5
		Occupational health and safety	2.4
		Collective bargaining for wages and benefits along the supply chain	2.4
		Access to financial services for all, including the most vulnerable	2.4
SDG 9 – Industry innovation and infrastructure	31.4	Resilient and sustainable infrastructure	16.7
		Sustainable technologies and sustainable industrial processes	30.9
		Access to information and communication technology for all	11.9
SDG 10 - Reduced inequalities	29.4	Responsible finance	14.3
		Investment (e.g., FDI) in developing countries	16.7
		Social protection systems for all	14.3
		Equal pay and opportunities for all, at all levels	21.4
SDG 11 - Sustainable cities and communities	27.4	Access to affordable and sustainable transport for all	21.4
		Access to affordable and safe housing for all	19.0
		Cultural and natural heritage and diversity	7.1
		Disaster and emergency planning	19.0
		Sustainable waste management in cities	-
D. PEACE-RELATED			
SDG 16 – Peace, justice and strong institutions	19.6	No corruption and bribery	7.1
		Accountable and transparent governance	11.9
		Responsive and inclusive decision-making at all levels	9.5
		No discrimination and anti-discrimination laws and policies	7.1
		No workplace violence and harassment	2.4
E. PARTNERSHIPS-RELATED			
SDG 17 – Partnerships for the goals	23.5	Data availability and public access to information	7.1
		Partnerships with the public and civil society sectors	23.8
		Transfer of (sustainable) technologies to developing countries	16.7

Appendix 1 – Protocol used for coding corporate websites and articles focusing on MNEs and SDGs

Broad SDG area mentioned	Tick	Specific target mentioned	Tick
SDG 1 - No poverty		Fair payment to small-scale suppliers	
		Goods and services for those on low incomes	
		Agricultural productivity of small-scale suppliers	
		Small-scale producers' ownership over land and other property	
SDG 2 – Zero hunger		Actual and potential impacts on local communities	
		Healthy and sufficient food for those on low incomes	
		Sustainable food production	
SDG 3 – Good health and well-being		Mental health and well-being	
		Health-care services and medicines for all	
SDG 4 – Quality education		Children's access to education	
		Employee training and education	
		Education to promote sustainable development	
SDG 6 – Clean water and sanitation		Water, sanitation, and hygiene	
		Water use efficiency	
		Protect and restore water-related ecosystems	
		Reducing water pollution, chemicals and hazardous materials in dealing with wastewater	
SDG 7 - Affordable and clean energy		Energy efficiency	
		Renewable energy production	
		Energy infrastructure	
		Clean energy research and development	
		Access to energy for all	
SDG 8 - Decent work and economic growth		Labor rights and practices in the supply chain	
		Elimination of forced labor and child labor	
		Economic growth and productivity, particularly in developing countries	
		Employment for all, particularly young people and people with disabilities	
		Occupational health and safety	
		Collective bargaining for wages and benefits along the supply chain	
		Access to financial services for all, including the most vulnerable	
SDG 9 – Industry innovation and infrastructure		Resilient and sustainable infrastructure	
		Sustainable technologies and sustainable industrial processes	
		Access to information and communication technology for all	
SDG 10 - Reduced inequalities		Responsible finance	
		Investment (e.g. FDI) in developing countries	
		Social protection systems for all	
		Equal pay and opportunities for all, at all levels	
SDG 11 - Sustainable cities and communities		Access to affordable and sustainable transport for all	
		Access to affordable and safe housing for all	
		Cultural and natural heritage and diversity	
		Disaster and emergency planning	
SDG 12 - Responsible consumption and production		External reporting on sustainability	
		Sustainable waste management throughout the life cycle of the product	
		Reducing air and soil pollution	
		Tools to monitor impacts on sustainable development	
		Socially responsible and environmentally sustainable sourcing	
SDG 13 – Climate action		Greenhouse gas emission reductions	
		Funding for developing countries' climate change actions	
		Resilience to climate-related hazards	
		Climate hazards and natural disasters emergency planning	
SDG 14 – Life below water		No overfishing and illegal-, unregulated- and destructive-fishing	
		Sustainable management and protection of marine and coastal ecosystems	
SDG 15 – Life on land		Ecosystems and biodiversity on land	
		Halt poaching and trafficking of protected species	
		Halt or reverse deforestation and/or desertification	
SDG 16 – Peace, justice and strong institutions		No corruption and bribery	
		Accountable and transparent governance	
		Responsive and inclusive decision-making at all levels	
		No discrimination and anti-discrimination laws and policies	
		No workplace violence and harassment	
SDG 17 – Partnerships for the goals		Data availability and public access to information	
		Partnerships with the public and civil society sectors	
		Transfer of (sustainable) technologies to developing countries	

Appendix 2 – Procedure followed for identifying and coding articles with a focus on MNEs and SDGs

A. Eligibility criteria for identifying relevant literature

- Referring "directly" and "explicitly" to the following:
  □ MNEs, Multinational Enterprises, Multinational Corporations/Firms, International Business, Transnational Corporations/Enterprise/Firms, Global Corporations/ Enterprises/ Firms
  □ SDGs, sustainable development goals, UN sustainable agenda, sustainability, sustainable development, and specific aspects of SDGs (e.g., "poverty", "hunger", "equality", "environment", "climate change", "life below water", "life on land", etc.)
- Peer-reviewed articles published in journals included in the Academic Journal Guide by the U.K. Chartered Association of Business Schools (ABS) *
- Articles having a conceptual or empirical nature
- Articles written in English language
- Articles published during the period from 2016 to 2023

