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Integrated Motivations and Approach to Sustainable Business Practices within Women Entrepreneurs

A case study on women entrepreneurs' approach and motivations regarding sustainability in their business

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Background: Sustainability has become one of the main factors driving business innovation and resulted in a green transition, which has slowed down in recent years, and to accelerate the green transition again, major barriers need to be removed. The gender imbalance in sustainable entrepreneurship could be a barrier to the acceleration of the green transition since women entrepreneurs showcase what the green transition represents, yet there are fewer women in entrepreneurship compared to men. Despite there being fewer women in entrepreneurship, several studies have found that women are more inclined toward sustainability, compared to men, when it comes to the practices of sustainable entrepreneurship. However, no studies state how or why this is.

Purpose: The purpose of this thesis is therefore to bridge that knowledge gap by investigating the potential 'how' and 'why' behind women's entrepreneurial sustainability. Moreover, the purpose of the findings is to create a new theory that offers new insights and a unique understanding regarding women's entrepreneurial sustainability implementation and motivation.

Research Question: How do women entrepreneurs incorporate sustainable business practices and why are they motivated to do so?

Method: A inductive qualitative single case study on eleven women entrepreneurs. The data collection was through semi-structured interviews. Followed by a Gioia's grounded theory analysis to create a theoretical model to answer the research question.

Conclusion: Women entrepreneurs are motivated through various intrinsic and extrinsic motivations where they use their decision authority as the approach to implementing their sustainable business practices.

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Definitions

In this section words which are being used throughout the thesis are defined.

Entrepreneur - We define an entrepreneur as someone who followed their passion and saw a gap in the market and created a business from the ground up.

Sustainable Entrepreneurship - It is a business-driven concept of sustainability that focuses on increasing social, environmental as well as economic business value.

Economic Sustainability - Refers to indicators related to employment, increasing sales, income stability, and profitability.

Social Sustainability - Refers to having a positive impact on people, society, and/ or the world.

Environmental Sustainability - Refers to making decisions and taking action that is in the interests of protecting the natural world.

Small to Medium Enterprise (SME) - The exact defining criteria for SMEs varies across countries. For the purpose of this thesis, we will use the criteria outlined by OECD (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development). According to OECD: "SMEs are non-subsidiary, independent firms that employ fewer than a given number of employees. This number varies across countries. The most frequent upper limit designating an SME is a maximum of 250 employees."

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

Historically, resources were seen as unlimited, and the economy was viewed as self-sustaining, leading businesses to focus more on economic growth (Kyrö, 2015). However, prioritizing economic growth resulted in negative consequences for air, land, and water (Kyrö, 2015). As a result, through the years, discussions about whether Earth's natural resources can sustain the growing human population became more important with time (Mensah, 2019). There were recommendations from the Brundtland Commission's report and the United Nations Conference of Environment and Development (UNCED), further enforcing the idea to replace the goal of economic development with the principles of sustainable development (Kyrö, 2015).

Sustainable development therefore refers to an approach in which society interacts more efficiently with the environment and minimizes the risk of damaging the environment for future generations (Mensah, 2019). Additionally, SD emphasizes that the future depends largely on socioeconomic and environmental factors (Mensah, 2019; Sanders & Wood, 2020). Accordingly, Sanders & Wood (2020) point out that businesses' decision-making processes must balance social-, economic-, and environmental factors to be sustainable. They further point out that the principle of balancing these three can be considered a "triple bottom line" approach to evaluating performance in business. Finally, they emphasized that the economic aspect refers to the profits of the business, the social aspect to the impact it has on the public, and the environmental aspect to the pollution and resource depletion.

We currently live in a world where the newest generations are more environmentally conscious (Pope, 2021). This is shown for example in the fact that more than a third of global consumers are willing to pay more for green products and services (Pope, 2021). One could state that a green transition was seen with the introduction of sustainability and increased awareness of sustainability. Sustainability has also become one of the main factors driving business innovation (Sanders & Wood, 2020). OECD (2019) points out that the green transition has influenced new innovations not only in technology, but also in economic and social systems, and in lifestyles.

Further, the green transition has opened up an array of opportunities for businesses, and this has accelerated significantly since the mid-2000s (OECD, 2019).

In recent years, however, some evidence suggests that green innovation has slowed down (OECD, 2019). In order to accelerate the green transition again, major barriers need to be removed (OECD, 2019). The gender imbalance in entrepreneurship and specifically sustainable entrepreneurship (Barrachina et al., 2021; Outsios & Farooqi, 2017) could be a barrier to the acceleration of the green transition. In relation to becoming entrepreneurs, women are frequently more likely than men to be engaged in green issues (Hechavarria et al., 2012). As a result, women entrepreneurs are focused on more than just financial benefits, since they also consider social issues while men tend to focus almost exclusively on maximizing financial benefits (Barrachina et al., 2021). Despite this, research shows that only 38.83% of the workforce is female and that women's entrepreneurial activities are well below those of men (Barrachina et al., 2021). Some researchers attribute this to the fact that women have a greater amount of difficulty opening their own businesses (Dal Mas & Paoloni, 2020).

1.2 Research problem

Nevertheless, despite there being fewer women in entrepreneurship, several studies have found that women adhere to more sustainable practices when it comes to the practices of sustainable entrepreneurship (Barrachina et al., 2021; Bawakyillenuo et al., 2021; Dickel et al., 2021; Hechavarria et al., 2012; Outsios, & Farooqi, 2017). The studies we found about women entrepreneurs and their inclination towards sustainability practices are, however, only quantitative. Also, the studies do not describe the approach or implementation women entrepreneurs use to establish their sustainable business practices nor their motivations for doing so. Consequently, there is a lack of data regarding women entrepreneurs and their inclination towards sustainability. Thus, the thesis will investigate the women entrepreneurs' implementation methods and motivation behind making sustainable choices within their businesses.

Accordingly, there is a gap in qualitative research regarding women entrepreneurs' sustainability implementation approach and motivations. In some ways, we could say that women who are inclined toward sustainability showcase Ecopreneurship, which will be clarified later, but what we

hope to demonstrate is how we do not know how or why women entrepreneurs are sustainability inclined. Understanding women's different perspectives may provide a deeper understanding of their motivations and approaches to something as important as sustainability. Previously, it was mentioned that the green transition was slowing down because of barriers (OECD, 2019), and a potential reason could be the gender imbalance within sustainable entrepreneurship (Barrachina et al., 2021; Outsios & Farooqi, 2017). Therefore, by shedding some light on women entrepreneurs, who are a minority group within entrepreneurship, and who, arguably, represent the core values of the green transition, we may be able to discover various important insights. It is possible that the findings could then be translated into knowledge and further understanding regarding entrepreneurial sustainability. Furthermore, the findings may lead to potential inspiration and education about the importance, implementation, and motivation behind entrepreneurial sustainability and inform others to be more sustainable minded, thus accelerating the green transition once again.

1.3 Purpose

Several studies have shown that women entrepreneurs have a higher likelihood to be sustainable (Barrachina et al., 2021; Bawakyillenuo et al., 2021; Dickel et al., 2021; Hechavarria et al., 2012; Outsios et al., 2017), but not enough studies have explained how or why. Therefore, the purpose of this thesis is to understand the method(s) and motivation(s) that influence and drive women entrepreneurs to be more socially, economically, and environmentally aware in their business practices. In response to existing research that suggests that female entrepreneurs are more concerned with sustainability than male entrepreneurs (Hechavarria et al., 2012; Dickel et al., 2021; Outsios et al., 2017, Barrachina et al., 2021; Bawakyillenuo et al., 2021), the study seeks to identify the techniques and motivations behind woman entrepreneurs' efforts to be more economic, social and environmental responsible within their businesses.

The purpose of this thesis is therefore to bridge that knowledge gap by investigating the potential how and why behind women's entrepreneurial sustainability. Moreover, the purpose of the findings is to create a new theory which offers new insights and unique understanding regarding women's entrepreneurial sustainability implementation and motivation. In addition, those findings may inspire us to take new actions and think differently about sustainability, and influence others to

become more sustainable in different aspects of life. This thesis presents an opportunity to gain first-hand insight into women entrepreneurs who possibly are implementing sustainable business practices that reflect the current green transition.

1.4 Research question

How do women entrepreneurs incorporate sustainable business practices and why are they motivated to do so?

2. Literature review

2.1 Entrepreneurship

Entrepreneurship is a vast term and has no clearly outlined definition (Churchill & Lewis, 1986). As a field of study, entrepreneurship is comparatively young and also the research thereon has grown dramatically over the years (Frederick, Kuratko & Hodgetts, 2007). In order to understand entrepreneurship, it is important to define who is an entrepreneur? According to Gartner (1985), the founder of a business is an entrepreneur and in other words, a person who starts their own business from scratch. Consequently, creation of a new business or organization can be termed as entrepreneurship (Gartner, 1988). Others are more selective and imply that only innovators can be called entrepreneurs, people who convert new ideas into successful innovations (Schumpeter, 1934). In 1965, Schumpeter gave a more formalized definition and defined "entrepreneurs as individuals who exploit market opportunity through technical and/or organizational innovation". Peterson (1985) posits that identification and exploitation of an opportunity is an entrepreneurial activity and those who pursue these activities are entrepreneurs. For this thesis we define entrepreneurship as a multifaceted concept that encompasses owning a small business (Kent et al., 1982, Carland et al., 1984), being innovative (Schumpeter 1934), acting as a leader Cunningham et al., 1991) and/or starting up a new company (Gartner, 1989).

2.2 Sustainability

Like entrepreneurship, sustainability is also a very vast topic and has many definitions (Redclift, 2005; Sneddon, Howarth, and Norgaard, 2006). The one thing that virtually all of them have in common is that they revolve around the future implications of present human and business actions on future generations and the planet (Robert, Parris, and Leiserowitz, 2005, Horton & Horton, 2019). Sustainability and sustainable development often go hand in hand and sometimes people use them interchangeably. However, the term sustainability is more closely linked with the overall goals for the future and sustainable development gives an insight into the processes that are carried out towards achieving those goals (UNESCO, n.d.). In order to clarify and make it simple, sustainability has been divided into three dimensions: economic, social and environmental (WCED, 1987). Yet this does not imply that any one dimension is has more weightage than the

other. If true essence of sustainability is to be achieved all three dimensions, social, economic and environmental, need to be addressed simultaneously (Lozano, 2008). Sustainability implies living within the boundaries of the planet, working and being in a way that allows all people on the planet to live a healthy, fulfilling, and enriched life (WCED, 1987). Sustainability mindsets enable companies to create win-win situations by "greening" their business, enhancing and building a favorable corporate image (Elkington, 1994).

2.3 Sustainable Development

Sustainable development refers to the processes that are carried out towards achieving the sustainable goals (UNESCO, n.d.). The United Nations established the Brundtland Commission in 1987 so that different nations across the globe have access to a common platform and to align the nations on common goals for future sustainability. The Brundtland Commission unified the nations and gave a simplified yet effective definition for sustainable development: “development that meets the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (WCED, 1987, p.43). However, this definition is quite vast and open to interpretations by different actors such as corporations and even countries, as they see fit. More recently, in 2015, the United Nations has developed the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) where they have outlined more achievable goals for countries and corporations to work towards for 2030 (Colglazier, 2015). The 17 SDGs can act as precision tools as well as provide generalized guidelines for individuals, businesses and countries who are working towards sustainable development (WHO, 2015). For this thesis, we will explore how or if women entrepreneurs are working towards any specific or general sustainable development goals through their businesses.

Sustainable Development Goals	
SDG 1	No poverty

SDG 2	Zero hunger
SDG 3	Good health and well-being
SDG 4	Quality Education
SDG 5	Gender Equality
SDG 6	Clean water and sanitation
SDG 7	Affordable and clean energy
SDG 8	Decent work and economic growth
SDG 9	Industry, innovation and infrastructure
SDG 10	Reduced inequalities
SDG 11	Sustainable cities and communities
SDG 12	Responsible consumption and production
SDG 13	Climate action

SDG 14	Life below water
SDG 15	Life on land
SDG 16	Peace, justice and strong institutions
SDG 17	Partnerships for the goals

Table 1: Authors summary of 17 SDGs (United Nations, n.d.)

2.4 Sustainable Entrepreneurship

The concept of sustainable entrepreneurship is relatively new in the business world, but nonetheless, it is gaining popularity and acceptance rapidly. Sustainability is a multifaceted concept that encompasses economic as well as social development alongside environmental protection (Gladwin et al., 1995, Choi & Gary, 2008). With the whole world striving to contribute towards sustainability in one way or another, it is understandable that businesses also join in the efforts. Hence, the concept of sustainable entrepreneurship arises. Sustainable entrepreneurship comprises entrepreneurial efforts which take into account the concept of sustainability along with adding or increasing business' corporate or financial value (Weidinger, Fischler & Schmidpeter, 2014). Like traditional entrepreneurship, within sustainable entrepreneurship the entrepreneurs' inclination towards sustainability is of great importance (Shepherd & Patzelt, 2011). Hall et al. (2010) believes that entrepreneurship is the key to achieving the sustainable practices and processes within a society. Entrepreneurs with a greater focus on sustainability make efforts to incorporating sustainable products and process into their businesses alongside achieving their financial or corporate objectives (Shepherd & Patzelt, 2011). The goal of sustainable entrepreneurship is to be profitable and economically viable while also addressing environmental and social concerns (Hockerts & Wüstenhagen, 2010). The world's biggest opportunity for enterprise and invention is being created by sustainable entrepreneurs who are shifting toward a more ecologically sustainable environment and economy (Dean & McMullen, 2007). Our thesis

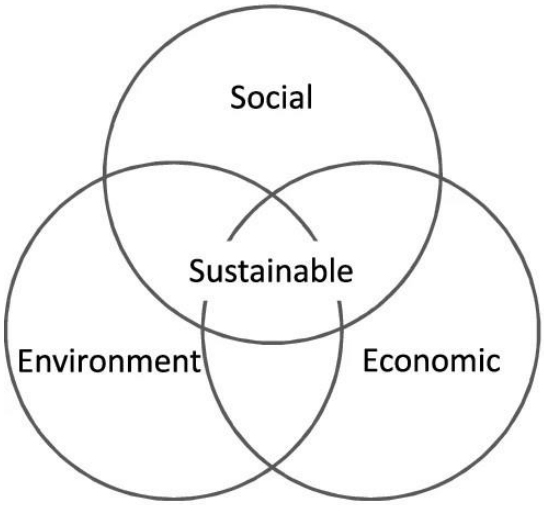
aims to identify such entrepreneurs and understand the motivations behind their desire to incorporate sustainable practices into their businesses.

