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**SUSTAINABLE ENTREPRENEURSHIP, AN  
ANALYSIS THROUGH AN INTERNATIONAL LENS.  
A qualitative Interpretative study**

Oscar Csibi

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UNIVERSITÉ COTE D'AZUR  
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GROUPE DE RECHERCHE EN MANAGEMENT

**SUSTAINABLE ENTREPRENEURSHIP, AN ANALYSIS THROUGH AN  
INTERNATIONAL LENS  
A qualitative Interpretative study**

By: Oscar CSIBI

Supervised by: Pr. Sabrina LOUFRANI,

Pr. Frederique CHEDOTEL, and Pr. Francois PANTIN.

Dissertation for the degree of Master 2 of Research in Management and Consulting  
Cohort 2023-2024

Defended the 3<sup>rd</sup> of June 2024

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# **ABSTRACT**

## **SUSTAINABLE ENTREPRENEURSHIP, THROUGH AN INTERNATIONAL LENS, A Qualitative Interpretative Study**

This research explores the nexus between sustainable entrepreneurship and international business, particularly in the context of post-COVID-19 socio-environmental grand challenges. By examining the role of Sustainable Development goals and corporate social responsibility (CSR) practices in SMEs' global expansion, the study illustrates how sustainability is integral, not just to business ethics, but also as a catalyst for international growth and innovation. Following an exploratory qualitative methodology through semi structured interview with entrepreneurs and experts. The research underscores the pivotal role of entrepreneurial values and moral cognition in decision-making when aligning international business strategies with sustainability goals. Drawing on various academic sources to highlight the evolution of entrepreneurship from profit-driven motives to encompassing broader social and environmental outcomes, the results suggest a large scope of sustainable behaviors typologies influencing different strategic decisions. The findings of this exploratory study, aim to contribute to the discourse on sustainable entrepreneurship within international settings, advocating for a nuanced understanding of how diverse contexts influence sustainable business practices and the relevance of a purpose driven entrepreneurship as a key element for SMEs internationalization.

Keywords :

Sustainable entrepreneurship, SME's internationalization, International Entrepreneurship, Corporate social responsibility (CSR), Global Expansion.



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## GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Fernhaber & Zou, (2022) argue that climate change, planetary boundaries and socio-economic problems have been exacerbated since the COVID-19 pandemic (Bacq & Lumpkin, 2021; Sanders, 2022; Audretsch et al., 2023). These major socio-environmental problems are known as grand challenges that can be seen as complex evolving and uncertain (Ferraro et al. 2015). The continuous rise of major challenges, such as environmental and social problems, poverty, gender inequality and migration, call for immediate solutions (Buckley et al., 2017). Rittel and Webber (1973) refer to them as wicked problems, issues “characterized by multiple interactions and various associations which make them difficult to understand” (Fernhaber & Zou, 2022, p. 3). Therefore, they are hard-to-solve problems that require crucial entrepreneurial responses.

These are all issues closely associated with the sustainability of our globalized society and form the cornerstone of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals. This complex context increases academic interest in identifying solutions to these challenges, also motivated by the growing awareness of global social and environmental issues. The United Nations (UN) and the European Union Commission, in collaboration with other governments and organizations, promote this awareness by setting ambitious targets for 2030 to meet the grand society challenges (Fernhaber & Zou, 2022). In 2015 the UN introduced the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), a set of 17 objectives encouraging businesses worldwide to adopt sustainable and socially responsible policies. These new goals influence the role of entrepreneurship in society, which is moving away from the traditional notion of creating economic value to integrate non-economic objectives such as social and environmental aspects into its missions. Entrepreneurs seem to find an ideal playground that fits with sustainability challenges.

As a response to the previous UN initiative, Hart and Milstein (1999) proposed the first paper on this topic and discussed how sustainability challenges could drive innovation and 'creative destruction' in industries, providing substantial business opportunities. The authors suggested that managers must focus on reducing their firms' ecological footprints and reinventing products and processes for sustainable development across different global markets. According to Fichter et al. (2023), both entrepreneurs and start-ups are seen as key players in implementing environmental innovations and accelerating the transition to sustainable development. As such, they can have a significant impact on sustainable development (Lüdeke-Freund, 2020; Schaltegger & Wagner, 2011).

The main core of Sustainable Entrepreneurship (SE) is that business activities should not undermine the ecological and social contexts in which they operate but should strive to restore and nurture these environments (Muñoz & Dimov, 2015), striking to balance between society, nature, and economic activity (Parrish, 2010). SE represents a new way of looking at the role of business action in preserving natural ecosystems and in providing economic and non-economic benefits to stakeholders (Hockerts & Wüstenhagen, 2010). Munoz and Cohen (2018) indicate that SE is an exciting new subfield of research that has emerged within the field of entrepreneurship, reflecting the growing importance of entrepreneurial solutions to social and environmental challenges (Stubbs, 2017).

Over a decade has passed since the publication of these seminal works on SE (Cohen & Winn, 2007; Dean & McMullen, 2007; Young & Tilley, 2006). These core studies have laid the foundations for understanding SE and its distinctive characteristics. SE focuses on the preservation of nature, life support, and communities in search of perceived opportunities to give rise to future products, processes, and services to create value at both societal and organizational levels (Muñoz & Cohen 2018), where value is widely considered to include economic and non-economic gains to individuals, the society, and to the economy (Shepherd & Patzelt, 2011).

SE differs from rent-seeking behavior or social entrepreneurship by enabling the creation of commercially viable enterprises that promote environmental protection and social justice causes (Muñoz & Dimov, 2015). In this sense, SE can be seen as a means to achieve a more sustainable future (Anand et al., 2021). The pursuit of multiple objectives characterizes sustainable entrepreneurs, going beyond single profit-seeking behavior (De Clercq & Voronov, 2011).

Despite this increased academic interest and contextual relevance of SE, there is still a lack of research on the factors that enable it, and we know little about the contribution of new ventures to solving major social issues and contributing to the achievement of the SDGs. Hörisch et al. (2024) stress this research gap and highlight how challenges faced by sustainable entrepreneurs can lead them to shift their mission and values, moving to more economic goals and sometimes compromising social and environmental goals. Therefore, sustainable entrepreneurs strive to balance their triple motivation, and the priority given to each dimension might vary based on the context. In this sense, Ghauri et al. (2023) suggest that international firms need to keep ethical behaviours putting more effort into creating positives externalities and minimizing negatives and this become crucial to create a global competitive advantage.

The previous underlines the need to better understand SE in different global contexts and to identify related factors that influence SE at an international scale. However, Leonidou et al. (2019) note that the international business dimension of research into socially responsible activities has received less attention than the national context. This seems paradoxical given that globalization is the reason why many companies are confronted with environmental, ethical, and social issues as a result of their stakeholders and their own business conduct.

The study of global business is highly complex, as it crosses national, cultural and organizational boundaries. This multiplicity of contexts calls for a refined and innovative socially-responsible strategy of international firms (Kolk, 2016). Buckley et al (2017) argue that this research needs to be conducted at a multilevel approach, but today it is primarily considered from the perspective of multinational enterprises (MNEs). Uzhegova, (2021) states that the responsibility of SMEs must be examined differently from that of large companies (Russo & Perrini, 2010), which means that existing research carried out on multinationals cannot be generalised to SMEs or entrepreneurs.

In the current global economy, particularly with the growing importance of sustainable development, it is increasingly recognized that wealth creation should not be the sole international motivation for entrepreneurs. As emphasized by Galkina et al. (2022), this realization increases the interest in the concept of International Sustainable Entrepreneurship (ISE). Despite acknowledging the environmental impact of international trade, and the urgent need for research on how firms can achieve global impact and promote sustainable entrepreneurial initiatives to mitigate climate change and improve social conditions (Fernhaber & Zou, 2022), there is a lack of studies in this area. Research has primarily focused on Sustainable International Entrepreneurship (SIE), or the perspective that sees how international business can be influenced by CSR practices and considering internationalization as a linear growth process. Therefore, it is necessary to emphasize future research on SE and entrepreneurs' internationalization, as the mechanisms facilitating sustainable practices internationally remain underexplored, signalling a critical gap in the literature (Ayuso & Navarrete-Báez, 2018; Casado-Belmonte et al., 2020).

Therefore, this research project aims to better understand the strategies and practices followed by sustainable entrepreneurs from an international perspective, by exploring how international contexts may affect sustainable entrepreneurial behaviour (Volkmann et al, 2021; Porter & Van der Linde, 1995; Bischoff, 2021); and how sustainable behaviours affect internationalization strategies. And ultimately to answer the call by Hörisch et al. (2024), and to contribute to the emerging research field of IES (Casado-Belmonte et al., 2020; Galkina, et al., 2022; Zucchella et al., 2023)

## **RESEARCH PROBLEM:**

The aim of this research project is to better understand how the internationalization context influences SE and to develop a comprehensive assessment of the current state of the emerging field of ISE, identifying key related themes from previous studies and potential boundaries for future exploration. To do this, we will attempt to answer the following questions:

Main Question: How do sustainable SMEs internationalize their activities, as opposed to traditional SMEs that pursue primarily economic objectives?

# MASTER THESIS STRUCTURE:

This thesis is structured as follows: It begins with an introduction that outlines the research background and identifies gaps in the existing literature, leading to the formulation of our main research question. The introduction also provides a brief summary of the literature review

Chapter 1 focuses on three broader topics: Sustainable Entrepreneurship (SE), SMEs internationalization, and International Sustainable Entrepreneurship (ISE). In this chapter, we explore the evolution of the SE concept, its outcomes, and the role of sustainability in an international business context, particularly within SMEs. The interactions between sustainability and entrepreneurship are examined from an international perspective. The chapter concludes with a discussion on the emerging intersection between SE and SME internationalization, highlighting emerging themes in this nascent field of ISE.

Chapter 2 covers the research methodology, detailing the design, research context, data collection, and analysis methods used in this study. It also presents the findings of our exploratory empirical research, including the discussion of emergent themes and contributions.

The final part of the thesis discusses the conclusions, study limitations, and suggestions for future research. The structure of the thesis is depicted in Figure 1.

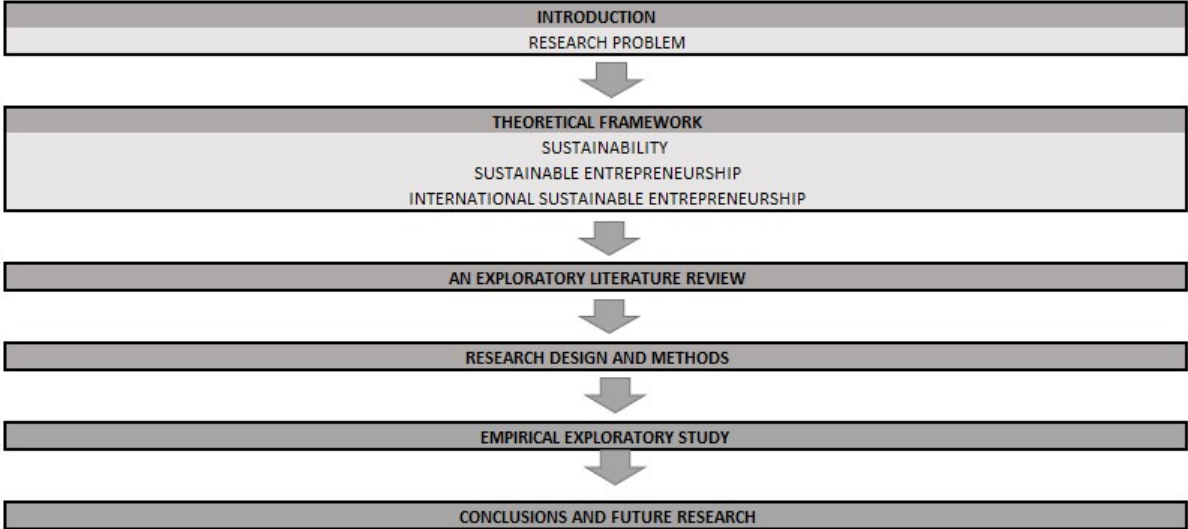


Figure 1 : Master thesis Structure.

Source: Own author

## CHAPTER 1

# Theoretical Framework Sustainable Entrepreneurship Through an International Lens



# **Chapter 1: Theoretical Framework Sustainable Entrepreneurship through an International Lens**

Over the last few years, we have seen an increasing concern for sustainable issues, particularly environmental and energy-related topics, which are now recognized by the international community as global threats. Several initiatives illustrate this interest, including: The European Commission's Eco-Innovation Action Plan, the 2030 Agenda proposed by the United Nations General Assembly, the 2016 Paris Agreement and the 2021 Glasgow Climate Agreement. All of them reflect a consensus on sustainable development urgency (Xu et al., 2023) and industries play a key role as part of the answer. Casado-Belmonte et al. (2020) highlight how, besides society, the main economic agents, that are firms, are aware of the Sustainable Development concept. When applied to the business world, Global Sustainable Development involves adopting appropriate strategies and practices that meet both the needs of the companies and the current and future expectations of society. (Ayuso & Navarrete-Báez, 2018).

However, despite this growing concern, a recent survey on sustainable development carried out by McKinsey (2011) showed that only 36% of business leaders confirm that their company has a strategic plan, envisaging actions to be taken in this area (Zu, 2014). Chappell (1994), argues that sustainable development challenges seem to require new radical solutions are needed for innovation efforts, and a common effort to combine economic success and a common well-being (Bayad et al., 2020). In this sense, entrepreneurs' behaviours seem to find a playground that fits with sustainability challenges. SE, defined as the commitment to ethical behaviour and economic development while improving quality of life, is a growing global movement (Zu, 2014).

This has brought SE (businesses and entrepreneurs) to the centre of sustainable development in most economies of the world, becoming a formula for transforming today's economy into a sustainable one (Shepherd and Patzelt, 2011). Sustainable development is a challenge that spans our global economy, requiring individuals, groups and small businesses to participate, contribute and motivate the efforts needed to meet these challenges.

The insufficient research and theory on the relationship between entrepreneurs and sustainability challenges means that we know little about who engages, when and what kind of actions they take to address these issues, and the type of solutions they create, is a grand challenge (Markman et al., 2019). These are global and universal questions, reflecting a real need to understand SE from an international perspective (Hörisch et al., 2024). These are global and universal issues, and this fact reflects a real need to understand SE through an international lens.

In this chapter, we will study the literature and concepts related to SE. Following previous reviews (Bayad et al., 2020), we will base our analysis on five recent and well-cited systematic literature reviews with the aim of providing a solid theoretical base for our research.

## **1.1 The Challenge of Sustainability for Entrepreneurs**

Exploring sustainable development, particularly through an entrepreneurial context, reveals how complex, and interconnected are the challenges at the centre of today's global society for the future of businesses and the planet. Understanding the interaction between sustainability and entrepreneurship is an important step in redefining business practices and behaviours', emphasizing the importance of innovation, and transforming the way we think about economic development. This chapter comments on the foundations of sustainability, its main challenges and the importance of entrepreneurship in addressing them. We try to explain the result of the emerging research sub-field of SE, while clarifying the aspects required for companies and entrepreneurs wishing to contribute to a more sustainable environment and society.

### **1.1.1 Sustainability and Entrepreneurship, the Intersection of Two Fields**

SE includes two concepts, both fuzzy, broad and hard to understand, and together, makes the field more complex to be defined. One concept is considered a macro level concept (sustainability), while the other is considered a meso-level (entrepreneurship).

Sustainability, as a concept, goes beyond economic progress and includes environmental conservation and thinking about the social impact of our actions. From a general perspective, it can be defined as the ability of something or someone to sustain itself or continue over a long period of time. In business terms, this means the viability of the business in the long term (Rosário et al., 2022), meaning that companies have to take into account all the aspects necessary for their survival and long-term viability.

According to Dhahri et al. (2021), as a consequence of the growing importance of sustainability, the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED), and the UN Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) defined Global Sustainability as: "the ability to meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs" (WCED, 1987). This definition requests the necessary integration in business practices of the three dimensions (environmental, social and economic) often referred to as the triple bottom line (3BL) for "people, planet, and profits", highlighting the complex nature of sustainability challenges in entrepreneurship. With this aim, in 2015 the UN introduced the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), a set of 17 objectives encouraging businesses worldwide to adopt sustainable and socially responsible policies (see table 1).

The 17 SDGs (United Nations, 2015) clustered under the three dimensions of sustainable development.

SDG	Title of the SDG	Description of the SDG
<i>Economic dimension: building a living economy</i>		
Goal 7.	Affordable and clean energy	"Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable, and modern energy for all".
Goal 8.	Decent work and economic growth	"Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all".
Goal 9.	Industry, innovation and infrastructure	"Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation".
Goal 11.	Sustainable cities and communities	"Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable".
Goal 12.	Responsible consumption and production	"Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns".
<i>Social dimension: protecting capabilities for flourishing</i>		
Goal 1.	No poverty	"End poverty in all its forms everywhere".
Goal 2.	Zero hunger	"End hunger, achieves food security and improved nutrition, and promotes sustainable agriculture".
Goal 3.	Good health and well-being	Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages.
Goal 4.	Quality education	"Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote life-long learning opportunities for all".
Goal 5.	Gender equality	"Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls".
Goal 10.	Reduce inequalities	"Reduce inequality within and among countries".
Goal 16.	Peace, justice and strong institutions	"Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels".
Goal 17.	Partnerships for the goals	"Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development".
<i>Environmental dimension: staying within planetary boundaries</i>		
Goal 6.	Clean water and sanitation	"Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all".
Goal 13.	Climate action	"Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts"
Goal 14.	Life below water	"Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development".
Goal 15.	Life on land	"Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss".

Table 1 : The 17 SDGs clustered under the three sustainability dimensions.

Source: (Dahri et al., 2021), Behavioural entrepreneurship for achieving the sustainable development goals

Elkington's (2004a, 2004b) conceptualization of 3BL, and the subsequent evolution to emphasize a holistic approach to sustainable business practices, underscore the expanding scope of what it means to be sustainable. Elkington (1994) introduced the concept of the 3BL as an answer to the publication of Our Common Future, the 1987 report of WCED, to facilitate the integration of Social and Green goals together with Economical. Stephan Schmidheiny, the Chairman Business of the Council for Sustainable Development (BCSD) said: "Sustainability requires that we pay attention to the entire life cycles of our products and to the specific and changing needs of our customers." (Elkington, 1994, p.91).

Entrepreneurship, traditionally viewed through the lenses of economic activity and innovation, has seen this new paradigm, and society as a shift from economic thinking to a more holistic vision of society, through the emergence of sustainable entrepreneurship. This new domain transcends the conventional focus on single profit, integrating sustainability into the core of entrepreneurial ventures decisions. Entrepreneurship is founded on economic goals and its theoretical foundations can be traced to the early works of Olivier de Serres, Richard Chatillon, and Jean-Baptiste Say (Messeghem & Torres, 2015), who emphasized concepts as risk-taking, innovation, and economic profit. Joseph Schumpeter (1954) today considered the most influential author in the field, further expanded and linked entrepreneurship with innovation, heralding a vision where entrepreneurs act as agents of creative destruction, paving the way for new industries and economic development (Filion, 1997). This central dimension related to innovation that characterises entrepreneurship, suggests to academics and institutions that entrepreneurs could be a potential source of solution to the global challenges (Markman et al., 2019).

SE represents a critical evolution in the business world, driven by the urgent need to address global sustainability challenges such as climate change, resource depletion, and social inequality (Dean & McMullen, 2007). However, this new approach to entrepreneurship seeks to balance economic objectives with environmental and social well-being in society, aiming to create businesses that contribute positively to the world and that creates a larger well-being through their practices (Shepherd & Patzelt, 2011). SE goes beyond single profit-seeking behaviours' (De Clercq and Voronov, 2011). Sustainable Entrepreneurs see the notion of opportunity through a different lens, where profit-seeking is a broader concept that encompasses both economic and non-economic gains, for individuals (to them) and for third parties (society) (Shepherd & Patzelt, 2011).

Thus, if SE is required, why are more firms, start-ups, and other businesses that support social, environmental and economic goals that are sustainable and make sustainable transition possible? Actual business practices are contrary to sustainable strategies > Following sustainable behaviours is not something ordinary in the economic world. The rarity of firms that successfully integrate sustainability into their business models underscores the entrepreneurial dilemma in adopting sustainable practices (Kratzer, 2020). Yet, this rarity remarks the unique and significant opportunity for sustainable entrepreneurs, as pioneers, building new paths of economic activity that harmoniously merge with environmental and social goals. SE is not just a variant of traditional entrepreneurship but a necessary global transformation of it (Aspelund et al., 2017), it represents a new way of understanding at the role of business action and managerial practices in preserving nature and ecosystems, and in providing economic and non-economic benefits to stakeholders (Hockerts & Wüstenhagen, 2010).

### **1.1.2 Challenges and Opportunities for Sustainable Entrepreneurs**

As previously discussed, the broad and fuzzy nature of both entrepreneurship and sustainability presents both challenges and opportunities for sustainable entrepreneurs. On one hand, the complexity of defining and operationalizing SE complicates the development and implementation of sustainable business practices. Aspelund et al. (2017) identify in their studies that few managerial practices obtain sustainable outcomes, illustrating the difficulty in translating the 17 SDG and the 3BL in business practices. On the other hand, this complexity opens up a wide array of opportunities for innovation and value creation that aligns with sustainable development goals (Elkington, 1994).

Entrepreneurs face various challenges when navigating the uncertainty and risks associated with integrating sustainability into their business models, with the academic literature identifying three major barriers. The first, more related to entrepreneurial cognition and probably the most important to overcome, is the paradox between individual and collective incentives, i.e., self-interested behaviour versus actions in the common interest. Pacheco et al. (2010) describes this dilemma as the green prison, in which the higher cost of social actions is penalized by the market, so businesses that focus on social well-being are at a disadvantage when they pursue costly sustainable actions, and when these costs are not carried by competitors. In a way, this prisoner's dilemma offers two choices and different interests to each option, but suggesting that the individual outcome will improve the common outcome, in case that entrepreneurs and leaders decide to compete following rules of existing industries.

To overcome this, the rules of the game should be changed, managers should rethink product life cycles, adapting to changing customer needs, disrupting industries and institutions, when engaging in proactive environmental strategies. To remove these challenges and escape from the green prison, sustainable entrepreneurs seem to align both individual and society benefits, thanks to altruistic concerns and economic returns (Pacheco et al., 2010).

The second challenge is related to innovation, which seems to be the key element on the road to a sustainable economy. The sustainable transformation of businesses requires innovations in products, processes and activities. The scale of the effort required in innovation illustrates the second challenge described in the literature, which is related to the experience and size of companies. In this sense, even if innovation is possible in existing large companies, they generally tend to follow incremental innovation. However, the level of disruptive innovation required in terms of sustainable development to design a new business model, which would require existing companies to reduce their current polluting behaviours, gives entrepreneurs and start-ups a clear advantage, turning them into the role of Emerging Davids compared with Greening Goliaths (Hockerts & Wüstenhagen, 2010).

The small size of new entrepreneurial businesses and their flexibility in defining new processes, provide opportunities to develop new products, processes and services that contribute to sustainability, offering the potential for competitive advantage and long-term viability through new business models.

The last and third challenge related to sustainability is the time required to collect the fruits of the invested work and start seeing improvements. Sustainability is considered one major challenge in our society (Buckley et al., 2017; Fernhaber & Zou, 2022; Markman et al., 2019), such a challenge requires a high level of commitment to continuous innovation, multiple stakeholder engagement, and the development of new metrics and reporting mechanisms that could capture the full impact of business activities on people, planet, and profits. In this sense, institutions and academics remark on the importance of Entrepreneur resilience (Gabarret et al., 2018; UN News, 2022), giving to Entrepreneurs the capacity to embrace sustainability. SE businesses can lead the way in solving some of the world's most pressing problems, becoming a major driver in creating economic value that is both inclusive and environmental.

Hart and Milstein (1996) argue that the interdependencies of the three dimensions have created a world in collision, presenting the greatest challenge our society has ever faced. They also emphasize that the challenges sustainable entrepreneurs will encounter vary depending on the economic context in which they operate, as illustrated in the following figure:

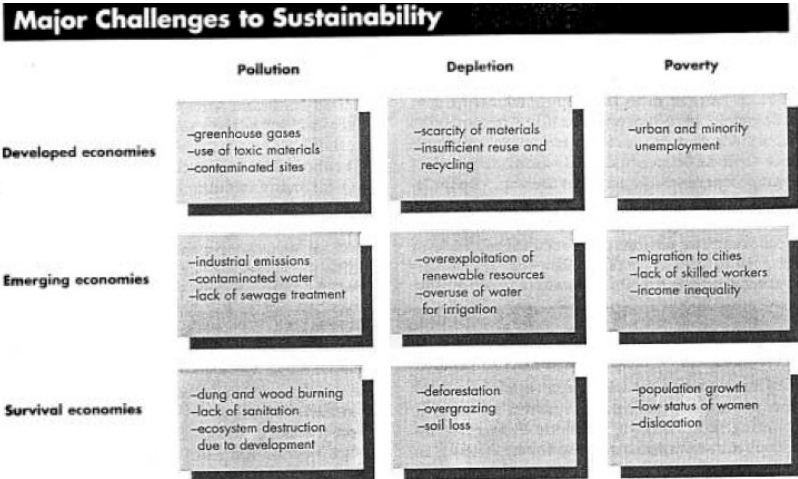


Figure 2 : Major challenges to Sustainability,  
 Source: Hart, S. L. (1996) Beyond Greening Strategies for a Sustainable World, HBR

The intersection of sustainability and entrepreneurship represents a vital frontier for innovation, economic development and social progress. SE offers a new vision of business that reconciles economic success with the preservation and enhancement of social and environmental resources. As the current global context faces unprecedented sustainability challenges, the role of entrepreneurs in driving sustainable transformation is becoming increasingly relevant in shaping a more sustainable and prosperous future for all. However, entrepreneurs alone will not be enough as the scale of the challenge requires greater mobilization of different stakeholders. This justifies a call for more additional academic research on sustainable entrepreneurial practices and behaviours that help accelerate this transformation (Markman et al., 2019).

## 1.2 Definitions of Sustainable Entrepreneurship

In the changing context of modern global businesses, the emergence of SE marks an important new direction from traditional entrepreneurship, in which start-ups focused on both financial and economic benefits aim at a more comprehensive approach and goals, integrating economic viability with society and the environment. This subchapter looks to explore the dynamic and multifaceted field of SE, drawing on the works discussed in well-cited literature reviews (Anand et al., 2021; Munoz and Cohen, 2018; Rosário et al., 2022; Terán-Yépez et al., 2020) to describe the current state, challenges and future directions of this stream of research.

The creation of SE as a distinct field can be traced back to the pioneering discussions of Hart and Milstein (1999), who presented global sustainable development challenges as a golden opportunity for innovation and entrepreneurship (Munoz and Cohen, 2018). The authors expand this research with the study of a more holistic way of creating value, moving from single economic profit to share value (Hart & Milstein, 2003). Since then, the concept has attracted academic interest, supported by growing global awareness of the urgent need to combat environmental degradation and social inequality. Anand et al. (2021) argue that entrepreneurs are increasingly recognized not only as profit generators but also as change agents, motivating their businesses to minimize negative environmental impacts and to promote social good (Choi and Gray, 2008; Munoz et al., 2018).

Anand et al. (2021) recently elaborate a bibliometric analysis that reveal the burgeoning interest and expansion of SE research across different levels of analysis, moving from central themes at a micro level (the Entrepreneur) to more recent studies at macro level themes (sustainable entrepreneurial ecosystems), resulting in a wide array of questions being addressed. However, gaps remain, notably in the meaningful measurement of sustainability outcomes and the need for more inclusive theories that go beyond a primarily North American and European focus (Muñoz & Cohen, 2018).

SE transcends disciplinary boundaries, drawing on fields as diverse as politics, environmental science, sociology, management and economics, thereby demonstrating a diversity of perspectives and methods. This interdisciplinary nature highlights the complexity of SE, shaped by different institutional contexts, organizational types, and individual perspectives of researchers (Anand et al., 2021).

As SE gains in maturity, it is recognized not merely as an amalgamation of social and environmental entrepreneurship but as a unique field capable of harmonizing economic, social, and environmental value creation. This holistic approach is crucial for ensuring the well-being of future generations and fostering a sustainable balance between nature, society, and economic activity (Terán-Yépez et al., 2020). Yet this significant progress has not solved all the challenges. The field is grappling with the need for clearer definitions, more comprehensive theoretical frameworks, and guidance for assessing the long-term systemic impacts of sustainable business practices. Furthermore, the growing SE field is at a crossroads, facing the conceptual risk of premature closure and the challenge of maintaining an innovative position while gaining legitimacy (Rosário et al., 2022).

We aim to analyse these discussions, providing an overview of the development of SE, current research themes, debates and the future trajectory. By synthesizing the views of leading academics and recent research, we look to contribute to a better understanding of the role of SE in promoting sustainable development and transforming managerial business practices. In doing so, we highlight the need for further research and actions to understand the full potential of SE and address some of the pressing global challenges of our time.

### **1.2.1 Historical Evolution and Boundaries of Sustainable Entrepreneurship**

Entrepreneurship in the academic literature is usually associated with economic development and wealth creation (e.g., Schumpeter, 1942; Kirzner, 1973). The environmental and social issues have been largely ignored in entrepreneurship research. Hart and Milstein (1999) were among the first to highlight the link between sustainable development and entrepreneurship and to note the potential that sustainability represents for entrepreneurship. They apply the concept of creative destruction (Schumpeter, 1942) as a front-and-centre force for the transition to a sustainable society. They assert that “innovators and entrepreneurs will see sustainable development as one of the greatest business opportunities in the history of commerce” (Hart and Milstein, 1999: 25). Since then, few articles on this subject appeared during the late 1990s and before 2008, with only a limited number of 15 articles published in international peer-reviewed journals (Binder & Belz, 2015).

Anand et al. (2021) argued that early literature reviews focused primarily on defining sustainable entrepreneurship (SE). This initial focus can be attributed to two main reasons. First, there was a need to differentiate SE from other forms of responsible entrepreneurship, such as social and environmental entrepreneurship (Thompson et al., 2011). Second, researchers aimed to better understand the components of SE, specifically the triple bottom line (Elkington, 1994), and the relationships between these components (Pacheco et al., 2010). SE is now widely recognized as a distinct field of research (Muñoz & Cohen, 2018; Rosário et al., 2022). Anand et al. (2021) identified three schools of research that can be traced to ten foundational articles. In doing so, they described the themes of interest for each stream; with a first group interested in a deeper understanding of entrepreneurial concepts such as opportunity construction or market imperfections; a second group more oriented to environmental entrepreneurship, green practices and related ecosystems; and a third group that tries to understand the transforming role and change impact of sustainable entrepreneurs in society; illustrating the variety of themes and orientations that are explored in this field.

Binder and Belz (2015) state that some authors see SE as part of the research or equivalent to what is done in “social entrepreneurship” (e.g. Sullivan Mort and Hume, 2009; Berglund and Wigren, 2012; Kury, 2012). Other authors use SE synonymously with “environmental entrepreneurship” and “eco-entrepreneurship” (e.g., Pastakia, 1998; Isaak, 2002; Schick et al., 2002). Still others see SE as the link between economic, ecological and social value creation (e.g., Cohen et al., 2008; Kuckertz and Wagner, 2010; Patzelt and Shepherd, 2011). The diversity of terms and approaches enhances the creativity within the field, attracting researchers from various disciplines who are interested in this topic.



Terán-Yépez et al. (2020), comment that this is a common issue with other emerging phenomena. SE has encountered a proliferation of different definitions, resulting in a lack of prominent theoretical frameworks in the literature (Sarango-Lalangui et al., 2018). The misunderstanding of the concept is maybe explained in part by its roots, as SE research evolved from initially paying attention to the connection between sustainable development goals and entrepreneurship. Other authors consider that this has created two schools of research. The first is inspired by the work of Crals and Vereeck (2005) more oriented to the concept of the triple bottom line, with an emphasis on non-economic aspects. The second stream follows the perspective of Pacheco et al. (2010) that is centred on the relationship between entrepreneurs and opportunity. We can therefore interpret a clear tension and debate between economic and non-economic research themes.

The research on SE remains a flourishing literature, but this lack of coherence pushes some authors (Berger-Douce et al., 2023) to criticize the use of different names and concepts to refer to the same phenomenon. The authors argue that the concept of SE must be reconsidered, given the proliferation of terms used by researchers in this field. Moving from Sustainopreneurship, to responsibility, sustainability, impactful, or human entrepreneurship (Kim, Eltarabishy, & Bae, 2018), to more recent concepts of circular entrepreneurship or ecopreneurship, making it difficult to navigate through the literature.

But the field keeps evolving, and new definitions emerge, trying to answer the business and social challenges related to sustainable development. Following the work of Anand et al. (2021), Binder and Belz (2015), and Muñoz & Cohen (2018) we elaborate a table that summarizes the evolution of the different definitions related to the concept of SE previously discussed:

<b>Authors Munoz et Cohen, 2018</b>	<b>Journal, Binder and Belz (2015)</b>	<b>Definition</b>	<b>Seminal (Anand et al. 2021)</b>
Crals and Vereeck, 2004	3rd Global Conference in Environmental Justice and Global Citizenship, Copenhagen, Denmark	Sustainable entrepreneurship is the continuing commitment by business to behave ethically and contribute to economic development while improving the quality of life of the workforce, their families, local communities, the society and the world at large as well as future generations (1)	
Cohen and Winn, 2007	Journal of Business Venturing	Sustainable entrepreneurship as the examination of how opportunities to bring into existence future goods and services are discovered, created and exploited, by whom and with what economic, psychological, social and environmental consequences (35)	1
Dean and McMullen, 2007	Journal of Business Venturing	Sustainable entrepreneurship is the process of discovering, evaluating and exploiting economic opportunities that are present in market failures, which detract from sustainability, including those that are environmentally relevant (58)	3
Katsikis and Kyrgidou, 2007	Academy of Management Proceedings	Sustainable entrepreneurship is the teleological process aiming at the achievement of sustainable development, by discovering, evaluating and exploiting opportunities and creating value that produces economic prosperity, social cohesion and environmental protection (2)	
Parrish and Foxon, 2009	Greener Management International	Sustainability-driven entrepreneurship describes those entrepreneurial activities in which the central guiding purpose is to make a substantial contribution to sustainable development. More specifically, sustainability entrepreneurs design ventures with the primary intention of contributing to improved environmental quality and social well-being in ways that are mutually supportive (48)	5
Tilley and Young, 2009	Greener Management International	A sustainability entrepreneur is an individual who holistically integrates the goals of economic, social and environmental entrepreneurship into an organization that is sustainable in its goal and sustainable in its form of wealth generation (88)	

O'Neill et al., 2009	Greener Management International	Sustainability entrepreneurship is a process of venture creation that links the activities of entrepreneurs to the emergence of value-creating enterprises that contribute to the sustainable development of the social-ecological system (34)	
Hockerts and Wüstenhagen, 2010	Journal of Business Venturing	'We thus define sustainable entrepreneurship as the discovery and exploitation of economic opportunities through the generation of market disequilibria that initiate the transformation of a sector towards an environmentally and socially more sustainable state.'	
Pacheco et al. 2010	Journal of Business Venturing	'We view sustainable entrepreneurship as the discovery, creation, evaluation, and exploitation of opportunities to create future goods and services that is consistent with sustainable development goals.'	6
Kuckertz and Wagner, 2010	Journal of Business Venturing	Sustainable development-oriented entrepreneurs are those individuals with entrepreneurial intentions who aim to manage a triple bottom line (527)	
Patzelt and Shepherd, 2011	Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice	'Sustainable entrepreneurship is the discovery, creation, and exploitation of opportunities to create future goods and services that sustain the natural and/or communal environment and provide development gain for others.'	7
Shepherd and Patzelt, 2011	Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice	Sustainable entrepreneurship is focused on the preservation of nature, life support and community in the pursuit of perceived opportunities to bring into existence future products, processes and services for gain, where gain is broadly construed to include economic and non-economic gains to individuals, the economy and society (137)	
Schaltegger and Wagner, 2011	Business strategy and the environment	Sustainable entrepreneurship can be described as an innovative, market-oriented and personality-driven form of creating economic and societal value by means of breakthrough environmentally or socially beneficial market or institutional innovations (226)	2
Lans et al., 2014	Journal of Cleaner Production	Sustainable entrepreneurship is seen as a way of generating competitive advantage by identifying sustainability as new business opportunities, resulting in new and sustainable products, methods of production or ways of organizing business processes in a sustainable way (37)	
Muñoz and Cohen 2017b	Journal of Business Venturing insights	Sustainable entrepreneurs seek and strive to balance, not to make sacrifices, amongst economic, environmental and social objectives.	
Sheldon & Lüdeke-Freund, 2023	Entrepreneur & Innover	Sustainability entrepreneurship aims to preserve, restore and/or distribute more justly a natural or societal resource via the responsible, profit-oriented commercialization of new products and services.	

