



A conceptual review on entrepreneurial marketing and business sustainability in small and medium enterprises

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ABSTRACT

This paper aims to review the current literature on entrepreneurial marketing and business sustainability while explaining various scholars' views on the relationships between these constructs. A comprehensive analysis of the previous literature on these concepts was conducted to gain better insights and in-depth knowledge regarding the trends in the past studies related to the entrepreneurial marketing and Small and Medium Enterprises' (SME) business sustainability. It is often postulated in the literature that entrepreneurial marketing represents a key strategy for driving and determining SMEs' business sustainability. Therefore, some propositions were suggested with reference to the examined literature as a basis for the future empirical investigation to examine effects of entrepreneurial marketing dimensions on SME business sustainability. The study provides a key contribution to current knowledge on the linkages among the entrepreneurial marketing dimensions, namely value creation, proactiveness, customer intensity, resource leveraging, and innovativeness) and business sustainability with reference to SME's context. This paper also addresses existing gaps in the literature on entrepreneurial marketing and business sustainability and put forward directions for future empirical studies.

1. Introduction

The term 'business sustainability' has originated from the discussion on how a sustainability concept can be effectively applied to enterprises. Some researchers have defined business sustainability as an enterprise' approach to achieve business competitiveness while using sustainable strategies [10,41,110,112]. Thus, they have paid attention to the existence of sustainability in approaches that lead to innovation, integration, and collaboration in the business environment [68,112,116]. Pojasek [99] defined business sustainability as a composite means that are used to address a company's mission and vision. In attaining the mission of a firm, entrepreneurs focus on available resources, techniques, and strategies [66]. They succeed in achieving the high-level competitiveness if they choose a sustainable approach to utilize resources and strategies [60,98,99]. From this perspective, it is possible to define business sustainability as a strategic approach followed by entrepreneurs to increase their competitive advantages in target markets.

The continuous involvement in sustainable business practices enables a firm to obtain a positive image in the eyes of customers who can maintain favorable attitudes and perceptions toward it [53,125]. Therefore, the sustainability concept emphasizes on implementing best practices and approaches for dealing with social, environmental, and economic aspects to ensure business development. Such aspects are largely

considered in the literature as the three main pillars of corporate sustainability and called as the 'triple bottom line' [4,87]. Concerning the environmental dimension, sustainability is attained by SMEs through informal approaches that aim to foster diverse development programs and minimize waste [55,115]. Furthermore, the social approach emphasizes on the involvement with communities and making significant contributions that can be valued by members in the society [53,110,113]. These enterprises also ensure their sustainability when they retain successful economic relationships with diverse organizations because they focus on cooperation that would be beneficial for the business growth and prosperity [20,85].

Some researchers have suggested that an important predictor of SMEs' business sustainability is the development of the idea of entrepreneurship [1,27,46,95]. It is also possible to assume that the principles of entrepreneurial marketing can have a significant influence on sustainability [7,31,75]. The rationale for this assumption lies in the fact that the aspects of entrepreneurial behaviors, such as resource leveraging, proactiveness, and innovativeness exert significant roles in predicting corporate sustainability. From this point, if corporate leaders focus on adopting innovative approaches for the purpose of managing organizational resources in an efficient way and invest in efforts to attract stakeholders to fulfill their desires, they can be considered effective in shaping the sustainability path [14,23,101]. Thus, the leaders' purpose

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in this case is to address their responsibilities in societal and environmental spheres [47,54,114].

Prior researches on entrepreneurial marketing linkages with SMEs' business sustainability can be categorized into three main groups: studies on SMEs' business sustainability (e.g. [51,62,71,139]), studies on entrepreneurial marketing (e.g. [43,135,142]; Whalen & Akaka, 2016; [82]), and other researches on the association between business sustainability and the elements of entrepreneurial marketing [1,90]. The last category is characterized by a scarce empirical research on the linkages among entrepreneurial marketing dimensions and corporate sustainability, particularly in SMEs context [35,52,89]. A number of researchers have indirectly highlighted that some elements of entrepreneurial marketing play a noteworthy role in determining the sustainability of SMEs [7,31,75]. However, they have not focused on identifying the empirical relationship between the variables to determine whether various entrepreneurial marketing components can influence the ability to foster business sustainability for SMEs [52,109].