Like sustainability, sustainable entrepreneurship is also categorized into three dimensions: economic, social and environmental. Sustainable entrepreneurship requires that firms should find a balance of economic, social and environmental dimensions within their corporate performance (Chang et al., 2017; Elkington, 1998).

Economic - Every business needs to be financially profitable for it to be called successful. Sustainable entrepreneurship requires that business decisions along with business profitability should take into account the overall economic impact as well (Anand & Sen, 2000). This does not mean that the business should suffer losses in pursuing its desire to become sustainable. Sustainable businesses strive to find a balance between their financial aspirations and the economic impact of their business and its practices (Easterly, 2006).

Social - Social sustainability focuses on the ability of any business to be socially responsible both externally as well as internally (Praszkier & Nowak, 2011). Businesses have a profound social impact on society. Being externally responsible can mean that the business owners are diligent in paying the taxes, being mindful of the rules and regulations of the country where the business is operational (Wheeler et al., 2005). Meanwhile, being internally socially responsible means that the business provides a healthy and safe work environment, and also provides equal opportunities irrespective of race or gender (Martin & Osberg, 2007).

Environmental - Being environmentally sustainable means that the business and its operations minimize negatively impacting the environment for future generations (WCED, 1987). Every resource used for the business impacts the environment in some way, either positive or negative. Environmental sustainability demands that businesses make resource utilization decisions that have either positive or the least negative impact on the environment (Cohen & Winn, 2007; Dean & McMullen, 2007). Most businesses nowadays are trying to reduce their carbon dioxide emissions in an effort to be more environmentally sustainable.



2.4.1 Ecopreneurship

Ecopreneurship refers to a business that seeks to transform a sector of the economy towards sustainability with a green design, with green processes, and with a lifelong commitment to sustainability (Isaak, 2002). Entrepreneurs who start a for-profit business but within sustainability, and contribute towards sustainable development through their business by offering green products and services are called ecopreneurs (Kirkwood & Walton, 2010; Walley & Taylor, 2002). Ecopreneurship promotes eco-friendly products and services aim to change the market trends by offering sustainable and environment friendly solutions for existing needs (Pastakia, 1998). Linnanen (2002) argues that ecopreneurs are highly motivated individuals who strive to make a change in the world by improving the quality of life while making profits through their businesses. Our thesis will attempt to explore the motivations of such ecopreneurs. Cohen & Winn (2007) posit that ecopreneurs are an important agent towards the sustainable development transition. Ecopreneurs offer business solutions which directly contribute towards the economic, social and environmental sustainability (Schaltegger & Wagner, 2010). Over the years many terms have been used for environment friendly entrepreneurship. The terms that integrate this aspect of entrepreneurship are green entrepreneurship (Berle, 1991), green–green businesses (Isaak, 1997), Enviropreneurship (Menon & Menon, 1997), eco-entrepreneurship (Randjelovic et al., 2003) and environmental entrepreneurship (de Bruin & Lewis, 2005;

Schaltegger, 2005). For this thesis, we will use the term Ecopreneurship as a synonym to all these.

2.5 Motivations

Sustainable entrepreneurship objectives go beyond the scope of traditional entrepreneurship (Vuorio et al, 2018). Sustainable entrepreneurs are key to sustainable development since they strive to strike a balance between economic growth, protecting the environment, and positively affecting society (Filser et al, 2019). For a long time, entrepreneurial motivations were limited to money generation and business growth only (Baumol, 1968; Schumpeter, 1934 cited in Nhemachena & Murimbika, 2018). But with the ever-growing focus towards sustainable development and sustainable entrepreneurship, it is essential to understand the motivations of sustainable entrepreneurs. Nhemachena & Murimbika (2018) argue that sustainable entrepreneurial motivation is based on satisfaction from achieving the desired social and environmental goals. However, we think that this is a very limited perspective and further research is needed to understand the motivations behind sustainable entrepreneurial behavior.

Through literature, we have established that there are two types of motivations for sustainable entrepreneurship: intrinsic and extrinsic (Frey et al, 2001; Nhemachena et al., 2018). Intrinsic motivations refer to the internal satisfaction that individuals or business owners get from achieving their social, economic and environmental goals. Extrinsic motivations encompass the external factors that influence entrepreneurs to incorporate certain practices into their businesses (Carsrud & Brännback, 2011; Cassar, 2007; Kuratko, Hornsby, & Naffziger, 1997). This thesis will focus on identifying the underlying intrinsic and extrinsic motivations of women entrepreneurs towards sustainability.

2.6 Women In Sustainable Entrepreneurship

Studies suggest that there are considerable gaps within entrepreneurship when considering gender. Researchers have argued that women have to face more challenges, as compared to men, when stepping into the world of entrepreneurship (Minniti et al., 2003; OECD, 2012; Sarfaraz et al., 2011). Starting and running a new venture is difficult and requires a lot of demanding work, resources and patience (Eckhardt et al., 2003). Yet it is observed that when women enter the field

of entrepreneurship, they have to face an increased intensity in the obstacles to starting and running a business (Minniti et al., 2003, Sarfaraz et al., 2011). However, according to Hechavarria et al,. (2012), women entrepreneurs are more inclined towards adopting sustainable business practices than their male counterparts. As highlighted by Hechavarria et al. (2012) in their study, that women are more concerned with the social and environmental impact of their business decisions and hence contribute towards a more sustainable business environment. Male entrepreneurs are more inclined towards 'traditional' entrepreneurship where profit maximization is the main objective of the business (Outsios et al., 2017; Dickel et al., 2021). Women entrepreneurs' inclination towards sustainability can be attributed to women being more predisposed towards socially and environmentally responsible entrepreneurial practices (Dickel et al., 2021). Although it is a relatively new area of interest, so far it has been established through research that women entrepreneurs are more sustainability conscious than male entrepreneurs (Barrachina et al., 2021; Bawakyillenuo et al., 2021; Dickel et al., 2021; Hechavarria et al., 2012; Outsios et al., 2017). Some scholars also argue that organizations where women are in leadership and decision-making positions tend to be more sustainability oriented than organizations or firms where leadership and decision-making lies with men (Criado-Gomis, Iniesta-Bonillo, Cervera-Taulet, Ribeiro-Soriano, 2020). Studies have highlighted how women entrepreneurs have a higher tendency to be environmentally sensitive in business practices (Bawakyillenuo & Agbelie, 2021) than male entrepreneurs. In 1996, Davidson and Freudenberg, presented that women have stronger attitudes and behaviors towards the environment. Women are more eager to participate in 'green' initiatives than men (Braun, 2010). We aim to explore this gap in research and identify how and why women entrepreneurs are more sustainability conscious when it comes to incorporating sustainable practices into their business.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Philosophy

Ontology is the research philosophy on the nature of reality and understanding what reality is (Bell et al., 2019). Therefore, this thesis takes a social constructionist ontology, where reality is seen as something that people are in the process of constructing themselves and individuals create the

social world instead of it being something beyond them (Bell et al., 2019). Further, social constructionist ontology wants to understand how groups of people end up sharing perspectives and seeks to understand how things are interpreted by those groups (Patton, 2015). Since this thesis is focusing on women and their entrepreneurial sustainability implementation and motivation, it is understood that each woman has their own perspective. However, the aim is to understand a common perspective on their sustainability implementations and motivations as a group. Through interviewing social actors, the social constructionist ontology aims to understand the social actor's point of view (Bell et al., 2019). Additionally, social constructionists want to understand how an individual's own experiences and background can affect what one understands and how one acts in the world (Patton, 2015). In this case, the social actors would be the women entrepreneurs and by interviewing the group of women the goal would be to gain an understanding of their perspectives on entrepreneurial sustainability implementation and motivations. Followed by also understanding how their individual experiences or background affects the women entrepreneurs' perspectives.

Viewed from an epistemology perspective, this thesis had an interpretivist epistemological orientation. According to Bell et al. (2019), interpretivism epistemology is interlinked with social constructivist ontology and underlines the importance of the meaning behind an individual's perspective, behavior, and knowledge. They further explain that the interpretivism aim is to see things through the eyes of one's research participants. The participants in this thesis would be women entrepreneurs. As a result of the participants who were being interviewed in the study being individuals, they come with different entrepreneurial experiences and points of view that the thesis aims to see. As highlighted by Bell et al., (2019), “interpretivism is also concerned with the ‘how’ and the ‘why’ of social action, including the processes whereby things happen” (p.31). Due to this thesis's research question being ‘How do women entrepreneurs incorporate sustainable business practices, and why are they motivated to do so?’, it aims to study both ‘how’ and ‘why’ of women's entrepreneurial sustainability. Furthermore, an interpretivist epistemology introduces a possibility to understand the process behind the social action of women entrepreneurs being more inclined towards implementing sustainable business practices.

3.2 Research Approach

When it comes to approaches within qualitative studies, this thesis applied a systematic methodology for inductive research (Gehman et al., 2018). Inductive research is when you attempt to research an area that is rather unknown (Rivas, 2017). Since the previous studies we found on women's entrepreneurial inclination towards sustainability have been quantitative and lacking in explaining 'how' and 'why' this phenomenon occurs, the qualitative research on this area is unknown to us. Furthermore, Patton (2002) describes how inductive research builds general patterns from open-ended qualitative data and thus understands patterns in the investigated phenomena. Therefore, by collecting relevant qualitative data from women on their entrepreneurial sustainability through their methods and motivations, we should be able to shape a new understanding of the phenomena. Rivas (2017) explains that the inductive approach to research is called inductive since one uses data to induce concepts and theories. However, the researcher later emphasizes how important it is that the induced concepts have to be accurate. Therefore, it is important for us to have transparency regarding our research procedures and how the findings, concepts, and theories (Bell et al., 2019) regarding women entrepreneurs' inclination towards sustainability were arrived at.

Similarly, with a continuation of approaches within qualitative research, this thesis took the Gioia approach (Gehman et al., 2018). The Gioia approach relies on the notion of knowledgeable actors who are actively constructing their perspective of reality, and on knowledgeable researchers who then have the ability to build patterns from the processes of their construction (Gioia et al., 2013). In other words, for this thesis, this approach relies on the women entrepreneurs to have a perspective on entrepreneurial sustainability and for us to be able to construct patterns from what the women share with us. This possibly highlights the importance of sampling women entrepreneurs who can share their perspectives and for us to be able to analyze and sort the data into understandable concepts. The main idea of the Gioia approach is to have a grounded theory where "theory is a statement of concepts and their interrelationships that shows how and/or why a phenomenon occurs" (Corley & Gioia, 2011, p. 12). Due to this thesis having a 'how' and 'why' as its research question and main investigative goal then accordingly Gioia was utilized during this thesis. Additionally, a theory is also supposed to present an explanation at a more generalized level through case studies (Gioia et al., 2013). Due to us wanting to use a single case study design to

provide a generalized explanation of how and why women entrepreneurs are more inclined toward sustainable business practices, it further confirmed why the Gioia approach was a suitable approach.

3.3 Research design

According to Easterby-Smith et al. (2015), selecting one's research design refers to organizing research activity and the collection of data, in the way that is most likely to achieve the research aims. For this reason, we decided to follow one of Bell et al. (2019) research designs which is the case study design. Conducting a case study entails the detailed and intensive analysis of a single case which includes a person (Bell et al., 2019; Gustafsson, 2017). However, Bell et al. (2019) clarify through an example how a single case study of a person can be i.e the study of women managers, where each woman constitutes a separate case. In other words, a single case study includes an intensive study of a group of people to get a deeper understanding of a subject (Gustafsson, 2017). Therefore, since this thesis focused on women entrepreneurs they would be our case study. Furthermore, for this thesis, the women entrepreneurs are the group of people, and their entrepreneurial sustainability implementations and motivations are the subjects we are investigating.

It is highlighted by Bell et al. (2019) "that is certainly true that exponents of the case study design often favor qualitative methods, such as participant observation and unstructured interviewing because these methods are viewed as particularly helpful in the generation of an intensive, detailed examination of a case" (p. 63). Therefore, this thesis choosing qualitative research design with semi-structured interviews was an optimal choice for an intensive examination of the women entrepreneurs and their implementation and motivation of sustainable business practices. Additionally, this thesis is conducting an inductive research approach which similarly aligns with a qualitative single case study design being inductive as well (Bell et al., 2019). Accordingly, through an inductive and qualitative single case study, the following step to analyze the data would be through Gioia's approach, as previously explained.

