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The Dynamics of Sustainable Business Models and Competitive Positioning in Developing Countries

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RESEARCH ARTICLE

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ABSTRACT

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Sustainable business models (SBMs) have received growing academic interest and practice as companies attempt to balance both economic gain and environmental stewardship and social responsibility. This research paper looks at the dynamics of SBMs and how they impact competitive positioning in emerging economies, where institutional voids, resource limitations, and market uncertainties define strategic decision-making. Based on an integrative review of the literature and a conceptual-empirical framework, the study will examine how companies develop, modify and innovate business models to realize sustainable value creation and competitive advantage. The paper identifies the dynamic capabilities, stakeholder integration and business model innovation as the key processes that help sustainability-based strategies to be converted into better firm performance. Moreover, it highlights the relevance of contextual elements like regulatory settings, informal organizations, and socio-economic status of moderating the effectiveness of SBMs. There is evidence that companies in developing economies are using sustainability as a differentiation as well as resilience and market expansion strategic tool rather than a compliance requirement. The findings add to the literature by integrating the knowledge gained in sustainability, strategic management and development literature to suggest a context-sensitive approach to competitive positioning. The study promotes theoretical discussion by highlighting the co-evolutionary aspects of business models and institutional settings, and provides practical suggestions to managers and policymakers interested in developing sustainable and competitive businesses in developing countries.

KEYWORD: Sustainable business models; Developing economies; Business model innovation; Dynamic capabilities; Circular economy; Sustainable development; Institutional theory; Firm performance.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The increasing acuity of global environmental and social pressures has increased pressure on firms to reconsider their more conventional strategies of value creation, which has given rise to the notion of sustainable business models (SBMs) as a focal point in the recent strategic management literature. SBMs do not just limit themselves to traditional profit-making models but make environmental stewardship and social responsibility part of the very rationale of how companies generate, deliver and capture value. Although there are considerable advancements in the understanding of SBMs in the developed economies, their dynamics in the developing countries have not been sufficiently investigated in the context of the latter having unique institutional and market conditions. Institutional voids, regulatory inconsistencies, infrastructural and resource constraints are typical of developing economies, and they have overall influence on the manner in which firms innovate and compete [15]. In these settings, sustainability has ceased to be a normative or compliance-focused agenda but is becoming a strategic or compulsory requirement that helps firms to obtain differentiation, robustness and long-term competitiveness. Furthermore, sustainability being integrated into business models necessitates firms to build dynamic capabilities that enable them to

constantly evolve in response to the changing expectations of the stakeholders, technical changes, and uncertainties in the market [19]. New evidence indicates that companies in the developing world use novel strategies, like the practices of a circular economy, inclusive business models, and value creation based on stakeholder-centricity, to surmount limitations and seize new market opportunities [12]. Nevertheless, the association between SBMs and competitive positioning in such settings is complicated and depends on various interactive factors, such as institutional pressures, ability to innovate, and strategic orientation. It is against this that this research would analyse the dynamic interaction between sustainable business models and competitive positioning in developing nations, and specifically how firms can design, adapt and leverage sustainability-based strategies to produce better performance.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Sustainable Business Models (SBMs)

Sustainable business models (SBMs) have become an extremely important extension of business model theory with its focus on the inclusion of economic, environmental, and social aspects into the value creation, delivery, and capture systems. The models are long-term oriented and unlike the traditional models that take short-term financial gains, SBMs integrate value to stakeholders and ecological concerns. The literature underlines that SBMs are dynamic entities that can change as a result of continuous innovations and alignment with sustainability goals [18]. Moreover, the creation of SBMs can be strongly associated with the overall sustainability changes, in which organizations are instrumental in helping to overcome societal problems at the same time as remaining economically viable [22].

2.2. Business Model Innovation and Dynamic Capabilities

The effective execution of sustainability strategies, especially where there are dynamic and uncertain environments, is focused on business model innovation. Companies need to build dynamic capabilities that allow them to feel opportunities, exploit them by creating innovative configurations and reallocate resources to remain at the leading edge. According to the literature, sustainability-driven innovation may necessitate companies to reconsider the way they operate traditionally and implement more flexible and adaptive methods [19]. Such skills would be needed to align the sustainability objectives and the business performance, particularly in highly dynamic markets.