Table 2 : Evolution of Sustainable Entrepreneurship definition

Source: Own author; adapted from (Anand et al, 2021; Binder & Belz, 2015; and Muñoz & Cohen, 2018)

The concept of SE needs to be revised (or reframed) and the transition from divergence to convergence in subfields, which will require a focus on purpose-driven entrepreneurship as a framework integrating these subfields (social, environmental and sustainable entrepreneurship) (Muñoz & Cohen, 2018).

To conclude this part of our literature review, we notice that SE still needs definition. Therefore, we will adopt the definition of Muñoz and Cohen 2017b and define SE as: A process in which "Sustainable entrepreneurs seek and strive to balance, not to make sacrifices, amongst economic, environmental and social objectives". By detaching from Elkington's triple bottom line framework, which assumes a balance, it is possible to better illustrate the real behaviours of entrepreneurs, in which sacrifices are often necessary to achieve a positive impact on the environment, society or local economies. Belz and Binder (2017) claim that the integration of the 3BL by entrepreneurs is sequential, rather than simultaneously, meaning that environmental and social entrepreneurs can evolve in sustainability over time (Anand et al., 2021). This definition embraces different types of sustainable behaviour through the umbrella of SE, from those focused on achieving a social or environmental goal, to more opportunistic behaviour aimed at capturing economic value from sustainable market opportunities.

## **1.2.2 Entrepreneurs Behaviours and Entrepreneurial Orientation for Sustainable Development**

SE as a field of study has examined different phenomena at various levels of analysis: micro, meso, and macro. In terms of micro level, the main theme of research is the entrepreneurs, “highlighted as the most important actor for achieving SE” (Muñoz & Cohen, 2018), and considered the key change agents for his capacity to manage the 3BL complexity.

The sustainable entrepreneur is conceptualized as an individual deeply committed to embedding sustainability at the core of its business operations, going beyond the traditional entrepreneurial goal of profit maximization to include social and environmental stewardship. Munoz and Cohen (2018) define the sustainable entrepreneur as an individual actively committed to building sustainable businesses, motivated by a change in values that prioritizes sustainability as an embedded driver of business success, rather than reacting to external pressures. This deep integration of sustainability into overall business practice is seen as a way of redefining the role of business in society, aiming for a more balanced relationship between economic success and social and environmental improvement.

The behaviours of the sustainable entrepreneur are essential for navigating the complexities of sustainable development. These behaviours are defined by the two fields at its origin. On one hand, the concept of entrepreneurship is based on Schumpeter's (1954) view in which entrepreneurship is the attitude of establishing new ideas through new business models and also replacing conventional business systems by making them obsolete through the renowned process of creative destruction. In this sense, innovation has an important place in entrepreneurship (Drucker, 1986) through new products, processes, markets or inputs.

Innovativeness is critical to fostering an entrepreneurial environment conducive to sustainable development, as they enable entrepreneurs to identify and seize opportunities for sustainable development. Innovation is at the heart of SE, and is a central concept related to transformation and adaptation (Calvo et al., 2022; Chabowski et al., 2023; Colovic, 2022; Tsukanova, 2023) which are concepts related to sustainable development.

On the other hand, the concept of Sustainability sees the sustainable entrepreneur (Schaltegger et al., 2018) as a creator of sustainable transformations, through the destruction of unsustainable patterns of producing, consuming and living, and improving life standard for future generations (Casado-Belmonte et al., 2020). Sustainable entrepreneurs have a different knowledge compared to traditional entrepreneurs, that is based on environmental and social threads and problems. This knowledge supports self-efficacy, defined as the capacity to believe in your ability to achieve a task; that gives an advantage to sustainable entrepreneurs in understanding and navigating markets through this complex process (Barbosa et al., 2007).

Casado-Belmonte et al. (2020) confirm that the motivations of sustainable entrepreneurs align with previous studies on self-realization, financial success, innovation, and independence (Carter, Gartner, Shaver, & Gatewood, 2003; Popescu & Popescu, 2015) and, unlike traditional entrepreneurs, sustainable entrepreneurs exhibit a strong desire to "change the world" (Schaltegger, 2002).

Munoz and Cohen (2018) assert that SE can also emerge through individual behavioural practices. They reference Klewitz & Hansen (2014), who outline five practices leading to SE, from resistant, reactive, anticipatory, innovative to sustainable-embedded, and altruist. There are specific values and attitudes that underpin cognitive mechanisms and behavioural responses. Understanding who is interested in supporting initiatives and creating businesses that support the idea of sustainability. These entrepreneurs, mobilize a number of sustainable values, such as equality, solidarity, freedom, tolerance, respect for nature, shared responsibility and altruism (Leiserowitz et al. 2006; Koe, Omar, & Rizal, 2020; Patzelt & Shepherd, 2010; Spence et al., 2011; Zolfaghari Ejlal; Manesh & Rialp-Criado, 2019). These values guide their ambitions, shape their attitudes and provide standards by which they observe and evaluate their behaviour (Casado-Belmonte et al., 2020). This is consistent with recent empirical research showing that values alignment is one of the key drivers to formalizing sustainable behaviours (Stubbs, 2017).

Sustainable entrepreneurs are founders of sustainable ventures, that are grounded in the core tenets of sustainability, collaboration, and innovation from their inception, they negate the risk of enterprises resorting to “greenwashing” (Baldassarre & Campo, 2016; Delmas & Burbano, 2011). These organizations are committed to a triple bottom- line approach, confirmed through the review of their products, processes, and organizational documents such as sustainability reports (Isaak, 2016; Todeschini et al., 2017). Research into SE has recently focused its efforts on exploring a meso level of understanding of the phenomena, with sustainable venture as an emerging theme that requires more attention. (Muñoz & Cohen, 2018)

Entrepreneurial Behaviours (EB) not only define entrepreneurship as a field, but also shape the pathways through which entrepreneurs can contribute to sustainable development. In this sense, the work of Covin & Slevin (1991) has been seminal in building multilevel research of the entrepreneurial phenomenon, elaborating in the previous work of Miller (1983, p.780). The two authors build a central concept (entrepreneurial posture) to study entrepreneurial behaviours, that describes EB based on three organizational-levels: 1) top management risk taking (high risk projects), 2) product innovation (technological leaders) and 3) proactive competition (first movers, pioneer firms). We previously explained innovation, but risk-taking orientation is another key characteristic of entrepreneurs, including those focused on sustainability. These entrepreneurs are prepared to take significant risks to achieve their vision of a sustainable business, often venturing into uncharted territory to develop solutions that are likely to have a profound impact on society and the environment. In this sense, Gupta et al. (2015) defines entrepreneurial behaviour as: “risky business” under any condition, but especially during an industry’s formative years when there are few precedents for the kinds of activities in which enterprising actors want to engage (Sine, Haveman, & Tolbert, 2005).

The core values and beliefs of entrepreneurs or owner-managers, including their ethical awareness, play a central role in their ability to create wealth through the integration of sustainability into daily business practice. This integration contributes to the development of social and symbolic capital, as noted by De Clercq & Voronov (2011) and Wahga, Blundel, and Schaefer (2018). In the field of SE, there is an important balance between seizing opportunities and adhering to ethical and moral standards, marking a clear departure from

traditional entrepreneurship, where values treatment can sometimes be compromised (Fischer, Frenkel, Lurie, and Nijhof, 2005). Additionally, the concept of ethical intensity shapes perceptions and drives business initiatives that support sustainability (Muñoz & Dimov, 2017). Interestingly, these researchers suggest that only people with both prior knowledge and a strong sense of ethics are likely to pursue sustainable opportunities. But despite its importance, exploration of ethical considerations in the context of sustainability, moral decision-making remains limited, highlighting the need for further research (Muñoz & Cohen, 2018).

Fisher (2012) suggests that entrepreneurship is about action (McMullen & Shepherd, 2006) and action in entrepreneurship is usually observed as an individual behaviour (Bird & Schjoedt, 2009), as result, the entrepreneurial behaviour is a useful unit of analysis in research. According to Fisher (2012), entrepreneurial behaviours are the "concrete implementation of individual or team tasks required to launch and develop a new organisation" (Bird & Schjoedt, p. 328) which manifest as a "discrete units of individual activity that can be observed by an audience" (Bird & Schjoedt, p. 335).

Casado-Belmonte et al., (2020), stress that the only other approach to EB as defined by Covin & Slevin (1991), is one that integrates the three pillars of economic, ecological and social ethics at the heart of the company (Walley & Taylor, 2002). In this sense, Hernández-Perlines & Ibarra-Cisneros, (2018) defines the SE orientation as " the enterprises' willingness to foster innovative, proactive and risky actions coherent with the development of the economic, social and environmental aspects of both the company and the environment" (Hernández-Perlines & Ibarra-Cisneros, 2018 p. 2). Hernández-Perlines & Ibarra-Cisneros state that the SE orientation of a firm is an approach to the environment in which the company operates, which enables business opportunities to be discovered and the quality of life to be improved. Sustainability orientation implies an organization's willingness to undertake sustainability-related initiatives (Tata & Prasad, 2015) and refers to the belief in the link between environmental considerations and environmental considerations. environment and society in business activities (Chea Hooi, Ahmad, Amran, & Abidur Rahman, 2016; Kuckertz & Wagner, 2010).

There are different categories of Sustainable Business, mainly differentiated in their level of sustainable development adoption. Karra Sillaman & de Colle (2024), emphasise that an important distinction needs to be made between companies that are moving from a traditional linear business model to a sustainable business model, and those that have been conceived with sustainable values at the heart of their activities. Companies in the latter category are often referred to as "born sustainable", "green start-ups" or "green businesses", and their founders are recognised as "sustainability entrepreneurs" or "ecopreneurs" (Jayaratne et al., 2019; Klewitz & Hansen, 2014; Todeschini et al., 2017) and companies in the former will be referred as "Sustainable Transforming firms".

The notion of Entrepreneurial Sustainability orientation is rooted in the seminal work of Hart et Milstein (1999, 2003), in which they develop a framework to understand sustainable value creation. The two authors distinguish in their 1999 articles, greening strategies, usually linked with incumbents' firms, from sustainable strategies, associated with start-ups, and disruption. For the two authors the creation of shareholder value needs to perform on multiple dimensions, the global challenges associated with sustainability are multifaceted, including the concern on

the 3BL dimensions of economic, social, and environmental. In result they developed a sustainable-value framework; this framework shows how global challenges related to sustainability (viewed through the appropriate business lens) can contribute to identifying strategies and practices that contribute to a “win-win” approach in which companies create “sustainable value” for a more sustainable world. There are four basic aspects of a sustainability strategy that fits in to the two previously described categories that will be considered:

### Sustainable Transforming firms

- Pollution prevention: reduction of waste and emissions from existing operations and facilities;
- Product Stewardship: engaging stakeholders and managing the entire lifecycle of today's products;

### Born Sustainable Firms

- Clean Technology: developing and operationalizing “next generation” clean technologies; and
- Sustainability Vision: co-creating new ventures to address the non-answered needs of the poor and underserved.

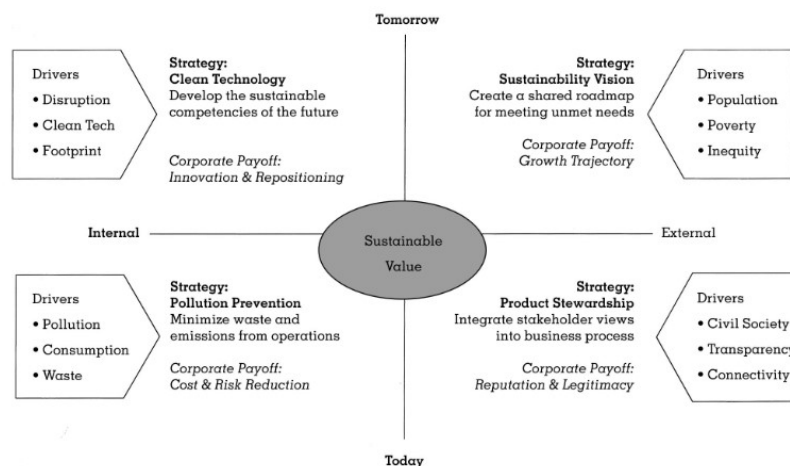


Figure 3 : Sustainable Value Framework,

Source: Hart, S. L., & Milstein, M. B. (2003). Creating sustainable value. *Academy of Management Perspectives*.

In short, despite the fact that there is not an universal definition of Entrepreneurship (Ratten et al., 2019), most definitions include the concepts of innovation, proactiveness and risk-taking, included into the definition of entrepreneurial behaviours EB. Entrepreneurs’ Behaviours play an important role in driving the sustainability agenda. By demonstrating these characteristics, sustainable entrepreneurs can transform industries, contribute to the economic landscape, but also play a central role in addressing global sustainability challenges. Firms moving from greening practices, centred in compliances and CSR practices improvement, to firms following more disruptive technologies, and more social business models, demonstrating a larger level of Sustainable Entrepreneurial Behaviours (SEB). The Sustainable Value framework (Hart & Milstein, 2003) illustrates how businesses can grow economically while making a significant contribution to environmental protection and social justice globally, showing the potential for entrepreneurship, in addressing global sustainable challenges (Hart & Milstein, 1999) through sustainable entrepreneurial behaviours (SEB).

### **1.3 A Need for Research about Sustainable Entrepreneurship in an International Context**

The concept of sustainable entrepreneurship (SE) has evolved significantly, balancing the economic, environmental, and societal facets of sustainability, as highlighted by the triple bottom line (TBL) approach introduced by Elkington (1994). The growing importance of SE is evident thanks to its potential to innovate and address grand challenges, affirming the existing link between entrepreneurship and sustainable development (Casado-Belmonte et al., 2020; Kabbara et al., 2024). However, this synergy is pivotal in transforming economies towards sustainability, and it underscores the necessity of exploring SE in the realm of international business. As affirmed by Aspelund (2017), there is no doubt that we are in the era of globalization and that international business are a key driver for market and social trends, and this confirms how sustainable development plays a key role in the global economy (Ratten et al., 2019). Furthermore, the contemporary global landscape, characterized by globalization and an increasing emphasis on social responsibility, offers a fertile ground for SE to contribute to economic development while addressing social and environmental challenges (Aspelund et al., 2017; Zu, 2013). This dual potential makes SE an important factor in contributing globally to the achievement of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Research emphasizes the complexity and potential of SE's internationalization, focusing on both firm-specific and external factors influencing this dynamic process (Casado-Belmonte et al., 2020). The complex balance between internal drivers, such as innovation, and external drivers, including home and host country factors, necessitates a deeper inquiry into how SE ventures navigate and thrive in international markets. Notably, the integration of sustainability into the internationalization strategies of small and medium enterprises (SMEs), especially in sectors like sustainable fashion in where sustainable practices are rare, the internationalization process represents both challenges and opportunities for growth and impact (Kabbara et al., 2024).

Entrepreneurial behaviour is embedded in context, leading to diverse perceptions and motivations for sustainability. This change is reflected in different priorities: some people prioritize environmental “sustainable aspects”, while others focus on “development aspects” of social- impacts (Shepherd & Patzelt, 2011). These differences are further complicated by the unique realities of countries, shaping business dynamics in a variety of ways. Spence et al. (2011) define this diversity as the opposition between the North and the South, showing that a country's geography and economics influence how entrepreneurs perceive and prioritize sustainability. Dhahri et al. (2021) also offer a nuanced perspective by distinguishing between opportunity-driven entrepreneurship and necessity-driven entrepreneurship, in which the latter, more common in less developed economies, tends to have greater negative environmental impacts than the former, more commonly observed in developed economies.

This difference in business dynamics and its impact on Sustainability emphasizes the importance of each stage of a country's economic development. Entrepreneurs in emerging economies face unique challenges and opportunities compared to those in developed countries,

influencing the priority given to sustainability. Jones et al. (2018) highlight the ambiguity surrounding these different entrepreneurial behaviours as an important but underexplored “emerging theme in the literature about entrepreneurial behaviours”. Calling for future studies that could extend the research on entrepreneurial behaviours by reconceiving our understanding of the context.

Muñoz and Dimov (2015) argues that Sustainable behaviours are what sustainable entrepreneurs actually do in the pursuit and realization of a sustainability-oriented business. Therefore, the sequences of sustainable behaviours for an entrepreneur could be analysed for patterns across international contexts. This will contribute by providing lessons for entrepreneurs in terms of observed actions. Entrepreneurs change their behaviour based on their perspective of a context. Beyond socio-economic relevance, it felt that sustainable enterprises should be encouraged to meet the global commitment to sustainable development (Casado-Belmonte et al., 2020).

Aspelund (2017) further emphasizes the importance of interpersonal relationships and innovative behaviour in the internationalization process of Sustainable firms, but internationalization research has mainly focused on firms growth (Kabbara et al., 2024) directly related to economics aspects of “how and why companies internationalize sustainable businesses entering foreign markets” (Zolfaghari Ejlal Manesh & Rialp-Criado, 2017). Therefore, studying the relationship between internationalization and SE is an underexplored topic (Park, 2018). The potential benefits of sustainable practices in internationalizing SMEs are underexplored, with a need for more research in this area (Torkkeli, Uzhegova, et al., 2017).

Few studies have explored the literature connecting internationalization and SE, stressing the urgent need for research to shed light on how SE firms internationalize? What are the challenges they face? and what are the strategies they use to overcome these obstacles? (Ayuso & Navarrete-Báez, 2018; Casado-Belmonte et al., 2020). This exploratory study will not only contribute to filling an important gap in the literature, but will provide insights for institutions, entrepreneurs, and academics interested in leveraging SE as a means to increase a sustainable global development.



### **1.3.1 SME Internationalization Related Theories**

The Internationalization of firms is a major theory in International Business and is considered as a strategic and fundamental choice, reflecting a company's focus on global rather than local activities (Ghemawat, 2008). The process of a company's internationalization is nuanced and linked to a variety of motivations. It can unfold unexpectedly, without any premeditated plan, or as a deliberate decision arising from internal factors (e.g., insufficient industrial capacity, need of new capabilities, increase of international experience, etc.) or because external factors (e.g., host market new opportunities, domestic market saturation, threats from new entrants, etc.). The decision to internationalize varies according to the context, depending on the sector and size of each organization (Campos et al., 2018; Ciravegna et al., 2019).

According to Desreumaux (1999), "Internationalization is one of the strategies that has developed most rapidly since the second half of the twentieth century, and is now being adopted by a large number of companies, whether large, medium-sized or small " (Pantin, 2005, p. 22).

However, there are divergent perspectives on internationalisation. Some see it as an inevitable step dictated by industry requirements, essential to remain competitive in a hyperconnected environment (Liñán et al., 2019). It can be seen as a gradual process, requiring the accumulation of knowledge to reduce uncertainty (Johanson & Vahlne, 1977, 2009), or as a nonlinear process in where firms go international, stop, decrease or re-increase international engagement at different points on time (Dominguez & Mayrhofer, 2017). But in the particular context of SMEs and International Entrepreneurship, internationalization is an opportunity-driven process (Chandra, 2017; Chandra et al., 2009), seeking strategic advantages and relying on entrepreneurial capabilities (Oviatt & McDougall, 2005; Zucchella et al., 2007). These different perspectives support different theories that try to explain the internationalization process of SMEs. In view of the large number of models explaining the process of firms' internationalization (Pantin, 2004), it is difficult to include and develop all of them in this study. Therefore, in this subchapter, we will develop two of the main theories discussed in the literature on SME internationalization.

### **1.3.2 The Gradual Internationalization Theory**

Very et Tournois (2018) argue that the Uppsala model developed by Johanson & Vahlne (1977), updated by the authors in 2009, is one of the two theories of internationalization that currently dominate research about international firm development. Together with Oviatt and McDougall's International New Model Ventures (1994), which we'll explain in the following sub-chapter, the two theories often contradict each other and offer a different view of the scale and speed of internationalization processes.

As explained by Very and Tournois (2018), the Uppsala model describes a gradual process of internationalization in which a company begins by exporting its products or services to foreign markets, then establishes a sales subsidiary and, potentially, a production site abroad. This

process is characterized by a gradual accumulation of knowledge about international markets, facilitated by direct experience. In their research Johanson & Vahlne introduced the concept of "psychic distance", which measures the degree of perceived strangeness shown by managers between their home versus foreign markets, thus impacting expansion strategy. Psychic distance is a metric way of expressing the "liability of the foreigner" (Zaheer, 1995), which reflects a foreign firm's disadvantage compared with local competitors when entering their country.

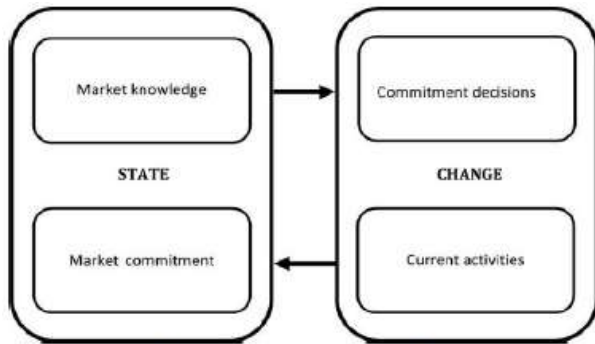


Figure 4 : Uppsala Model, Basic Mechanism of Internationalization State and Change Aspects.

Source: (Johanson and Vahlne, 1977) - The Internationalization Process of the Firm. A Model of Knowledge Development and Increasing Foreign Market Commitments. JIBS

The Uppsala model suggests that companies expand abroad incrementally, starting with markets they consider close in terms of physical, cultural and institutional distance. As they expand, they accumulate knowledge that enables them to venture into markets that are psychologically more distant.

The Uppsala model, developed on the foundations of organizational behaviour explored by Cyert and March in 1970, is a key reference in the study of corporate internationalization, often highlighted by organizational researchers as Madsen (2005). This model, marks a significant advance in managerial understanding of internationalization by incorporating a behavioural perspective of this process. It revolves around the management of uncertainty, and emphasizes the importance of organizational learning in reducing the perceived risk associated with international expansion. This approach was the first one to differ from traditional economic models, such as those based on transaction cost theory proposed by Buckley, Casson or Dunning, by offering empirical supported research, more behavioural, and with an incremental vision of international expansion.

However, despite being the most influentially cited study in the internationalization of the firm (Santos & al., 2015 in Very and Tournois, 2018), many critics has been formulated to both the original model (1977) and to the adapted Uppsala models (2009). Critics are mainly based in its strong association with multinationals, as noted by several researchers, who argue that these models focus primarily on large companies, neglecting the behaviours of small and medium-sized enterprises SMEs (Pantin, 2010; Perrault & St-Pierre, 2009). The concept of multinationals or large corporations is both implicit and debated in these models. According to the Uppsala framework, a company's international success is often measured by its export levels or the number of countries in which it operates, making the expansion of internationalization

the ultimate benchmark. However, this model does not take into account the dynamic nature of global markets and information, nor the strategic decisions linked to de-internationalization (Dominguez & Mayrhofer, 2017). In reality, many entrepreneurs may choose to maintain only a limited international presence, while others may engage extensively in international activities, but remaining centred in a few countries. The goal of becoming a multinational should not be the sole objective of internationalization efforts; rather, it should be about adding value and strengthening a company's competitive edge.

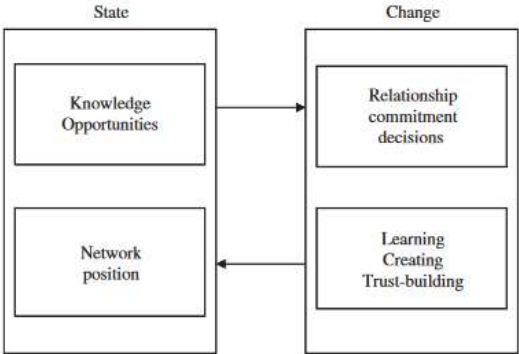


Figure 5 : Uppsala Revisited Model, Mechanism of Internationalization State and Change Aspects.

Source: (Johanson and Vahlne, 2009) - The Uppsala internationalization process model revisited: From liability of foreignness to liability of outsider ship. JIBS

Coviello et al. (2017) remarks, how despite the different critics that this theoretical model received since its origin, Johanson and Vahlne were able to keep it alive by revisiting it, including new international business practices, creating new important concepts, as the liability of outsider ship (Johanson & Vahlne, 2009) and updating the model to new social and technological changes (Vahlne & Johanson, 2017). The most recent versions of the model are built on modern firms features as: “process rather than structure oriented, network rather than a stand-alone unit; business exchange rather than production; proactive and entrepreneurial rather than passive; heterarchical (decentralized) rather than hierarchical” (Coviello et al., 2017). Demonstrating an evolution and a recognition of the relevance of entrepreneurial behaviours in successful international practices, more adapted to the actual changing landscape of international business practices and to the advances in international business research.

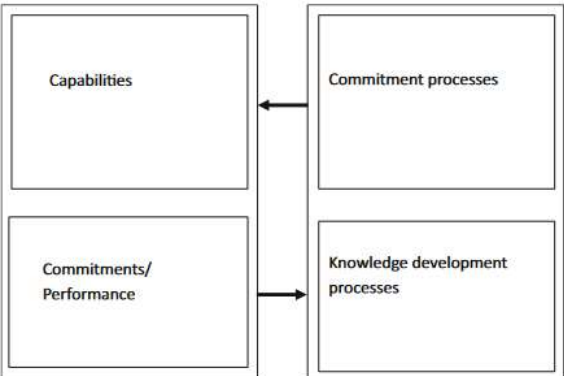


Figure 6 : Uppsala Model 2017 Revisited.

Source: (Vahlne and Johanson, 2017) - From internationalization to evolution: The Uppsala model at 40 years. JIBS

### 1.3.3 The International Entrepreneurship Theory

The research on International Entrepreneurship (IE) was built around the first definition provided by McDougall (1989), who used it to refer to new ventures engaged in international business since its inception. IE research is considered a stream of research at the intersection between its two main disciplines, international business and entrepreneurship (Servantie et al., 2016). Both fields can enrich one to the other, as researchers expand their scope from single-country entrepreneurship research to cross-border and multinational research (Oviatt and McDougall, 2000). IE is also influenced by other research fields such as, strategy, economic management, knowledge management and geography economy. International Entrepreneurship is a complex phenomenon that cannot be explained by a single theory (N. E. Coviello et al., 2011).

Oviatt and McDougall defines International entrepreneurship (IE) as “the combination of innovative, proactive, and risk-seeking behaviour that crosses national borders and is intended to create value in organizations” (McDougall & Oviatt, 2000). This is considered the first true definition of international entrepreneurship as a field of research (Jones et al., 2011). We note in this definition the clear inclusion of the dimensions of Entrepreneurial Orientation (EO) defined by Lumpkin and Dess (1996) and entrepreneurial behaviours as defined by Covin and Slevin (1989, 1990), this allows to expand the field of study to other types of firms from SMEs and to explore different sizes and ages of companies.

The level of International entrepreneurial orientation described by Oviatt and McDougall (1994) is identified in four types of global SME, differentiated according to the number of countries and activities internationalized, in which Global Start-ups are considered those showing the highest level of risk-taking and proactiveness based in two dimensions, the scope of their activities and the level of global integration:

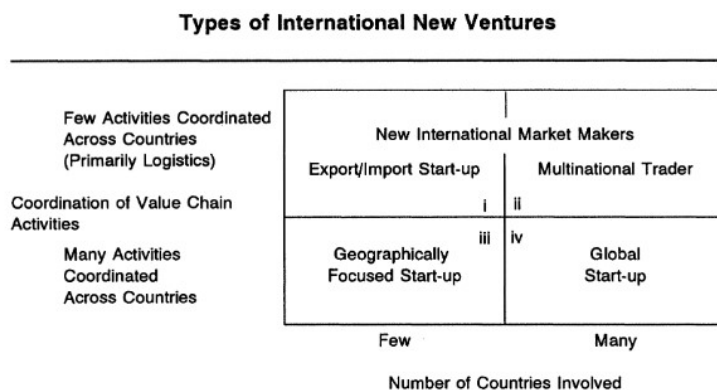


Figure 7 : INV Framework

Source (Oviatt & McDougall, 1994) - Toward a theory of international new ventures. JIBS

Other definitions followed as knowledge in the field increased, but is again a new definition by Oviatt and McDougall, (2005, p. 538) that redefine the field of IE as: "the discovery, enactment, evaluation, and exploitation of opportunities beyond national borders to create future goods and services". This broader definition adds two key concepts from the entrepreneurship research literature, the concept of opportunity discovery (Kirzner, 1973), related to market exploration

and connected to learning advantages; and the concept of opportunity exploitation, based on the famous phrase of "creative destruction" (Schumpeter, 1954) and which establishes the idea of entrepreneurial innovation that replace obsolete industries and transform markets.

The work of Zahra and Garvis (2000), confirms that through international entrepreneurial efforts a company can improve its results, even when foreign markets are unfavourable and hostile. These results confirm how the risk-taking behaviour described by Oviatt and McDougall pay off, and suggest that international managers must act cautiously, but accepting risks in business (Zahra & Garvis, 2000). Whether a company is a new international venture or a more established company, it is important to study the individuals and teams behind, to understand the company's business internationalization behaviour (Coviello, 2015). However, Chandra et al (2012) argues that INV and firms following a gradual internationalization are more similar than they might first appear to be, as is the context that accounts for much of the difference, for the authors both forms of internationalization are fundamentally driven by an evolutionary, path-dependent process of opportunity development and cross-border ventures. This process is influenced by the domestic and international networks in which key actors and organizations have previously and currently operated.

According to Jones et al. (2011) the internationalization of SMEs is not necessarily considered a part of the field of IE. An entrepreneurial internationalization integrates the following key sequentially applied factors as described in Oviatt and McDougall (1994) needed to maintain a sustainable competitive advantage (Barney, 1991) in the global marketplace:

- 1) Internalization of certain transactions: this basic element, derived from traditional multinational enterprise (MNE) theory (Buckley & Casson, 1976), distinguishes organizations from market-oriented transactions. It affirms that organizations are trained to internalize transactions when market imperfections lead to inefficiencies in economic exchange (Williamson 1985). This implies that outsourcing and supplying agreements considered as lower transaction costs, including all related to contract formulation with third parties, are a consequence of the efficiency research of organizations. Therefore, the implementation and performance monitoring, as organizational governance support are not part of. However, some key activities or assets (transactions) must still be part of the value of the organization. Activities such as R&D, sales, quality management or procurement, etc., in which firms support their value remain usually under control of INV.
- 2) Alternative governance structures: Recognize that due to the resource constraints typical of new ventures, which highlight the importance of governance structures alternative value other than ownership. INVs often lack the resources to fully control assets through ownership and must rely on hybrid structures (such as licensing and franchising) or network structures. These structures are characterized by social control mechanisms based on trust and moral obligations, offering a resource-conserving alternative to full internalization and allowing new ventures to navigate their resource limitations and potential opportunism from partners. Because of their lack of resources and power, international new ventures can rely on these structures when the risk of expropriation by mixed partnerships is very high.

- 3) **Foreign Location Advantage:** Distinguishing INVs from domestic ones, this element emphasizes the strategic advantages of operating across national borders. It underlines the importance of movable resources, like knowledge and technology, which can be combined with less mobile local resources to overcome indigenous firms' advantages. The mobility and scalability of knowledge, facilitated by modern communication infrastructures, enable INVs to rapidly globalize, leveraging private knowledge for differentiation or cost advantages in multiple countries, this condition will increase their international market efficiency and competitive advantage.
- 4) **Unique Resources:** The final element stressed by the two authors is the necessity of having unique resources for sustaining a competitive advantage. Even with the advantages outlined in the previous elements, sustainable success requires that a venture's resources be not just valuable but also unique and difficult to imitate. This includes keeping knowledge proprietary through direct means (like patents or trade secrets) or indirect means (such as unique organizational histories or complex social knowledge) and leveraging licensing strategies or network governance structures to limit knowledge expropriation.

These elements collectively frame the pathway for international new ventures to achieve and sustain competitive advantages by navigating the complexities of global markets, leveraging unique resources, and employing strategic governance structures to mitigate resource limitations and capitalize on global opportunities. INVs capitalize on extensive international networks and relationships to facilitate operations, access resources and overcome barriers to market entry. They use cutting-edge technologies and digital platforms for their global operations, enabling them to grow rapidly and be agile. The framework highlights the unique strategic flexibility of INVs, enabling them to adapt quickly to the dynamics of international markets and take advantage of emerging opportunities, redefining traditional views of how and when companies internationalize (Autio et al., 2000).

The new definition of Oviatt and McDougall (2005) give to researchers the possibility to study companies that exhibit entrepreneurial behaviours internationally, without being limited to any type of activity, and allowing to broaden the scope of research from purely trading activities to sourcing, and including family businesses and large groups, in addition to the focused in technology sector. Jones et al. (2018), call for a deeper understanding of how to analyse entrepreneurial behaviour through models in an international context. There is a clear need in studying the role of Entrepreneurial behaviours as innovativeness, proactiveness, and risk-seeking behaviour is sustainable businesses (Uzhegova & Torkkeli, 2023), to better understand how they create new products, processes and business models internationally. The work of Colovic and Heneron (2018) stresses that developing CSR practices should be part of SMEs internationalization strategies. This nascent stream of research, connecting SE with the internationalization process, requires better understanding the discovery, enactment, evaluation, and exploitation of opportunities beyond national borders (Oviatt and McDougall, 2005), through a sustainability lens.

## 1.4 Taking Stock on More Recent Studies

Drawing up a literature review makes it possible to justify our research problem and the research design that will be employed. The literature review is part of a comprehensive abductive research project, and serves as base for elaborating an empirical study of sustainable entrepreneurial firms through the prism of the internationalization process. The documentary research protocol follows a methodological reference applied in literature reviews in the social sciences (Dumez, 2018).

Following the work of Anand et al. (2021), we elaborated a first study of the literature to better understand the evolution of the SE field since 2021 and more precisely to identify studies exploring the internationalization contexts. The study elaborate by Anand et al. (2021) is important not only because is the most recent relevant literature review that can be identified in a peer review journal, but also because the Journal of Business Venturing is the most relevant journal in the field of entrepreneurship research with a FNEGE factor of 1\*. Unfortunately, in this review, the internationalization process of the firms or the international context are not mentioned, and there is no specific related information on where we can start building our project.

Following the same review methodology as the cited review (database, keywords, and exclusion criteria). We explore the evolution of the concept of "sustainable entrepreneur\*" OR "sustainability entrepreneur\*" between 2021 to 2023. We could identify in the SCOPUS database 555 new articles during this period. Identifying 332 articles published in the business and management research field. This result reflects the positive evolution of this stream of research and confirms a growing interest in the phenomenon of SE. Compared to the review Anand et al. (2021) that identified 299 articles during the period 2002-2020, but also including the fields of social science and economics.

