

## On Entrepreneurs' Orientation Towards Sustainability. A Theoretical Approach

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### **Abstract**

*Sustainability and development pose unprecedented challenges as human societies grow and seek to ensure future wellbeing and prosperity. Yet, more often than not, the business has a hard time with the concept of environmental sustainability. Business is about making money. Sustainability is about protecting the planet and its creatures (including humans). Business time scale is measured in quarters, annual results, three-to-five-year plans, among others. Climate change, deforestation, biodiversity loss, inter alia, occur over decades or even centuries. It is difficult to bridge the gap. Sustainability or, to be more precise, the men and women who are deeply concerned about it, often have a difficult time with the business. For many activists and government administrators, the fundamental motives of business are opaque and even suspect. Even entrepreneurs involved in developing new environmentally friendly technologies often fall short of finding ways to fund their development and make a return on any potential investor's money. Consequently, his article attempts to bring the worlds of business and sustainability a little bit closer together. Its aim is not to provide a passionate argument based on hopeful assumptions, but to seek out common understanding in one core direction: to provide a theoretical framework for managers, entrepreneurs, and SMEs owners to think about sustainability in their language. This objective implies discussing the issues in terms that recognize their fiduciary responsibility to their partners, customers, employees, and shareholders. We are to follow this course of action through the lens of a narrative literature review, which provides us with the possibility of a comprehensive, critical and objective analysis of the current knowledge, taking into account the spectral character of the main topic of our research, sustainability. Nevertheless, entrepreneurs' orientation towards sustainability becomes all the more relevant when taking into account that the COVID-19 pandemic compelled countries and markets to face challenges such as the generation of economic recovery packages that benefit SMEs, the increase in public investments to promote job creation, and the inclusion of social and environmental repercussions in their financial valuations.*

### **Keywords**

*Sustainability; entrepreneurs; sustainable development; entrepreneurs' orientation towards sustainability.*

## **Introduction**

The high interest sustained in the literature on entrepreneurs' orientation towards sustainability requires a great outline of the impact of this concept on small and medium businesses, addressing the conceptual depth and invaluable contribution to sustainable entrepreneurship through theoretical considerations.

Defining the concept of entrepreneurs' orientation towards sustainability requires shaping the innovative notion of "triple bottom line", and integrating the social,

ecological, and financial dimensions under the tutelage of sustainability. The conceptual approach to entrepreneurs' orientation towards sustainability is supported by the theoretical framework provided by international specialists registered in the law of companies that prove and promote sustainability, outlining through the conceptual filter the image of sustainability propagated on the entrepreneurial context. The imperative principles that constitute the premises of sustainable businesses draw the social, ecological, and economic directives through which the concept of entrepreneurs' orientation towards sustainability can be achieved, taking into account the maintenance of the balance between the incidence of economic activity and the integrity of environmental factors.

The retrospective of the concept of entrepreneurs' orientation towards sustainability implies showing an overflowing interest towards the incipient attribute of the notion of sustainability attributed to small and medium businesses, outlining the premises of entrepreneurship inclined to preserve and protect the environment, and managing human resources through the criteria of maximum performance. The evolution of the concept promoted by sustainable businesses highlights the connotation acquired by entrepreneurs' orientation towards sustainability through a temporary filter, and assists in shaping organizational objectives and strategies depending on the incidence of the irreparable nature of the degradation of the planetary contour. Therefore, the current approach to entrepreneurs' orientation towards sustainability emphasizes the imperative of implementing a sustainable dimension in the economic activity highlighted in small and medium businesses, and it considerably contributes to the support of environmental objectives.

Besides, the concept of sustainability implemented at the microeconomic level emphasizes the impact of sustainable characteristics on predominantly sustainable entrepreneurship and outlines the directives through which small and medium-sized businesses can responsibly assume the title of sustainable enterprise.

### **The importance of understanding the concept of entrepreneurs' orientation towards sustainability**

The concept of entrepreneurs' orientation towards sustainability has materialized in the context of accelerated and irreparable degradation of planetary contour, requiring a re-approach of the conduct of small and medium businesses. The intensive use of conventional energy, the harmful effects propagated on the environment, and the alarming share through which entrepreneurial benefits contribute to the degradation of ecosystems have led to the imperative implementation of the concept of sustainable enterprise. Racelis (2014) claims that sustainable entrepreneurship is defined by the economic, ecological, and social objectives found in the current activity of businesses and which show considerable interest in moral responsibility towards future generations.

In addition, the microeconomic perception outlined through in-depth specialized studies by the author (Racelis, 2014) inscribed in the law of sustainable businesses represents the renewable attribute of energy resources. By assuming the ecological principles attributed to global sustainability, the use of conventional energy with

maximum efficiency is expected, proving that social responsibility is inclined to satisfy the consumption needs of future generations.