Moreover, the recent literature reveals that the elements of entrepreneurial marketing, for instance: resource leveraging, proactiveness, and innovativeness are positively interrelated with an enterprise's business sustainability [27,61,68,70,90]. Particularly, several scholars emphasized on the role of entrepreneurs' behaviors while selecting opportunities to develop their organizations and to the explicit means of selecting innovative approaches to build and sustain a competitive advantage. They also paid attention to the importance of resource leveraging in effectively managing existing resources and detecting promising opportunities [24,46,65]. However, more empirical research is required to examine whether the elements of entrepreneurial marketing have any impact on corporate sustainability, particularly in SMEs. The limited empirical studies on the linkages between the stated concepts and the absence of clear discussions regarding the significance of entrepreneurial marketing elements in the process of sustainable development indicate that further research is needed to investigate and describe the presumed association between both constructs [1,89,93]. Consequently, the current paper aims to contribute to the empirical literature on sustainability and entrepreneurial marketing in SMEs' context by reviewing the past studies on entrepreneurial marketing dimensions and business sustainability. It further aims to provide directions for future empirical studies on these concepts in line with research gaps identified in the literature. The following section presents the literature review for this paper.

2. Literature review

2.1. Theoretical background

Institutional Theory represents the foundations for this study. It is directed towards understanding enterprises that have identical institutional environment. The key foundations of Institutional Theory were articulated in the early 1980s by DiMaggio and Powell, and then, the theory has further been developed by Meyer and Scott in the same period. DiMaggio and Powell [34] emphasized that governments, social institutions, and regulatory structures encourage organizations and urge them to comply with the specified rules and regulations to ensure their continual growth and prosperity. On the other hand, Meyer and Scott [81] emphasized that business organizations have to conform to governmental pressures that aim to regulate business practices and ensure organizational development while considering stakeholders' interests. Accordingly, Institutional Theory provides useful insights and details related to the motives for entrepreneurs to adopt particular practices to ensure greater profits and economic revenues, and the same time act ethically in the eyes of the society and government institutions [21,136,137].

According to Institutional Theory, firms have to design appropriate strategies for responding to institutional issues and complying with diverse rules and regulations in order to maintain their existence or achieve further growth [30]. Institutional Theory provides useful guidelines for entrepreneurs to strengthen their competitive positions in to-

day's dynamic business environment and suggests that focusing on regulatory aspects and legitimacy rules should be closely monitored. Therefore, the theory improves our understandings with regards to the necessary requirements for operating within the legal settings and managing business activities [32,74]. Moreover, the notions of the theory posit that legal institutions function as a set of operational rules which provide a direction for making effective decisions [37,97]. Accordingly, the assumptions of Institutional Theory indicate that organizations can safeguard their survival by emphasizing on the legitimacy concerns and complying with prevalent institutional rules and pressures in legal and societal environments, and at the same time focusing on social, environmental, and economic aspects of sustainability.

In earlier research, Institutional Theory was used for explaining the framework of the study which was conducted by Delmas and Toffel [32] in the field of sustainability. The authors relied on Institutional Theory to describe the importance of environmental management in organizational growth. They concluded that numerous firms which have to apply environmental policies could respond to the effect of institutional pressures in different ways. Thus, organizational success tends to be contingent on the mechanisms selected by a company in promoting its environmental sustainability [25,32,40,41]. Manolova et al. [78] also employed Institutional Theory to explain the influence of "regulatory, cognitive, and normative" institutions on the principles of entrepreneurship in evolving economies. The researchers found that, in most of the times, entrepreneurial practices can be influenced negatively by institutional environment, because companies are expected to operate within certain limitations, regulations, and government norms [78]. Similarly, Institutional Theory was applied in the work of Bruton et al. [22] who demonstrated that every country has different set of rules and requirements for investment. They added that the entrepreneurial activities in some countries, such as Latin American and Asian states depend on specified institutional laws. Some of these instructional rules are in the best interests of the investors, while others limit their opportunities for investment and profitability. Consequently, in certain countries, the institutional principles could be perceived as beneficial for the entrepreneurs as they enable businesses to follow a standard pattern. But, in other regions, institutional principles normally represent as key limitations.

Tolbert et al. [124] explored the link among Institutional Theory and the entrepreneurial activity in their comparison of some data from many studies in the field of entrepreneurship. It was found that prior researches on entrepreneurship are repetitively built on the Institutional Theory ideologies for describing how both entrepreneurship and the entrepreneurial marketing could be developed in diverse institutional settings. The scholars declared that institutions play a noteworthy role in affecting entrepreneurial marketing, particularly in the context of SMEs as they need an explicit method to manage small businesses in a definite institutional environment [124]. Furthermore, previous studies verified that government institutions exert a significant impact on the decisions shaped by entrepreneurs of SMEs (Chen et al., 2020; Sadeghi et al., 2019; [124,143,144]). Overall, the researchers have concluded that it is vital to put a close attention on the direct linkages between Institutional Theory and entrepreneurship idea [141].

