

# Entrepreneurial Innovation and Sustainability: An Integrative Review of Business Practices in The Informal Food and Sports Events Industries

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## Keywords

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## Abstract

This study delves into the amalgamation of entrepreneurial innovation and sustainability within South Africa's informal food and sports events industries. The primary objective is to formulate adoption strategies tailored to local businesses in South Africa. The research methodology employed a systematic literature review to pinpoint optimal practices and hindrances to embracing innovative and sustainable business practices. The study's core findings underscore the significance of collaborative partnerships, community involvement and actionable strategies for SMEs and sports event organisers to attain sustainable growth and a competitive edge. It accentuates the pivotal role of technological innovation, environmental sustainability and social responsibility in propelling business success and broader socio-economic development objectives. The research contributes by shedding light on the interplay between innovative and sustainable business practices and their implications for emerging economies like South Africa. This study advocates for driving economic growth and socio-economic progress within the informal food and sports events industries by endorsing innovation and sustainability integration in business practices.

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# 1. Introduction

## 1.1. Background

In the contemporary global economic landscape, entrepreneurial innovations and sustainability have emerged as critical determinants of business success, particularly within small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in the informal food and sports events industries. The symbiotic relationship between entrepreneurial innovation and sustainability in the food and sports industries fosters economic growth and contributes to a country's social and environmental well-being (Klewitz & Hansen, 2014; Ratten, 2018). This study thoroughly reviews global business practices integrating innovative entrepreneurship and sustainability within these dynamic sectors to develop adoption strategies for these business practices in South Africa.

Informal food SMEs play a pivotal role in many developing economies, providing essential services and employment opportunities while contributing significantly to local and national economies (Young & Crush, 2020). The enterprises are often characterised by their agility and adaptability, which enable them to innovate rapidly in response to changing market demands. However, their informal nature presents unique challenges, including limited access to formal financial services, regulatory hurdles and vulnerability to economic fluctuations (Endris & Kassegn, 2022).

Innovative entrepreneurial practices in informal food SMEs range from adopting new technologies to developing novel business models that enhance efficiency and sustainability. For instance, mobile payment systems have revolutionised how these enterprises conduct transactions, facilitating greater financial inclusion and operational transparency (Qureshi, 2020). Additionally, initiatives that promote sustainable sourcing and waste reduction are gaining traction, reflecting a growing awareness of environmental sustainability within the industry (Stewart & Niero, 2018).

Sports events, from local community gatherings to international spectacles, are significant economic drivers with the potential to foster social cohesion and promote healthy lifestyles. The financial impact of sports events extends beyond the immediate revenues generated from ticket sales and sponsorships, influencing local economies through tourism, infrastructure development and job creation (Ennis & Ennis, 2020). Despite these benefits, the sporting events industry faces sustainability challenges, including environmental degradation and resource management issues (Ennis & Ennis, 2020).

Entrepreneurial innovations in sports events encompass a broad spectrum of activities that enhance sustainability and inclusivity. For example, implementing green technologies and practices, such as energy-efficient stadiums and waste minimisation programmes, can exemplify the industry's commitment to environmental stewardship (Kellison, 2015). Moreover, using digital platforms to engage with audiences and streamline event management processes highlights the role of technology in driving innovation (Glebova, Gerke & Book, 2023).

Informal food SMEs often have a symbiotic relationship with sporting events, providing essential services that enhance the event experience while benefiting economically from the increased footfall. For instance, informal food vendors commonly set up stalls around sports stadiums or at community sports events, capitalising on the large crowds to sell their products (Kirby, Duignan & McGillivray, 2018). This provides a livelihood for these entrepreneurs and contributes to the local economy. The framework of entrepreneurial ecosystems can be applied to understand this dynamic as it emphasises the interconnectedness of various actors (the entrepreneur, sports event organisers and sports consumers) and resources in fostering entrepreneurial activity (Ratten & Jones, 2020; Ratten, da Silva Braga & da Encarnação Marques, 2021). Informal food SMEs benefit from the entrepreneurial ecosystem of sports events by gaining access to a concentrated customer base, while sports events gain value by offering diverse food options, thus enhancing the overall attendee experience (Ratten, 2018). Additionally, the principles of the circular economy, such as reducing waste and improving resource efficiency, can be integrated into this context. For example, informal food vendors at sports events can adopt sustainable practices, such as using biodegradable packaging or sourcing ingredients locally, thus aligning with broader sustainability goals (Serhan & Yannou-Lebris, 2021). This interconnected approach promotes economic sustainability and addresses environmental and social sustainability, reflecting a comprehensive strategy for development in both industries.

The intersection of innovation and sustainability in informal food SMEs and sports events highlights the potential for cross-sectoral learning and collaboration in South Africa. Both sectors can benefit from entrepreneurial approaches that drive innovative and sustainable business model development. These approaches include digital technologies, circular economy principles and community-focused strategies, which enhance operational efficiency and align with broader societal goals (De Bernardi, Azucar, De Bernardi & Azucar, 2020a).

Furthermore, integrating sustainability into business practices surpasses being merely a regulatory requirement and becomes a strategic imperative that enhances competitiveness, growth and resilience. By adopting innovative and sustainable practices, informal food SMEs and sports events in South Africa can mitigate risks, attract investment and build stronger stakeholder relationships (Amoako, 2018). This underscores the importance of a holistic approach to innovation and sustainability considering economic, environmental, and social dimensions.

Consequently, the existing body of knowledge on innovative and sustainable business practices that drive the entrepreneurial growth of informal food SMEs and sports events is pertinent and timely, given its potential impact on economic advancement in South Africa. Considering a holistic approach to integrating innovation and sustainability in entrepreneurial business practices for the informal food and sports events industries would add further depth to this discourse while providing practical guidance for businesses in these industries to adopt lucrative, innovative and sustainable business practices for maximised competitive advantage and growth.

This study uses a systematic literature review (SLR) to develop adoption strategies of business practices that South African informal food SMEs and sporting event organisers can implement to promote sustainable growth and achieve competitive advantage. Ultimately, examining extant literature and case studies will contribute to the discourse of small business development and sports management in South Africa by revealing the best practices and critical components of effective innovative business practices and sustainability practices. A systematic literature review will synthesise the results of numerous studies, thereby demonstrating its efficacy in collecting comprehensive data and information. This will provide a more comprehensive understanding of how informal food SMEs and sports organisers can adopt innovative and sustainable business practices to transform their operations – thus establishing a robust basis for the conclusions reached in this investigation.

