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Navigating Global Coffee Trade: How Market Access and Sustainability Drive Entrepreneurial Growth

Vo Minh Vinh [1], Le Nguyen Si Phuc[2], Pham Minh Hieu[3], Nguyen Thanh Vinh[4]

[1]Faculty of Management and Economics, University of Tomas Bata, Czech Republic, https://orcid.org/0009-0007-4100-770X

[2]John Bapst Memorial High School, Bangor, America

[3]Nguyen Thi Minh Khai high school, Ho Chi Minh, Vietnam

[4]Faculty of Business Management, University of Greenwich, UK

ABSTRACT

Purpose: This study examines the influence of sustainable business practices and international market accessibility on entrepreneurial advancement within the global coffee export sector. It addresses a significant gap in the existing literature by incorporating the role of institutional enablers—specifically, government policies and trade agreements—into the comprehension of entrepreneurial development. The focus is on the interaction between sustainability-oriented strategies and external market entry capabilities, which collectively shape growth, resilience, and competitiveness among coffee entrepreneurs in emerging economies.

Methodology: A quantitative methodology was adopted, employing a structured online survey constructed with a 5-point Likert scale to collect data from 385 participants, encompassing coffee entrepreneurs, trade specialists, and sustainability officers. A stratified sampling technique ensured adequate representation across various roles, regions, and firm sizes. Data analysis was performed utilizing SPSS, which incorporated descriptive statistics, Cronbach's alpha reliability testing, exploratory factor analysis (EFA), and multiple linear regression to examine the proposed relationships and moderation effects.

Results: The findings indicate that both sustainable business practices and access to international markets exert significant positive effects on entrepreneurial growth. Furthermore, government policies and trade agreements demonstrate a robust moderating influence, enhancing the advantages of market access when supportive frameworks are established. The study elucidates how the convergence of internal capabilities and external institutional alignment propels entrepreneurial performance within the coffee export sector.

Originality/Value: This research enhances the theoretical comprehension of entrepreneurship in global agri-trade by synthesizing Resource-Based View and Institutional Theory to evaluate the joint impact of sustainability and market access. Additionally, it offers practical implications for entrepreneurs, policymakers, and international trade agencies regarding the promotion of inclusive and competitive growth in the coffee sector through sustainability initiatives and policy endorsement.

KEYWORDS: Entrepreneurial Growth; Sustainable Business Practices; International Market Access; Global Coffee Trade; Government Policies & Trade Agreements.

1. INTRODUCTION

Entrepreneurial growth in the worldwide coffee export industry faces significant and long-standing challenges, necessary for economic growth in developing nations. Sometimes the sector is characterized by notable price swings, which creates an unstable environment that might impede long-term investment and growing entrepreneurial activities (Daviron & Ponte, 2005). Furthermore major challenges to market access and expansion remain, particularly for smallholders and emerging exporters who deal with the dominance of large multinational companies controlling most of the value chain (Handschuch & Wollni, 2016). Significant difficulties arise in managing complex logistics and quality standards for export markets as well as in obtaining finance (Donnet et al., 2008). Thus, achieving sustainable and inclusive business growth, above basic survival, poses a great difficulty, usually limited by structural imbalances in the global trade system (Ruben, R & Fort, R., 2012).

Drawing upon the recognized challenges impeding entrepreneurial development in the coffee industry (Daviron & Ponte, 2005; Ruben & Fort, 2012), prior studies provide valuable yet often contradictory perspectives on your proposed solution. Although certain studies assess market access difficulties in a more isolated context (Handschuch & Wollni, 2016), research often examines the influence of sustainable practices, such as certifications, on farmers' livelihoods or market positioning (Ponte, 2002). Research has examined the direct impact of government policies and legislation on coffee value chains (Neilson, 2008). The existing research exhibits a significant deficiency by failing to conduct a comprehensive analysis of the interplay between market access and sustainability in relation to entrepreneurial development, focusing just on income or participation. Moreover, although the effects of policy are examined, the specific moderating function it plays in shaping the relationship between market entry methods and subsequent entrepreneurial growth in the coffee export sector remains little explored. This article seeks to address this gap by integrating policy moderation, sustainability, and market access into a unified framework to enhance understanding of the factors influencing and constraining entrepreneurial development in global trade.