2.3. Strategic Advantage and Competitive Positioning.

The use of competitive positioning with regard to sustainability goes beyond the conventional cost leadership and differentiation models. Sustainability is becoming a strategic asset that firms are driving through improved brand reputation, efficiency in the operations and reduction of risks. By incorporating the aspect of sustainability into the business strategy, firms are able to develop unique value propositions that can hardly be duplicated by their competitors. According to the previous research, business model reconfiguration is critical to realizing and maintaining a competitive advantage in the changing market environments [7].

2.4. SBMs in Developing Countries

The context of SBMs implementation in developing countries is characterized by peculiar challenges and opportunities because of institutional voids, limited infrastructures, and resource limitations. Companies that are in such environments are mostly guided by creative and open-minded methods to solve socio-economic issues and remain competitive. According to the literature, sustainable business practices in the developing economic settings are often based on the need and flexibility, as opposed to compliance with the regulations only [15].

A concrete example of how institutional frameworks shape the dynamics of micro entrepreneurship in developing economies is the adoption of simplified tax regimes. In Latin America, systems such as the Monotributo in Argentina and the Micro emprendedor Individual (MEI) in Brazil have played a key role in formalizing small entrepreneurs, lowering barriers to entry into the formal market and integrating tax and social security obligations into a single payment [28]. However, implementation challenges reveal that macroeconomic imbalances, particularly sustained inflation and delayed

updates to fixed quotas and income caps, can significantly distort the real fiscal burden borne by microentrepreneurs, making it increasingly difficult to remain within the regime [27]. As a result, the entrepreneur who is most affected is precisely the one with the least capacity to grow and formalize a viable business in the long term, leading to an early rupture in the entrepreneurial chain before it can generate broader economic value. Moreover, the notion of a circular economy and resource-efficient solutions have become increasingly popular when companies strive to maximize scarcer resources and minimize environmental impact [12].

2.5. Research Gap

Although there is an increasing literature on sustainable business models and competitive strategy, the literature lacks integrated analysis to explore the dynamic relationship between SBMs and competitive positioning in a developing country setting. The literature has a tendency to concentrate on the concepts of sustainability or competitiveness separately, but little has been done to explain the relationship between these two aspects in different institutional environments. In addition, the mediating role of dynamic capabilities in this relationship is not well examined. This gap is critical to creating a multi-faceted perspective on how companies can use sustainability as a strategic resource in creating a long-term competitive advantage in developing economies [18].

3. METHODOLOGY

The research design used in this study is a mixed-methods research design to investigate the dynamics of sustainable business models (SBMs) and their role in competitive positioning in developing countries. The method combines both quantitative and qualitative approaches to provide generalizable as well as context-specific results [18]. A cross-sectional survey was conducted among firms in major sectors such as manufacturing, services, and agriculture within developing economies. The survey instrument was developed to measure constructs including sustainability orientation, business model innovation, dynamic capabilities, and competitive positioning. Moreover, qualitative case analysis was incorporated to provide deeper insights into how firms adapt SBMs in response to institutional and market environments [19].

3.1. Data Collection

Structured questionnaires were used to collect primary data from managers and business owners with strategic decision-making responsibilities. A purposive sampling technique was adopted to ensure that respondents possessed relevant experience in sustainability practices. Key variables were measured using a five-point Likert scale. In addition, secondary data sources, including industry reports and prior studies, were reviewed to support triangulation and enhance the validity of the research [15].

3.2. Variables and Measurement

Key variables were identified and operationalized based on the existing literature to systematically examine the relationship between sustainable business models and competitive positioning. These variables bring to the fore strategic capabilities within the company and external environmental factors. The measurement framework adopted in this study is summarized in Table 1.

Table 1: Variables and Measurement Framework

Variable	Description	Measurement Scale	Source Basis
Sustainable Business Models	Integration of environmental and social aspects into business operations	Likert Scale (1–5)	SBM literature
Business Model Innovation	Degree of innovation in value creation and delivery mechanisms	Likert Scale (1–5)	Innovation studies
Dynamic Capabilities	Firm's ability to adapt, reconfigure, and respond to change	Likert Scale (1–5)	Strategic management literature
Institutional Factors	Influence of regulatory and socio-economic environment	Likert Scale (1–5)	Institutional theory
Competitive Positioning	Firm's ability to achieve differentiation and performance advantage	Likert Scale (1–5)	Competitive strategy literature

As shown in Table 1, the study integrates both firm-level strategic variables and external contextual factors to provide a comprehensive analytical lens. This structured operationalization ensures consistency in measurement and facilitates robust empirical analysis.