*the Journal of International Business Policy was also included as a sister journal of International Journal of Business Studies published by the Academy of International Business with a more international business policy focus (relevant to SDG implementation)

B. Exclusion criteria

- Conference proceedings
- Books, book chapters, articles in books
- Editorial comments, research notes, reply notes, viewpoints
- Reviews, meta-analyses, bibliometrics
- Monographs, theses, dissertations

C. Search strategy

- Use of various electronic databases, including ABI/Proquest, ScienceDirect, EBSCO, Scopus, and Web of Science.
- Searching titles, abstracts, and keyword fields of several electronic databases, namely, ABI/Proquest, ScienceDirect, EBSCO, and Web of Science. Our search used keywords that refer to SDGs in a broad way, namely "sustainable development goals" OR "SDGs" OR "UN sustainable development agenda" OR "sustainability" OR ''sustainable development", as well as keywords referring to specific aspects of SDGs, namely, "no poverty'' OR "zero hunger'' OR "good health and well-being'' OR "quality education" OR "gender equality" OR "clean water and sanitation" OR "affordable and clean energy" OR "decent work and economic growth" OR "industry innovation and infrastructure'' OR "reduced inequalities", "sustainable cities and communities" OR "responsible consumption and production" OR "climate action" OR "life below water" OR "life on land" OR "peace, justice and strong institutions'' OR "partnerships for the goals". These two sets of keywords were connected with the Boolean operator AND using the following keywords referring to MNEs: "international business" OR "multinational corporations" OR "multinational enterprises" OR "multinational firms" OR "transnational corporations'' OR "transnational enterprises" OR "transnational firms" OR "global corporations" OR "global enterprises" OR "global firms".

D. Search results

- Identification of articles from initial searching: n= 3106
- Articles omitted due to duplication: n= 1183
- Exclusion on non-eligible articles after manual check/reading: n= 1923
- Additional articles identified from cross-checking article reference lists: n=6
- Additional articles identified after manually checking the table of contents of all international business journals included in the ABS list: n=7
- Final sample of articles obtained for content analysis: n=116
-

E. Coding article content

- Preparation of a coding manual explaining the nature and content of each of the 17 SDGs and the specific 64 targets incorporated in them
- Designing a special coding protocol containing the list of 17 SDGs broken down into their 64 targets to tick whether these were addressed in an article
- Coding manually the content of each article obtained in the final sample with regard to the category of SDGs addressed and the specific targets within each category
- Inserting the data extracted from the coding analysis of each article in an Excel Program to calculate the percentage frequency of appearance

Appendix 3- Journal contribution of articles focusing on MNEs and SDGs

Journal title	Number (percentage)
Journal of Cleaner Production	22 (19.8%)
Business Strategy and the Environment	9 (7.8%)
Sustainability	9 (7.8%)
Transnational Corporations	9 (7.8%)
Journal of International Business Studies	8 (6.9%)
Journal of Business Ethics	7 (6.0%)
Journal of International Business Policy	7 (6.0%)
Corporate Social Responsibility and Environmental Management	5 (4.3%)
Critical Perspectives on International Business	4 (3.4%)
Journal of World Business	3 (2.6%)
Multinational Business Review	3 (2.6%)
Other journals	30 (25.9%)
TOTAL	116 (100%)

Appendix 4 –Questionnaire used for the survey among academics

Dear colleague,

Thank you for accepting to participate in our study, which aims to compile the opinions of academic experts in the sustainability field regarding future research on the role of MNEs in implementing the 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The following questionnaire consists of two parts.

Part 'A': Out of the 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) shown in the following list, please select **five (5)** that you consider most important for academic research to focus in the future, by selecting the appropriate box.
After selecting the five (5) SDGs, please go to the second part of the questionnaire.

Part 'B': Within each Sustainable Development Goal (SDG), please select three (3) specific targets where you think particular attention should be paid. (Please note that the option 'Other' gives you the opportunity to propose other dimensions not included in the list).

After selecting the three (3) specific targets within each SDG, and please provide possible subject areas within each target.

Broad SDG	Please tick	Specific target	Please tick	Suggested subject
SDG 1 - No poverty		Fair payment to small-scale suppliers		
		Goods and services for those on low incomes		
		Access to financial services		
		Small-scale producers' ownership over land and other property		
SDG 2 – Zero hunger		Actual and potential impacts on local communities		
		Healthy and sufficient food for those on low incomes		
		Sustainable food production		
SDG 3 – Good health and well-being		Mental health and well-being		
		Health-care services and medicines for all		
SDG 4 – Quality education		Children's access to education		
		Employee training and education		
		Education to promote sustainable development		
		Equal pay and opportunities for men and women, at all levels		
		No workplace violence and harassment		
		Childcare services and benefits		
SDG 6 – Clean water and sanitation		Water, sanitation, and hygiene		
		Water use efficiency		
		Protect and restore water-related ecosystems		
		Reducing water pollution, chemicals and hazardous materials in water and dealing with wastewater		
SDG 7 - Affordable and clean energy		Energy efficiency		
		Renewable energy production		
		Energy infrastructure		
		Clean energy research and development		
		Access to energy for all		
SDG 8 - Decent work and economic growth		Labor rights and practices in the supply chain		
		Elimination of forced labor and child labor		
		Economic growth and productivity, particularly in developing countries		