To enhance the theoretical understanding of this subject, the study aims to investigate the following research questions:

1. How do sustainable business practices influence entrepreneurial growth in the global coffee export trade?
2. To what extent does access to international markets affect entrepreneurial growth in the global coffee export trade?
3. How do government policies and trade agreements moderate the relationship between access to international markets and entrepreneurial growth in the global coffee export trade?

The study intends to fill in previously found gaps by empirically investigating the complex dynamics influencing entrepreneurial development in the coffee export market. Beyond studies focusing only on farmer income or certification adoption, the main goal is to assess the special influence of sustainable business practices on entrepreneurial growth in the given demanding environment (Daviron & Ponte, 2005). Second, the study intends to quantify the impact of foreign market access on this expansion, acknowledging the significant structural obstacles encountered, especially by smaller firms (Handschuch & Wollni, 2016; Ruben & Fort, 2012). The third objective explicitly analyzes the moderating role of government policies and trade agreements on the market access-growth relationship, investigating how state interventions or frameworks influence the results of market engagement strategies, so addressing the recognized gap regarding policy effects (Neilson, 2008). Reaching these objectives will produce the thorough study lacking now and enable a more complete understanding of the interactions between sustainability, market access, and policy either supporting or hindering real entrepreneurial progress in this vital global trade (Gibbon & Ponte, 2005), so directly addressing the constraints found in the previous analysis.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Entrepreneurial Growth in the Coffee Export Industry

The intricacies of entrepreneurial growth, especially in the dynamic global coffee export business, are recognized in academic discourse. This approach, while sometimes restricted to clearly measurable indicators such as actual financial success or infrastructure predictors of expansion plans (Liao et al., 2009), is inadequate. A thorough understanding, essential for the coffee industry, includes qualitative and strategic aspects such as the accumulation of requisite resources (capital, human resources, networks), entry into new geographical markets or product segments, and the implementation or advancement of technological innovations in cultivation, processing, or logistics, alongside considering growth intentions and expansion plans (Pistrui, 2017). The core of this expansive definition is the notion of growth intention - the explicit objectives and ambitions that entrepreneur has for the future magnitude and breadth of their company (Dutta & Thornhill, 2008). This aim is not only an abstract desire; it is seen as a core trait that differentiates ambitious entrepreneurs (Gundry & Welsch, 2001) and acts as a crucial predictor of whether coffee export enterprises will attain considerable development (Birch, 1987). In the realm of coffee exports, entrepreneurial growth denotes a purposeful, vision-oriented process involving strategic initiatives designed to substantially expand the enterprise (Pistrui, 2017).

2.2. Theoretical Framework

2.2.1. Institutional Theory

Institutional Theory provides a thorough framework for analyzing how the external environment, including regulatory, normative, and cultural-cognitive institutions, affects entrepreneurial behaviors and organizational tactics. This theory asserts that organizations are profoundly integrated inside institutional settings that influence their decisions and behaviors, either facilitating or limiting their development (Scott, 1995). Institutional Theory is especially pertinent to the global coffee trade since it addresses the macro-level dynamics, such as trade restrictions, certifications, and governmental policies, that enterprises must traverse while growing internationally. Entrepreneurs seeking to enter foreign markets are influenced not just by market circumstances and firm-specific competencies but also by their capacity to adhere to institutional regulations and achieve legitimacy (Bruton et al., 2010). Exporters from coffee-producing nations such as Ethiopia or Colombia frequently adhere to trade agreements regulated by the World Trade Organization (WTO), bilateral export-import regulations, and sustainability certifications like Fairtrade or Rainforest Alliance, which collectively serve as institutional mechanisms influencing entrepreneurial development. Stenholm et al. (2013) assert that entrepreneurial activity differs markedly throughout nations owing to variations in institutional frameworks. Their empirical results indicate that the pace and nature of entrepreneurship are influenced not only by economic freedom or capital availability but also by the existence of supportive or restrictive institutional frameworks. This insight immediately informs the research of how governmental policies and trade agreements influence the link between access to international markets and entrepreneurial development in the global coffee export industry. Liberalized trade regulations might facilitate market entrance for smallholder coffee entrepreneurs, while onerous export paperwork, inadequate infrastructure, or ineffective contract enforcement may hinder development. Additionally, entrepreneurs in developing nations also encounter informal institutional barriers, such as ambiguous bureaucratic processes, corruption, and societal norms that affect corporate credibility. This underscores the multiple characteristics of institutions—both official and informal—in influencing entrepreneurial pathways. Coffee entrepreneurs that do not conform to institutional norms may find it challenging to get recognition from international purchasers, certifying bodies, or their own governments. In contrast, companies that deliberately adjust to or influence institutional expectations, via lobbying or collaborations with NGOs, may establish themselves as trustworthy and sustainable participants in global markets.