3.3. Analytical Approach

Statistical data analysis techniques, such as descriptive statistics, correlation, and regression modeling, were applied to analyze quantitative data to determine the relationships across variables. In complement, thematic analysis was utilized to analyze qualitative data in order to establish recurring patterns and situational factors affecting SBM adoption and implementation [19].

3.4. Research Framework

To conceptualize the relationships among the study variables, a structured analytical framework was developed. This framework illustrates the sequential and interdependent links between sustainability practices and competitive outcomes.

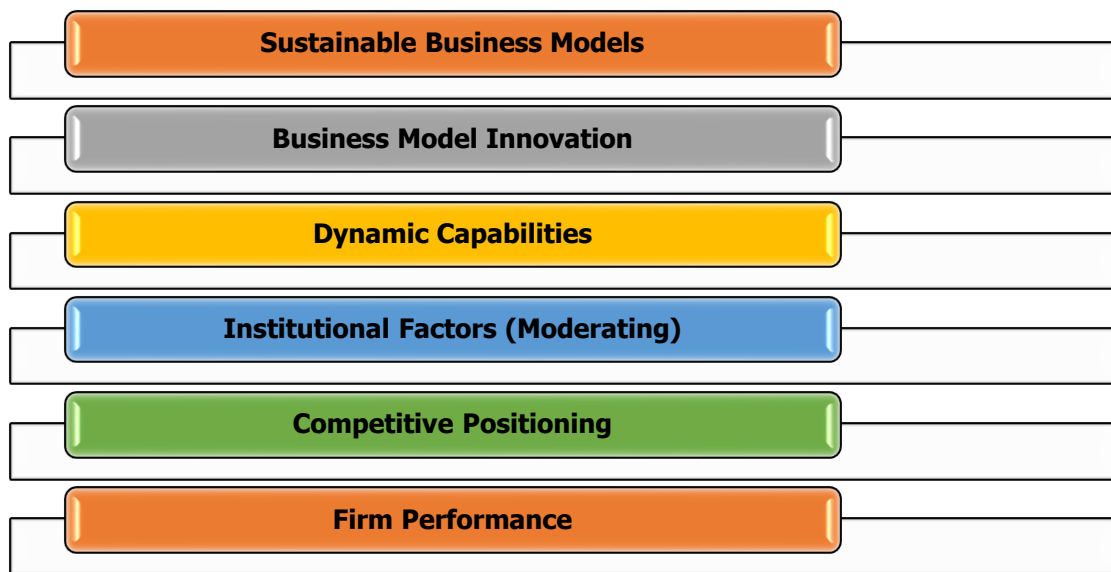


Figure 1. Conceptual Research Framework

The framework highlights that sustainable business models serve as the foundation for innovation and capability development, while institutional factors moderate their effectiveness. Ultimately, these interactions influence a firm's competitive positioning and overall performance.

3.5. Reliability and Validity

Reliability was measured by Cronbach's alpha to assess the internal consistency of measurement items and ensure methodological rigor. Construct validity was determined through factor analysis, which evaluates whether the variables accurately represent the intended theoretical constructs. Furthermore, data triangulation and consistency checks were employed to enhance the credibility of the findings, while ethical considerations such as confidentiality and voluntary participation were strictly observed [18, 19].

4. RESULTS

This part gives the empirical results of the research, with emphasis on the descriptive statistics, correlation, and regression results. The objective of the analysis is to analyze the connections between sustainable business models (SBMs), business model innovation, dynamic capabilities, institutional factors, and competitive positioning.

4.1. Descriptive Statistics

The central tendency and dispersion of the important variables analyzed in this study were summarized using descriptive statistics. The statistics give a general picture of how companies in the

developing world view and put into practice strategies that are sustainability oriented. Previously, it is implied that descriptive analysis is necessary to comprehend the patterns at the baseline of sustainability and innovation practices [8].

Table 2 shows that the mean values of all the variables are moderate and high meaning that firms are gradually incorporating sustainability in their strategic operations.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics

Variable	Mean	Std. Dev
Sustainable Business Models	3.87	0.68
Business Model Innovation	3.74	0.71
Dynamic Capabilities	3.92	0.65
Institutional Factors	3.60	0.73
Competitive Positioning	3.85	0.69

These findings suggest that dynamic capabilities recorded the highest mean, indicating their critical role in enabling firms to adapt sustainability practices in competitive environments [19, 2].

