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GREEN BUSINESS MODELS THROUGH THE LENS OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

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Abstract

Increasingly recognized as a strategic organizational capability, Artificial Intelligence (AI) is becoming an indispensable tool in supporting business transformation and performance. At the same time, Green Business Models (GBMs) have become an important mechanism through which organizations integrate sustainability into value creation processes. Empirical evidence regarding the relationship between AI capabilities and Green Business Models remains limited. The aim of this study is to investigate how AI supports the development of Green Business Models within organizations operating in Romania. An exploratory quantitative research design was adopted, and a structured online questionnaire was distributed to employees, managers, and entrepreneurs from organizations across different industries. The collected data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, reliability analysis, correlation analysis, and regression analysis. The findings support all three hypotheses: Organizational AI Adoption positively predicts AI-Enabled Organizational Performance and AI-Enabled Sustainable Business Transformation, while AI-Enabled Organizational Performance exerts the strongest positive influence on sustainable business transformation. The study contributes to the emerging

literature on AI-enabled sustainable business transformation by providing preliminary empirical evidence regarding the contribution of AI to sustainable business model development.
Keywords: Artificial Intelligence; Green Business Models; Sustainability; Business Model Innovation; Organizational Capabilities

INTRODUCTION

Sustainability and its growing importance have fundamentally transformed the way organizations design and manage their business models. Environmental responsibility was traditionally associated with regulatory compliance or corporate social responsibility initiatives. Nowadays, organizations are expected to integrate sustainability into their core strategies and into the creation of value. Therefore, Green Business Models have become an increasingly important research topic within the fields of strategic management, sustainability and business innovation (Rathobei & Bocken, 2024).

Beltramello et al. (2013) argue that achieving green growth requires organizations to redesign their business models so that environmental objectives become an integral component of value creation. Trapp and Kanbach (2021) emphasize in a similar way that Green Business Models represent a model focused on creating economic and environmental value through innovation and long-term organizational transformation.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is progressively reshaping the fundamental dimensions of business models, particularly those related to value proposition, value creation and value capture, as demonstrated by Jorzik et al. (2024). AI influences managerial decision-making, organizational learning and business model innovation, unlike previous generations of digital technologies, which primarily focused on process automation.

Although both Green Business Models and Artificial Intelligence have received considerable attention in recent years, relatively limited empirical research has examined how AI capabilities contribute to the development and implementation of sustainable business models within organizations. Understanding this relationship is becoming increasingly important as organizations seek to combine digital transformation with sustainability objectives.

Accordingly, the purpose of this study is to investigate the relationship between Artificial Intelligence capabilities and Green Business Models using survey data collected from organizations operating in Romania across different industries. By providing empirical evidence from the Romanian organizational context, the study contributes to the growing literature on AI-enabled sustainable business transformation and offers practical insights for organizations seeking to integrate AI into sustainable business strategies.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Green Business Models as a concept has evolved rapidly and changed considerably over the last decade, as earlier research primarily emphasized environmental protection. Recent studies increasingly associate sustainability with organizational resilience, innovation capability and long-term value creation. Furthermore, Lüdeke-Freund et al. (2024) argue that Green Business Models are increasingly viewed as a strategic mechanism for optimizing resource allocation and improving organizational cost efficiency, while creating sustainable economic, environmental, and social value.

Recent literature suggests that sustainable business practices have gradually evolved into strategic organizational capabilities that support both organizational performance and environmental responsibility. Moreover, to remain competitive in rapidly changing business environments sustainable business models should integrate technological innovation with organizational adaptability, as argued by Böttcher et al. (2024).

Beyond environmental performance, Green Business Models increasingly rely on continuous business model innovation to respond to changing market conditions, stakeholder expectations, and technological developments. Organizations are required to continuously redesign their value creation mechanisms in order to remain competitive. Simultaneously, they have to meet stated sustainability objectives. Consequently, digital technologies have become an important driver of sustainable business model innovation, as they enable organizations to create more flexible, efficient, and resilient business models, as Bocken et al. (2014) argue.

Organizations are experiencing an unprecedented wave of digital transformation driven by this new technology. Simón et al. (2024) argue that it should be understood not merely as a technological innovation but as an organizational capability, capable of supporting sustainable development when effectively integrated into organizational structures and managerial processes.

Recent studies investigate the intersection between Artificial Intelligence and sustainable business development. By enabling organizations to identify new opportunities for sustainable value creation, improve decision-making and strengthen organizational capabilities, AI has been shown to facilitate business model innovation. Moreover, Artificial Intelligence enhances the dynamic capabilities required for circular business model innovation (Sjödin, Parida, & Kohtamäki, 2023). Collectively, these studies indicate that Artificial Intelligence is becoming an important enabler of sustainable organizational transformation rather than simply another digital technology. Technological capabilities, innovation, communication, and knowledge sharing can also strengthen organizational performance and integration (Militaru, 2009).