Institutional Theory elucidates why some organizations excel over others within the same industry, while encountering similar resource limitations. Individuals that actively manage institutional connections or gain institutional knowledge are more adept at obtaining export permits, using government incentives, or engaging in global value chains. This corresponds with the findings of Webb et al. (2009), who contend that institutions function not just as restrictions but also as facilitators of entrepreneurial opportunities, especially in developing countries. Consequently, in the international coffee trade, institutional alignment transcends basic compliance, focusing instead on strategic positioning and the establishment of credibility. Entrepreneurs must combine internal operational efficiency with external institutional flexibility to attain sustainable development.

Institutional Theory is founded on numerous fundamental principles. It posits that organizational behavior is profoundly influenced by external institutional settings characterized by laws, conventions, and cultural expectations (Scott, 1995). Secondly, it posits that organizations pursue legitimacy by adhering to institutionalized expectations, which is essential for their survival and expansion (Bruton et al., 2010). Third, it posits that institutions are dynamic; they develop throughout time in response to political, economic, and cultural changes, necessitating adaptation by enterprises. Finally, it recognizes the dual function of institutions as both limitations and enablers in influencing entrepreneurial conduct and market accessibility.

2.2.2. Resource-Based View (RBV)

The Resource-Based View (RBV) provides an internally oriented paradigm for comprehending how organizations cultivate and maintain competitive advantages via the strategic use of their distinctive resources and capabilities. This theory asserts that organizations differ in the resources they possess, and these resources, if they satisfy the VRIN criteria (Valuable, Rare, Inimitable, and Non-substitutable), can result in enhanced performance and enduring development (Barney, 1991). In the realm of global coffee exports, RBV is particularly relevant as it redirects attention from macro-institutional factors to the micro-level methods that entrepreneurial enterprises might use to succeed in a competitive and sustainability-oriented market.

A fundamental principle of the RBV is that companies must cultivate resources that are difficult for rivals to imitate. For coffee exporters, this may include distinctive blends, enduring partnerships with high-altitude cultivators, advanced post-harvest processing methods, and commitment to sustainable agricultural practices. Chen et al. (2006) assert that green innovation, a sustainable business practice, serves as a strategic resource that improves company reputation, operational efficiency, and access to environmentally conscious markets. Their research demonstrated a significant correlation between green innovation performance and corporate advantage in Taiwanese enterprises, so offering empirical validation for the RBV in sustainability settings.

Sustainable practices in global coffee commerce are becoming essential, serving both as ethical imperatives and as means of distinction. Exporters who include organic agriculture, equitable labor methods, and carbon-neutral operations into their business models may enter niche markets in Europe and North America, where customers demonstrate an increasing preference for ethically produced goods. These activities, once formalized into robust capabilities, satisfy the VRIN criteria: they are valuable to customers, uncommon among conventional exporters, difficult to replicate due to ingrained procedures, and non-substitutable owing to the distinctive branding they provide. Consequently, the Resource-Based View elucidates how internal organizational assets, linked with sustainability, may facilitate entrepreneurial success. Another discovery from the RBV is the significance of dynamic capabilities, which refer to a firm's capacity to continually reconfigure its resource base in reaction to environmental changes (Teece et al,.1997). In the coffee sector, where climate change, customer tastes, and certification criteria are ever changing, the companies that react most rapidly possess dynamic skills integrated into their leadership, innovation, and learning processes. In this perspective, entrepreneurial growth pertains not only to increasing operations but also to enhancing internal skills to address external issues. Additionally, RBV offers a framework for assessing the moderating influence of governmental policies and trade agreements. Although these are external influences, their influence on entrepreneurial success is mediated by firm-specific competencies. A trade deal that reduces tariffs only favors exporters equipped with the necessary logistical and compliance skills to leverage such arrangements. The Resource-Based View posits that enterprises with superior resource orchestration are more inclined to capitalize on institutional possibilities for expansion.