Additionally, Starik and Kanashiro [121] focused on examining the approaches to sustainability achievement while describing them in relation to Institutional Theory. They illustrated that the key to ensure business sustainability appears through the ability of entrepreneurs to follow institutional policies and codes which may restrict firms in their undertakings, while directed towards establishing social responsibility [17,106,121]. Thus, the theory explains how organizations from different industries choose specific practices to maintain their profitability in fluctuating environments. It also posits that firms have to strive for legitimacy by referring to institutional guidelines to deal with the issues that are allied with sustainable development [9,80]. Accordingly, Institutional Theory represents a valuable framework for deliberating the significance of entrepreneurial marketing elements in determining

SMEs' business sustainability. Moreover, it can be used for describing how the dynamics in societal values and environments, in addition to the changes in social regulations, could impact the sustainable business practices [33,38,49,132].

2.2. Business sustainability

Business sustainability can be conceptualized as the ability to manage and coordinate economic, social, and environmental practices and concerns to safeguard organizational growth and survival [13,15,118,122,145]; Khan et al. 2015). Organizations can achieve sustainability objectives when they align their goals with the advances in the internal and external business environments while reaching at a dynamic balance [139,146]; Moore & Manring 2008; [99]. Certain researchers documented that corporate sustainability is allied with value creation for a business with a key emphasis on exploiting promising opportunities and minimizing corporate risks [72,146]; Moore & Manring 2008). Overall, achieving corporate sustainability requires business practitioners to put sufficient emphasis on the accepted practices which can be recognized as socially and environmentally acceptable [129,139,147]; Rezaee, 2016; [112].

In spite of the significant number of studies on SMEs' business sustainability and various sustainability dimensions which have been conducted by different scholars, most of them have been qualitative in nature [79]. Olawumi and Chan [92] stated that there are limited studies which attempted to map the international research on business sustainability. Thus, there is a scarce empirical research on social, economic, and environmental dimensions of sustainability [5,42,95,103]. More scientific evidence is necessary to demonstrate how sustainability proliferates a firm's value and performance while considering its key aspects. Recent literature indicated that there is an inadequate empirical research which tested SMEs' business sustainability as a general phenomenon ([26]; Abdelaziz et al., 2018). That is, the majority of previous studies on business sustainability have mainly focused on large multinational enterprises with key focus on social and environmental perspectives. Still, there is a scarce research on the commitment of SMEs towards sustainability actions and on how these enterprises function to fulfill social and environmental needs [42].

By looking at the earlier studies on this topic, it can be observed that there are limited information on the linkages among the practices of sustainability, stakeholders' interaction, and innovation [9,108,119,134]. Even though some researchers highlighted about innovation as well as proactiveness while deliberating sustainability, they did not explain the influence of these dimensions of entrepreneurial marketing on sustainability [6,52,76]. Moreover, the majority of the prior researches were centralized on SMEs in the Western cultures, and there is minimal emphasis on other countries' experiences [2,9,29]. Therefore, the current paper is intended to review the systematic literature on SMEs' business sustainability. Table 1 presents the main findings related to the above-mentioned works in date order.

2.3. Entrepreneurial marketing

Previous studies have reported several definitions for entrepreneurial marketing. However, currently, there is no universal conception for entrepreneurial marketing, because this concept is constantly evolving, and its meaning is determined by the viewpoint from which scholars elucidate the idea. According to the principal views, entrepreneurial marketing encompasses the aspects of both entrepreneurship and marketing [59]. A more contemporary definition was suggested by Franco et al. [44] after summarizing the opinions of different scholars. They proposed that entrepreneurial marketing is "a process with an entrepreneurial spirit (marketing by founder-entrepreneur)" [44]: 266. On the other hand, Simba and Ndlovu [117,116] viewed entrepreneurial marketing as a concept that focuses

on describing "the marketing processes adopted by firms which pursue opportunities in chaotic and unstructured market conditions such as those offered by the life science sector." It is important to note that entrepreneurial marketing plays a significant role in developing SMEs while contributing to their competitiveness [36]; Sadiku- Dushi et al., 2019; [50].

Nevertheless, the most popular conceptualization of entrepreneurial marketing was expressed by Morris et al. [86]. The authors referred entrepreneurial marketing to "the proactive identification and exploitation of opportunities for acquiring and retaining profitable customers through innovative approaches to risk management, resource leveraging and value creation" [86]: 5. This definition comprises the facets which refer to the domain of entrepreneurship through proactive approaches and to the marketing domain through customer orientation. Therefore, for the current study, entrepreneurial marketing is described as a proactive exploitation of existing opportunities to attract larger number of customers through adopting the best innovative practices and means while capitalizing on the available resources to deliver greater customer value.