## **1.2. Problem Statement**

Despite the evident benefits of innovative and sustainable business models and practices, there is a paucity of comprehensive studies that examine specific adoption strategies within the informal food SMEs and sports events industries in South Africa. The existing literature predominantly focuses on individual case studies or specific innovations without a holistic understanding of how these practices can be systematically adopted to drive entrepreneurial growth and sustainability across these industries. The paucity of this literature limits the ability of stakeholders in these industries to adopt best practices that could enhance their competitiveness, growth and sustainability. Specifically, there is a need for a detailed examination of the innovation and sustainability strategies and best practices that have been successful in other contexts and how they can be adapted and implemented in the South African setting. This will promote sustainable growth, enhance competitive advantage, and contribute to the broader discourse on small business development and sports management.

## **1.3. Research question and objectives**

### **Research question**

How can innovative and sustainable business practices be effectively adopted, implemented and leveraged by informal food SMEs and the sports events industry in South Africa from global contexts, and what are the key barriers and enablers that can enhance their competitiveness, growth, and sustainability?

### **Primary objective**

The study's objective is to conduct a comprehensive systematic literature review to identify, evaluate, and synthesise business models integrating innovative entrepreneurial practices and sustainable strategies for small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in the global informal food and sports events industries and provide actionable insights and adoption strategies for these industries in South Africa.

### **Secondary objectives**

- To systematically examine and categorise innovation and sustainability business models and global best practices implemented in informal food SMEs and sports events globally, focusing on their applicability in South Africa.
- To identify key barriers and enablers to adopting innovative and sustainable business practices in the informal food and sports events industries in South Africa.
- To identify critical strategies for adopting innovation and sustainability business models and best practices for the informal food and sports events industries in South Africa, highlighting cross-sectoral learning and collaboration opportunities.

This systematic literature review paper is structured as follows: A literature review is conducted following the introduction, problem statement, research aims and objectives. This review synthesises existing research on the advantages of implementing innovative and sustainable business practices for SMEs' sustainable growth and competitive advantage in the informal food and sports events industries, focusing on global and local perspectives. The systematic review methodology section provides a comprehensive synthesis of the findings by describing the method for identifying, selecting and analysing relevant studies. The literature-based insights in the results and findings section emphasise the critical components of innovative and sustainable business practices for stakeholders in the informal food and sports events industries. The managerial implications address the practical applications of these findings for SMEs in the informal food industry, sports event organisers, educational institutions, and the business community. The emphasis is on agility and adopting innovative business practices that foster sustainable growth and a competitive advantage in the business environment. The academic implications delineate the intersection of innovation and sustainability in the informal food and sports events industries, thereby identifying cross-sectoral learning and collaboration opportunities. The conclusion concisely summarises the primary points, emphasising the importance of sustainable and innovative business practices to bridge the gap between small business development, sports management, entrepreneurial innovation and sustainability. Actionable business practice adoption strategies are suggested for SMEs and sports event organisers to achieve sustainable growth and competitive advantage. Simultaneously, the future research section proposes areas for additional investigation to improve our comprehension of the relationship between innovative and sustainable business practices and the development of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in the food and sports events industries, as well as their influence on the socio-economic advancement of communities in South Africa.

## **2. Literature Outline**

Integrating entrepreneurial innovations and sustainability within business practices is increasingly vital to economic growth and environmental stewardship (Schaltegger, Lüdeke-Freund & Hansen, 2016). This recognition is particularly pertinent within the informal food and sports events industries, which play significant roles in developing and developed economies. This literature review

synthesises existing research to provide a comprehensive understanding of the innovative and sustainable business models and practices employed in these sectors, thereby addressing how innovative and sustainable business models and practices can be effectively adopted by informal food SMEs and sports event organisers in South Africa to promote sustainable growth and competitive advantage.

The significance of this study lies in its dual focus on two dynamic sectors—informal food SMEs and sports events—that are often overlooked in the context of sustainability and innovation (Kirby, *et al.*, 2018). Despite their crucial economic contributions, informal food SMEs face numerous challenges, including limited access to formal financial services, regulatory hurdles and economic volatility (Endris & Kassegn, 2022). Similarly, sports events are powerful economic drivers with potential for social cohesion but grapple with sustainability issues such as environmental degradation and resource management (Ennis & Ennis, 2020). This systematic literature review (SLR) analyses how these sectors can leverage innovative and sustainable business practices to overcome challenges and foster business growth.

The literature review analyses various sources, including empirical and case studies detailing the successful implementation of innovative and sustainable business practices in informal food SMEs and sports events globally (Liakh & Spigarelli, 2020); key theoretical contributions that provide frameworks for understanding entrepreneurial ecosystems and the circular economy (Pizzi, Leopizzi & Caputo, 2022); and interdisciplinary research that intersect business, environmental science and social policy, providing a holistic perspective on sustainability and innovation (Rau, Goggins & Fahy, 2018).

This systematic literature review significantly contributes to academic, managerial, and practical domains. Academically, it will fill a critical gap in the literature by comprehensively analysing and developing adoption strategies of innovative and sustainable business practices for the informal food and sports events industries in South Africa, which can be applied to other developing countries. Managerially, the review will offer actionable insights for business leaders and entrepreneurs in the informal food and sports industries, enabling them to adopt best practices that enhance sustainability, competitiveness and growth. The review will provide stakeholders with practical guidance to implement sustainable business practices, promoting economic resilience and social well-being.

The systematic literature review synthesises extensive research to offer a robust understanding of innovative and sustainable business practices within informal food SMEs and sports events. By addressing the research aim and achieving the outlined objectives, the review will provide valuable academic, managerial, and practical insights, contributing significantly to the discourse on small business development and sports management. This comprehensive approach will enhance the competitiveness and sustainability of these industries, promoting economic resilience, social well-being and cross-sectoral learning in South Africa and beyond.

### 3. Research Methodology

This study implemented a systematic literature review (SLR) methodology and design to investigate sustainable and innovative business practices that SMEs in the informal food industry and sports event organisers can adopt to foster sustainable growth and develop a competitive edge. The SLR approach, renowned for its structured, reproducible, and rigorous nature, is well-suited for synthesising extant literature and identifying research gaps (Pickering, Grignon, Steven, Guitart & Byrne, 2015). The methodology is based on the strategies implemented by Cury, Kennelly and Howes (2023) and Pitts (2016) to guarantee a thorough and methodical examination of the pertinent literature. This research adhered to the systematic literature review methodology implemented by Cury *et al.* (2023) and Pitts (2016). The review protocols followed in this SLR are outlined below.