		Employment for all, particularly young people and people with disabilities		
		Occupational health and safety		
		Collective bargaining for wages and benefits along the supply chain		
		Access to financial services for all, including the most vulnerable		
SDG 9 – Industry innovation and infrastructure		Resilient and sustainable infrastructure		
		Sustainable technologies and sustainable industrial processes		
		Access to information and communication technology for all		
SDG 10 - Reduced inequalities		Responsible finance		
		Investment (e.g. FDI) in developing countries		
		Social protection systems for all		
		Equal pay and opportunities for all, at all levels		
SDG 11 - Sustainable cities and communities		Access to affordable and sustainable transport for all		
		Access to affordable and safe housing for all		
		Cultural and natural heritage and diversity		
		Disaster and emergency planning		
SDG 12 - Responsible consumption and production		External reporting on sustainability		
		Reducing air and soil pollution		
		Tools to monitor impacts on sustainable development		
		Socially responsible and environmentally sustainable sourcing		
SDG 13 – Climate action		Greenhouse gas emission reductions		
		Funding for developing countries' climate change actions		
		Resilience to climate-related hazards		
		Disaster and emergency planning		
		Climate hazards and natural disasters and emergency planning		
SDG 14 – Life below water		Sustainable management and protection of marine and coastal ecosystems		
		No overfishing and illegal-, unregulated- and destructive-fishing		
SDG 15 – Life on land		Ecosystems and biodiversity on land		
		Halt poaching and trafficking of protected species		
		Halt or reverse deforestation and/or desertification		
SDG 16 – Peace, justice and strong institutions		No corruption and bribery		
		Accountable and transparent governance		
		Responsive and inclusive decision-making at all levels		
		No discrimination and anti-discrimination laws and policies		
		No workplace violence and harassment		
SDG 17 – Partnerships for the goals		Data availability and public access to information		
		Tools to monitor impacts on sustainable development		
		Partnerships with the public and civil society sectors		
		Transfer of (sustainable) technologies to developing countries		

WEB APPENDICES

Web Appendix A – SDGs and their specific targets mentioned in MNEs' websites

SDGs \ MNEs	3M	Procter & Gamble	SIMS	GSK	NIKE	Coca-Cola	Pepsi-Co	Ford	J&J	IKEA	L Oreal	Bombardier	Unilever	Volvo	Novo Nordisk	Philips	Nestle	Dassault Systems	Syngenta AG	Marks and Spencer	Allianz	Orange ORA	Geberit	Siemens	Sanofi	Henkel	Vodafone	Samsung	Hyundai Motors	Konica Manolta	Lenovo	Toyota	**TOTAL NUMBER**
SDG 1 - No Poverty																																	
Fair payment to small-scale suppliers	✓	✓								✓			✓				✓			✓													**6**
Goods and services for those on low incomes	✓	✓	✓	✓					✓	✓	✓						✓			✓	✓			✓		✓	✓						**13**
Agricultural productivity of small-scale suppliers						✓				✓			✓				✓		✓								✓						**9**
SDG 2 – Zero Hunger																																	
Actual and potential impacts on local communities	✓					✓	✓			✓	✓		✓						✓	✓				✓		✓		✓			✓		**11**
Healthy and sufficient food for those on low incomes	✓	✓					✓			✓			✓				✓			✓								✓					**8**
Sustainable food production							✓			✓			✓				✓			✓				✓		✓							**7**
SDG 3 – Good Health and well-being																																	
Mental health and well-being	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓					✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	**23**
Health-care services and medicines for all		✓		✓		✓			✓	✓	✓		✓		✓	✓								✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			**16**
SDG 4 – Quality Education																																	
Children's access to education	✓	✓	✓							✓														✓		✓	✓						**7**
Employee training and education	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	**29**
Education to promote sustainable development		✓		✓	✓			✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	**23**
SDG 5 – Gender Equality																																	
Equal pay and opportunities for men and women, at all levels	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	**30**
No workplace violence and harassment		✓						✓		✓	✓	✓		✓			✓			✓	✓			✓	✓		✓			✓	✓	✓	**15**
Childcare services and benefits	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	**32**
SDG 6 – Clean water and Sanitation																																	
Water, sanitation, and hygiene	✓	✓				✓		✓		✓	✓	✓					✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓		✓		✓			✓	✓	**17**
Water use efficiency	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓		✓					✓	✓				✓	✓	✓	✓			✓		✓	✓	**19**
Protect and restore water-related ecosystems	✓	✓					✓						✓																				**4**
Reducing water pollution, chemicals and hazardous materials in water and dealing with wastewater	✓			✓				✓		✓	✓		✓						✓	✓					✓			✓					**10**
SDG 12 - Responsible consumption and production																																	
External reporting on sustainability	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	**32**
Reducing air and soil pollution	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓		✓	✓			✓	✓		✓	**23**
Sustainable waste management throughout the product life-cycle	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓			✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	**26**