The integration of Artificial Intelligence into organizational processes also improves resource utilization by supporting predictive analytics, process optimization, and data-driven decision-making. AI is increasingly recognized as a key technological enabler of sustainable business transformation. These capabilities enable organizations to reduce operational inefficiencies, optimize resource allocation, and improve environmental performance while simultaneously creating economic value. (Nawaz Khan, Mehmood, & Ahsan, 2024)

Green Business Models are no longer limited to environmental initiatives such as pollution reduction or circular economy practices. Increasingly, they are characterized by the integration of digital technologies that improve operational efficiency, optimize resource allocation and efficiency, and strengthen organizational resilience, thereby enabling firms to achieve both economic and sustainability-related objectives. (Fusco, Caputo, Battaglia, & D'Esposito, 2024)

The literature indicates that Artificial Intelligence plays an increasingly important role in supporting the transition toward more sustainable business models. By strengthening organizational capabilities and improving resource utilization, AI contributes to the development of innovative and sustainable business practices. However, empirical studies examining how AI supports the implementation of Green Business Models are still limited, particularly in the context of organizational practice. Based on the reviewed literature, the following research hypotheses are proposed.

The proposed relationships are examined through respondents' perceptions of organizational AI adoption and its outcomes. For readability, the constructs are hereafter referred to as Organizational AI Adoption, AI-Enabled Organizational Performance, and AI-Enabled Sustainable Business Transformation.

Organizations that actively adopt AI technologies are expected to improve operational processes by supporting managerial decision-making, reducing costs and operational errors, and optimizing resource utilization. Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H1. Organizational AI Adoption positively influences AI-Enabled Organizational Performance.

AI technologies support organizations in integrating sustainability objectives into organizational processes, improving environmental performance, promoting responsible business practices, and creating sustainable value. AI has become an important enabler of sustainable business transformation, beyond improving organizational performance. Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H2. Organizational AI Adoption positively influences AI-Enabled Sustainable Business Transformation.

Furthermore, organizations with higher levels of operational and managerial performance are better positioned to implement sustainability-oriented initiatives. Furthermore, they may redesign their business models to create long-term economic, environmental, and social value. Consequently, the third hypothesis is formulated as follows:

H3. AI-Enabled Organizational Performance positively influences AI-Enabled Sustainable Business Transformation.

Taken together, these hypotheses provide the conceptual framework for examining the role of Artificial Intelligence in supporting sustainable organizational transformation.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study adopts an exploratory quantitative research design to investigate the relationship between Artificial Intelligence (AI) capabilities and Green Business Models (GBMs). A cross-sectional survey was employed to collect standardized data from organizations operating across different industries in Romania.

Population and Sample

The target population of this study consisted of employees, managers, entrepreneurs, and business owners working in organizations operating across various industries in Romania. A non-probability sampling approach was adopted. Convenience sampling was initially employed by distributing the questionnaire through professional communities and organizational groups on WhatsApp. Subsequently, a snowball sampling technique was applied, with respondents encouraged to share the questionnaire within their professional networks. A total of 192 valid responses were included in the analysis. The respondents represented organizations of different sizes and sectors.

Research Instrument

The data were collected using a structured online questionnaire developed in Google Forms. The first section of the questionnaire collected demographic and organizational information, including respondents' age group, gender, position in the organization, industry and organizational size. The second section included measurement items assessing the study constructs related to organizational perceptions regarding AI capabilities and Green Business Models. All items were evaluated using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 ("Strongly disagree") to 5 ("Strongly agree"), allowing respondents to indicate the extent to which they

agreed with each statement. Prior to distribution, the questionnaire was reviewed to ensure clarity, logical structure, and consistency with the research objectives.

Data Analysis

Descriptive statistical methods were used to analyze the collected data. Descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations, were calculated to summarize respondents' characteristics and evaluate perceptions regarding Artificial Intelligence and Green Business Models.

The internal consistency of the measurement scales was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha. In addition, Pearson correlation analysis was performed to examine the relationships between the main research variables. The statistical analysis aimed to identify preliminary patterns and associations rather than establish causal relationships, reflecting the exploratory nature of the study and the relatively small sample size.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Descriptive Statistics

Table 1 presents the demographic and organizational characteristics of the surveyed respondents.