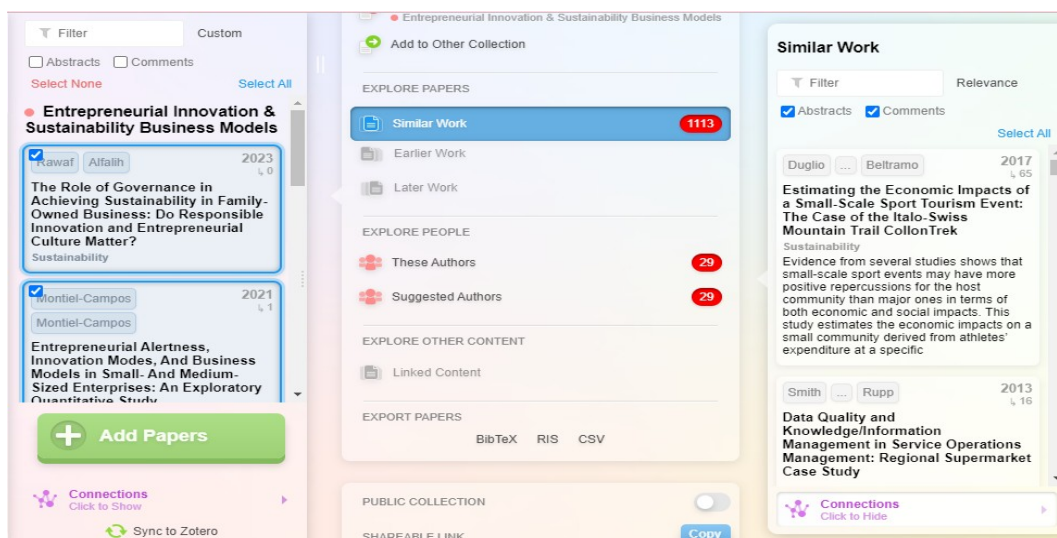
The initial stage in developing the review protocol involved thoroughly examining the research problem, which highlighted a gap in the literature regarding adopting innovative and sustainable business practices in the informal food and sports events sectors in South Africa. This led to the formulation of the research question: *How can innovative and sustainable business practices be effectively adopted, implemented and leveraged by informal food SMEs and the sports events industry in South Africa from global contexts, and what are the key barriers and enablers that can enhance their competitiveness, growth, and sustainability?* The primary and secondary research objectives were delineated to guide the scope and focus of the review.

The second stage of the review protocol ensured the relevance and quality of the studies selected and included specific inclusion and exclusion criteria. Studies were included if they addressed innovative and sustainable business practices or strategies, focused on informal food SMEs or the sports events industry, were published in peer-reviewed journals or reputable academic sources between 2010 and 2024 and provided empirical or theoretical insights applicable to the South African context. Studies classified as grey literature or discussed unrelated aspects and did not adhere to these criteria were excluded (Mohamed Shaffril *et al.*, 2021). Grey area studies included research which focused solely on large enterprises or formal sectors, studies that did not contribute directly to the understanding of business practices in the specified industries, and studies that were not published in English (Thomson *et al.*, 2023). The literature yield was assured by combining predetermined search strings with selected databases.

The third stage of the SLR protocol was the database selection and search strategy. The study's relevant databases were Emerald, EBSCO, and Scopus, which were selected for their extensive compilations of peer-reviewed articles in the informal food sector, sporting events, and innovative and sustainability business practices (Thomson, Hayes, Hanlon, Toohey & Taylor, 2023). The choice was influenced by a preliminary survey that indicated that these databases contained the most pertinent literature (Cooper, Booth, Britten & Garside, 2017). The key search terms were carefully selected to capture all aspects of the research question, incorporating keywords such as "entrepreneurial

innovation," "sustainability," "business practices," "informal food SMEs," "sports events," "South Africa," "circular economy," "entrepreneurial ecosystems," and "competitive advantage." The objective was to compile a comprehensive collection of literature pertinent to sustainable and innovative business practices that informal food SMEs and sporting events in South Africa can adopt. The research focus was refined by generating keyword combinations, which resulted in search phrases such as "sustainable growth," "circular economy principles," "the role of entrepreneurial ecosystems", "innovative and sustainable business practices", and "competitive advantage in business models." Boolean operators and filters were employed to refine the search results, ensuring a thorough exploration of the literature. The literature review synthesised articles from prestigious journals in sports management, entrepreneurship, and small business management. Some of the most significant journals were the *Journal of Business Venturing*, *Sustainability (MDPI)*, *Journal of Small Business Management*, *International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behaviour & Knowledge*, *Journal of Sports Management*, and *International Journal of Sports Marketing & Sponsorship*.

The fourth stage of the SLR protocol involved the study selection and screening process. The study selection process was outlined in two stages: an initial screening based on titles and abstracts and a full-text review of the selected studies. Two reviewers conducted the screening independently to minimise bias and ensure consistency. Any discrepancies in the selection process were resolved through discussion or, if necessary, by involving a third reviewer.



**Figure 1: 1113 journal articles relating to entrepreneurial innovation and sustainability business practices in informal food SMEs and sporting events.**

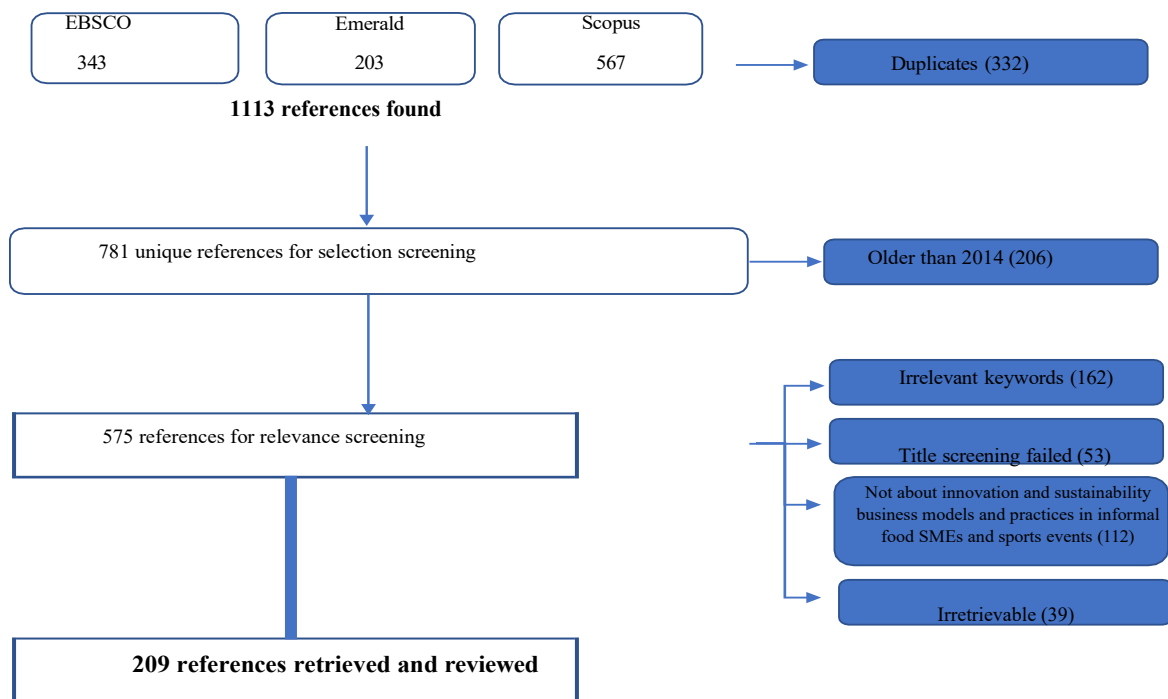
The exhaustive literature search was conducted from March to July 1, 2024, lasting for four months. Numerous articles were identified during the search and subsequently evaluated for relevance. The initial screening process involved the review of titles and abstracts to exclude studies that did not satisfy the inclusion criteria. After this, a full-text review of the remaining articles was conducted to verify their relevance to the research objectives. 209 manuscripts were chosen for inclusion in the study resulting from the rigorous search.