4.2. Correlation Analysis

Correlation analysis was conducted to examine the strength and direction of relationships among the study variables. This analysis is important for identifying potential associations prior to regression modeling ([5, 12].

The results, as shown in Table 3, reveal positive correlations among all variables, indicating that sustainability-oriented practices are closely linked with competitive outcomes.

Table 3. Correlation Matrix

Variables	SBM	BMI	DC	IF	CP
SBM	1				
BMI	0.62	1			
DC	0.68	0.65	1		
IF	0.54	0.58	0.60	1	
CP	0.70	0.66	0.72	0.59	1

Notably, sustainable business models and dynamic capabilities exhibit strong positive correlations with competitive positioning, reinforcing the argument that sustainability contributes to firm competitiveness [7, 6].

4.3. Regression Analysis

In order to analyze the effects of independent variables on competitive positioning further, multiple regression analysis was done. This technique enables it to evaluate the predictive ability of sustainability-related variables on the performance results of firms.

Regression results show that sustainable business models, business model innovation and dynamic capabilities have a strong positive impact on competitive positioning. The positive but comparatively less strong impact is also observed in the institutional factors.

On the whole, the model has a high explanatory power, indicating that sustainability-oriented strategies are the most important determinants of the competitive success in the developing economies [22, 11].

4.4. Overview of the main findings.

The findings indicate that companies that have implemented sustainable business models are likely to experience greater competitive positioning, which is buttressed by good innovation and adaptability. Dynamic capabilities became the most powerful one, representing the significance of flexibility and responsiveness in unpredictable conditions. Moreover, institutional factors are supportive in the sense that they influence the sustainability strategies effectiveness.

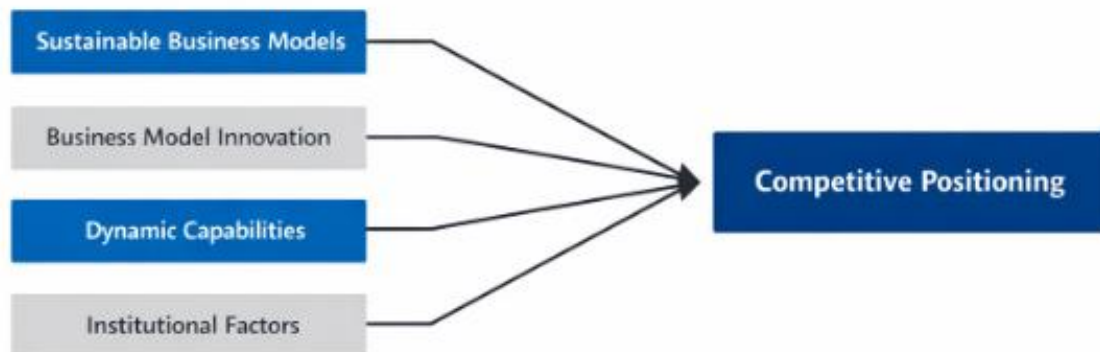


Figure 2. Empirical Results Framework

The diagram illustrates the positive relationships identified in the analysis, showing how multiple sustainability-driven factors converge to influence competitive positioning.

5. DISCUSSION

The results of this research have a solid empirical basis in supporting the strategic usefulness of sustainable business models (SBMs) in improving the competitive positioning in developing economies. The observed positive and significant relations between SBMs, business model innovation, dynamic capabilities, and competitive positioning imply that sustainability is not an activity that is imposed by compliance but one that has a fundamental role in strategic advantage. Specifically, the leading role of dynamic capabilities supports the argument that companies should be able to constantly adjust, re-allocate resources and proactively respond to new changes in the environment and the market to ultimately enjoy the fruits of sustainability-oriented strategies [19, 2]. These results align with earlier researches highlighting the need to consider sustainability in business models as a channel to long-term value addition and resilience [22]. Moreover, the close relationship between business model innovation and competitive positioning emphasizes the significance of reconsidering the conventional value creation processes, which is consistent with the perception that innovation is one of the enabling factors of a sustainability shift [11]. A company that manages to integrate sustainability in its operations is in a better position to distinguish itself, improve its reputation and tap into new market opportunities.

