



**GREEN INNOVATION PRACTICES AND ORGANIZATIONAL PERFORMANCE:
A Critical Review and Research Agenda for Emerging Economies.**

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ABSTRACT

Green innovation has emerged as a critical pathway for firms seeking to reconcile environmental responsibility with competitive performance. While a growing body of research examines the relationship between green innovation and organizational outcomes, the literature remains fragmented, particularly with respect to emerging economies. This paper critically reviews the conceptual foundations, theoretical perspectives, and empirical evidence on green innovation practices and organizational performance. It synthesizes research across developed and developing contexts, with particular attention to the limited but expanding body of work from Nigeria and Africa. The review identifies four key dimensions of green innovation practices: green management practices, green process adherence, green product offering, and green marketing adoption; and evaluates their individual and joint effects on performance. Major gaps are highlighted in theoretical integration, contextual coverage, methodological approaches, and the operationalization of green innovation constructs. The paper concludes by proposing an integrated conceptual framework and a research agenda to guide future empirical investigations, especially in emerging market settings where institutional pressures and resource constraints shape the green innovation performance relationship differently from developed economies.

Keywords: Emerging-economies, Green, Innovation, Management, Performance



1.1 Introduction

The accelerating climate crisis, tightening environmental regulations, and shifting stakeholder expectations have elevated green innovation from a peripheral concern to a central strategic imperative for organizations worldwide (Chen et al, 2006, Kemp & Foxon, 2007). Firms are unceasingly expected not only to minimize their environmental footprint but also to translate sustainability-oriented innovations into tangible performance gains. Green innovation, encompassing environmentally unproved products, processes, management practices and marketing approaches, has therefore attracted substantial scholarly attention over the past two decades.

Despite this growth, the literature remains uneven. Much of the existing evidence originates from developed economies, where institutional support, technological capabilities, and market demand for green products are relatively mature. In contrast, research from emerging economies, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa, remains limited and fragmented. Studies that do exist often focus on narrow aspects such as waste management or single dimensions of green practice, leaving the multi-dimensional nature of green innovation and its performance implications underexplored (Okunuga et al., 2022; Michael, 2024).

This paper addresses these shortcomings by providing a critical review of the conceptual, theoretical, and empirical literature on green innovation practices and organizational performance. It pursues three interrelated objectives:

- 1) To synthesize current understanding of the key dimensions of green innovation practices;
- 2) To evaluate the theoretical lenses that have been used to explain the green innovation performance relationship; and
- 3) To identify critical gaps and propose a research agenda tailored to emerging economy contexts. In doing so, the review contributes to the sustainability literature by offering a more contextually sensitive and multi-dimensional perspective on how green innovation can support organizational performance under conditions of institutional complexity and resource constraint.

The remainder of the paper is structured as follows: **Section 2** Clarifies the conceptual foundations of green innovation and its constituent practices, **Section 3** Examines the main theoretical perspectives, **Section 4** Synthesizes the empirical evidence across developed economies, developing economies, and the Nigerian economy. **Section 5** presents the key research gaps and reveals an integrated conceptual framework, and **Section 6** concludes with implications for research, practice, and policy.

2.0 Conceptual Background

2.1 Green Innovation

Innovation has long been recognized as a driver of firm growth and competitive



advantage (Schumpeter. 1934, Love & Roper, 2009) Classical definitions emphasize the commercialization of new products, processes, or organizational methods that differ significantly from previous offerings (OECD/Eurostat, 2018; Fedulov & Pobedin, 2021) Green innovation extends this logic by incorporating an explicit environmental criterion innovations are considered "green" when they result in a measurable reduction of environmental risk, pollution, or resource intensity across the product or process life cycle (Kemp & Foxon, 2007. Chen et al., 2006).

More recent conceptualizations have broadened the construct beyond technology Green innovation is increasingly understood as a systemic and cultural phenomenon that encompasses organizational values, managerial routines, and market-facing activities (Wang, 2023; Yao et al., 2021. Millar et al., 2019). This evolution reflects a shift from viewing green innovation as a discrete technical fix toward recognizing it as an embedded organizational capability.