It has been found with reference to the literature review that most of the scholars used five dimensions to assess entrepreneurial marketing. The dimensions include innovativeness, resource leveraging, customer intensity, proactiveness, and value creation. Proactiveness exists when an enterprise acts in advance to make significant changes before others. It is highly adopted by entrepreneurs as an approach to distinguish themselves from their rivals by providing new or novel products and services before them [36,45,67,90]. Proactive entrepreneurs tend to benefit from marketing research to get better understanding about customers and existing practices of competitors and come up with innovative product or service offerings [96]. The proactiveness dimension is mainly cantered towards identifying promising opportunities and exploiting them to gain the greatest financial benefits. It was also defined by Morris et al. [86] as the ability of an entrepreneur to make significant projections through deliberate understanding of market environment and dynamics in the institutional forces. Craig et al. (2014) [149] found that proactiveness is positively associated with innovation in family firms.

Innovativeness has also been widely recognized as a main element of entrepreneurial marketing. Innovativeness exists when a firm involves in searching for unique, creative, and new product or service ideas to fulfill the needs of customers [28,105]. It represents a powerful strategy for entrepreneurs in SMEs because it emphasizes on improving existing products or services via the introduction of new features. SMEs can generate these novel ideas and understand about customers' needs in more details by collaborating with various business stakeholders and collecting the desired data through marketing research [12,46,120]. Previous researches considered innovativeness as a significant strategy for driving the competitiveness of SMEs [3,56,88]. Accordingly, innovative enterprises focus on adopting advanced technologies and regularly collect necessary data about target markets to improve their products, services and operational processes [11,46]. Balka et al. [8] added that innovativeness leads to value creation and enhance a firms' ability to respond to emerging challenges from business rivals.

Similarly, value creation has received momentous attention from marketers because it directs them towards understanding customers' needs and providing superior value. Value creation can be realized through combining unique resources to build brand image and generate high profit margins [19,36]. It can also be defined as the ability of marketers to detect and exploit business opportunities and act upon them through creating a product or service with distinctive features to satisfy existing needs [111]. The notion of value creation in entrepreneurial marketing setting was initially emerged from the traditional marketing conception. Nevertheless, Morris et al. [86] illustrated that the traditional view towards value creation is not suitable for unique and fluctuating environments. Hence, the best innovative approaches to value

Table 1
Past studies on SMEs' business sustainability.

Author(s)	Year	Variables	Methodology	Findings
Atkinson	2000	Corporate sustainability, measures	Qualitative	Sustainability can be evaluated with a focus on its aspects.
Newby et al.	2003	Effectiveness, response rates, data quality	Quantitative	The success of SME's nested on business tendencies.
Bansal and Clelland	2004	Environmental legitimacy	Qualitative	Environmental sustainability depends on legitimacy and stakeholders' expectations.
Sull and Escobari	2004	Business growth Value	Qualitative	Businesses use sustainability practices to create value.
Lawrence et al.	2006	Sustainability practices	Qualitative	Sustainability causes long-term business progress.
Avram and Kuhne	2008	SMEs' Social responsibilities	Conceptual Analysis	The social environment affects SMEs' business sustainability and competitive advantage.
Berns et al.	2009	Aspects of sustainability	Quantitative	Companies' sustainability depends on managerial strategies.
Moore and Manring	2009	Sustainability practices	Qualitative	Concentrate on how SME's sustainability foster to further value creation.
Nkamnebe	2009	Unsupportive local environment, Global market pressure, sustainable marketing, poverty incidence	Qualitative	The sustainability of marketing depends on external pressures.
Dobni	2010	Innovation aspects	Qualitative	Concentrate on the stimulation of innovation on sustainable development.
Loucks et al.	2010	Sustainability aspects	Qualitative	A focus on sustainability influences SMEs' competitive advantage.
Parrish	2010	Sustainability principles	Qualitative	Entrepreneurship is proficient when it is following sustainable development.
Guido et al.	2011	Entrepreneur perceptions, marketing approach	Quantitative	Entrepreneurs' judgments regarding SMEs' sustainability relies on their views of sustainability in the industry.
Kraus and Britzelmaier	2012	Sustainability management	Qualitative	The path of sustainability makes for advancement toward the sustainable corporation.
Starik and Kanashiro	2013	Sustainability management	Conceptual Analysis	management of sustainability improves the profitable progress of a firm.
Arend	2014	Sustainability practices	Qualitative	SME's motivation is affected by their sustainability practices.
Müller and Pflieger	2014	Sustainability, business growth	Qualitative	Businesses oriented toward sustainability achieve better results.
Shields and Shelleman	2015	Sustainability, business practices and growth	Qualitative	SMEs can achieve sustainability by applying a sustainability strategy or a model.
Langwell and Heaton	2016	Human resource activities, sustainability	Qualitative	Some human resource activities can be used to implement sustainability in SMEs.
Camilleri	2017	Corporate social performance, financial performance	Qualitative	Sustainability can be built through responsible business practices.
Cantele and Zardini	2018	Sustainability practices	Quantitative	Formal, economic, and social elements of sustainability positively affect competitive advantage.
Chang and Cheng	2019	Sustainability aspects	Qualitative	SME must devote to ecological concerns to enhance their sustainability.
Yussof et al.	2019	Green intellectual capital, business sustainability	Quantitative	Business sustainability can be achieved through green intellectual capital
Li et al.	2020	Green innovation, business sustainability	Quantitative	Green innovation had a positive impact on business sustainability
Orobia et al.	2020	Entrepreneurial framework conditions	Quantitative	Entrepreneurial framework conditions are essential antecedents of corporate sustainability among both of women and youth entrepreneurs
Belas et al.	2021	Corporate social responsibility, SME sustainability	Quantitative	CSR activities are positively associated with SME sustainability
Hanaysha, et al.	2022	Innovation capabilities, business sustainability	Quantitative	Innovation capabilities are positively associated with business sustainability

