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Linking Sustainability-Driven Factors and Online Knowledge Sharing in Business: A PLS-SEM Analysis

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Abstract: Over time, the concept of sustainable development may transform into a business practice that mandates organizations to contemplate the interconnectedness between economic, social, and environmental factors. For organizations to grow in a competitive market, they should adopt cohesive policies founded on reliable sustainability strategies and combine this with efficient knowledge sharing. This approach supports an organization's growth and enhances its social reputation. That is, these elements may be considered important for an organization's growth in a competitive market. Building upon this context, we used structural equation modeling (SEM) to examine the structural correlations between organizational sustainability policies, supplier sustainability, online knowledge sharing, and external factors that encourage sustainable practices. This study's originality and novelty lie in its proposal of a conceptual model that connects all these factors within a coherent framework, thus extending the existing literature on this topic. Our results confirm that external factors have a positive relationship with sustainability policies and that sustainability policies positively impact supplier sustainability and online knowledge sharing. We emphasize the importance of considering internal and external factors when implementing sustainable procedures and the need for authentic communication with stakeholders to integrate sustainable practices successfully. The findings can assist managers in comprehending the factors that impact a company's sustainability strategies and in adapting policies to address environmental and social concerns.

Keywords: organizational sustainability policy; supplier sustainability; knowledge sharing

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1. Introduction

The concept of sustainable development has evolved over the years, becoming a more comprehensive term considering the interlinkages between economic, social, and environmental factors. Sustainable development represents not only the "foundation for today's leading global framework for international cooperation" [1] at a governmental level but also a mainstream business practice [2–5]. Andrew Winston [2] provides evidence that leading organizations have committed to achieving sustainable goals that are advocated worldwide by international organizations, such as the U.N., with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals, or the 2050 European Green Deal objective, striving to achieve net-zero emissions of greenhouse gases. Moreover, the international agenda also highlights the importance of sustainability as a guiding principle for global political actions [6].

Martins et al. [7] (p. 490) point out that the literature comprises several conceptual interpretations regarding sustainable development, deepening and extending the scope and meaning of the concept. Nevertheless, one of the most well-known and highly cited and adopted definitions was formulated by the World Commission on Environment and Development in 1987 in the Brundtland Report: "Sustainable development is a development

that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" [8]. That is, sustainable development requires organizations to consider how their economic activities impact the environment and society. This definition is not without its faults, as several scholars have criticized it as being a vague definition (see [9]) or for being anthropocentric, indefinite, and unclear (see [10]). Regardless of the criticism it received, the Brundtland Report has sparked interest and increased awareness by engaging a broad audience [11] and showcasing the interconnections between "the economy and its dependence on natural resource systems" [12] (p. 4).

Achieving sustainability requires focusing on sustainable development, which can be monitored, evaluated, and managed by implementing sustainable development strategies [13]. This approach is described in the widely accepted triple bottom line (TBL) framework of sustainability proposed by Elkington in 1997 [14]. The three dimensions (3Ps) advanced by Elkington focus on people, the planet, and profits as a triple goal toward achieving sustainability [14,15]. Therefore, the 3P framework recognizes the need to balance economic growth with social equality and environmental protection when defining sustainability.

This framework encouraged businesses to track both their financial performance and their social and environmental performance, influencing corporate accounting, stakeholder engagement, and business strategies [16]. Hence, an organization's success is dependent on achieving positive returns on all 3Ps [17]. The TBL framework was a starting point that prompted organizations to integrate different systems into practice that allow them to measure their environmental or social performance, in addition to their traditional financial performance.

Consequently, organizational practices nowadays include a combination of various metrics and tools, such as "ESG (a framework focusing investors and financial analysts on Environmental, Social and Governance factors), Social Return on Investment (SROI), the Environmental Profit & Loss approach" [16], to mention a few. All sustainability reporting systems aim to provide higher transparency and accountability [18] for organizations while promoting a balanced approach to business and organizational decision-making by measuring progress toward sustainability goals [16]. At the same time, by establishing a strong and sustainable foundation in terms of organizational policies and the stakeholder approach (including employees, suppliers, and customers), organizations can further communicate about it to wide audiences, and, to this end, they can capitalize on the catalysts of digital transformation—i.e., varied and interconnected online channels through which they can share relevant knowledge [19]. The adoption of coherent organizational policies based on sound sustainability strategies coupled with adequate knowledge sharing supports organizational development and social reputation, thus emerging as a sine qua non condition for their survival in competitive markets [19,20].

Building on this logic, the present study looks into the relationships between organizational sustainability policies, suppliers' sustainability, online knowledge sharing, and the external factors pushing organizations toward more sustainable approaches. By doing so, the paper extends the existing body of literature and proposes a conceptual model that links all these factors under the aegis of an articulate framework.

The argumentation structure begins with a literature review and the formulation of hypotheses. It continues by proposing a methodological design and a measurement of the proposed model, followed by an evaluation of the structural model and a discussion of the findings. The paper ends with conclusions, limitations, and future research directions.