2.2 Dimensions of Green Innovation Practices

Building on prior classifications (Seman et al., 2019, Sellitto et al., 2020), this review organizes green innovation practices into four interrelated dimensions:

- I. **Green management practices:** This refers to the strategic and organizational activities through which organizations incorporate environmental objectives

into decision-making including environmental policies, green human resource management, and sustainability-oriented leadership (Sulich & Rutkowska, 2020: Arevalo et al., 2011).

- II. **Green process adherence** This concerns the redesign and continuous improvement of operational processes to reduce energy consumption, waste, emissions, and the use of hazardous materials (Hraiga & Abbas 2023; Awan et al., 20213.
- III. **Green product offering** This involves the development and commercialization of products that are environmentally preferable in terms of materials, energy efficiency, recyclability, or reduced toxicity across their life cycle (Qureshi et al., 2022; Paraschos, 2016)
- IV. **Green marketing adoption** This encompasses the strategies used to communicate environmental attributes, build green brand equity, and engage environmentally conscious consumers through eco-labeling, sustainable packaging and targeted promotion (Aravinda & Rajapakshe, 2023; Kushwaha & Sharma, 2016). These four dimensions provide a more comprehensive operationalization than the narrower indicators employed in many earlier studies, which often focused on only one or two aspects of green innovation

2.3 Organizational Performance in the Context of Green Innovation

Organizational performance is a multi-



dimensional construct that includes both financial outcomes (profitability, revenue growth, and return on assets investments) and non-financial outcomes (operational efficiency, market reputation environmental performance, and stakeholder legitimacy) (Richard et al., 2009, Gutterman, 2023). The sustainability literature increasingly argues that green innovation can enhance performance through dual pathways internal efficiency gains (cost reduction, waste minimization) and external market advantages (differentiation, premium pricing, improved reputation) (Wang et al, 2021: Hermundsdottir & Aspelund, 2020). However, the relative strength of these pathways appears to vary across institutional and resource contexts, reinforcing the need for more nuanced, context-sensitive research.

3.0 Theoretical Perspectives

Understanding the relationship between green innovation practices and organizational performance requires a multi-theoretic lens. Single theory approaches have often produced partial explanations, particularly in emerging economy settings where institutional pressures, resource constraints, and economic rationality interact in complex ways. This review draws on three complementary perspectives:

- i. Green Innovation Theory
- ii. Institutional Theory, and
- iii. Cost-Benefit Theory

3.1 Green Innovation Theory

Green Innovation Theories, advanced by Chen et al 120061, provides the core conceptual foundation for this review. Building se earlier Innovation, scholars (Schumpetes (14 Greenaare et al 2012), the theory defines green innovative as hardware and software innovations in green products and green processes that simultaneously generate environmental and economic value in positions green innovation not merely as a technical response to regulation but as a strategic capability that can enhance competitiveness through differentiation, cost efficiency, and legitimacy.

Subsequent elaborations have emphasized the systemic and cultural dimensions of green innovation (Wang, 2023, Yao et al. 20211). From this perspective, successful green innovation depends on the alignment of organizational routines, values, and external knowledge flows. The theory is particularly useful for identifying the specific practices, managerial, process-related, product-related, and market-facing, that constitute green innovation and for hypothesizing other performance effects However, Green Innovation Theory alone offers limited insight to why firms in different institutional environments adopt these practices at varying rates or with varying levels of intensity

3.2 Institutional Theory

Intuitional Theory addresses this explanatory gap in the Green Innovation Theory by focusing on the external social and regulatory forces that shape organizational behavior (Meyer & Rowan