Tools to monitor impacts on sustainable development	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓							✓		✓			✓	**16**
Socially responsible and environmentally sustainable sourcing		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓				✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓					✓	✓		✓		✓	**12**
SDG 13 – Climate Action																																				
Greenhouse gas emission reductions	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	**32**
Funding for developing countries' climate change actions																✓	✓																			**2**
Resilience to climate-related hazards															✓			✓										✓			✓					**4**
Climate-related hazards and natural Disaster and emergency planning	✓	✓					✓																					✓								**4**
SDG 14 – Life below water																																				
Sustainable management and protection of marine and coastal ecosystems		✓		✓		✓	✓			✓	✓		✓			✓		✓	✓				✓		✓				✓	✓	✓				**15**
No overfishing and illegal-, unregulated- and destructive fishing									✓																		✓								**2**
SDG 15 – Life on land																																				**0**
Ecosystems and biodiversity on land	✓		✓				✓	✓	✓		✓				✓		✓	✓					✓	✓				✓	✓		✓			**14**
Halt poaching and trafficking of protected species																														✓						**1**
Halt or reverse deforestation and/or desertification		✓		✓				✓	✓			✓			✓			✓				✓		✓			✓	✓		✓				**12**
SDG 7 - Affordable and clean energy																																				
Energy efficiency	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓		✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	**26**
Renewable energy production	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓		✓	✓		✓		✓	✓		✓			✓	✓		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	**19**
Energy infrastructure							✓	✓					✓	✓		✓					✓	✓		✓											**5**
Clean energy research and development	✓	✓	✓			✓		✓													✓	✓													**6**
Access to energy for all		✓																																		**1**
SDG 8 - Decent work and economic growth																																				
Labor rights and practices in the supply chain		✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	**27**
Elimination of forced labor and child labor	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	**28**
Economic growth and productivity, particularly in developing countries		✓			✓			✓	✓			✓						✓			✓			✓											**8**
Employment for all, particularly young people and people with disabilities	✓	✓			✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓							✓			✓		✓	✓			✓							**12**
Occupational health and safety	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	**30**
Collective bargaining for wages and benefits along the supply chain		✓					✓						✓						✓	✓									✓						**6**
Access to financial services for all, including the most vulnerable	✓							✓				✓									✓			✓											**5**
Educating Suppliers/ Children in STEM				✓																			✓												**2**
SDG 9 – Industry innovation and infrastructure																																				
Resilient and sustainable infrastructure							✓						✓						✓	✓		✓	✓	✓				✓	✓						**9**
Sustainable technologies and sustainable industrial processes	✓	✓	✓				✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓		✓			✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	**22**

Access to information and communication technology for all																			✓	✓		✓		✓			✓		✓					**6**
SDG 10 - Reduced inequalities																																	
Responsible finance																																	
Investment (e.g. FDI) in developing countries		✓																															**1**
Social protection systems for all		✓		✓						✓			✓																	✓		✓	**6**
Equal pay and opportunities for all, at all levels		✓		✓		✓	✓	✓			✓										✓		✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	**15**
SDG 11 - Sustainable cities and communities																																	
Access to affordable and sustainable transport for all													✓																			✓	**2**
Access to affordable and safe housing for all									✓																✓								**2**
Cultural and natural heritage and diversity																												✓					**1**
Disaster and emergency planning		✓					✓													✓							✓		✓	✓	✓		**7**
SDG 16 – Peace, justice and strong institutions																																	
No corruption and bribery	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓		**27**
Accountable and transparent governance	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		**29**
Responsive and inclusive decision-making at all levels	✓	✓								✓	✓			✓													✓			✓			**7**
No discrimination and anti-discrimination laws and policies	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓			**26**
No workplace violence and harassment	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	**32**
SDG 17 – Partnerships for the goals																																	
Data availability and public access to information												✓							✓								✓	✓	✓					**5**
Partnerships with the public and civil society sectors	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	**32**
Transfer of (sustainable) technologies to developing countries																			✓									✓		✓			**3**