In short, by conducting a single case study on women entrepreneurs, the thesis was able to intensely analyze the qualitative data from the conducted semi-structured interviews. Thus, through this

research design, the aim of the study, which is to get deeper knowledge surrounding the subject of women entrepreneurs' implementation and the motivations behind their sustainable business practices would be reached.

3.4 Data Collection

3.4.1 Sampling Process

In order to execute qualitative research through a single case study on women entrepreneurs specifically, the study took on a purposeful sampling design. According to Patton (2015) purposeful sampling is selecting information-rich cases, which are relevant to the study, thus leading to in-depth understanding rather than empirical generalizations that random sampling would result in. Therefore, the design of the study is based on a smaller, purposefully selected sample of women entrepreneurs. Studying information-rich cases yields rich, contextually sensitive findings to the phenomenon studied (Patton, 2015). In this thesis, the phenomena being explored was women's entrepreneurial sustainability implementation and motivation. Thus, based on Patton's (2015) research, within this thesis, which would mean the purposeful sampling of women entrepreneurs would therefore yield greater information to be analyzed and learned from. However, it is an internationally based study and women entrepreneurs from all over the world were welcome to be interviewees. The inclusivity criteria for being included in the sample is to be a woman who is part of founding an entrepreneurial business which today is an SME. Additionally, the women entrepreneur must have identifiable sustainable practices. Before having the interview, we made sure to present our thesis topic and explain what we define an entrepreneur to be and also explained sustainable entrepreneurship and the meaning of its three categories. That allowed the interviewees to understand if they fit what we were studying or not, before the interview took place. The explanation of our study and the definitions we used can be found in Appendix 1: Interview guide.

To find interviewees who fit the project's criteria, we recruited them from our own personal social networks, such as LinkedIn, Facebook, Instagram, and Snapchat. Also, people who knew of women entrepreneurs recommended us to the women, enabling us to approach them with a referral. We applied snowball sampling at the end of every interview, where interviewees proposed

potential participants who shared the experience or characteristics for our research (Bell et al., 2019). In our case, the women were asked if they knew any other women entrepreneurs that we might be able to interview. We asked the interviewees if their references could be used when contacting potential interviewees in order to increase credibility. The goal was to get between ten to twelve interviewees, and we got eleven interviewees in total.

The initial idea was to include all the women entrepreneurs' names and businesses, especially after all of the women gave their consent to be included in the thesis with their name and business name. Our ongoing discussion, however, was whether or not to make the women entrepreneurs anonymous. This thesis examines and considers the economic, social, and environmental sustainability practices and motivations of women entrepreneurs. Considering the possibility that the women may have communicated something that could potentially harm them or their business, it did not feel ethical to reveal their identities. As highlighted by Tracy (2019), "further, even if an action is permissible from the point of view of formal standards, if something feels unethical, then it probably is unethical" (p.285). Thus, we decided to do what made us feel comfortable about discussing our findings while causing no harm to the women. In this manner, the data will be openly presented, and the women will be protected by making them non-identifiable based on what they share with us. Moreover, since our aim was to discover the methods and motivations of women entrepreneurs in regard to their sustainable business practices, knowing their identities was not considered necessary in the process of answering our research question. Therefore, anonymizing the women was the best approach. To gain a general perspective of the women entrepreneurs by viewing their alias, SME industry, SME role, length and dates of the interviews, it is listed in Table 1 below.

3.4.2 Primary Data

The study used a qualitative research method with reference to the research question and the main purpose of the study. Qualitative research methods include interviews (Bell et al., 2019; Fisher, 2007) and the thesis conducted semi-structured open-ended interviews with women entrepreneurs who opened SMEs. Qualitative methods show individual differences which facilitates attention to the importance of different outcomes while simultaneously identifying common patterns of outcomes (Patton, 2015). As explained by Al-Busaidi (2008), a qualitative method is superior in

researching unmeasurable aspects including experience, motivations, attitudes, knowledge, and beliefs of individuals. Additionally, Fisher (2007) underlines how semi-structured interviews allow the researcher to have control of the discussion but simultaneously allow the interviewee to talk freely in different parts of the interview. In concert with this, we conducted research on the entrepreneurs' own implementations and the motivations behind them, allowing them to express themselves freely, but also guiding them as appropriate. Therefore, we were able to gain a better understanding of their entrepreneurial decisions, which in turn included their personal experiences, knowledge, insights, and entrepreneurial choices. Furthermore, interviews allow the participants to express sensitive matters with greater ease (Al-Busaidi, 2008). Discussing sustainable business practices and implementation, or the absence thereof, as well as the motivations for their existence, might be a sensitive subject. Therefore, using the method of interviews which most easily allows the participants to discuss more freely (Al-Busaidi, 2008) was an optimal option.

As mentioned, we opted for semi-structured open-ended interview questions where the interviewees were allowed the opportunity to add insight, detail, and meaning to the experience at a vastly immensely personal level (Patton, 2015). As a result, with the participants having individual knowledge to share, the type of interview questions will determine how much information is gained and qualitative interviews will give them the most possibility to give their individual perspectives. Our interview questions were based on our research question and aimed to see ‘how’ the entrepreneurs applied their sustainable practices and then investigate' why'. There were twenty-one interview questions that were divided into six sections: preliminary, introduction, method, motivation, behavior, and concluding questions. The complete interview questions and their structure can be found in Appendix 1 Interview Guide. According to Easterby-Smith et al. (2015) “laddering up will help the respondent move from statements of fact or descriptive accounts about the questions posed upwards so as to begin to reveal the individual’s value base” and “laddering down is where the researcher seeks to obtain illustrations and examples or occurrences of events.” (p.142). Hence, with us conducting semi-structured interviews, different measures of laddering up and down were done throughout the interviews to get developed answers from the women.

The first questions were asked before the interview started and therefore categorized as the preliminary questions. Fisher (2007) underlines how you must ask for consent before recording an interview, thus the first question was regarding consent to record the interview. Participants of a study have the right to confidentiality (Tracy, 2019). Therefore, the following preliminary questions asked if the women wanted to be anonymous. In the introduction section, the interviewees were asked to explain their entrepreneurial business today and their role in it as well as their career background and their prior experience. By understanding their current SME and their entrepreneurial experience it was possible to know which specific type of follow-up questions to ask through laddering up or down.

The following questions were regarding methods where the interviewees were asked to describe which sustainable business practices they identify in their business, how long those practices have been implemented, and examples of them. The women were also asked to essentially explain their motivations behind these practices, followed by describing a typical workday and if they identify any sustainability routines. Firstly, this was to measure the reliability of the data collected since if they did not identify any areas of sustainable initiatives, they were not the right person to interview. Secondly, these questions were stated to grasp an idea of which business practices they self-identified as sustainable and then try to identify particular initiatives they have implemented to be more sustainable. The goal was also to gain an understanding of the origin of the idea and decisions about going for those particle practices as well as their typical workday daily impact on sustainability. By asking for examples, we tried to later go into details of particular actions, since we hoped the details would present why and how the entrepreneurs implement sustainable practices.

The next section of interview questions was about motivation and referred to the ‘why’ of our research question. These questions were about their initial motivation to start their business and investigate their personal opinions about sustainability in general and within business initiatives. Similarly, the questions in the behavior section also investigated the ‘why’ aspect. It entailed questions regarding if the women's values and responsibility were reflected in their business and sustainability initiative decisions. Additionally, the questions were about what they wish they could improve within their business sustainability and their opinion if a business did not make

sustainable efforts. Thus, to investigate the women entrepreneurs' opinions, values, and control and involvement over the sustainability decisions. Since once we identified particular initiatives, we attempted to understand the whole process by which these initiatives take place, and it starts with the initiative being implemented. Furthermore, the women entrepreneurs expected results from other businesses, to know if they set themselves to the same standard, and if not, why that is. The concluding questions were to give the women entrepreneurs an opportunity to clarify anything if they wanted and for us to implement snowball sampling. The interview questions guide that we used for each interview as well as an introduction to explaining this research study can be found in Appendix 1: Interview Guide.

We used video meetings to conduct the interviews because of the pandemic and also because it was a global study, and the women entrepreneurs were in different locations. Telephone interviews could have been utilized however, they only last 20-25 minutes, and personal interviews last a lot longer than that (Bell et al., 2019). Consequently, we found a happy medium between telephone interviews and face-to-face interviews and conducted eleven video interviews that lasted 31 to 50 minutes. Bell et al. (2019) state that video meetings are more flexible than face-to-face interviews because last-minute scheduling changes can easily be accommodated. Moreover, the researchers point out how a remote interview significantly reduces time and costs as traveling for the interview is eliminated, which is of particular benefit to geographically dispersed scenarios. Furthermore, Bell et al. (2019) outline how online video meetings can encourage some people to agree to be interviewed when they may otherwise refuse. Due to the many benefits of online video meetings, this thesis relied primarily on qualitative data collected via semi-structured video call interviews conducted over Zoom meetings. All interviewees gave consent to record the interviews, therefore it resulted in 421 minutes of recorded data which were later transcribed and analyzed.

A study conducted by Bell et al. (2019) explains how having more than one observer increases reliability because members of the research team have to agree on what they see and hear. Therefore, we both participated in all interviews, but alternated between taking the lead role and playing the passive role. We conducted the interviews in the native language of the women entrepreneurs, so there were five instances when only one of us spoke the language and led the interviews. In interviewing participants whose first language is not the interviewer's, Seidman (2006) argues that the question is whether the language of both the interviewer and the participants

influences the interview's progress. The interview process had to run smoothly, and we hoped to gain valuable insight from the women entrepreneurs without language obstructing the interview process (Seidman, 2006)**.**

After each interview, by utilizing the recordings, the translation process began on the interviews that were not in English and the transcription process followed on all the interviews. The translation process and transcription process was done manually by us. If the transcription process includes translation by the interviewers who are fluent in the interviewees' native languages and perform their interviews in those languages, this can contribute to the complexity and challenges of translating (Davidson, 2009; Seidman, 2006). As quoted by Seidman (2006), "the issue of finding the right word in English or any other language to represent the full sense of the word the participants spoke in their native language is demanding and requires a great deal of care" (p.104). When translating the interviews into English, we took our time to choose the right words and phrases and consolidated each other.

Since most interviews qualitative data consists of verbatim quotations with sufficient context to be interpreted (Patton, 2015), we transcribed most interviews verbatim to ensure maximum material to extract quotes from. Although, transcription of interview recordings can be time-consuming and can lead to loss of enthusiasm in the research process, as Seidman (2006) explained. Moreover, the researcher explains that there is an alternative to transcribing an entire interview tape, where you listen to the tapes several times and pick out sections that seem important, and then transcribe just those. However, Seidman (2006) underlines that this method is labor-saving but not ideal since it imposes the researcher's frame of reference on the interview data one step too early. In contrast, we chose this option when transcribing some interviews, since the women entrepreneurs were sampled from our personal networks and people with whom we have relationships. Thus, the interview may have been derailed in sections pertaining to matters unrelated to the thesis. Because of that, we felt it would be counterproductive to invest hours in transcribing material that wouldn't help the research.

3.4.3 The interviewee's

Date of interview	**Alias**	**SME Industry**	**SME Role**	**Length of recorded interview**	**SME size (Employees)**
2022-03-04	Entrepreneur A	Fashion Industry	Co-Founder & CEO	40 minutes	49 employees
2022-03-10	Entrepreneur B	AI platform	Co-Founder & COO	35 minutes	10 employees
2022-03-28	Entrepreneur C	Fashion Industry	Founder & CEO	40 minutes	1 employee
2022-04-01	Entrepreneur D	Fashion Industry	Founder & CEO	35 minutes	10-20 employees
2022-04-02	Entrepreneur E	E-commerce	Founder & CEO	50 minutes	30-40 employees
2022-04-02	Entrepreneur F	Handmade goods	Founder & CEO	31 minutes	1 employee
2022-04-03	Entrepreneur G	E-cigarettes	Founder & CEO	38 minutes	100 employees
2022-04-03	Entrepreneur H	Consulting Agency	Founder & CEO	43minutes	12 employees
2022-04-10	Entrepreneur I	Yoga Business and Healing business	Co-founder & Trainer and Healer	46 minutes	1-10 employees
2022-04-12	Entrepreneur J	Handmade jewelry	Co-Founder & CEO	31 minutes	2 employees
2022-04-12	Entrepreneur K	Physical rehabilitation and wellness center	Founder & CEO	32 minutes	1 employee

Table 1: Interviewees

The interviewees for this thesis were eleven women entrepreneurs, all of whom were involved in the founding of their respective companies. Today all of the women are CEOs, except for Entrepreneur B who is a COO and Entrepreneur I who is an Trainer and Healer. instructor.
Additionally, all of the interviewees self-identified as women, and they all agreed to participate as interviewees in the study.

The first interview was with Entrepreneur A and she co-founded a locally produced fashion brand. She has been involved in entrepreneurship for ten years and had previous experience with opening her own business previously, which she then sold. Her current fashion brand was launched in 2018, with the goal to create versatile and long-lasting clothing and today has forty-nine employees.

The second interview was with Entrepreneur B and she co-founded an AI platform to facilitate job and employee searching. Her AI platform business launched in 2020 and was her first entrepreneurial experience. Today, it has ten employees.

The third interview was with Entrepreneur C and she is the founder and CEO of a handmade crochet online fashion boutique. It was a business that was initially just a hobby, but after getting laid off due to Covid-19 staff cuts, she decided to sell her creations and start her business. She has been running the business for a year and is the only employee.

The fourth interviewee was Entrepreneur D and she is the founder and CEO of a women's fashion brand, where she designs, manufactures and markets the clothing for women. She grew up with fashion being a part of her life due to her mother also being a designer. Today, she has been an entrepreneur for twenty-five years. She has two of her women's clothing stores in two different cities with a range of ten to twenty employees.