Bell and Stelling (2012) show considerable interest in raising awareness, reducing the environmental footprint of businesses, and highlighting the implementation of sustainable directives. As such, the authors mentioned above promote a sustainable vision that highlights:

- diminishing the ecological footprint;
- conservation of ecosystems;
- implementation of renewable resources.

The concept of entrepreneurs' orientation towards sustainability in line with Rey's (2011) vision highlights the imperative nature of social and environmental responsibility proven by small and medium-sized businesses and promotes the conservation and protection of the environment. In doing so, the economic activity needs to be inclined towards implementing ecological principles, limiting negative interaction between business environment and environmental factors.

Further, the expansion of the protagonists on the entrepreneurship scene degrades the planetary contour at an alarming rate and contributes decisively to endangering the sustainability of environmental factors. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (2014) highlights the harmful impact attributed to the disruption of the fragile balance in the context of global climate and signals the ecological disasters generated by the intensity of achieving financial notoriety to the detriment of organizational interest in maintaining the integrity of the planet.

Jackson and Schuler (2005) integrate the definition of the Brundtland Commission in literature, supporting the ideology that the success of an organization involves meeting the current needs highlighted by consumers, anticipating and taking a step ahead of future customer needs, and maintaining the fragile balance of environmental integrity. Thus, the business integrates the components of the respective economic environment, which define the broad concepts of sustainability.

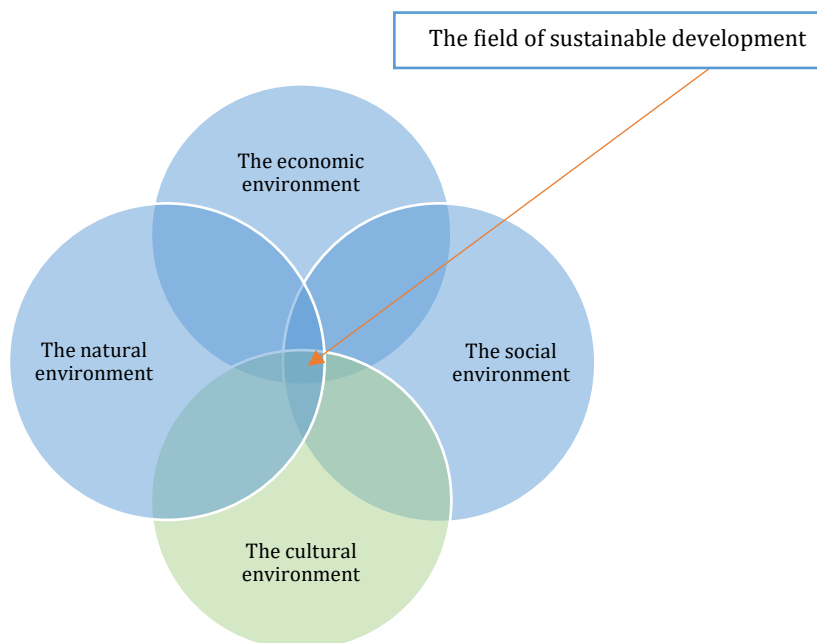
Overly, the sustainable enterprise defined by Gerlack (2003) highlights an innovative behavior proven by entrepreneurs working in the private sector and showcases an ability to turn specific environmental issues into an advantage of the competitive process. The contribution outlined through personal subjectivity highlights the imperative of assuming the remediation of environmental problems and contributing to reducing adverse effects propagated by entrepreneurial benefits. Economic interests need to be linked to the impact of ecological principles, supporting the premises of sustainability outlined at a global level.

### ***Delimitation of the concept of entrepreneurs' orientation towards sustainability***

The notion of entrepreneurs' orientation towards sustainability has known through literature the conceptual deepening necessary to understand and assume the overflowing importance of sustainability integrated into the economic activity of small and medium businesses.

In other respects, the notion of sustainability implemented in the entrepreneurial universe is in line with the directives drawn by the primordial pillars of the notion "triple bottom line", integrating social responsibility, interest in environmental conservation, and economic development in the context of businesses that check the sustainable attribute. The concept of sustainable development attached to businesses restates the conduct carried out in entrepreneurial services, witnessing the incipient premises of businesses with a predominantly sustainable character.

The invaluable contribution to defining the concept promoted by the "triple bottom line" outlined by Kraaijenbrink (2019) and propagated in the digital universe Forbes highlights the importance of the three initial pillars that underpinned the sustainability framework concept, to which is added, following the Paris Declaration UNESCO (2011), a fourth pillar (i.e. the cultural environment). Consequently, the four conceptual frameworks can become quantifiers in the analysis and approach of sustainable businesses.



**Figure 1. The components of sustainable development, according to the Brundtland Report (1987), later supplemented by the UNESCO Paris Declaration (2011)**  
(personal elaboration)

According to the social dimension, the human resource involved in entrepreneurial performance related to sustainable businesses decisively influences the global image inscribed in the law of organizations, imposing the need to show a permanent interest in completing the professional portfolio of human resources. Satisfaction in excellent conditions of the needs and expectations of potential clients is based on the implementation of innovative concepts in the subconscious of the professional team,

encouraging the assumption of creativity and the imperative of updating professional skills.