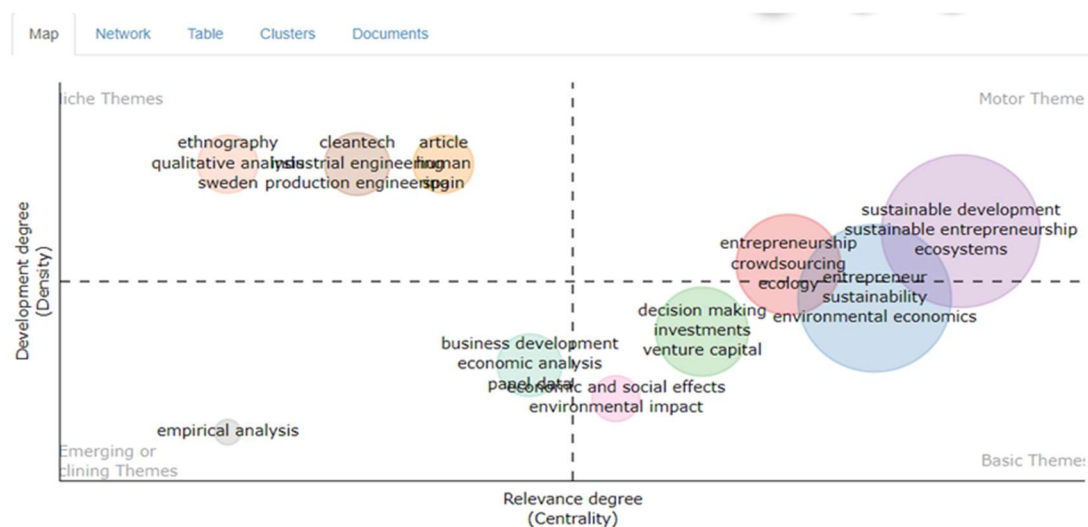


Figure 8 : Strategic Diagram of research in Sustainable Entrepreneurship

Source: Own author, elaborated via R software

From the previous graphic built on the article keywords and that illustrate the evolution of this short period of time, we can identify four major themes: The entrepreneur, SE Ecosystems, Sustainable Development and Entrepreneurship. In concordance with previous reviews elaborated by Muñoz & Cohen (2018) and Téran-Yépez et al. (2020), the main research theme is the entrepreneur, that remains the central topic of research in the field but moving to a more basic level. Entrepreneurship and ecosystems moving from emerging themes to motor themes, and together with SE and sustainable development as the most important topics of research in this sub-field.

Following Anand et al. (2021) we proceed to add a new filter into our selected database to include only scientific articles, excluding books, chapters and proceeding. We decided to only consider peer review journals included in the FNEGE 2023 ranking. We obtained a base of 60 articles studying the concept of “Sustainab\* Entrepreneur\*” between 2021 to 2023.

These results reflect a growing interest in the management and business academic community in SE, with an important number of published articles in peer reviews, that represent a third of articles published previous years in three different fields. And including once again sustainable development and the entrepreneurs as major research themes.

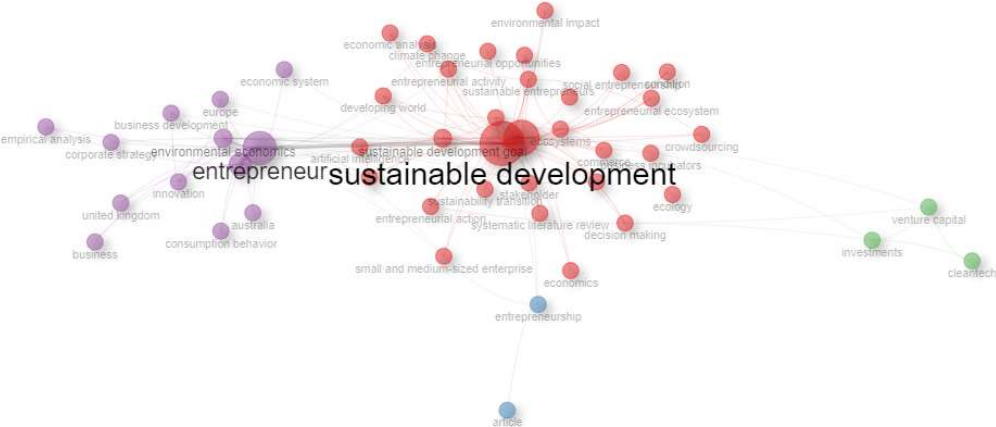


Figure 9 : Map of Research clusters in Sustainable Entrepreneurship

Source: Own author, elaborated via R software

As Sustainable development is a motor engine in the business and management research, as this subject has a global dimension, we conclude that the SE stream is moving into an international context, with the aim of including a more holistic view to address international initiatives as the sustainable development promoted by the United Nations. This concept looks to encourage entrepreneurs all around the world to deliver environmental and social value through responsible practices (Larsson et al., 2016).

SE and ultimately its evolution into a circular economy, is seen by some authors as a necessary step to be followed by firms looking to answer global environmental problems (Zucchella & Urban, 2019).



# 1.5 An Exploratory Analysis of the Emergent Literature in International Sustainable Entrepreneurship

The aim of the literature review is to gain understanding of the concept of SE in an internationalization context, based on a synthesis of the existing literature on the subject. Nevertheless, the international context and the internationalization process remain absent, so we decided to process new research more specifically. To validate if the academics researchers are interested in the interconnection between SE and International activities, we proceed to elaborate a new literature research into the SCOPUS database, studying the concept of “Sustainab\* Entrepreneur\*” up to 2023, in the field of Business and Management, but adding a new keyword “internationalization” OR “internationalisation”.

<b>ALGORITHM FOR SEARCH</b>
TITLE-ABS-KEY (internationalization OR internationalisation ) AND ( "sustainab* entrepreneur*" ) AND PUBYEAR > 2003 AND PUBYEAR < 2024 AND ( LIMIT-TO ( SUBJAREA , "BUSI" ) ) AND ( LIMIT-TO ( DOCTYPE , "ar" ) )

Table 3 : Algorithm for literature research

Source (own author)

We obtained only 7 articles <sup>1</sup>. We conclude that this result is due to the fact that the converging literature between “Sustainable Entrepreneurship” and “SMEs Internationalization” is an emerging field in the twenty-first century, hence available literature is limited.

Consequently, we modified our keywords, and we therefore decided to open up (diastole) to other research streams. We kept the same domain (business and management) and source type limits, but decided to study the three main words separately, adding an asterisk to each search term to ensure that we included all articles of interest: international\* AND sustainable\* AND entrepreneur\*. In search for relevant literature, peer-reviewed scholarly articles, book chapters and conference papers published from 2003 to 2023 through the Scopus database

<b>ALGORITHM FOR SEARCH</b>
TITLE-ABS-KEY (internationalization OR internationalisation ) AND ( sustainable) AND ( entrepreneur* ) AND PUBYEAR > 2003 AND PUBYEAR < 2023 AND ( LIMIT-TO ( SUBJAREA , "BUSI" ) )

Table 4 : Algorithm for second literature research

Source (own author)

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<sup>1</sup> A screenshot from all our literature research results is included in the Appendices 1

We obtained 54 results. After filtering irrelevant articles by the abstracts, we obtained 29 articles that we summarize in 3 major themes and gaps to potentially be studied. A set of inclusion and exclusion criteria were adopted to ensure generalization of the findings and avoid biases in the studies selection

<b>Inclusion criteria</b>	<b>Exclusion criteria</b>
(1) the studies had to be an empirical paper, articles, case studies or conference proceedings published.	(1) Editorials, Literature Reviews, conceptual papers or teaching case
(2) the studies had to be in the field of SME International Business or International Entrepreneurship.	(2) Articles that mention the term “Sustainable” with the meaning of firm survival
(3) the studies had to be in the discuss concepts related to Sustainability or CSR.	(3) No international context notion in the article

Table 5 : Inclusion and Exclusion criteria for literature research

Source (own author)

The following table shows a complete presentation of the key contents in the 29 studies selected through this review. We have chosen to present authors (publication year), identified themes, level of analysis, research focus, and methodology and methods discussed for each study:

<b>ARTICLE</b>	<b>THEMES</b>	<b>LEVEL</b>	<b>RESEARCH QUESTION</b>	<b>Methodology / Methods</b>
Anbarasan & Sushil (2018)	BEHAVIORS	FIRM	The central question the research is trying to answer appears to be how enterprises, specifically the ITC (Imperial Tobacco Company), can opt for sustainability through the stakeholder approach amidst liberalization, privatization, and globalization (LPG), and what factors drive the ITC's vision of sustainability.	The methodology used in the research includes a brief literature review on sustainable enterprise, an introduction to the case organization (ITC), and the application of Total Interpretive Structural Modelling (TISM) to evolve a framework of sustainable enterprises. Additionally, the study validates its findings using linear regression analysis on data taken from the annual reports of the ITC.
Arora & De (2020)	BEHAVIORS	MACRO	The study aims to uncover how Latin American SMEs' adoption of Environmental Sustainability Practices (ESP) influences their success in export markets, focusing on the role of organizational strategies and the surrounding institutional environment.	Quantitative study, base in a large Data Base. The research employs an analytical approach, blending institutional economics with stakeholder theory to explore the dynamics between SMEs' environmental practices and their export performance.
Asemokha et al. (2020)	PROCESS	IND	How do the managerial-, firm-, and environmental-level antecedents influence the internationalization of small-and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) operating in the renewable energy market?	The study adopts a qualitative multiple case study approach in a Finnish SME context and identifies the antecedents' relative prominence at the managerial, firm and environmental levels.
Ayuso & Navarrete-Báez (2018)	PROCESS	FIRM	How do the entrepreneurial and international orientations of SMEs influence their commitment to sustainable development in Spain and Mexico?	The study employed survey data from Spanish and Mexican SMEs, analysing the effects of entrepreneurial orientation and internationalization on SD engagement.

Bérard et al. (2015)	BEHAVIORS	FIRM	The study seeks to understand how sustainability-driven and high-growth SMEs manage paradoxical tensions and the strategic practices they employ to address these tensions.	A single-case study of a pioneering French SME in the organic sector, using a qualitative analysis to identify paradoxical tensions and strategic practices.
Broccardo et al. (2023)	BEHAVIORS	FIRM	How the age of SMEs operating in the Italian wine industry influences their sustainability orientation and its impact on financial performance.	The study used a mixed-methods approach, employing both qualitative and quantitative data collected through survey questionnaires.
Calvo et al. (2022)	CAPABILITIES	FIRM	Which factors drive the internationalization of eco-innovation business models?	Single Case Study exploring the business model of eco-innovation of an energy saving consulting firm, collecting data through 3 interviews of 2h and secondary information
Colovic & Henneron (2018)	PROCESS	FIRM	1) how does the adoption of socially responsible practices impact SME internationalization? 2) How does internationalisation impact socially responsible practices in SMEs ?	A qualitative methodology applying an inductive theory building approach, using a multiple case study
Denicolai et al. (2021)	CAPABILITIES	FIRM	1) ("What") investigate the impact Artificial Intelligence (AI) readiness on the international performance of SMEs? 2) ("Does") whether the relationship between digitalization and internationalization is affected (changed) by sustainability readiness?	Quantitative empirical methodology. Applying survey relying on a sample consisting of 438 SMEs.
DiVito & Bohnsack (2017)	BEHAVIORS	IND	How do entrepreneurial orientation and sustainability orientation interact and affect sustainability decision-making in sustainable fashion firms?	An exploratory mixed-method study using structured surveys and in-depth interviews with 24 sustainable fashion firms.
Galkina (2021)	CAPABILITIES	IND	How the environmental commitment of ecopreneurs influences partner selection during the internationalization of their ventures?	A qualitative inductive study, applies to a multiple-case study (Yin, 2004). Semi-structured interviews were the appropriate technique for the data collection. In total, 21 interviews were conducted with the founders and managers SME
Ghauri et al. (2014)	PROCESS	FIRM	how employing corporate social entrepreneurship and developing a network of relationships with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) can support and contribute towards the internationalisation of service firms into the base of the pyramid (BOP) markets in emerging markets.	An exploratory approach employing qualitative multiple case studies. Three service firms that have targeted the BOP markets in India were studied. In total, 25 in-depth interviews were conducted with multinational corporations (MNCs) and their NGO partners. Data analysis was facilitated through pattern matching and systematic case comparison

Grimstad et al. (2020)	BEHAVIORS	FIRM	Does SMEs' intrinsic motivation drive CSR activities more than extrinsic motivation? And, are motivations for CSR activities contingent on the degree of internationalisation of SMEs?	A quantitative study, that test statistically a conceptual model applying a correlation
Kim et al.(2023)	PROCESS	FIRM / MACRO	1) As SMEs' business is expanding and diversifying, (we) attempts to find the drivers of their CSR engagement. 2) What are the critical factors that affect the relationship between export participation and CSR engagement based on the features of SMEs?	An empirical quantitative study, drawn from a survey by the Ministry of SMEs and Start-ups. A statistical test using correlations and linear regressions of the variables.
Knoppen & Knight (2022)	CAPABILITIES	FIRM	How do the dynamic capabilities of 'born sustainable' firms underpin their strategic development and management?	Dialogic approach comparing literature and empirical material from 12 case studies across various sectors and locations.
Ko et al. (2021)	BEHAVIORS	FIRM / MACRO	How proactive environmental strategy contributes to emerging country SME internationalization under different foreign environmental pressures	A survey of 217 Chinese SMEs reveals the positive effects of proactive environmental strategy on inward-focused and outward focused internationalization activities.
Martín-Tapia et al. (2010)	BEHAVIORS	FIRM	Can innovative environmental strategy positively contribute to a SMEs' export? Is the relationship between advanced environmental strategy and export intensity the same for medium, small and micro-enterprises?	Personal interviews were conducted with 123 general managers of exporting SMEs from the Spanish food industry.
Mersland et al. (2020)	BEHAVIORS	MACRO	How do macroeconomic environments of host countries influence the international market selection of social enterprises?	Analysis based on data from 41 impact investing organizations and 153 developing countries, using statistical models to examine macroeconomic factors.
Oelze & Habisch (2018)	PROCESS	FIRM	how the implementation of Responsible Supply Chain Management (RSCM) of SMEs as buyers in the international markets differs from the approach of MNCs	The study is based on cross-sectional qualitative case-study research of ten German companies
Ostermann et al. (2021)	CAPABILITIES	FIRM	Identifies the drivers for adopting Circular Economy (CE) practices in a born-sustainable company within the fashion sector.	An exploratory case study of a Brazilian fashion company, involving literature review and empirical case analysis.
Ratten (2023)	CAPABILITIES	IND	Are female sustainable tourism entrepreneurs more interested in climate change than male entrepreneurs	A qualitative study of female tourism entrepreneurs following an interpretative approach was used to collect,

Rialp-Criado et al. (2020)	PROCESS	MACRO	how and why the drastic renewable energy policy reform in Spain ultimately influenced the development of international entrepreneurial activities amongst domestic firms.	Primary data were collected from nine RE companies in Spain and then triangulated with secondary data and interviews from informants in other local institutions.
Stoian & Plakoyiannaki (2023)	BEHAVIORS	FIRM	How do SMEs understand and practice CSR in the context of firm internationalization?"	The study follows an interpretive qualitative approach
Sundström et al. (2020)	BEHAVIORS	FIRM	What critical mediating and moderating market intelligence challenges faced by the SMEs when implementing corporate social responsibility (CSR) internationally	Action research method by analysing four case studies.
Tarnanidis et al. (2019)	PROCESS	MACRO	Measuring the concept of sustainable entrepreneurship.	We collected data from 150 Greek food companies.
Uzhegova & Torkkeli (2023)	CAPABILITIES	IND	Explores the role of decision-making logic in explaining responsible business practices (RBPs) in SMEs and their impact on competitive performance.	Survey of 179 Finnish SMEs, linear regression modelling.
Uzhegova et al. (2019)	PROCESS	FIRM	i) what is the impact of network competence on CSR in SMEs? and ii) what are the outcomes of CSR for SMEs' competitive performance?	Based on the survey data from a sample of 141 Finnish SMEs. Results obtained via linear regression modelling
Zahoor & Lew (2022)	CAPABILITIES	FIRM	What is the influence of strategic orientations and dynamic capability on the sustainable international performance of SMEs?	Quantitative study Using survey data from 211 SMEs
Zolfaghari Ejlal Manesh & Rialp-Criado (2019)	PROCESS	IND / FIRM	Who are international ecopreneurs? How and why do IE and sustainable entrepreneurship literatures contribute to explain the phenomenon of international ecopreneurs?	This study is based on an exploratory case study approach to examine the key research questions. In this study, we employed a multiple-case design based upon our research criteria for selecting Spanish new ventures in the renewable energy industry.
Torkkeli et al. (2017)	BEHAVIORS	FIRM	What is the relationship between corporate social responsibility (CSR) and sustainability-related practices and successful internationalization, particularly in the context of SMEs?	Quantitative empirical methodology. Applying survey relying on 90 internationally operating Finnish SMEs across several industry sectors
Uzhegova et al. (2018)	CAPABILITIES	FIRM	Investigates how CSR and market-sensing capability influence the international performance of SMEs.	Quantitative analysis using regression modelling on data from 85 Finnish SMEs, alongside mediation analysis.

Uzhegova et al. (2020)	BEHAVIORS	FIRM	What implications have the differences in RBPs' manifestations for international business of SMEs from emerging and developed economies?	A broad inductive exploration, following a qualitative investigation of RBPs in Russian and Finnish SMEs that have international business relationships in the other country.
Uzhegova et al. (2023)	CAPABILITIES	INDIVIDUAL	What is the effect of managerial sensemaking on fostering responsible business practices in international SMEs?	Linear regression analysis using data from a survey of 179 Finnish internationalized SMEs.
Crals & Vereeck (2004)	BEHAVIORS	FIRM	Investigates how SMEs can engage in sustainable entrepreneurship despite challenges like limited resources and complex certification processes.	Case study analysis, particularly examining the approaches and practices of SMEs towards sustainability.
Khaledi et al. (2023)	PROCESS	MACRO	Examination, classification and ranking of the food industry supply chain in Mazandaran Free Economic Zone from a sustainability perspective and its effect on international entrepreneurship.	Interpretive structural modelling (ISM) and Matrix-based Multiplication Applied to Classification (MICMAC) methods is an export-oriented method. The indicators are determined based on the definitive opinion of experts.
Torkkeli et al. (2017)	CAPABILITIES	FIRM	How do learning and environmental orientations affect the internationalization and growth of SMEs?	Mixed methods, including regression analysis and case study.

Table 6 : Summary of Literature converging between SE and Internationalization

Source: Own author

The obtained review shows that there are three main themes that are given special attention in this stream of research: the internationalization process, the sustainable behaviours and the resources and capabilities of sustainable SMEs. In the following section, we will present each topic and discuss the different findings and implications for the nascent sub-field of sustainable international entrepreneurship.

### 1.5.1 The Internationalization Process

In the dynamic international business arena, the link between corporate social responsibility (CSR) and the global expansion of SMEs is becoming increasingly clear, as evidenced through a series of academic findings (Uzhegova et al., 2019, 2020). Two streams of research are clearly emerging, the first one in which sustainability is a strategy to increase international performance (either for business growth, or scope diversification). We call this stream, Sustainable International Entrepreneurship (SIE), that is CSR and Sustainable practices adoption by International SMEs. A second one in which internationalization could be one the strategic options followed by a sustainable business to increase firms' competitive advantage, with the aim of creating a shared value (Casado-Belmonte et al., 2020). We call this stream of research International Sustainable Entrepreneurship (ISE), that is the internationalisation process of Sustainable SMEs.

Related to the first stream, Colovic & Henneron (2019) draw attention to the significant influence of internationalization on the integration of CSR in SMEs, and note the mutual impact of CSR in accelerating and enabling the growth of the scale of international operations. Several studies demonstrate this, for example Khaledi et al. (2023) examine the sustainability of food industry supply chains in the Mazandaran Free Economic Zone, and highlight the importance of environmentally friendly practices, cost reduction and customer responsiveness in attracting international investment FDI. Furthermore, Kim et al. (2023) found that SMEs are more likely to engage in CSR activities when doing export. In a similar study, Tarnanidis et al. (2019) examine corporate sustainability in Greek food companies, identifying key attributes of internal and external social, environmental and economic value that contribute to long-term and meaningful returns for international development. These studies demonstrate how the internationalization process increases CSR behaviours and how CSR behaviours can positively impact international outcomes, either for funding or for capturing market value.

The second stream of research is related to Sustainable Entrepreneurs with deep CSR practices integrating internationalization strategies. Ayuso & Navarrete-Báez (2018) provide insights into how entrepreneurial and international orientations positively influence SMEs' commitment to sustainable development in Spain and Mexico. The two authors posit that Internationalization's effect on sustainable development engagement (SDE) is context-dependent and EO is positively associated with SDE, particularly in environmental, human resources, and community involvement aspects. In this sense we can infer different SDE behaviours based on different firm's contexts. Internationalization, representing a shift from local to global operations, is influenced by several motivations and contexts. This process varies depending on the industry and company size, with divergent views on its nature, ranging from gradual knowledge accumulation to opportunity-driven ventures in SMEs (Johanson and Vahlne, 2009; Oviatt & McDougall, 2005). We can constant, that values and adherence to international standards and the development of internal governance structures play a critical role in sustainable internationalization. As Oelze & Habisch (2018) discuss, Responsible Supply Chain Management (RSCM) differentiates SMEs in international markets, providing a framework for maintaining sustainability across borders.

Despite the interest in understating the relation between Sustainable Practices and Internationalization strategies, our study identified few articles specifically studying the internationalization process of sustainable businesses (Asemokha et al., 2019; Rialp-Criado et al., 2019; Zolfaghari Ejlal Manesh & Rialp-Criado, 2017). These articles study mostly SMEs following niche market strategies due to their lack of resources and specific technological product's innovation. In fact, these studies describe a born global internationalization pattern, common in renewable energies firms, in which the commercialization phase may be slow and a clear way to speed up is through international growth (Casado-Belmonte et al., 2020). This research is centred in the energy sector and using a business growth lens through export activities, while in other sectors different possible strategies can be followed as alliances, joint ventures or other types of entry modes strategies. Additionally, growth is not the only pattern that SE can follow, the SMEs internationalization process can also be considered non-linear (Schweizer & Vahlne, 2021), so, companies can increase or decrease international market commitment (Dominguez & Mayrhofer, 2017).

Ghuri et al. (2014) work which solely focused on multinational enterprises (MNEs) rather than SMEs, discuss how firms with strong social focus adopt alternative approaches to structuring their internationalization efforts. These firms aim to cultivate robust networks with NGOs and other stakeholders, facilitating their entry and expansion in neglected bases of the pyramid (BOP) markets, by prioritizing non-economic goals. This paper suggests a non-gradual approach (Johanson & Vahlne, 1977) followed by MNEs, based on different motivations than those economically discussed in network theories (Johanson & Vahlne, 2009).

In summary, the literature suggested a different internationalization process followed by Sustainable Entrepreneurial SMEs, that is intended to create shared-value with different actors based two strategic approaches (greening international growth or sustainable international advantage), differing from the traditional assumptions centred in economic thinking (Zahra et al., 2014) and can vary in levels of speed, scope and activities, based in how integrated is sustainability in core activities of the firm.

### **1.5.2 The Role of Sustainable Behaviours and Firms Orientation on SME Internationalization and Market Selection**

This emerging literature suggests that different Sustainable behaviours of entrepreneurs will influence different SMEs internationalization outcomes, differently from the previous subchapter, these studies are centred on firms looking for sustainable international advantages, balancing strategies moving from social, environmental and economic value. According to Torkkeli et al. (2017), there is a strong link between CSR efforts, particularly those focused on social good (called Corporate Sustainability CS), and improved international performance, with a more pronounced impact than customer-focused CSR. This study highlights the fact that SME managers face different trade-offs and consequently make different decisions when adopting sustainable practices in the context of internationalization and the development of CSR. Grimstad et al (2020) also emphasize the essential nature of two different sustainability motivations, and encourage companies to adopt CSR because of its inherent ethical value rather than because of external incentives. Other studies as Martín-Tapia et al. (2010) found that innovative environmental strategies could significantly contribute to an SME's export intensity, suggesting that firms that apply local adaptations of global CSR strategies and behave as local firms, could enhance market penetration and performance. Mersland et al. (2020) note that social focused enterprises tend to target countries that offer a balance between these goals, avoiding regions with extreme macroeconomic conditions.

This stream of research makes evident that SMEs need to strategically balance their financial and social goals when selecting international markets, consequently suggesting different CSR-driven behaviours and levels of Sustainability integration priority when balancing the triple bottom line. This integration affects all decision-making processes, from market entry to operational practices. At an individual level, the work of DiVito & Bohnsack (2017) illustrates how the firm's sustainability orientation interacts with entrepreneurial orientation, affecting overall sustainability decision-making. This study contributes by identifying distinct



sustainability decision-making profiles, defined as singular, flexible or holistic, illustrating different levels of sustainable prioritization logics. Indicating the varying approaches SME's managers can adopt when integrating sustainability into their business models for enhanced international performance. This strategic approach helps in structuring internationalization processes that are aligned with both business and ethical goals.

In this sense, the recent study of Stoian & Plakoyiannaki (2023), expand how SMEs managers can differently understand international CSR, highlighting how they interpret the role of sustainability in SMEs internationalization as: a driver of performance, a marker for distinctiveness, a facilitator of collaboration, and a catalyst for change. The authors propose four distinct approaches to sustainable and responsible international operations in SMEs, with result in different firm behaviours: CSR internationalization as a driver of international performance, within entrepreneurs and companies viewing sustainable activities as a mediating activity for international performance; a need to differentiate internationally, with sustainable and responsible practices being an aspect of compliance that needs to be met, especially when looking to work with mature markets in where institutions and customers pay attention to sustainability; as a promoter of successful international cooperation, thanks to this approach we can derive practices of a social nature aimed at improving societies at the bottom of the pyramid and living standards; and as a catalyst for change, empowerment and sustainable internationalization. This is the entrepreneurial disruptive approach suggested by Hart and Milstein (1999), in which innovation brings disruption rather than just incremental answers to sustainable challenges, creating a clear change in old industries, and systems purely oriented towards economic goals.

However only few studies explore empirically how these behaviours influence SMEs internationalization. In this sense Torkkeli et al. (2017) suggest that environmental sustainability behaviours in internationalizing SMEs positively impact entrepreneurial growth, and environmental orientation subsequently influences performance among internationally operating enterprises. But Uzhegova et al (2020) argues that social responsible behaviours, including ethics, transparency, and partner responsibility, are crucial for international business relationships between SMEs from developed and emerging economies, while environmental responsibility is less important. These results are contradictory regarding the influence in performance of environmentally oriented behaviours in SMEs.

In summary, this body of research reveals different levels of business sustainability engagement and behaviours when building international strategies of SMEs, suggesting a shifting paradigm in which CSR is associated with the core activities of firm international expansion. But despite the growing interest in this theme, limited research has being done in exploring what are the implications of sustainability for the international outcomes of SMEs (Torkkeli, Saarenketo, et al., 2017), therefore is important to deeper explore how more "radical" and proactive sustainable behaviours, more innovative and future oriented influence SME internationalization.

### **1.5.3 Firm Capabilities and Social Capital during the Sustainable Internationalization of SMEs**

The role of human and social capital is pivotal in navigating international markets with a sustainability focus. Several studies identified various aspects, from the decision-making logic to the impact of social and environmental knowledge on international performance and competitive positioning of SMEs.

At an individual level, managerial cognition, manager's knowledge and decision making can be considered one of the most significant resources in Sustainable SME. The work of Uzhegova et al. (2023) discuss how managerial sensemaking significantly influences how international SMEs adopt responsible business practices. Their study suggests that managers can align CSR practices with the strategic goals of international SMEs, creating a cohesive narrative that resonates across cultures and markets. This mediating role between capabilities like market-sensing and international performance is also discuss by Zahoor & Lew (2022) who elucidate that CSR is not just a peripheral activity but central to enhancing SMEs' global performance, these capabilities can be learned but the learning capacity and orientation of SMEs is also critical for international success (Torkkeli et al., 2017). In this sense, a recent study made by Kabbara et al. (2024), analysed the role of the entrepreneur's attitude and sustainable orientation as a key success for the international growth of sustainable firms (Dibrell et al., 2011; Manesh and Rialp-Criado, 2019; Ruzzier et al., 2020).

Uzhegova and Torkkeli (2023) state the importance of managerial logic and decision making, in fostering responsible business practices (RBPs) in internationalized SMEs, which, in turn, boost the competitive performance of SME. For the authors effectual behaviours, as a decision-making approach under uncertainty, allows SMEs managers to adapt to the diverse demands of global markets by leveraging partnerships and emergent opportunities. In this sense the study of Galkina (2021), discuss how sustainable and particularly environmental commitment in international ecopreneurs from Finnish energy firms, is an important aspect in their international partner selection, demonstrating the role of values and ethics in internationalization outcomes, but also environmental engagement as an aspect that contributes to internationalization of SMEs. The work of Ayuso & Navarrete-Báez (2018), stresses how this engagement varies contextually, being more pronounced in certain geographies, highlighting the need for SMEs to tailor their sustainability strategies to specific international contexts. The various studies mentioned above illustrate the importance and impact of entrepreneurial behaviours combined with knowledge of sustainability and CSR practices, in order to identify and structure international activities to improve performance at global level.

At a firm's level, Denicolai et al. (2021) underscore the difficulty of adhering to sustainability during internationalization, particularly alongside early-stage digital transformation. These initiatives require substantial resources, and attempting to invest in the three areas simultaneously can be counterproductive. This highlights the need for strategic prioritization and resource allocation to navigate these challenges effectively. However, Chabowski et al. (2023) emphasize the importance of digital platforms and sustainable marketing strategies in supporting SE's global expansion. Kabbara et al. (2024) also confirm these results, remarking

that sustainable ventures achieve international performance thanks to the digitalization of certain activities that facilitate exchanges and diminish their lack of resources. These contributions align with the evolving dynamics of international business models in the digital era and the importance of green branding in enhancing consumer environmental awareness.

Finally, still at micro level, Ecosystems and Networks, as in traditional literature, also plays a significant role as resources to internationalizing SMEs. Chaudhary et al. (2023) reveal that a sustainable entrepreneurial ecosystem emerges from interactions among diverse actors. This ecosystem facilitates SMEs' sustainability-oriented innovations and global market access, demonstrating the value of collaborative networks. This is in line with the previous work of Ghauri et al (2014) who discuss how networking with social stakeholders as non-profit associations, or non-governmental organizations facilitate the mobilization of resources, actors and activities in emerging markets. Ostermann et al. (2021) and Calvo et al. (2022) suggest that personal networks, market opportunities, and fast-evolving environments influence eco-innovative international growth patterns, illustrating the key role of networks as drivers of eco-innovation and catalysators in the adoption of Circular Economy practices.

In summary, the previously cited resources and capabilities are crucial for identifying and leveraging international opportunities that align with the firm's sustainable practices, but it is also important to remark that the international context can accelerate and improve firms' capabilities in sustainability and responsible practices.

## **1.6 Discussion and Literature Gaps**

One of humanity's greatest challenges is to develop a sustainable global economy that can be sustained indefinitely by our planet. Sustainable development is a global issue and a fertile area for entrepreneurial activity. However, most research has focused on making existing businesses more responsible, by improving business practices to make them greener. While pollution control is important, it does not address the wider challenge of sustainability (Hart, 1997). The literature often focuses on process re-engineering and good marketing practice for international companies, neglecting how entrepreneurs recognise and exploit global opportunities when creating new products and industries on an international scale. Hart (1997) points out that many future products and technologies do not yet exist. Sustainable businesses should be purpose-driven and create positive impacts, accelerating solutions to grand challenges (Buckley et al., 2017; Markman et al., 2019; Muñoz & Cohen, 2018)

This review highlights two academic research streams on the convergence of sustainability, entrepreneurship, and firms' internationalization: International Entrepreneurship (IE) with opportunistic sustainability (SIE) and internationalization influenced by Sustainable Entrepreneurship (ISE) (Casado-Belmonte et al., 2020). The former focuses on strategic returns, while the latter on value creation (Muñoz & Cohen, 2018). Both currents emphasize the role of entrepreneurs' skills and experiences. But entrepreneurs often struggle to seize sustainable opportunities amid uncertainty (Muñoz & Dimov, 2015). Making awareness of

sustainability issues key for successfully recognizing sustainable opportunities and the desire to improve the world is crucial for early international development (Rialp-Criado et al., 2019; Zolfaghari Ejlal Manesh & Rialp-Criado, 2017). Highlighting the role of moral cognition and values in balancing rent-seeking behaviors and purpose-driven motives in market selection and strategy, an underexplored area needing further study (Muñoz & Cohen, 2018).

Our review concludes that academic research has mainly been focused on SIE, viewing CSR practices as international business accelerators and internationalization as linear growth. Future research should focus more on SEI and sustainable entrepreneurs; the benefits of sustainable practices in internationalizing SMEs are underexplored, indicating a critical gap (Ayuso & Navarrete-Báez, 2018; Casado-Belmonte et al., 2020).

In summary, there is a scarcity of studies linking the internationalization process and Sustainable Entrepreneurship (ISE), highlighting an urgent need to explore SE firms' international activities, challenges, and strategies (Aspelund et al., 2017; Kabbara et al., 2024; Uzhegova & Torkkeli, 2023). These conclusions support the study of Casado-Belmonte et al., (2020) that call for more research in this area due to the limited number of studies examining the sustainability's implications for SMEs' international performance (Torkkeli, Saarenketo, et al., 2017). Entrepreneurs often adapt their behavior based on context, suggesting a need to understand how sustainable values influence internationalization strategies. Exploring the relationship between internationalization and sustainable behaviors is crucial for leveraging SE for sustainable global development. This exploration can clarify strategies for SE firms to navigate international markets and address global sustainability issues, tackling the nuanced challenges of a globalized economy.

## 1.7 Chapter Conclusions

Our literature review guided us to focus our empirical research on two key theories that deepen the concept of Sustainable Entrepreneurship (SE) in an international context and particularly highlight SE as a driving global force. The theory of the triple bottom line (Elkington, 1994, 2004a) has been seminal in many articles, providing a valuable framework for analyzing strategic decisions, specifically the balance of distinct non-economic goals within sustainable firms. For our exploratory study, we opted to use the work of Cohen et al. (2008), which offers a more detailed explanation of various entrepreneurial sustainable behaviors and aligns closely with the main theories discussed in SE literature <sup>2</sup>. This model builds on Elkington's triple bottom line concept. The second foundational theory is the International Entrepreneurship (IE) theory (McDougall & Oviatt, 2000; Oviatt & McDougall, 1994) which serves as a key reference for analyzing the internationalization process and understanding possible outcomes. While most studies rely on the Gradual Internationalization Theory, we found that the integration of IE theory with SE as an analytical framework has been underexplored, making it particularly compelling for further development.

Our empirical research will be based on these two theories to explore the internationalization process of sustainable firms. This approach is designed to answer the following reformulated research question: "How do different sustainable behaviors influence SME's internationalization process and market selection?" By applying these theoretical foundations, we aim to develop a priori coding based on the existing literature to explore this question (Gavard-Perret et al., 2018).

Sustainability behaviors and CSR are intertwined with SMEs' internationalization, emphasizing the importance of balancing global sustainable standards with local needs. Future research should further explore this relationship and process, providing a roadmap for firms aiming to expand globally with sustainability as a core strategy. Our empirical study examines the sustainable behaviors entrepreneurs adopt internationally and their influence on firms' international outcomes, validating the subject's relevance and potential research directions.