Data extraction and quality assessment, an essential component of any SLR protocol, was the fifth stage of the process to be followed by the data synthesis and analysis, and reporting and dissemination in section four of the paper (Mohamed Shaffril *et al.*, 2021). This entailed the systematic extraction of data using a specially designed SLR matrix, the scouring of abstracts, and the selection of papers of high relevance. This step emphasised potential research gaps and developed a comprehensive overview of the existing research.

Figure 2 provides a comprehensive overview of the methodology, encompassing the initial database search and the quality assessment of the resulting literature. Ultimately, 209 papers were incorporated into this research because of this rigorous methodology. These articles were subsequently subjected to an exhaustive analysis using the SLR matrix, which served as the basis for this comprehensive review. This research established a comprehensive understanding of the role of innovative and sustainable business practices in fostering competitive advantage and growth in the informal food and sports events industries using a Systematic Literature Review. This has paved the way for additional investigations into this developing field.

The rigorous methodology used to conduct a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) of innovation and sustainability business practices that can be used for the growth of informal food and sports events industries in South Africa is illustrated in Figure 2 below. The figure illustrates the sequential process, which commences with the initial database search and concludes with the quality assessment of the resulting literature. It visually illustrates the research process by emphasising the meticulous approach employed to screen 575 references for relevance, of which 209 were retrieved and reviewed. The foundation for this review was established by this comprehensive method, which enabled the construction of a panoramic view of innovation and sustainability business practices that informal food and sports event industries can implement to foster growth, collaboration opportunities, and cross-sectoral learning.



**Figure 2: Performed search process**

## 4. Results and Findings

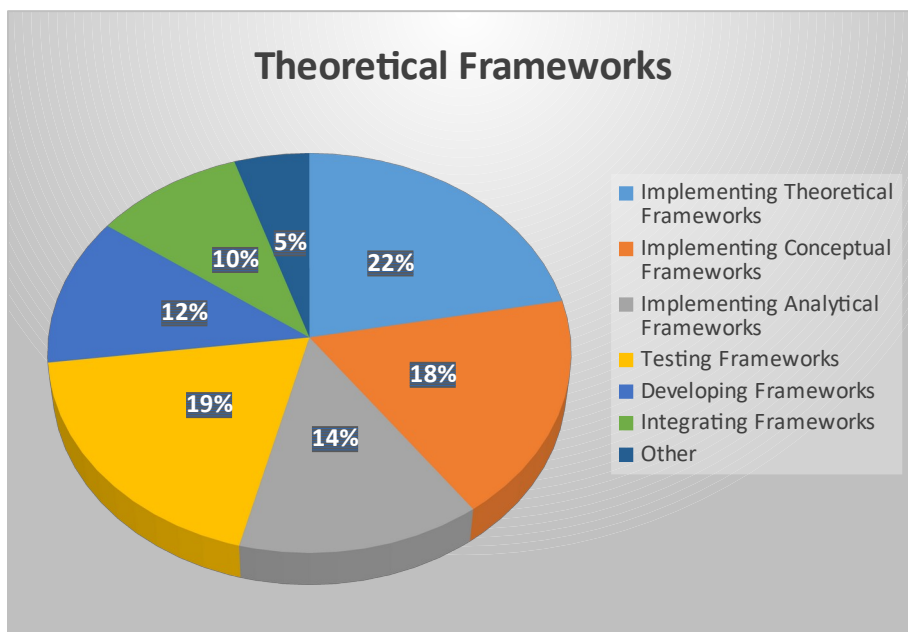
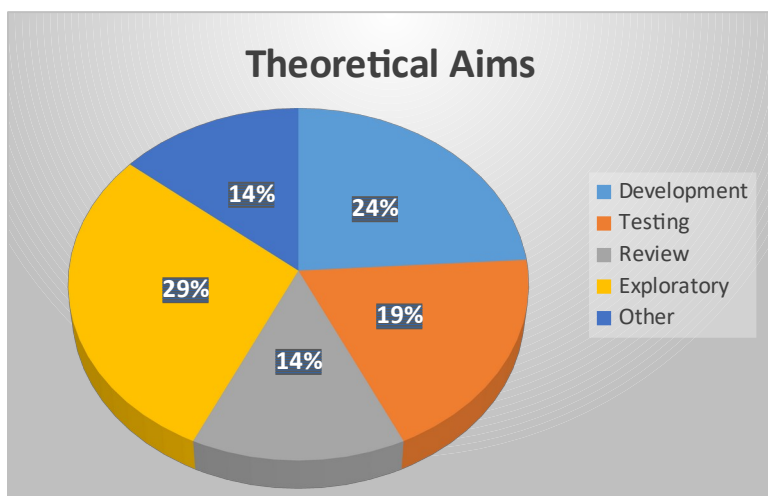
This research explored quantitative and qualitative analyses of the literature covering global innovation and sustainability business best practices in the informal food and sports events industries, focusing on their applicability in South Africa. The results of each are presented in the following subsections.