Web Appendix B – List of academic articles focusing on MNEs and SDGs

Authors	A. PEOPLE-RELATED					B. PLANET-RELATED					C. PROSPERITY-RELATED					D.	E.
	SDG 1	SDG 2	SDG 3	SDG 4	SDG 5	SDG 6	SDG 12	SDG 13	SDG 14	SDG 15	SDG 7	SDG 8	SDG 9	SDG 10	SDG 11	SDG 16	SDG 17
Bag et al. (2023)								✓									
Carmagnac et al., (2023)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Dou et al. (2023)	✓		✓		✓		✓	✓					✓	✓	✓		✓
Eang et al. (2023)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Elg et al. (2023)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Enderwick and Buckley (2023)								✓									
Ferreira et al. (2023)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Foroudi et al., (2022)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Galeazzo et al. (2023)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Garcia- Sanchez et al. (2023)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Haritas and Das (2023)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Leonort et al. (2023)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Lippolis et al. (2023)													✓				
Margaret et al. (2023)								✓									
Ordonez-Ponce & Talbot (2022)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Pranugrahaning et al. (2023)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Rosati et al. (2022)								✓			✓						
Saeed et al. (2023)					✓												
Sasaki et al. (2023)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Araujo et al. (2022)							✓					✓					
Boruchowitch & Fritz, (2022)							✓										
Das Gupta et al. (2022)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Dziubaniuk et al. (2022)						✓											
Erin et al. (2022)							✓										
Garcia-Sanchez et al. (2022)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Hou et al. (2022)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Ike et al. (2022)							✓										
Lee and Hess (2022)							✓										
Miklian and Barkemeyer (2022)																✓	
Nylund et al (2022)							✓										
Pless (2022)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Rajic et al. (2022)							✓										
Rygh et al. (2022)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Scuotto et al. (2022)												✓	✓				✓
Sebhatu et al. (2022)																	✓
Vazquez-Maguirre & Benito (2022)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Williams et al (2022)																	✓
Whittingham et al. (2022)							✓										
Albino-Pimentel et al. (2021)																✓	
Ajwani- Ramchandani et al. (2021)							✓										
Andersen & Åberg (2021)						✓		✓									
Brandl et al. (2021)	✓																
Claro & Esteves (2021)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Eden & Wagstaff (2021)					✓												
Heras-Saizarbitoria et al. (2021)							✓										
Khalique et al. (2021)												✓					
Luomaranta et al. (2021)					✓												✓
Lewis et al. (2021)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Madsen & Ulhøi (2021)								✓			✓						
Montiel et al. (2021)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Morea et al. (2021)								✓				✓	✓				
Nylund et al. (2021)													✓				
Patchell & Hayter (2021)											✓						
Patala et al. (2021)								✓									
Ramirez (2021)																✓	
Scheyvens & Laeis (2021)							✓										
Selmier & Newen-ham-Kahindi (2021)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓									✓		
Silva (2021)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Srinivasan & Eden (2021)							✓						✓				
van den Broek (2021)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Van Holt et al. (2021)							✓										
van Zanten and van Tulder , 2021	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Zhan & Santos-Paulino (2021)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Andersen and Esbjerg, (2020)	✓																
Bello & Othman (2020)				✓													

D'Souza et al. (2020)												✓			✓		
Derqui (2020)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
García-Alaminos et al. (2020)												✓					
Garcia - Sanzhez et al. (2020a)							✓										
Garcia - Sanzhez et al. (2020b)							✓										
Fortunati et al (2020)							✓										
Ike et al. (2020)							✓									✓	
Lartey et al. (2020)							✓	✓	✓	✓							
Lopez (2020)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Liou & Rao-Nicholson (2020)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Munro & Arli (2020)							✓										
Prashantham & Birkinshaw (2020)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Sartor & Beamish (2020)																✓	
Sinkovics et al., (2020)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
van der Waal et al. (2020)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓[1]	✓	✓	✓	✓
Abdelhalim & Eldin (2019)	✓											✓	✓		✓		✓
Banik & Lin (2019)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Barkemeyer and Miklian (2019)	✓			✓	✓		✓	✓				✓	✓			✓	
Bowie (2019)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Bridges and Eubank (2019) (2019)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
De Perea et al. (2019)		✓															
Ebhuoma et al. (2019)	✓	✓															
Endl (2019)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Ike et al. (2019)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Mutale et al. (2019)		✓	✓	✓								✓				✓	
Nara et al. (2019)	✓						✓			✓				✓	✓		
Reade et al. (2019)																✓	
Trista & Donald (2019)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Wang & Li (2019)																✓	
Ali et al. (2018)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Forcadell & Aracil (2018)	✓			✓				✓			✓		✓				✓
Gallego-Alvarez et al. (2018a)						✓	✓	✓		✓	✓						
Gallego-Alvarez (2018b)						✓				✓	✓				✓		
Hult et al. (2018)							✓										
Narula (2018)													✓			✓	✓
Santangelo (2018)		✓	✓											✓		✓	
Van Zentan & van Tulder (2018)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Yakokleva and Vazquez-Brust (2018)	✓											✓				✓	✓
Arp et al. (2017)	✓																
Donoher (2017)	✓			✓			✓	✓				✓	✓				
Hendriks (2017)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Oetzel & Miklian (2017)																✓	
Perrot (2017)	✓																
Schönherr et al. (2017)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Selmier & Newen-ham-Kahindi (2017)	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓											
Selmier II et al. (2017)																	
Terpstra-Tong (2017)					✓												
Topple et al. (2017)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Beddewela & Fairbrass (2016)															✓	✓	
Shan & Khan (2016)	✓		✓							✓			✓		✓		
Yin & Jamali (2016)											✓						✓
Total number	57	48	48	49	49	48	67	56	43	47	49	53	54	45	50	56	52
Total percentage	49.1	41.4	41.4	42.2	42.2	41.4	57.8	48.3	37.1	40.5	42.2	45.7	46.6	38.8	43.1	48.3	44.8

Web Appendix C – Pattern matching of the results obtained from corporate websites and academic views