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<sup>2</sup> An example of the complete table of multiple variables that firms can follow to create shared values is given by Cohen et al. (2008) and included in the Appendices 2

CHAPTER 2  
Research Design, Methodology  
And Preliminary Study

## **Chapter 2: Research Design, Methodology and Preliminary Study**

The goal of this chapter is to present the research strategy we wish to employ to tackle our research question. The chapter will begin by describing our epistemological position, explaining why an interpretivism approach is well suited for this project. We follow by explaining our research design, with the aim to show that our approach, which utilizes a qualitative methodology rooted in exploratory interviews, offers the most powerful tool to understanding a new phenomenon as is the Internationalization of Sustainable Entrepreneurial Firms. We will further detail the context of our research and particularly describe the growing regional interest in Sustainable Practices and International activities of institutions and business actors in the French region of Pays de Loire. We will detail how the data is collected and the subsequent analysis methods that we applied to interpret our preliminary results. We will conclude by presenting the preliminary findings of our exploratory empirical study, including the discussion of the emergent themes.

### **2.1 Epistemological Positioning of the Research**

Pantin (2005) posits that any research work requires taking a stance and making numerous choices. Being the epistemological positioning the first choice to be done, a critical step as it shapes the conduct of the research and positions the researcher within their environment. Thus, epistemological reflection is necessary to any investigation (Martinet, 1990).

However, despite the existence of multiple methodologies and methods, some authors highlighted the predominance of positivist approaches in International Business as the main applied paradigm (Piekkari and Welch, 2006), which see reality as an objective entity that can be studied through falsification and generalization (Burrell & Morgan, 1979), supported by deductive logic criteria (Popper, 2002).

The study by Aguzzolli et al (2024) calls for wider use of epistemological approaches in IB research. The methodology of research is crucial as it bridges theoretical frameworks with the researcher's perception of reality, utilizing scientific methods for investigation (Bourdieu et al., 1991). Research methods are techniques for data collection and analysis that remain as universal and consistent despite the methodologies applied (Bernard, 2017).

### 2.1.1 Using an Interpretivist Philosophical Approach

Aguzzolli et al. (2024) stress the need of employing alternative epistemological lens in international business (IB) studies (Nielsen et al., 2020; Eden & Nielsen, 2020), revealing significant methodological shifts, offering insights into complex IB phenomena while critiquing the prevailing positivist dominance. These alternatives approaches encourage exploring diverse research questions and understanding multi-level relationships, decision-maker rationality and subjectivity, and individual roles in addressing grand challenges (Liesch et al., 2011; Sullivan & Daniels, 2008; Geppert et al., 2016; Boussebaa, 2023). Sustainable Development is considered by several authors one the major contemporary challenges that society must faces (Buckley et al., 2017; Eisenhardt et al., 2016; Fernhaber & Zou, 2022; Markman et al., 2019)

Different authors advocates for the use of alternatives paradigms in social science to address these challenges, Eisenhardt et al. (2016) suggest more inductive approaches, when Packard (2017) advocates for interpretivism, a paradigm where social order and entrepreneurial processes are seen as emerging from intentional actions at the individual level. The interpretivism perspective prompts a reconsideration of entrepreneurship definitions beyond traditional market activities, suggesting it encompasses any intentional pursuit of new economic value, including non-market activities like DIY projects (Shane and Venkataraman, 2000; Alvarez et al., 2013), this suggests for a better fit of interpretivism when studying entrepreneurial phenomenon pursuing non-financial goals.

Packard (2017), underscores that interpretivism's emphasis on individual interpretation (Yanow & Schwartz-Shea, 2014) of intentional action and social experiences, requiring methodologies that capture personal contexts and subjective realities, enhancing our understanding of phenomena through the lenses of ideology, emotion, and cognition in decision-makers (Weber, 1949). This approach fosters a process-theoretic view of entrepreneurship, focusing on individual intentions and well-being rather than solely economic outcomes (McMullen and Dimov, 2013; Wiklund et al., 2011).

Consequently, interpretivism emerges as the most appropriate approach for our study, responding to calls from two distinct research streams. In International Business, the emphasis on exploring multi-level relationships and the subjectivity of individual decision-makers is critical for addressing grand challenges. Similarly, in Entrepreneurship, the focus on examining phenomena through the lens of values, subjective beliefs, and social motivations aligns well with our need to understand the beliefs, motivations, and ethical dilemmas of Sustainable Entrepreneurs as they make strategic choices to address global sustainable development challenges.



### **2.1.2 Using an Abductive Method of Reasoning**

In line with the previous epistemological view, applying either an Inductive or an abductive method could be coherent. But abduction seems the most suitable logic for answering the research question of our project, given the lack of established conceptual models and theoretical frameworks in the literature of International SE. Applying a pure grounded theory coding method, involving full induction as described by Glaser and Strauss in 1967, would require extensive fieldwork to implement, which is not possible in this project due to the reduced time. However, the literature is comprehensive and informative, providing a sufficient basis to examine the phenomenon (Miles et al. 2020). Consequently, adopting a hybrid approach, iterating between empirical data, existing literature and empirical evidence, which is characteristic of an abductive method.

## **2.2 A Qualitative Research Design**

With the aim of understanding how Managers and Entrepreneurs leading Sustainable oriented SMEs internationalize their firms? Our research will be carried out using a qualitative approach. Qualitative research can be justified by its "how" question, i.e. the way in which the different aspects of a phenomenon are related; and also by its "why" question, i.e. the underlying psychological, economic or social dynamics (Wright, 2004; Yin, 2009). When a study's research question begins with "How" or "Why", it's because it seeks to explore a phenomenon in depth, to better understand its mechanisms and motivations. Our main research question is: "How do sustainable SMEs internationalize their activities, as opposed to traditional SMEs that pursue primarily economic objectives?"

There are several reasons for this methodological choice. First, this research project focuses on the concepts of SE and in the process of SMEs internationalization, which are both linked with motivations and values of entrepreneurs. As Galkina (2021) indicates, the behavioural characteristics of entrepreneurs require careful attention to their personal interpretations and the context. This choice also answers to the call done by Muñoz and Cohen (2018), in their literature review the two authors highlight the need for more interpretive approaches in order to truly understand the drivers of morality that guide sustainable entrepreneurs, morality and values are not easily measured by surveys, thus justifying methods that facilitate the interpretive analysis of the meanings and explanations entrepreneurs give to their experiences and how they give moral sense to their behaviours.

Secondly, qualitative research therefore offers a rich and detailed description of reality (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Our object of study concerns a subject that is complex as is in the intersection of two fields of research, that together are little explored, and also lacks theories (Casado-Belmonte et al., 2020). Loufrani-Fedida et al. (2019) states that by following a logic of exploration and discovery, that is the one we will follow, a qualitative research methodology offers an accurate and rich description of reality.

Third, given how novel is our research subject, a qualitative approach is considered the most appropriate to collect detailed and rich data (Yin, 2009). Wright argues that qualitative research is justified when prior knowledge of a subject is limited, and that it can help develop theories that can be tested quantitatively, and in particular theories that are more robust because they are generated directly from the field, making them unlikely to be entirely wrong. Loufrani-Fedida et al. (2019) posits that “qualitative research is appropriated when studying new variable or poorly theorized topics” (Glaser & Strauss, 1967)

Fourth, our empirical exploratory research will be supported with data from interviews with Entrepreneurs-Leaders of SMEs and Experts demonstrating sustainable behaviours in order to understand and explain the internationalisation process and sustainable behaviours. In both cases it is recommended to use a qualitative study focused in interviews or panel discussions.

To summarise, as Yin (2009) argues, qualitative research, it’s often focussed on motivation or processing, this approach adopted is for the purpose of understanding. This means “a detailed and sophisticated analysis of the phenomena under study, including descriptions and narratives, the presentation of the actors and their actions and interactions, discourse and interpretation of them, while also highlighting the mechanisms that create and support the motivations and process” (Dumez, 2013).

By studying this type of actors, Sustainable Entrepreneurs operating in varied international contexts, and by choosing France, a country that counts with institutional supports to both international and sustainable practices; we are able to enrich our understanding of the types of sustainable behaviours and international choices that such actors elaborate, what strategies and how they work with international actors (economical or non-economical oriented), to balance responsible practices.

## 2.3 Research Context

In Pays de Loire region (PDL) the “JOUR E” conference <sup>3</sup> was recently hold in Nantes city, the capital, other initiatives are starting to be structured by public regional agencies, together with other actor and firms interested in incentivising Sustainable practices <sup>4</sup>. Despite the fact that France is one of the countries that is supporting more Sustainable development practices (Ranked 12 in Europe, based on figure 10 index), to our knowledge there are no French context studies exploring the relation of SE and the SMEs Internationalization. The few empirical work are primarily done in Scandinavia and Spain (Rialp-Criado et al., 2019; Torkkeli, Saarenketo, et al., 2017; Uzhegova, 2021; Zolfaghari Ejlal Manesh & Rialp-Criado, 2017). Understanding Sustainable entrepreneurs from one of the major economies of the EU would be relevant, as the size of a big domestic market can decrease the motivation to go to foreign markets to survive, as is the case in the previous cited studies.









Rank	Country	Score	Performance by SDG
1	 Finland	80.54	
2	 Sweden	80.57	
3	 Denmark	80.04	
4	 Austria	77.71	
5	 Norway	77.00	
6	 Germany	75.43	
7	 Czechia	74.36	
8	 Slovenia	73.74	
9	 Iceland	73.71	
10	 Estonia	73.03	
11	 Switzerland	72.94	
12	 France	72.86	

Figure 10 : Country Ranking of Sustainable development

Source: European SD report 2023/24 index.

Additionally our research project explores SMEs located in the region of Pays de la Loire (PDL), a geographical context rarely studied in the international management literature, and notably known in France for its low international activity (Sonia & Serge, 2018), in this sense our study responds to calls for research little-studied contexts (Teagarden et al., 2018). Is also important to highlight that France is not a traditional exporting nation and particularly the international positioning of its SMEs is now among the weakest in Europe, France has half as many exporting companies as Italy and three times fewer than Germany (Gonzalez, 2017). Therefore, we can suppose that Sustainable SMEs are not particularly driven by networks or domestic dynamics into the international arena.

For last, through this study we aim to answer previous research calls that claim for a better understanding of the contexts in where the internationalization process is elaborated (Elbanna et al.,2020; Shepherd et al., 2021), the particular context that actually navigate Sustainable SMEs is different from the traditional context in which firms use to operate, mainly based in economic goals and financial aspects. To this end, for this preliminary exploratory research, we

<sup>3</sup> [https://evenements.bpifrance.fr/jour-e?pk\\_vid=684991321daca5ee171605549645f1da](https://evenements.bpifrance.fr/jour-e?pk_vid=684991321daca5ee171605549645f1da)

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.reseau-entreprendre.org/fr/impact-en-action/>

decided to study two French Sustainable oriented SMEs, based in this region, both with different levels of international development. We will complement these interviews with the understanding, perception and opinion of experts in this subject also based in the same region. Empirical results were obtained through a total of 4 semi-structured interviews conducted with 2 managers from Sustainable SMEs, and 3 experts specialized in CSR driven internationalization. The fact that all the companies and experts were based in the same region enabled us to reduce any distortions linked to cultural differences.

## **2.4 An Exploratory Research Strategy**

Given how novel is the subject that we aim to study, our research project is exploratory in nature and does not aim to test any theory or verifiable hypotheses, so as the primary source of information, interviews interpretations is particularly well suited to answering open research questions (Yin, 2009).

Therefore, we opted for a phenomenological methodology focused on exploring in depth and understanding the essence of specific experiences through detailed interviews, thus producing rich and detailed data. Gavard-Perret et al. (2018) consider that personal interviews are appropriate for exploring complex personal processes (understanding, evaluation, decision, appropriation, immersion, mental imagery, etc.) or for dealing with difficult, intimate or taboo subjects (religion, alcohol, tobacco, sex, death, money, etc.) and/or to highlight individual differences. In our particular research project, sustainability is related to personal values and entrepreneurial ethics. This can be considered an intimate subject that can be difficult to discuss and understand as a religion, due to the multiple contradictions between the expected " to do " and the actual " done ".

All the selected firms demonstrate sustainable behaviours through their commitment to responsible practices and also by different obtained certifications and have international activities and experience. The two entrepreneurs are based in the same region, and dispose of the same level of regional and national incentives and support. The fact that both companies are based in the same region eliminates potential distortions due to inequality of additional resources. The two experts have specific knowledge and competencies acquired through their consultancy work with international SMEs and MNEs, and particularly in strategic advice to improve sustainability and CSR practices. Both consultant firms are also based in the same region, and cooperate with firms demonstrating principally CSR and sustainability practices.

We validated through public sources that none of the interviewed firms (SMEs or consulting firms) is in financial difficulty, which means that we won't have any problems that could become a future cause for interrupting the project. This allows us to consider further validation of the results of the subsequent decision-making process and the possibility of continuing this project longitudinally.

### Summary of information gathered

Companies	Enterprise A	Enterprise B	Expert Firm (1)	Expert Firm (2)
Products	Eco-responsible shoes	Industrial water Cleanings Systems	International Strategy Consulting	Coaching and Training for B-Corp Certification
Sales (€m)	1.05 *	2,0 **	14.2 *	Not disclosed
Number of employees *	3	6 to 9	31	1
Share capital (K€) *	34	150	50	Not disclosed
Year of creation *	2017	2008	2013	2024
Export intensity *** (exports/sales in %)	28%**	20% **	Not required	Not required

\* This information was collected in 2022 from public sources via the website [www.societe.com](http://www.societe.com)

\*\* This information was provided by entrepreneurs through written exchanges.

\*\*\* Calculated on the basis of information gathered during our interviews.

Table 7 : Summary of sample characteristics

Source: Own author

#### 2.4.1 Primary Data Collection through Interviews

Gavard-Perret et al, (2018, p. 86) underscore that the interview is "one of the most widely used qualitative methods in management science" (Romelaer, in Roussel and Wacheaux, 2005). It can be seen as "a conversation with an objective" (Kahn and Cannell, 1957), " an exchange process in which an interviewer aims to encourage a respondent to produce a discourse on a subject defined within the framework of research" (Freyssinet-Dominjon, 1997). The interview is therefore essentially an interpersonal encounter involving an interaction that is primarily verbal: the data collected is therefore co-produced. Moreover, this data is based on representations stored in the participant's memory: it is therefore recreated. In this way, they "inform us firstly about the thoughts of the person speaking and secondly about the reality that is the subject of the discourse" (Albarello et al. 2006). This interaction between researcher and respondents requires specific organization to achieve the research objectives (an interview guide, a selected sample, a location, instructions, stimuli, data recording methods, etc.) (Gavard-Perret et al, 2018).

As primary source, semi-structured interviews were selected as the appropriate technique for the data collection. This methodology is considered one of the most appropriate when studying novel themes and allows a good understanding of entrepreneurs as well as a comparison with other sources of information (Ahi et al., 2017).

The aim of an exploratory study is to save time and avoid investing energy in erroneous themes, or missing digging over essential aspects of our subject due to a lack of familiarity with it. In this sense the work of Campenhoudt et al. (2022) offers a clear guide on what type of persons would be useful to select for an exploratory study. The authors suggest three categories based on the level of clearness of the initial research question. Following the authors recommendations, we elaborated interviews with the three categories to clarify our research question and subject.

The first category is the public directly concerned by our study, in this case interviews were conducted in person with two founders of selected firms. Both founders demonstrate commitment to sustainability through ethical behaviours as: transparency, social and environmental engagement, institutional support, etc; and international experience based on their type of businesses. One entrepreneur was contacted and requested to participate directly through LinkedIn, and the second contact for the interviews was facilitated by members of Team France Export, and the International CCI for Pays de Loire. The interviews are detailed in the following table:

<i>Company</i>	<i>Sector</i>	<i>Activity</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Time</i>	<i>Interviewee</i>	<i>Sustainable Mission in Website</i>	<i>Other RSE information</i>
Entrepreneur A (Fashion Brand)	Brand Low Fashion (Industrial)	International Brand of Eco-responsible Shoes	March-12 And Apr-08	0h42 And 0h39	CEO	From the beginning, our project has been to manufacture environmentally friendly sneakers, sharing value to those who produce them.	Partner factory audited and certified BSCI. ADEME Carbon Audit informed Solidarity: In 6 years, we have financed the construction of 6 schools in marginalised villages and the education of 400 pupils. Eco-responsible: Favour the sourcing of local, vegan and recycled raw materials.
Entrepreneur B (Technical Solution)	Industrial Technical Services Company	Technical Office Specializing in the Performance of Industrial Cleanings, Especially Water Systems	Apr-03	1h00	CEO	Joined in 2023 the "Green-Rooster" community launched by Bpifrance in partnership with ADEME and the Ministry of Ecological Transition.	Certified "Solar Impulse" a label for solutions proven from a technical and environmental impact/environmental benefit point of view, but also cost-effective.

Table 8 : Entrepreneurs Interviewed for Exploratory study

Source: Own author

The second category is considered the privileged witnesses, this means persons that based on their experience, position or knowledge of the subject, they are also concerned by the subject but not directly. In this case interviews were conducted in person with three experts from two consulting firms. All the interviewees have a high level of knowledge and commitment to sustainable and responsible practices due to their positions, and international experience based on their previous or actual activity. One entrepreneur was contacted directly in one local conference and requested to participate directly through LinkedIn, and two other experts were facilitated by members of Team France Export, and the International CCI for Pays de Loire. The interviews are detailed in the following table:

<b>Company</b>	<b>Sector</b>	<b>Activity</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Time</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>Sustainable Mission in Website</b>	<b>Other RSE information</b>
Consulting Firm (1) Experts A and B	International Development Consulting Firm	French Leader in International Establishment Consulting	29-mars	1h30	Director of Sustainable International Projects	Understand new opportunities and adapt one's international development strategy.	In August 2022, the firm carried out with Global Climate Initiatives its first carbon assessment for their offices. Member of CEC-impact a program to help organizations switching from an extractive economy to a regenerative economy.
Consulting Firm (2) Expert C	CSR Consulting Firm	Training B Leaders in France and B-Corp Certification	Apr-02	1h00	Consultant in CSR Strategy & Responsible Communication	(Reduce One's Footprint) + (Succeed in One's Commitments) = (CSR: Strengthen One's)	Coaching Managers to become B-Corp Leaders

Table 9 : Consulting Firms and Experts Interviewed for Exploratory study

Source: Own author

Finally, a third category of interviewee is recommended, and are researchers specialized in the subject, this means an academic that based on his previous experience, based in publications or teaching is interested in the subject. For this case interviews were conducted online with one researcher cited in our literature. The interviewee has a high level of knowledge on the subject of SE and IE based on previous publications in peer review journals and he is member of a university laboratory specialized in the theme of SE. The researcher was initially contacted through the platform Research Gate for requesting a copy of his work, and later requested to participate in the interviews through LinkedIn.

<b>Academic Interviewee</b>	<b>Degrees</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Time</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>Research Themes</b>	<b>Academic Publications</b>	<b>Editor or Reviewer</b>
Spanish University Scholar	Ph.D. in Economics, Business and Law Sciences and MSc in Business Management and Economics.	07-mai	0h30	Interim Professor and Research Assistant in Centre for Economics and Sustainable Development	Main research interests include international entrepreneurship, business internationalization, foreign trade and international marketing	He has published in journals such as IJHM, CIT, JCP, RMSC, JEMA, JIEN, and AABC.	Academic Editor at Springs, and has been reviewer in journals such as JBV, SBE, BS&E, RMSC and PlosOne

Table 10 : Academic Experts Interviewed for Exploratory study

Source: Own author

Interviews lasted an average of 75 minutes, between 60 min the shortest to 90 min the largest. All interviews were recorded with the previous authorization of the interviewees, who authorized the use of their names and companies.

We collected data through semi-structured interviews with a public with a broad experience in international management and sustainability, following the interview method recommended in the research methodology manual by Gavard-Perret et al, (2018). The interviews were conducted during the first trimester of 2024 in the Pays de Loire region in France. Due to the time constraints of this project, we only conducted 5 interviews.

We drew up two different interview guides, one for the entrepreneurs and another for the experts, comprising 16 questions each, before the data collection process for the different predefined themes. In order to invite the interviews to share their experiences with us, our questions took the following format: 1) we asked them to tell us about their experiences in the different phases of the international project, 2) we asked them about their objectives defined for different phases, 3) and about the several alternatives envisaged. We used questions such as

Who, When, How and Why in order to stimulate storytelling and narrative and thus better understand the reasoning and actions taken (Chandra, 2017). We also included additional non-prepared questions in our guide to ask them about emergent topics. We did not follow a specific order for the questions in each interview, as we did for the questions in our guide, as the order of the questions varied where necessary. We have included an example of the interview guide template used in the appendices (#4 and #5).

The interview covered topics related to the characteristics of the company, its history, the managers values and perception on the research subject, their knowledge and practice of CSR and sustainability, its internationalization process and how sustainability influences internationalization. Due to limited time, each participant was interviewed only once face-to-face, which recommended the use of a retrospective narrative strategy, through the historical account of the decisions taken by the respondent. In addition, in order to confirm our understanding of the narrative, we requested the interviewees to validate the conformity of the notes taken after reading them at the end of the interview following Gavard-Perret et al, (2018).

We have obtained verbal and written permission <sup>5</sup> to use the data obtained during the interviews and to continue the research project on sustainable international entrepreneurship in the future, which all those interviewed consider to be urgent and important for increasing sustainable development behaviour in international companies. We also obtained their agreement to participate in future meetings that will be set up to discuss this topic, and to meet other members of their teams and professional networks to enrich this research project in future.

#### **2.4.2 Secondary Data Collection**

As suggested by Yin (2009), data triangulation can be achieved by comparing information collected during the interviews with additional information from secondary sources.

For this purpose, we collected secondary information from different sources. Following Galkina (2021), secondary sources of information were employed: the firms' websites, industry-associated websites, and other available press releases to prepare for interviews and further verify general information about the individuals to be interviewed, the history of their firms, their core businesses values and products", (Cassel and Symon, 1994).

Additionally, we try to answer the call made by Javadian et al.(2020), including new sources of data and information. Secondary information, such as previous interviews conducted by the entrepreneurs in various podcasts and websites specialized in specific sectors, sustainability or responsible supply management, are included in the information. A qualitative methodology using this type of data was recently used by Brownell et al (2023), to systematically examine how luck is invoked in post-hoc assessments of success in 70 podcast interviews with successful entrepreneurs, and expands the possibilities of finding additional narratives to our interviews, that can be relevant to triangulate for our research topic.

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<sup>5</sup> An example of one of the written authorizations can be seen in the appendix 7



## 2.5 Data Analysis based on a Thematic Analysis

We opted for a phenomenological methodology integrated with the analytical framework suggested by Miles et al. (2020). This integration is particularly appropriate as phenomenology focuses on exploring in depth and understanding the essence of specific experiences through detailed interviews, thus producing rich and detailed data. Miles et al. (2020) method, emphasis on the systematic collection, reduction, presentation and analysis of data and can be suited to the organization and interpretation of this complex data, allowing a nuanced thematic analysis that fits well with the phenomenological aim of capturing the deeper dimensions of Sustainable Entrepreneurs international experiences.

To carry out the analysis of the data from the interviews, we followed the same protocol used by Loufrani-Fedida et al. (2019) using the standard methods suggested by Miles et al. (2020). Each interview is initially summarized on an index card after being recorded and completely transcribed on computer. As defined by Skjott Linneberg & Korsgaard (2019) coding is simply a matter of identifying meaningful segments in your data and labelling them with codes, which can be defined as follows: “a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data” (Saldaña 2015: 3).

We carefully examine transcripts, identifying the specific sections (sentences or groups of sentences) where the pre-established codes can be applied <sup>6</sup>. During this analytical phase, abductive reasoning and thematic analysis is followed, which can lead to the emergence of new themes sub-categories. An inductive coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) makes it possible to stay faithful to the data, and cross-reference the different codes in order to identify emergent themes, mechanisms and concepts related to our research object and subject. However, in some cases, researchers adopt a narrower, deductive approach to coding, particularly the novice researchers at risk to whom the whole process might become too complicated and lack precision (Skjott Linneberg & Korsgaard, 2019). Here, a predefined list of codes is created in a table of codes before coding begins (see Miles, Huberman & Saldana 2020) to facilitate the interpretation of the information and focus on issues and themes that are relevant for the existing literature.

Skjott Linneberg & Korsgaard (2019) argues that abduction (Alvesson and Kärreman 2007) in practice, is a combination of inductive and deductive coding, what is sometimes referred to as a blended approach (Graebner, Martin, and Roundy 2012), and is the most commonly used coding approach. Therefore, following Loufrani-Fedida et al. (2019), we will elaborate a table of codes from theoretical concepts or themes drawn from the existing literature in International SE. When using a deductive coding approach, some authors argue that the number of codes is relatively limited, moving from five to ten codes derived from previous research (Skjott Linneberg & Korsgaard, 2019). An initial phase of "a priori coding", a process by which "categories have been established prior to analysis on the basis of any theory" (Stemler, 2001, cited by Gavard-Perret et al., 2018, chapter 7 p.250) was carried out using this grid on a randomly selected part of the corpus.

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<sup>6</sup> An example of a complete transcript of an interview is given in appendix 10.

This table of codes will help to elaborate the entire coding process that will be carried out manually through word to code all fourth interviews as well as additional documents, and other secondary sources of information. In order to clarify and summarize the codes, different tables will be provided in the empirical chapter and appendices.

The predefined codes were related to the two main dimensions related to: in one hand to the international entrepreneurship theory (Scope – IES, or Activities IEA), and in the other to different firm’s sustainable behaviours SB (Economic Performance – SBEP, or Social Promise SBSP, or Environmental Perpetuity SBEP, or Social Efficiency SBSE, or Stewardship SBSW, or Eco-Efficiency SBEE, or Entrepreneurial Sustainability SBES).

<b>Entrepreneurial Behaviours Categories</b>	<b>Code a priori</b>	<b>Characterisation of indicators (from literature)</b>
<b>Internationalization behaviours</b>		<b>(Oviatt &amp; McDougall, 1994)</b>
International entrepreneurship Scope	IES	Refers to the overall reach and extent of an organization's international entrepreneurial activities, focusing on how broadly (# of countries) the organization engages in international markets.
International entrepreneurship Activities	IEA	Relates to the specific actions and initiatives that define the organization's international entrepreneurial efforts, such as new market entries, FDI, outsourcing, or international partnerships.
International entrepreneurship Governance	IEG	Addresses how international entrepreneurial efforts are managed and structured within the organization, including leadership and decision-making processes relevant to international operations (internal structure or market-contract)
<b>Sustainability Behaviours</b>		<b>(Cohen et al., 2008)</b>
Sustainable behaviours Economic Performance	SBEP	Examines the economic outcomes of sustainable practices, particularly impact in financial performance (profit, sales, valuation, competitive advantage, assets controlled).
Sustainable behaviours Social Promise	SBSP	Reflects the involvement of stakeholders in Firm's commitments towards social improvement and the fulfilment of these commitments, and how impacts social legitimacy, brand image, brand equity.
Sustainable behaviours Environmental Perpetuity	SBEP	Indicates a focus on sustainable practices that ensure long-term environmental sustainability by reducing pollution and environmental impact
Sustainable behaviours Social Efficiency	SBSE	Measures the efficiency of an organization's social initiatives, evaluating how effectively resources are used to achieve social goals (indicators from alliances, employee's retention, community impact, etc.)
Sustainable behaviours Stewardship	SBSW	Refers to facilitating responsible management and conservation of resources of stakeholders, emphasizing an organization's role in improving the use of resources, and caring as much about the entire life cycle.
Sustainable behaviours Eco-Efficiency	SBEE	Focuses on the organization's capacity to target ecological challenges, aiming to reduce ecological impact through product design (packaging, materials etc.), production efficiency.
Sustainable behaviours Entrepreneurial Sustainability	SBES	Combines sustainability with entrepreneurial efforts, looking to innovative practices that can contribute to sustainable development, creating new industries, processes, etc.

Table 11 : Pre-Coding Table adapted from Cohen et al. (2008) and Oviatt & McDougall (1994)

Source: Own author

## 2.6 Preliminary Results through an Interpretative Analysis

In this section, we will analyse the collected data and discuss our preliminary findings. Although this research is still ongoing and the number of interviews conducted has not yet provided a sufficient basis for drawing definitive conclusions or establishing a theoretical framework, the analysis has confirmed several existing themes and revealed new ones based on our empirical study. These findings will be briefly commented on and discussed to address our research question.

Following the methodology outlined by Gavard-Perret et al. (2018), we transcribed the audio recordings of five interviews, resulting in 88 pages and approximately 49,480 words. For our data analysis, following the approach of Miles et al. (2020), we selected 85 verbatim statements using Word, which were then grouped into 53 first-level codes. These first-level codes were further organized into 12 second-level codes using Excel tables, as per Loufrani-Fedida et al. (2019). These second-level codes were subsequently categorized into 8 emergent themes and 3 main categories. It is important to note that the transcription from the interview with Expert C was excluded due to his lack of international experience as a consultant. Additionally, the interview with the Academic was not included in this abductive analysis, as it primarily serves to support the conclusions and suggestions for future research.

In the following section, we will explain and discuss the emergent themes from the previous analysis, related directly to the sustainable behaviors of entrepreneurs operating internationally. We will discuss the concepts linked to the origins of their international projects, and internationalization decisions, providing insights into how these themes contribute to our understanding of the internationalization of sustainable entrepreneurial firms.

### 2.6.1 The Origin of the Sustainable International Venture

Code 2	Code 1	Entrepreneur A	Entrepreneur B	Expert A
ORIG	genesis	"It's a bit of a mix of all that which found me in Mexico, where I discovered artisanal work, saw the projects surrounding it, and I came back balanced, with a somewhat vague idea."	"Because when you're in your own market, and you're French, you don't realize the know-how you have, which does not exist elsewhere. And that was a bit of a revelation for me, even in major countries like the USA."	"Who drives CSR or the International guide on the subject? Good question, right? Actually, it's both. And indeed, these are things some clients have told us. Uh, yes. Previously, we assisted an agribusiness client who said, though the reason was weak and the method said no, that I absolutely do not get along with the Export A international manager and vice versa. The international manager really said, it's a thorn in my side. In fact, by accompanying them, we demonstrated that they almost had the same objectives, namely, to develop sustainably."
ORIG	competitive advantage	"We could have taken the Made in France approach, but we chose instead to focus on the millions of workers worldwide, especially in Vietnam. Let's ensure they are treated well and maintain employment there, thus fostering this social desire."	"We needed to develop expertise in washing to, I would say, be legitimate in proposing solutions. Reflecting on this site and this project, I found innovative solutions and met a Canadian, Gilles YYY, a chemist by training who had been working on a principle we ultimately integrated when we created company XXX."	NVI
ORIG	competitive advantage	"Our competitive advantages. Already the dimension takes us back there again. But our DNA is the handmade and artisanal side, we are nearly the only ones doing it. So in this respect, we are much more advanced on this topic. We are one of the few who do artisanal work on an industrial shoe."	NVI	NVI
ORIG	Role of MNE	"In the end, we were among the first brands, which quickly led us to be present, and Galeries Lafayette for example. Because Galeries Lafayette as a precursor to fashion also took an interest in ethical fashion in 2019."	"So I told him, listen, I can't propose this to Danone, but I believe in it, I will take the means, talking about my group, I propose to create this structure. We pool patents, know-how to scientifically develop the technique, and also to industrialize the technology, making it more industrial in its design and implementation."	NVI
ORIG	Motivations de diversification de risque commercial	NVI	"To help, beyond the desire I already had, the willingness to emancipate myself a bit from just a simple French group and to find my own clients for creating the subsidiary in Chile."	NVI

## a) The Genesis of the Idea

In our Literature Review some authors debate about the impact of internationalization on the CSR efforts of SMEs, and how CSR influences the speed and scope of internationalization of SMEs, pointing out an egg-chicken phenomenon that needs to be clarified (Colovic & Henneron, 2018).

Entrepreneurial ideas are often born out of diverse international experiences that highlight sustainable opportunities. For example, entrepreneur A was initially driven by social motivations to get involved with NGOs in Mexico. This involvement not only stimulated his spirit of cooperation, but also led him to identify entrepreneurial opportunities that matched his aspirations. He explains: *"It was a combination of these (Social Volunteering) experiences that led me to Mexico, where I was exposed to local crafts and saw many projects take shape. At the end of the trip, I returned home with an idea, albeit a vague one"*.

Similarly, Entrepreneur B's travels, facilitated by government programmes, enabled him to recognise the uniqueness of his French expertise on the global market. This realisation was a revelation, especially when he compared his skills to those prevailing in Asian and American markets. Entrepreneur B remarked: *"Being focused on your own market, particularly in France, often blinds you to the unique skills you possess that may not exist elsewhere. Discovering this in larger economies like the US was an eye-opener"*.

These findings illustrate how international experiences significantly shape entrepreneurial motivations in sustainable ventures. Entrepreneur A's involvement with NGOs in Mexico and Entrepreneur B's government-facilitated travels reveal how exposure to different markets and cultures can spark innovative ideas. This notion resonates with "opportunity recognition," a major concept in Entrepreneurship research, illustrating entrepreneurial behaviours as its capacity to identify unique business possibilities through their interactions with new environments (Shane & Venkataraman, 2000).

But in a general way, there is not real debate, both strategic paths can positively influence each other as the two experts from the consulting firm 1 comment, *"who leads, CSR or the Internationalization guide on the subject? Good question, right? Actually, it's both. And indeed, these are things some clients have told us. Previously, we assisted an agribusiness client who said, though the reason was weak and the method said no, that I absolutely do not get along with the Export international manager and vice versa. The international manager said, it's a thorn in my side. In fact, by accompanying them, we demonstrated that they almost had the same objectives, namely, to develop sustainably their firm."* To address sustainable development, these two strategies can't be opponent but complementary, in order to support practices that impact global challenges (Hörisch et al., 2024)

## b) The International Context as Source of Competitiveness or Differentiation

The international context serves as a catalyst for competitive differentiation, as evidenced by the strategies of both entrepreneurs. As the two research streams indicate for International Entrepreneurs, sustainability adherence represents a source of competitive advantage for growth (Uzhegova et al., 2019), while for Sustainable Entrepreneurs the internationalization process aligns with the concept of "shared value" (Porter & Kramer, 2011), where businesses create economic value while addressing social issues.

The global market offers both entrepreneurs a competitive advantage through distinct business strategies. In this sense, Entrepreneur A has chosen to base his production in Asia, making this decision the cornerstone of his competitive advantage and CS responsibility. He articulates this strategy by emphasizing the social dimensions of his business model: *"While we could have focused on 'Made in France', we chose instead to engage with the broader industrial world. There are millions of workers globally, especially in Vietnam. By ensuring they work under favourable conditions and maintaining their employment, we fulfil a social imperative."* And the entrepreneurs A also state, *"our competitive advantages. First of all, this dimension, which is something we're really proud of. The DNA is the hand-woven, artisanal side, and we're practically the only ones to do that. So, we're much more advanced in this area. We're one of the few to use (ethnic) craftsmanship textile on an industrial shoe."*

For Entrepreneur B, his international experiences have been a major contributor to the discovery of its innovative technological solutions. It was while working on an earlier international project that he discovered a Canadian chemist, Gilles YYY, who had developed a new principle that was subsequently adopted by Entrepreneur B's company, XXX. He thought about it, *"While planning for this project, I sought innovative technologies. Serendipitously, I met Gilles, who had pioneered a solution that we embraced.... I even visited a large cheese factory in Buffalo, New York, where I saw the prototypes and pilot projects Gilles had developed, which led to the factory becoming part of Groupe Y following an acquisition."*

Both cases, but particularly the Entrepreneur B genesis, highlights the significance of applying entrepreneurial logic when having serendipitous encounters during the entrepreneurial process, where unplanned interactions, can lead to valuable business opportunities (Dew et al., 2009), also known in effectuation theory terms as the "Crazy Quilt Principle" of partnership co-creation.