The fifth interview was with Entrepreneur E who is the founder and CEO of an online platform for crafters to register themselves and in return be able to become her vendors of their products. Additionally, Entrepreneur E. provides the crafters with advice on how to make their products more sustainable. Since 2020, Entrepreneur E has been involved with entrepreneurship and her

own business which has 30-40 employees, and with the goal to keep promoting a certain level of ecopreneurship.

The sixth interview was with Entrepreneur F who founded an online boutique where she sells handmade jewelry and candles, where her specialty is food-scented candles. While she is running her online business, she simultaneously is a full-time university student with a major in Textile Designing. She has been involved in entrepreneurship for two years and is the only employee within her business.

The seventh interviewee was Entrepreneur G who is the founder and CEO of an international business that sells e-cigarettes. Entrepreneur H's business has both a B2C and B2B business model, which causes her business operations to be both online and through different franchises. She has a Ph.D. in Marketing and has been involved in entrepreneurship for five to six years. Her e-cigarette business has 100 employees.

The eighth interview conducted was with Entrepreneur H who is the founder of a consultant agency that supports women entrepreneurs in their growth journey. The business was established one and a half years ago and specifically, focused on enabling women-led entrepreneurs in their business growth by providing them tailored assistance and guidance according to their business needs. Entrepreneur H is a business graduate who runs her SME as CEO with twelve employees in her business.

The ninth interview was with Entrepreneur I who runs a yoga business where the focus is on training yoga teachers. She also co-founded a healing business with her sister. She has been involved in the entrepreneurial yoga business for four years and her healing business for two years. Both SMEs have a range of between one to ten employees. Entrepreneur I graduated with a bachelor's in Early Childhood Studies but found purpose in her two businesses instead.

The tenth interview was with Entrepreneur J who is the co-founder and CEO of a handmade jewelry brand. This business is Entrepreneur J's first entrepreneurial experience and it launched

two years ago. She is a Graphic Design and Web Development graduate who started the business with her mother and thus there are two employees within the business.

The eleventh interview was with Entrepreneur K who founded her own physical rehabilitation and wellness center in 2008. She has been a physiotherapist for the past twenty years and has always been around that profession since her mother was a physiotherapist as well. She owns and runs the physical rehabilitation and wellness center where she is the only employee.

3.4.4 Secondary Data

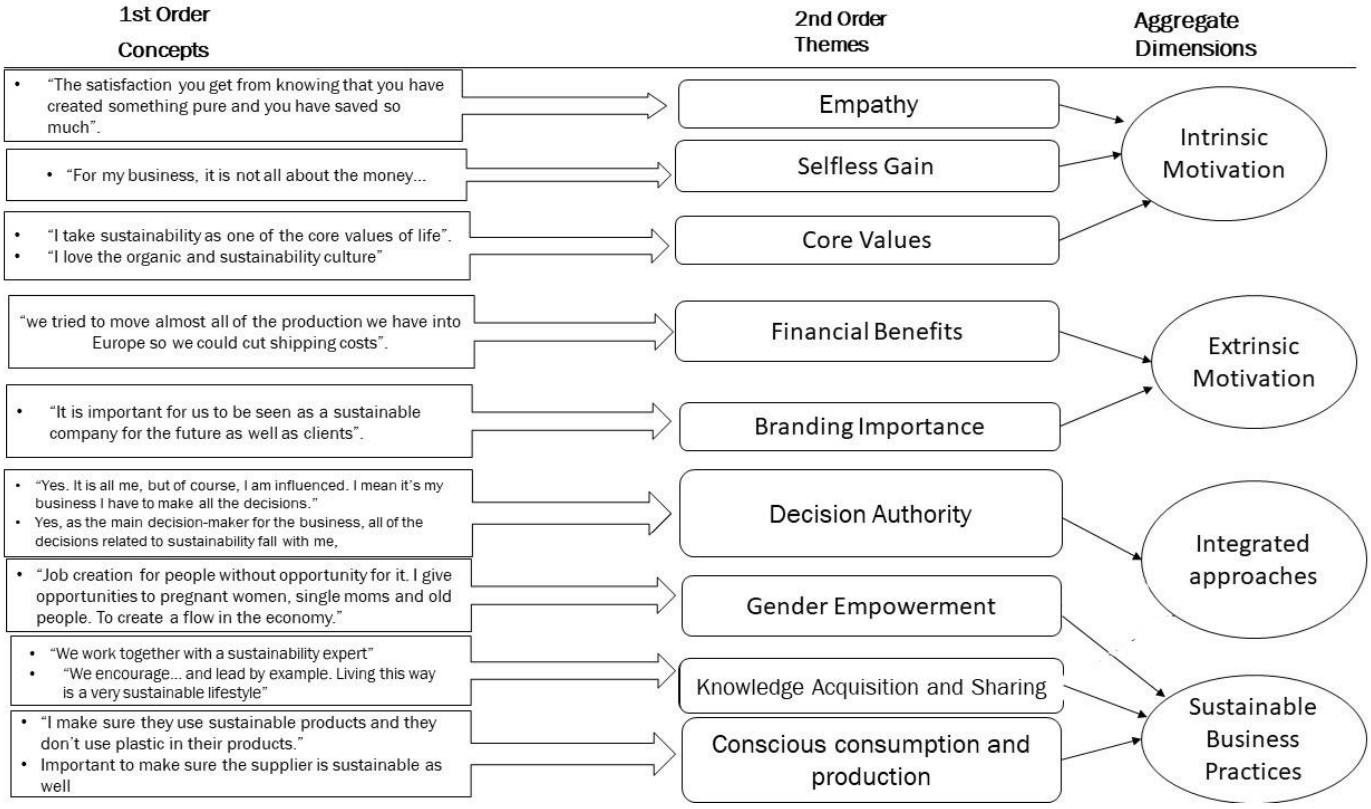
According to Easterby-Smith et al., (2015) "secondary textual data are written sources of information produced for a purpose other than research but with some relevance to a given research project" and includes "…archival data, advertisements, newspaper articles, books and blogs." (p.130). Furthermore, the researchers explain that secondary textual data can provide information related to a specific business and used to complement primary data through interviews. Therefore, secondary textual data collection was made in relevant areas about the participants and their businesses. It is highlighted by researchers how the internet is a useful tool when it comes to sourcing information (Easterby-Smith et al., 2015; Fisher, 2007). Accordingly, all the complimentary data was collected from the internet. Subsequently, the areas seen as relevant and complimentary included the background information of the entrepreneurs and their SMEs through data from their websites, blogs, Instagram pages, LinkedIn pages, Facebook pages as well as published news articles regarding the entrepreneurs and their SMEs' business activities. Although secondary textual data is not collected by us, therefore source criticism is essential to ensure that secondary textual data is of greater validity and quality (Easterby-Smith et al., 2015). Additionally, our use of secondary data relates to data triangulation, which strengthens a study by utilizing a variety of data sources (Patton, 2015).

As mentioned, the semi-structured interviews were conducted to provide us with broad and varied data that could be utilized in order to answer our research question (Easterby-Smith et al., 2015). Likewise, the collected complementary secondary textual data was utilized during the interviews with the intention to enrich the interviews by asking questions relating to the relevant information found. The important secondary textual data collected contributed to the ability to discuss the

entrepreneur's businesses and individual situations regarding practices, approaches and motivations.

3.5 Data analysis

As discussed, this thesis executed an inductive empirical study using Gioia's methodology. This includes using Gioia's three-step process approach to analyze data. Figure 1 is the thesis data structure which presents an overview of our analysis process after following Gioia et al. (2013) systematic method of the "1st-order" concept, "2nd order" themes, and aggregate dimensions.



Graph 1: Thesis Data Structure

In the early stages of research analysis, the Gioia method analysis process starts with an overall open-coding through all the qualitative data and what the interviewees said to further ensure qualitative rigor (Gioia, 2021). Due to us exploring a rather unknown phenomenon which is women's entrepreneurial sustainability implementation and motivation, it was ideal for us to use an analysis method that examines the entirety of the data collected and conducts a thorough analysis of the data (Gioia, 2021). Therefore, a manual separate open-coding on the transcribed

material from the interviews was completed. We opened the transcribed interviews, one by one, and used different colors and highlighted sentences and words that were considered descriptive or explanatory to us and ended up with seventy-six codes. As explained by Gioia (2021), in the first-order analysis, there is little attempt to distill categories, resulting in the number of concepts being between fifty to one hundred if you had ten interviews.

Following the open coding was creating the "1st-order" concepts (Gioia et al., 2013). The "1st-order" concepts involve an analysis using informant-centric codes and terms (Gioia et al., 2013). Therefore, we had intense discussions regarding which "1st-order" concepts we could link with the various seventy-six codes. The open-coding codes were organized in primarily a Word file and then in an Excel file, which is found in Appendix 2, to gain a more extensive overview of some codes we found and present in the Findings, compared to the ones listed in Figure 1. Eventually, we utilized axial coding and investigated for similarities and differences among the myriad of categories (Gioia, 2021) as well as arranging the codes systematically and using the right colors to keep track of them led to a reduction in key concepts. We identified the relevant 1st-order concepts from the open coding. Following that we kept referring back to our "1st-order" concepts to extend into the creation of our "2nd-order" themes, which involves using researcher-centric themes (Gioia et al., 2013)**.** By analyzing the "1st-order" concepts and attempting to describe them in theoretical terms (Gioia, 2021), the patterns and themes started to take shape. The "2nd-order" themes found were 'Empathy', 'Selfless Gain', 'Core Values', 'Financial Benefits', 'Branding Importance', 'Decision Authority', 'Knowledge Acquisition and Sharing', 'Gender Empowerment', and 'Conscious Consumption and Production'. Those became our nine "2nd- order" themes and they reflected different motivations, approaches, and sustainable business practices.

Moving on, when it came to identifying the aggregate dimensions, we concluded dynamic relationships in the "2nd-order" themes and converted multiple themes into a dynamic grounded theory model (Gioia et al., 2013) which is found in Graph 2 the Findings section below. Hence, there were four aggregate dimensions we identified from the "2nd-order" themes. Firstly, was the aggregate dimension of 'Intrinsic Motivation' which stemmed from the themes 'Empathy', 'Selfless Gain' and lastly' Core Values'. They all relate to the women entrepreneurs' internal and personal motivation for sustainability and sustainable business practices. The second aggregate

dimension we identified was ‘Extrinsic Motivation’ from the themes ‘Financial Benefits’ and ‘Branding Importance’. These were motivations we concluded to be driven out of external motivations and drivers. The third aggregate dimension we identified was ‘Integrated Approaches’ that are rooted in ‘Decision Authority’. This aggregate dimension was the implementation and approach used by the women entrepreneurs to enforce their sustainable business practices. Lastly was the fourth aggregate dimension which was ‘Sustainable Business Practices’, where the women entrepreneurs showcased which specific sustainable practices they had in their business through the themes of ‘Knowledge Acquisition & Sharing’, ‘Gender Empowerment’, and ‘Conscious Consumption and Production’.

The Findings section includes our rationale for each empirical evidence in the analysis. Furthermore, the Discussion section will highlight how we applied our empirical evidence in correlation with what we stated in our Literature Review’s relevant literature to gain answers.

3.6 Data quality

When it comes to creating quality within qualitative research it comes down to the approach used (Easterby-Smith et al., 2015). Hence, Tracy's (2010) ‘Eight “Big-Tent” Criteria’ was created out of an interpretivist research approach and inductive analysis perspective, which aligns with the previously mentioned research methodology of this thesis. Tracy (2010) argues how applying traditional criteria like generalizability, objectivity, and reliability to qualitative research is illegitimate. As a result, Tracy's (2010)’s criteria were utilized to explain our methods and assure certain quality throughout the thesis process. The ‘Eight “Big-Tent” Criteria’ provide a common language of excellence for qualitative research as well as a useful pedagogical compass (Tracy's, 2010). The criteria are a worthy topic, rich rigor, sincerity, credibility, resonance, significant contribution, ethics, and meaningful coherence.

3.6.1 Worthy Topic

Firstly, Tracy (2010) describes a worthy topic can stem from personal curiosity and focuses on both the topic relevance and interest. When we were exploring potential master thesis topics, it became clear that we should choose something that resonates with us. Since we are both women who are studying the strategic entrepreneurship master's program and have a common interest in

sustainability, we began a detailed and broad search for topics related to all these three points. After a while, we saw that several studies claimed that women entrepreneurs are more inclined towards being sustainable, yet no previous studies found by us investigate how and why that is. Thus, creating further interest in women's entrepreneurial sustainability approach and motivation. We deemed the topic to be worthy of exploring because of the lack of existing data and relevancy in regard to sustainability and how it could be seen as prevalent in society today.

3.6.2 Rich rigor

The rigor refers to the care and effort taken to ensure that the research is carried out appropriately and asks if we have done our due diligence (Tracy, 2019). As a result, rigor can be determined by the specific practices of data collection, such as interviewing, transcribing, and analyzing the data (Tracy, 2010). Both of us were in agreement that qualitative interviews were the best way to explore the sustainability motivations of women entrepreneurs. When researching for potential interviewees, we had selection criteria of their businesses being SMEs, which includes the possibility of their business only having one employee. If data is new or unique, a smaller sample size is still going to provide a valuable contribution (Tracy, 2010). Thus, we were collecting new data and were comfortable with the university thesis guidelines sample size of ten to twelve interviews contributing with value. Therefore, we proceeded with conversations on the appropriate sampling and data collection method. For instance, the method of either conducting multiple case studies of investigating four different women businesses and conducting 3 interviews within each business. However, it was ruled out since we noted how one of our selection criteria was SME size businesses, which could mean one employee. Therefore, potentially interviewing a maximum of four women, three consecutive times, and then doing a comparative study. We concluded that four women's perspectives might not provide the same broad insight as conducting a minimum of ten interviews with ten different women. Additionally, whilst completing the interviews we realized that each of the women's answers differed and saw huge potential for an interesting analysis of the transcribed data. As a result, we felt more confident in our decision of investing our time in several different entrepreneurs to gain a more generalizable perspective on the topic.