1977, DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). The theory posts that organizations adopt strictures and practices that conform to the expectations of their institutional environment in order to gain legitimacy, resources, and social acceptance. In the environmental domain, coercive pressures (regulations and sanctions), normative pressures (professional standards and industry norms), and immense pressures (imitation of successful peers) drive the adoption of green practices (Zhu & Sarkis, 2007, Scot, 2014). In emerging economies, institutional pressures are often characterized by regulatory uncertainty, uneven enforcement, and the growing influence of global value chains and international buyers. Institutional Theory therefore helps explain both the diffusion of green innovation practices and the potential decoupling between formal adoption and substantive implementation. Firms may adopt visible green practices primarily for legitimacy while under-investing in deeper process or product changes. This insight is critical for interpreting mixed performance outcomes in developing-country studies

3.3 Cost-Benefit Theory

While institutional pressures may compel adoption, sustained investment in green innovation ultimately depends on perceived economic returns. Cost-Benefit Theory, with roots in the work of Dupuit (1844), provides a rational-choice complement to the previous perspectives. It suggests that organizations will pursue green innovation when the expected benefits, cost savings from resource efficiency, risk reduction, premium pricing, enhanced reputation, and

avoided regulatory penalties outweigh the associated costs and uncertainties.

In resource-constrained emerging-economy contexts, the cost-benefit calculus is often more stringent. High upfront investment, limited access to green finance, and uncertain consumer willingness to pay for sustainable products can deter substantive green innovation even when institutional pressures exist. Conversely, where green practices generate rapid operational savings or open export markets, the economic justification reinforces institutional drivers. Cost-Benefit Theory thus helps explain variations in the depth and performance impact of green innovation across firms and sectors.

3.4 Integrated Theoretical Perspective

Taken together, the three theories offer a more comprehensive explanation of the green innovation performance relationship than any single perspective. Green Innovation Theory identifies the relevant practices and their potential value-creating mechanisms. Institutional Theory accounts for the external drivers of adoption and the risk of symbolic compliance. Cost Benefit Theory explains the internal economic filtering process that determines whether adopted practices are deepened and translated into performance gains.

This integrated lens is especially pertinent to emerging economies. In such contexts, firms operate under dual pressures: the need to respond to evolving institutional expectations (both local and global) and the imperative to demonstrate tangible



economic returns under conditions of resource scarcity an integrated theoretical approach therefore provides a stronger foundation for examining how green management practices, process adherence, product offerings and marketing adoption jointly and independently influence organizational performance

The next section reviews the empirical evidence through this multi-theoretic lens, highlighting patterns contradictions, and contextual contingencies across developed, developing and Nigerian settings.

4.0 Empirical Evidence

A substantial body of empirical research has examined the relationship between green innovation and organizational performance. The evidence, however, is unevenly distributed across contexts and varies in both direction and magnitude of effects. This section synthesizes the literature according to economic context, developed economies, developing economies, and Nigeria before drawing out key contingencies and patterns.

V. Evidence from Developed Economies

Research conducted in developed economies generally reports a positive association between green innovation practices and firm performance. Systematic reviews and large-scale studies indicate that sustainability-oriented innovations frequently generate win-win outcomes, enhancing both environmental and economic performance (Hermundsdottir & Aspelund, 2020) Green innovation has been

linked to improved competitiveness, higher market valuation, and operational efficiencies through reduced resource consumption and waste (Baneliene et al. 2023, Selfitto et al., 2020).

Studies focusing on specific dimensions reinforce these findings. Green process and product innovations have been shown to strengthen competitive advantage in manufacturing clusters (Sellitto et al., 2020), while green human resource management and transformational leadership foster green creativity and environmental performance (Maitio et al., 2024, Jia et al., 2018). Eco- innovation and renewable energy adoption have also been associated with reductions in carbon emissions among G7 countries (Aliani et al., 2024). Collectively, these studies suggest that in institutional environments characterized by strong regulatory frameworks, mature green markets, and advanced technological capabilities, green innovation practices are more readily translated into performance gains.