But the global context can also switch rapidly into a source of challenges. Entrepreneur A's main advantage lies in the support of shared values; his emphasis on artisanal, hand-woven products not only differentiates the brand but also reinforces its commitment to sustainability. However, the fracturing of globalization raises critical questions: Is the global project dead, and is it destroyed by its own patterns of success and failure? These questions are crucial not only to the field of International Business (IB) but also in the context of grand challenges. A shift towards renewed nationalism could make it more difficult for enterprises operating internationally and non-traditional organizational forms to address these global challenges effectively (Buckley et al., 2017).

### c) The Role of Incumbent Firms in Sponsoring the Idea

According to Uzhegova & Torkkeli (2023), there is an important influence of business responsibility actions driven by stakeholders. Stakeholders are defined as groups or individuals possessing power, legitimacy, and urgency, who impact or are impacted by the achievement of an organization's objectives. This perspective aligns with the stakeholder theory and is commonly seen in CSR studies, though it is less frequently applied in international business research. The study by Park and Ghauri (2015), is an exception which examined CSR drivers in small subsidiaries of multinational enterprises (MNEs) and how local demand in host countries incentivizes responsible and sustainable practices in corporations.

Both cases highlight the essential role played by incumbent companies, whether multinationals or well-established businesses, in acting as a catalyst for the successful launch of international sustainable businesses. In Entrepreneur A's experience, the support and endorsement of well-known retail chains was key to building brand awareness and legitimacy. He describes, *"In the end, we were one of the first brands, which meant that we were soon present at the Luxury Distribution chain X, for example. Because this retail chain, as a fashion trend-setter, is also interested in ethical fashion in 2019."*

Similarly, Entrepreneur B emphasizes the crucial contribution of multinational sponsorship to the collaboration through business opportunities once the project has been launched. This previous relationship with this company also facilitated negotiations with the innovator of the technology he adopted, as he indicates, *"So I said to him, listen, I can't propose this to the Groupe X, but I believe in it, I'll take the resources, and speaking of my group, I propose that you set up this structure, where we pool patents and know-how to develop the technique scientifically, industrialize the technology too, and make it more industrial in its design and implementation."*

Most SMEs adopt a niche market strategy due to their lack of resources and consequently they create specific technological innovation in products (Zolfaghari Ejlal Manesh & Rialp-Criado, 2019). Casado-Belmonte et al. (2020) argues that incumbents' firms and particularly MNE may opt for mass markets due to the access to more resources, and networks. However, large and mature companies can consider these Sustainable SMEs as threats and they may opt for merging or acquiring them. In such a way, they exert a pushy effect on small firms to international markets. We can't consider that the relations between MNE and Sustainable SMEs will always be positive, and it requires further research to understand how this varies through the multiple contexts and evolution of international business.

Overall, the international context profoundly influences sustainability adoption for SMEs and entrepreneurs by exposing them to diverse markets, cultures, and technological advancements. This exposure not only drives innovation and competitive differentiation but also fosters a deep commitment to ethical and sustainable business practices through different stakeholders that requires a deeper understanding.

## 2.6.2 The Sustainable Entrepreneurs that Internationalize, Behaviours and Characteristics <sup>7</sup>

### a) The Different Characteristics of International Sustainable Entrepreneurs

According to Casado et al. (2023), key determinants in international ventures include formal and informal ties, prior international experience, and education. These factors positively influence the decision to enter international markets. Human capital, such as entrepreneurs with previous experience from previous projects or higher education, helps identify future partners for business expansion. Specifically, education in an international context can alleviate cultural problems through knowledge of language, communication, and business skills. Other authors consider experience in the sector as necessary to have a successful rapid international entry (Kabbara et al., 2024; Zolfaghari Ejlal Manesh & Rialp-Criado, 2019).

In this sense our preliminary finding contradicts these previous conclusions. While the entrepreneurs of both firms share commonalities as education level (higher education) or international orientation (passionate about travelling), that can decrease the liability of the foreigner (Johanson & Vahlne, 2009), both cases also show differences in their market and industrial experience, as for the motivations that drives their project. In terms of experience, in one size both founders of the enterprise A, lacks experience either in the fashion industry or as entrepreneurs, for them all the project has been a learning experience since day 1, as he states: *“We learnt during the adventure, we didn't know anything at all, we knew absolutely nothing about the field, well about the fashion industry. So, we had to learn everything. The different labels, certifications and so on.”* While on the other size Entrepreneur B started this firm as the continuity of a previous second project, as he states, *“We merged with another large group, and I found myself in charge of development for a whole centre of entities, 350 employees, both Export and tech, etc. And I'm an entrepreneur, so it didn't suit me, so after 3 years I said, I'm changing, I'm changing direction and I'm only looking after the structure of X, my actual firm that I created 15 years ago”*. This divergence highlights the varied pathways to SE, where both novice and experienced entrepreneurs can succeed by leveraging their unique strengths and learning along the way.

According to Muñoz & Cohen (2018), Leiserowitz et al. (2006) argue that several sustainability values (such as equality, solidarity, freedom, tolerance, respect for nature, and shared responsibility) guide entrepreneurs' ambitions, frame their attitudes, and provide standards against which their behaviour can be observed and assessed. This aligns with recent empirical work by Stubbs (2016), which identifies value alignment as a key driver in formalizing sustainable behaviour. Consequently, some authors conclude that sustainable entrepreneurs must orient themselves by integrating economic, ecological, and social-ethical sustainability principles (Muñoz & Cohen, 2018).

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<sup>7</sup> A larger sample of verbatims and codes analysis, by theme can be found in the appendices 10 related to this section

Our finding illustrates that both entrepreneurs are guided by a different order of values priority, on one hand Entrepreneur A indicates, *“We share a lot of the same values. That's what led to the creation of our company XXX. The 2 of us want a world that is both more social and more ecological, more just”*. On the other hand, Entrepreneur B states, *“In our own values. There are 3 of them, and that's been with me all my life, and in each company, it's been the same things. It's the technical value or an engineering company, we're curious, we're passionate about technical subjects, whatever the field, a performance subject, there's always this quest to find something more efficient somewhere, and the environment, that's it”*. On the basis of these priority values, we can clearly see how entrepreneur A seems to illustrate a more balanced sustainable profile, integrating the 3P dimensions, while entrepreneur B corresponds to an ecopreneur profile.

The literature suggests that sustainability values such as equality, solidarity, and respect for nature guide entrepreneurs' ambitions and behaviours (Muñoz & Cohen, 2018). The two entrepreneurs have different values and experience in the sector, but despite their differences, they both show the same speed to go international, and have been operating internationally since their inception. Uzhegova et al. (2018), state that SMEs may engage in CSR due to family tradition, the entrepreneur's personal values, community embeddedness, or a sense of responsibility to contribute to wider society (Ellerup Nielsen & Thomsen, 2009; Looser & Wehrmeyer, 2015). However, the authors argue that is missing research on values, tradition and sense of responsibility in the international context, leading to a limited understanding of whether and how values affect the international performance of SMEs, and thus calling for more research.

## **b) Behavioural Typologies of Sustainable International Entrepreneurs**

According to Cohen et al. (2008), the focus on entrepreneurial rents as the primary driver for aspiring entrepreneurs has unfortunately led to the exclusion of other significant drivers and factors leading to entrepreneurship. Citing Amit et al. (2000) and Jensen and Meckling (1994), Cohen discusses five models of human behaviour based on utility-maximization theories. He concludes that humans predominantly fit the Resourceful, Evaluative, Maximizing Model (REMM). In this model, individuals care about various aspects such as knowledge, others' well-being, wealth, and the environment; have unlimited wants; maximize value; and are resourceful. The work of Cohen et al. (2008) is the perspective used to explore our findings looking to understand the broader motivations and impacts of entrepreneurial behaviour.

While the two entrepreneurs we interviewed seems to have important differences in terms of socially oriented behaviours, the discussion with the two experts of the consulting firm 1, confirms that several typologies of Entrepreneurs can be identified in terms of Sustainable development responsiveness, both experts' underscores, *“I would say that there are 3 typologies that we can observe. The first is the native CSRs, Faguot, NGO Shoes, if we're talking about shoes, Graines de Sel, Fonto de Vivo, in the food, whatever, in short there are plenty of native CSRs, who in fact, when they internationalise their model, well they're going to want to*



*be aligned with who they are.... there's a 2nd cluster of companies that are wondering about the sustainability of their business model and that, given the challenges we're facing and their awareness of them, want to integrate these criteria, but don't necessarily know where to start, because the subject is broad and complex. For example, the Eram group, a long-standing player. .... Who questions the sustainability of their family business model? This is very much the case in family businesses.... The 3rd category is made up of those who, because of regulatory constraints, will most of the time be moving ahead. Let me give you an example: the end of combustion engines in Europe in 2035. Here we have a customer who works with internal combustion engines. OK, so what do I do? That's it. I've got 3 international subsidiaries, I've got an eminently global business, how do I redirect my business model? "*

From our sample, although both entrepreneurs can be considered CSR natives, their approaches to sustainability differ substantially. Despite similar evaluations of economic and environmental aspects, they give different priorities to social issues. For instance, Entrepreneur A highlights that *"donate 2% of turnover to Sayden, an NGO that builds schools in Vietnam"* and they *"have financed 6 schools with them since the start of the project, so that's around 300 children in school"*. In contrast, entrepreneur B expresses scepticism *"I'm not a big fan of philanthropy as such. Sometimes, there's a condescending side"*. However, experts A and B suggest that such priorities may vary based on the country and region, *"In discussions with our colleagues around the world, we've realized that for some companies, sustainability often translates into philanthropy, for example, this is the case in India, and the USA. Thus, social issues are still very important in the rest of the world, more so than in Europe"*. We can observe different social behaviours from entrepreneurs that in principle are purpose-oriented.

It is also important to highlight that the evolving sustainability landscape in Europe, driven by regulations such as the Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD), constrains multinational corporations and mid-sized European firms to integrate new social laws, or engage with sustainable communities such as the Conference for the Environment. This shift pushes stakeholders towards more socially responsible practices. These trends can accelerate the integration of social and environmental behaviours within firms, compelling environmentally oriented entrepreneurs to also address and communicate their social impact and community support. This broader focus helps better address the "triple bottom line" of people, planet, and profit (Elkington, 1994) and suggests a larger institutional influence that would require research.

Concerning Environmental oriented behaviours, both entrepreneurs apply the principles of eco-design, although Entrepreneur A is much more advanced in terms of eco-responsibility and carbon footprint reduction. CO<sub>2</sub> emissions remain the major challenge for environmentally conscious companies embarking on international trade. In this sense, while both entrepreneurs have launched a full life cycle audit to assess the carbon emissions impact of their business, Entrepreneur A has taken more definitive action in terms of supplier management, logistics and the full life cycle of products. This commitment is further evidenced by obtaining B Corp certification, which verifies responsible practices, as entrepreneur A points out, *"Therefore, the certification for recycled materials, the certification for cardboard, the certification for leather. So, for each material, we have a label, an adapted certification"*. In contrast, Entrepreneur B's

approach may reflect a more business-centric orientation, focusing primarily on operational performance and profitability, as exemplified by his pursuit of the Solar Impulse label, as he states, *“Bertrand Piccard (the label’s founder), who is the man who flew around the world in a solar-powered airplane, created his foundation to say that industries and even governments need to stop saying there are plenty of solutions but they’re not profitable, because what they’re looking for are solutions that are proven from a technical and environmental impact perspective, and that are also profitable”*

Despite sharing the ambition to have an impact on their sector, the types of products and customer bases of the entrepreneurs lead them to adopt markedly different approaches to sustainability. While Entrepreneur A argues for a need to *“change your growth objectives and even question growth and say to yourself, if I take over again, I’m still in the fashion business. Is the aim to sell more and more products, shoes, clothes and so on, or is it to sell at the right price, to have more sustainable products?”*, on contrary Entrepreneur B underscores, *“The leverage effects are always significant on industrial performance broadly speaking, that is, it’s not just about water savings, and kilowatt-hours, and the environment; a benefit for the environment, obviously, it’s in our DNA, there is always a leverage point, an industrial performance level”*. The discussions reflect the critical balance of the "3Ps" alliance (people, planet and profit) as remarked by experts A and B. They cite, *“I go back to the winemaker in Muscadet. He says, my dream is to make my product as least impactful as possible. But if this product is too expensive, and it’s not accessible to my consumer, I would have lost my bet. So, this is the 3P alliance, which means not forgetting”*. This illustrates the ongoing challenge of integrating sustainable practices that are both environmentally beneficial and economically viable, and could somehow explain the different choices and points of view of these sustainable entrepreneurs when it comes to internationalization. The results clearly illustrate differing priorities between sustainable entrepreneurs in addressing social and environmental issues (Muñoz & Cohen, 2018). This divergence underscores the multifaceted nature of sustainability, where entrepreneurs may prioritize different aspects based on their values, market demands, and regulatory environments (Elkington, 1994). The previous analysis reveals that Entrepreneur A is more socially oriented, while Entrepreneur B focuses on green technology issues, both integrating in a lower level the other two dimensions.

Concerning International Sustainable Behaviours (ISB), Stoian & Plakoyannaki (2023) identified four typologies based on different managerial interpretations of International CSR: a driver of performance, a marker for distinctiveness, a facilitator of collaboration, and a catalyst for change. The social and environmental behavioural orientation of both entrepreneurs, as the discussion with the experts from the consulting firm further elucidate a larger diversity in ISB. Stoian & Plakoyannaki call “Catalyst for Change” what the two experts name "native CSRs", who inherently align their business models with sustainability principles, this type of firm contrasts with companies that integrate sustainability due to regulatory pressures or evolving market demands. The different typologies confirm previous research suggesting that ISB are not monolithic but encompasses a spectrum of motivations and strategies based on size and experience (Hockerts & Wüstenhagen, 2010).

In this sense, our finding on the diversity of “Native CSRs behaviours” suggests a broader spectrum of ISB typologies, that also differ in entrepreneurial values besides just motivations, in comparison to Stoian & Plakoyannaki (2023). According to Muñoz & Cohen (2018), Stubbs (2016), identified value alignment as a key driver in formalizing sustainable behaviour and emphasizes the need for future research on entrepreneurial sustainability ethics and behaviour. Muñoz & Cohen (2018) underscore how Shepherd (2015) observed an expansion of the entrepreneurship domain towards one that is more compassionate, prosocial, and capable of alleviating others' suffering. Shepherd argues that an entrepreneurial approach, driven by sustainable values, is not morally neutral, calling for further examination of the moral cognitive foundations that can influence it.

### 2.6.3 The Internationalization Process of Sustainable Entrepreneurs

While in the previous section we demonstrated how both entrepreneurs share common values, sustainable goals and recognized the need for proactive action, this section discusses how their approaches also considerably diverge when it comes to the process, the international market selection and how they structured their firms internationally. For that we will analyse and discuss our findings following the International Entrepreneurship Theory lens (McDougall & Oviatt, 2000; Oviatt & McDougall, 2005).

#### a) Sustainable entrepreneurs Market Selection

International Entrepreneurial Scope				
Code 2	Code 1	Entrepreneur A	Entrepreneur B	Expert A
IES	Development of markets with CSR focus, oriented towards commercial opportunity	We know that Italy and Spain are markets much less oriented towards responsible purchasing. Conversely, Nordic countries and Germany are oriented towards responsible purchasing. So, when we decide to go to a market, given that fashion is extremely competitive and as I said earlier, one of our arguments remains a CSR policy, it might as well be that this market is open to these issues. That's the reason we first went to Germany in 2019 and it has become part of our priority market today.	I've reached a certain size that I started to develop, notably internationally with a number of large groups like the Danone group. They have greatly inspired me because they identified in us a capacity, quite innovative, to develop actions to reduce impacts. I'm using the example of startup 'X' which is a Nantes-based startup that offers a filter to make any water potable. Well, they have a product, which can be characterized as impactful, innovative. Well, that's what makes, by virtue of the product's activity, the needs on international very quickly.	NVI
IES	Economic market choice criterion	NVI	After all, the territories that I initially targeted are because I think there are significant challenges. When we talk about the United States, there is a lot of work to be done there. There's also a big market and as for me, I want the machine to keep running. Well, you still have to feed it. If I go into exports with markets that are as profitable as possible, that's clear.	NVI
IES	Real partnership with both the distributor and supplier	In distant fashion markets, today we have two distributors, one in Australia and one in Chile. They directly buy from us, we receive orders from Vietnam, we ship by container, they manage their own stock, their own logistics and then we support them.	NVI	NVI
IES	Development of markets with CSR focus, oriented towards commercial opportunity	We look at the population, it's young, aging. Well, we look at the purchasing power, that's why. That's the reason why we are barely present in Vietnam, it's not our priority market in terms of selling a shoe for 110 euros.	NVI	NVI
IES	Market choice criterion, non-economic	We know that the USA is a market where they want fast delivery, so unless you have 10 warehouses, you end up flying goods within the USA. Well, in terms of co-responsibilities it's hard, so either you manage it differently or sometimes you might have to forgo certain markets. Hence, when I say you have to be honest, it means you have to go to the end of the reflection.	NVI	In CSR philosophy, there is even this will not to develop just for the sake of developing. There must be a reason, an added value, so they might have... The essential aspect of the offer.
IES	Market choice criterion, non-choice	NVI	NVI	For example, I have another general example that we accompany, which is a winemaker in the Loire who is transitioning from father to children, they were exporting. Historically, to South Korea, to Australia, to the other end of the planet. Really, the father loved to travel everywhere. They do agroforestry, they have biodynamic wines, they do co-grazing in the vineyards. Finally, they have an ecologically very advanced approach to organic wines. And the son said but I can't spend my whole day with my sheep in the vineyards and export my mistakes to Australia. I don't want to do what my father did, it's not possible. They argued a lot with each other. They finally came to a consensus which is to say OK I understand why you don't want to export to the other end of the planet, taking it step by step. And we will define a radius of 1500 km around our estate by choosing our partners with criteria that are important to us, who share our values

According to Oviatt and McDougall (2005), they define “an international new venture as a business organization that, from inception, seeks to derive significant competitive advantage from the use of resources and the sale of outputs in multiple countries (p.5)”, their definition implies multiple markets selections to operate or to growth. Musso & Francioni, (2014) argue that International Market Selection (IMS) can be considered a central decision in internationalization strategy (Papadopoulos et al., 2002; Root, 1998). The authors state that SMEs usually follow an opportunistic approach to IMS. Chandra et al. (2012) underscore that literature on IE has conceptualized IMS as an innovative entrepreneurial activity (Jones and Coviello 2005; Simmonds and Smith 1968), building on mainstream entrepreneurship theory that is centred around the concept of opportunity (Shane and Venkataraman 2000). As indicated by Chandra et al. (2012), behind the gradual or rapid internationalization process lies a path-dependent process of opportunity development. The previous definitions state an economic opportunistic approach followed by SMEs when selecting international markets to sell or to improve their operations and competitive advantage.

Our findings suggest that in terms of IMS (scope), both entrepreneurs target mature markets adopting an opportunistic approach to global expansion, but it seems that values will also influence some particular decisions. As declares entrepreneur B, *“When we talk about the United States, there is a lot of work to be done there. There's also a big market and as for me, I want the machine to keep running. Well, you still have to feed it. If I go into exports with markets that are as profitable as possible, that's clear”*. However, this commentary reveals a difference in the conscientious approach to market engagement compared to entrepreneurs A. Whose values limit or redefine his market strategies, as his commentary indicates, *“We know that the USA is a market where they want fast delivery, so unless you have 10 warehouses, you end up flying goods within the USA. Well, in terms of co-responsibilities it's hard, so either you manage it differently or sometimes you might have to forgot certain markets. Hence, when I say you have to be honest, it means you have to go to the end of your thoughts”*.

This type of behaviour of market non-selection, is not a rare exception, sustainable entrepreneurs can even show a more drastic behavior and exit from export market following sustainable values, this is exemplified by the consulting firm’s commentary, *“I have another general example that we accompany, which is a winemaker in the Loire who is transitioning from father to children, they were exporting. Historically, to South Korea, to Australia, to the other end of the planet. Really, the father loved to travel everywhere. They do agroforestry, they have biodynamic wines, they do co-grazing in the vineyards. Finally, they have an ecologically very advanced approach to organic wines. And the son said but I can't spend my whole day with my sheep in the vineyards and export my mistakes to Australia. I don't want to do what my father did, it's not possible. They argued a lot with each other. They finally came to a consensus which is to say OK I understand why you don't want to export to the other end of the planet, taking it step by step. And we will define a radius of 1500 km around our estate by choosing our partners with criteria that are important to us, who share our values, who will convey how we produce our wines and we do not want them in markets that are not democratic.”*

The previous examples highlight different approaches to IMS differing to what indicates the established literature on IB. Based on the definition by Oviatt & McDougall (2005), the focus on competitive advantage or sales, are consistent with the opportunistic perspective described by Chandra et al. (2012). Relying on a definition of opportunity that encompasses situations where an entrepreneur anticipates profit, rather than those that are inherently profitable (Shane 2003, p. 18). Our findings reveal that while both entrepreneurs in our study target mature markets with an opportunistic approach, their personal values significantly influence their decisions. If SMEs follow an opportunistic IMS approach as Musso & Francioni (2014) argue, the behaviours exhibited by Entrepreneurs A and the history provided by the two experts from the consulting firm 1, deviates from established literature, which emphasizes economic advantages and profit, indicating a need for further research to explore these contradictions.

### b) Sustainable entrepreneurs' international operations

International Entrepreneurial Activities				
code 2	code 1	Entrepreneur A	Entrepreneur B	Expert A
IEA	Reflection on delocalization of certain activities to respond more to climate challenges	NVI	Not wanting to be too big an entity and to develop internationally where I had set up an agency in Chile, well it's business as usual, it's for me to say I create subsidiaries here, there I have expatriated people or I send them regularly. Well, it was for me to say so I'm going to rent partnerships like the one I did in France which was a beta-test for me. That is to say, beyond the first steps with an NDA with a partner-reseller, a step of commercial collaboration already a bit more robust and an exclusivity approach where the partners will be local manufacturers. So it means I transfer my know-how, so that it is manufactured locally on the right or left. Transferring a form of know-how.	Then it will also bring pragmatism and common sense. I'll cite another example, a fairly famous biscuit company that makes metal gift boxes, Breton Biscuit in metal, very appreciated in China since it's a gift-giving culture, hence a strong historical export drive to China, it's the same boxes are produced in China, empty, they are imported to France, filled in France, re-exported to China. Well, the client says, well it costs me less to do that. But well yes but from an ecological aspect, how is it? he says well yes that's true. So he is questioning how he can export his biscuits, by packaging them locally in the tin boxes. That brings good sense too.
IEA	Type of production choice	"We could have taken the prism of Made in France, but we chose instead, there are millions of workers in the world, notably in Vietnam. Let's make sure they are well treated and keep them in employment there, thus fostering this social desire."	After going international, my vision was to think that business judgement is what matters in my field; in fact, I go to a country, I convince them that my solution is fantastic, I sell it to them, I manufacture here because I will control the entire value chain, the margin, and also the technology. I build my skid, put it in a container, and send it to the other end of the planet. I send guys who will go there to start it up, who will come back, who go, who come, etc., briefly. So that's classic.	NVI
IEA	Choice of production in Vietnam	Those who go to the site know what we are there for and how we can be there; in fact, we created a page, "Why producing in Vietnam does not mean producing badly?", where we explain all this.	NVI	NVI
IEA	Choice of purchasing local raw materials in Vietnam	Those who were at the genesis of the project. It was the artisans since it's the DNA of the project to have this ethnic part. So in fact, from the beginning, my partner sought out artisan cooperatives to work with her on the ethnic fabrics.	NVI	NVI
IEA	Developing the brand in target countries, notably Germany, but also to help in the French market	As a result, we recruited profiles in Marketing and Communication who had this international dimension, the German market interests us so someone who has worked in Germany, who spoke German. So to already have in our team people oriented towards international and who can support us in France, but not only, also on our other markets.	NVI	NVI

According to Oviatt and McDougall (2005), INV coordinate multiple value-chain activities in many countries with the aim of improving the competitive advantage, as they explain, INVs "gain foreign location advantages from private knowledge that they possess or produce (p 6)". The approaches followed in our sample also considerably diverge when it comes to this previous definition. This is likely influenced by their respective social and economic orientations.

In terms of foreign location activities, Entrepreneurs A and B exhibit different behavioural patterns. Entrepreneur A adopts a social impact approach, which influences his decision to base production and supply in Vietnam, a major manufacturing hub. He aims to disrupt the industry by focusing on the welfare of local workers. As he explains, "We could have taken the prism of Made in France, but we chose instead to support millions of workers worldwide, notably in Vietnam. Let's ensure they are well-treated and employed, fostering this social desire." He also

states, “Those who were at the genesis of the project were the artisans, as it’s the DNA of the project to include this ethnic aspect. From the beginning, my partner sought out artisan cooperatives to collaborate on the ethnic fabrics”. However, these statements do not necessarily reflect an improvement in the competitive advantage of the firm. Producing in a global manufacturing hub while incurring higher fair trade production costs may seem inconsistent with the foreign location decision. Additionally, the main competitive advantage of the firm lies in the ethnic fabrics, which are rooted in the historical and cultural knowledge of the country, not the entrepreneurs themselves.

On the contrary, Entrepreneur B, who is more environmentally oriented, follows a traditional exporting strategy with operations focused in France. He explains, “*I manufacture here because I can control the entire value chain, the margins, and the technology.*” During the interview, he highlighted the major challenge of protecting his intellectual property if he were to expand to the southern hemisphere. He states, “*My technology has a positive impact. Keeping it to myself preserves my margin, but eventually, this solution needs to be widespread. It’s not just about making money; it’s about ensuring the technology is accessible globally.*” The approach of Entrepreneur B aligns more closely with IE theory, demonstrating concerns about licensing and intellectual property issues that could stop global expansion, particularly in the southern hemisphere where he risks losing control of the technology and its profits.

Emerging trends in sustainable development and growing awareness of climate issues can also drive industries to reconsider their historical strategies, as posits Expert A, “*I’ll cite another example, a fairly famous biscuit company that makes metal gift boxes, Breton Biscuit in metal, very appreciated in China since it’s a gift-giving culture, hence a strong historical export drive to China, it’s the same boxes are produced in China, empty, they are imported to France, filled in France, re-exported to China. Well, the client says, well it costs me less to do that? Well No. But from an ecological aspect, how is it? he says well yes that’s true. So, he is questioning how he can export his biscuits, by packaging them locally in the tin boxes*”. In this particular example, the biscuit manufacturer is now questioning his export strategy, considering packaging the biscuits locally in China to reduce the environmental impact. However, this change poses a risk to their main competitive advantage, being perceived as a French food manufacturer with European controls. The challenge is whether the company can maintain its French quality branding if it exports in bulk and repackages in China for the regional or global market. This decision is driven not necessarily by economic factors but also by ethical and environmental considerations.

According to Oviatt and McDougall (2005), new international ventures (NIVs) enhance competitive advantage by leveraging private knowledge in multiple countries. Our findings reveal divergent approaches between entrepreneurs in terms of their social and economic orientations. Entrepreneur A focuses on social impact, basing production in Vietnam to support local workers, even though this does not improve the company's competitive advantage due to the higher production costs of fair trade. Conversely, Entrepreneur B adopts an environmentally-focused strategy and manufactures in France to control the value chain and protect intellectual property, which is more in line with international entrepreneurship (IE) theory. In addition, emerging trends in sustainable development are prompting companies to

reconsider their traditional strategies, as illustrated by one cookie company's move towards local packaging in China to reduce environmental impact, at the risk of compromising its French quality brand image. Such diverse approaches underline the need for future research into how sustainable practices influence internationalization strategies and competitive advantage in different contexts.

### c) Sustainable entrepreneurs' international governance

International Entrepreneurial Governance				
Code 2	Code 1	Entrepreneur A	Entrepreneur B	Expert A
IEG	Reflection on more flexible mode, partnerships (contracts), to respond more to climate challenges	NVI	Not wanting to be too large an entity and to develop internationally where I had established an agency in Chile, well it's business as usual, it's for me to say I create subsidiaries here, there I have expatriated people or I send them regularly. Well, it was for me to say so I'm going to rent partnerships like the one I did in France which was a beta-test for me. That is, beyond the first steps with an NDA with a partner-reseller, a step of commercial collaboration already a bit more robust and an exclusivity approach where the partners will be local manufacturers. So it means I transfer my know-how, so that it is manufactured locally on the right or left. Transferring a form of know-how.	The franchise expertise from the Nutriset group in Normandy is very inspiring for this. Thus, they franchise their expertise through their network of franchisees called Plumpty Field, so they don't export at all anymore, they just do franchising, whereas they were historically exporters.
IEG	Real partnership with both distributor and supplier	We used distributors who had exclusivity over the territory, so if I take the example of Australia, we have someone there who will thus buy directly, place orders directly from Vietnam, and we ship the container to Australia.	NVI	NVI
IEG	Choice to centralize all operations from France, with control of expertise	NVI	I convince them that my solution is fantastic, I sell it to them, I manufacture it here because I will control the entire value chain, the margin, and also the technology. I build my skid, put it in a container, and send it to the other end of the planet.	NVI
IEG	Advisory role (service) from headquarters for major export clients who are delivered directly from Vietnam	We support them by providing the necessary content for the development of the brand in their territory, with all the particularities of fashion, season, price, language, and culture that it requires.	NVI	NVI
IEG	Investment in a production control structure	We work with the network of the intermediary supplier in Vietnam, since the problem with fashion is the opaque side due to the multitude of intermediaries. So we eliminate them by having an employee on-site in Vietnam plus my partner.	NVI	NVI
IEG	New trends in ETI governance	NVI	NVI	In quite a few companies, it's about having, we have some clients who are in the mode of a liberated company where hierarchical levels are completely erased. We have some clients who are transitioning into SCOPs, more and more. So to share governance, decisions... This will be especially the case when it's about external growth because that's often one of the criteria for external growth as such.

According to Oviatt and McDougall (2005), INV are often resource-constrained, allocate minimal assets and utilize cost-effective governance mechanisms, like network structures, to control critical resources. INV gain foreign location advantages through private knowledge and sustain this advantage via protection methods such as imperfect imitability, licensing, networks, and patents. Concerning the governance, both entrepreneurs tend to align themselves by establishing partnerships with distributors to sale their products.

However, when entrepreneur B centralizes all decisions at the French head office, while maintaining strict control over global operations; entrepreneur A fosters a tighter relation with overseas partners, actively facilitating and supporting activities as brand marketing and sales training, and delegating entirely logistics, and negotiations aspects to local distributors. Furthermore, due to transparency needs, he is investing in production and process quality controls, as he declares *“We work with the network of the intermediary supplier in Vietnam, since the problem with fashion is the opaque side due to the multitude of intermediaries. So, we eliminate them by having an employee on-site in Vietnam plus my partner”*.

Expert A confirms that new trends in sustainable development and growing awareness of climate issues can also drive industries to reconsider new ways of governing, *“The franchise expertise from the Group X in Normandy is very inspiring for this. Thus, they franchise their*

*expertise through their network of franchisees called XX, so they don't export at all anymore, they just do franchising, whereas they were historically exporters”.*

In conclusion, these examples illustrate a clear evolution accelerated by sustainable values and social commitment, highlighting a shift from a centralized control structure to more flexible modes based in partnerships. The following criteria is deeply influenced by transparency and ecological considerations, such as carbon footprint reduction, remarking the growing importance of sustainability in shaping global business practices. Our findings reveal that sustainable entrepreneurs are adopting more flexible entry modes that challenge traditional ownership models, shifting their firms towards support activities like marketing and technical training, while delegating local knowledge to partners. This transition necessitates stronger ties between partners, posing cultural challenges that require further research. Understanding these dynamics is crucial for developing effective strategies that integrate sustainability into international business operations.



## **CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH**

The goal of our exploratory research project was to gain a deeper understanding of the academic interest in the internationalization processes followed by sustainable SMEs and entrepreneurs. The originality of this research lies in the intersection between Sustainable Entrepreneurship and SMEs Internationalization, two streams of literature that so far are together underexplored. Additionally, this research adopts an empirical multisectoral study with different actors. This first study could set the basis for an interesting theoretical and practical contribution. Before detailing the possible future evolution, we will discuss the empirical results:

### **a. Empirical Study Discussion**

Despite different authors noticing that SE still needs to be defined, our study seems to support the definition of Muñoz and Cohen (2018) as a process in which “Sustainable entrepreneurs seek and strive to balance, not to make sacrifices, amongst economic, environmental, and social objectives.” The two entrepreneurs and different examples gathered through our interviews with experts illustrate well the difficulty in balancing Elkington's triple bottom line. The real behaviors of the sustainable entrepreneurs that we interviewed illustrate how it is often necessary to sacrifice one dimension to achieve a positive impact on the other two: the environment, society, or local economies. This suggests that the integration of the 3BL by entrepreneurs is sequential rather than simultaneous, implying that environmental and social entrepreneurs can evolve into sustainable entrepreneurs over time (Anand et al., 2021).

The results highlight the significant role of international experiences in shaping entrepreneurial motivations. Both entrepreneurs demonstrated how exposure to different markets and cultures can spark innovative ideas and opportunities, aligning with the concept of "opportunity recognition" in entrepreneurship research (Alvarez & Barney, 2007). These findings support the notion that internationalization and CSR efforts are not mutually exclusive but can complement each other in fostering sustainable business practices (Colovic & Henneron, 2019).

Various typologies of sustainable behaviors were identified through our study. Following the model proposed by (2008), this study revealed diverse combinations of processes and behaviors among sustainable international entrepreneurs. The study also identifies several behavioral typologies among sustainable entrepreneurs. The discussion with the experts shows typologies ranging from "native CSRs" to those driven by regulatory pressures or evolving market demands. The two interviewed entrepreneurs seem to fit into the same category of Native CSR, but both demonstrate different values and behaviors. These results suggest a wider spectrum of behaviors compared to those discussed in the ISE literature (Stoian & Plakoyiannaki, 2023), underscoring the multifaceted nature of sustainability and suggesting a deeper understanding of how entrepreneurial values and motivations influence SMEs' internationalization.

We also identified entrepreneurial values and moral cognition as a major topic to be explored in the future within the subfield of SE. Our study suggests a great influence of values and entrepreneurial moral perception on strategic decisions. While both entrepreneurs show different levels of priority concerning the importance of the different dimensions of the triple bottom line model, both founders started international activities early. However, one of the two

entrepreneurs excludes certain markets based on environmental ethical considerations, while the interviews with the expert illustrate cases in which environmental values accelerate an exit from international markets. This deviation from established literature on IB and IE (Chandra et al., 2012; Musso & Francioni, 2013) supports the need for further research to explore these contradictions. Different authors call for research in this area and suggest several questions to explore, such as how environmental values and norms spread through international business partnerships and networking, and how moral cognition impacts the decision to internationalize operations (Galkina, 2021; Muñoz & Cohen, 2018; Terán-Yépez et al., 2020).

Our study also indicates that sustainable entrepreneurs adopt more flexible governance structures, shifting from centralized control to partnerships and support activities. This aligns with what the literature indicates about INV governance, suggesting that sustainable entrepreneurial SMEs will follow multiple activity locations instead of solely export strategies, which are usually preferred by SMEs to gain entry to foreign markets (Leonidou & Katsikeas, 1996; Martín-Tapia et al., 2010). This transition is driven by transparency and ecological considerations, emphasizing the growing importance of sustainability in shaping global business practices. These findings suggest that sustainable entrepreneurs are not only responding to market demands or CSR compliance but are also proactively integrating sustainability into their international strategies.