Source: Compiled by the authors.

creation should be determined by the firms through relevant marketing research.

Resource leveraging is another key component of entrepreneurial marketing which is based on the idea of doing more using less resources [36]. Successful entrepreneurs embrace this element by utilizing existing resources to cultivate a market base optimally. SMEs prosper and grow when they focus on resource leveraging as they tend to be characterized by limited capabilities and resources [46,91,105]. Such limitations in organizational resources requires a proactive action to safeguard profit margins and ensure the firm's survival. Accordingly, effective resource leveraging appears through recognizing the optimal use of resources to satisfy corporate goals [68,86,105]. Carnes

et al. [24] also reported that resource leveraging enables organizations to improve their innovativeness by serving social needs with limited resources.

Finally, customer intensity is an element that explains the efforts of entrepreneurs in attracting and maintaining customers. It also refers to the focus on customers as the key stakeholders in the exchange process [39,86,105,109]. This aspect is important because researchers link the image of the firm to customer orientation; however, an extreme emphasis on customers may jeopardize the advancement in innovation and impedes a firm's competitiveness [12]. Meanwhile, marketers can change customers' attitudes and focus on managing dynamic relationships with them because they are regarded as valuable assets to achieve success

Table 2
Past studies on entrepreneurial marketing.

Author(s)	Year	Variables	Methodology	Findings
Morris et al.	2002	Entrepreneurial marketing dimensions	Qualitative	The dimensions of EM create a framework for integration and sustainable development.
Beverland et al.	2007	Entrepreneurial marketing dimensions	Qualitative	The focus on proactiveness guarantees business effectiveness.
Becherer et al.	2008	Entrepreneurial marketing dimensions	Qualitative	Modern business persons pay more attention to leveraging resources.
Mitra et al.	2008	Entrepreneurial marketing dimensions	Qualitative	Pro-activeness leads to improving competitive advantage.
Jones and Rowley	2009	Entrepreneurial marketing aspects	Qualitative	Entrepreneurial marketing sets the framework for the SMEs' progress.
Mitchelmore and Rowley	2010	Entrepreneurial competence, business performance, business growth	Qualitative	Entrepreneurial competence causes business growth and development.
Gilmore	2011	Entrepreneurial and SMEs marketing aspects	Qualitative	The SMEs' growth depends on using revised EM approaches.
Harrigan et al.	2011	Entrepreneurial marketing aspects	Qualitative	EM influences effective customer communication.
Hills and Hultman	2011	Entrepreneurial marketing aspects	Qualitative	Entrepreneurial marketing affects the sustainable development of businesses and their concentration on innovativeness.
Kurgun et al.	2011	Marketing components	Qualitative	Entrepreneurial marketing enhances the ability to choose effective strategies.
Morrish	2011	Entrepreneurial marketing aspects	Qualitative	Entrepreneurial marketing depends on entrepreneurs and customers to co-create value.
Webb et al.	2011	Entrepreneurial marketing aspects	Qualitative	An emphasis on entrepreneurship enhances business innovation.
Bettiol et al.	2012	Marketing dimensions in SMEs	Qualitative	EM dimensions influence SMEs' business progress.
Mort et al.	2012	Entrepreneurial marketing processes	Qualitative	Entrepreneurial marketing depends on four prominent strategic processes.
Rezvani and Khazaei	2013	Entrepreneurial marketing dimensions	Quantitative	Entrepreneurial marketing dimensions influence business growth.
Karimi et al.	2015	Entrepreneurial marketing, SMEs' performance	Quantitative	Entrepreneurial marketing influences the SMEs' potential for innovative performance.
Renton et al.	2015	Entrepreneurial marketing process	Qualitative	Entrepreneurial marketing contributes to improving SMEs' brand management and focuses on innovation.
Kajalo and Lindblom	2015	Entrepreneurial orientation, market orientation	Quantitative	Entrepreneurial orientation and market orientation had a positive impact on SME performance
Ahmadi and O'Cass	2016	Entrepreneurial orientation, market orientation	Qualitative	Entrepreneurial orientation and market orientation have a positive effect on exploratory and exploitative innovation activities
Kilenthong et al.	2016	Entrepreneurial marketing, firm size, founder status	Qualitative	Entrepreneurial marketing behaviours have a systematic relationship with the age of the firms, but not with the status of the founder
Kocak et al.	2017	Entrepreneurial orientation, market orientation, innovation	Quantitative	Entrepreneurial orientation and market orientation influence SME performance through incremental and radical innovation
Fard and Amiri	2018	Entrepreneurial marketing, SME performance	Quantitative	Entrepreneurial marketing positively influences the market and innovative performances of SMEs
Sadiku-Dushi et al.	2019	Entrepreneurial marketing, SME performance	Quantitative	Opportunity focus, resource leveraging, and value creation affect SME performance
Rezvani and Fathollahzadeh	2020	Entrepreneurial marketing dimensions, innovative performance	Quantitative	Entrepreneurial marketing dimensions have a positive effect on innovative performance
Alqahtani and Uslay,	2020	Entrepreneurial marketing, firm performance	Qualitative	Entrepreneurial marketing positively affects firm performance
Polas and Raju	2021	Entrepreneurial opportunity, entrepreneurial marketing decisions	Quantitative	Entrepreneurial opportunity positively affects entrepreneurial marketing decisions
Deku et al.	2022	Entrepreneurial marketing dimensions, SME performance	Quantitative	Entrepreneurial marketing dimensions positively affect SME production and financial performance