The aforementioned author emphasizes the sustainability attributed to the notion of rewarding the performances registered by the human resource involved in the entrepreneurial performance, noticing through personal subjectivity the opportunity outlined by the financial motivation inscribed in the law of the professional team. Integrating the principles of organizational ethics and morality in entrepreneurs' orientation towards sustainability highlights the rewarding interest towards the qualitative perfection of the human resource benefits, impelling the self-taught character and the permanent desire for personal self-improvement.

What is more, the concept highlighted through the "triple bottom line" requires a considerable interest in the personal and professional development of human resources involved in the performance of sustainable businesses, objectively rewarding the performance of employees. Starting from the premise that human resources are the most critical organizational resource, completing the professional portfolio acquired by the staff of sustainable businesses guarantees perception of the superior quality of products or services provided to potential and actual customers.

Additionally, the granting of keen interest in protecting and conserving the environment highlights the imperative character of the "triple bottom line" concept. Business expansion has led to the gradual and irreparable destruction of the fragile balance of the environment, nearly eliminating the global potential for non-renewable resources, degrading ecosystems, and driving the harmful effects propagated by the irreparable nature of pollution. Therefore, the considerable reduction of the ecological footprint inscribed in the right of entrepreneurial benefits is expected, effectively contributing to the maintenance of the integrity of planetary contour.

All the more, Linder and Williander (2017) bring into prominence the premises of ecological sustainability at a microeconomic level, signaling the need to reduce conventional energy consumption through specialized studies. The accelerated degradation of the planetary contour attributes to the entrepreneurs the colossal responsibility to integrate the economic performance of innovative technologies of sustainable character, opting for a considerable reduction of exhaustible resources.

Besides this, the outline of entrepreneurship is in line with the intense attribute of the irresponsible use of energy with an exhaustible character, stressing the imperative of implementing sustainable energy, attributed to the directives of sustainable development. The implementation of alternative fuels in the development and management of sustainable business highlights the essential condition for meeting the higher energy needs of companies, taking into consideration the reduction of conventional energy consumption and opting for the implementation of sustainable technologies.

On the other hand, the perception propagated by Leleux and Jan van der Kaaij (2019) emphasizes the imperative of assuming the sustainable attribute in the corporate concept, correlating the incidence of financial objectives with the implementation of

ecological principles. Furthermore, the alarming statistics outlined by the World Economic Forum (2016) predict a substantial ecological disaster: by 2050, the oceans will contain more plastic than marine life. Hence, the principal actors in the entrepreneurship scene must show a permanent and sustained interest in the ecological principles assumed through implementing the sustainable attribute in entrepreneurial services.

Complementary, the vision promoted by Ikerd (2011) draws attention to the implementation of the concept of ecological economy, considering the integration of resources with renewable potential in the activity of small and medium businesses and eradicating the harmful effects propagated by conventional energy on the environment. Moreover, the author introduces the concept of holism in the definition of sustainable businesses, involving the presence of close and permanent relationships highlighted between the components of sustainability.

Aiming at the aspirational ideal of reducing the costs denoted by the entrepreneurial service, the concept of "triple bottom line" aims to integrate into the contour of sustainable businesses an integrated system of recycling and significant reduction of raw material consumption, avoiding compromising natural resources.

On the side, Harnoss and Reeves (2017) correlate the financial opportunity outlined by implementing innovative technologies that integrate renewable energies into the production circuit, underpinning the significant decrease of highly polluting factors and unsustainable expenditures under conventional energy consumption.

Notwithstanding, highlighted as the primary objective of entrepreneurial services, profit maximization can be achieved by reducing the costs of using conventional energy and directing interest in recycling materials needed for economic activities.

### **The evolution of the concept of entrepreneurs' orientation towards sustainability and current challenges**

In terms of businesses, the concept of sustainability can be deepened through a retrospective of the temporary filter, which subsequently shows an overflowing interest in the connotation of sustainability implemented in the entrepreneurial universe. Accordingly, the concept of sustainable enterprise is materialized at first through the imperative to show considerable interest in the conservation and protection of planetary contour to minimize the harmful effects propagated on environmental factors.

Under the above-mentioned authors' perception, the implementation of sustainability in entrepreneurship is the necessary and imperative condition to achieve performance standards, streamlining the management of organizational resources and minimizing the costs of conventional energy consumption.

### ***The incipient concept of entrepreneurs' orientation towards sustainability***

The perception of authors Meadows and Randeras (1972) illustrated in the paper entitled "*Limits of Growth*" highlights the negative impact in the relationship between economic growth and depletion of natural resources. The incipient awareness of the harmful implications of economic activities on maintaining the planet's integrity has resulted in the imperative of limiting the consumption of resources and avoiding compromising the sustainability of environmental factors. The accelerated and irreparable degradation of the environment is mainly due to the rapid growth of population, which generates conditions of malnutrition and forced industrialization, respectively, to the continuous degradation of the environment, which produces the depletion of renewable resources.