### 4.1. Quantitative Analysis



**Figure 3: Innovation and sustainability business best practices in the informal food and sports events industries**

The quantification of the innovation and sustainability business best practices reflects their respective roles and importance in the global informal food and sporting events industries. Product and service innovation leads the global implementation scale with a share of 35% because of its direct impact on consumer engagement and market differentiation (Rather, 2019). Process and sustainability-focused innovations follow with a 20% and 15% share, respectively, driven by the need for operational efficiency and environmental responsibility (Du, Bstieler & Yalcinkaya, 2022). While essential, community-oriented, revenue, and technological innovation business practices are less dominant, each practice contributing 10% to the global implementation scale, but critical for comprehensive business strategy, addressing social impacts, financial diversification, and technological advancements, respectively (Donner & de Vries, 2023). These practices collectively contribute to the global resilience, competitiveness, and sustainability of informal food SMEs and sporting events.

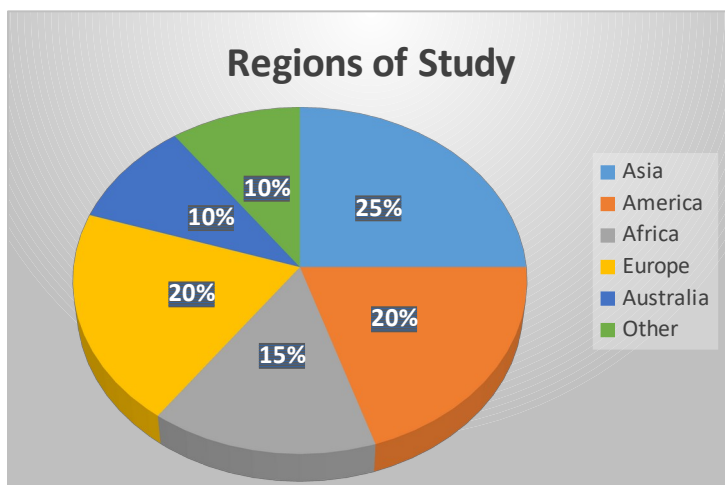


**Figures 4: Theoretical aims and frameworks**

The theoretical aims of the selected 209 research papers related to innovation and sustainability business practices in the informal food and sports events industries were quantified as part of the SLR

analysis. Twenty-four per cent of the studies focus on development, which is crucial for creating or enhancing business practices to improve sustainability (Purvis, Mao & Robinson, 2019). Testing frameworks are the focus of 19% of the studies, validating the business practice efficacy in real-world scenarios. Review studies, making up 14% of the studies, synthesise existing literature to identify trends and guide future research. Exploratory studies, the largest category contributing 29% of the total research papers, investigate less understood areas, leading to novel insights. The remaining 14% of the studies address various theoretical aims, including comparative and interdisciplinary research.

Regarding frameworks, 22% of the studies implement theoretical frameworks, providing structured approaches to understanding sustainability and innovation principles. In 18% of the studies, conceptual frameworks are used to organise and interpret findings. Analytical frameworks, used in 14% of the studies, ensure rigorous data examination. Testing frameworks, crucial for business practice validation, are employed in 19% of the studies. Developing frameworks, found in 12% of the studies, create new business practices based on empirical or theoretical advancements. Integrating frameworks in 10% of the studies combine multiple business practices for comprehensive analysis. Five per cent of the studies do not specify frameworks, often due to their exploratory nature.



**Figure 5: Regions of study**

Asia, accounting for 25% of the studies, leads in investigating sustainability and innovation practices in the informal food and sporting events sectors. This dominance is due to rapid urbanisation, economic growth, and heightened consumer awareness in countries like China and India, alongside regional initiatives like the ASEAN Economic Community promoting sustainable practices (Thong, Nguyen, Bich & Huong, 2017). America follows with 20%, driven by the United States' advanced research capabilities and interest in corporate social responsibility, bolstered by federal initiatives and private sector engagement in the sharing economy (Camilleri, 2017). Europe also represents 20%, supported by the European Union's funding programmes like Horizon 2020 and a strong commitment to environmental sustainability (Mentes, 2023). At 15%, Africa addresses socio-economic challenges through sustainability and innovation, with significant support from international organisations and local academic institutions (Omisore, 2018). With 10%, Australia has emerging interest driven by

national initiatives and robust academic involvement (Ratten, 2018). The 'International and Others' category, also at 10%, encompasses varied research levels influenced by global organisations like the UN and World Bank promoting sustainability in developing regions (Georgeson, Maslin & Poessinouw, 2017).

## **4.2. Qualitative Analysis**

The study on entrepreneurial innovation and sustainability in the informal food and sports events industries presents a comprehensive analysis of the intersection between innovation and sustainability practices in cross sectors, particularly focusing on SMEs in developing countries like South Africa. The research delves into the symbiotic relationship between entrepreneurial innovation and sustainability, emphasising their role in fostering economic growth and contributing to social and environmental well-being. This emphasis on sustainability is crucial in today's global economic landscape, where businesses are increasingly expected to operate in environmentally and socially responsible ways.

The study's methodology involved a systematic literature review identifying key terms and search phrases related to entrepreneurial innovation, sustainability, business practices, informal food SMEs, and sports events. The study ensured a comprehensive collection of relevant literature by refining the research focus and utilising databases like Emerald, EBSCO, and Scopus, and publications such as the *Journal of Business Venturing*, *Sustainability (MDPI)*, *Journal of Small Business Management*, *International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behaviour & Knowledge*, *Journal of Sports Management*, and *International Journal of Sports Marketing & Sponsorship*. This rigorous approach to literature review is essential in establishing the credibility and academic rigour of the study.

One of the study's key findings is the importance of collaborative partnerships and community engagement in driving innovation and sustainability in business practices. Informal food SMEs benefit significantly from networks that provide access to resources, training, and markets, enabling them to innovate and adapt to changing market demands. Similarly, partnerships with local businesses and community groups in sports events can enhance economic benefits and ensure events are inclusive and socially responsible. This highlights the significance of a holistic approach that integrates technological innovation, environmental sustainability, and social responsibility in driving business success and broader socio-economic development goals. Additionally, studies on innovation and sustainability business practices for informal food and sports events industries are conducted globally, encompassing regions such as Asia, Africa, America, Europe, and Australia. This global perspective allows for a broader understanding of the topic.

Moreover, the study emphasises the need for actionable business practice adoption strategies for SMEs and sports event organisers to achieve sustainable growth and competitive advantage. By synthesising existing research and providing insights into innovative and sustainable business practices in the informal food and sports events industries, the study offers valuable guidance for businesses looking to promote sustainability and competitiveness. This guidance is particularly

relevant in developing economies like South Africa, where SMEs are crucial in driving economic growth and creating employment opportunities.

The study on entrepreneurial innovation and sustainability in the informal food and sports events industries provides a comprehensive overview of the challenges and opportunities in integrating innovative and sustainable practices into business models. By highlighting the importance of collaborative partnerships, community engagement, and actionable adoption strategies, the study offers valuable insights for SMEs and sports event organisers looking to thrive in a dynamic and competitive global landscape. Further research in this area can help deepen our understanding of the relationship between innovative and sustainable business practices and their impact on socio-economic development in developing countries like South Africa.