Source: Compiled by the authors.

in the market environment [12,46,90,105]. Therefore, the idea of customer intensity stems from relationship marketing sphere which reveals that building successful customer relationships represent the main strategy for improving brand performance. Feng et al. [39] also showed that customer intensity represents the foundation for value creation. This dimension is essential for firms that adopt entrepreneurial marketing strategy to accentuate the role of customer intensity for this specific type of marketing. Table 2 presents the main findings of the above-mentioned works in date order.

2.4. Entrepreneurial marketing and business sustainability

The topic of entrepreneurial marketing has been covered by several researchers. Still, they have only added to the literature review on this concept without examining its empirical association with sustainability [83,88,93,100,105]. In this paper, the past studies which focus on entrepreneurial marketing and business sustainability in SMEs' context are reviewed. It has been suggested that entrepreneurial marketing enables business practitioners to apply effective strategies and methods to

Table 3
Previous studies have explored the relationship among entrepreneurial marketing and sustainability in SMEs.

Author(s)	Year	Variables	Methodology	Findings
Kickul and Gundry	2002	Entrepreneurship aspects	Qualitative	Entrepreneurship requires a creative approach to business that contributes to gain sustainability.
Gawel	2012	Entrepreneurial marketing dimensions	Qualitative	Sustainability depends on entrepreneurs' orientation to entrepreneurial marketing dimensions.
Hacioglu et al.	2012	Entrepreneurial marketing dimensions, sustainability aspects	Quantitative	Entrepreneurial marketing dimensions, such as innovativeness and proactiveness, cause business sustainability.
Sarma et al.	2013	Entrepreneurial marketing dimensions, sustainability aspects	Quantitative	SMEs that use entrepreneurial marketing dimensions have a more developed business and can achieve sustainability.
Franco et al.	2014	Marketing dimensions in SMEs	Qualitative	SMEs' development depends on using innovative strategies of entrepreneurial marketing.
Green et al.	2015	Market orientation, environmental sustainability	Quantitative	Market orientation affects environmental sustainability positively
Martins	2016	Entrepreneurial orientation, SME growth	Quantitative	Entrepreneurial orientation is an essential driver of SMEs growth
DiVito and Bohnsack	2017	Entrepreneurial orientation	Mixed method	Entrepreneurial orientation affects sustainability orientation
Kisha and Awadhi	2017	Entrepreneurial orientation	Qualitative	The implementation of entrepreneurial activities enables SMEs to grow and sustain their businesses.
Mullens	2018	Entrepreneurial orientation, SME sustainability	Quantitative	Entrepreneurial orientation is positively related to the investment in sustainability initiatives
de Guimarães et al.	2018	Entrepreneurial orientation, market orientation and knowledge management orientation, sustainable competitive advantage	Quantitative	Entrepreneurial orientation, market orientation and knowledge management orientation are associated with a sustainable competitive advantage
Youssef et al.	2018	Entrepreneurship, innovation, sustainable development	Quantitative	Entrepreneurship is positively and strongly associated with sustainable development in the presence of innovation
Pratono et al.	2019	Entrepreneurial orientation, market orientation, sustainable competitive advantage	Quantitative	Entrepreneurial orientation and market orientation lead to sustainable competitive advantage
de Sousa Jabbour et al.	2020	Innovation, entrepreneurial orientation, social sustainability, and environmental sustainability	Quantitative	Innovation and entrepreneurial orientation are important drivers of SMEs' social and environmental sustainability
Nwankwo and Kanyangale	2020	Entrepreneurial Marketing aspects	Qualitative	Applying entrepreneurial marketing dimensions to SMEs can increase their performance, success, and survival
Sarma et al.	2022	Entrepreneurial marketing and Business competitiveness	Quantitative	Entrepreneurial marketing affects business development and business sustainability.