2. Literature Review and Formulation of Hypotheses

2.1. External Drivers of Organizational Sustainability Policies

Drawing from the Brundtland Report [8], one important external driver of sustainable development is connected to environmental strategies. Ecological concerns have, therefore, become central to the concepts of circular economy and environmental sustainability [21], which, in turn, represent essential strategies to governmental bodies, such as the European

Commission, and non-governmental organizations. Kirchherr, Reike, and Hekkert state that "the main aim of the circular economy is considered to be economic prosperity, followed by environmental quality" [21] (p. 221). Accordingly, the European Union regulates the market by establishing environmental standards that encourage and support the transition to a circular economy, and this is one of the E.U.'s primary goals, that is, "to make Europe cleaner and more competitive" [22]. The E.U. is not the only organization to support a transition to a circular economy and environmental sustainability. The International Organization for Standardization takes a step further, addressing the essential sustainable issues and helping organizations to meet the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) [23] by providing tools that help to achieve them.

Another driver for sustainable strategy implementation within an organization is consumer demand. A recent Delloite study [24] conducted on a representative sample of more than 2000 UK adults shows that most consumers consider a product sustainable if it meets one of the following criteria: made from recycled materials, biodegradable, responsibly sourced, minimal packaging, and carbon neutral. Hence, consumers are becoming more socially aware, embracing the idea of circularity, as the same study shows [24]. Similarly, the World Economic Forum [25] highlights that consumers want a more sustainable lifestyle, expecting organizations to drive positive change while making it a critical strategic priority [26].

The existing studies on business sustainability have investigated the effects of legal frameworks and policies [21], the re-evaluation of business models [27–32], and stakeholder performance [33,34], particularly regarding supply chains [35–37] and employees' attitudes [38–40], as well as long-term partnerships and collaborations [10,11]. Furthermore, there is an increasing number of studies exploring the connection between evolving consumer lifestyles and demands and sustainable development [24,25,41]. Hence, the development and implementation of organizational sustainability policies are influenced by various factors, including the organizational culture, the legal and regulatory environment, stakeholder pressure, and economic factors. By understanding these determinants, companies can develop and implement policies that meet the needs and concerns of stakeholders, comply with laws and regulations, and enact their long-term sustainability strategies.

Against this backdrop, developing a sustainability strategy becomes a must for companies. Organizations are dared to formulate articulate sustainability policies and to set clear objectives in order to properly implement them [3,42]. Likewise, entrepreneurs and managers are expected to support the organizational system through consistent sustainability-oriented strategies and policies, thus reifying a cohesive work culture among all organizational stakeholders [42,43].

Supporting previous research results from a recent McKinsey Global Survey [44] indicate that companies focused on creating value are more likely to incorporate sustainability into their corporate culture and provide training for employees on integrating sustainability into their work practices. Having a sustainability mindset embedded in the internal culture is crucial for organizations [45] seeking to achieve value and performance [44]. However, when discussing an organizational culture, there are some scholars who note that it is greatly influenced by its context, including internal and external factors, such as stakeholders, market conditions, and the industry sector [46]. Considering this, Fietz and Günther [46] reinforce the idea that only an organizational culture that encourages, supports, and facilitates change and incorporates it into its values and beliefs can advance sustainability. Consequently, organizations must acknowledge that the actions and behaviors of their employees play a crucial role in addressing and mitigating their environmental impact [38–40]. In addition, employees who believe that their organization has sustainability policies are more likely to engage in environmentally friendly behaviors [39,40].

A recent study [38] demonstrates a positive relationship between employees' perceptions of organizational sustainability policies and their green behavior, in terms of both task-related and proactive behaviors. Employees, managers, and volunteers play a significant role in advancing environmental sustainability in their organizations through

their input and efforts [10]. The social well-being of employees and the reinvention of the social contract between organizations and their employees have become imperative, according to Leinwand and Mani [47]. The two specialists [47] state that the key to success is implementing a "citizen-led approach", where the employees within an organization and its surrounding environment continuously contribute and drive innovation. From Elkington's perspective [15], the higher the mutual respect and loyalty earned between an organization and its stakeholders, the higher the probability that the organization will be sustainable.

Based on these arguments, we posit the following:

H1: *External sustainability drivers positively impact organizational sustainability policies.*

2.2. External Sustainability Drivers and Suppliers' Sustainability

Sustainable development is driven by today's increased need to address global challenges from environmental and social standpoints. Issues such as climate change, the depletion of natural resources [8], and social inequalities [8,29] drive a global sustainable development agenda that ensures that the planet remains healthy and habitable for future generations. An environmental strategy could be considered part of ecological sustainability, defined by Eliot as "stakeholder behavior impacting on the natural environment that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future stakeholders to meet their own needs" [11] (p. 207). To achieve this, organizations must implement new products or services and processes that address environmental, social, and economic sustainability challenges while properly managing their entire supply chain [41]. The growing emphasis on environmental and social concerns in public discourse has created both incentives and prospects for integrating these issues into supply chain management [14]. In this vein, Han et al. [35] state that green supplier integration is related to an organization's environmental, social, and economic performance. In this sense, green supply management is a viable solution that addresses ecological concerns and meets the growing demand for organizations to comply with environmental regulations [35]. Additionally, Seuring and Müller [48] identified the strategy known as "supply chain management for sustainable products", and this involves the establishment of life-cycle-based standards for the environmental and social performance of products and their implementation throughout the supply chain, helping organizations achieve their sustainability goals.