According to Enhert (2009), the concept of sustainability has been integrated into strategic organizational management since 1980, which facilitated businesses to gain an entrepreneurial advantage in the competitive context. Economic sustainability involves concentrating organizational efforts on incorporating valuable, scarce, and highly difficult-to-replace resources into entrepreneurial performance. Starting from the premise that each person has unique characteristics, it can be said that the human resource involved in the economic activity of service providers is of considerable interest precisely through the uniqueness extracted from DNA.

Withal, the role of people identified in the law of employees is to appropriate the business's values and propagate in the subconscious of actual and potential customers the guarantee of superior satisfaction. Accordingly, the image exposed by the business through human resources has a determined weight in consumers' perception, and it represents the ethics, values, and quality with which they identify.

On top of that, the United Nations World Commission on Environment and Development (1987), also known as the Brundtland Commission, defines sustainable business as a way to promote global sustainable development, with an overriding interest in conserving depletable resources and ensuring their usefulness, including for future generations. The directives drawn up by the Brundtland Commission and implemented in sustainable businesses highlight two critical environmental and social levels. The first leads to measures for the responsible use of natural resources and the allocation of resources in sustainable technologies. In contrast, the second focuses on integrating human resource sustainability and the implementation of sustainability in an organizational context.

Additionally, the integration of human resource sustainability aims to invest organizational effort in employees' personal and professional perfection, realizing the overflowing importance of the only organizational resource that highlights the uniqueness extracted from DNA.

### ***The evolution of entrepreneurs' orientation towards sustainability concept***

The concept of entrepreneurs' orientation towards sustainability has evolved by integrating the notion of "eco-entrepreneur" in specialized literature, a term that

refers to the person through whom the concept of sustainable enterprise can be outlined, concretized, and implemented. In line with that, Gladwin, Kennelly, and Krause (1995) describe the entrepreneur who assumes the status of eco-entrepreneur as the person inclined towards a sustainable approach to economic activities, outlining a sustainable business that fully meets the necessary conditions for predominantly sustainable businesses. The shaping of an ecological design implements the certainty of a responsibility assumed towards the integrity of planetary contour in the subconscious of potential and practical customers, underlining the economic processes inclined towards the satisfaction of the ecological needs.

The definition attributed to "ecopreneur" offered by Pastakia (1989) highlights the status of entrepreneurs who dedicate their organizational resources in shaping sustainable businesses that are differentiated through the following defining characteristics:

- Highlighting the non-profit activity;
- Imposing ecological values;
- Marketing sustainable products or services.

According to Isaak's perspective in "The Making of the Ecopreneur" (2002), sustainable businesses are established by implementing sustainable attributes in economic activity, which involves both individuals and public or private institutions in promoting environmental innovation. Eco-entrepreneurship focuses mainly on the conservation and protection of environmental factors, disregarding the positive financial results through which the sustainable enterprise can record an exponential profit.

On the flipside, the concept promoted by Linnanen (2002) suggests the approach of ecopreneurs from a double perspective, their status being classified according to two defining criteria: the desire to promote sustainability and quality of life, and the financial interests of economic activities, respectively.

According to the perception outlined by the author mentioned above, the identified ecopreneurs inclined to promote sustainability and quality of life show a constant interest in implementing innovative technological concepts. Thus, they contribute decisively to reducing conventional energy consumption, assuming that ecological responsibility places sustainable goals at the top of the priorities outlined in the organizational ranking and placing the aspirational ideal of gaining financial notoriety on a secondary place. Attributing the primordial character of the exponential growth registered in the turnover right removes the ecopreneurs from the expected ecological responsibility, opting for selfish financial interests drawn by the management team.

In compliance with the above-mentioned approaches, authors Tilley and Young (2009), in the paper "Sustainability Entrepreneurs - Could they be the True Wealth Generators of the Future", highlight the notion of revolutionary change inscribed in the law of predominantly sustainable businesses. According to data found in the paper, eco-entrepreneurship involves adapting innovative requirements to the outline of traditional markets, requiring a change in consumer perceptions of traditional consumption patterns. Besides, the aspirational ideal enshrined in eco-



entrepreneurship highlights the desire of entrepreneurs to invest considerable interest in environmental conservation, partially eliminating the harmful effects of propagated pollution on the planetary contour.

The field of eco-entrepreneurship faces challenges which lay stress on the organizational effort inclined to change consumers' behavior, implement the notion of sustainability in their subconscious, and promote the sustainable nature of ecological transition related to sustainable businesses.