According to Tracy (2010), rigor is also based on the care and practice of data collection and chosen analysis procedures. That includes several areas. One of those is in terms of the interviews and interview process. To show rigor, we reached out to 53 different women entrepreneurs and tried to exceed the minimum amount of ten interviews. We decided to keep our selection criteria open when it came to which country the women entrepreneurs are from and where they base their businesses. Additionally, there was also no specification of the business branch either. Initially, this was due to the previous studies we found that stated how women entrepreneurs are prone to sustainable practices had all based their studies on different countries and business branches. However, Tracy (2010) also highlights how a broader sample is intended to elicit rich and meaningful information, as well as a broad variety of responses, which will aid in answering the research question appropriately. Since the aim of the study was to understand how and why women entrepreneurs apply sustainable practices within their businesses, the wider sample range seemed most appropriate in hopes of gaining a broader range of answers. After acquiring interviews with women entrepreneurs from various countries and who owned various business types, we completed eleven interviews. These eleven interviews were a happy medium amount from our initial goal range of ten to twelve interviewees.

As mentioned in 3.4.2 Primary Data the interview questions were divided into six sections and resulted in each interview lasting between 31 to 50 minutes. We knew that we needed enough time to manually transcribe and analyze the eleven interviews after collecting the data for a 39-day time period. As mentioned by Tracy (2010), there is no magic amount needed to study a field, the importance is if the data will substantiate meaningful claims. Since all interviews were conducted digitally and we had the interviewee's consent to record the interview, it summed up to 421 minutes of recorded data.

When it came to transcribing, we opted for manually transcribing each interview ourselves and doing it verbatim for most of the interviews. Initially, we attempted to use transcribing software but noticed how there was a potential risk of software error whenever certain words, expressions, or phrases were misspelled or completely missed. We decided to do it mostly verbatim since we wanted to be able to distinguish codes from all the material. Therefore, we delegated the interview recordings between each other and individually transcribed them alone. In the

interviews where both of us spoke the language, we applied a technique where the other person who did not transcribe that specific recording, would listen to the recorded interview and proof-check if the transcribing was correct.

A rigorous data analysis can be achieved by providing the reader with an explanation and transparency about the process of raw data being transformed and organized into the study (Tracy 2010). Explaining each step of the analysis process and describing how much material we started with up and how we analyzed until the findings we ended with, it creates further transparency along the analysis process altogether.

3.6.3 Sincerity

According to Tracy (2019), sincerity is shown through self-reflexivity where we share our goals, hopes, and mistakes, and through transparency by our openness to the life experiences of others, as well as a willingness to share aspects of our own experiences. Followed by discussing how these may have implicated areas of the thesis (Tracy, 2010; Tracy 2019). Throughout the thesis process, the goal was to create an understanding of women entrepreneurs as well as their approaches and motivation behind the sustainable practices they have in their business. That resulted in us curating questions for the interviews which at the beginning, could be seen as direct. We wanted to get answers as to how and why women would do certain sustainable practices but also be broad in the sense that any entrepreneurs could answer them. It led to the first interview becoming a session where we as authors had to further explain the topic and why we chose this research topic. The first interviewee did not feel the questions were specific enough for her business branch and expressed how she wanted something more niched. That created a moment of realization for us, that it is important that even if we want answers to our research question, the interviewee needs to feel important and valued enough to want to participate. Additionally, understood we must make it very clear to the interviewee that it is about women entrepreneurs as a case study, not specifically their business industry.

We showed transparency by further explaining this to the first interviewee and all others that followed. The ‘how’ and ‘why’ aspects of the women entrepreneurs' practices are important to know and most intriguing to us. This created an interview environment that allowed us to be

open to the women's individual experiences of sustainability both within their business but also externally. When asking the semi-structured interview questions, we allowed ourselves to utilize Easterby-Smith et al. (2015) approach of laddering, until we recognized responses that could be used as answers to our research question. Due to this, the interviews ranged in time, since some interviewees were able to answer our interview questions clearly and some were asked follow-up questions to further understand what they were saying.

For the data analysis, the key area when coding and its reliability is to keep it consistent (Bell et al., 2019). Therefore, when doing the open-coding the hope was to find areas that could be seen as expressions of motivations, descriptions of actions, methods, or anything related to our research topic in general. We were not sure what we were going to find when coding, since it was an inductive study, so we went in blank and coded anything that seemed of interest to us, then circled back and wrote down all the codes. As a result, we had a couple of unrelated codes that were essentially unrelated to our research question and therefore, decided to not include them in our grounded theory analysis. Perhaps that was a mistake since all data could be used somehow, however, we aimed to keep our research question as the main focus throughout. Instead, we mentioned the codes we found unrelated to our thesis in the further research section.

3.6.4 Credibility

The fourth criterion of quality in qualitative research is credibility which refers to the trustworthiness and expresses a reality that seems true (Tracy, 2010). To enhance the credibility of our thesis, we only selected interviewees who fit our selection criteria and we also provided an introductory description of each interviewee for further context. Furthermore, “the concept of triangulation emerged within realist paradigms that aimed to rid research of subjective bias.” and includes “...multiple types of data, researcher viewpoints…” (Tracy, 2010, p. 843). Triangulation was thus employed by there being two of us conducting this thesis instead of one. Furthermore, if multiple researchers converge on the same conclusion, then the conclusion becomes more credible (Tracy, 2010). To reduce bias and subjectivity, both of us were involved in the data collection-, transcribing-, and data analysis process of all the interview transcripts. Moreover, triangulation “...allows different facets of problems to be explored, increases scope, deepens understanding, and encourages consistent (re) interpretation” (Tracy, 2010, p.843). As a result, we agreed on all steps

of the thesis process and agreed to the same conclusions. In addition to that, we employed data triangulation to enrich the collected data by gathering data of our interviewees and their businesses companies from multiple reliable secondary textual data sources (e.g., the entrepreneur's business websites, LinkedIn pages, and news articles related to the women). As such, to achieve data triangulation, we complemented these secondary sources to strengthen our primary data collection and enrich the interviews with related follow-up questions.

3.6.5 Resonance

Tracy (2010) describes resonance as the research's ability to meaningfully affect an audience and includes naturalistic generalization. Namely, "when the readers make choices based on their intuitive understanding of the scene, rather than feeling as though the research report is instructing them what to do" (Tracy, 2010, p.845). Accordingly, the aim of the thesis has only been to present the answers to our research question from our perspective, but the reader is invited to draw their conclusions from our findings. As explained by Tracy (2010), the majority of qualitative researchers do not seek resonance because they desire to generalize across different cases, but instead because they want to generalize within them and place the cases within a larger frame. By the same token, our findings came from the generalization of our selected women entrepreneurs and implemented those generalizations to potentially fit the conclusions of women entrepreneurs on a wider scale.

3.6.6 Significant contribution

The sixth criterion is a significant contribution, which includes whether a study introduces visibility of what is inappropriately ignored and generates a sense of insight and deepened understanding (Tracy, 2010). However, the crucial first step is to familiarize with existing literature and research, and "second, it necessitates delving deeper into a particular issue, reading and learning as much as possible about that issue, finding its boundaries" (Tracy, 2019, p. 281). Consequently, an exploration of relevant literature and research on the thesis topic was completed and presented in our literature review. During the deep dive into women entrepreneurs and their inclination toward sustainability, there were limitations in the literature surrounding implementation and motivation behind them. Therefore, the significant contribution was through

conceptual development, where the study builds theory beyond the existing literature and offers new understandings (Tracy, 2019). To illustrate, this thesis aims to create a new theory regarding women entrepreneurs' business sustainability implementation and motivation.

3.6.7 Ethical research practice

Ethical research practices constitute a universal end goal of qualitative quality and are dictated as universally necessary (Tracy, 2010). “For instance, procedural ethics are encompassed by the Institutional Review Board (IRB), including mandates such as do no harm, avoid deception, negotiate informed consent, and ensure privacy and confidentiality” (Tracy, 2010, p.847). Therefore, the ethical consideration of this thesis was heavily important. As explained in 3.4.1 Sampling Process, we ultimately decided to anonymize the women entrepreneurs. We deemed sustainability and motivations behind it to be sensitive information and we wanted to openly discuss our findings. Therefore, if interviewees said something that could be seen as controversial regarding sustainability, we would want the liberty to include such statements, yet not create any harm. Thus, even though all interviewees agreed to have their names and businesses be stated in the thesis, we considered how the information they provided us could possibly harm them, their image, and their business livelihood. Therefore, to keep the women entrepreneurs safe from identification, we decided making the interviewees anonymous was the clear option.

“Procedural ethics require that participants understand the research, provide consent for their involvement, and know how to opt out.” (Tracy, 2019, p.284). Before each interview, we introduced why we were doing this thesis and what the main objective was with the thesis, as seen in Appendix 1. Moreover, when contacting the interviewee, we always underlined how it is a voluntary interview, where they have the option to participate or not, and always feel free to ask us questions if anything is unclear. That was to avoid deception and make sure the women knew what we would use the interview data for and that we were open to answering any questions they had. When it comes to ensuring privacy and confidentiality, it relates back to us making the decision to anonymize the women. It is important to consider how certain actors might be identified even if their name is removed as well as to secure the research documents (Tracy, 2019). Therefore,

we attempted at removing all non-necessary descriptive information about the women or their business, so they became unidentifiable. Additionally, all recorded interview material, transcripts, and compromising field notes were deleted after receiving our thesis grade.

Relational ethics refers to engagement with care, values mutual respect, dignity and compassion with participants and not trying to co-opt others just to get a quote on quote "great story" (Tracy, 2010). Therefore, due to us gaining access to the interviewees through our personal social networks, there was already underlying care and mutual respect between us, the interviewees and the people involved who referred us to the said interviewees. Furthermore, the women who agreed to partake in the thesis wanted to help with our thesis data collection and we wanted their help through participation. Similarly, feminist communitarianism, as it stresses promise-keeping, caring, relationships, collaboration, and connectedness between participants and researchers (Tracy, 2010). As a result, we kept a relationship and contact with all the women entrepreneurs as they offered to always answer any additional questions post-interview and we offered to send them the finished thesis. The goal was always to have a thesis we felt was worthy of presenting publicly since all women were discussed respectfully. Additionally, since the women decided to collaborate with us on this thesis, it was extremely important to thank the women for their help and keep the relationship going beyond the thesis as well.

3.6.8 Meaningful coherence

The final characteristic of qualitative data quality is meaningful coherence. As explained by Tracy, (2010) qualitative studies should "(a) achieve their stated purpose; (b) accomplish what they espouse to be about; (c) use methods and representation practices that partner well with espoused theories and paradigms; and (d) attentively interconnect literature reviewed with research foci, methods, and findings" (p. 848). Hence, for (a), the purpose of this thesis was to bridge a knowledge gap by investigating the potential how and why behind women's entrepreneurial sustainability. Us focusing the study on solely these two aspects of how and why and not diverting contributes to the thesis coherence. Additionally, for (b), we make it very clear throughout what we are investigating and why, so the reader can be clear on what the thesis is supposed to be about. In regard to (c), in the methodology, we explain our reasoning for all aspects and why we selected those philosophies, approaches, and designs, as well as provide an explanation of all our following

methods. Finally, with (d), throughout the thesis we made sure to reference our research philosophies and methods with credible sources found in our list of references. Furthermore, the discussion section contains an intricate dialogue where the combination of our findings with the pre-existing literature from our literature review occurs.

4. Findings

From an intense analysis of our raw data, our case study provided findings that are presented in our model below. Figure 2 presents our theory about the phenomena we investigated, which was women entrepreneurs' inclination toward sustainable business practices and contributed with the motivations and approaches behind it.