### **4.3. Entrepreneurial Innovation**

Entrepreneurial innovation, a dynamic and multifaceted concept, encapsulates how individuals or organisations create novel products, services, or business practices that disrupt existing markets and generate economic value (Khan, 2023). Building upon the seminal work of Schumpeter, who conceptualised the role of the entrepreneur as a "creative destructor," Khan (2023) has expanded our understanding of this phenomenon. According to Sibeko and Barnard (2020), entrepreneurial innovation is not merely the province of the lone visionary but a systematic practice that can be cultivated and nurtured within organisations. Sibeko and Barnard (2020) further elucidate that innovative entrepreneurs leverage emerging technologies, identify unmet consumer needs, and challenge established industry norms to create transformative solutions. This dynamic interplay between entrepreneurship and innovation is further explored by Chen, Huang, Liu, Min and Zhou (2018), who highlight the importance of aligning organisational structure and culture to foster a climate conducive to innovative activities.

The proliferation of disruptive startups evidences the continued relevance of entrepreneurial innovation, the rise of the sharing economy, and the increasing emphasis on corporate venturing and intrapreneurship within established firms (Knossalla & Carbon, 2023). As the global business landscape evolves, harnessing entrepreneurial innovation will remain a critical driver of competitive advantage and sustainable economic growth.

### **4.4. Sustainability**

Sustainability has become a crucial consideration for modern businesses, particularly within the context of small enterprises in developing countries. According to Gherghina, Botezatu, Hosszu and Simionescu (2020), small businesses account for over 90% of all enterprises worldwide, making them integral to driving sustainable economic growth. In this regard, sustainability in small businesses encompasses a multifaceted approach that encompasses environmental stewardship, social responsibility, and long-term financial viability. Endris and Kassegn (2022) found that small businesses in developing nations often face unique challenges in achieving sustainable practices, such

as limited resource access, technological constraints, and regulatory hurdles. Nevertheless, innovative solutions, such as adopting renewable energy, waste management strategies, and inclusive hiring practices, have emerged as viable pathways for small businesses to integrate sustainability into their core operations (Schoneveld, 2020). Arnold (2018) indicates that sustainable small businesses enhance their resilience to market fluctuations and contribute to broader sustainable development goals (SDGs) by addressing local environmental and social issues. Thus, sustainability in small businesses is both a strategic imperative and a moral obligation, driving progress towards equitable and sustainable development (Arnold, 2018).

#### **4.5. Innovation and Sustainability Business Practices in the Informal Food and Sports Events Industries**

As the informal food and sports events industries continue to evolve, business practices such as product and service innovation, process innovation, sustainability-focused business, community-oriented business, revenue innovation, and technological innovation are pivotal for the advancement of businesses in these industries (Mukherjee, Onel & Nuñez, 2016; Rhodes, 2017). Product and service innovation involves creating or improving offerings to meet changing consumer demands and enhance competitive advantage, aligning with a direct sales business model (Kindström & Kowalkowski, 2014). In the informal food sector, this could entail the development of healthier or culturally significant food options, while in the sporting events industry, it might involve innovative fan engagement services (Kindström & Kowalkowski, 2014; Ratten, 2018).

Process innovation enhances operational efficiency and effectiveness (Kahn, 2018). This may include adopting better food safety practices or streamlining supply chains for informal food SMEs, whereas sporting events benefit from optimised logistics and crowd management systems. Such innovations improve performance and reduce costs and waste, contributing to sustainability.

Sustainability-focused businesses integrate environmental and social responsibility into their core strategies, addressing the global call for sustainable development (Schoneveld, 2020; Stewart & Niero, 2018). Informal food SMEs adopting this practice might implement eco-friendly packaging or source ingredients locally to reduce carbon footprints. Similarly, sporting events can embrace sustainability by minimising waste, using renewable energy sources, and promoting public transportation (Kellison, 2015).

Community-oriented businesses prioritise local engagement and socio-economic development (Houghton, 2016). For informal food SMEs, this could involve supporting local farmers and employing community members, fostering economic resilience (De Bernardi *et al.*, 2020a). This business practice might manifest in the sporting events industry through local community outreach programs, partnerships with local businesses, and initiatives promoting social inclusion and health (Rowe, Karg & Sherry, 2019).

Revenue innovation involves developing new revenue streams or business practices to enhance financial sustainability (Parida, Sjödin & Reim, 2019). Informal food SMEs might explore subscription-based meal services or mobile food vending, while the sporting events industry could leverage digital platforms for virtual event experiences or exclusive content subscriptions (Kindström & Kowalkowski, 2014; Ratten, 2018).

Technological innovation is crucial for driving efficiency and competitiveness. Technology can enhance informal food SMEs' inventory management, marketing, and customer interaction. In sporting events, advanced technologies such as augmented reality, blockchain ticketing, and data analytics can transform fan experiences and operational efficiency (Glebova *et al.*, 2023).

By strategically adopting these innovation and sustainability practices, informal food SMEs and the sports events industry can enhance their competitiveness, create unique value propositions, and position themselves for long-term success in a rapidly evolving marketplace.

#### **4.6. Global Best Entrepreneurial Innovation and Sustainability Practices in Informal Food SMEs And Sports Events**

Global best practices in entrepreneurial innovation and sustainability within informal food SMEs and sports events are essential for fostering economic growth, environmental stewardship, and social equity. Informal food SMEs benefit from integrating sustainable sourcing and production practices. For instance, farm-to-table approaches reduce carbon footprints and support local agriculture, enhancing food security and community livelihoods (Pehin Dato Musa & Chin, 2022). Additionally, employing biodegradable packaging and waste reduction techniques, such as composting and recycling, aligns with global sustainability goals and enhances brand reputation (Pehin Dato Musa & Chin, 2022).

In sports events, sustainability practices involve comprehensive strategies to minimise environmental impacts. Implementing energy-efficient stadium technologies, such as LED lighting and solar panels, significantly reduces energy consumption (Sfintes, 2020). Moreover, waste management practices, including extensive recycling programs and reducing single-use plastics, are crucial. Events like the Olympic Games have set benchmarks by incorporating sustainability into their core operations, from venue construction to post-event legacy planning (Kim & Grix, 2021).