### ***The current approach to entrepreneurs' orientation towards sustainability***

The work entitled "The Entrepreneur-Environment Nexus: Uncertainty, innovation, and allocation", developed by Venkataraman and York (2010), highlights the imperative to implement a sustainable concept in the context of contemporary business, which involves a dedicated effort in the following categories concerned with the economic activity of sustainable businesses: entrepreneurs, consumers, government agencies.

According to Racelis (2014), the notion of sustainable development attached to sustainable businesses in literature is integrated, implying the need to address an ethical model inclined towards the concept of social and environmental responsibility related to the environment. Accordingly, the ecological awareness assumed by entrepreneurs expects the reduction of harmful effects propagated by economic activities on the planetary contour, considerably reducing the incidence of intensely polluting factors. Thence, the optimization of production processes and their correlation with the ecological principles outlined by entrepreneurs' orientation towards sustainability highlight the need to implement innovative technologies and to foreground the significant reduction of intensely polluting factors projected in the external contour of businesses.

Furthermore, the concept of sustainable businesses perceived by Koe, Omar, and Sa'ari (2015) highlights the concordance between attitudinal factors and mentions the sustainable attitude and perceptual factors - the perception of feasibility. According to the vision propagated by the authors, the incidence of attitudinal factors and the subjective perception of sustainability decisively influence people's perception of entrepreneurs' orientation towards sustainability.

In addition, Weybrecht (2014) emphasizes the imperative of reducing the adverse incidence generated by contemporary industries and correlating organizational objectives with ecological principles denoted by maintaining the integrity of environmental factors. The directives drawn through the "triple bottom line" concept support industry 4.0 and integrate sustainable concepts into economic activity. The premises of a sustainable entrepreneurial future require the imperative of concentrating the organizational effort on implementing sustainable technological processes, considerably diminishing the harmful effects propagated by the intensive nature of pollution. Moreover, the human dimension highlighted in the contour of sustainable businesses implies an educational process throughout life, effectively completing the professional portfolio of human resources involved in industry 4.0.

Thus, in agreement with the whole theoretical framework, we may conclude by stating that the ecosystem of small and medium businesses needs to be inclined towards the conservation and protection of environmental factors, integrating the strategic objectives necessary to maximize financial results without compromising environmental integrity.

### **Principles and practices associated with entrepreneurs' orientation towards sustainability**

Businesses that aspire to carry the sustainability attribute require the implementation of principles enunciated by Gutterman (2018), highlighted in the paper entitled "*Sustainable Business: A Handbook for Starting a Business*". According to the authors, the principles of sustainable businesses involve a two-pronged approach: operational and strategic.

#### ***Operational principles related to sustainable businesses***

- Admirable and empathetic employees - companies with a sustainable character pay considerable interest to the satisfaction felt by the professional team and invest the necessary resources for the personal and professional development of employees. Outlining an organizational climate conducive to the harmonious development of human resources highlights the essential condition enshrined in the law of sustainable businesses. The directives drawn up through this operational principle completely prohibit the negative behaviors highlighted in employee relations, mentioning the eradication of discrimination and abusive behaviors identified at a microeconomic level. The directives drawn through the entrepreneurs' orientation towards sustainability stress the implementation of moral principles in the subconscious of human resources, encouraging the professional team to assume social equity.

- Responsibility for the environment - the sustainability character attributed to companies expects to take responsibility for the conservation and protection of the environment, carrying out its economic activity following the ecological objectives necessary to eradicate irreparable effects of pollution. The contribution to sustainability can be achieved by significantly reducing the intensive consumption of raw materials identified in the category of non-degradable elements, facilitating the integration of sustainable recycling within organizations inclined to preserve planetary contour. On top of this, implementing innovative technologies that integrate the beneficial effects of the resources with renewable potential in the economic processes is the essential condition of businesses to obtain the honorary title of sustainability.

- Community contribution and fairness - the economic activity provided by sustainable businesses must ensure that local communities improve their living conditions, encouraging employees to contribute to achieving this economic and social goal actively. The outline of this principle highlights the integration of the local population in the enterprise's activity or the purchase of raw materials from local producers.

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Finally, this type of approach brings a marked improvement in the quality of life at a community level.

- Influence on people - the initiative highlighted in the activity of sustainable businesses propagates the ideology of personal sustainability on the population (employees, suppliers, customers). The conditions enshrined in this principle of entrepreneurs' orientation towards sustainability aim to encourage the recycling of products, use products that meet international quality standards, and ensure that no child has participated in the production process.

### *Strategic principles enshrined in the law of sustainable businesses*

- Integration of the sustainable concept within the organization - entrepreneurs' orientation towards sustainability implies an imperative need and priority of integration in the organizational culture, propagating the positive effects of a sustainable concept on the enterprise. The sustainability attribute must be implemented mainly in the contour of the decision-making process, integrating the principles outlined through the innovative concept "triple bottom line" in the decision-making behavior highlighted at a microeconomic level. Assuming the attribute attached to entrepreneurs' orientation towards sustainability propagates the need to shape the business's vision, as well as the business's mission in strict accordance with the directives outlined by sustainable concepts. The positive effects denoted by entrepreneurs' orientation towards sustainability are traced through the management of organizational performance, taking into account the professional completion of human resources, significantly reducing the incidence of expenses incurred by conventional energy consumption, and boosting the financial results recorded by the business.