Compliance with local, national, and international laws and regulations relating to sustainability is also essential. For example, companies operating in E.U. countries must follow E.U. directives and adopt policies that reduce waste and emissions or disclose information about their sustainability practices. External sustainability drivers, such as regulations and market pressures, have prompted some organizations to seek ways to reduce their environmental impact and develop green products. E.U. directives, for example, mandate policies that reduce waste and emissions or require companies to disclose information about their sustainability practices. Hence, E.U. legislation determines the priority and extent of corporate sustainability activities [33]. Seuring and Müller [48] found that external sustainability drivers, such as governing agencies, customers, and stakeholders, influence suppliers to adopt sustainable practices. Furthermore, according to Oelze et al. [36], organizational learning plays a crucial role in comprehending how companies execute sustainable supply management. The authors in [36] highlight that industry and cross-industry cooperation, along with collaboration with external stakeholders, such as non-governmental organizations, can facilitate sustainable practices among suppliers by proactively addressing relevant issues.

However, organizational perspectives focused solely on short-term profitability strategies, policies, and actions can negatively impact the global economic and ecological environment [49]. Therefore, a shift to a sustainable business model that tackles today's most pressing challenges is crucial. The development of new circular business models, industrial processes, and clean technologies is necessary for this shift to happen [50]. According to the European Commission [51] and Eurostat [52], the circular economy model offers

opportunities for more competitive, sustainable, and innovative businesses, protecting them against a scarcity of resources while also safeguarding the environment in terms of climate, biodiversity, and pollution. Framing business activities in new ways requires a sustainable development strategy that mobilizes sustainability transformations [53]. Therefore, supplier sustainability is crucial to ensure that sustainability is implemented throughout the entire supply chain and external sustainability drivers positively impact suppliers' sustainability. The proper management of the supply chain and the delivery of value to businesses and society are essential for sustainable development [28,49,53,54]. Consequently, we posit the following:

H2: *External sustainability drivers positively impact suppliers' sustainability.*

2.3. Organizational Sustainability Policies and Suppliers' Sustainability

As previously mentioned, sustainability strategies and policies encompass all three dimensions of the TBL (environmental, economic, and social dimensions) with a focus on natural resources [55] and maintaining environmentally friendly production [56]. Organizations are increasingly encouraged to adopt environmentally conscious behavior and change, if necessary, how they operate by setting or adopting sustainable business models [27].

Sustainability has become an integral part of organizational strategies as a response to external requirements because it determines superior organizational performance [54]. Many researchers have confirmed a positive association between sustainability, innovation, and economic performance [28,54]. Zang, Khan, Lee, and Salik [54] (p. 512), for instance, confirm that sustainability significantly impacts financial performance as organizations develop additional capabilities and technological innovations that help them achieve economic and sustainable goals. Hence, sustainable development requires substantial systematic readjustments [49] that help organizations achieve green growth, remain competitive [31,35,57], and foster economic performance [28,54] via coherent monitoring of the whole value chain. The sustainable transformation of businesses most frequently occurs through the development of product/service reconfigurations, process transformation [31,53], or marketing innovations [31].

Scholars analyzing sustainable innovations focus on multiple facets: (1) changing the linear business model to meet today's standards, which involves enhancing well-being through the creation of an eco-industry and promoting environmental restoration [28,32,34]; (2) changing internal factors determining management practices, new product/service development, and commercialization [31,53]; and (3) changing external factors influencing managerial practices, such as stakeholder expectations, and environmental and social regulations [48,58]. Müller and Siebenhüner [33] note that organizations have no universal solutions to address today's environmental and social challenges. However, they highlight the importance of learning and growing at the organizational level by pursuing vertical and horizontal sustainable development. The authors argue that, while various factors can facilitate organizational learning, such as new market competitors, shifting customer needs, media attention, and stringent regulations, there is a limited understanding of the specific conditions surrounding learning processes related to sustainability [33]. In this respect, organizational efforts translated to policies directed toward sustainable development should consider several criteria [33] (p. 238): high temporal flexibility, broad fields of application, decentralization, and deliberative approaches. All these criteria impact organizational sustainability-oriented learning through organizational culture, structure, and personnel policies [33].

A sustainability strategy requires organizations to adhere to all environmental regulations, including in their product production supply chains. Therefore, there is external pressure from both large organizations and consumers for supply chain compliance with environmental standards [36,41]. Nevertheless, implementing sustainable policies in supply chains can be a major challenge for organizations, potentially affecting a company's reputation and financial results. Recent studies [36] have shown that organizational learning is crucial in comprehending how companies implement sustainable supply chain manage-

ment. Cross-industry and industry collaborations are becoming increasingly vital [15,36], as each organization may act as a supplier and a buyer at different times, and other partners bring varying perspectives. Increasing stakeholder interest in sustainability [24,25,45] leads to a growing preference for products/services certified as ethical, socially responsible, and made through sustainable supply chains [45]. Starting from these issues, we consider the following:

H3: *Organizational sustainability policies positively impact suppliers' sustainability.*

2.4. Organizational Sustainability Policies, Suppliers' Sustainability, and Online Knowledge Sharing

Digital transformation is vital in shaping sustainable development. Scholars [59,60] argue that digital tools, such as the Internet of Things (IoT) and artificial intelligence (A.I.), will be vital tools for promoting sustainable development by improving energy production, water treatment processes, food production, and preserving the health of our planet. Smart technologies can also provide equal access to essential services, leading to an improvement in overall well-being.