The RBV is predicated on the premise that enterprises have diverse resources that are unevenly allocated and challenging to transfer across organizations (Barney, 1991). It presupposes that some resources fulfill the VRIN criteria, valuable, rare, inimitable, and non-substitutable, resulting in a prolonged competitive advantage. Another hypothesis posits that disparities in performance across organizations may be mostly attributed to the efficacy with which they use their internal resources. Furthermore, it assumes that companies may cultivate dynamic skills to modify their resource base over time in reaction to evolving surroundings (Teece et al., 1997), hence emphasizing the significance of innovation and learning in entrepreneurial achievement.

2.3. Determinants of Entrepreneurial Development in the Coffee Export Industry

2.3.1. Sustainable Business Practices

SBPs denote corporate strategies and operations that harmonize profitability with enduring environmental stewardship, ethical accountability, and socio-economic fairness (Dyllick & Hockerts, 2002). These practices include sustainable manufacturing, transparent governance, equitable labor, and community development activities designed to mitigate damage and augment social benefit. Within the coffee export sector, especially in developing markets, SBPs include eco-friendly agricultural methods (such as agroforestry and organic certifications), transparency in supply chains, and direct trade frameworks that enhance environmental preservation and economic stability. Conceptually, SBPs are theoretically grounded on the Triple Bottom Line (TBL) paradigm, which asserts that firms must prioritize economic success alongside social and environmental results. Furthermore, the TBL highlights the interrelation between sustainability and entrepreneurship in the global coffee trade, particularly for coffee-growing SMEs reliant on ecosystem resilience, social capital, and ethical value chains. From a strategic perspective, the RBV posits that SBPs may function as strategic assets, generating unique capabilities and reputational benefits that enhance competitive differentiation in international markets (Hart, 1995; Golicic & Smith, 2013). In coffee export ecosystems, where quality, ethical sourcing, and traceability are paramount, sustainability-oriented competencies like eco-certifications and sustainable farming networks are crucial for developing entrepreneurial initiatives and penetrating premium markets. In contemporary socio-economic situations, SBPs have garnered considerable attention as consumer and regulatory expectations for sustainable trading practices increase. Increasing climate risk, deforestation, and biodiversity decline have compelled agri-export industries to shift towards sustainable value chains. Climatic unpredictability impacts more than 80% of smallholder coffee farmers, making sustainable methods both ethically imperative and commercially essential. Furthermore, international purchasers are incorporating sustainability measures into their buying strategies; certifications such as Rainforest Alliance and Fairtrade have increased in market significance, indicating that entrepreneurial coffee exporters must adjust to survive. This transition is further bolstered by ESG investment trends and regulatory incentives that advocate for sustainable agricultural practices. Empirical evidence substantiates the assertion that strategic business practices promote entrepreneurial development in coffee-exporting enterprises. Sustainable approaches diminish input expenses over time (e.g., via soil regeneration or less pesticide use), alleviate climatic concerns, and attract impact investors and ethical purchasers (Zahra et al., 2009). Research indicates that ecologically responsible tactics improve market access, brand loyalty, and price premiums, particularly in foreign coffee markets that emphasize sustainable sourcing. When well managed, SBPs may foster entrepreneurial innovation, including the creation of specialty organic goods, local farmer cooperatives, or blockchain-based supply tracking systems (Dentoni et al., 2012). In this regard, SBPs function not just as compliance instruments but as catalysts for development that enhance entrepreneurial prospects across production, processing, and export avenues. Nevertheless, academic discourse persists over the strength and uniformity of this association. Certain experts contend that social business practices provide substantial entrepreneurial advantages just when integrated with conducive market infrastructure or institutional trust. In nations with inadequate enforcement or disjointed supply chains, the implementation of SBPs may elevate operating expenses without delivering commensurate benefits, particularly for enterprises with little resources (Del Río-González, 2005). Additionally, smaller enterprises often have difficulties in achieving certification criteria or expanding eco-innovation owing to financial and informational constraints, suggesting that the effectiveness of SBPs may be influenced by factors like as business size, geographic location, or regulatory context. Nonetheless, there is an increasing agreement that, when well managed, SBPs improve export performance and entrepreneurial legitimacy in international commerce (Golicic & Smith, 2013). From a philosophical standpoint, virtue ethics advocates that businesses should seek sustainability not just for profit, but as an expression of moral obligation to future generations and the welfare of the society. This corresponds with indigenous and agricultural perspectives in several coffee-producing areas, where land stewardship and intergenerational accountability are fundamental principles. Development economics positions SBPs as essential for inclusive growth by facilitating entrepreneurship in agri-exports, alleviating rural poverty, and fostering equitable engagement in global markets (Sachs, 2015). Institutional economics asserts that the efficacy of SBPs is contingent upon the prevailing legislative framework, norms, and enforcement mechanisms that facilitate responsible entrepreneurship.