- Minimizing risks and maximizing opportunities - regardless of the experience gained in the professional portfolio, the organization inevitably faces risks and uncertainty in the decision-making process. However, proven caution in shaping organizational decisions prevents the harmful and irreversible effect of entrepreneurial failure by effectively managing the business's resources and strategies. Additionally, by contributing to the conservation and protection of the environment, the organization needs to pay considerable attention to environmental strategies, minimizing the negative impact on environmental factors.

- Transparency and accountability - the concept implemented by sustainable businesses promotes transparency and organizational accountability, providing stakeholders with factual information about the performance of the enterprise.

- Integrating innovation towards meeting future organizational needs - the intensity of irreparable environmental degradation constrains companies to adopt the concept of sustainability, promoting the responsible and assumed use of non-renewable resources. The concordance highlighted between the organizational objectives and the directives drawn by the environmental strategies emphasizes the maximization of the financial results of sustainable businesses, implementing the use of renewable energy sources, sustainable technologies, and the concept of waste recovery.

The implementation of renewable energy resources facilitates the achievement of financial objectives expected by the management team, involving low or non-existent costs by replacing conventional energy consumption.

### **The human dimension of entrepreneurs' orientation towards sustainability**

Entrepreneurs' orientation towards sustainability implemented at the microeconomic level implies the need to integrate the concept promoted by the "triple bottom line", resizing the economic benefit according to the directives drawn through social, ecological, and economic approaches inscribed in the right of sustainable attributes.

However, the accelerated degradation of the planetary contour is a catalyst for the immediate need to adopt and implement a sustainable approach for small and medium-sized businesses, actively contributing to reducing the negative impact of pollution on environmental factors. Gutterman (2018) promotes the concept of "triple bottom line" implemented at a microeconomic level, considering the inclination of entrepreneurship to achieve the premises of sustainable development.

According to the vision of authors Daneke, Hall, and Lenox (2010) highlighted throughout the paper "Sustainable Development and Entrepreneurship: Past Contributions and Future Directions", the human dimension inscribed next to the concept "triple bottom line" requires assuming and implementing social responsibility in the organizational contour. Undertakings that demonstrate the attribute of sustainability strictly respect the rights of the professional team, effectively contributing to the eradication of abuses by prohibiting discrimination and the elimination of forced benefits, respectively, to the protection of human resources by providing appropriate health insurance.

The authors mentioned above support the idea that sustainable entrepreneurship implies the need to pay considerable attention to the psychological balance of human resources, ensuring the imperative medical leave necessary to recover the cognitive abilities registered in the professional community.

All things considered, the social responsibility assumed by sustainable businesses highlights the effort invested in the personal and professional development related to human resources, completing the quality of the economic benefits registered in the law of the professional team. Daneke, Hall, and Lenox (2010) emphasize the right to education and professional development implemented by businesses that prove the sustainable attribute. Equally, concern for a quality workplace adds to the employer's worry about the ability to access health care. If it also gives them guaranteed access to innovative technology, we can discuss a foremost concern about performance and ensuring a secure, integrated job from a sustainable point of view.

All the same, the social concept promoted by the "triple bottom line" highlighted in "Sustainable Development and Entrepreneurship: Past Contributions and Future Directions" emphasizes the overflowing importance of sustainable businesses in

supporting the freedoms of the professional team, ensuring the freedom of expression of human resources. The microeconomic outline of businesses that assume their sustainable attribute does not distort the beliefs and aspirations of the professional team, giving the human resource involved in the entrepreneurial service total freedom to support personal perceptions.

The policy enshrined in the law of sustainable businesses imposes the obligation to protect personal data, ensuring complete confidentiality to the professional community. According to the authors mentioned above, sustainable entrepreneurship strictly expects to use personal data in the organizational context, avoiding compromising the security of human resources involved in the businesses' economic activity.

In other respects, Daneke, Hall, and Lenox (2010) define the social responsibility proven by sustainable businesses as showing considerable interest in the rights of the professional community, protecting the physical and psychological integrity of the human resource involved in entrepreneurial services. Considering the respect shown to the professional team, the assumption of social responsibility implies the observance of the informed consent, the moral support of the professional team, and the material reward of the human resource.

Up to present times, the environment has been, since ancient times, the ideal support for carrying out any economic activity. Without asking for anything in return, it is the one that has made all the necessary resources to carry out economic activities available. But, unfortunately, our actions, manifested at all levels (social, economic, political), have led to its gradual and irreparable destruction, almost eliminating the global potential of non-renewable resources, degrading ecosystems, and boosting the harmful effects propagated by the irreparable nature of pollution.