Furthermore, the advancement of technology and the growth of the digital economy have led to a shift in how organizations operate, connect, and communicate with customers, suppliers, and stakeholders [61–64]. In recent years, "being digital" and sharing knowledge online have become the mantra for organizations [47]; Vătămănescu et al. [61,62] described their success in highly competitive environments. As technological innovations and digital technologies have rapidly advanced, they have provided innovative and cost-effective solutions to various global challenges. Global challenges have also been identified by the United Nations (U.N.) within its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which aim to end poverty, protect the planet, and ensure peace and prosperity for all by 2030 [65].

An effective way for organizations to tackle sustainability challenges is through digital transformation and the incorporation of digital technologies, which can assist in addressing the world's most pressing global sustainability issues [59]. Digital transformation involves utilizing innovative digital technologies to significantly enhance operations and markets, including improving the customer experience, simplifying processes, and developing new business models [59,66–69]. Through digital technologies, organizations gain new capabilities (managerial and operational capabilities) that help them achieve sustainable goals [70].

Nevertheless, digital transformation has simultaneously favored the external communication of organizations, including their integrated approach to sustainability principles, strategies, and policies [19,43,71–73]. Online channels have become a suitable means for companies aiming to publicly display their sustainable orientation, their adherence to sustainability-centric policies, and the importance that they attach to the entire supply chain from a sustainability-driven standpoint [20,74]. Corroborating these aspects, we infer the following:

H4: *Organizational sustainability policies positively impact online knowledge sharing.*

H5: *Suppliers' sustainability positively impacts online knowledge sharing.*

A conceptual model was proposed from the abovementioned hypotheses (Figure 1).

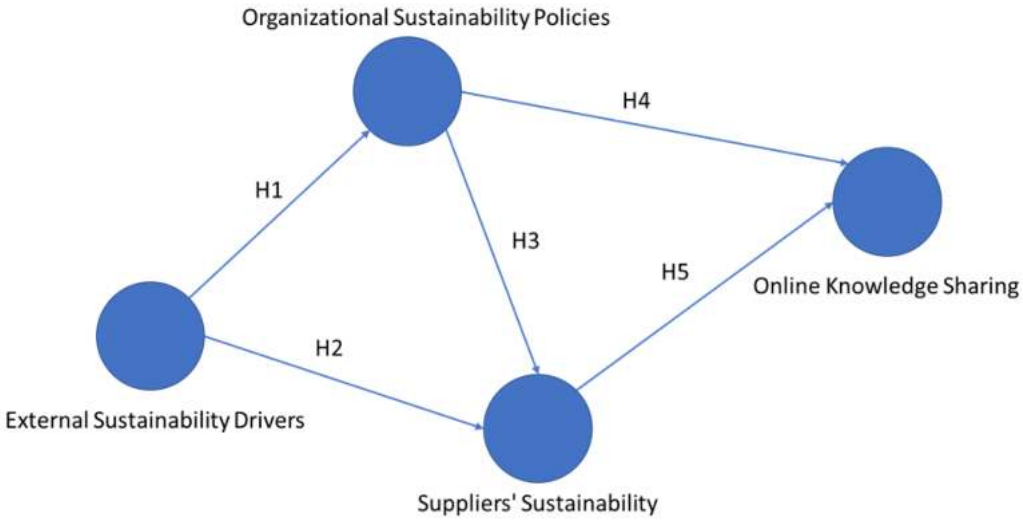

Figure 1. Conceptual model (source: SmartPLS, own research results).

3. Materials and Methods

3.1. Research Design and Method

In defining our research instrument, developed based on the literature review presented above, we considered the necessity of the collected data proving to be valid and reliable for further analysis. Validity is the degree to which the results accurately reflect what they are intended to measure. Internal validity ensures that the investigated causal link is dependable and unaffected by other conditions or variables. External validity refers to the extent to which the research findings may be applied to different contexts, individuals, or events. The degree to which a measurement is free of random error and yields consistent results is regarded as trustworthy [75]. The research quality depends on sample preparation, size, and measurement procedures.

Given the abovementioned considerations, we developed a model (Figure 1) based on quantitative research. The questionnaire employed in this research was distributed via Google Forms to managers from various enterprises, multinational and local, that operate in the Romanian market. Single-answer. multiple-choice questions were used to establish demographic and business issues. The questions addressing the research variables were based on a unipolar Likert scale [75], with a five-point scale expressing the respondents' agreement with the specific questions. This form of response is derived from ordinal data. Frequency distribution, mean, median, and range analyses were performed on the data. In ordinal data lacking a normal distribution, only the non-parametric cross-tabulation chi-squared test may be used [76].

Structural equation modeling (SEM) was used in a multivariate statistical analysis approach to investigate structural correlations. SEM permits a multivariate statistical analysis to investigate structural correlations [77]. SmartPLS 4.0 was utilized for structural equation modeling.