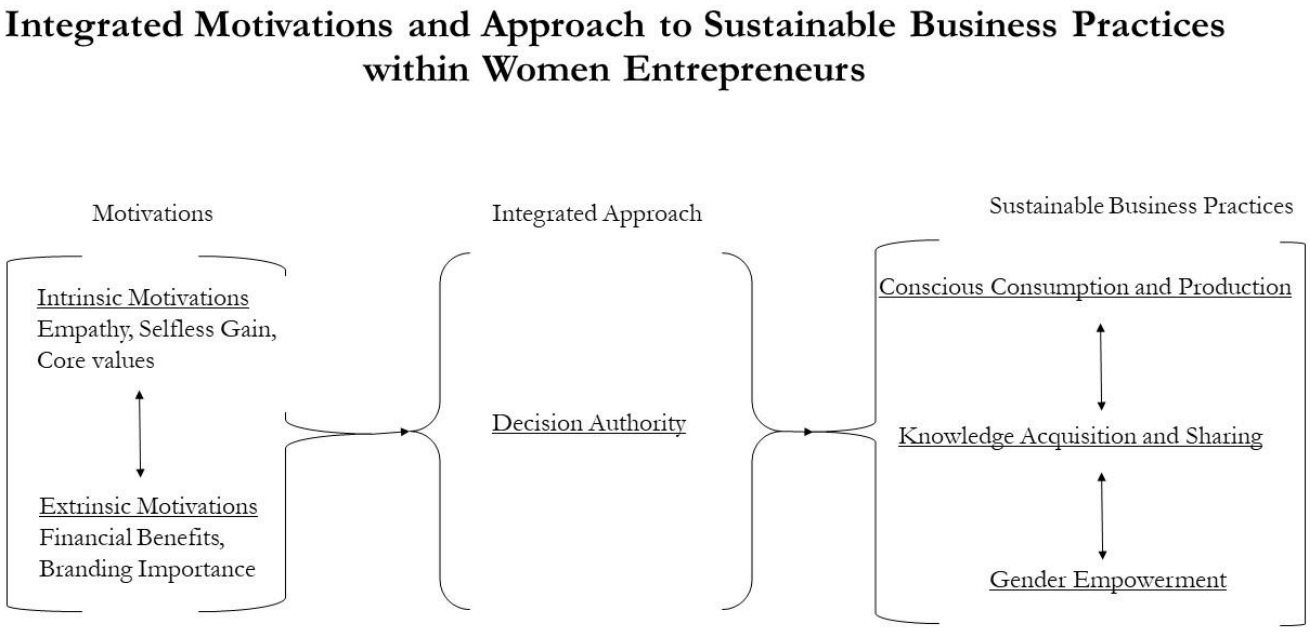


Figure 2: Thesis Findings Model

Our model presents all findings regarding the studied phenomena, as well as their relationship to each other. Throughout the Findings, we will discuss our findings and our rationale for each, as well as how they relate to our model.

4.1 Motivations

One of the aims of the thesis was to identify the women entrepreneurs' motivation for their sustainable business practices. Accordingly, there were motivations and drivers of the women within our findings. We identified two types of motivations. One of them being intrinsic motivation and the second one being extrinsic motivation. Each of these is a different type of motivation that drive the women entrepreneurs into having their said sustainable practices.

4.1.1 Intrinsic Motivations

The identified intrinsic motivations were the ones stemming from the themes of Empathy, Selfless Gain, and Core Values. All of these were the women entrepreneurs' own interests, motivations, and drivers that were cultivated from themselves and reflected their own personal ways of thinking, feeling, and reasoning.

4.1.1.1 Empathy

Throughout the duration of the interview, it was evident that the interviewees were very mindful and empathetic towards the impact they or their businesses have on other people's life and the environment. When asked the question about why she chose to pursue her business, Entrepreneur E replied that she was a student of textile design and during her studies, she was introduced to the process of cloth making. She was appalled by the fact that many chemicals were used during the manufacturing process, which was harmful to the environment as well as damaging to the workers' hands. She then proceeded to mention that as a result, she started working on a 'pure cloth' during her university days in order to make a difference and create an alternative to the traditional methods. She was successful in creating a chemical-free cloth that is now being used to make clothes for cancer patients in her country. These types of actions and drivers showcase that she was empathetic towards the people who were affected by this unsustainable issue. Moreover, showcasing her being highly motivated towards creating a positive impact on the environment and society. A couple of impressionable statements she made during her interview are as follows,

> *"...the chemicals used during the manufacturing process are harmful for the workers' hands and if my pure cloth can save them from that, such things were at the back of my mind when I made my own fabric".*

"The satisfaction you get from knowing that you have created something pure and you have contributed to saving so much".

"..... if I can contribute towards reducing this impact I will be very happy".

Entrepreneur E also mentioned that she started her business with a similar frame of mind and wanted to make a change in the world. Similarly, the other interviewees also identified themselves with different social, economic, and/or environmental sustainability motivations which were empathy-driven. An example of this is when Entrepreneur G, said "*I am a socialist and a person who is always concerned about others…I am a social entrepreneur".* Furthermore, during another interview when Entrepreneur H was asked why she chose to work with women empowerment as a main sustainable business focus and practice, she responded with *".... I thought it is time to start giving back to the community".* Therefore, further demonstrates the entrepreneur's empathy towards others than themselves in regard to their sustainability motivation.

While conducting one of the interviews, we came across a very interesting observation by Entrepreneur E, who is working very closely with other women entrepreneurs; she said: "*I know many women who go out of their way to raise funding for their eco products. They are passionate about their work and its impact".* She mentioned that these were underprivileged women with little knowledge or access to sustainable products and their impacts. Yet they took extra measures to obtain sustainable raw materials for their finished products. This was an observation beyond the interviewee, however, we considered it was worth mentioning. As mentioned, Entrepreneur E showcased ample empathy being the motivation behind her sustainable business practices. Therefore, when she described a situation where other women entrepreneurs, external from the sample of this thesis, showed hustle and empathy-driven motivation towards producing products that have an important impact and are good for sustainability, it was interesting as well.

4.1.1.2 Selfless Gains

When inquired about their work, Entrepreneur K elaborated that she has some products in her product line which do not generate enough or any profit, yet she continues to provide them to her customers in the spirit of doing good. She said, *"I am not about selling things; I have some things in my business but that is only to sort of help people…"*. On further probing as to her motive behind having such products in her portfolio she explained: *"for my business, it is not all about the money.*

I can work a lot more than I do and I can make a lot more money than I do, but I want to do other things. I need to take care of myself to then be able to take care of other people". Therefore, this statement highlights how money is not the main motivation for Entrepreneur K to help people, but instead making sure she is able to help people and perhaps to a greater quality. During another interview, Entrepreneur G mentioned that she used to work in the corporate sector and when asked about the motivations behind choosing to start a business that was focused on gender empowerment by uplifting women, Entrepreneur G replied: *"I am a socialist kind of a person as well so I wanted to do something which will help people…."*. Yet again, underlining that their sustainable business practice motivation is partly based on the selfless need and want to help others. A very noteworthy observation shared by Entrepreneur J is *"Small business owners have the luxury of choosing more sustainable products and methods of doing things than larger corporations because that's really always more like money focus so they look for the cheapest alternatives"*. This emphasizes Entrepreneur J's opinion that SME owners have the luxury opportunity to choose sustainable business products and methods for a greater good, instead of mainly trying to reach monetary success by going for the cheapest alternatives.

Entrepreneur K agrees with common opinions among the interviewees by also believing that a business is not just a tool for profit generation. She believes she can instead help others through her business and for her, that is a reward unto itself. She explained, *"and if I can sort of make the day better for one, two or three people a week, that is what I can do. That is sort of fulfilling. I enjoy it!"*. While discussing their long-term goals, the women entrepreneurs showcased that aside from financial stability and monetary gain, they are also mindful of the social, economic, and environmental impact of their businesses. Entrepreneur D said, *"I want to open new opportunities for the newer generations to evolve their creativity into this world and to create new job opportunities for the society"*. Similarly, Entrepreneur I shared her insight about the future of her business by saying, "*I know that the information in this training could change people's lives, heal others, heal the collective"*. Along those lines, Entrepreneur J had an even wider perspective and elaborated that *"…you have to be responsible as a business owner to not contribute to the worse things in the world….be responsible rather than evil"*. The women entrepreneurs emphasized the importance of being selfless and showing examples of selfless gain through their motivations to achieve sustainability in their businesses.

4.1.1.3 Core Values

It was clear during dialogues with the interviewees that sustainability is regarded as a core belief by the women entrepreneurs, which makes sustainability an attractive choice for incorporating into their businesses. In many of our interviews, our interviewees emphasized the importance of sustainability such as "I take sustainability as a core value of my life" by Entrepreneur H or "I guide my business around health, sustainability, and spirituality" by Entrepreneur I. Our interviewees believe that when they choose sustainable options both for their business and in their personal lives they help contribute to a more sustainable future. Furthermore, Entrepreneur C highlighted that she uses recycled and organic materials for making her products, and when inquired about the underlying motives for her choices, she answered *"because otherwise, it wouldn't be honest work"* if she used the traditional and cheaper alternatives. Similarly, Entrepreneur I believe that by making more sustainable lifestyle choices she can contribute to the sustainability of the planet. She expressed that she became a vegan because she believes, *"being vegan is one of the top things you can do for the environment so we are doing our fair share for environmental sustainability".* Moreover, Entrepreneur I further added, *"I give sustainability very much importance in my life. I have learned about myself and how to sustainably schedule my days, workout, food, work, and my social life".* Entrepreneur J also shares a similar perspective and said, *"I started being vegan…I learned more about how sustainable it was and I really like that so I kept going".* When we inquired about Entrepreneur J's motives as to why she chose to launch a sustainability-oriented brand she responded: *"I've always cared more about sustainability and looking for sustainability when out shopping so when we created the brand we wanted to create something that we ourselves would buy from".*

Entrepreneur H is not native to Sweden and during her interview, she highlighted that she visited Sweden in 2012 and was profoundly impressed by observing people living in a more "*sustainability-oriented culture and I fell in love with the organic lifestyle".* She further added that it was this inspiration that led her to explore more about sustainable practices and also look for ways to promote sustainability in and through her business venture. She added that *"I am a hardcore organic person. I prefer buying organic products even if I have to go an extra mile for them".* On the other hand, Entrepreneur B was born and raised in Sweden, and she believes that sustainability is extremely important to her because she believes that making conscious choices is

her responsibility as a human being. Entrepreneur B emphasized, *"…I mean living in Sweden I feel like it is engrained in the social structure of society to be environmentally friendly……we are forced to make environmentally conscious choices from a very young age"* and when they grow up they are tuned in to make such choices because it is a core part of their being. Entrepreneur J revealed during our interview that she has a strong motivation behind why she chooses to not purchase anything from vendors that use plastic, both on behalf of her business and personally. She said, "*It's not nice to you know buy plastic stuff and like have everything individually wrapped in plastic and then you have to like open like a billion things and then it's all trash for like one little thing that you bought. It is so unnecessary! Looks clean by like it's not good".* Therefore, the interviewees underlined why their sustainable business practices are rooted in their personal core values regarding sustainability as a whole.

4.1.2 Extrinsic Motivations

The identified extrinsic motivations were the ones that appeared from the themes of Financial Benefits and Branding Importance. All of these were the women entrepreneurs' external interests, motivations, and drivers that reflected their motives to gain and benefit from their sustainable business practices.

4.1.2.1 Financial Benefits

During the interviews and when asked about the incorporation of sustainable business practices, the topic of the production of products was discussed. All the women who produced had in-house or even local production. However, when asked about the production history, Entrepreneur A revealed how "*we tried to move almost all of the production we have into Europe so we could cut shipping costs*". It was further disclosed that the production was earlier in China, and their business is based in Europe. That gives the impression that trying to close the proximity of production was not mainly motivated by sustainability-related reasons like reducing carbon footprint. Instead, the reduction of shipping costs for the SME seems to be one of the main motivators for moving production closer. Additionally, Entrepreneur A stated that "*It is easier sometimes to gather recycled material from China for a decent price than it is to get good material from Europe*". She clarified that they ship raw materials from China, but the final

assembly took place in Europe. Since only the raw material was being shipped from China and the actual assembly of the finished goods took place in Europe they could write 'made in EU' in combination with 'made out of recycled material' on their final products. By using this approach, they could increase the price of their product and consequently generate higher profits for their business. Entrepreneur G also highlighted that being sustainable "*is not only satisfying my own appetite but also it is very progressive, a valuable business as well".* This yet again highlights how sustainability is something that fulfills her needs and helps create a valuable and profitable business.

4.1.2.2 Branding Importance

Throughout the interviews, it became very apparent that the business's branding and its connection to sustainability were something of importance. Entrepreneur A emphasized that *"It is important for us to be seen as a sustainable company for the future as well as clients".* This statement describes sustainability as a balance between focusing on the future and creating value for clients. Hence pointing at sustainable practices, imparts an image of sustainability that not only does good for future generations but also results in brand recognition. Entrepreneur I clarified that she believed that being sustainable was important for brand image and it was good for the business as well due to sustainability-conscious customers preferring to buy from brands who identified themselves as sustainable; *"I have to keep my sustainable practices if I want to grow my business, make money, and make sure all my bills are paid"*. Entrepreneur A also shares similar views and said, *"I think it is also important how you communicate this [conscious production] to your clients, that there is no greenwashing all over the place.".* Sustainability may be something that the women entrepreneurs view as highly important in their lives, however business branding was also of high importance to the women entrepreneurs and another example is a statement by Entrepreneur J, *"I think it [supplier transparency] is always important just because we do care about sustainability but also it's important because it represents the brand. I think that is good".* These statements give examples of instances where women entrepreneurs show that branding and the business image are of concern and thus the motivation behind certain sustainable business practices.

4.2 Integrated Approaches To Sustainability

All of the identified reasons for the businesses' sustainable practices require an implementation strategy. In their discussions with us, all women entrepreneurs demonstrated one primary implementation approach, decision authority. As the women built, owned, and operated their own businesses today, all of them demonstrated how what they say goes.

4.2.1 Decision Authority

All of the entrepreneurs who were interviewed for this thesis are actively involved in their respective businesses. They are in higher management (founder/co-founder and/or CEO) and are responsible for most of the decisions including business operations. During the interviews all of them were asked if they were responsible for decision making when it comes to implementing sustainability-related practices into their business and all of them responded that since they were the founder/co-founder and in higher management, they were in a position to influence all decisions; so "*yes"* they were responsible for implementing or deciding which practices were to be incorporated and the daily operations of the business.