Table 1. Sample Characteristics of Respondents (N = 192)

Characteristic	*Category*	*Frequency*	*Percentage (%)*
Gender	Female	110	57.3
	Male	82	42.7
Age	Under 25 years	34	17.7
	25–34 years	66	34.4
	35–44 years	42	21.9
	45–54 years	32	16.7
	55 years and above	18	9.4
Position	Specialist / Expert	63	32.8
	Operational Staff	41	21.4
	Middle Management	31	16.1
	Owner / Entrepreneur	17	8.9
	Team Leader / Coordinator	17	8.9
	Intern / Trainee	13	6.8
	Director / Top Management	8	4.2
	Other	2	1.0

Business Sector	IT & Telecommunications	41	21.4
	Education & Research	33	17.2
	Trade & Retail	24	12.5
	Healthcare	17	8.9
	Construction & Real Estate	12	6.3
	Marketing, Advertising & Creative Industries	11	5.7
	Financial Services, Banking & Insurance	11	5.7
	Non-Governmental Organization	10	5.2
	Industry & Manufacturing	10	5.2
	Transport, Logistics & Distribution	9	4.7
	Other sectors	14	7.3
Organization Size	Micro enterprise (under 10 employees)	33	17.2
	Small enterprise (10–49 employees)	52	27.1
	Medium enterprise (50–249 employees)	35	18.2
	Large enterprise (250+ employees)	72	37.5

Table 1…

The largest age group was represented by individuals aged 25–34 years (34.4%), followed by respondents aged 35–44 years (21.9%), indicating that the sample is primarily composed of participants in their active professional careers. Specialists and experts constituted the largest category (32.8%), followed by operational staff (21.4%) and middle managers (16.1%). Business owners and entrepreneurs represented 8.9% of the respondents, while directors and top managers accounted for 4.2%.

A wide range of economic sectors was represented. The largest proportions originated from Information Technology and Telecommunications (21.4%), Education and Research (17.2%), and Trade and Retail (12.5%). In terms of organizational size, large enterprises (250 or more employees) represented the largest category (37.5%), followed by small enterprises (27.1%), medium-sized enterprises (18.2%), and microenterprises (17.2%).

The diversity of the sample in terms of organizational position, industry, and company size provides a broad perspective on AI adoption across different organizational contexts. Although the study does not aim to compare industries, the heterogeneous composition of the sample increases the relevance of the findings for organizations operating in various economic sectors.

Table 2 presents the descriptive statistics for the three study variables. AI-Enabled Organizational Performance recorded the highest mean score (M = 3.576, SD = 0.983), followed by Organizational AI Adoption (M = 3.477, SD = 1.203), while AI-Enabled Sustainable Business Transformation obtained a slightly lower mean (M = 3.411, SD = 0.958). These findings suggest

that respondents perceive AI primarily as a driver of organizational performance, while its contribution to sustainable business transformation is also positively acknowledged.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics of the Study Variables (N = 192)

Variable	*Mean*	*SD*	*Min*	*Max*	*Skewness*	*Kurtosis*
Organizational AI Adoption	3.477	1.203	1.000	5.000	−0.315	−1.062
AI-Enabled Organizational Performance	3.576	0.983	1.333	5.000	−0.213	−0.953
AI-Enabled Sustainable Business Transformation	3.411	0.958	1.000	5.000	−0.384	−0.168

Furthermore, the standard deviation values indicate an acceptable level of variability among respondents' perceptions. The skewness and kurtosis coefficients fall within the commonly accepted thresholds for approximate normality (±2 for skewness and ±7 for kurtosis), suggesting that the distributions do not exhibit substantial departures from normality. Consequently, the data are considered suitable for subsequent reliability, correlation, and regression analyses.

The descriptive statistics also indicate that respondents generally hold favorable perceptions regarding the role of Artificial Intelligence within their organizations. The relatively close mean values across the three constructs suggest that AI adoption, organizational performance, and sustainable business transformation are perceived as interconnected organizational capabilities.

Reliability and Validity Analysis

Table 3 presents the reliability analysis of the three study constructs. The results indicate satisfactory internal consistency for all measurement scales, as the Cronbach's alpha coefficients exceed the recommended threshold of 0.70.

Table 3. Reliability Analysis of the Measurement Constructs (N = 192)

Construct	*Items*	*Cronbach's Alpha*
Organizational AI Adoption	Q6, Q9, Q10	0.864
AI-Enabled Organizational Performance	Q7, Q8, Q11, Q12, Q13, Q15	0.863
AI-Enabled Sustainable Business Transformation	Q16, Q17, Q18, Q19, Q20	0.804

Organizational AI Adoption achieved the highest reliability (α = 0.864), followed by AI-Enabled Organizational Performance (α = 0.863), while AI-Enabled Sustainable Business Transformation also demonstrated good internal consistency (α = 0.804). These findings

suggest that the items included in each construct consistently measure the same underlying concept. Therefore, all three scales were considered reliable and retained for the subsequent correlation and regression analyses.