3.2. Data Collection and Sample

Sampling was based on a combination of a stratified random approach and a snowball methodology [75], considering that the sample size must be sufficient to approximate the actual distribution of the examined population and to confirm the test results. For quantitative research to attain internal and external dependability, the sample size must be substantially larger than in qualitative research [75]. In management research, the standard degree of assurance is 95% [78]. This study analyzes business decision-makers' approaches to sustainability issues and knowledge sharing via online channels. One hundred and seventy-four managers from local enterprises and subsidiaries of multinational corporations, mostly from Romania, filled in the questionnaire from January to May 2022. Most respondents (54%) have less than three years of experience, equally divided between the

age groups. However, 44% have more than 16 years of experience. The research covers a good sample of experience profiles, with almost half of the respondents having significant professional experience and only two having less than one year of experience.

The profile of the respondents shows that 61% are experienced executive managers, with 40% of the people responding to the survey being in operational roles. The persons responding to the survey come from multiple industries, with a higher number working in the financial sector (22%) and media (approximately 12%). They work for medium and large organizations, with 77% working for corporations with over 1000 employees. Only 5% work for small organizations with less than ten employees. Most of the survey respondents are employees of a subsidiary of an international company, with 16% working in the company headquarters. A total of 97% of the responses come from employees working in Romania. Still, the survey also includes data from people working in other European countries (such as Albania, Austria, Belgium, The Netherlands, and the UK).

The research instrument was developed based on the studied literature review. The primary constructs were operationalized using the items reflecting different facets (indicators) derived from prior investigations.

3.3. Research Model Formulation

A model was proposed according to the previously described research hypotheses, as shown in Figure 1.

4. Findings, Measurement, and Structural Model Assessment

The measurement and structural model [79] were evaluated using the rigorous statistical technique of component-based partial least squares (PLS). In this instance, the exploratory feature of PLS-SEM (SmartPLS) was chosen [80]. Table 1 displays the psychometric properties of the investigated constructs. According to Thompson and Barclay [81], the necessary metrics are pertinent for evaluating the convergent validity, individual item reliability, composite reliability, and discriminant validity of measurement models. The authors investigated convergent validity utilizing factor loadings, average variance extracted (AVE), composite reliability (C.R.), and reliability (Cronbach's alpha). As shown in the table, the reflected item factor loadings were significant and greater than 0.65, and the AVE values were more significant than 0.60.

Table 1. Psychometric properties of reflective constructs.

	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability * (rho_a)	Composite Reliability (rho_c)	Average Variance Extracted ** (AVE)
External Sustainability Drivers	0.892	0.904	0.915	0.608
Online Knowledge Sharing	0.863	0.879	0.901	0.646
Organizational Sustainability Policies	0.925	0.930	0.941	0.727
Suppliers' Sustainability	0.900	0.912	0.926	0.715

* Composite reliability (C.R.) = (square of the summation of the factor loadings)/[(square of the summation of the factor loadings) + (square of the summation of the error variances)]; ** AVE = (summation of squared factor loadings)/(summation of squared factor loadings) (summation of error variances.

Since composite reliability is considered to be more accurate than Cronbach's alpha [82], we also used it to overcome limitations by considering the indicator loadings. Notwithstanding, Cronbach's alpha values of all indicators exceeded the acceptable level of 0.6 [83], and the reflective construct measure loadings exceeded the recommended threshold of 0.70 for composite reliability according to Nunnally and Bernstein's [83] guidelines [84]. In this study, the range of C.R. values was from 0.86 to 0.90, while the range of AVE values was from 0.61 to 0.73.

The goal of a discriminant validity assessment is to ensure that a reflective construct has the strongest relationships with its own indicators (e.g., in comparison with those of any other construct) in the PLS path model [85]. If the HTMT value is below 0.90, discriminant validity is established between two reflective constructs (Tables 2 and 3).

Table 2. Heterotrait–monotrait ratio (HTMT)—matrix.

	External Sustainability Drivers	Online Knowledge Sharing	Organizational Sustainability Policies	Suppliers' Sustainability
External Sustainability Drivers				
Online Knowledge Sharing	0.662			
Organizational Sustainability Policies	0.575	0.805		
Suppliers' Sustainability	0.585	0.868	0.778	

Source: SmartPLS.

Table 3. Heterotrait–monotrait ratio (HTMT)—list.

	Heterotrait–Monotrait Ratio (HTMT)
Online Knowledge Sharing <-> External Sustainability Drivers	0.662
Organizational Sustainability Policies <-> External Sustainability Drivers	0.575
Organizational Sustainability Policies <-> Online Knowledge Sharing	0.805
Suppliers' Sustainability <-> External Sustainability Drivers	0.585
Suppliers' Sustainability <-> Online Knowledge Sharing	0.868
Suppliers' Sustainability <-> Organizational Sustainability Policies	0.778

Source: SmartPLS.

Using SmartPLS, the discriminant validity of the measurement model was evaluated by comparing the square roots of the AVEs to other correlation scores in the correlation matrix. As seen in the table below (Table 4), none of the construct correlations (non-diagonal entries) exceeded the appropriate square root of the AVE (diagonal entries). The findings confirm the criterion proposed by Fornell and Larcker [86], namely, that the measures of each construct are more closely associated with their respective items than with items representing other constructs. Therefore, the overall measuring items meet the required level of reliability, and the discriminant validity of the study model's components is confirmed. Fornell and Larcker's [86] criteria emerge as the primary exploratory model validity metric within the SmartPLS application.