SDG target	Corporate websites (%)	Academic views (%)	Sign of difference	χ^2	*p*-value
A. PEOPLE-RELATED					
SDG 1 - No poverty					
Fair payment to small-scale suppliers	18.8	21.4	<	0.80	0.78
Goods and services for those on low incomes	40.6	14.3	>	7.28	**0.01**
Agricultural productivity of small-scale suppliers	28.1	11.9	>	3.43	**0.06**
Small-scale producers' ownership over land and other property	0.0	11.9	<	4.06	**0.04**
SDG 2 – Zero hunger					
Actual and potential impacts on local communities	34.4	7.1	>	9.97	**0.00**
Healthy and sufficient food for those on low incomes	25.0	2.4	>	10.04	**0.00**
Sustainable food production	21.9	16.7	>	0.34	0.56
SDG 3 – Good health and well-being					
Mental health and well-being	75.0	4.8	>	44.09	**0.00**
Health-care services and medicines for all	50.0	19.0	>	8.74	**0.00**
SDG 4 – Quality education					
Children's access to education	21.2	19.0	>	0.06	0.81
Employee training and education	90.6	16.6	>	42.96	**0.00**
Education to promote sustainable development	71.9	9.5	>	33.92	**0.00**
SDG 5 – Gender equality					
Equal pay and opportunities for men and women, at all levels	93.8	19.0	>	42.56	**0.00**
No workplace violence and harassment	46.9	11.9	>	12.56	**0.00**
Childcare services and benefits	100.0	9.5	>	64.45	**0.00**
B. PLANET-RELATED					
SDG 6 – Clean water and sanitation					
Water, sanitation, and hygiene	53.1	16.6	>	12.17	**0.00**
Water use efficiency	59.4	9.5	>	23.62	**0.00**
Protect and restore water-related ecosystems	12.5	9.5	>	0.18	0.67
SDG 12 - Responsible consumption and production					
External reporting on sustainability	100.0	14.3	>	57.23	**0.00**
Sustainable waste management throughout the lifecycle	81.3	26.2	>	23.65	**0.00**
Reducing air, water, and soil pollution	71.9	28.6	>	14.70	**0.00**
Tools to monitor impacts on sustainable development	75.0	14.3	>	30.47	**0.00**
Socially responsible and environmentally sustainable sourcing	59.4	19.0	>	14.02	**0.00**
SDG 13 – Climate action					
Greenhouse gas emission reductions	100.0	47.6	>	24.43	**0.00**
Funding for developing countries' climate change actions	6.3	16.7	<	1.90	0.17
Resilience to climate-related hazards	12.5	35.7	<	5.34	**0.02**
Climate hazards and natural disaster and emergency planning	12.5	7.1	>	0.68	0.41
SDG 14 – Life below water					
No overfishing and illegal-, unregulated- and destructive-fishing	6.3	4.7	>	0.10	0.75
Sustainable management and protection of marine and coastal ecosystems	46.9	14.3	>	10.51	**0.00**
SDG 15 – Life on land					
Ecosystems and biodiversity on land	43.8	9.5	>	13.02	**0.00**
Halt poaching and trafficking of protected species	3.1	2.4	>	0.04	0.85
Halt or reverse deforestation and/or desertification	37.5	7.1	>	11.75	**0.00**
C. PROSPERITY-RELATED					
SDG 7 - Affordable and clean energy					
Energy efficiency	81.25	21.4	>	28.18	**0.00**
Renewable energy production	59.4	33.3	>	5.39	**0.02**
Energy infrastructure	15.6	19.0	<	0.15	0.69
Clean energy research and development	18.8	21.4	<	0.08	0.78
Access to energy for all	3.1	9.5	<	1.22	0.27
SDG 8 - Decent work and economic growth					
Labor rights and practices in the supply chain	84.4	9.5	>	46.08	**0.00**
Elimination of forced labor and child labor	87.5	9.5	>	49.42	**0.00**

Economic growth and productivity, particularly in developing countries	25.0	19.0	>	0.42	0.52
Employment for all, particularly young people and people with disabilities	37.5	9.5	>	9.42	**0.00**
Occupational health and safety	93.8	2.4	>	69.14	**0.00**
Collective bargaining for wages and benefits along the supply chain	18.8	2.4	>	6.56	**0.01**
Access to financial services for all, including the most vulnerable	15.6	2.4	>	4.89	**0.03**
SDG 9 – Industry innovation and infrastructure					
Resilient and sustainable infrastructure	28.1	16.7	>	1.68	0.19
Sustainable technologies and sustainable industrial processes	68.8	30.9	>	11.25	**0.00**
Access to information and communication technology for all	18.8	11.9	>	0.74	0.39
SDG 10 - Reduced inequalities					
Responsible finance	0.0	14.3	<	4.96	**0.02**
Investment (e.g., FDI) in developing countries	3.1	16.7	<	3.54	**0.06**
Social protection systems for all	18.8	14.3	>	0.29	0.59
Equal pay and opportunities for all, at all levels	43.8	21.4	<	4.64	0.03
SDG 11 - Sustainable cities and communities					
Access to affordable and sustainable transport for all	6.3	21.4	<	3.37	**0.07**
Access to affordable and safe housing for all	6.3	19.0	<	2.59	0.11
Cultural and natural heritage and diversity	3.1	7.1	<	0.59	0.44
Disaster and emergency planning	21.9	19.0	>	0.10	0.75
D. PEACE-RELATED					
SDG 16 – Peace, justice and strong institutions					
No corruption and bribery	84.4	7.1	>	49.85	**0.00**
Accountable and transparent governance	90.6	11.9	>	49.31	**0.00**
Responsive and inclusive decision-making at all levels	21.9	9.5	>	2.44	0.12
No discrimination and anti-discrimination laws and policies	81.2	7.1	>	46.48	**0.00**
No workplace violence and harassment	100	2.4	>	77.08	**0.00**
E. PARTNERSHIPS-RELATED					
SDG 17 – Partnerships for the goals					
Data availability and public access to information	15.6	7.1	>	1.51	0.22
Partnerships with the public and civil society sectors	100	23.8	>	45.30	**0.00**
Transfer of (sustainable) technologies to developing countries	9.4	16.7	<	0.87	0.35