Nevertheless, even within developed contexts, results are not uniformly positive. Research on smaller firms has identified negative short-term effects of environmental orientation on economic performance, highlighting potential trade-offs during the transition period (Linder et al. 2019). These mixed signals indicate that firm size, industry characteristics, and the depth of implementation remain important boundary conditions.

VI. Evidence from Developing Economies



Evidence from developing and emerging economies is more heterogeneous. A number of studies report positive relationships between green practices and various dimensions of performance. Research in Pakistan, for example, has found that green supply chain management practices (eco-design, green purchasing, and green logistics) are positively associated with economic, social, and environmental performance in the construction sector (Talba et al., 2024). Similarly, green intellectual capital has been shown to enhance green innovation and environmental performance among SMEs (Shahbaz et al., 2024), while green marketing strategies improve both environmental and market outcomes in the consumer goods sector (Muniba et al., 2024). In other Asian and Latin American contexts, green entrepreneurial orientation and ambidextrous green innovation have been linked to superior green performance, particularly when supported by strong resource orchestration capabilities (Baquero, 2021; Khalid et al., 2021). Studies in Vietnam and Indonesia further suggest that green innovation can serve as a source of competitive advantage even in non-green industries and among SMEs (Thuyen & Bich, 2024; Rustrarini et al., 2022).

However, several investigations reveal more qualified or context-dependent results. Cross-country analyses of BRICS nations have produced mixed findings, with certain green innovation indicators showing negative associations with GDP growth and competitiveness (Jaluza et al., 2024). Resource constraints, limited green finance,

and weaker consumer demand for sustainable products appear to moderate the performance benefits of green innovation in many emerging markets. Moreover, a significant proportion of studies in these contexts remain sector-specific or geographically narrow, limiting generalizability.

VII. Evidence from Nigeria

Empirical research on green innovation and organizational performance in Nigeria remain limited and relatively narrow in scope. Existing studies have primarily examined related constructs such as sustainable waste management, green manufacturing, and environmental sustainability rather than multi-dimensional green innovation practices. Research on food and beverage firms indicates that effective waste management contributes positively to organizational performance by enabling resource recovery and reducing environmental liabilities (Michael, 2024). Studies of fast-moving consumer goods companies in Lagos have found that green manufacturing practices, including green product design, efficient processes, green supply chains, and recycling, significantly influence operational costs (Okunuga et al., 2022). Other works have linked social sustainability practices to productivity enhancements in plastic manufacturing firms (Udodiugwu, 2022) and examined the broader challenges of waste management administration and environmental sustainability in urban settings (Olayiwola et al., 2023).



While these studies provide useful insights, they typically focus on single industries, single performance metrics (often operational cost or productivity), or narrow aspects of environmental management. Comprehensive investigations that simultaneously examine green management practices, process adherence, product offerings, and marketing adoption and their joint effects on multi-dimensional organizational performance remain scarce in the Nigerian context. This constitutes a significant empirical gap.

VIII. Integration and Outcomes

Across the literature, several patterns emerge. First, the performance benefits of green innovation appear more consistent and pronounced in developed economies than in emerging ones, suggesting that intuitional maturity, technological capability, and market demand an important enabling condition. Second, studies that adopt multi-dimensional operationalization of green innovation tend to reveal more nuanced results than those relying on single indicators. Third, non-financial performance outcomes (environmental performance, reputation, operational efficiency) are more frequently and positively associated with green practices than short-term financial metrics, particularly in resource-constrained settings.

These contingencies underscore the limitations of universalistic claims. The green innovation and organizational performance relationship is shaped by institutional context, firm sources industry

characteristics, and the specific dimensions of green practice under examination. For emerging economies such as Nigeria, where regulatory enforcement may be uneven and consumer willingness to pay for green products remains developing, the translation of green innovation into sustained performance gains is likely to be more complex and contingent than suggested by the dominant narrative derived from developed-country research.

The following section builds on these empirical patterns to articulate the principal research gaps and to propose an integrated conceptual framework for advance inquiry in this domain.