Drawing from the foundational theoretical framework, the first hypothesis emerges through the integration of the key concepts previously discussed:

H1: Sustainable business practices positively impact entrepreneurial growth in global export coffee trade.

2.3.2. Access to International Markets

Access to International Markets denotes the capacity of firms, particularly small and medium enterprises (SMEs) and entrepreneurs, to enter, engage in, and derive advantages from foreign trade networks, encompassing access to buyers, trade agreements, infrastructure, and platforms that promote exports. This encompasses logistical capacity, adherence to international standards, partnerships with foreign importers, and access to premium niche markets like certified organic or fair-trade coffee (Ponte, 2002). Access encompasses not just physical aspects but also institutional, informational, and network-related elements that jointly influence an entrepreneur's capacity to compete on a global scale. This variable is theoretically based on Internationalization Theory, which posits that enterprises extend outside local boundaries to pursue growth, economies of scale, and varied markets. This corresponds with Network Theory, highlighting that access to international markets increasingly relies on relational assets and integration across global value chains (Chetty & Agndal, 2007). In the international coffee sector, exporters depend on trade liberalization as well as social and digital networks to minimize transaction costs, surmount entrance obstacles, and establish reputational legitimacy (Gereffi & Lee, 2016). Furthermore, the Dynamic Capabilities View posits that enterprises must incessantly rearrange their market strategies to align with global trade circumstances, indicating that mere access is inadequate unless strategically used. Access to foreign markets in the current economic and social environment is influenced by changing trade regulations, geopolitical realignments, and digital revolution. Coffee is among the foremost internationally traded agricultural commodities; yet, small producers encounter obstacles including non-tariff barriers, certification mandates, and fluctuating worldwide pricing. The emergence of e-commerce and traceable supply chains provides new avenues for market entry, especially for quality-differentiated coffee goods. In socio-economic terms, enhanced access is significantly correlated with rural income diversification and the empowerment of smallholder businesses in Latin America, East Africa, and Southeast Asia. Nonetheless, enduring infrastructural deficiencies and trade imbalances persistently hinder fair engagement. Empirical research consistently substantiates the assertion that enhanced access to foreign markets promotes entrepreneurial expansion, especially in sectors such as specialty coffee, where brand identification, origin, and quality are crucial in generating value. Global exposure necessitates that companies innovate, improve quality control, and adhere to sustainability standards, resulting in increased competitiveness and income (Bamber et al., 2014). Access allows businesses to expand operations, get funding, and establish multinational collaborations. Research indicates that SMEs who effectively engage in global coffee value chains see accelerated growth in production and employment relative to their domestically focused rivals (Gereffi & Lee, 2016). Moreover, access to foreign consumers often facilitates the emergence of innovative business models, such as direct trade, which enhance transparency and fortify producer–buyer relationships—thereby augmenting entrepreneurial confidence and investment tendencies. Nonetheless, academic discourse persists over the strength and uniformity of this association. Certain studies contend that foreign market access significantly influences entrepreneurial development when coupled with supportive institutions and export preparedness. Some argue that access produces conditional impacts, since trade openness may primarily advantage well-capitalized or well-connected individuals while marginalizing underrepresented groups (Narula, 2014). Moreover, mere access does not ensure success; companies must navigate information asymmetries, legal challenges, and cultural obstacles to maintain their foothold in international markets (Chetty & Agndal, 2007). Consequently, while access is essential, its influence is moderated by organizational competencies and external support systems. Liberal internationalism, from a philosophical perspective, promotes free markets as a means to achieve peace and prosperity, asserting that international commerce enhances the strength of people and states via mutual interdependence. This corresponds with the concept that access to global coffee markets promotes inclusive entrepreneurship and rural development. Nevertheless, post-colonial economic criticisms warn that global trade frameworks may perpetuate reliance, causing producers to stay confined to low-value sectors of the value chain. Consequently, access should be paired with fair trade conditions and institutional changes to guarantee that entrepreneurial development is both sustainable and liberating. From an economic standpoint, the idea of comparative advantage validates foreign market access as a means for emerging nations to specialize and expand via the exportation of commodities such as coffee. New trade theory emphasizes that market imperfections, including monopolistic competition and growing returns to scale, advantage businesses with past export experience or enhanced skills, hence exacerbating inequality among entrepreneurs (Helpman et al., 2004). To harmonize these perspectives, focused assistance for nascent coffee entrepreneurs—via trade facilitation, digital resources, and export education—can guarantee that access serves as a catalyst for widespread development rather than elite appropriation.