Table 4. Fornell–Larcker discriminant validity of measurement model *.

	External Sustainability Drivers	Online Knowledge Sharing	Organizational Sustainability Policies	Suppliers' Sustainability
External Sustainability Drivers	0.780			
Online Knowledge Sharing	0.590	0.804		
Organizational Sustainability Policies	0.536	0.739	0.853	
Suppliers' Sustainability	0.541	0.801	0.722	0.845

* The diagonals represent the square root of the extracted average variance, whereas the off-diagonals represent correlations between constructs. Source: own research results.

A variance inflation factor (VIF) assessed the degree of multicollinearity between the components. According to Hair et al. [87], VIF values under five show the absence of multicollinearity. The calculations found that the VIF scores ranged from 1.5 to 4.18 (less than the threshold value of 5), indicating that multicollinearity was unlikely to be an issue with the data. Harman's one-factor test was used to measure the level of standard method bias, and an unrotated principal component factor analysis was performed on all constructs. Given that no one factor explained more than fifty percent of the variance, the usual procedure bias was ruled inapplicable to this investigation.

To further analyze the advanced structural model developed by Hair et al. [85,87], the R2, beta, and *t*-values were calculated (Tables 5 and 6). In this context, employing a bootstrapping method with 5000 resamples allowed us to assess the data extensively,

including reporting on effect sizes (f2) and predictive significance (Q2). In addition, due to the reflecting nature of the multi-item endogenous variable, a blind approach was performed to establish the predictive significance. Blindfolding is an approach for sample reuse that eliminates every data point from the endogenous construct's indicators and guesses the parameters using the remaining data points [85].

Table 5. R Square.

	R-Square
Online Knowledge Sharing	0.696
Organizational Sustainability Policies	0.288
Suppliers' Sustainability	0.555

Source: SmartPLS, own research results.

Table 6. Results of the structural model analysis (hypothesis testing).

	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (|O/STDEV|)	*p*-Values	Decision
H1: External Sustainability Drivers-> Organizational Sustainability Policies	0.536	0.542	0.066	8.149	0.000	Supported
H2: External Sustainability Drivers-> Suppliers' Sustainability	0.216	0.218	0.063	3.444	0.001	Supported
H3: Organizational Sustainability Policies-> Suppliers' Sustainability	0.606	0.606	0.053	11.413	0.000	Supported
H4: Organizational Sustainability Policies-> Online Knowledge Sharing	0.334	0.337	0.060	5.554	0.000	Supported
H5: Suppliers' Sustainability ->Online Knowledge Sharing	0.560	0.559	0.055	10.197	0.000	Supported

As seen in Table 4, R2 exceeds the 0.35 threshold [88] for online knowledge sharing with 0.67 and suppliers' sustainability with 0.56 but not for organizational sustainability policies with an R-square of 0.29.

We analyzed R2, showing that two exogenous dimensions were extracted from the proposed model. One had a small effect of 0.06, while three had a large effect with an f square of more than 1.6 [88] (Table 7).

Table 7. f square.

	External Sustainability Drivers	Online Knowledge Sharing	Organizational Sustainability Policies	Suppliers' Sustainability
External Sustainability Drivers			0.404	0.075
Online Knowledge Sharing				
Organizational Sustainability Policies		0.176		0.588
Suppliers' Sustainability		0.494		

Source: SmartPLS, own research results.

Findings

Figure 2 shows the PLS structural model linking sustainability facets and online knowledge sharing.

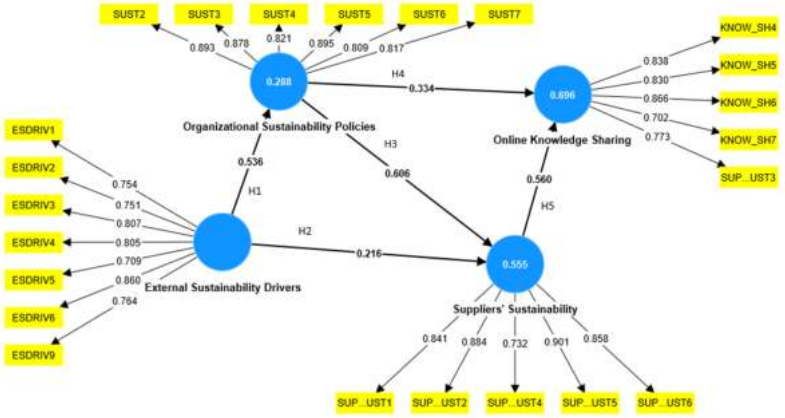

Figure 2. PLS test of the proposed structural model.

H1—external sustainability drivers positively impact organizational sustainability policies (β = 0.54, $p < 0.001$, f-square = 0.4)—is confirmed with a large effect. The essential factors that contribute to organizational sustainability include a corporate culture focused on ecological and social initiatives, which motivate all employees to adopt sustainable practices in their daily activities, supported by management. In addition to the importance of a corporate culture focused on sustainability, organizations must also set clear sustainability goals and incorporate them into their operational systems. This involves monitoring and reducing waste, energy consumption, and other environmentally harmful practices throughout production and distribution processes.