5.0 Research Gaps and Conceptual Framework

Despite the expanding literature on green innovation and organizational performance, important gaps persist. These gaps limit both theoretical advancement and practical guidance, particularly for firms operating in emerging economies. This section articulates the principal shortcomings in the existing body of knowledge and presents an integrated conceptual framework designed to address them.

5.1 Research Gaps

5.1.1 Contextual and Empirical Gaps

The majority of empirical studies originate from developed economies or selected Asian and Latin American emerging markets (Hermundsdottir & Aspelund, 2020, Baneliene et al., 2023. Sellitto et al., 2020s. Research focusing on sub-Saharan



Africa, and Nigeria in particular, remains sparse and narrowly scoped. Existing Nigerian studies have largely examined waste management, green manufacturing cost implications, or single-industry productivity effects (Okuiga et al, 2022; Michael, 2024; Udodiugwu, 2022; Olayiwola et al., 2023). Comprehensive investigations of multi-dimensional green innovation practices and their performance consequences within the Nigerian consumer goods sector are still lacking. This geographical imbalance restricts the generalizability of current findings and leaves underexplored the ways in which institutional voids: resource constraints and evolving stakeholder pressures shape the green innovation/performance relationship in African contexts.

5.1.2 Theoretical Gaps

Much of the existing research relies on single theoretical lenses, most commonly variants of the resource-based view or institutional theory. Relatively few studies integrate Green Innovation Theory (Chen et al., 2006) with Institutional Theory (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983) and Cost-Benefit Theory in a coherent explanatory framework. Such integration is particularly valuable in emerging economies, where external legitimacy pressures and internal economic calculations jointly determine the adoption and depth of green practices. The absence of multi-theoretic approaches has limited understanding of the mechanisms through which institutional forces are filtered by cost-benefit considerations before translating into performance outcomes.

5.1.3 Methodological Gaps

A considerable proportion of published work consists of systematic literature reviews, qualitative case studies (Rupasinghe et al, 2023, Hermundsdottir & Aspelund, 2020; Kropp 2018). While valuable for mapping the field, these approaches are less suited for testing multi-path hypotheses concerning the relative and joint effects of distinct green innovation dimensions. Quantitative studies that employ robust statistical techniques to examine both direct and simultaneous effects remain less common, especially in African settings.

5.1.4 Operationalization and Variable Gaps

Many prior studies have operationalized green innovation through relatively narrow sets of aggregated indicators. Some focus primarily on green manufacturing components or selected marketing practices (Okunuga et al., 2022, Muniba et al., 2024), while others examine only process or product innovation. Few investigations simultaneously assess green management practices, green process adherence, green product offering, and green marketing adoption as distinct yet complementary dimensions. This limited operationalization constrains insight into which specific practices drive performance and under what conditions. Collectively, these gaps indicate the need for research that is contextually grounded in emerging economies, theoretically integrative, methodologically rigorous, and multi-



dimensional in its treatment of green innovation practices.

5.2 Conceptual Framework

In response to the gaps identified above, this paper proposes a conceptual framework that links four dimensions of green innovation practices to organizational performance. The framework is informed by the integrated theoretical perspective developed in Section 3 and is consistent with multi-dimensional conceptualizations of green innovation in the literature (2010 Sellitto et al 2020, Kemp & Foxon, 20071).

The four independent dimensions are;

- i.** Green management practices the strategic and organizational routines that embed environmental objectives into firm decision making and culture
- ii.** Green process adherence the redesign and continuous improvement of operational processes to reduce environmental impact and resource intensity
- iii.** Green product offering: the development and commercialization of products with superior environmental attributes across the life cycle
- iv.** Green marketing adoption: the market-facing strategies used to communicate environmental value and engage sustainability-oriented stakeholders.