The findings of our qualitative interviews provide a rich understanding of the multifaceted nature of ISE. How diverse experiences, motivations, and sustainable behaviors of the entrepreneurs underscore the complexity and dynamism of the international context, highlighting the need for more exploration of the evolving challenges and opportunities that represent sustainable development for society. In this sense, our empirical work partially confirms that this subject is emerging in the literature of IE and suggests answers to our two questions.

The main research question of this study was: How do sustainable SMEs internationalize their activities, as opposed to traditional SMEs that pursue primarily economic objectives?

Zuchella et al. (2023) argue that the study of SE from an international perspective encompasses two main perspectives: growth or transculturality. This author states that SE can be studied through the internationalization process following an International Entrepreneurship (IE) lens: “First, considering the entrepreneurial international expansion of sustainable ventures; or second, analyzing comparative cases of sustainable ventures in different countries” (Zucchella et al., 2023). In this sense, Our exploratory study doesn’t account for the second perspective and is partly focused on the first perspective, “the understanding of the international expansion of sustainable ventures.” This is because we don't see the process of internationalization as mere expansion, and believe it can involve the pursuit of benefits and, in the case of sustainable entrepreneurs, the creation of impact.

Our study shows that sustainable SMEs integrate CSR and sustainable practices, but the depth will follow the entrepreneurs' and managers' environmental and social engagement. Sustainable SMEs don’t focus solely on economic gains but also on ethical goals and sustainable green practices. This new approach affects their entire decision-making process, from market entry

to operational strategies. Different authors emphasize the importance of well-aligning sustainability business practices with different CSR global standards (Torkkeli, Saarenketo, et al., 2017; Uzhegova et al., 2020), stressing that different levels of CSR alignment will result in different international outcomes. Unlike traditional SMEs that primarily pursue economic objectives, sustainable SMEs can prioritize non-economic goals, such as environmental responsibility and social good, which guide their market selection (Mersland et al., 2020) partnerships selection (Galkina, 2021), and international strategies. However, this varies depending on how they balance the three dimensions of sustainability and in which dimension the entrepreneurs are more focused.

The literature discusses two types of internationalization strategies: one centered on CSR compliance related to gradual internationalization strategies, with a focus on economic growth; and a second strategy more oriented towards improving global sustainable challenges, in which firms are purpose-driven and centered on creating shared value. This strategy could be more related to International New Ventures (INVs), as firms follow a non-gradual approach from a very early stage. In this sense, our study suggests that sustainable entrepreneurs adopt flexible governance structures, shifting from centralized control structures to partnerships and support activities. This approach aligns with INV governance literature, suggesting that sustainable SMEs prefer multiple activity locations, integrating small structures to support partners in production or sales, without major investments, over solely export strategies to enter foreign markets. This transition is driven by the need for transparency in operations and ecological considerations, such as reducing carbon footprint, reflecting the growing importance of sustainability in global business practices. The literature related to INV and Born Global firms mainly concerns high-tech firms that don't need much cultural adaptation and are facilitated by the economy of the internet. Moving from traditional export strategies to multiple locations and keeping a flexible structure of governance implies major challenges for sustainable SMEs that will require more research and integration of other theoretical frameworks.

Regarding our reformulated question: How do different sustainable behaviors influence SMEs' internationalization process and market selection?

Zuchella et al., (2023) posit that the emergence of international SE introduces an additional theoretical dimension, requiring the incorporation and combination of concepts and methodologies from the fields of IB, entrepreneurship, ecology, environmental economics, and sustainability research, thus broadening the theories discussed in IE and SE.

In this sense, our exploratory research shows different sustainable behaviors followed by entrepreneurs, confirming the utility of multidisciplinary research. As previously discussed, SMEs integrate CSR and sustainable practices at different levels of depth, depending on the sustainable engagement of entrepreneurs and managers. This engagement varies based on a combination of values and behaviors that each entrepreneur prioritizes differently, significantly affecting their internationalization strategies and influencing SMEs' internationalization processes and market selection. Sustainable entrepreneurs often strive to balance economic, environmental, and social objectives, leading to diverse internationalization strategies and market choices. Our study suggests that:

**Values Drive Market Selection:** Entrepreneurs with strong environmental and social values may forgo certain markets if operating there generates conflicts with their sustainability principles. Sustainable behaviors can also lead to decisions to exit certain markets if continuing operations contradicts the entrepreneurs' values. The study highlighted cases where environmental values drove entrepreneurs to cease exporting to distant markets to maintain ecological integrity. Market selection is also influenced by the alignment of partners with the entrepreneurs' ethical standards.

**Adaptive Governance Structures:** Sustainable entrepreneurs adopt governance structures that align with their values and support transparency and legitimacy. While ecopreneurs may maintain centralized control and build partnerships with local partners for technical support, flexibility allows SMEs to better integrate sustainability into their operations and can lead to innovative market entry strategies.

**Sequential Integration of Sustainability:** The integration of economic, environmental, and social goals often occurs sequentially rather than simultaneously. Entrepreneurs might initially focus on achieving a significant impact in one area before balancing the other dimensions of sustainability. One entrepreneur started with a social focus and later integrated responsible environmental practices, influencing his different strategies without compromising his initial commitment to social impact. The second entrepreneur was focused on environmental impact from the beginning but was also driven by more opportunistic economic aspects. However, his strategy is evolving to integrate social impact into his activities, aiming to facilitate access to his technology in less developed nations. Both cases illustrate the complexities of managing internationalization while adhering to sustainability values. Nevertheless, both entrepreneurs seem to be moving towards integrating Greening behaviors to access developed markets, although they differ in the way they bring disruptive innovation to bear on sustainability in developing countries.

Previous research discusses about different behaviours moving from Greening transformative to Disruptive innovative behaviours (Hart et Milstein, 2003). As previously presented, the model of Cohen et al. (2008) serves as a basis to explore different firm behaviors. This model is linked to the main theories and definitions discussed in the literature of SE, mainly built on the notion of the triple bottom model of Elkington (1994). The study of Cohen et al. (2008) takes the 3BL model and expands it with fourth possible combinations to illustrate seven possible behaviors followed by sustainable entrepreneurs. We applied this model to our study, illustrating how both firms show different complex and multidimensional value creation strategies, reflecting a vast array of typologies to explore.

We consider that this work contributes to the literature on Sustainable Entrepreneurship and to the nascent stream of International Sustainable Entrepreneurship, as we contribute to understanding what this phenomenon is, what motivates entrepreneurs to go international, and how their different motivations can influence their decisions and the ISE possible outcomes.

The internationalization of SE involves the global expansion of SMEs that prioritize CSR and sustainable practices. This phenomenon is divided into two main streams: on one hand, Sustainable International Entrepreneurship (SIE), where sustainability and CSR practices drive

international performance, and on the other hand, International Sustainable Entrepreneurship (ISE), where the internationalization process enhances the competitive advantage of sustainable businesses looking to create shared value and impact industries.

The integration of sustainability into international business is driven by the growing recognition of the importance of CSR in global operations in the first trend. In the second case, the international arena is part of the sustainable practices embedded in the DNA of companies seeking to improve not only environmental and social outcomes but also corporate growth and competitiveness to generate impact. The literature highlights how sustainability can attract international investment, reduce costs, improve customer responsiveness, and ultimately create shared value for companies and their stakeholders.

In our study, sustainable entrepreneurs internationalize by leveraging a variety of strategies tailored to their sustainability orientation and market context. These practices may vary and be combined differently depending on the sustainable commitment. They often engage in responsible supply chain management, adopt environmentally-friendly practices, and establish strong networks with stakeholders, including NGOs and local communities. The process of internationalization is influenced by factors such as the entrepreneur's values, previous international experience, and the cooperation and support received from various industry players.

To summarize, different sustainability behaviors will significantly influence SMEs' internationalization and reflect different market selections and strategies. CSR, especially focused on social good, improves international performance (as international scope) compared to more customer-focused CSR (Torkkeli, Saarenketo, et al., 2017). Other studies demonstrate how innovative environmental strategies boost export intensity (Kim et al., 2023), suggesting that particular sustainable strategies will enhance market penetration. These findings suggest that SMEs will strategically balance their financial and social objectives when selecting international markets. However, few studies explore how sustainable behaviors and the related CSR-driven strategies can influence international market selection, market entry strategies, and what consequences they have in other related international outcomes (International Scope, Number of international operations, and type of Governance) as discussed in the model of Oviatt and McDougall.

### c. Future Research Evolution

A lack of research linking internationalization with sustainable entrepreneurship (SE) behaviors and practices underscores the urgent need to study the internationalization processes, challenges, and strategies of SE firms (Aspelund et al., 2017; Casado-Belmonte et al., 2020; Kabbara et al., 2024; Uzhegova & Torkkeli, 2023). Our interview with expert academic Eduardo Teran Yopez highlights this gap, suggesting that a PhD project could contribute valuable insights. As he confirms, *"We detected that there is a lack of literature relating sustainable entrepreneurs with the internationalization process... In 2021, when our research was developed, we found only two articles that have studied the connection."*

Traditional models such as the Gradual Internationalization or International Entrepreneurship theories focus primarily on economic aspects and goals. The Uppsala model aims at reducing financial risk to ensure firm survival (Johanson & Vahlne, 1977), while the INV model emphasizes the creation of economic value through improved cost and market efficiencies (Oviatt & McDougall, 2000). These models often overlook non-economic values, highlighting significant gaps in the literature on sustainable internationalization. Our interviews with the Spanish scholar confirm the necessity of developing more qualitative studies to continue this exploratory work. The researcher states, *"I think it's better first to establish a good conceptualization, a good theoretical framework, and also to have good qualitative papers."*

Entrepreneurs often change their behavior based on context, suggesting a need to understand how sustainable values influence internationalization outcomes and strategies. Exploring the relationship between internationalization and different sustainable behaviors (Muñoz, 2018) is crucial for addressing environmental and social issues through both traditional and more disruptive, proactive sustainable practices. This exploration is essential for leveraging SE for sustainable global development. The tension between SME internationalization and entrepreneurial sustainability presents a rich area for future research, particularly in understanding how sustainable entrepreneurs define social and environmental goals compared to traditional economic approaches. Exploring this dynamic can clarify strategies for SE firms to navigate international markets and contribute to mitigating global sustainability issues, addressing the nuanced challenges of a globalized economy. The researcher emphasizes, *"The relationship between those concepts is still in its infancy... I think it's important to continue developing a qualitative view of the field."*

Entrepreneurial cognition, creativity, and imagination are crucial for developing innovative business models that address global sustainability challenges (Calvo et al., 2022; Chabowski et al., 2023; Dentchev et al., 2018). Our study identifies various sustainable entrepreneurial behaviors for international operations, highlighting the importance of knowledge, values, and ethics. Uzhegova et al. (2023) stress that managerial sensemaking helps align CSR with international business goals while navigating complex internationalization contexts and adhering to sustainability principles (Asemokha et al., 2019; Zolfaghari Ejlal Manesh & Rialp-Criado, 2017). To study entrepreneurial perception and subjectivity, a qualitative methodology is recommended, as the researcher suggests: *"I suggest continuing with some qualitative views with some interviews because some of the few studies published right now are focused on*

*specific industries or specific sectors. So, it's not always transferable to other industries. It's important to continue developing a qualitative view of the field.”*

For a future PhD project, it is advisable to collect case studies and study relevant literature on sustainable entrepreneurship, international business, and strategic management. As Eisenhardt (1989) suggests, iterating between theory and evidence helps understand observations better. Collecting in-depth information on different firms until reaching theoretical saturation can provide rich insights. A multiple case study approach is crucial to capture diverse strategies and behaviors among sustainable entrepreneurs. This is supported by the academic interviewee, who states, *“Multiple case studies right now are the type of research we need for the advancement of theoretical knowledge about the relationship between internationalization and sustainable entrepreneurship. Having the view of different actors is really important at the beginning of any research, so it could be convenient to begin with such interviews.”*

International trade's impact on sustainability is well recognized, and several authors call for research on how firms can achieve a global impact and promote sustainable entrepreneurial initiatives to mitigate climate change and improve social conditions (Fernhaber & Zou, 2022). Future research should emphasize the SE stream and the role of entrepreneurs, as the benefits of sustainable practices in internationalizing SMEs remain underexplored, signaling a critical gap in the literature (Ayuso & Navarrete-Báez, 2018; Casado-Belmonte et al., 2020). Here, the challenge can be accessing the right entrepreneurs, but luckily, we count on the local support of different specialized consultants in the region who are willing to introduce us to other entrepreneurs and concerned actors. The academic expert also notes, *“The biggest barrier could be the accessibility to data. It's really difficult to find sustainable entrepreneurs beginning the internationalization process who are willing to talk about their strategies. The most difficult thing is finding the correct people to capture the information.”*

Based on our results, we consider that a PhD project on International Sustainable Entrepreneurship is necessary to fill the research gap linking internationalization with sustainable entrepreneurship behaviors. As highlighted by the Spanish academic researcher, who noted the scarcity of studies on this connection, this project would develop theoretical frameworks and qualitative case studies to understand how sustainable values influence internationalization strategies, thereby addressing global sustainability issues and promoting innovative business models. The purpose of this Master's thesis was to answer our research question presented after the introduction. To continue this project through a PhD thesis, and based on the findings of this exploratory study, we suggest reformulating our research question as follows:

How do different SE behaviours and practices impact strategies, outcomes and the competitive positioning of SMEs in international markets?



*“WE DO NOT INHERIT THE EARTH FROM OUR ANCESTORS; WE BORROW IT FROM OUR CHILDREN”*, Anonymous authorship

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# APPENDICES

## APPENDICES 1: Examples of Literature Search Results in SCOPUS

Search within: Article title, Abstract, Keywords | Search documents: "sustainab\* entrepreneur"

361 documents found

Refine search: Search within results, Filters: Year (2021-2024), Subject area (Limited to Business, Management and Accounting)

Document title	Authors	Source	Year	Citations
1 Article Exploring nature-based physical activity as a catalyst for sustainable entrepreneurial intentions in sport science students	Ordifana-Belver, D., Aguado-Berenguer, S., Pérez-Campos, C., González-Serrano, M.H.	Journal of Hospitality, Leisure, Sport and Tourism Education, 34, 100482	2024	0
2 Article • Open access The ideation as an instrument for entrepreneurial education in university contexts	García-Castanedo, J., Corrales-Caray, D., Rodríguez-Sánchez, J.-L., González-Torres, T.	International Journal of Management Education, 22(1), 100926	2024	0
3 Article • Open access Unveiling the relationship between entrepreneurial aspirations and prosperity: An international panel study	Khefacha, I., Romdhane, R.	International Entrepreneurship and	2024	0

Search within: Article title, Abstract, Keywords | Search documents: "sustainable entrepreneur"

AND

Search within: Article title, Abstract, Keywords | Search documents: internationalisation OR internationalization

7 documents found

Refine search: Search within results, Filters: Year, Subject area (Limited to Business, Management and Accounting)

Document title	Authors	Source	Year	Citations
1 Article Internationalisation and growth of small sustainable fashion enterprises	Kabbara, D., Qin, E., Jarrar, H., Salloom, C.	International Journal of Entrepreneurship and Small Business, 51(4), pp. 469-493	2024	0
2 Book Chapter Exploring internationalization in sustainable entrepreneurship	del Pilar Casado-Belmonte, M., Terán-Yápez, E., Carrillo, G.M., de las Mercedes Capobianco-Uriarte, M.	Research Anthology on Business Law, Policy, and Social Responsibility, 2-4, pp. 789-812	2023	0
3 Article • Open access Home (not so) sweet home: Domestic political uncertainty driving early internationalisation in the Spanish renewable energy context	Rialp-Criado, A., Zolfaghari Ejlal Manesh, S.M., Moon, D.	Critical Perspectives on International Business, 16(4), pp. 379-406	2020	4

Search within: Article title, Abstract, Keywords | Search documents: "sustainable AND entrepreneur"

AND

Search within: Article title, Abstract, Keywords | Search documents: internationalization OR internationalisation

54 documents found

Refine search: Search within results, Filters: Year, Subject area (Limited to Business, Management and Accounting)

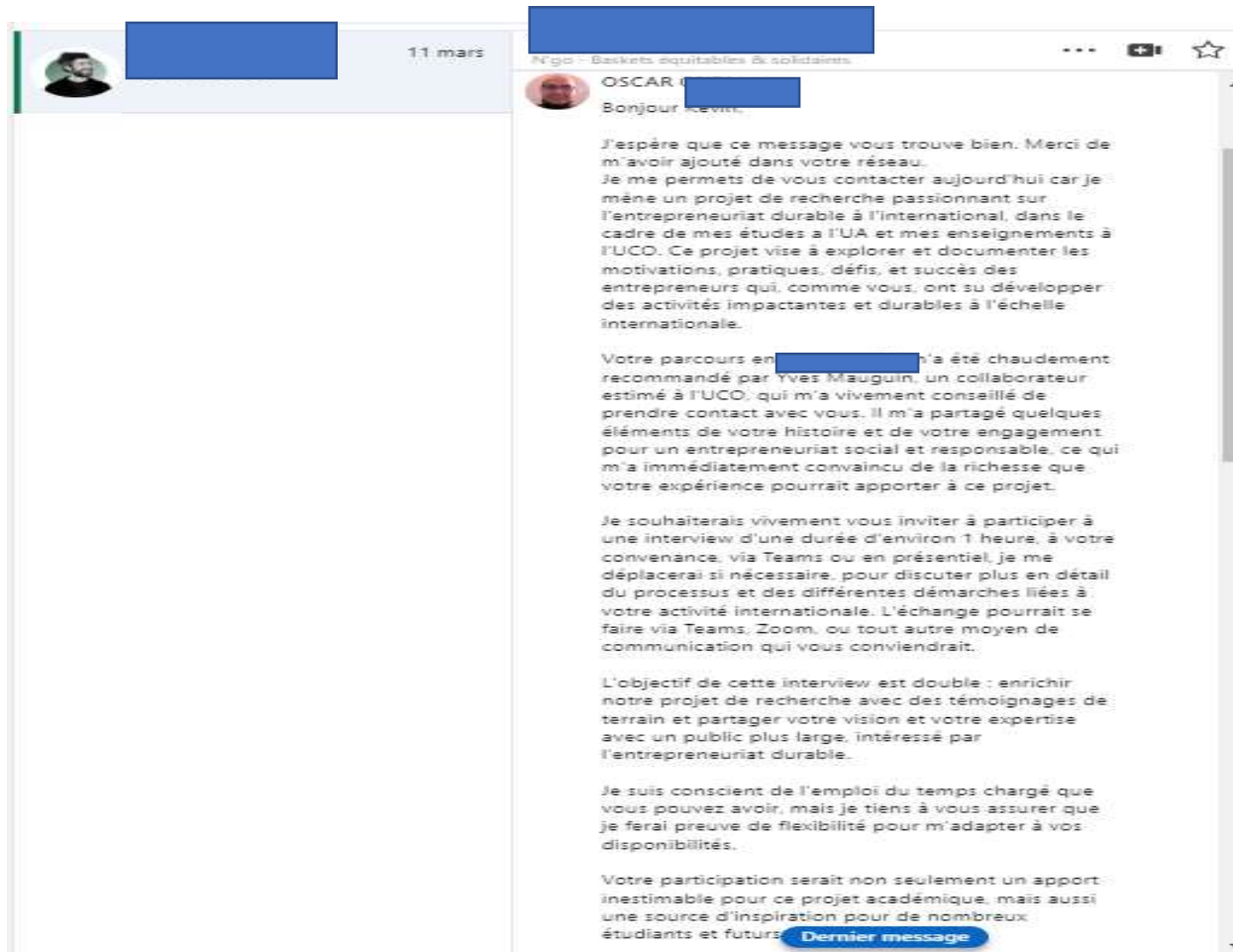
Document title	Authors	Source	Year	Citations
1 Book Chapter Exploring internationalization in sustainable entrepreneurship	del Pilar Casado-Belmonte, M., Terán-Yápez, E., Carrillo, G.M., de las Mercedes Capobianco-Uriarte, M.	Research Anthology on Business Law, Policy, and Social Responsibility, 2-4, pp. 789-812	2023	0

## APPENDICES 2: List of Dependent Sustainable Entrepreneurship Variables

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|--|---|
| <p>1. Performance</p> <p>Processes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Employee productivity</li> <li>Operational efficiency</li> <li>Economic risk management</li> <li>Team decision making process</li> </ul> <p>Outputs (activities)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cash flow, dividends</li> <li>Supply contracts, royalties</li> <li>Production levels, intellectual property applications</li> </ul> <p>Outcomes (impacts)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Profit, return, stock price, valuation</li> <li>Survival, competitive advantage</li> <li>Assets controlled, knowledge</li> </ul> <p>2. Promise</p> <p>Processes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reporting, marketing communication</li> <li>Public relations</li> </ul> <p>Outputs (activities)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Stakeholder involvement</li> <li>Stakeholder interactions</li> <li>Legislation, law suits, philanthropy</li> </ul> <p>Outcomes (impacts)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Image/reputation, brand equity</li> <li>Social legitimacy</li> </ul> <p>3. Perpetuity</p> <p>Processes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Life cycle assessment (LCA)</li> <li>Design for environment (DFE)</li> <li>Environmental auditing</li> </ul> <p>Outputs (activities)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Environmental management</li> <li>ISO 14001</li> <li>Waste management</li> <li>Restoration</li> </ul> <p>Outcomes (impacts)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pollution, emissions</li> </ul> <p>4. Socio-efficiency</p> <p>Processes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Service quality, relationship</li> <li>Quality, trust, cooperation, market orientation</li> <li>Strategic planning, governance</li> </ul> <p>Outputs (activities)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Market entry/exit; market penetration</li> <li>Number of alliances/relationships</li> <li>Customer retention, product mix</li> <li>Harvest/exit readiness</li> </ul> | <p>Outcomes (impacts)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sales, market share, customers</li> <li>Employees, employee development</li> <li>Satisfaction, loyalty, commitment</li> <li>Venture creation decision</li> </ul> <p>5. Stewardship</p> <p>Processes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Environmental planning, reporting,</li> <li>Environmental public relations</li> </ul> <p>Outputs (activities)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consumer education, reducing waste</li> <li>Recycling, re-use</li> <li>Environmental charity contributions</li> </ul> <p>Outcomes (impacts)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Env. reinvestment, improvements</li> <li>Environmental protection</li> <li>Meaningful employment</li> <li>Quality of work life, recognition</li> </ul> <p>6. Eco-efficiency</p> <p>Processes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Materials use</li> <li>Energy management</li> <li>Environmental risk management</li> <li>Green procurement</li> </ul> <p>Outputs (activities)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cleaner production, green packaging</li> <li>Production resource efficiency</li> <li>Green product development</li> </ul> <p>Outcomes (impacts)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Selection by socially responsible investment (SRI) funds,</li> <li>reduced costs</li> <li>Stability/longevity</li> </ul> <p>7. Sustainability</p> <p>Processes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>First order strategic planning</li> <li>Ethical decision making</li> </ul> <p>Outputs (activities)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sustainable innovation</li> <li>Sustainable development</li> <li>Creation of new sustainable industries</li> </ul> <p>Outcomes (impacts)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>First order competitive advantage</li> <li>Market effectiveness</li> <li>Employee satisfaction/commitment</li> <li>Increased quality of life</li> <li>Customer loyalty, species survival</li> </ul> |
|--|---|
-

## APPENDICES 3: Example of a LinkedIn Message Requesting an Interview with an Entrepreneur



## APPENDICES 4: Example of an Email Requesting an Interview with Experts

De : Oscar CSIBI <[ocsibi@uco.fr](mailto:ocsibi@uco.fr)>  
Envoyé : mercredi 13 mars 2024 10:42  
À : [redacted]  
Cc : [redacted] ; [redacted]  
Objet : Mise en relation CCI, pour un entretien de recherche  
Importance : Haute

You don't often get email from [ocsibi@uco.fr](mailto:ocsibi@uco.fr). [Learn why this is important](#)

Bonjour [redacted]

Je vous adresse mes respectueuses salutations. Votre parcours professionnel m'a été recommandé par Romain MAUGRAIN et Cyril ROCH de la CCI Angers, avec qui je collabore au sens de mes activités à l'UCO. Romain m'a vivement conseillé de prendre contact avec vous.

En tant que chercheur intéressé par l'impact de l'entrepreneuriat durable sur notre société et notre planète, je me permets de solliciter un peu de votre temps, afin de participer à un projet de recherche que je mène au sein de l'IAE Angers et l'Université Côte d'azur. Ce projet s'intéresse à la relation entre l'entrepreneuriat durable et l'internationalisation, une thématique qui, j'en suis sûr, résonne particulièrement avec vos valeurs et expérience.

Votre profil et votre engagement envers la RSE, représenteraient une source d'inspiration et d'expertise inestimable pour ce projet. L'approche que vous portez sur former des leaders envers un développement durable international, fait écho aux thèmes que nous cherchons à mieux comprendre et à mettre en lumière.

Je souhaite vivement vous inviter à participer à une interview d'une heure (maximum), à votre convenance (entre fin mars et première semaine d'avril) pour discuter de votre expérience, des démarches et des défis liés à l'entrepreneuriat international durable. Cette conversation pourrait se dérouler en présentiel, via Zoom, Teams, ou toute autre plateforme de votre choix, dans le but de partager votre vision et votre avis avec une audience académique.

Je suis conscient que votre agenda puisse être particulièrement chargé, mais je tiens à vous assurer de ma flexibilité quant à l'organisation de cette réunion, afin de définir l'interview à un moment qui pourrait vous convenir.

En espérant que vous accepterez cette invitation, je vous remercie par avance pour votre temps et votre considération.

Bien Cordialement / Kind regards

Oscar CSIBI

## APPENDICES 5: Example of Plan of a Semi-Structured Interview (Experts)

### A – Information principale :

Type d'entreprise : Cabinet de Conseil

Secteur d'activité : Structuration des activités et stratégies à l'International.

Activité commerciale : Services d'accompagnement, audit, et mise en relation à l'international.

Interviewé : Expert A

Position occupée : Directrice de projets international durable et Projet Manager RSE

Enquêteur : Oscar CSIBI, étudiant M2 Recherches.

Date et heure : 29 Mars 2024.

Objet d'étude : Regard Expert

Objectif : Explorer l'internationalisation dans l'entrepreneuriat durable.

Problème de recherche : comment les comportements de durabilité influencent-ils l'internationalisation des entreprises ?

### B – Ouverture

#### Introduction :

- a. Présentation personnelle, objectif de l'entretien, soulignant l'intérêt de comprendre l'importance des comportements entrepreneuriaux durables dans l'internationalisation des entreprises.  
➔ **Remarque : Assurance de confidentialité, demande de consentement pour l'enregistrement.**  
*« Les informations et les réponses divulguées lors de cet entretien sont strictement exclusives à ce projet académique et ne seront utilisées que dans ce cadre. Aucune utilisation commerciale des réponses formulées lors de cet entretien ne sera faite ultérieurement. Nous pouvons également rendre les réponses anonymes afin de préserver votre identité si vous le souhaitez »*

### C – Questions :

#### 1- Questions d'échauffement (5 minutes)

- a. Pouvez-vous décrire brièvement votre entreprise et son engagement en faveur du développement durable ?
- b. Qu'est-ce qui vous a incité à vous au niveau personnel et à votre organisation à vous lancer dans une stratégie durable ?
- c. Identifiez-vous les mêmes raisons valeurs dans vos clients ?
- d. Est-ce que tous les clients qui se lancent dans cette démarche ont déjà une culture/expérience dans la durabilité ? et à l'international ? sinon à quel degré ?

#### 2 - Comprendre les facteurs liés à la durabilité (15 minutes)

- a. Quels sont les facteurs de soutenabilité qui ont le plus d'influence sur les activités des entreprises que vous accompagnent ? (Prévention de la pollution, gestion des produits, technologies propres, développement durable)
- b. Pouvez-vous donner des exemples de la manière dont ces facteurs de durabilité ont été intégrés dans vos pratiques commerciales ?
- c. Quels types de stratégies de durabilité ont été utilisées par vos clients dans leurs projets d'internationalisation (amélioration des gestions de déchets, énergies, pollution / intégration des parties prenantes institutionnelles, ADEME, association civil, état - territoires / contribution aux pratiques dans d'autres pays-secteurs : sensibilisation, accompagnement, exigence,

contribution / développement des technologies propres : écodesign, achat responsable, décarbonisation, circularité)

- d. Comment l'innovation et l'efficacité environnementale sont-elles intégrées dans les stratégies d'internationalisation des entreprises que vous accompagnez ? Exemples spécifiques de succès ou de défis.

### **3 - L'entrepreneuriat international et la sélection des marchés (20 minutes)**

- a. Comment pensez-vous l'engagements en matière de développement durable ont-ils influencé les stratégies de sélection des marchés internationaux de vos clients ?
- b. Quels sont les défis et les opportunités que vous avez pu identifier ils ont rencontré dans l'alignement de motivations (orientations) de durabilité avec la sélection des marchés internationaux ?
- c. Pouvez-vous évoquer des exemples spécifiques des marchés qui ont été choisis ou évités sur la base de considérations de durabilité par des entreprises ?
- d. De quelle manière structure vos clients leurs collaborations de stratégie d'internationalisation durable ? Exemples de collaborations ou partenariats

### **4 – Facteurs de durabilité et stratégie d'internationalisation (15 minutes)**

- a. Pensez-vous que les aspects liés à la durabilité influencent-ils l'avantage concurrentiel des PMES sur les marchés internationaux ?
- b. De quelle manière la perception des parties prenantes (consommateurs, fournisseurs, réglementations liées au développement durable) dans les marchés cibles ont-elles influencé l'expansion internationale de vos clients ? Pouvez-vous citer des exemples ?

### **5 - Perspectives d'avenir et conseils (5 minutes)**

- a. Quelles tendances émergentes identifiez-vous dans l'entrepreneuriat international durable ?
- b. Quels conseils donneriez-vous aux entrepreneurs qui aspirent à intégrer l'internationalisation durable dans leur stratégie d'affaires ?

### **D – Conclusion (5 minutes)**

Invitation à partager des réflexions additionnelles.

Offre de disponibilité pour d'éventuelles questions futures et échange de coordonnées.

Demande de mise en relation future avec des dirigeants d'entreprises intéressées par cette thématique

Souhaitez-vous que nous vous envoyions une transcription de cet entretien ?

### **E- Remerciements**

Remerciements pour la participation, explication des prochaines étapes de la recherche.



## **APPENDICES 6: Example of Plan of a Semi-Structured Interview (Entrepreneur)**

### **A – Information principale :**

Type d'entreprise : Bureau d'étude technique spécialiste de la performance des nettoyages industriels

Secteur d'activité : Structuration des activités et stratégies à l'International.

Activité commerciale : Services d'accompagnement, audit, et mise en relation à l'international.

Interviewé et position occupée : Entrepreneur B, Directeur General

Enquêteur : Oscar CSIBI, étudiant M2 Recherches.

Date et heure : 03 Avril 2024.

Objet d'étude : Regard Entrepreneur

Objectif : Exploration de l'internationalisation durable.

Problème de recherche : comment les comportements de durabilité influencent-ils l'internationalisation des entreprises ?

### **B – Ouverture**

#### **Introduction :**

Présentation personnelle, objectif de l'entretien, soulignant l'intérêt de comprendre l'importance des comportements entrepreneuriaux durables dans l'internationalisation des entreprises.

➔ **Remarque :** Assurance de confidentialité, demande de consentement pour l'enregistrement.  
*« Les informations et les réponses divulguées lors de cet entretien sont strictement exclusives à ce projet académique et ne seront utilisées que dans ce cadre. Aucune utilisation commerciale des réponses formulées lors de cet entretien ne sera faite ultérieurement. Nous pouvons également rendre les réponses anonymes afin de préserver votre identité si vous le souhaitez »*

### **C – Questions :**

#### **1- Questions d'échauffement (5 minutes)**

- a. Pouvez-vous décrire brièvement votre entreprise et son engagement en faveur du développement durable ?
- b. Pouvez-vous partager votre expérience internationale ?
- c. Comment définissez-vous l'internationalisation durable et son importance dans votre activité entrepreneuriale ?
- d. Qu'est-ce qui vous a incité à vous au niveau personnel et à votre organisation à vous lancer dans une stratégie durable ?

#### **2- Comprendre les facteurs liés à la durabilité (15 minutes)**

- a. Quels sont les facteurs ou stratégies de soutenabilité qui ont le plus d'influence sur les activités de votre entreprise ? greening vs radical (Prévention de la pollution audits ; gestion réglementaire des produits ISO, ILO, SDG, ESG ; développement des technologies propres, développement socio-durable nvos indicateurs, impact social)
- b. Pouvez-vous donner des exemples de la manière dont ces facteurs de durabilité ont été intégrés dans vos pratiques commerciales ?
- c. Quels types de stratégies de durabilité ont été utilisées par vous dans votre marché domestique. (Amélioration des gestions de déchets, énergies, pollution / intégration des parties prenantes institutionnelles, ADEME, association civil, état - territoires / contribution aux pratiques dans d'autres pays-secteurs : sensibilisation, accompagnement, exigence, contribution /

développement des technologies propres : écodesign, achat responsable, décarbonisation, circularité)

- d. Utilisez-vous les mêmes dans votre projet d'internationalisation ?
- e. Comment l'innovation et elles intégrées dans vos stratégies soutenables d'internationalisation ? Exemples spécifiques de succès ou de défis.
- f. Quel rôle la prise de risque et la responsabilité sociale jouent-elles dans votre stratégie d'internationalisation ? Discussion sur les risques calculés et les initiatives sociales.
- g. En quoi la proactivité et l'éthique des affaires sont-elles essentielles pour votre entreprise dans le contexte de l'internationalisation durable ? vous vous êtes pionnier dans vos démarches internationales durables, comment ?

### **3- L'entrepreneuriat international et la sélection des marchés (20 minutes)**

- a. Comment pensez-vous l'engagements en matière de développement durable ont-ils influencé vos stratégies de sélection des marchés internationaux ?
- b. Quels sont les défis et les opportunités que vous avez pu rencontrer dans l'alignement de motivations (orientations) de durabilité avec la sélection des marchés internationaux
- c. Pouvez-vous évoquer des exemples spécifiques des marchés qui ont été choisis ou évités sur la base de considérations de durabilité par votre entreprise ?
- d. De quelle manière structurez-vous vos collaborations de stratégie d'internationalisation durable ? Exemples de collaborations ou partenariats

### **4- Facteurs de durabilité et stratégie d'internationalisation (15 minutes)**

- a. Internationalisation vs. Soutenabilité, un ordre (poule -œuf) ? antagonique ? de la main ?
- b. Pensez-vous que les aspects liés à la durabilité influencent-ils l'avantage concurrentiel des PMES sur les marchés internationaux ?
- c. De quelle manière la perception des parties prenantes (consommateurs, fournisseurs, réglementations liées au développement durable) dans les marchés cibles ont-elles influencé votre expansion internationale ? Pouvez-vous citer des exemples ?

### **5- Perspectives d'avenir et conseils (5 minutes)**

- a. Quelles tendances émergentes identifiez-vous dans l'entrepreneuriat international durable ?
- b. Quels conseils donneriez-vous aux entrepreneurs qui aspirent à intégrer l'internationalisation durable dans leur stratégie d'affaires ?

### **D – Conclusion (5 minutes)**

Invitation à partager des réflexions additionnelles.

Remerciements pour la participation, explication des prochaines étapes de la recherche.

Disponibilité pour d'éventuelles questions futures et échange de coordonnées.