Entrepreneurs A, C, D, F, I, and J explicitly stated that since they were the founders and owners of the business, they make the major decisions for the business. They believe that they are solely responsible for deciding which sustainable practice to implement in the business and where. Entrepreneur A and I further explained that they have co-founders, and they discuss these decisions with them; nonetheless, Entrepreneur A and I feel that their inclination towards sustainability influences their decision-making process and impacts the final decision. Entrepreneurs C, D, E, F, G, H, J, and K are sole owners of their respective businesses, which means all business decisions regarding sustainability fall solely on their shoulders. A similar response came from Entrepreneur H: *"Yes, as the main decision-maker for the business, most of the decisions related to sustainability fall with me…".* Respondent E works with other crafters and feels that since she is the one who is guiding them it is her responsibility to ensure sustainable practices; *"Yes, I am the one who is educating my crafters and I am responsible to keep them on track".*

Some of the women entrepreneurs believed in teamwork and said that they involve their whole team in the decision-making process but since they are responsible for the business, they make the

final call. A fitting example is Entrepreneur B, who said that when it comes to making substantial decisions regarding the business they value the opinions of their whole team, but the final decision lies with them [the founders]. She further added that *"…. I do think that you know me and O [name omitted] being kind of head of operations and also have kind of like a bird's eye view of the company we would probably be able to make a decision on the basis of the final decision would probably be with us but it's keeping everybody else in mind".* Entrepreneur K shared a similar view and said *"Yes. It is all me but of course, I am influenced. I mean it's my business I have to make all the decisions".* Entrepreneur G believes that leaders are the driving force and their influence weighs heavily on all sustainability-related decisions; "*If you take any business the strategic leader and her values are always reflected in the business because that is the person who is the driving force. People work for you but at the end of the day it is your own values which should reflect in whatever you do".*

4.3 Sustainable Business Practices

During the interviews, the women entrepreneurs' self-identified sustainable practices were also presented. These all included tangible and intangible business practices, which all reflected back as sustainable business practices in the women's opinion. The sustainable business practices we identified were Responsible Consumption and Production, Knowledge Acquisition and Sharing, and Gender Empowerment.

4.3.1 Responsible Consumption and Production

During the interviews, almost all of the respondents emphasized that they are mindful of the consumption and production processes of their businesses. Entrepreneur A pointed out that they apply the *"conscious multi-purpose production"* technique where they produce a limited number of products and use the same raw materials for a number of items, which makes it easier for them to utilize leftover raw materials from the production of one product in another. To further clarify the process, she gave the example of the production process of their leather jackets; she narrated that the cutouts of leather that are leftover during the jacket production phase are then used to make belts and also to accessorize their saddle seats. In this way, they minimize their end waste. Entrepreneur C also uses the same technique and informed that *"I don't throw away a small piece of yarn that I don't use. When I make a piece I think that it has to fit"*. Statements like *"... I use*

like scraps of yarn, I don't throw, I actually use it. ...I really use everything" by Entrepreneur C and, *"and all the orders are also made to order do not overproduce"* by and Entrepreneur J and, *"I make one piece at a time"* by Entrepreneur C were a common occurrence during the interviews and indicate that the women entrepreneurs are conscious of their product choices and make an effort to produce responsibly and minimize waste.

A few more statements from Entrepreneur C demonstrating her conscious production: *"I use organic materials and organic yarn", "I also use recyclable yarn if I use acrylic yarn, cottons and wool etc."* and *"if I had to choose between recycled material or not, I would use recycled".* Entrepreneur E, who is working with other crafters said that: *"I have formed policies and as per my policies the products that they make must be made from recycled material, no animal should be harmed, it should be eco-friendly and what is its purpose"* and *"I make sure they use sustainable products and they don't use plastic in their products".*

Another very important practice was the use of suppliers who are sustainable. As pointed out by Entrepreneur J, the women entrepreneurs are going out of their way to find and work with these suppliers. She stated, *"We really make sure to purchase from sustainable suppliers or suppliers who are more transparent with where they got their products from and everything in between".* Along with making sustainable choices for their own business, the women entrepreneurs are influencing other actors such as crafters, and suppliers, to work with sustainability as well.

Alongside responsible product production, the interviewees highlighted that they are either recycling or not using paper in their office space at all to reduce or minimize the impact of waste paper. Entrepreneur H informed that in order to become more environmentally sustainable *"...we are completely paperless. We believe in daylight saving…. paperless environment, we have no printer in our office…", "we have a paperless environment in our office space, we save on electricity as much as possible".* Additionally, all women entrepreneurs who were interviewed emphasized that they are minimizing the use of plastic products in their finished goods and strive to obtain plastic free and/or recycled raw materials during the production process. Entrepreneur J informed that *"the packaging is compostable and everything else is not plastic but instead things you can reuse at home".* Likewise, Entrepreneur E pointed out that she ensures her crafters are using sustainable raw materials for their products; *"I make sure they use sustainable products and they don't use plastic in their products".* Entrepreneur B informed that they pride themselves in

having an environmentally-friendly workspace in their office where *"…. vending machine here that are plant-based which I think is awesome you know because that contributes to less carbon footprints that gives you the healthy option also the environmentally friendly option we have the recycling station…."*.

4.3.2 Knowledge Acquisition and Sharing

One of the interviewees, Entrepreneur E, who is working with other craftsmen for her business stated .... *I am constantly educating them [the craftsmen] ... they are not very educated so they do not completely grasp the concept of sustainable materials so I have to educate them about ecopreneurship".* Likewise, Entrepreneur H is working with women empowerment by providing assistance to women entrepreneurs in their business development and growth journey. *"...we are helping women entrepreneurs in their growth-related issues…".* She also informed that women working with her do not always have the right education and/or resources for sustainable practices or they do not understand the importance of sustainability. Furthermore, she said, *"Women [entrepreneurs] are passionate but they need the light, direction…".* Both of these women entrepreneurs are sharing their sustainability-related knowledge with others in the hopes of raising awareness of sustainable business practices. Entrepreneur I operates a yoga studio and alongside her yoga, she promotes better and sustainable health choices as well, which include highlighting the benefits of veganism. *"Something we teach in our training is veganism. So many people have gone vegan or stopped eating meat as a result of our training".* Entrepreneur I believes in a 'lead by example' style and stated*, "We encourage a healthy lifestyle and lead by example. Living this way is a very sustainable lifestyle".* She further added that *"I think my personal sustainable practices are important because I am a leader and an example to my students. I know myself really well".* Entrepreneurs J and K also share similar views. Entrepreneur K added she believes that *"... somehow if you get trained at work I think you take it with you home, eventually".*

During the interview, Entrepreneur A admitted that she and her co-founders were not very well versed in sustainable practices but they were willing to learn to make a change and adapt their business with sustainable practices. Their solution was to hire a sustainability expert who works with them to identify areas where improvements can be made and help their business in the transition, *"We work together with a sustainability expert".* Similarly, Entrepreneur D, who was

in her 50's, wanted to transition her business to incorporate more sustainable practices and for that purpose, she enlisted the help of her children, who were more educated on the subject. *"Now with my kids, it's different because they are teaching me that sustainability is very important, so I'm re-learning everything in my 55 years of age".*

4.3.3 Gender Empowerment

During the interviews a common theme that emerged was that women entrepreneurs highlighted their preference and inclination towards supporting other women entrepreneurs. Entrepreneur D owns a women's fashion brand and she blatantly stated that she prefers to work with other women and give them more opportunities. She stated that *"I give opportunities to pregnant women, single moms and old people. To create a flow in the economy".* She purposefully chooses to support women in the industry so that they can establish themselves and their businesses. Similarly, Entrepreneur H is also *"working for women empowerment"*. She has a platform where she supports other women in their business growth journey. She pointed out that women in rural areas establish their small businesses via Facebook and Instagram pages. But those women do not have the knowledge or access to resources to grow their businesses beyond the initial phase. She supports them by providing training, specialized sessions, and guidance about business growth in the corporate world. In doing so, Entrepreneur H believes that she is contributing to the growth and prosperity of women entrepreneurs in her country.

Entrepreneur E is also one of the women entrepreneurs who supports and works towards gender empowerment. Through her business, she promotes crafters from underprivileged backgrounds by providing them with a platform where they can showcase their work and effort to a more sustainability-conscious customer. She informed that since these crafters have little to know information about sustainability and sustainable business practices, she, Entrepreneur H, educates them about the proper material and guides them throughout the production process. She further helps them out with the sale of their final product as well by connecting them to the right customers. Entrepreneur H also highlighted a very interesting detail when she elaborated that *"I have recently joined a group Eco-preneurs of Pakistan…. And interestingly enough all of the members of the group [Eco-preneurs of Pakistan] are women. Men are more focused on business where they earn maximum profit, but women are more concerned with eco-friendly*

products". She reported from her personal experiences that despite the lack of resources women entrepreneurs were more sustainability-conscious than male entrepreneurs. During the interview, she emphasized that male entrepreneurs are interested in businesses and business practices where their main focus is cost reduction and profit maximization. However, according to Entrepreneur H, women entrepreneurs are willing to go the extra mile to inculcate sustainability into their businesses.

5. Discussion

This thesis aims to identify why and how women entrepreneurs incorporate sustainable practices into their business. To gain an understanding of 'why' the women entrepreneurs choose sustainable practices for their business, it is essential to understand the motivations behind those choices. As highlighted in studies by Dickel et. al. (2021) and Barrachina et. al. (2021), women entrepreneurs are more sustainability-oriented and are more concerned with the social, economic, and environmental impact of their businesses alongside the financial achievements of the business. Our thesis enriches their findings by also identifying motivations for women entrepreneurs' heightened sustainability orientation. Furthermore, our finding indicates that a combination of both intrinsic and extrinsic motivations are the motives for choices regarding women's entrepreneurial sustainability. Similarly, previous studies state that a mix of intrinsic and extrinsic motivations play a large role in choices (Patzelt & Shepherd 2011; Vourio et. al., 2018). After carefully analyzing the findings from the interviews, we have identified the themes of empathy, selfless gain, and core values to represent the intrinsic motivation of the women entrepreneurs, as intrinsic motivations are what motivates a person from within to make a certain choice (Deci et al., 1981). Financial benefits for the business and branding importance are identified as extrinsic motivations for women entrepreneurs to integrate sustainable practices into their businesses.

Empathy is defined as a person's ability to understand and relate to other people's feelings (Elliott et al., 2011). We have identified empathy as one of the themes of personal reasoning because it was observed during the interviews that most of the entrepreneurs were very empathetic towards the needs and suffering of other people. Another common theme that emerged in almost all of the interviews was the women entrepreneurs' enthusiasm for helping and assisting others through their businesses. They used their energy, time, and resources in processes that did not generate any financial or economic value for the business, yet they seemed content with the results; happy even. Aside from the obvious financial achievements of their businesses they were equally satisfied with their social achievements. A person's core values define who they are and how they behave in society (Smolicz 1981). However, intrinsic motivations are not the only reason why women choose to inculcate sustainability into their business practices. Chang et al. (2017) pointed out that businesses tend to balance out the sustainability-related impact and also the corporate performance. Through our findings we support this claim as well; when considering the social, economic, and

environmental impact of the business, women entrepreneurs also considered the financial benefits and the importance of branding their business as sustainable. Furthermore, our findings indicated that the women entrepreneurs also take into account the financial impact of their choices on the business. This supports the existing literature where Dean et al (2007) pointed out that the financial motivations of entrepreneurs maintain the balance within the social and economic systems. This thesis further contributes to the already existing literature by giving more depth and understanding behind the motivations of women entrepreneurs in choosing sustainable practices for their businesses.

As all the women entrepreneurs are actively involved in their respective businesses and are in a position of power to influence business-related decisions. The women's entrepreneurial inclination toward sustainability has a direct impact on the use or lack, thereof, of sustainable practices in the operations of their businesses. A CEO or manager is in a position to make significant changes to the operations of the business (Criado-Gomis et. al., 2020). If higher management is more inclined to incorporate sustainable practices, then it is very likely the business operations will be adapted to include sustainability (Criado-Gomis et. al., 2020; Walls et al., 2017). This thesis supports this notion by highlighting that women entrepreneurs who are sustainability-oriented are more inclined to make efforts towards incorporating sustainable practices into their businesses.

In order to better understand ‘how’ women entrepreneurs incorporate sustainable business practices into their businesses, they were asked a few open-ended questions as to what sustainability-related practices they apply in their businesses and/or business operations. After thoroughly analyzing the transcribed interviews, the themes of responsible consumption and production, knowledge acquisition and sharing, and gender empowerment were drawn. Responsible consumption and production are one of the goals of the Sustainable Development Goals, known as SDGs 12 and outlined by the United Nations (UN) in order to make the world a better place for the present and future generations (Martin & Chassagne, 2015). During the interviews, the term responsible consumption and production, and Sustainable Development Goals were not mentioned intentionally by us in order to obtain an unbiased opinion from the interviewees and not to influence their responses in any way. However, it was noted that all the women entrepreneurs are contributing to SDG 12, in one way or another. From using sustainably sourced or recycled materials all the way to waste reductions, all of our interviewees are working

towards making a positive impact. Another factor that surfaced repeatedly throughout the duration of the interviews was the emphasis on the use of recycled materials. Almost all of the respondents emphasized that they prefer to use organic and recycled materials. Another very important finding was that women entrepreneurs sought to use suppliers who were sustainable. It is difficult for SMEs to work with sustainable suppliers (Wu, 2017). It is a further indication that women entrepreneurs are willing to go the extra mile to incorporate sustainability and sustainable practices into their businesses. Along with making sustainable choices for their own business, the women entrepreneurs are influencing other actors such as crafters and suppliers, to work with sustainability as well. Waste reduction is an important aspect of responsible consumption as it leads to the overall protection of the planet ("Waste reduction", n.d.).