Each dimension is hypothesized to exert a positive direct effect on organizational performance, which is conceptualized as a

multi-dimensional construct encompassing financial outcomes (e.g., Profitability, revenue growth) and non-financial outcomes (e.g., operational efficiency, reputation, and environmental performance) (Richard et al, 2009; Gutterman, 2023). In addition, the framework pouts a joint effect the simultaneous implementation of all four dimensions is expected to generate stronger performance outcomes than the adoption of any single dimension in isolation, reflecting potential complementarities among managerial, operational, product, and market-facing green practices.

The framework is particularly suited to emerging-economy contexts institutional Theory suggests that external pressures will influence the adoption of these practices, while Cost-Benefit Theory implies that performance effects will depend on the extent to which the practices generate tangible economic and reputational returns under conditions of resource constraints. By examining both individual and joint effects, the framework enables more nuanced understanding of how green innovation contributes to organizational performance in settings such as Nigeria.

Thus, conceptualization addresses the operationalization gap noted earlier and provides a clear foundation for future empirical testing. It also offers managers a structured way to diagnose their current green innovation profile and to prioritize investments across the four dimensions.

IX. Conclusion and Implications



This paper has critically reviewed the conceptual foundations, theoretical perspectives, and empirical evidence concerning green innovation practices and organizational performance. It has shown that while green innovation is increasingly recognized as a strategic response to environmental and competitive pressures, the literature remains uneven in its geographical coverage theoretical integration, methodological approaches, and operationalization of key constructs. Research from developed economies generally reports positive performance effects, whereas evidence from emerging economies is more contingent and, in the case of Nigeria, still limited in both scope and depth.

By synthesizing existing knowledge and identifying critical gaps, the review makes three principal contributions. First, it organizes green innovation practices into four distinct yet complementary dimensions: green management practices, green process adherence, green product offering, and green marketing adoption: thereby offering a more comprehensive operationalization than many prior studies. Second, it advances an integrated theoretical perspective that combines Green Innovation Theory (Chen et al., 2006), Institutional Theory (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983), and Cost-Benefit Theory. This multi theoretic lens is particularly well suited for explaining adoption and performance outcomes in emerging-economy contexts characterized by institutional complexity and resource constraints. Third, it proposes conceptual framework that explicitly links

the four green innovation dimensions to multi-dimensional organizational performance and highlights both direct and joint effects.

X. Research Implications

The gaps identified in this review point to several priorities for future scholarship. Empirical studies are needed that test the proposed multi-dimensional framework in under-researched settings, especially in sub-Saharan Africa and the Nigerian consumer goods sector. Such research should employ rigorous quantitative designs capable of examining both the individual and complementary effects of the four green innovation dimensions. Comparative studies across institutional environments would further clarify the boundary conditions under which green innovation translates into performance gains. In addition, longitudinal designs are required to capture the temporal dynamics of green innovation investments and their delayed or cumulative performance effects: an aspect largely neglected in the current cross-sectional literature.

XI. Practical Implications

For managers, particularly those operating in emerging economies, the review underscores the value of a balanced and integrated approach to green innovation. Focusing exclusively on one dimension, such as green product development or marketing claims while neglecting managerial systems or process improvements is unlikely to yield sustained performance benefits. Firms that align



green management practices, process adherence, product offerings, and marketing strategies are better positioned to capture both efficiency gains and market-based advantages. The framework presented here can serve as a diagnostic tool for assessing current green Innovation profiles and for prioritizing resource allocation under conditions of constraint.

XII. Policy Implications

Policymakers have an important role in shaping the institutional conditions that enable pre innovation to deliver performance benefits Strengthening regulatory frameworks, improving enforcement, and creating targeted incentives (including access to green finance, and technical support) can reduce the cost-benefit barriers that currently constrain deeper implementation in many emerging economies policies that encourage transparency and reduce the rewards purely symbolic adoption will further support the transition from compliance oriented performance oriented green innovation.

In conclusion, green innovation holds significant potential to advance both organizational performance and environmental sustainability. Realizing this potential in emerging economies, however, requires more contextually sensitive research more integrated theoretical explanations, and more coherent managerial and policy approaches. The agenda outlined in this paper offers a foundation for progress on all three fronts.

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