As part of the law of social responsibility, cultural sustainability outlines the premises for preserving identity from a cultural perspective, outlining the imperative of inclining organizational efforts to support cultural skills and identity (Boukas & Lambert, 2014). The above-mentioned authors' perception underlines the importance of cultural sustainability inscribed in the right to assume and implement at a microeconomic level, giving considerable interest to heritage conservation, sustaining cultural skills, and promoting the contour of the cultural identity of the geographical space where businesses assume their sustainability status.

Hereupon, Boukas and Lambert (2014) attribute the imperative of enrolling in the law of sustainable businesses to cultural sustainability, preserving the invaluable heritage outlined by the time capsule. Furthermore, the harmonious fusion of creativity and innovation requires support from sustainable entrepreneurship, sponsoring the continuity of cultural and artistic acts.

As a result, the outline of personal subjectivity inscribed in the approach to cultural sustainability finds the defective involvement of organizations in supporting the vitality of artistic acts, involuntarily contributing to the irreparable disappearance of cultural heritage. The social responsibility assumed through sustainable

entrepreneurship expects organizational efforts to fully support innovation and creativity, eradicating the potentially devastating effects outlined by the lack of funding for cultural and artistic activities.

Suitably, the ecological responsibility promoted through businesses with a sustainable attribute re-approaches the economic performance, integrating the premises of the global sustainable development in the organizational concept. Majid (2012) enables the directives outlined by the United Nations Convention on Biodiversity, stressing the inclination of businesses to conserve environmental factors, avoid the use of genetically modified elements and, of course, implement sustainable technologies.

At the same time, sustainable entrepreneurship requires compliance with the Precautionary Principle, avoiding compromising environmental factors and concentrating organizational efforts on preserving the integrity of planetary contour. The vision promoted by the author mentioned above emphasizes the overriding importance of preventing the spread of the following harmful effects on the environment, eliminating the negative impact of carbon dioxide emissions. Integrated environmental responsibility in the context of the overarching goals set by sustainable businesses is expected to avoid compromising the integrity of the ozone layer, arguing for a reduction in the incidence of climate change. Also, reducing the impact of economic activity on airway integrity ensures efficient management of harmful emissions and the protection of local communities in the geographical area where the business performs its entrepreneurial services.

Aside from that, the paper entitled "Sustainable Entrepreneurship (SE): A Revised Model Based on Triple Bottom Line (TBL)" focuses on the efforts of sustainable organizations to conserve environmental factors, outlining the awareness and commitment of the invaluable contribution of environmental responsibility. It is vital to conserve biodiversity by maintaining soil integrity, with the implications of avoiding its impregnation with pesticides or other pollutants. Equally, the emphasis is on preventing the compromise of drinking water sources and implicitly the rational use of water consumption.

On top of this, Majid (2012) promotes the concept of ecological efficiency, encouraging entrepreneurs to implement the premises of sustainable development in the organizational contour on two primary levels:

- energy efficiency (reduction of energy consumption from conventional sources, implementation of renewable energy resources);
- recycling efficiency (selective waste collection and implementation of the concept of material recycling);

The vision of ecological responsibility promoted by Majid (2012) concerns businesses that prove a sustainable attribute that favors making financial efforts to support non-governmental organizations in implementing environmental projects, actively contributing to the conservation and development of wildlife. Furthermore, the ecological responsibility of sustainable businesses is expected to keep the fragile balance of ecosystems, ensuring the continuity of the perpetuation of species threatened by the passage of time.

Inclusively, the economic responsibility inscribed in the law of sustainable businesses highlights the implementation of organizational objectives and strategies, which the sustainable attribute highlighted in the regulation of entrepreneurship can materialize through. The effort focused on achieving the aspirational ideal denoted by the exponential profit level requires a considerable interest in respecting the moral principles suitable for the entrepreneurial universe.

Also, Bergh (2013) illustrates the contour of economic sustainability by concentrating organizational efforts to satisfy the entrepreneurial requirements inscribed in the right of positive financial results in particular conditions. Thus, the attribute of sustainability and economic responsibility in the entrepreneurial context includes the expansion of economic assets, completing the organizational portfolio registered in the law of predominantly sustainable businesses.

The vision of economic sustainability put forth in the specialized paper "Sustainability-driven Entrepreneurship: Perceptions of Challenges and Obstacles in a South African Context" shows considerable interest in the ethics of economic responsibility, propagating the obligation to assume and respect the moral principles of business on the entrepreneurial stage. The incidence of immoral actions present in the entrepreneurial context spreads adverse effects on companies that are difficult to master and overcome, mentioning actions of economic fraud (bribery or embezzlement) or conflicts of interest (prioritization of personal interest).