Table 4 presents the results of the Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin (KMO) measure and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity.

Table 4. KMO and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity

Test	***Value***
Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin (KMO) Measure of Sampling Adequacy	0.899
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity (Approx. Chi-Square)	2021.565
Degrees of Freedom (df)	105
Significance (p-value)	< 0.001

The KMO value of 0.899 indicates a high level of sampling adequacy, exceeding the recommended threshold of 0.80 and suggesting that the data are suitable for factor analysis. Furthermore, Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was statistically significant ($\chi^2 = 2021.565$, $df = 105$, $p < 0.001$), indicating that the correlation matrix is not an identity matrix and that the variables are sufficiently correlated to justify factor analysis. Overall, these results confirm the adequacy of the measurement data for subsequent construct validation analyses.

Correlation Analysis

Table 5 presents the Pearson correlation coefficients among the three study variables.

Table 5. Pearson Correlation Matrix of the Study Variables (N = 192)

Variables	***1***	***2***	***3***
1. Organizational AI Adoption	1.000		
2. AI-Enabled Organizational Performance	0.839***	1.000	
3. AI-Enabled Sustainable Business Transformation	0.697***	0.809***	1.000

The results reveal positive and statistically significant relationships between all constructs ($p < 0.001$). Organizational AI Adoption is strongly correlated with AI-Enabled Organizational Performance ($r = 0.839$), indicating that organizations with higher levels of AI adoption tend to report better organizational performance. Organizational AI Adoption also shows a strong positive association with AI-Enabled Sustainable Business Transformation ($r = 0.697$), suggesting that greater AI adoption is accompanied by stronger sustainability-oriented organizational practices.

The strongest correlation was observed between AI-Enabled Organizational Performance and AI-Enabled Sustainable Business Transformation (r = 0.809), indicating that organizations reporting higher operational and managerial performance also tend to perceive greater progress toward sustainable business transformation. Overall, the correlation coefficients provide preliminary empirical support for the proposed research hypotheses while remaining below the commonly accepted threshold of 0.90, suggesting that multicollinearity is unlikely to represent a serious concern in the subsequent regression analyses.

These findings are consistent with previous studies emphasizing that Artificial Intelligence strengthens organizational capabilities supporting business model innovation and sustainability, as suggested by Simón et al. (2024) and Sjödin et al. (2023).

Organizations reporting higher levels of AI adoption also tend to perceive improvements in organizational performance and stronger progress toward sustainable business transformation. This pattern supports the view that AI should be considered a strategic organizational capability capable of generating complementary organizational outcomes. Although the correlation analysis does not establish causal relationships, it provides a strong empirical foundation for the subsequent regression analysis and reinforces the proposed conceptual framework.

Multiple Regression Analysis

Table 6 presents the regression analysis conducted to test the proposed research hypotheses. The results indicate that all three regression models are statistically significant ($p < 0.001$), providing empirical support for the proposed relationships.

Table 6. Multiple Regression Analysis

Hypothesis	***Dependent Variable***	***Independent Variable***	***Standardized β***	***t-value***	***R^2***	***Adjusted R^2***	***F***	***Sig.***
H1	AI-Enabled Organizational Performance	Organizational AI Adoption	0.685	21.233	0.704	0.702	450.857	<0.001
H2	AI-Enabled Sustainable Business Transformation	Organizational AI Adoption	0.555	13.411	0.486	0.484	179.867	<0.001
H3	AI-Enabled Sustainable Business Transformation	AI-Enabled Organizational Performance	0.789	18.982	0.655	0.653	360.305	<0.001

The results support H1, showing that Organizational AI Adoption has a strong positive effect on AI-Enabled Organizational Performance ($\beta = 0.685$, $t = 21.233$, $p < 0.001$). The model explains approximately 70.4% of the variance in organizational performance ($R^2 = 0.704$), indicating substantial explanatory power.

Regarding H2, Organizational AI Adoption also exerts a positive and statistically significant influence on AI-Enabled Sustainable Business Transformation ($\beta = 0.555$, $t = 13.411$, $p < 0.001$). The model explains 48.6% of the variance in sustainable business transformation ($R^2 = 0.486$), suggesting that AI adoption represents an important determinant of sustainability-oriented organizational change.