Source: Compiled by the authors.

improve the value of their firms by focusing on attracting customers, value creation, and innovativeness [1,59]. It has also been argued that entrepreneurial marketing can contribute to improving SMEs' innovative performance, as noted by Karimi et al. [63]. Furthermore, it can contribute to improved business management and satisfaction among customers as discussed by Renton et al. [104]. Conversely, there is insufficient literature on the empirical linkages among entrepreneurship and sustainable development and on the association amongst EM and sustainability. In addition, understanding the association between the environment and dynamics in the entrepreneurship tactics is deemed important [9,57,77].

By reviewing the existing literature on this topic, it can be seen that there is only an indirect discussion on the linkages between the elements of EM and business sustainability, particularly in SMEs' context [16,27,73,90]. Thus, in the current study's, it is imperative to say that present studies on the key dimensions of entrepreneurial marketing and the interrelationships among them are very limited [48,86]. Table 3 illustrates some of the previous researches on the association between EM and business sustainability with reference to SMEs sector.

On whole, it is possible to state that there is insufficient research on the empirical linkage among EM dimensions, elements of SMEs' business sustainability, and on the association among various entrepreneurial marketing dimensions. It is also possible to declare about an obvious gap in this field of research. The current paper is designed to provide greater insights on sustainability topic and the association between en-

trepreneurial marketing and SMEs' sustainability. Thus, the focus is on creating an appropriate conceptual model to reflect the possible relationship among the stated constructs.

3. Conceptual model

At this stage, it is important to create a conceptual model to demonstrate how entrepreneurial marketing dimensions can relate to SMEs' business sustainability with particular reference to the recent research in the field. It has been postulated by several scholars that SMEs can maintain and improve their businesses through innovativeness, opportunity focus, Proactiveness, and leveraging resources [36,150]; Becherer et al., 2012. However, it is rare to come across empirical researches that explored the impact of the stated EM elements on corporate sustainability [44,65]. Various past studies indicate that these entrepreneurial marketing dimensions have a role to play in SMEs' business sustainability. These factors are indirectly discussed in some qualitative studies as predictors of a company's sustainable development [76,85]. Still, researchers are inclined to associate entrepreneurship and sustainability [133,138,140]. Therefore, the current study is important because it seeks to articulate assumptions with regards to the influence of EM components on corporate sustainability in SMEs' context (Raposo et al., 2019; [46,112,151]). This approach accentuates a link between entrepreneurship and sustainability.

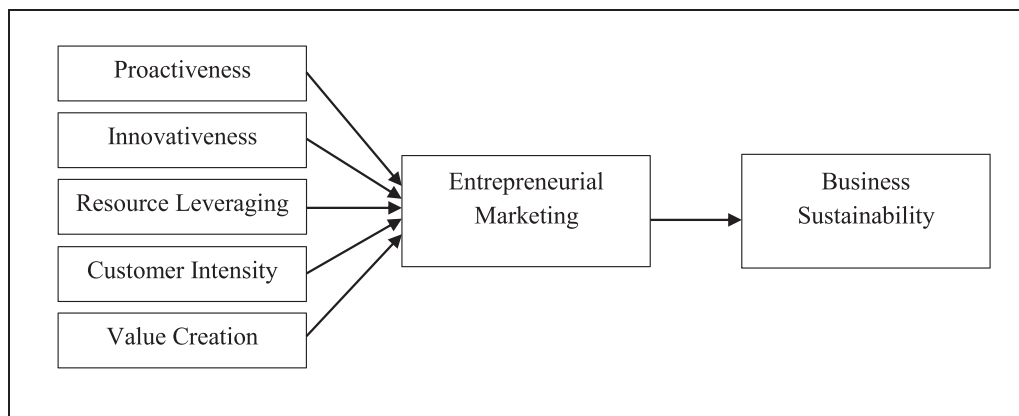


Fig. 1. Entrepreneurial marketing dimensions to SMEs' business sustainability.