Web Appendix D - Theories employed in studies focusing on MNEs and SDGs

Theory	Total (n= 116) %	Examples of theory application
Institutional/ Neo-institutional theory	12.1	How the lack of a regulatory framework and voluntary disclosure as parts of the institutional environment affected the level and content of reporting in Nigerian companies (SDG 12) (Erin et al., 2022); how foreign MNEs' land acquisitions create negative externalities on the rural communities and on the role of local informal institutions (SDG 1) (Brandl et al., 2021); the misalignment of the commitment to gender equality between the headquarters and the subsidiaries (SDG 5) (Terpstra-Tong, 2017).
Stakeholder theory	6.9	The effect of multi-stakeholder dialogue in developing a CSR strategy that adds value to the company's business model (SDG 17) (Sebhatu et al., 2022); how CSR strategy addresses and integrates SDGs (Lopez, 2020); the development of a Salience and Institutional Analysis and Design Framework to address miners' interests and concerns as stakeholders to develop a cooperative strategy with MNEs as an alternative sustainable governance mode (SDG1,8,16,17) (Yakokleva and Vazquez-Brust, 2018).
Legitimization theory	7.7	Differences in the topics published in sustainability reports by headquarters and the topics mentioned to be of interest by subsidiaries (SDG 12) (Ike et al., 2022); how the current and dominant legitimization strategies implemented by MNEs are insufficient to address the adoption and achievement of SDGs (Silva, 2021); the role of stakeholder network and balance of interests and beliefs on the MNE's decision to participate in SDGs initiatives (Donoher, 2017).
Resource-based view	4.3	The extent to which MNEs address SDGs in their overall strategy and consider negative externalities (Claro and Esteves, 2021); To what extent different offshoring decisions affect the choice of sustainable practices (SDG 12,13,14,15) (Lartey et al., 2020); The organizational capabilities required by MNEs to consider the BOP segment as a strategic opportunity (SDG1) (Perrot, 2017).
Miscellaneous theories (e.g., transaction cost theory, actor-network theory, social role theory; etc.)	30.2	An examination of the relationship between the level of host country's corruption and the MNEs' choice of investment structure abroad (within the context of SDG implementation) (SDG 16) (Sartor and Beamish, 2020); How MNEs' technologies and processes emerge in a BoP context (SDG 6, 13) (Andersen and Aberg, 2021); whether women leaders have an impact on the implementation of SDGs strategies within their companies (SDG 5) (García-Sanchez et al., 2023)
No theory	42.2	