Knowledge sharing about sustainability and sustainable business practices was related to SDG 4 since it related to education and lifelong learning for all (United Nations, n.d.). As the interviews were collected, a common theme emerged where women entrepreneurs expressed that they are also working towards sharing their sustainability-related knowledge with others in order to emphasize the importance of sustainability in society as a whole. In one way or another, they are influencing others on the use of sustainable practices, some directly some indirectly. Women entrepreneurs are not only working towards incorporating sustainability into their own business but also creating a wider impact by passing on their knowledge and experience to other actors within their reach. While some women entrepreneurs have extensive knowledge on sustainability and sustainable practices and are imparting that knowledge to others, there are yet other women entrepreneurs who are in the learning process themselves. Their willingness to learn and change indicates that it is never too late for a business to incorporate sustainable practices. While some are educating and some are learning directly, others are influencing indirectly by setting examples. Nonetheless, they also believe in the importance of knowledge sharing in sustainable business practices. Knowledge sharing was not part of the interview guide, hence, the respondents were never directly asked about sustainability-related knowledge sharing, but somehow almost all the respondents emphasized its importance in one way or another.

Hechavarria et al. (2012) draw attention to the importance of women entrepreneurs supporting other women in their sustainability journey. Our findings indicate a similar result, where women entrepreneurs highlight that they support other women by empowering them and also by providing

guidance and training. The women entrepreneurs who were interviewed, also mentioned that they prefer to buy their raw materials and supplies from other women entrepreneurs, especially those who are working with or towards sustainability. We add value to the literature by reinforcing that women entrepreneurs are working and contributing toward gender empowerment in their capacity as business owners and being the decision-making authority.

Previous research has highlighted that women entrepreneurs are more inclined towards sustainable practices and sustainable businesses than men entrepreneurs (Barrachina et al., 2021; Bawakyillenuo et al., 2021; Dickel et al., 2021; Hechavarria et al., 2012; Outsios et al., 2017). However, to our knowledge, all of the research done in this regard was quantitative. Quantitative research can give concise answers but at the same time, it restricts the respondents' answers by giving them a set of options to choose from (Patton, 2002). It can mean the respondents are influenced to think in a set frame of mind (Gray et al., 1998). This thesis used semi-structured interviews where the interviewees could openly express themselves (Al-Busadi, 2008; Fisher, 2007). We were careful not to influence the interviewees in any way or not to give them any direction. Therefore, the respondents themselves highlighted their own perspectives regarding the topic of women entrepreneurs and sustainability. Thus, this thesis supports previous quantitative literature with a qualitative in-depth approach.

6. Conclusion

The thesis began by conducting background research on entrepreneurship and sustainable practices within the entrepreneurial business. There were several studies found on how women entrepreneurs were more inclined toward sustainable business practices compared to men. Additionally, studies showed that there are fewer women in entrepreneurship and that women face more barriers when entering entrepreneurship. We suggested how the green transition slowing down may be due to this and perhaps we can learn why and how women are sustainability inclined. However, all studies found by us regarding women entrepreneurs and their inclination for sustainable business practices were quantitative and did not explain how or why the phenomena occur. This created an area of interest to investigate the qualitative data regarding women entrepreneurs and the 'how' and 'why' 's of their sustainability practices, with the aim of gaining an understanding of how and why women entrepreneurs are more inclined to be sustainable business-wise. To address this conundrum, the research question was asked as follows; how do women entrepreneurs incorporate sustainable business practices, and why are they motivated to do so?

It seems that the complexity of women's entrepreneurial sustainability motivations and the sustainable business approaches chosen, have a relationship. When it comes to the 'why' of our research question, it was regarding the motivations of the women entrepreneurs. The motivations found were either the women's personal and intrinsic motivations or their externally influenced extrinsic motivations. This division created an interesting perspective on where the motivations seemed to be stemming from. The intrinsic motivations had to do with the women's empathy, selfless gain, and core values that made them who they are today and reflect their personal motives for sustainability implementation. These personal values and motivations indicated a certain motivation with genuine concern for the aim of global sustainability through the previously mentioned sustainable business practices. However, with the extrinsic motivations for including sustainable business practices, the two main areas were financial benefits and business gain through the importance of business branding. Contrary to the women's intrinsic motivations, the extrinsic motivations give the impression of applying sustainable business practices due to image and monetary goals.

As mentioned, there is relationship between the motivations and the approach of women entrepreneurial sustainability. In fact, the thesis found a main implementation approach used by every single women entrepreneurs, which is decision authority. By them being the ones building their own business, owning and running it today, the are able to independently have a say of what occurs in the business. Therefore, the ‘how’ of our research question is answered through the answer being decision authority.

The women entrepreneurs interviewed for the thesis provided several ways that they have sustainable business practices. An agreeable practice was to reduce over consumption and over production and implement a more responsible way instead. A couple of women entrepreneurs turned to sharing knowledge in hopes of others to be more sustainable or allowed themselves to be taught more about it and thus do better themselves. Thereby knowledge acquisition and sharing with others, promoting sustainable lifestyle choices and/or receiving and delivering education about sustainability, are ways the women entrepreneurs showcased how education is part of their sustainable practices. There was also a common aim amongst the women entrepreneurs to address gender inequality and participate in minimizing it through their business practices and underlining gender empowerment by uplifting women. Therefore, by the entrepreneurs self-identifying which sustainable business practices they have, an overall multitude of practices were discovered and later confirmed as SDG’s and actual sustainable business practices.

It is too early in the research aspect to determine what the true answers regarding the phenomena of women's entrepreneurial sustainability approach and motivations really is. However, conclusions have been drawn on both how women entrepreneurs incorporate business practices and why they are motivated to do so, thus answering the research question of this thesis.

6.1 Limitations

First of all, this thesis does not state that every woman entrepreneur is sustainable. Therefore, instead of focusing exclusively on sustainable businesses, we narrowed it to sustainable business practices so that women entrepreneurs could independently identify their areas of sustainable

practices and then we could understand how and why they do them. Thus, when looking for interviewee candidates, we concentrated our efforts to find those women entrepreneurs who self-identified sustainable areas.

Secondly, we recognize that access, education, and sustainability standards may differ across the globe as well as from business industry to business industry. We conducted this study with entrepreneurs from around the world and across different business sectors, so there may be some discrepancies in the findings.

Another limitation is the English language. We conducted the interviews in the native languages of the women entrepreneurs and translated them to English before sharing the results, which may have caused some information to get lost in translation and the data to not be totally accurate. However, when in doubt, we both always discussed which words or phrases would best describe what was said and mentioned it here as a disclaimer for the reader to be aware.

6.2 Suggestions for further research

This thesis explored the phenomena of women's entrepreneurial sustainability motivation and how the women incorporated sustainable business practices. When conducting the thesis, areas for potential further research were found. The initial suggestion for further research is to investigate the phenomena of entrepreneurial sustainability motivations however on male- and/or non-binary entrepreneurs' perspectives as well to gain a broader perspective. When the data regarding the phenomena of entrepreneurial sustainability implementation and motivations exist on women-, men- and non-binary entrepreneurs comparative research can be made between them all.

During the coding, we identified that all of the women entrepreneurs displayed personal actions and approaches towards sustainability in their personal life. Due to our study focusing on business practices, the data on their personal practices was seen as too broad for the findings. However, that creates the opportunity to perhaps study if the women's personal actions and approaches have a relation to women entrepreneurs being more inclined towards sustainability. Further, through the data collection, there were a lot of barriers found from the women

entrepreneurs' perspective when it came to being women entrepreneurs. Thus, further research that investigates the women's entrepreneurial barriers and how and why they occur respectively, and how to limit their barriers could also be of interest. Lastly, potential future research could be by extending this thesis topic, however with a broader dataset with interviewees from women entrepreneurs and their SMEs within the same industries and countries to get a more nuanced understanding.

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Appendix 1: Interview Guide

My name is Christine and my colleague's name is Saba. We are studying our master's degree in business administration at Jönköping University. Saba and I are in the middle of writing our thesis, which studies women entrepreneurs who own SMEs and how they relate to sustainability. Studies show how women entrepreneurs are more likely to use sustainable practices in their business compared to men, yet there are fewer women than men in entrepreneurship overall. Therefore, we seek to only focus our study on women entrepreneurs and gain their own opinions on certain aspects of entrepreneurship and sustainability. Participating in this study is voluntary and you can opt out whenever you want. The data you provide us will be used in our master thesis to explore the topic mentioned above.

We define an entrepreneur as someone who followed their passion and saw a gap in the market and created a business from the ground up. They can be an owner of the business today, but must be the one who created the business from scratch and are also actively involved in the business. The definition for sustainable entrepreneurship by the UN is "sustainable entrepreneurship stands for a business driven concept of sustainability which focuses on increasing both social as well as business value". Sustainable entrepreneurship is further divided into three categories: Economic, Social and Environmental.

- Economic sustainability refers to indicators related to employment, increasing sales, income stability and profitability
- Social sustainability refers to having a positive impact on their community, in society or the world.
- Environmental sustainability refers to making decisions and taking action that are in the interests of protecting the natural world.

Name of interviewee:
Age:
Gender:
Business Name:
Number of employees:
Designation:

Questions before the interview:

1. Is it okay for us to record the interview?

2. Do you wish to remain anonymous during the interview and after the interview is published?
3. Do you want to have access to the transcript after the interview? To check what was noted.

Questions for the main interview:

Entrepreneurial introduction (who)

4. Can you briefly describe your business and your role in it?
5. How long have you been involved in entrepreneurship?
6. Could you tell us about your previous experiences before your involvement at your business today?

Method (how)

7. There are three sustainability branches: economical, social and environmental. Which of these do you believe is practiced within your business?
8. Can you give examples of how that/those branches are shown in your business?
9. What was the reasoning behind those choices?
10. When did you implement these measures?
11. Can you describe a typical workday and if you identify areas where sustainability routines occur?

Motivation (why?)

12. What drives you to do what you do today?
13. When it comes to sustainability, how much importance do you give it in your personal life?
    a. Can you explain why that is?
14. What is your opinion on the importance of having sustainable practices in a business in general?
15. What importance would you say the specific sustainable practices your business have?

Behavior (why?)

16. Do you feel like your personal values reflect in your business?
    a. If yes, how?
17. Are there any areas in your business that you wish were more sustainable?
    a. If yes, what? And what are the main hinders in implementing those measures yet?
18. Would you say you feel personal responsibility over the decisions made regarding sustainability in your business?
19. What would you think about a business within your field that would have no sustainable practices at all?

Concluding questions:

20. Do you want to clarify or add something further to what has been asked?

    Sampling (snowballing)

21. Do you have any other women entrepreneurs in mind that we could interview as well?

Appendix 2: Thesis Authors' Model based on Grounded Theory

1st order concepts	2nd order themes	Aggregate Dimensions
"I know many women who go out of their way to raise funding for their eco products. They are passionate about their work and its impact".	Empathy	**Intrinsic Motivations**
"The satisfaction you get from knowing that you have created something pure and you have saved so much".		
"..... if I can contribute towards reducing this impact I will be very happy".		
"I am not about selling things, I have some things in my business but that is only to sort of help people to sit right or work out right".	Selfless Gain	
"For my business, it is not all about the money. I can work a lot more than I do and I can make a lot more money than I do, but I want to do other things. I need to take care of myself to then be able to take care of other people".		
"Small business owners have the luxury of choosing more sustainable products and methods of doing things than larger corporations because that's really always more like money, so they look for the cheapest alternatives".		
"I am hardcore organic person. I prefer buying organic products even if I have to go an extra mile for them. …... I love the organic and sustainability culture".	Core Values	
"I take sustainability as one of the core values of life".		
"I've always cared more about sustainability and looking for		

sustainability when out shopping so when we created the brand we wanted to create something that we ourselves would buy from".		
"we tried to move almost all of the production we have into Europe so we could cut shipping costs".	Financial Benefits	**Extrinsic Motivations**
"It is easier sometimes to gather recycled material from China for a decent price than it is to get good material from Europe".		
"It is not only satisfying my own appetite but also it is very progressive, a valuable business as well".		
"It is important for us to be seen as a sustainable company for the future as well as clients".	Branding Importance	
"I think it's always important (supplier transparency) just because we do care about sustainability but also it's important because it represents the brand. I think that is good".		
"Yes. It is all me but of course I am influenced. I mean it's my business I have to make all the decisions".	Decision Authority	**Integrated approach to sustainability**
"Yes, as the main decision maker for the business, all of the decisions related to sustainability fall with me".		
"If you take any business the strategic leader and her values are always reflected in the business because that is the person who is the driving force".		
"The packaging is compostable. And everything else is not plastic but instead things you can reuse at home."	Responsible consumption and production	**Sustainable business practices**
"I make sure they use sustainable products and they don't use plastic in their products."		
"...we are completely paperless. We believe in daylight		

saving…..paperless environment, we have no printer in our office…"		
"We work together with a sustainability expert".	Knowledge acquisition and sharing	
"…. I am constantly educating them (the craftsmen)… they are not very educated so they do not completely grasp the concept of sustainable materials so I have to educate them about ecopreneurship."		
"We encourage a healthy lifestyle and lead by example. Living this way is a very sustainable lifestyle."		
"Job creation for people without opportunity for it. I give opportunities to pregnant women, single moms and old people. To create a flow in the economy."	Gender empowerment	
"I have recently joined a group Ecopreneurs of Pakistan…. And interestingly enough all of the members of the group (Ecopreneurs of Pakistan) are women. Men are more focused on business where they earn maximum profit, but women are more concerned with eco-friendly products".		
"We are working for women empowerment".		