Proactiveness is viewed as an activity to pursue greater profits that causes leaders to make effective decisions and choose efficient business processes and practices [69,102,131]. In their work, Mitra et al. [84] applied Institutional Theory to describe the role of proactiveness in realizing business sustainability by using proactive methods and reducing costs [94,107,123]. Furthermore, according to Gawel [46], proactiveness can be related to sustainability while influencing efficiency and equality of firms' activities in economic, social, and environmental contexts. However, the number of studies that refer to the relationship between proactiveness and sustainability directly or indirectly is limited. Therefore, the subsequent proposition is suggested:

Proposition 1. Proactiveness is likely to have a positive effect on Small and Medium Enterprises' business sustainability.

Innovativeness in SMEs is associated with the leaders' focus on using innovative methods to become competitive and successful [18,102,120,152]. According to Gilmore (2011), many innovative processes are necessary to achieve sustainability and provide customers with the latest methods, efficient approaches, and effective tools in doing a business. Following Vanormelingen and Cassiman [126], innovation and innovativeness are related to sustainability because they become a basis for the survival of a firm in today's competitive market. As a result, it is possible to expect the economic and strategic growth. From this point, innovativeness is an important factor to warrant not only competitive advantage, but also sustainability. Vrontis et al. [128] stated that, focusing on innovativeness enables entrepreneurs to address the needs of the society to make processes more sustainable. Moreover, institutional theory posits that firms should be innovative in order to introduce new products order services provide social value for the communities where they serve. Therefore, the subsequent proposition is suggested:

Proposition 2. Innovativeness is likely to have a positive effect on Small and Medium Enterprises' business sustainability.

According to Gawel [46], sustainability is based on all dimensions of entrepreneurial marketing, including resource leveraging. The positive correlation between these phenomena was also discussed by Wallnofer and Hacklin [130]. Rezvani and Khazaei [105] have further stated that resource leveraging and sustainability are positively correlated because knowledge, human resources, and funds are necessary for the survival of businesses. Customer intensity is also necessary to influence sustainability of a firm, because this aspect assures that the audience's needs and interests will be met (Lee et al., 2021; [64,86,153]). As a result, there is a connection between customer intensity and the social pillar of sustainability [44]. Furthermore, customer intensity exists through developing products and services that can address customer's expectations and influence the economic pillar of sustainability [127]. Finally,

researchers found an indirect relationship between value creation and sustainability [46]. Consistent with Morris et al. [86], value creation is observed when firms provide customers with new opportunities, and different value-creating processes and strategies often lead to developing the background for sustainability in a firm. In line with earlier literature, institutional theory serves as the basis for linking customer intensity, resource leveraging and value creation to the pillar of corporate sustainability as firms which focus on these dimensions tend to be foster better values to the society [58]. Based on the analysis of the recent literature in the field, the following propositions that can serve as a ground for future empirical testing are formulated (see Fig. 1):

Proposition 3. Resource leveraging is likely to have a positive effect on Small and Medium Enterprises' business sustainability.

Proposition 4. Customer intensity is likely to have a positive effect on Small and Medium Enterprises' business sustainability.

Proposition 5. Value creation is likely to have a positive effect on Small and Medium Enterprises' business sustainability.

4. Conclusion and future research

Sustainability has been associated with the corporate vision and mission of several businesses. This term is relatively new, particularly among SMEs. Prior literature suggested that EM represents a key driver and determinant of business sustainability in SMEs. Nowadays, SMEs have been regarded as a key pillar for driving economic growth via the application of entrepreneurship principles to ensure their continual development. The economic policies of SMEs have been associated in past studies with entrepreneurial marketing and its elements. The rationale for this correlation lies in the fact that SMEs' growth can be nurtured through entrepreneurial marketing practices, for instance via innovativeness and proactiveness. Entrepreneurial marketing represents an important strategy for dealing with emerging challenges that are associated with business sustainability of SMEs. However, more research is still required to further test and verify the impact of entrepreneurial marketing on SMEs' performance and sustainability.

In conclusion, the review of past studies indicates that there is a significant gap in the empirical research on entrepreneurial marketing and business sustainability. The current researches are rather not comprehensive. They are mainly centralized either on corporate sustainability and SME growth or on the components of EM and their impact on organizational performance. It is hard to find integrated studies which tested the role of EM components in affecting business sustainability of SMEs. Additionally, additional research is required to clarify the significance of incorporating key elements of entrepreneurial marketing to ensure corporate sustainability because these elements are not indispensable from each another. Therefore, this paper provides a noteworthy contribution

to the literature with regards to the association among entrepreneurial marketing and business sustainability. However, future research is still required to verify and determine the proposed relationship in different contexts, industries, and geographical regions.

Declaration of Competing Interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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