Demande de mise en relation future avec des dirigeants d'entreprises intéressées par cette thématique

Souhaitez-vous que nous vous envoyions une transcription de cet entretien ?

### **E- Remerciements**

## APPENDICES 7: Examples of Notes Written during the Interview with Entrepreneur B

Efficacité énergétique / limité consommation énergie-couts / partenariat avec group Danone / Danone Précurseur « réduction de CO2 et KW à la tonne » / Pression forte externe = driver de l'accélération RSE / consultation internationale partenariat / angle environnemental orientation traitement eau / 30 collaborateurs à l'époque, conseil envers Danone, Lactalis / partenariat avec 2 autres bureaux d'études , groupe utilities performance, cycle de l'eau, économie d'eau, nettoyage et valorisation (biomasse), Dirigeant pilier international / croissance jusqu'à 100 collaborateurs / projet West Jordan, éco-conception (rupture de liner), travailler dans la sobriété de début, million de dollar pour usine de dépuratation « comment limiter cet investirent », volume d'eau + charge organique = nettoyage en conséquence, complexité de projet sur les aspect production-qualité à considérer, recherche des solutions innovantes, vision entrepreneurial, besoin d'autonomie pour lancer / réutilisation de soude à l'infinie = économie de lessive, diminution des risques de production, sans contrainte institutionnel (environnemental) / solution top mais sans légitimité scientifique / développement d'un brevet pour le savoir-faire, protection contre barrières des lobby chimique, université bretagne sud partenariat,

Recherche (curiosité dès l'efficience (management) en bénéfice de l'environnement (tacite)

Savoir-faire unique que nous avons en France, unique et que peut être un vrai avantage concurrentiel, ouvertures de filiales, utilisation des VIE, regard des autres sur le côté export (festif, plaisir, vacances), expats (modalité informelle) ??

Membres des Dirigeants responsables Maine-Loire (bonnes pratiques), création du groupe pour réduction de gaz à effets serre (trajectoire carbone d'entreprise).

Création d'une PME et développer, antagonisme entre croissance et empreinte carbone, la technologie joue un rôle bénéfique qui facilite l'internationalisation durable, application d'un

Ecodesign pour la conception des solutions (inox), remettre en question le processus international en entière, recherche de flexibilité (partenariat/exclusivité/) via partenariats, commercialisation des royalties/licence d'utilisation et fabrication des solutions. Avec des difficultés juridiques (respect de contrats). Rééquilibrage nord-sud, comment contribuer ?

Sacrifice de la marge pour partager la technologie afin de favoriser l'acquisition des acteurs des économies en développement.

Quelles solutions de financement ?? cela fait partie de l'équation ?

Une prise de conscience !! dégradation !! l'urgence climatique ! enfants (paternaliste), une quête de sens pour le futur, intérêt général

## APPENDICES 8: Examples of Consent Form for use of Interview Information



### Formulaire de consentement – Projet de Recherche International Sustainable Entrepreneurship

Oscar CSIBI, jeune chercheur menant un projet de recherche pour son Master 2 RCM à l'IAE Nice, Co-encadré par Madame Frederique CHEDOTEL à l'Université d'Angers et Madame Sabrina LOUFRANI à l'Université Cote d'azur, m'a proposé de participer à la recherche intitulée : « L'internationalisation de l'Entrepreneuriat Soutenable ».

J'ai pris connaissance du résumé m'expliquant l'étude mentionnée ci-dessus, et des documents d'information y afférents, à la date du : 03/03/2024

J'ai pu poser toutes les questions que je voulais, j'ai reçu des réponses claires et précises.

J'atteste que je suis affiliée ou affilié à un régime de sécurité sociale ou bénéficiaire d'un tel régime.

J'ai noté que mes données : 1. sont traitées aux fins de transcription, analyse, et statistiques et sont destinées à l'équipe de recherche exclusivement ; 2. le caractère facultatif du traitement ; et 3. qu'elles seront conservées pendant 5 ans à compter de la publication de l'étude - dont je serai informée ou informé.

J'accepte que soit effectuée une analyse des données à caractère personnel me concernant afin de réaliser l'étude définie ci-avant, en conformité avec la loi n° 78-17 du 6 janvier 1978 relative à l'informatique, aux fichiers et aux libertés (traitement informatisé des données nominatives). J'ai noté que mes données à caractère personnel seront rendues anonymes avant toute publication.

J'ai noté que je peux exercer les droits sur mes données à caractère personnel (accès, rectification, opposition, effacement, limitation et portabilité) en m'adressant à Monsieur Oscar CSIBI ([o.csibi@univ-angers.fr](mailto:o.csibi@univ-angers.fr) / [ocsibi@uco.fr](mailto:ocsibi@uco.fr)).

J'ai compris que je peux refuser de participer à cette étude sans conséquences pour moi, et que je pourrai retirer mon consentement à tout moment (avant et en cours d'étude) sans avoir à me justifier et sans conséquences. J'ai été informée ou informé que les résultats de l'étude feront l'objet d'une restitution collective.

Compte tenu des informations qui m'ont été transmises, j'accepte librement et volontairement de participer à la recherche intitulée : « L'internationalisation de l'Entrepreneuriat Soutenable ».

Mon consentement ne décharge pas l'investigateur et le financeur de leurs responsabilités à mon égard.

Fait à Angers, le 30/04/2024

En deux exemplaires originaux

Participant(e) à la recherche :

Nom Prénoms : [REDACTED]

Signature (Précédée de la mention : Lu, compris et approuvé)

*Lu, compris et approuvé*



## APPENDICES 9: Tables of Codes with Analysis of Emergent Themes

Sustainable behaviours: Social Promise (SBSP)			Description: Reflects the involvement of stakeholders in Firm's commitments towards social improvement and the fulfilment of these commitments, and how impacts social legitimacy, brand image, brand equity. (transparency, reporting, etc)	
Code 2	Code 1	Entrepreneur A	Entrepreneur B	Expert A
SBSP	Notions of transparency and value of communicating actions	Give people the information and I think if we move towards CSR thinking we are perfect, well we do nothing, or if we make believe we are perfect	Here or there, the way of also targeting either learning towards a school that deals with autistic children or that kind of thing. It's a small scale every time. But, I am not very versed in displaying, let's say, big actions that are a bit demonstrative, what.	After, with the CSRD, the triple accounting, the extra-financial indicators, cause a different perception of the value of the company, not just its purely financial value, it changes. Especially among the ETIs that are concerned. Well, faster than SMEs? This CSRD, what can be said, is that it adds transparency, thus compared to the CSR practices that were historically quite attached to communication
SBSP	Notions of transparency and labels	Therefore, the certification for recycled trades, the certification for cardboard, the certification for leather. So, for each material, we have a label, an adapted certification.	We have done 3 years of intense R&D with Mehdi, with the University of South Brittany, two INRA research directors, specialized in these fields to provide additional robustness. I would say, to the conclusions that would come out with a real scientific guarantee.	NVI
SBSP	Information open to the public	We make a carbon balance every year and we also publish it on our website.	NVI	NVI
SBSP	Importance of collective	It takes a real commitment from the leaders, with I think also, it is necessary to manage to bring the teams along with oneself, around this and to go there really and honestly.	NVI	NVI

Sustainable behaviours: Eco-Efficiency (SBEE)			Description: Focuses on the organization's capacity to target ecological challenges, aiming to reduce ecological impact through product design (packaging, materials etc.), production efficiency.	
Code 2	Code 1	Entrepreneur A	Entrepreneur B	Expert A
SBEE	Strategic choice of eco-design	At our scale, we want to contribute by making cleaner products with less carbon impact.	It makes much more sense to integrate technology into the NEP (New Economic Paradigm). So, I have set up a partnership with a French partner to integrate the technology natively into a new project. This only concerns new projects. But also, we've thought about miniaturizing our system in batch mode. Therefore, reflecting on how to be more modest in design.	The category that wants to integrate CSR into their business model. There will also be a logic of experimentation, of being a pioneer in some way. I'll take another example, a winemaker in Muscadet, he is the first winemaker to put his wine in cans, in France the wine in a can is not very well perceived, seen as low quality. Yet, it's very good wine. And he made a bet, a huge investment, and has been very successful, including in France, whereas originally, he did it more for the export markets.
SBEE	Choice of eco-responsibility	We try to break away from the seasonal aspect, to make timeless, basic products.	We must be scientifically robust about the technology and its reliability and impacts. We also need to be able to finally determine the economic benefits, of course, but also the environmental ones. It's not just about saying we're doing good for the planet, but there may indeed be potentially negative side effects.	NVI
SBEE	Strategic choice of eco-design	We no longer look at things only in terms of the materials we choose, but also in terms of durability and recyclability. So, it's so technical that it encompasses many things, and you see, typically, I think I talked about it last time, we might choose a less ecological leather, based on paper, but it will be more durable. Thus, we consider it to be more ecological ultimately because the footwear will last longer.	Come see what you can optimize in terms of consumption, energy, pollution reduction, etc. We face such and such problems, and I say yes but ideally it should be right from the design stage, because if ultimately we had recommendations which in some cases consisted of somewhat deconstructing, with all the frustrations that go with things that have been done, or modifying them with increased costs, more complicated profitability, etc.	NVI

Sustainable behaviours: Environmental Perpetuity (SBEP)			Description: Indicates a focus on sustainable practices that ensure long-term environmental sustainability by reducing pollution and environmental impact	
Code 2	Code 1	Entrepreneur A	Entrepreneur B	Expert A
SBEP	Strategic Logistics Choice: Carbon Impact	We solved the issue by using only maritime containers and not air transport. If we were to use air transport, it would significantly increase our carbon footprint negatively.	From a sustainability perspective in every sense of the term, from medium to long term. I've reconsidered, in my close impacts, mainly the Pareto is simple, it's the journey and it's stainless steel. Because we don't make our equipment from cardboard yet, and stainless steel has a high carbon weight.	This is also the case of moving from an export approach to a local implementation approach. For example, the player in syrups, the beverages, they made the historical strategic choice to become local actors. Because they no longer wanted to export heavy glass bottles, which break with significant logistic flows, so they made that choice. Being as close as possible, with a market area thus they are on the five continents... They have opened 5 factories across 5 regions, that is one factory per key region, for example.
SBEP	Cooperation with other institutions to improve eco-responsibility and product lifecycle	Eco-responsibility, briefly, it has become more and more technical, we took it through the prism of recycled material production and others, and we are increasingly conducting an LCA study, including a study on the product lifecycle linked with ADEME or calculating not only the production but also the entire durability of the product up to its reparability and end-of-life recycling.	We had done the complete study, I was talking about multiple impacts, we conducted a lifecycle analysis, so I was talking earlier and we determined that a conventional NEP versus one like ours, the greenhouse gas impact is less 96%, terrestrial ecotoxicity less 92%, aquatic ecotoxicity less 94% something like that. So we had all these benefits.	NVI
SBEP	Cooperation and Commitment of Vietnamese supplier to advance in CSR production	We were able to engage them in an audit process of certification within a one-year, two-year horizon, etc., which we did with our main supplier in southern Vietnam and who last year obtained the BSCI rating known as a label in the fashion world.	NVI	NVI
SBEP	Notion of eco-responsibility	All other productions, so we didn't do it from the start but the desire was there, to go for the eco-responsible aspect, especially through transport.	NVI	NVI

Sustainable behaviours: Entrepreneurial Sustainability (SBES)			Description: Combines sustainability with entrepreneurial efforts, looking to innovative practices that can contribute to sustainable development, creating new industries, processes, etc.		
Code 2	Code 1	Entrepreneur A	Entrepreneur B	Expert A	
SBES	Social and environmental justice values	Both of us want a world that is both more social and more ecological, more just.	Where will population growth happen tomorrow? It's not here, it's not in Japan, it's in Africa, it's South America, etc. So if we don't provide them with technologies that are virtuous from the start, we will repeat the same mistakes as our growth, industrial revolution with things that are going wrong. And we won't want it because they are also under constraints somewhere. Yeah. So. And through that, for me, there is a form of guilt, that is how do I ensure to have a filthy growth and this is valid for both hemispheres.	We created it about twelve years ago in the group and we thought, well. To support clients in their roadmap, in the co-construction of the roadmap and then in the operational implementation in other services of the CSR coupling. It appears more evident to start from the beginning, namely what roadmap we set for ourselves and how we integrate sustainability criteria into our strategy internationally.	
SBES	Desire for impact in the industry	Desire at our level to have an impact so that, in this case, in the fashion industry, there are people who are exploited and that needs to change.	The rebound effect of my action, which is certainly not on my activity which is increasing where I will add more carbon, but the marginal benefit due to the development of my activity, I must remain vigilant and modest at most, it is in any case amplified. OK, so that's what makes it legitimate despite everything, without wanting to justify things, the fact of growing internationally and growing my own business.	"He says, I want to be the pioneer of negative carbon wine and now he is literally pushing the exercise across all fields, from vine to green, to arrive at our carbon-negative wine and continue exporting it. Exactly, and to really be the pioneer for also his ultimate goal behind. He says, I know that winemakers can be criticized, etc. We do a lot already, but we don't necessarily communicate, we are not necessarily supported by agricultural policy, etc. Well, that's his point of view, huh? And he says, I want to lead my whole profession on this path."	
SBES	Desire for impact in the industry	But also to change the fashion mindset which is always to consume more, produce more, etc. This is something we stand against.	NVI	NVI	
SBES	The entrepreneur makes a future-oriented choice investing in their supplier even if it had an economic cost but the goal is to have an impact in the country	This closed some doors for us because some clients demanded transparency and thus that our suppliers have this label. So I had to wait for it for some particularly pushy clients in ethical fashion.	NVI	NVI	
SBES	3P questioning and finality of the BM	Is the goal to sell more and more products, shoes, clothes, etc., or is it to sell at the right price, to have more durable products, thus making consumers consume less but better?	NVI	NVI	
SBES	Vision and mission formalized CSR	We have a vision and a mission that integrates these CSR issues, so it needs to be reflected in reality through actions and measured by carbon audits, B-Corp audits, etc.	NVI	NVI	

Sustainable behaviours: Economic Performance (SBEC)			Description: Examines the economic outcomes of sustainable practices, particularly impact in financial performance (profit, sales, valuation, competitive advantage, assets controlled).		
Code 2	Code 1	Entrepreneur A	Entrepreneur B	Expert A	
SBEC	Notion of Pragmatism, manufacturing while integrating CSR	To change your growth objectives and even question growth and say to yourself, if I take over again, I'm still in the fashion business. Is the aim to sell more and more products, shoes, clothes and so on, or is it to sell at the right price, to have more sustainable products?	The leverage effects are always significant on industrial performance broadly speaking, that is, it's not just about water savings, and kilowatt-hours, and the environment, a benefit for the environment, obviously, it's in our DNA, there is always a lever, an industrial performance lever. Of course, on costs, but for example in the case of the syllable we've reduced 800 hours per year, so it means we gain our productivity, we improve quality, so we also gain in performance.	Not overlooking the economic aspect, it's really the 3P alliance: people, planet, profit. Because I go back to the winemaker in Muscadet. He says, my dream is to make my product as least impactful as possible. But if this product is too expensive, it's not accessible to my consumer, I would have lost my bet. So it's really the 3P alliance of not forgetting the factor.	
SBEC	Economic Importance	For those who want to take on entrepreneurship and the CSR ecological aspect through the economic means, why not? Because the companies need to operate. And well, it's a great argument to say, you will gain in margin (profit), while reducing your carbon impact ..... But there will be, there is one thing that may be tougher, which is the most blocking element to progress, that is the price.	I sought early on to get the "Solar Impulse" label and then Bertrand Piccard, who is the man who flew around the world in a solar-powered airplane, created his foundation to say that industries and even governments need to stop saying there are plenty of solutions but they're not profitable, because what they're looking for are solutions that are proven from a technical and environmental impact perspective, and that are also profitable.	NVI	
SBEC	Notion of Pragmatism: Sometimes they make concessions if necessary for commercial reasons	So the very first container, well the very first order we had it come by air. Because at that time we had it seeded through a crowdfunding campaign.	NVI	NVI	

Sustainable behaviours: Social Efficacy (SBSE)			Description: Measures the efficiency of an organization's social initiatives, evaluating how effectively resources are used to achieve social goals (indicators from alliances, employee's retention, community impact, etc.)		
Code 2	Code 1	Entrepreneur A	Entrepreneur B	Expert A	
SBSE	RSE moment of shock that triggers idea	At the time, in 2013, there was the Rana Plaza collapse, which was a factory in Bangladesh. It caused, far from 3000 deaths, I think, and it was H&M and Zara that employed these people. And so that, I remember that, it marked me I said, Ah, there is something to be done.	What triggers it is, to become aware of a form of urgency because where we say, Well we will find solutions, we will have time. Well, actually no, we don't have the time. We are in a state of urgency from all points of view. So obviously when you have children it's a factor I wouldn't say aggravating but multiplying the issue.	From a personal perspective, two key words, the first is alignment, alignment with who I am outside of the company, and the second is contribution. A bit like the hummingbird, I don't know if you know the Native American legend, Well, that's it. So doing my part in the challenge of climate disruption and societal issues, well, that's really quite personal.	
SBSE	Commercial choice, CSR behavior, solidarity	Solidarity: we donate 2% of our turnover to Sagden, an NGO that builds schools in Vietnam.	I'm not a big fan of philanthropy as such. Sometimes, there's a condescending side, but yes, there are actions, because it makes sense for the employees and in relation to things.	In discussions with our colleagues around the world, we've realized that for some companies, sustainability often translates into philanthropy, for example. This is the case in India, and the USA. Thus, social issues are still very important in the rest of the world, more so than in Europe.	
SBSE	Choice of socio-economic impact	Let's ensure they are treated well and maintain employment there, so this social desire.	NVI	Here are the 500 companies that signed the corporate convention for the climate, we feel a climate slap that I had already felt before the CEC, but like a double slap. They are very aware and we have different discussions with historic Altios clients who experienced the CEC in the meantime. And Well who are going to implement a completely different roadmap.	
SBSE	Choice of socio-environmental impact	NVI	I am a member of Responsible Leaders Anjou-Maine, which is the entity from Anjou... We work on, we think precisely about the axes of CSR, how to progress in our practices to exchange good practices, etc. And I was at the initiative of creating a small group .....with this objective, to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions by 50% by 2030.	We can't advise companies the same way we used to now that we have all the elements of understanding in hand. There is an ethical question in it. And from a professional point of view? Well, I think it's still a luxury to be able to deal with these questions and to make it one's profession.	
SBSE	Project of school creation through business turnover	we have financed 6 schools with them since the start of the project, so that's around 300 children in school.	NVI	NVI	

Sustainable behaviours Stewardship (SBSW)			Description: Refers to facilitating responsible management and conservation of resources of stakeholders, emphasizing an organization's role in improving the use of resources, and caring as much about the entire life cycle.		
Code 2	Code 1	Entrepreneur A	Entrepreneur B	Expert A	
SBSW	Choice of recycling or refurbishment to recycle	You are also quite advanced in giving products a second life and you try to push forward in the recycling part even though it's hard.	Absolutely. We are really in the realm of eternal circularity, that is, we never throw away the solution anymore. Imagine your dishwasher. I no longer buy detergent, I continually wash with the same detergent, which is about 90, 95% effective so I lose a little. But we are still always with the same solution.	Hub strategies, refocusing in circular mode, in more eco-circular business models as close as possible to the countries, that's really the case. In terms of sourcing, human capital and production-distribution, that's been the case, especially since the pandemic.	
SBSW	Choice to educate future managers on the environmental cause	NVI	Here, what I've done for 20 years, and yes, it's a constraint, but it has always been both a pleasure and meaningful, and few do it, but I have always forced myself to dedicate at least 4 or 5 days a year to go to engineering schools, or technical institutes or similar, where I give a half-day lecture on my themes.	NVI	
SBSW	Choice to reduce product ranges	We try to break away from the seasonal aspect, to create timeless, basic products, and that, I would say, is crucial because it's not enough to just make recycled material products. If it's to continue making products that only last for 3 months.	NVI	NVI	

Code 2	Code 1	Entrepreneur A	Entrepreneur B	Expert A
ESB	Entrepreneurial Behavior Typologies			I would say there are three typologies we can observe. The first one, the native CSR entrepreneurs. Just bundles, something if we talk about shoes, grains of salt, ghosts, vivo. What do I know? Well, there are plenty. Native CSR who? In fact, when they internationalize their model, they will be keen to be. With whom? That's the first part, I put in the same the. Plan, the. Impact, impact businesses and so on. Or the institutions, non-governmental organizations? I would say there is a second, 2nd plan cluster of businesses that questions the sustainability of their business model and who, given the challenge we face and who are sensitized, well, want to integrate these criteria but do not necessarily know where to start. Judged because the. Is wide and complex, for example. The Eram group, historical actors? Well, they were favored in their shareholding, they have come out. Who questions the sustainability of their family business model. This is very much the case in family businesses. It's a lot the case in businesses, in management and intimately convinced. So there really is governance that will guide this path. But it's the same thing for. To be ambitious, that's it. So this, this becomes a category and the the third category, are those who by regulatory constraint, most of the time will get moving. I'll give you an example, the end of internal combustion engines in Europe in 2035.

## APPENDICES 10: Examples of Interview Transcription and Initial Coding

00:00:20 Speaker 2	Bonjour Kévin, merci de ton temps. On est là aujourd'hui au sujet d'un entretien par rapport à mon projet de fin de mémoire de recherche à l'IAE Nice en co-partenariat avec IAE Angers. Donc aujourd'hui, l'objectif de ma recherche, c'est explorer l'internationalisation de l'entrepreneuriat durable. C'est le sujet.	Intro projet
00:00:35 Speaker 2	Et la question centrale de mon projet c'est : comment les comportements de la durabilité d'influence-ils L'internationalisation d'une PME ?	Sujet de recherche
00:00:49 Speaker 2	Je t'invite à faire une petite introduction personnelle tout à l'heure, mais tout d'abord je me présente, je suis Oscar CSIBI, je suis un étudiant en seconde année de Master, et au même temps je suis enseignant assistant à l'université catholique de l'Oust, et j'aimerais que si c'est possible pour toi, tu te présentes. Qui es-tu ? Quelle étude t'as ? quel âge tu as ?	Question 1
00:01:13 Speaker 1	Très bien. Donc.	
00:01:16 Speaker 1	Kevin XXXX, je suis le fondateur et directeur général de XXXX, donc j'ai 32 ans et on a créé l'entreprise il y a 7 ans maintenant, avec mon ami d'enfance et associé Roland XXXXX qui lui gère toute la partie produit, production et RSE.	Rôles dans organisation Profil dirigeant Origine de l'entreprise quand et qui ? Rôles dans organisation
00:01:36 Speaker 1	L'idée, elle est née, l'idée de XXXXX est née de nos parcours plus perso, que pro, puisqu'on ne vient pas de	Origine de l'entreprise cote personel



	<p>l'univers de la mode, on n'a pas fait d'école de commerce. Moi j'étais expert-comptable avant de créer XXXX, je travaillais en cabinet</p> <p>Roland, lui il travaillait pour une ONG au Vietnam</p> <p>Et j'ai eu envie de plus de sens dans ma vie, plus d'un boulot qui rejoigne les valeurs et c'est ça qui m'a mené vers l'entrepreneuriat.</p> <p>Je ne pensais jamais créer une boîte, mais le fait d'avoir envie d'être en phase avec mes valeurs m'a poussé à l'entrepreneuriat.</p> <p>Il se trouve que, j'ai voyagé pas mal en Amérique latine à l'époque, Mexique, Pérou, Bolivie, Colombie, etcetera.</p> <p>Et à chaque fois, je découvrais différentes formes de savoir-faire, d'artisanat, avec des motifs ethniques que j'adorais. Je ramenaient pas mal de choses et je me suis dit, tiens, j'aimerais entreprendre autour de cet artisanat, de valoriser cet artisanat, et travailler en direct avec.</p> <p>Et donc après un voyage au Mexique, j'en ai parlé à un Roland avec qui j'avais voyagé et je savais que ça lui parlait,</p> <p>Un ami de longue date ?</p>	<p>Sans expérience dans le secteur, sans études entrepreneuriales.</p> <p>Expérience dans le pays d'implantation</p> <p>Motivation, quête de sens pour</p> <p>Expérience internationale personnelle avant-projet du pays de départ</p> <p>Intérêt par le textile traditionnel</p> <p>Orientation internationale à l'origine de l'entreprise</p> <p>Idée initiale autour de valorisation artisanat latin</p>
00:02:10 Speaker 1	<p>Relation personnelle entre fondateurs</p>	<p>Relation personnelle entre fondateurs</p>
00:02:38 Speaker 2	<p>Origine de l'entreprise, Relation proche entre fondateurs</p>	<p>Origine de l'entreprise, Relation proche entre fondateurs</p>
00:02:40 Speaker 1	<p>Expérience internationale avant-projet du pays de départ</p>	<p>Expérience internationale avant-projet du pays de départ</p>

	<p>chose et du savoir-faire, du tissage à la main et à de la broderie, il y a tout un tas de choses, donc si tu veux-je retourne au Vietnam et on construit le projet là-bas.</p> <p>Donc moi je suis resté en France, lui il est parti au Vietnam en 2016 et on a construit la chose comme telle, avec la particularité, c'est que, au début, on savait qu'on voulait travailler sur du commerce équitable, avec de l'artisanat, avec une action, on reverse une partie du chiffre d'affaires, bref, un cercle vertueux dès le début, mais sans savoir ce qu'on allait vendre, ou faire, ou comment on allait générer du chiffre d'affaires.</p> <p>L'idée ?</p>	<p>Connaissance de secteur artisanat dans le pays d'implantation</p> <p>Notions de RSE de la naissance du projet</p> <p>Mais idée du projet non structurée</p>
00:03:20 Speaker 2		
00:03:21 Speaker 1	<p>On a non, non, au moment où il repart, on n'a pas encore eu l'idée de la basket ça peut être autre chose.</p>	<p>Mais idée du projet non structurée</p>
00:03:33 Speaker 1	<p>Et en fait ça s'est devenu la basket pour plusieurs raisons. Alors déjà il y avait un marché de la basket éthique là-dedans.</p> <p>Il y avait VEJA qui existait déjà, mais à l'époque, il y avait très peu des marques, contrairement à aujourd'hui.</p>	<p>Connaissance d'acteurs du marché, qui ont réconforté leur choix</p>
00:03:39 Speaker 1	<p>Euh. Deuxièmement, et bien le Vietnam avait un grand savoir-faire dans la basket, aujourd'hui c'est les plus gros faiseurs dans le monde, ils font pour les plus grandes Marques : Nike, Adidas et autres. Donc on pousse la démarche du savoir-faire en faisant de la basket. Et puis on</p>	

<p>00:04:06 Speaker 1</p>	<p>était tous les 2 fans de Sneakers et je crois qu'on était beaucoup dans l'idée de se faire plaisir et donc on a été vers la basket équitable, solidaire et écoresponsable.</p> <p>C'est les 3 valeurs qu'on a mises en avant et qu'on a encore aujourd'hui.</p> <p>Et donc, si je résume brièvement, chacune d'entre elles : équitable, c'est rémunérer de manière juste tous les fournisseurs, à commencer par les artisans.</p> <p>Donc aujourd'hui, on travaillait avec une cinquantaine de femmes, 3 coopératives. Et le but c'est de valoriser leur savoir-faire, de les faire vivre de ce savoir-faire du tissage à la main, et nous d'en faire l'identité et l'originalité de la marque. On retrouve ça sur tous nos produits et c'est ce qui en fait l'ADN.</p> <p>Et après on travaille avec le réseau du fournisseur au Vietnam Intermédiaire, puisque le problème de la mode c'est le côté opaque par la multitude des intermédiaires.</p> <p>Donc on les supprime en ayant un salarié sur place au Vietnam plus mon associé.</p> <p>Et on connaît tout le fournisseur, il nous apporte de la transparence et on l'apporte à nos clients.</p> <p>La solidarité, on reverse 2% de notre chiffre d'affaires à sayden, qui est une ONG qui construit les écoles au Vietnam, plutôt au nord du pays-là où il y en a besoin. Et c'est eux qui sont en lien avec les autorités locales.</p>	<p>Envie de trouver de plaisir dans le projet</p> <p>Ampliation des notions de RSE avant la naissance du projet</p> <p>Interprétations des notions RSE, comportement RSE, Commerce Equitable</p> <p>Différentiation de la marque par la valorisation de l'artisanat</p> <p>Interprétations des notions RSE, comportement RSE, transparence</p> <p>Système de control international des opérations</p> <p>Interprétations des notions RSE, comportement RSE, solidarité</p> <p>Contribution et rétribution du CA, valeur partagée avec les communautés au Vietnam</p>
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<p>00:05:07 Speaker 1</p>	<p>Et on a financé avec eux 6 écoles depuis le début du projet, donc c'est un peu prêt 300 enfants scolarisés</p> <p>et enfin l'écoresponsabilité, brièvement ce que du coup c'est devenu de plus en plus techniques, on l'a pris par le prisme de la production de matières recyclées ou autres, et on va de plus en plus sur une étude ACV, dont une étude sur le cycle de vie du produit en lien avec l'ADEME par exemple ou en calcul certes la prod mais aussi tout, toute la durabilité du produit jusqu'à sa réparabilité voir son recyclage en fin de vie.</p> <p>Voilà, donc on fait un bilan carbone tous les ans et qu'on publie d'ailleurs sur notre site d'internet.</p>	<p>Interprétations des notions RSE, comportement RSE, écoresponsabilité</p> <p>Coopération avec institutions pour améliorer l'écoresponsabilité</p> <p>Interprétations des notions RSE, comportement RSE, bilan carbone, pour transparence</p>
<p>00:05:40 Speaker 2</p>	<p>Est-ce que tu peux me raconter un peu le profil de toi, ton associé, mais comment vous êtes ? Quelle était votre expérience, quelles étaient vos études ?</p>	<p>Question guide</p>
<p>00:05:52 Speaker 1</p>	<p>Alors donc mon associé, il a fait, il a commencé par faire droit après avoir fait un bac S, on a fait un bac S tous les 2 en économiques, et il est parti dans faculté de droit pour au final finir à Lille, où il a fait un master en gestion de projet avec option humanité.</p>	<p>Profil dirigeant</p>
<p>00:06:10 Speaker 1</p>	<p>Et c'est dans ce cadre-là. Qu'il est parti faire son stage de fin d'étude au Vietnam, à Tien Hoang, une petite ville où il était chargé de du développement de la ville pour une ONG espagnole et ensuite</p>	<p>Education en projet sociaux et humanistes</p> <p>Connaissance de secteur ONG dans le pays d'implantation</p>

<p>00:06:31 Speaker 1</p>	<p>il est resté 2 ans à peu près là-bas avant de revenir en France, puis de repartir pour XXX Shoes</p> <p>et moi, j'ai fait une bac S aussi avec lui, je suis parti à l'IUT de Nantes Gestion des entreprises et d'administration, et très vite j'ai été vers la finance et la compta, pour rejoindre l'IAE de Nantes, en master CCA, donc Comptabilité-Control-Audit</p> <p>Et en fait, le monde de l'entreprise et du Conseil autour de des entreprises, des entrepreneurs et tout me passionnés. J'avais de très bonnes notes en compta, en gestion etcetera. Donc les profs m'ont dit, Bah tu pourrais devenir expert-comptable ? C'est le bras droit du dirigeant. Voilà. Donc j'ai été vers là, J'ai passé mon DSCF, j'ai travaillé en cabinet chez BakerTelly Strego à l'époque et j'ai été jusqu'à être mémorialiste, donc expert-comptable stagiaire. Donc c'est processus un peu comme une thèse, c'est à dire un processus un peu long, que on, on travaille, on est salariés, mais on doit faire 3 ans même d'activité salariée avant de pouvoir passer un mémoire qui est un peu l'équivalent d'une thèse qui demande énormément de temps en plus de son activité en Cabinet. Et c'est à ce moment-là où j'ai commencé à me poser des questions, est ce que c'est vraiment ce que je voulais faire.</p> <p>Je suis quelqu'un qui aime les challenges, qui bouge beaucoup dans la vie, qui est</p>	<p>Profil dirigeant 2</p> <p>Origin du projet, fatigue de travail de rédaction et scientifique.</p>
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<p>00:07:44 Speaker 1</p>	<p>sportive, qui aime, je suis un compétiteur et autres, et j'avais l'impression d'être à 25 ans, comment tu ?</p> <p>Tu fais du sport ?</p>	
<p>00:07:54 Speaker 2</p>	<p>Sport ouais, j'ai fait, maintenant je suis à fond dans le vélo, le cyclisme et j'ai été longtemps dans le handball et</p>	
<p>00:07:54 Speaker 1</p>	<p>Je pense que ces 2 choses qui m'ont amené dans l'entrepreneuriat ?</p> <p>Premièrement, le gout du challenge justement, l'envie de me sentir vivant est animé par un projet. Là même si c'est prenant, on est dans un peu un train de quotidien, je me suis dit, ***** à 25 ans ce n'est quand même pas le kiff, et j'attendais en fait les voyages pour m'évader et après un voyage, je me projetais déjà sur celui d'après. Donc évidemment c'était les périodes de vacances. Donc c'est un peu triste déjà de réfléchir comme ça à 25 ans. Et c'était finalement assez court comme période d'évasion et cette évasion je la vivait, comme je disais en Amérique latine principalement avec mes voyages.</p> <p>On était en famille d'accueil avec Romain, on a fait des projets humanitaires. Enfin donc il y avait ce côté évasion de challenge et le côté sens où vraiment j'avais envie, c'était viscéral de me sentir utile dans cette société.</p> <p>Donc j'ai commencé à faire Bénévoles à travailler auprès d'immigrés, enfin voilà à aller vers différentes assos humanitaires et internationales.</p>	<p>Envie de trouver du challenge pour créer le projet</p> <p>Envie de trouver du sens, de contribuer à la société</p> <p>Travail dans le secteur d'ONG et humanitaire dans le pays d'origine et à l'internationale</p>

<p>00:09:14 Speaker 1</p>	<p>Et c'est un peu le mélange de tout ça qui a fait que je me suis retrouvé au Mexique, que j'ai découvert artisanal, que j'ai vu que les projets faisaient autour de ça, et je suis revenu équilibré, avec une idée un peu flue.</p> <p>Moi, ce que j'aime, c'est le voyage. Bah je vais faire un lien autour du voyage, autour de l'entrepreneuriat, autour du lien multiculturel et voilà. Et c'est comme ça qu'est né XXXXXX jusqu'à créer une basket et demain de la bagagerie.</p>	<p>Le coté social a été à l'origine du départ international</p>
<p>00:09:27 Speaker 2</p>	<p>Si tu pouvais parler un peu des valeurs, de tes valeurs personnelles et aussi des ton associé. Quelles sont les valeurs que vous pensez vous tenez à cœur aujourd'hui ? Sont essentielles pour vous à l'époque où vous avez lancé cette idée ?</p>	<p>Question guide</p>
<p>00:09:44 Speaker 1</p>	<p>Alors, on est très différent avec mon associé et très complémentaires. Par contre on se rejoint énormément sur les valeurs. C'est ce qui a fait la naissance de XXXX.</p> <p>Tous les 2, on a envie d'un monde à la fois plus social et plus écologique, plus juste. Alors oui il y aura toujours des déséquilibres et autres, mais on a envie à notre échelle de d'avoir un impact pour que, là en l'occurrence, dans l'industrie de la mode, il y a des gens qui sont exploités et que ça change.</p> <p>On aurait pu prendre le prisme du Made in France, on a plutôt pris celui de,</p>	<p>Valeurs de justice sociale et environnementale</p> <p>Envie d'un monde plus juste</p> <p>Envie d'avoir un impact dans l'industrie, de changer des méthodes pas en lignes avec leurs valeurs.</p> <p>Justification de choix entre produire en France ou produire au Vietnam</p>