Entrepreneurial innovation in these sectors often involves leveraging digital technologies. Informal food SMEs increasingly use mobile platforms for marketing, sales, and customer engagement, enhancing accessibility and operational efficiency (Kindström & Kowalkowski, 2014). Similarly, sports events harness big data and analytics to improve fan experiences, optimise logistics, and personalise services (Glebova *et al.*, 2023). Digital ticketing systems, for instance, streamlining entry processes and reducing paper waste, contribute to sustainability practices in sports events while enhancing customer convenience (Cury *et al.*, 2023).



Collaborative partnerships and community engagement are critical to innovation and sustainability business practices. Informal food SMEs benefit from networks that provide access to resources, training, and markets, fostering resilience and innovation (Arnold, 2018). In sports events, partnerships with local businesses and community groups can enhance economic benefits and ensure that events are inclusive and socially responsible (Ratten, 2018).

In synthesising these practices, it is evident that a holistic approach that integrates technological innovation, environmental sustainability, and social responsibility is vital. These strategies drive business success and contribute to broader socio-economic development goals, setting a global standard for excellence in informal food SMEs and sports events. Overall, the intersection of entrepreneurial innovation and sustainability practices in the informal food SME and sports event sectors has yielded promising results, highlighting the potential for these businesses to thrive in an increasingly dynamic and competitive global landscape.

#### **4.7. Barriers and Enablers to Innovative and Sustainable Business Practice Adoption in The Informal Food and Sports Events Industries In South Africa**

Implementing innovative and sustainable business practices in informal food SMEs and sports events in South Africa presents a complex landscape shaped by numerous barriers and enablers. Key barriers include limited access to finance, inadequate infrastructure, and regulatory constraints. Informal food SMEs often struggle with securing capital due to their perceived high risk and lack of formal financial records (Endris & Kassegn, 2022). This financial exclusion limits their ability to invest in sustainable practices and innovative technologies. Additionally, inadequate infrastructure, such as unreliable electricity and poor transport networks, hampers operational efficiency and increases costs, further discouraging sustainable investments (Endris & Kassegn, 2022).

Regulatory constraints also pose significant challenges. The informal nature of many SMEs means they often operate outside formal regulatory frameworks, limiting their access to government support programs and making it difficult to comply with sustainability standards (Endris & Kassegn, 2022). In the sports events sector, stringent regulations and bureaucratic red tape can delay the implementation of sustainability initiatives, such as green building certifications or waste management systems (Ennis & Ennis, 2020).

Despite these barriers, several enablers can facilitate the adoption of innovative and sustainable business practices. Government policies and support programmes are crucial. South Africa's National Development Plan and other policy frameworks emphasise the importance of SME development and sustainability, providing a supportive environment for businesses to innovate (Soni, 2014). Access to financial resources can be improved through initiatives such as microfinance, which provides small-scale funding to informal businesses, enabling them to invest in sustainable practices and technologies (Soni, 2014).

Technological advancements also play a significant role as enablers. Mobile technology, for instance, has revolutionised business operations for informal food SMEs, providing platforms for marketing, sales, and customer engagement, thereby enhancing operational efficiency and sustainability (Qureshi, 2020). In the sports events sector, advancements in digital technologies, such as data analytics and smart venue management systems, enable organisers to reduce waste, optimise resource use, and enhance fan experiences sustainably (Glebova *et al.*, 2023; Cury *et al.*, 2023).

Community engagement and collaborative partnerships are equally vital. Informal food SMEs can benefit from networks that provide access to resources, training, and markets, fostering resilience and innovation (De Bernardi *et al.*, 2020a). In the sports events industry, partnerships with local businesses and community groups can amplify economic benefits and ensure that events are inclusive and socially responsible (Rowe *et al.*, 2019). Furthermore, the rise of social entrepreneurship in South Africa has spurred the development of business models and practices that prioritise social and environmental impact alongside financial returns, offering a blueprint for sustainable business practices (Lubberink, 2020).

Education and capacity building are also critical enablers. Training programs focused on sustainable business practices and innovation can equip entrepreneurs with the knowledge and skills needed to navigate the challenges and seize opportunities in the market (Gaiardo, 2019). By fostering a continuous learning and adaptation culture, these initiatives can help informal food SMEs and sports event organisers integrate sustainability into their core operations.

While barriers such as limited access to finance, inadequate infrastructure, and regulatory constraints pose significant challenges, enablers like supportive government policies, technological advancements, community engagement, and education can drive the implementation of innovative and sustainable business practices in South Africa's informal food SMEs and sports events. Addressing these barriers and leveraging the enablers can pave the way for a more sustainable and resilient economic landscape.

#### **4.8. Integrating the Informal Food and Sports Industries Through the Entrepreneurial Ecosystem and Circular Economy System for Cross-Sectoral Learning**

As the global economy continues to evolve, the interconnectedness of various industries has become increasingly apparent, presenting unique opportunities for cross-sectoral learning and collaboration. Two such domains that have garnered significant attention and hold the potential to bridge the gap between the informal food and sports industries are the entrepreneurial ecosystem and the principles of the circular economy (Zucchella & Urban, 2019)

The entrepreneurial ecosystem, characterised by its dynamic and interdependent nature, is crucial in driving innovation and fostering sustainable development (De Bernardi *et al.*, 2020b). Within this ecosystem, entrepreneurs, venture capitalists, service providers, and government entities converge to create an environment conducive to the growth and success of new and existing ventures (De Bernardi

*et al.*, 2020b). According to De Bernardi *et al.* (2020b), the entrepreneurial ecosystem encompasses access to finance, a supportive culture, appropriate human capital, and a favourable regulatory framework, all contributing to thriving entrepreneurial activities. In the context of the informal food and sports industries, this ecosystem can catalyse the cross-pollination of ideas, the adoption and implementation of innovative and sustainable business practices.

Complementing the entrepreneurial ecosystem are the principles of the circular economy that offer a comprehensive framework for addressing the challenges faced by the South African informal food and sports events industries. Kristensen and Mosgaard (2020) define the circular economy as a restorative and regenerative framework that maintains the utmost usability and value of goods, components, and supplies. By embracing the principles of the circular economy, such as reuse, recycling, and resource recovery, the informal food and sports events industries can reduce waste, minimise their environmental impact, and foster a more sustainable ecosystem.

For instance, in the informal food industry, entrepreneurs can leverage the circular economy principles to develop innovative food production and distribution systems that prioritise resource efficiency, waste reduction, and the utilisation of local, sustainable ingredients (Kindström & Kowalkowski, 2014). Similarly, in the sports industry, circular economy principles can be applied to designing and manufacturing sports equipment, managing sports facilities, and integrating sustainable practices in event organisation and spectator engagement (Kellison, 2015).