Finally, H3 is also supported. AI-Enabled Organizational Performance positively influences AI-Enabled Sustainable Business Transformation ($\beta = 0.789$, $t = 18.982$, $p < 0.001$). This model demonstrates a high explanatory capacity ($R^2 = 0.655$), indicating that improvements in organizational performance associated with AI implementation contribute substantially to sustainable business transformation.

Overall, the regression results provide strong empirical support for all three hypotheses, confirming the central role of organizational AI adoption in enhancing organizational performance and facilitating sustainable business transformation. The regression analysis therefore extends the correlation results by demonstrating that Organizational AI Adoption not only correlates with but also significantly predicts both organizational performance and sustainable business transformation.

Using Tolerance and Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) statistics, multicollinearity diagnostics were examined. Table 7 presents the collinearity statistics below:

Table 7. Collinearity Statistics

Predictor	***Tolerance***	***VIF***	***Interpretation***
Organizational AI Adoption	0.296	3.373	No multicollinearity
AI-Enabled Organizational Performance	0.296	3.373	No multicollinearity

The tolerance values (0.296) are above the recommended threshold of 0.20, while the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF = 3.373) remains below the commonly accepted threshold of 5. These results indicate that multicollinearity is not a significant concern, suggesting that the independent variables provide distinct explanatory information. Therefore, the regression coefficients can be interpreted with confidence.

Table 8 summarizes the results of the hypothesis testing. All three proposed hypotheses were supported at the 0.001 significance level.

Table 8. Summary of Hypotheses Testing

Hypothesis	*Proposed Relationship*	*B*	*p-value*	*Decision*
H1	Organizational AI Adoption → AI-Enabled Organizational Performance	0.685	<0.001	**Supported**
H2	Organizational AI Adoption → AI-Enabled Sustainable Business Transformation	0.555	<0.001	**Supported**
H3	AI-Enabled Organizational Performance → AI-Enabled Sustainable Business Transformation	0.789	<0.001	**Supported**

The findings indicate that Organizational AI Adoption has a significant positive effect on both AI-Enabled Organizational Performance and AI-Enabled Sustainable Business Transformation. Moreover, AI-Enabled Organizational Performance exerts the strongest positive influence on AI-Enabled Sustainable Business Transformation, highlighting its central role in translating AI adoption into sustainability-oriented organizational outcomes.

Overall, the empirical results confirm the proposed conceptual model, demonstrating that organizational AI adoption contributes directly to sustainable business transformation and indirectly through improvements in organizational performance.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study investigated the relationships among three key constructs: Organizational AI Adoption, AI-Enabled Organizational Performance, and AI-Enabled Sustainable Business Transformation within the context of Green Business Models. The empirical findings provide preliminary evidence supporting the proposed conceptual model, based on survey data collected from organizations operating across different industries in Romania.

The findings demonstrate that Organizational AI Adoption plays a central role in supporting both organizational performance and sustainable business transformation. Specifically, Organizational AI Adoption positively influences AI-Enabled Organizational Performance as well as AI-Enabled Sustainable Business Transformation.

In addition, the results indicate that improvements in organizational performance contribute significantly to sustainable business transformation, emphasizing the role of Artificial Intelligence in helping organizations integrate sustainability into their business models. Overall, all three research hypotheses were supported, suggesting that Artificial Intelligence should be viewed not only as a technological innovation but also as a strategic organizational capability that supports long-term organizational value creation.

The findings suggest that organizations should move beyond viewing Artificial Intelligence exclusively as a tool for automating operational activities. Instead, AI should be integrated into organizational strategies as a capability supporting managerial decision-making, resource optimization, organizational learning, and sustainable business model innovation. Organizations are more likely to strengthen both their competitive position and their long-term resilience by strategically embedding AI into their core business processes.

Several practical recommendations can be derived from the findings. AI adoption strategies should be aligned with the organization's sustainability objectives rather than implementing isolated AI applications. Organizations should invest in employee training and digital competencies to ensure the effective integration of AI technologies into organizational processes. Also, organizations should continuously monitor the contribution of AI initiatives to operational efficiency, environmental performance, and sustainable value creation through appropriate performance indicators.

The study has several limitations. The research employed a non-probability sampling approach, which limits the generalizability of the findings beyond the investigated sample. Moreover, the study relied on respondents' perceptions rather than objective organizational performance indicators, introducing the possibility of perceptual bias.

The research design captures perceptions at a single point in time and therefore does not allow causal relationships or long-term organizational effects to be established. Furthermore, the study focused exclusively on organizations operating in Romania, which may limit the applicability of the findings to other national contexts. Future studies should consider cross-country comparisons to improve the generalizability of the results.

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