According to the ideology supported by Bergh (2013), businesses that prove the attribute of sustainability and economic responsibility integrate the interest in financial support for local communities in the outline of organizational objectives, contributing to the sustainable development of geographical areas where the business performs. The fulfillment of local taxes is the premise of the harmonious development of communities placed in the vicinity of sustainable businesses, offering the resident population the opportunity to benefit from superior living conditions. Otherwise, the inclination of financial efforts towards the financial support of students contributes to diminishing the risk of social exclusion and material deprivation, facilitating the access of young people to educational resources, which are imperative in terms of professional completion.

The contribution to complete the concept of economic sustainability highlighted by authors Rahman and Singh (2014) throughout the paper entitled "Economic and Environmental factors leading to Entrepreneurial success" mentions the need and opportunity to focus financial efforts by sustainable businesses in professional completion of human resources (supporting the improvement of entrepreneurial services, investing financial efforts in the specialization of human resources) or to implement innovative concepts (integrated into the economic performance of innovative technologies).

However, Rahman and Singh (2014) emphasize the importance of tilting financial efforts to support scientific progress and investing financial results in profit law to

support intellectual property rights, patenting, or scientific inventions from an economic point of view.

The humanitarian involvement highlighted by authors Rahman and Singh (2014) relates the ideology through which donations and sponsorships offered by sustainable businesses contribute to:

- financial support for students (sponsoring the right to education, providing financial support to disadvantaged students);
- sponsoring non-governmental organizations by providing financial support to humanitarian causes.

In the first place, the economic responsibility analyzed through a personal filter highlights the ability of sustainable businesses to respond positively to the directives drawn in the context of global sustainable development, contributing decisively to supporting scientific progress, imperative in the context of local society.

Secondly, the sponsorship of non-governmental organizations emphasizes the empathic attribute inscribed in the law of sustainable entrepreneurship, giving an overflowing interest to the financial support inclined towards the partial remedy of social difficulties.

## Conclusions, limitations, and further research

In explaining the reasons for this paper, the omnipresence and maximum relevance of the concept of "sustainability" was highlighted as one of the central stimuli for its realization. Consequently, it is of utmost importance that we address the twin challenges of sustainability and development with actionable knowledge for innovating solutions to the world's most pressing problems such as climate change, poverty and inequality, biodiversity loss, and ecosystem degradation.

Nevertheless, some other essential elements represent the limitations of our present study:

- argue the importance of understanding the concept of entrepreneurs' orientation towards sustainability - show that it was and, somehow, still is considered the prerogative of multinationals / large companies;
- insist on how this concept is also crucial for entrepreneurial initiatives;
- delve into why the "triple bottom line" is not frequently met in the SMEs sector (or even sustainability per se); is it because there is a significant distinction in form or structure between SMEs and Corporations?
- provide a broader, yet clear-cut, distinction between the four dimensions that sustainability entangles;
- investigate the factors that triggered the interest of entrepreneurs in sustainability (dedicate a subchapter to the analysis of the factors that shaped sustainable approaches in SMEs);
- encourage human elements - the desire / voluntary choice of the entrepreneur - including ethics or alignment with good corporate practices/professionalization in SMEs - to adhere to a sustainable paradigm (not only due to exogenous reasons).



As for the preliminary conclusions, we can state that rather than sustainability being a qualifier for development (e.g., sustainable development), we conceptualize sustainability and development as co-equal fields of inquiry and action that seek to build bridges between the economic, natural, social, and applied sciences, and humanity as well. When sustainability and development are placed on equal grounds, it requires us to think more explicitly about the trade-offs, co-benefits, and synergies between them.

Regarding the research gaps found so far, we can pinpoint the following, based on Devashree (2009):

- despite a consensus in the sustainable development literature that equity, economy, and environment need to be simultaneously addressed in any effort toward sustainable development, equity has been neglected in empirical research on what communities are doing to promote local sustainability;
- research has been restricted to municipalities with well-documented sustainability plans and policies, thereby limiting our theoretical understanding of sustainability;
- research is in its early stages of determining how well communities are implementing various sustainability policies, focusing solely on adopting multiple initiatives.

Unequivocally, the need to find a development model that does not conflict with the finite nature of the planet and that guarantees the wellbeing of current and future generations acts as the axis of political and business agendas around the world and with more reason than ever, in a year like 2021, with significant international events that force us to reflect on the progress and challenges around the difficult task of balancing the economic, environmental and social dimensions.

Future research perspectives need to address two essential dimensions, which include various subjacent ramifications:

- a sharply defined understanding of how Romanian SMEs and entrepreneurs perceive and adapt to a sustainable business model, as part of an innovation paradigm;
- the role that human elements play when it comes to addressing the adoption of sustainable managerial strategies;
- the perception of local entrepreneurs towards the future: how they perceive business and the role that sustainability plays within that projection.

On the whole, now, more than ever, it is crucial to find the necessary means to link sustainability to companies' business strategy, to align their behavior with the proclaimed values, namely establishing and maintaining relationships of trust and collaboration with stakeholders.

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