H2, which relates to the positive impact of external sustainability drivers on suppliers' sustainability, is also validated by the results (β = 0.22, $p = 0.001$, f-square = 0.07) but with a smaller path coefficient and a small effect size. The exogenous variable has good explanatory power on the endogenous variable. Suppliers are encouraged to adopt sustainable practices in order to meet the demands of their customers and to stay competitive in the market. Additionally, adopting sustainable practices can help suppliers reduce costs and improve their overall operational efficiency. For example, reducing energy consumption can lead to lower electricity bills, while minimizing waste can result in lower disposal costs. Moreover, suppliers that adopt sustainable practices can also differentiate themselves from their competitors and attract new customers who prioritize sustainable sourcing. Overall, suppliers who embrace sustainability as a core value can benefit both financially and reputationally.

H3—organizational sustainability policies' positively impact suppliers' sustainability—is confirmed with a large β, very strong statistical significance, and a large effect size (β = 0.6, $p < 0.001$, f-square = 0.59). Organizations that prioritize sustainability understand the importance of integrating sustainable practices into all aspects of their operations. This includes not only their own internal processes but also the practices of their suppliers. By working closely with suppliers, organizations can ensure that they are sourcing sustainable materials and goods and that their suppliers are following ethical and environmentally friendly practices. As such, when an organization sets sustainability goals and priorities, it can have a ripple effect throughout the entire supply chain.

The fourth hypothesis, H4, organizational sustainability policies' positively impact online knowledge sharing, is also confirmed by this empirical research (β = 0.33, $p < 0.001$, f-square = 0.18). The null hypothesis is invalidated with an average parch coefficient and effect size. The significance of online knowledge sharing about sustainable products and services for organizations should not be overlooked. The promotion of such products and services online positively impacts employees and customers, thereby enhancing an organization's social reputation. Furthermore, it is crucial to note that online knowledge sharing is a two-way process, allowing companies to gain insights into external stakeholders' views on sustainability attributes for new products or services. This is particularly relevant in light of the recent shift in consumer preferences toward more sustainable practices.

H5—suppliers' sustainability positively impacts online knowledge sharing—is confirmed, as evidenced by the high β value, significant statistical significance, and considerable effect size (β = 0.56, $p < 0.001$, f-square = 0.49). The sustainability practices of suppliers can have a significant impact on online knowledge sharing. When suppliers adopt sustainable practices, they can share this information with their customers, including the organizations that they supply. This information can then be disseminated through online channels, leading to increased awareness and knowledge sharing about sustainable practices. Additionally, suppliers that prioritize sustainability are often more likely to collaborate with their customers on sustainable initiatives and share information and resources related to sustainability. This collaboration can lead to increased knowledge sharing and the development of innovative solutions that can be shared through online platforms. Furthermore, organizational customers are increasingly interested in the sustainability practices of their suppliers and are more likely to engage with suppliers that demonstrate a commitment to sustainability. This creates a positive feedback loop, where suppliers who prioritize sustainability are able to build stronger relationships with their organizational customers and engage in more knowledge sharing about sustainable practices through online channels. Overall, suppliers' sustainability can have a powerful impact on online knowledge sharing and contribute to the overall sustainability efforts of organizations and their supply chains.

5. Discussion of the Findings and Conclusions

Our goal in this research was to examine how an organization's sustainability policies are connected to its suppliers' sustainability practices, as well as how online knowledge sharing plays a role in encouraging more sustainable approaches. Additionally, this study explored the external factors that drive organizations toward adopting more sustainable practices. We found positive relationships between external sustainability drivers and organizational policies consistent with previous studies [10,15,42,43,47] (H1). Specifically, we found that external factors, market and industry demands, regulations, and employees' perceptions greatly impact organizational sustainability policies.

The second hypothesis (H2) confirms the correlation between external sustainability drivers and suppliers' sustainability. That is, market pressures, along with national and international sustainability-related laws and regulations, oblige companies and their suppliers to diminish their environmental footprint and devise novel methods—encompassing procedures, products, and services—to tackle ecological and societal issues while safeguarding the environment against climate change and biodiversity loss, as well as air, soil, and water pollution. These findings provide evidence that supports the theoretical positions presented in the literature review [28,30,33,41,49,53,54].

Consistent with expectations, the third hypothesis (H3) is confirmed, showing that organizational sustainability policies have a positive impact on suppliers' sustainability. Our results are in line with those of previous research [15,36], indicating that collaboration is essential for promoting sustainable business practices between organizations and suppliers, mainly due to the rising demand for products and services that are certified as ethical, socially responsible, and produced through sustainable supply chains. This demand stems from increasing stakeholder interests in sustainability [24,25,45], which ultimately impacts the relationship between the sustainability policies of organizations and those of their suppliers.

The fourth hypothesis (H4) states that organizational sustainability policies positively impact online knowledge sharing. We further hypothesized that suppliers' sustainability positively impacts online knowledge sharing (H5). The findings corroborate both hypotheses (H4 and H5), in accordance with prior studies [19,20,43,59,70–74,89], indicating that online platforms have increasingly become a viable method for companies to showcase their commitment to sustainability, their adherence to sustainability-focused policies, and the significance they place on sustainability throughout the entire supply chain. As a

result, organizations and suppliers exchange their acquired knowledge on sustainability by utilizing digital technologies to communicate with all stakeholders.