Moreover, the findings highlight the critical role of the contextual elements, especially institutional settings, in determining the success of sustainable business models in developing nations. Institutional factors showed a positive correlation with competitive positioning, but the moderate impact is quite indicative of the fact that companies tend to mitigate regulatory and infrastructural shortcomings with internal resources and innovative activities. This confirms the idea that institutional voids, instead of limiting entrepreneurial and sustainable innovation, may as well act as a driver [15, 12]. The results also add to the theoretical discussion by revealing the co-evolutionary process between business models and the external environments, in which companies shape and react to institutional processes. In addition, the research builds on current literature by offering a comprehensive view, integrating sustainability, innovation, and competitive strategy in the framework of the developing economies. This combined method fills a significant gap in the previous studies that have tended to consider these dimensions separately.

6. CONCLUSION

This paper has explored the dynamics of sustainable business models (SBMs) and how they impact on competitive positioning in developing economies as well as the theoretical and empirical evidence on how firms can gain sustainable competitive advantage in complex and resource constrained conditions. The results prove that SBMs could be instrumental in improving the performance of firms by incorporating the environmental and social effects into the strategic business operations. Specifically, business model innovation and dynamic capabilities became major enablers that enable firms to adjust, change, and effectively respond to evolving market and institutional environments [19, 22]. The relevance of institutional contexts is also emphasized in the study as the regulatory and infrastructural issues are present, but the firms can use their internal strengths and creative strategies to address them and generate value. This study will add to the bigger picture of understanding the impact of sustainability-based strategies on competitive positioning in developing economies since it will synthesize the insights by considering the literature on sustainability, strategic management, and development. Moreover, the research fills an important gap in the literature by providing a comprehensive view that links sustainable business models to competitive results in particular contextual settings. In practical terms, the results imply that managers must focus on creation of adaptive capabilities and innovational-driven strategies to maximize the sustainability initiatives. The policymakers are also urged to establish enabling environments that will facilitate sustainable innovation and business transformation. Generally, the paper highlights the fact that sustainability is not just a moral or a regulatory issue but a strategic requirement to long-term competitiveness and expansion in developing nations.

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ديناميكيات نماذج الأعمال المستدامة والمكانة التنافسية في الدول النامية

فريدي أوسكارا

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ملخص

حظيت نماذج الأعمال المستدامة باهتمام أكاديمي وتطبيقي متزايد، حيث تسعى الشركات إلى تحقيق التوازن بين المكاسب الاقتصادية والمسؤولية البيئية والاجتماعية. تتناول هذه الورقة البحثية ديناميكيات نماذج الأعمال المستدامة وتأثيرها على المكانة التنافسية في الاقتصادات الناشئة، حيث تُشكل الفجوات المؤسسية ومحدودية الموارد وعدم استقرار السوق عوامل حاسمة في عملية صنع القرار الاستراتيجي. وبالاستناد إلى مراجعة شاملة للأدبيات وإطار مفاهيمي-تجريبي، تبحث الدراسة كيفية تطوير الشركات لنماذج أعمالها وتعديلها وابتكارها لتحقيق خلق قيمة مستدامة وميزة تنافسية. وتحدد الورقة القدرات الديناميكية، وتكامل أصحاب المصلحة، وابتكار نماذج الأعمال كعمليات رئيسية تُسهم في تحويل الاستراتيجيات القائمة على الاستدامة إلى أداء أفضل للشركات. كما تُسلط الضوء على أهمية العناصر السياقية، مثل الأطر التنظيمية والمنظمات غير الرسمية والوضع الاجتماعي والاقتصادي، في تعديل فعالية نماذج الأعمال المستدامة. وتشير الأدلة إلى أن الشركات في الاقتصادات النامية تستخدم الاستدامة كأداة استراتيجية للتميز والمرونة وتوسيع السوق، بدلاً من كونها مجرد متطلب امتثال. تُثري هذه النتائج الأدبيات من خلال دمج المعارف المكتسبة في مجالات الاستدامة والإدارة الاستراتيجية والتنمية، مُقترحةً منهجاً مُراعياً للسياق في تحديد الموقع التنافسي. تُعزز الدراسة النقاش النظري بتسليط الضوء على جوانب التطور المشترك بين نماذج الأعمال والأطر المؤسسية، وتقدم اقتراحات عملية للمديرين وصناع السياسات المهتمين بتطوير أعمال مستدامة وتنافسية في الدول النامية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: نماذج أعمال مستدامة؛ اقتصادات نامية؛ ابتكار نماذج الأعمال؛ القدرات الديناميكية؛ الاقتصاد الدائري؛ التنمية المستدامة؛ النظرية المؤسسية؛ أداء الشركات.