Web Appendix E - Indicative MNE programs per SDG and their resulting outcomes

SDG	Indicative MNE program	Resulting outcome
A. PEOPLE-RELATED		
SDG 1 - No poverty	**Nestlé** has established an "innovative income accelerator program for cocoa production to reduce poverty and address child labor". The program targets to improve the livelihoods of farmers and their families and improve agriculture through regenerative practices. Through this program, it also aims to improve consumer trust by increasing "traceability and segregation of its cocoa products".	By the end of 2022, more than 10,000 families participated in this income accelerator program.
SDG 2 - Zero hunger	**Marks & Spencer**, under the "Our Communities" pillar of its sustainability plan, cooperates with Neighborly for a food redistribution program. The company believes that "food is too good to go to waste". As a result, the company donates surplus food (e.g., bakery goods, fresh fruit and vegetables) through its network of more than 1,400 community partners to people in need.	During the period 2021-2022 the company donated 14.8 million meals to those individuals in need for food.
SDG 3 - Good health and well-being	Since 2010, **GSK** has launched its Access to Medicine program, which, in collaboration with Gavi (the Vaccine Alliance), aims to offer transformational vaccines and medicines at affordable prices to less-developed countries.	By 2022, the company has managed to supply more than one billion vaccine doses to millions of children in these countries.
SDG 4 - Quality education	Since 2012, **Henkel** has pioneered the "Sustainability Ambassador Program", aiming to "engage and empower employees to become actively involved in sustainability in their work environment and in their private lives".	Through this program the company has successfully trained more than 50,000 motivated employees at its sites in various parts of the world.
SDG 5 – Gender equality	In promoting gender equality, **Nike** has set a target for "50% representation of women in its global corporate workforce" and "45% representation of women in leadership positions" through its "Leadership Development Program".	By 2022, the representation of women in the company's global workforce reached 51.1%, while women represent 44.1% of leadership positions.
B. PLANET-RELATED		
SDG 6 - Clean water and sanitation	From 2006, **Pepsi Co** has set water stewardship as one of its top priorities, recognizing the importance of distributing safe water to people in need through its value chain. Since then, The PepsiCo Foundation has invested approximately $2 million in various safe water access programs.	By 2022, the company delivered safe water access to more than 80 million people worldwide.
SDG 12 – Responsible consumption and production	**Coca-Cola** has set as a target to make 100% of its packaging recyclable by 2025 and use at least 50% recycled packaging content by 2030. To accomplish the target, the company has set a goal to recycle a bottle or can for each one sold by 2030. Another target is at least 25% of its beverages sold worldwide to have a refillable/returnable glass/plastic bottles or fountain dispensers with reusable packaging.	In 2022, the company reported to have 90% recyclable packaging, 15% of recycled PET, and 61% of its packaging collected for recycling. It also invests in refillable and dispensed solutions.
SDG 13 - Climate action	**Nike** has embarked on a program aiming to reduce carbon emissions targeting "a 63% by 2030 and reach net zero by 2050". In this regard, the company innovates in all of its operations and uses low carbon materials.	In 2022, the company has managed to have 70% absolute reduction of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions in owned or operated facilities, through the use of renewable electricity and fleet electrification.
SDG 14 - Life below water	**Procter & Gamble** has been committed, through partnerships and alliances (e.g., The Alliance to End Plastic Waste, Circulate Capital, The Recycling Partnership), to reduce plastic waste in the environment, setting as a target to have 100% of its packaging coming from recyclable or reusable material by the year 2030.	The company has managed to produce the world's first recyclable shampoo bottle for its *Head & Shoulders* brand (made from 25% recycled beach plastic), as well as introduced the *Fairy ocean plastic* bottle made completely from recycled ocean plastic.
SDG 15 - Life on land	**Toyota** under its 'Global Environment" initiative maintains several forests in the Toyota City area, while it has also been engaged in various "factory forestation" efforts at its production plants in Japan and abroad.	Within a decade, the company has managed to plant more than two million trees.
C. PROSPERITY-RELATED		
SDG 7 - Affordable and clean energy	**3M** has set as a target to use 100% renewable energy for electricity at its facilities by 2050, while it has also been committed to offer a wide range of energy efficient products.	In 2022, the company achieved over 50% renewable energy across all its global operations, which is two years ahead of the company's 2025 timeline.

SDG 8 - Decent work and economic growth	**Volvo** has embarked on a Health and Safety program, aiming to prevent accidents, near misses, and work-related illness of its workforce in all of its activities, hence supporting the goal of achieving decent work across the value chain.	All company employees have been systematically trained on health and safety issues, contributing to continuous improvements of the work environment.
SDG 9 - Industry innovation and infrastructure	**Lenovo** has as a vision to transform from a devices company to a global technology powerhouse that also includes services and solutions. As such, it has embarked on a program aiming to find smarter technological solutions on the basis of equity and empowerment for the future.	During the period 2021-2022, the number of R&D professionals in the company increased by approximately 5,000 (with an announcement to hire an additional 12,000), while its R&D investments are expected to double over the next three years.
SDG 10 - Reduced inequalities within and among countries	**IKEA** is committed to reduce inequalities in the workplace through its program Responsible Wage Practice (RWP) within which it attempts to understand wage-related practices and policies across the value chain. To implement the program, it works together with governments, NGOs, labor organizations, and specialists.	In 2022, the company conducted the first RWP baseline assessments in all organizations working under the IKEA brand, and across its worldwide value chains.
SDG 11 - Sustainable cities and communities	**Vodafone** is committed "to enhance inclusive and sustainable urbanization and capacity for participatory, integrated, and sustainable human settlement planning and management in all countries (SDG 11.7)". Its aim is for the more vulnerable groups such as children older persons, persons with disabilities along with women to have inclusive access to green and public spaces by 2030.	By 2022, the company has managed in South Africa, through its citizen engagement digital platform, to facilitate engagement between citizens and municipalities with more than 25,000 active users, while its patient engagement platform facilitated easy and efficient communication between patients, doctors, and the Department of Health with more than 33,500 active users.
D. PEACE-RELATED		
SDG 16 - Peace, justice and strong institutions	**Syngenta** is thoroughly committed to take violations of the code of conduct seriously into consideration in order to secure the highest standards of ethics and integrity in its operations, a commitment that is important for its investors, customers, employees, and the society at large.	The company's employees can report any suspected violations of the code of conduct either directly to their line manager or human resources department teams. They can also anonymously contact the company's Compliance Helpline, which is available 24-hours a day and offered in 24 languages.
E. PARTNERSHIPS-RELATED		
SDG 17 - Partnerships for the goals	**Orange** believes that the major benefit to be derived from implementing SDGs is through partnerships and joint activities with other institutions and large groups from both the public and sector. Through the means of digital technology, start-ups and innovative SMEs, the company supports further the socio-economic development of the countries where it operates.	By 2022, the company had a partnership agreement with the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria in four African countries, funded 71 active research contracts and 5 research chairs, and financed start-ups positively impacting the environment, inclusion, or care through its Orange Ventures Impact fund.

Source: Companies' websites and/or published sustainability 2022 reports.