5.1. Summary of the Findings

The proposed structural model accounts for 69.6% of the variance in online knowledge sharing. The study confirmed its hypotheses, revealing that external sustainability drivers greatly impact organizational sustainability policies and suppliers' sustainability practices. Moreover, organizational sustainability policies positively affect suppliers' sustainability, and both have a positive impact on online knowledge sharing. These results highlight the growing significance of digital platforms in promoting sustainable practices and exchanging sustainability knowledge among all stakeholders. The model showed that external sustainability drivers significantly affect organizational sustainability policies, which, in turn, positively influence suppliers' sustainability practices. Furthermore, organizational sustainability policies have a strong positive impact on both suppliers' sustainability practices and online knowledge sharing.

5.2. Theoretical and Practical Contributions

This study explores the external factors that determine organizational sustainability policies using an essential statistical tool. We developed a novel conceptual model that integrates organizational sustainability policies, suppliers' sustainability, online knowledge sharing, and external drivers that encourage companies to adopt sustainable policies. By employing PLS-SEM to test the hypotheses related to sustainability policies, our study adds to and enhances the current literature on organizational sustainability and knowledge sharing. The theoretical contributions of this study are noteworthy, as a new model is introduced that depicts the interrelationships between various constructs. We favored a context-driven perspective, as there was no specialized literature in the Romanian context. Concentrating on a singular country, as this approach does, holds phenomenological significance by accentuating contextual specificity, and it contributes to a better understanding of the factors that influence sustainability in the Romanian context in particular. The model developed in this study highlights the significance of the effects of organizational sustainability policies and external sustainability drivers on suppliers' sustainability and online knowledge sharing. This approach is particularly important because it provides a better understanding of the interdependence of these constructs and their role in enhancing the sustainability of organizations.

The results of this paper can assist managers and companies in comprehending the factors that impact a company's sustainability strategies and in adapting organizational sustainability policies to not only serve financial returns but also better address current environmental and social concerns. To effectively integrate sustainable practices into a company's activities, managers need to comprehensively understand the entire business process, from the supply chain to production to distribution. Sustainable practices exert a substantial influence on the environment and society, albeit the degree of progress differs across industries. Among the best performers are industries such as the medical industry, which has made significant strides in reducing its carbon footprint and implementing sustainable practices in its operations. For instance, many medical facilities have invested in energy-efficient technologies, waste reduction and recycling programs, and sustainable procurement practices. In contrast, industries such as the banking industry have struggled to adopt reliable sustainability strategies. Despite increasing pressure to promote their environmental and social responsibilities, banks have been slow to embrace sustainable practices, with only a few taking significant steps toward reducing their ecological impact. This discrepancy in sustainability performance among industries highlights the need for more concerted efforts toward promoting sustainable practices and policies across all sectors. Additionally, authentic communication with all stakeholders, including employees, customers, and shareholders, is essential for successfully implementing sustainable policies.

A combination of internal and external factors influences sustainability policies. Adopting sustainable policies is not only dependent on current laws and regulations at international and national levels but also on market developments, value-chain demands, employees' expectations, and consumer lifestyles. Consequently, significant consideration should be given to these factors for an organization to implement sustainable policies successfully. Managers have the potential to engage a range of stakeholders and meet their unique needs, including environmental concerns, by sharing knowledge about their sustainability practices and methods. This can include sustainable procedures, product and service developments, and distribution strategies that address ecological and social issues. The adoption of coherent organizational policies founded on robust sustainability strategies, along with effective knowledge sharing, is important for organizational development and the maintenance of social reputation. In today's competitive markets, organizations face increasing pressure to demonstrate their commitment to sustainable practices and policies that minimize their ecological footprint and promote social responsibility. The adoption of such policies and strategies can support the development of organizations, as they not only help to manage risks but also provide opportunities for growth and innovation. Moreover, organizations that prioritize sustainability are more likely to attract and retain customers, employees, suppliers, and investors who share similar values and priorities. The results of this study add to the existing literature on sustainable practices and provide a basis for further research in this field.

5.3. Limitations and Future Research Directions

We recognize that our study has room for further enhancement, which can be addressed in future research. One such limitation is the reliance on the self-reported data obtained from the questionnaire respondents, which can lead to method bias and potentially influence the results.

Another concern arises from the fact that most respondents were from Romanian companies, and relying on data from a single country may limit the generalizability of the study. Consequently, to enhance the study, analyzing larger sample sizes from participants located in different countries would improve the accuracy of the results and provide a more comprehensive understanding of the field's current state. Furthermore, replicating the survey using a comparable sample from other developing countries in Europe or worldwide would serve as an additional test of our hypotheses.

A potential avenue for future research could be to further investigate the interconnection between sustainability, organizational growth, and social reputation. Scholars and practitioners can enhance their understanding of effective strategies for managing and improving an organization's growth trajectory and social reputation by comprehensively examining this relationship, including the potential effects of sustainability policies on growth trajectories and social reputation and vice versa. Additionally, it is important to note that the development and adoption of sustainable strategies and policies can substantially contribute to an organization's public image and social reputation. Therefore, promoting sustainable practices can serve as a valuable approach to enhancing both organizational growth and social reputations.

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