Integrating the entrepreneurial ecosystem and circular economy principles within the informal food and sports industries can lead to a mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge, resources, and best practices. Köhler, Sönnichsen and Beske-Jansen (2022). have highlighted the importance of cross-sectoral collaboration in driving the transition towards a circular economy, emphasising the need for stakeholders from different industries to share their expertise and collectively address systemic challenges.

By fostering this cross-sectoral integration, the informal food and sports industries can unlock new opportunities for innovation, improve their environmental and social impact, and contribute to the overall sustainability of their respective sectors. Through the lens of the entrepreneurial ecosystem and the circular economy, these industries can engage in a symbiotic relationship, creating a blueprint for a more resilient and prosperous future.

#### **4.9. Strategies For Adopting Innovation and Sustainability Business Best Practices in Informal Food and Sporting Events Industries**

South African businesses in the informal food and sports events industries can adopt the following strategies to implement innovation and sustainability business practices effectively for sustainable growth and competitive advantage:

- Collaborative Partnerships: Encourage partnerships through the entrepreneurial ecosystem between informal food SMEs, sports event organisers, and relevant stakeholders to share resources, knowledge, and best practices. Collaborations can lead to shared innovation, improved sustainability practices, and enhanced competitiveness.
- Community Engagement: Engage with local communities to understand their needs, involve them in decision-making processes, and ensure that business practices align with community values and sustainability goals.
- Technology Integration: Embrace technological innovations to streamline operations, reduce environmental impact, and enhance customer experiences. Utilise digital marketing, sales, and data analytics platforms to drive efficiency and sustainability.
- Capacity Building: Invest in training and development programmes to upskill employees in innovation, sustainability, and best practices. Building internal capacity can empower staff to drive positive change within the organisation.
- Circular Economy Practices: Implement principles to minimise waste, optimise resource use, and create value from by-products. Encourage recycling, upcycling, and sustainable sourcing to reduce environmental footprint.
- Regulatory Compliance: Stay informed about local regulations and compliance requirements related to sustainability practices. Adhering to legal standards mitigates risks and enhances reputation and trust among stakeholders.
- Continuous Improvement: Foster a culture of continuous improvement by regularly evaluating and optimising business processes, products, and services. Encourage feedback loops from customers, employees, and partners to drive innovation and sustainability.

## **5. Managerial Implications**

The manifold managerial takeaways of integrating innovation and sustainability into business practices within South Africa's informal food and sports events industries are crucial for driving sustainable growth and maintaining a competitive edge. This section will explore key strategies such as regulatory awareness, continuous improvement, and alignment of business goals to provide actionable insights for SMEs and sports event organisers in navigating the dynamic landscape of entrepreneurship and sustainability.

**Managerial Implications:** Businesses in the informal food and sports events industries must stay updated on regulations to ensure compliance and avoid penalties, foster a culture of ongoing enhancement to adapt to changing market demands, and ensure that sustainability initiatives align with overall business goals for growth and competitiveness.

**Business Implications:** Businesses in the informal food and sports events industries must form partnerships to enhance innovation and sustainability efforts, involve local communities to build support and enhance brand reputation, and implement actionable plans to drive sustainable growth and gain a competitive edge.

**Educational Implications:** Businesses in the informal food and sports events industries must educate employees or stakeholders on the importance of innovation and sustainability in business operations. Educational institutions should develop training sessions to equip staff with the skills to implement sustainable practices effectively. Educational institutions must encourage further research to deepen understanding and discover new insights on the phenomenon of innovation and sustainability business practice adoption strategies in the informal food and sports events industries in South Africa and developing countries.

**Practical Implications:** Businesses in the informal food and sports events industries must implement renewable energy and waste management solutions to integrate sustainability into operations and emulate global best practices such as sustainable sourcing and energy-efficient technologies. Policymakers must address challenges businesses face in these industries, like limited resources and regulatory constraints, through government support and technological advancements.

By adopting these strategies, businesses in South Africa's informal food and sports events industries can effectively integrate innovation and sustainability into their business practices, leading to sustainable growth and a competitive advantage in the market. These strategies align with the study's emphasis on actionable adoption strategies for SMEs and sports event organisers

## **6. Conclusions, Limitations and Future Research**

This paper on Entrepreneurial Innovation and Sustainability: An Integrative Review of Business Practices in the Informal Foods and Sports Industries delves into integrating entrepreneurial innovation and sustainability within South Africa's informal food and sports events industries. Through a systematic literature review, the research identifies adoption strategies for businesses in these industries, addresses the lack of comprehensive studies in South Africa, and focuses on enhancing the competitiveness and sustainability of businesses in these industries.

This systematic literature review study on global entrepreneurial innovation, sustainability business models and best practices for informal food and sports events industries emphasises the significance of cross-sectoral learning through collaborative partnerships, community engagement, and actionable adoption strategies for SMEs and sports event organisers, particularly in South Africa, to promote sustainable growth and competitive advantage for businesses in the informal food and sports events industries. It underscores the importance of integrating technological innovation, environmental sustainability, and social responsibility in driving business success and socio-economic development.

Compared to research previously conducted on entrepreneurial innovation and sustainability business practices for informal food and sports events industries in the small business development and sports management phenomena, this study provides a more focused examination of the specific contexts of South Africa's informal food and sports events industries. It offers actionable insights tailored to these industries, addressing the lack of comprehensive studies on regional adoption strategies.

Key findings underscore theoretical, managerial and practical contributions for stakeholders in these industries. Firstly, the theoretical contribution highlights the importance of innovative and sustainable business practices for economic growth and environmental stewardship in developing countries like South Africa. Secondly, the managerial contribution elucidates the significance of integrating technological innovation, environmental sustainability, and social responsibility in driving business success and socio-economic development. Practically, the study offers concrete strategies such as regulatory compliance, continuous improvement, and partnership formation to drive sustainable growth and competitiveness.

Limitations of the study may include the generalisability of findings beyond South Africa and the dynamic nature of the business environment. Future research could delve deeper into the impacts of specific adoption strategies, explore the role of government policies in fostering sustainability, and investigate the long-term effects of integrating innovation and sustainability in these industries. Additionally, comparative studies with other developing countries could provide valuable insights.

In conclusion, this groundbreaking study underscores the critical need for integrating entrepreneurial innovation and sustainability within South Africa's informal food and sports events industries. By addressing the dearth of comprehensive research on adoption strategies in this context, the research shines a light on cross-sectional learning. It provides actionable insights for SMEs and sports event organisers to enhance competitiveness and sustainability. The findings emphasise the transformative potential of innovative and sustainable business practices in driving economic growth, environmental stewardship, and socio-economic development. Further exploration of these strategies and their implications for developing countries like South Africa is essential for fostering sustainable growth and competitiveness in these vital industries.

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