<p>00:10:15 Speaker 1</p>	<p>Il y a des millions d'ouvriers dans le monde et notamment au Vietnam. Faisons en sorte qu'ils soient bien traités avec qui travaillent dans de bonnes conditions et les maintenir dans un emploi là-bas donc cette envie sociale.</p>	<p>Envie de soutenir l'économie de Vietnam,</p>
<p>00:10:39 Speaker 1</p>	<p>Et puis une envie, une envie environnementale où on ne peut pas nier que le monde part un peu en cacaoettes, c'est qu'il faut qu'on ait tous un impact à notre échelle et cet impact là pour le coup de l'industrie de la mode, il est extrêmement nocif. Donc l'envie à notre échelle de contribuer à ça en faisant et des produits plus propres, avec moins d'impact carbone.</p> <p>Mais aussi de changer la réflexion de la mode qui est de toujours plus consommer, plus produire, etcetera.</p> <p>Ça, c'est quelque chose sur lequel on est, on s'oppose. On essaie de se casser le côté saisonnier, de faire des produits intemporels, basiques, voilà</p> <p>et ça, je dirais que, à mon sens, ce qui est primordial parce que ça ne suffit pas de juste faire des produits en matière recyclée. Si c'est pour continuer de faire des produits qui ont 3 mois de durée de vie et qu'on va retrouver à moins 70% de prix après, au bout de 6 mois juste faire acheter, voilà !</p> <p>Donc c'est toutes ces réflexions-là qu'on voulez mettre dans XXXXX et sur laquelle on se rejoint.</p> <p>Et je pense que tout ça, ça vient de de nos parents, lui et</p>	<p>Choix stratégique d'écodesign</p> <p>Envie de changer l'industrie, opposé à ses valeurs</p> <p>Choix stratégique commercial de réduction des gammes</p>



	<p>moi et d'ailleurs, ils se connaissent, ils sont amis, au départ, de notre amitié lui et moi.</p> <p>Vos familles sont liées ?</p>	<p>Liens personnels entre familles fondateurs</p>
<p>00:11:57 Speaker 2</p> <p>00:11:57 Speaker 1</p>	<p>Ouais, ouais, ils se connaissent et je pense que c'est lui comme moi on a une éducation des bah, portée vers l'autre, portée vers le monde, portée vers le collectif. D'être acteurs, d'être actifs, de s'offusquer sur certaines choses, mais de faire en sorte de pouvoir avoir un impact à notre échelle. Je dis toujours à notre échelle, parce que à 25 ans justement, ou en tout cas avant de créer XXXXX, j'avais un poste, et ce côté de jeune qui veut changer le monde. Si je voulais faire ça, en fait j'allais en être malheureux et finalement ça ne pousse à rien faire, parce qu'on me dit que on ne peut pas changer le monde.</p> <p>Donc c'est plutôt de se dire OK, à mon échelle, qu'est-ce que je peux faire ? Et finalement, si chaque citoyen se met à faire ça, Ben c'est tous ensemble qu'on va réussir à faire un impact un peu plus long.</p>	<p>Valeurs de famille</p> <p>Un désir d'impact, d'être acteur de change, mais pragmatique</p> <p>Mentalité de contribution individuelle et collective aux enjeux,</p>
<p>00:12:50 Speaker 1</p>	<p>Donc voilà, c'est cette mentalité, ces valeurs là que nos parents nous ont, je pense, donné.</p> <p>Et puis après ça, et on se construit aussi nous-même à travers tout un tas des choses hein, mais.</p> <p>Vous aviez déjà une connaissance des enjeux climatiques et du secteur de textile avant de vous lancer ?</p>	<p>Question guide</p>

<p>00:13:02 Speaker 2</p>	<p>Ouais, ouais, ouais, complètement. Moi je sais déjà que à titre perso, j'avais commencé à acheter plus responsables sur l'alimentaire, on commençait à s'intéresser à l'équitable, au bio, Etcetera sur l'alimentaire.</p>	<p>Connaissance préalable dans les critères de commerce responsable</p>
<p>00:13:14 Speaker 1</p>	<p>Ensuite sur l'habitat durable, avant de créer XXXXX. En fait au Mexique, j'ai eu une autre idée qui était de créer une auberge de jeunesse. Enfin. Indépendante énergiquement, Donc on était intéressés un peu à ça.</p> <p>On s'est mis à faire des formations en ligne. Je suis pas du tout ingénieur, je suis pas du tout technique et je me suis dit bon là je, je m'adresse à quelque chose qui me dépasse. Donc j'avais mis ça en standby. Et au final, Bah je me suis intéressé au secteur de la mode où on porte tous les vêtements et en effet, je me suis dit Bah pourquoi faire attention à ce que j'achète dans l'alimentaire et pas faire attention à ce que je porte, qui a un impact énorme un d'un point de vue environnemental et social ?</p> <p>Et à l'époque, en 2013 ? Il y a eu des Rama Plaza qui s'est effondrée, qui est une usine au Bangladesh. Qui a fait ? Loin de 3000 morts, je crois, et c'était H&amp;M et Zara qui employait ces gens-là. Et donc ça, je me rappelle ça, m'a marqué je me suis dit, Ah, Là il y a quelque chose à faire et c'est un peu par ce biais-là et par cet événement tragique qu'on a pris le côté achat</p>	<p>Premières idées des projets RSE avant naissance de projet</p> <p>Premier Projet RSE failli</p> <p>Origine de l'entreprise, Cherchez un produit quotidien lié à une industrie.</p> <p>Origine de l'entreprise, moment d'électrochoc que déclenche l'idée,</p>

<p>00:14:50 Speaker 1</p>	<p>responsable dans la mode et moi je me serais promis.</p> <p>Il avait d'achat responsable à voir, des premières marques qui commençaient à faire des choses, donc j'ai cité VEJA, y il avait Faguo aussi qui commençait un peu à l'époque. Et donc je me suis dit, bon, y a quand même peu de marques. Ça va bouger, ça va bouger, y a quelque chose à faire, et ouais.</p> <p>Au final, on a été dans les premières marques, ce qui nous a valu d'ailleurs des très vite d'être présents, et Galleries Lafayette par exemple. Parce que les Galleries Lafayette en tant que précurseur de la mode se sont aussi intéressés à la mode éthique en 2019 et ils ont fait rentrer des marques. Ils auraient fait un référentiel des marques et ils ont une nouvelle référencée rapidement en 2019 alors qu'on a écrit la boîte en 2017. Donc ça va être un très beau tremplin pour nous d'être présent à Hausmann, au BHV, dans ces grands magasins parisiens.</p>	<p>Connaissance d'acteurs du marché RSE mode, qui ont réconforté leur choix</p> <p>Reconnaissance de marque, légitimité dans le secteur RSE</p> <p>Partenariats commerciaux grâce à légitimité avec des acteurs précurseurs.</p>
<p>00:15:22 Speaker 2</p>	<p>Donc pour revenir encore par rapport à cette notion de l'entrepreneuriat durable ? Aujourd'hui, comment tout définirait le l'entrepreneuriat durable à l'international pour toi ?</p>	<p>Question guide</p>
<p>00:15:43 Speaker 1</p>	<p>Alors ? Dès qu'il y a le mot international, on parle tout le temps de transport, c'est la première chose, que vienne à l'état d'esprit, à l'esprit des gens et c'est normal. Donc je pense que la première chose déjà à traiter, c'est ce</p>	<p>Principale challenge pour l'international notion du transport et bilan carbon</p>

	<p>que je peux être durable de par mes transports ?</p> <p>Nous notre bilan carbone, on fait venir les chaussures en conteneurs maritimes depuis le Vietnam jusqu'en France et à raison de 2 à 4 conteneurs par an.</p> <p>Ça représente 4 à 6% de notre bilan carbone. Autrement dit, pas grand-chose.</p> <p>Ce qui représente un impact, c'est la fabrication des matières premières et l'assemblage des chaussures et tout l'énergie que ça demande. Ça, c'est le principal impact. C'est c'est 75 à 80 % de notre impact.</p> <p>Mais c'est parce qu'on a, en tout cas d'un point de vue carbone, on a Résolu la chose en utilisant que du conteneur maritime et pas de l'aérien. Si on était sûr de l'aérien, ça boosterait notre billet en carbone négativement c'est certain.</p> <p>Donc déjà la première des choses c'est se dire, Bah est ce que mon activité nécessite d'envoyer des produits en avion aux 4 coins du monde du monde ? Auquel cas il va difficilement faisable de d'allier économie et durabilité.</p> <p>Donc aujourd'hui, il existe plein des moyens et le maritime, certes ça prend plus de temps, c'est certain, mais c'est extrêmement développé dans le monde et c'est surtout extrêmement moins cher. Donc pour ceux qui ont envie de prendre l'entrepreneuriat et le côté RSE écologique par le biais économique, et j'ai envie de dire pourquoi pas ? Parce qu'il</p>	<p>Il faut intégrer d'autres les choix pour faire un reel jugement</p> <p>Choix stratégique logistique, privilégier le transport maritime, maximiser le nombre d'unités transportés (container au lieu des palettes)</p> <p>Notion d'équilibre économique et durable</p> <p>Choix a double impacte</p>
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	<p>faut aussi que les boîtes (entreprises) tournent. Et bah c'est un superbe argument de dire, vous allez gagner en marge (bénéfice), tout en diminuant votre impact carbone en utilisant le maritime plutôt que l'aérien. Donc ça je pense que c'est un élément fondamental.</p>	
00:17:40 Speaker 2	<p>C'est un choix dès le début ?</p>	
	<p>Ouais, on l'a. Nous, on l'a fait dès le début. Ouais.</p>	
00:17:42 Speaker 1	<p>Je te répète la question. C'était une décision que vous avez pris dès le début concernant le maritime, c'était quelque chose</p>	
00:17:51 Speaker 2	<p>qui avait été réfléchi dans votre stratégie de de de départ ?</p>	
00:18:08 Speaker 1	<p>Alors le tout premier conteneur, enfin la toute première commande on l'a fait venir en avion. Parce que à l'époque on a fait ensemencer via une campagne de crowdfunding donc on vendait nos paires en précommande et en fait on a eu des retards dans la production. Ça commençait déjà, mais on a appris avec le temps après, que c'était quasiment tout le temps le cas. Et donc en fait c'était nos premiers clients. On a un peu paniqué, on s'est dit faut qu'on les livre à temps et donc on avait fait finir nos la production de 1000 paires à l'époque en avion. Mais ça a été la seule, la seule et dernière fois où ?</p> <p>Et après ? On s'est mis dans une logique de bilan carbone, à commencer par le transport, et</p>	<p>Parfois ils font des concessions si nécessaire pour des raisons commerciales</p>

	<p>ensuite on a fini par container en maritime.</p> <p>Toutes les autres productions, donc on ne l'a pas fait dès le début mais l'idée, l'envie était là, d'aller sur le volet éco-responsable et notamment à travers le transport.</p> <p>Ben voilà ça. C'est la première chose, je pense, quand on parle d'international et de sujet entrepreneuriaux.</p> <p>Les autres sujets je pense. Après ça, ne touche pas forcément à l'international, mais c'est que L'entrepreneuriat et la RSE, pour que ce soit, à la fois je pense viable économiquement, et que ça ait un impact, il faut que ce soit honnête et sincère. Je ne l'ai pas dit dans mes, dans nos valeurs, L'honnêteté, la et l'authenticité, c'est des choses qui en ressort dans les valeurs de XXXXX.</p> <p>Et nous, on fait le jeu de la transparence. Et qui dit transparence, dit ce qu'on fait de bien, mais aussi ce qu'on ne fait pas bien. Et là on peut s'améliorer. C'est ce qu'on fait sur notre bilan carbone, c'est ce qu'on fait sur, tout un tas des communications de notre part pour.</p> <p>Donner les informations aux gens et je pense que si on y va vers la RSE en se disant en étant parfait, eh bien on ne fait rien, ou si on fait croire qu'on est parfait.</p> <p>C'est manquer Le client, le consommateur, le fournisseur, bref les parties prenantes, donc il.</p>	<p>Notion d' éco-responsable</p> <p>Notions de transparence en tant que valeur</p> <p>Transparence et pragmatisme, communication du projet</p> <p>Authenticité contre le greenwashing</p>
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	<p>Que ce fait avec authenticité, autrement dit, pas de greenwashing.</p> <p>Et ça, ça permette de le dire, mais ce n'est pourtant pas le cas de tout le monde. C'est à certains voudraient aller là-dedans parce que c'est à la mode, mais sans faire, sans faire. J'allais dire des concessions, ce n'est vraiment pas des concessions. C'est sans se faire des changements dans l'entreprise. Il faut évidemment des changements au pair. Je pense que ça intéresse aujourd'hui bon nombre de salariés, donc, aux entreprises d'essayer de faire changer les choses collectivement et je pense que sur le long terme ils y gagneront. Et même à court terme, si on reprend l'exemple du transport, on peut très bien allier économie et écologie. C'est pas du tout un frein. De vouloir aller dans vers de l'entrepreneuriat durable ? Au contraire, il y a plein de façons de rayonner, de convaincre des clients de gagner de la marge, etcetera, tout en ayant un impact positif. Mais pour ça, il faut une réelle un réel engagement de la part des dirigeants, avec je pense aussi, il faut réussir à embarquer les équipes avec soi, autour de ça et d'y aller vraiment et de façon honnête.</p> <p>Et si ce n'est pas faisable tout de suite ou partiellement ou autres. Et bah de le dire, de le dire et de communiquer dessus et d'aider dès le début de se créer une stratégie RSE avec des Deadlines. Et comme je dirais n'importe quel projet parce que pour des vieilles</p>	<p>Notions de concessions dans les décisions entrepreneuriales</p> <p>Valeur ajoutée marque employeur</p> <p>Notion de collective,</p> <p>L'engagement envers la RSE commence par le dirigeant mais aussi les collaborateurs.</p>
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<p>00:21:43 Speaker 2</p> <p>00:21:46 Speaker 1</p>	<p>entreprises ce n'est pas simple de prendre ce virage.</p> <p>Pourquoi ce n'est pas simple pour des vieilles ?</p> <p>Alors je dis plus pour les vieilles entreprises que pour les jeunes entreprises, parce qu'il y a tout un tas de process qui sont mis en place, des habitudes à l'échelle de l'ensemble des équipes et c'est évidemment plus long et plus fastidieux de faire changer des directions à un paquebot qu'un petit dériveur comme XXXXXX. Mais en plus on s'est créé sur la RSE sur les bases de la RSE, donc c'est plus facile que tout soit créé et piloté autour de ça. Et pour autant, on a quand même des chantiers où on doit-on doit progresser évidemment, si je reste dans mon secteur de la mode, des mastodontes, comme pour prendre des exemples français de Jules, Devred. Des enseignes, ils ont voulu travailler avec nous pour bah, pour eux, c'était une manière d'aller vers le RSE en travaillant avec une marque qui l'était déjà. Ils sont dans cette réflexion, ils font des choses. Mais il y aura, il y a une chose qui peut plus dure qui soit, qui est l'élément le plus bloquant pour faire avancer, c'est le prix. Le prix consommateur, c'est qu'en fait, dès qu'ils vont toucher au produit, aux matières, aller sur des matières recyclées, matières recyclées, en moyenne c'est 3 fois plus cher qu'une matière conventionnelle. Donc ils vont toucher à leur coup de reviens</p>	<p>Notion de taille pour développer la RSE, il faut rester souple</p> <p>Les petits acteurs dans l'écoresponsabilité deviennent une façon pour les grandes marques d'aller vers la RSE</p> <p>Les processus actuels de fabriquer en intégrant la RSE sont plus couteux</p> <p>le marché général n'est pas prêt</p>
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	<p>et donc potentiellement au prix derrière. Et vu qu'ils sont sur une typologie de clientèle qui est habituée à des prix plutôt moyens, voire bas, Eh Ben forcément ça peut avoir un impact économique.</p> <p>Maintenant je pense qu'il y a un élément et là je suis plus le gestionnaire qui dit ça, mais un élément plus de marché et là ça Ne touche pas que la mode qui pour moi il faut qu'on change nos mentalités là-dessus et ça ira en ce sens de la RSE, c'est arrêter de mesurer les choses par le chiffre d'affaires, et le prendre par la rentabilité et surtout la marge brute</p> <p>Aujourd'hui, on ne voit les choses que par le chiffre d'affaires. C'est quand on dit Je suis leader sur le marché, c'est en termes de chiffres d'affaires, quand ? On parle de croissance en termes de chiffre d'affaires, on ne compare que ces données qui ne veulent strictement rien dire. Si je prends nous l'exemple de la mode, si on vend via une campagne de déstockage sur VP sur des modèles que n'ont pas marché, On va faire quasiment marge zéro. Pour autant, on va faire du chiffre d'affaires, alors que si on vend sur notre site internet à prix plein, là on fait plein de marge et pour le coup avec le avec un chiffre d'affaires, on va dire équivalent, la marge va pas du tout être la même. Donc si nous on vend, on fait 1 millions d'euros de chiffre d'affaires aujourd'hui. Si on fait 1 millions d'euros sur Internet, on va finalement produire moins de chaussures, mais avec une</p>	<p>Nécessité de changer les modes de gestion et control dans les organisations guidées plus par le CA que par autres facteurs.</p> <p>Online semble être un appui pour la RSE, afin d'améliorer la rentabilité</p>
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<p>00:25:35 Speaker 2</p>	<p>meilleure marge que si on fait le même de chiffre d'affaires qu'en magasin par exemple. Parce que la marge du magasin où là va falloir qu'on produise plus de chaussures, qu'on vende plus de chaussures. Avec finalement une marge qui sera moindre de donc qu'une rentabilité qui sera moindre,</p> <p>Donc Je pense que là, Un des éléments importants, c'est beaucoup de changer ses objectifs de croissance et voire, même questionner d'ailleurs, la croissance et de se dire si je reprends encore, je reste encore dans l'univers de la mode. Est-ce que le but c'est de vendre de plus en plus de produits, de chaussures, de vêtements, etcetera, ou est-ce que c'est de vendre au prix juste, d'avoir des produits plus durables, donc de faire consommer moins mais mieux aux consommateurs ? Et au final en termes de marge et de rentabilité ?</p> <p>Les boites vont se retrouver économiquement et vont s'en trouver peut-être même mieux économiquement de cette façon-là. Mais il faut changer la façon de voir les choses et d'aborder les choses.</p> <p>On va commencer un peu la partie en profondeur sur l'international, la place de l'International, sur le l'entrepreneuriat durable. Aujourd'hui pour toi, tu es la place que l'International a dans l'innovation ? quelle est la place qu'il a eue dans le démarrage ? C'est un c'est une notion « international », donc l'innovation que ça peut t'apporter ? Au lancement de</p>	<p>Questionnement 3P et finalité du BM</p> <p>Envie de changer les règles de jeux</p> <p>Question guide</p>
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<p>00:26:23 Speaker 1</p>	<p>ton projet, ton produit, ton tes processus, comment l'International t'as influencé ou influencé l'innovation de ton projet durable ?</p> <p>Alors l'international c'est 2 choses, c'est l'import et l'export. L'import donc c'est le Vietnam. Comment ça nous influencer ? Bah vu qu'on produit nos chaussures au Vietnam, il a fallu qu'on s'adapte à la culture vietnamienne qui n'était pas du tout tournée vers l'écologie. Et donc dans le choix de fournisseur. Aller vers ceux, soit qui était déjà certifié d'un point de vue social, environnemental et autre, soit au contraire ceux qui ne l'étaient pas, mais qui voulaient l'être, et on pouvait les engager dans un processus d'audite de certification à horizon un an, deux ans, etcetera, ce qu'on a fait avec notre fournisseur principal dans le sud du Vietnam et qui a l'année dernière obtenu la note BSCI qui est connue comme label dans l'univers de la mode avec la meilleure des notes, Note A. Là où quand on a commencé avec eux, ils n'étaient pas audité BSCI, Ensuite ils l'ont été avec une C pour finir avec une note A</p> <p>Comment vous l'avez fait ?</p>	<p>Coopération et Engagement de fournisseur vietnamien pour le faire évoluer en production RSE</p>
<p>00:27:24 Speaker 2</p>	<p>On l'a fait parce que on leur a montré, disons, on leur a demandé de s'engager dans ce processus, on leur a montré que c'était possible.</p>	
<p>00:27:26 Speaker 1</p>	<p>Qu'ils pouvaient répondre aux différents critères de ce label. Et que c'était une demande du marché européen mais aussi américain. Que les fournisseurs</p>	<p>Une certification RSE devient un signe de légitimité pour le fournisseur Asiatique pour accéder aux marchés développés</p>

	<p>aient cet audit-là, donc ça doit leur rapporter des clients. Et que si demain ils voulaient travailler avec des grandes marques internationales, ce qui est le cas maintenant aujourd'hui, Ben ils allaient devoir passer par ce processus-là, parce que ça allait être un prérequis pour accéder à ces marchés. Donc, eux, justement, qui n'avaient pas forcément.</p> <p>Quand vous avez fait ça vous étiez tout début de, de la relation ?</p> <p>Au début de la relation qu'on les a entraînées dans ce processus de labellisation, mais. Mais on les a accompagnés là-dessus et au début ils n'avaient pas ce label-là. Ce qui d'ailleurs pour nous cela nous a fermé quelques portes, parce que certains clients demandaient à avoir de la transparence et donc que nos fournisseurs aient ce label. Donc il m'a fallu attendre qu'il l'ait pour certains clients un peu poussés dans la mode éthique. Donc nous ça nous paraît cohérent d'avoir un impact au Vietnam auprès des fournisseurs en les faisant progresser d'un point de vue et social et environnemental. Et on a réussi à le faire. Et la preuve, ils se retrouvent économiquement puisqu'ils ont pu avoir de nouveaux clients internationaux et nous aussi puisque du coup on s'ouvre à potentiellement de nouveaux clients grâce à leur labellisation. Donc ça c'est pour la partie import, et pour la partie Export, on a été très vite sur le marché.</p>	<p>L'entrepreneur fait un choix à futur investissant dans son fournisseur même si cela avait un cout économique mais le but est d'avoir un impact dans le pays</p>
00:28:11 Speaker 2		
00:28:17 Speaker 1		

<p>00:30:02 Speaker 3</p> <p>00:30:04 Speaker 1</p>	<p>Allemand. Et là maintenant, on va aller sur le marché australien. Là, la logique elle a été de se dire et c'est surtout une question de transport, c'est pour pas faire des allers-retours. Comment ?</p> <p>logistiquement parlant, on va avoir notre stock au plus proche de nos fournisseurs.</p> <p>Et en. On est passé par des distributeurs qui avaient l'exclusivité sur le territoire, donc si je prends l'exemple de l'Australie, on a quelqu'un là-bas qui va donc acheter directement, nous faire des commandes directement depuis le Vietnam et on livre le conteneur en Australie et comme ça les stocks est basé chez le distributeur pour être livré en transport terrestre ensuite au magasin et aux clients,</p> <p>Ça ne faisait pas avant ?</p> <p>Ça on ne le faisait pas avant et là c'est en cours de développement, ça fait partie de nos enjeux de développement à l'export et du coup ça pourrait être vite de prendre l'avion. C'est à dire que c'est un marché qui est proche du Vietnam, donc on peut livrer facilement en conteneurs, même en moins de temps qu'en France. Et après c'est en camion comme on fait en France où on livre, on importe en conteneur et après on livre dans le magasin, ou il y a nos clients.</p> <p>Donc on enlève du coup les Envoies Aériens, c'est à dire que pour nous ça sera, ça serait un non-sens de vouloir se développer dans des pays lointains, Tout en ayant un</p>	<p>Un nouvelle stratégie export qui représente une prise de risque supérieur, car l'entrepreneur fabrique des plus grandes quantités et doit avoir un réel partenariat avec les deux son distributeur et fournisseur, car étant une marque, le distributeur peut à tout moment aussi créer la sienne.</p> <p>Innovation avec focus commercial pour l'organisation</p> <p>L'optimisation de la logistique pour l'écologie, force l'entreprise à prend des risques</p>
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	<p>stock en France, ça veut dire forcément on en voie aérien et ça clairement ce ne serait pas viable d'un point de vue écologique pour nous donc.</p>	
00:30:48 Speaker 2	<p>Est-ce que tu essaie de cloner ton modèle d'affaires dans les différents pays où tu vas exporter ? Garder le même.</p>	
	<p>Ouais, c'est ça, Exactement,</p>	
00:30:51 Speaker 1	<p>Peux-tu développer un peu cette idée ?</p>	<p>Présence grand export, Chili et Australie via des distributeurs exclusives.</p>
00:30:55 Speaker 2	<p>Alors c'est quelque chose qui se soit fait beaucoup hein, dans des marchés lointains dans la mode, et aujourd'hui on a 2 distributeurs, un en Australie et un au Chili. Qui donc achète directement nos, enfin, nous passe commande depuis le Vietnam, on les livre en conteneur, ils gèrent leur propre stock, leur propre logistique et après nous, on les accompagne pour le côté image de marque, pour que à la fois, Ils aillent vers les bons clients B to B, donc magasins et à la fois qui créent un site internet qui nous représente bien et qui va être leur vitrine et leur e-shop pour les clients B to C, en particulier.</p>	
00:30:58 Speaker 1	<p>Et là, vous avez un rôle ?</p>	
00:31:39 Speaker 2	<p>Et là ouais, on a un rôle de coordination, d'en lien avec eux, de gestion de projet avec nos équipes en interne,</p>	
00:31:41 Speaker 1	<p>puisqu'on est une boîte de 10 personnes basée à Nantes. Et donc on les accompagne en leur donnant le contenu nécessaire au développement</p>	<p>Rôle de conseil (service) depuis le siège pour les clients grands export qui sont livrés directement depuis Vietnam</p>

	<p>de la marque sur leur territoire, avec toutes les particularités de mode, de saison, de prix de de langue, de culture, que ça nécessite.</p> <p>Et c'est nouveau chez vous à faire ça en interne ?</p>	
00:32:08 Speaker 2	Ouais, c'est. Nouveau et là On a des personnes qui nous on recrutent, donc en 2024 on a fait pour la première fois une levée de fonds en 2023, ça nous permet de nous développer alors sur l'international comme j'ai dit la et également sur de la Bagagerie en plus de la chaussure et on a recruté du coup des profils Market et Com qui avaient cette dimension internationale, le marché allemand nous intéresse donc quelqu'un qui a travaillé en Allemagne, qui parlait allemand. Donc d'avoir déjà dans notre équipe des gens tournés vers l'international et qui peut nous appuyer sur la France, mais pas que, sur aussi nos autres marchés.	
00:32:11 Speaker 1		<p>Pour développer l'international, ils investissent dans des profils Marketing et Communication pour aider à développer la marque dans les pays cibles, notamment l'Allemagne, mais aussi pour aider dans le marché France.</p>
00:32:53 Speaker 2	<p>Aujourd'hui, et aussi dans le démarrage du temps, le temps de projet, cette notion de justement de durabilité. Est-ce que tu penses que l'effet de d'être à l'international ça a eu un impact au niveau risque ? Incertitude pour toi, plus large que si tu les essayes depuis la France.</p> <p>Oui, c'est sûr. L'international comporte forcément des risques. Il y a des risques de devises, il y a des risques de transport, il y a des risques géopolitiques, il y a des risques</p>	
00:33:22 Speaker 1		

	<p>de différences culturelles et de langues.</p> <p>Il y a tout un tas de risques, ça c'est clair, après nous qui aimons, justement, le challenge et ce lien multiculturel, c'est justement ce qui nous anime et on compose avec ce risque.</p> <p>Mais c'est sûr qu'aujourd'hui, plus grande difficulté qu'on a eu dans la boîte, c'est sur des sujets internationaux, c'est à dire les, si je prends par exemple reprendre l'exemple des conteneurs maritimes, on a eu tout un tas de crises.</p> <p>Sur les 7 dernières années chez XXXX qui ont fait à la fois augmenter les prix des conteneurs et donc qui impactent directement la marge et à la fois augmenter les délais de livraison, ce qui a un impact sur les clients finaux où on les livre en retard. Il y a eu le COVID évidemment, où tout s'est arrêté, puis tout a repris, et donc, les conteneurs, les prix des conteneurs, ont explosé avec délais qui se sont rallongés. On a eu malheureusement des contrôles de douanières par pas de chance, parce qu'on a l'air si bizarre que ça puisse paraître, la douane qui est pourtant l'administration française, Bah il nous facture un contrôle, nous immobilisez la marchandise alors, pour des bonnes raisons hein, mais nous, il y a un impact économique. Là, plus récemment, et bah il y a tout ce qui se passe dans le canal de Suez avec le Yémen.</p> <p>Ça a un impact tous les nos conteneurs doivent emprunter un autre trajet, enfin tout le contour de l'Afrique, donc on prend beaucoup plus de temps</p>	
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	<p>et les prix sont de nouveau partis à la hausse. Alors on n'est pas sur le après COVID, on était passé d'un conteneur de 2000\$ à 16000\$ le conteneur, là on est plus passé de 2000\$ à 6000\$ à peu près. Pour autant, c'est un encore une fois un impact, donc c'est des choses sur lesquelles on ne peut absolument rien et on est extrêmement dépendant. Donc oui, clairement il y a des risques, et</p>	
00:35:31 Speaker 2	<p>Tu penses que pour toi, ces risques-là sont différents d'une boîte qui n'est pas durable ?</p>	
00:35:39 Speaker 1	<p>Non là pour le coup ce sont plus des risques d'une boîte qui va vers l'international et qui tourne vers l'international sur l'Import et l'export qui est, du contraire à une boîte qui serait sur un tissu local français, même si elle a ses propres risques aussi. Mais il n'y a pas de d'entreprise sans risque. Des risques liés à la durabilité d'une entreprise...</p>	
00:36:06 Speaker 2	<p>Tu as investi au début ? Vous avez investi un capital ? vous avez mis des fonds ?</p>	
00:36:11 Speaker 1	<p>Oui. Bien sûr. On a mis des fonds.</p>	
00:36:14 Speaker 2	<p>A quel niveau le risque était là pour toi ?</p>	
00:36:17 Speaker 1	<p>Je, alors enfin là déjà le fait d'avoir investi dans notre boîte finalement, on a plus ou moins fait le même investissement. Sinon pour autant je ne considère pas avoir pris un risque démesuré, dans la mesure où on a investi dans la boîte à 25 ans, qu'on n'avait pas d'enfant, pas d'emprunt,</p>	<p>Notion de risque très basse, l'entrepreneur ne voit pas une grande perte potentielle.</p>

<p>00:36:57 Speaker 2</p> <p>00:36:59 Speaker 1</p>	<p>pas d'immobilier, etcetera. Donc tu ne le fais pas grand-chose à plaindre, et que nos projets on a réussi à le faire financer par du crowdfunding, par des banques et autres.</p> <p>Donc finalement de toute façon on avait 25 ans donc on n'avait pas beaucoup d'apports personnels, on n'avait pas de ni des gros montants et depuis ces montants étaient largement récupérés, rentabiliser donc finalement, euh.</p> <p>Vous avez investi une partie du capital ?</p> <p>On a on a mis de l'argent personnel évidemment mais on n'a rien risqué de nos vies quelque part. Je ne considère pas avoir pris le risque démesuré en me versant là-dedans pour ça. Je pense que j'avais plus à y gagner qu'à y perdre, même si ça ne se passait pas comme vous le voulez. Donc je ne dirais pas, qu'on a pris des risques ? Oui, mais pas démesurés</p> <p>Et encore maintenant, avec la levée de fonds, le projet qui prend une autre ampleur. Oui, on prend des risques, mais, mais ils sont mesurés, c'est certain. Et après sur le côté durabilité Les risques qu'on a dans la durabilité de notre projet, c'est je pense que c'est premièrement, bah on a des produits qui forcément on a un coût de revient un peu plus élevé, donc un prix un peu plus élevé en ce moment avec les sujets d'inflation, etcetera, ça peut, ça pourrait nous porter défaut, même si aujourd'hui on trouve largement notre clientèle. Mais c'est</p>	<p>Les nouvelles sources de financement (crowdfunding), diminuer la notion du risque.</p> <p>Tout les risques pris pour lancer le projet sont justifiés et mesurés.</p>
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<p>00:38:25 Speaker 1</p>	<p>potentiellement un risque qu'on pourrait avoir.</p> <p>Deuxièmement, un des risques que on observe, c'est quand tu te lances dans la durabilité certains, c'est ce que je disais tout à l'heure, donc nous évidemment, on explique notre démarche, mais certains doit être dans le Greenbashing autrement dit, « Tu dis que tu fais bien ? », mais nous on va creuser, on va trouver ta faille.</p> <p>Il y en a forcément, encore une fois, personne n'est parfaite, aucune boîte n'est parfaite et du coup on va t'attaquer là-dessus ; et nous là, il nous attaque beaucoup, c'est sur le Vietnam, en disant Ben vous dites que vous êtes social équitable et écoresponsable mais faut vous fabriquer au Vietnam. Alors ceux qui nous connaissent et ceux qui se sont intéressés à notre boîte et qui vont aller sur le site, savent dans quoi on l'est là-bas et comment on peut être là-bas, d'ailleurs, on a créé une page, « Pourquoi produire au Vietnam ne veut pas dire produire mal ? », on explique tout ça mais c'est souvent sur les réseaux sociaux, sur les commentaires des pubs etcetera, où les gens se lâchent, et c'est un peu facile parce qu'ils ne connaissent pas, et ils ne vont pas se renseigner. Donc ça c'est un potentiel un peu un risque, c'est de se faire bâcher, alors qu'en plus on fait le jeu de la transparence, mais on n'est pas les seuls à subir ça. Et bizarrement un Nike, un H&amp;M et un Zara, va limite, moins subir ça, parce qu'eux ils disent très clairement bah on fait mal et on l'assume. Bizarrement personne va les</p>	<p>Risque d'incompréhension RSE des consommateurs et autres du lien international et RSE.</p>
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	<p>embêter et ils vont trouver leurs clients. Donc ça c'est un éventuel frein, mais qui se maîtrise carrément. Il suffit juste de communiquer, en fait comme toujours, à chaque fois, c'est expliquer les choses, communiquer, être transparent et en fait où les gens pourront éventuellement gueuler, mais pourront pas me reprocher de pas avoir été honnête avec eux. Et typiquement je prends un exemple avec tous les hausses des conteneurs, l'inflation et autres, on a fait un choix fort en 2022 de dire Bah on augmente tous nos produits, le prix de vente, bah certaines boîtes le font un peu même clairement sans communiquer. Ben nous on a communiqué, on a dit voilà, à telle date on augmente tous nos prix de 5€. Voici pourquoi, et on a donné les raisons et les gens, ça eu un impact extrêmement grand, d'un point de vue notoriété parce que ça nous a donné une visibilité, les poids ont été partagés, etcetera. Donc je pense que les gens sont demandeurs de ça, mais des fois il faut oser se mettre à nu. Et on ne veut ne pas être transparent, et la durabilité c'est ça aussi, c'est être transparent, et on veut ne pas être transparent disant on va, on va se faire bâcher. Bah non, et les gens ne comprendront pas, etcetera. Si les gens peuvent comprendre, c'est juste dans une démarche de transparence, d'expliquer les choses. Voilà, y en aura toujours des mécontents dans le haut, mais je pense qu'on a plus à y gagner qu'à y perdre. Mais faut faire le jeu de le faire et prendre le risque de le faire.</p>	
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<p>00:40:57 Speaker 2</p> <p>00:42 :00</p>	<p>J'arrête l'enregistrement parce qu'on doit continuer. Merci beaucoup de ton temps Kevin et on continuera la discussion à un autre moment. Merci.</p>	<p>Remerciement</p> <p>Fin de premier entretien</p>
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