Grounded in the conceptual foundations established earlier, the second hypothesis is formulated by consolidating the central theoretical insights.

H2: Access to international markets positively impacts entrepreneurial growth in global export coffee trade.

2.3.3. Government Policies & Trade Agreements

Formal institutional frameworks, rules, and bilateral or multilateral treaties passed by governments to enable, regulate, or advance global trade and economic cooperation are referred to as government policies and trade agreements (WTO, 2021). These tools influence labor/environmental standards, tariffs, subsidies, investment flows, market access, and taxes, all of which have a direct impact on cross-border business ventures (Gereffi, 2018). According to North (1990), formal institutions (such as trade regulations) lower transaction costs and uncertainty in economic interaction when seen through the lens of institutional economics. Similar to this, Porter's Diamond Theory asserts that national industries' competitive environments are significantly shaped by the government, which in turn affects worldwide entrepreneurial competitiveness (Porter, 2001). Therefore, integration into global value chains is facilitated by government action through trade agreements and regulatory regimes, particularly in export-dependent industries like coffee (Kowalski et al., 2015). Such policies can guarantee quality certifications, lower trade obstacles, provide export incentives, and develop trade infrastructure in a socioeconomic setting. Free trade agreements (FTAs), for instance, have been demonstrated to facilitate product diversification and speed up SME growth in underdeveloped countries. Government-backed agreements provide much-needed market stability and regulatory compliance procedures in the global coffee trade, where quality requirements and price volatility are high (Voora et al., 2019).

Government policies and trade agreements shape the impact of access to international markets on entrepreneurial growth in the global coffee export trade. When international market access is combined with supportive policy frameworks—like export incentives, trade facilitation measures, and preferential entry via FTAs—entrepreneurs can grow their operations, innovate, and stay resilient in competitive global markets. A well-organized policy environment enhances institutional confidence and lowers the expenses of conducting business internationally (Woodside et al., 2012). For example, in coffee-exporting countries such as Vietnam or Colombia, strong trade agreements with the EU and US have greatly improved the entrepreneurial environment by simplifying adherence to international standards, offering certifications (e.g., Fair Trade, Organic), and aiding logistical and financial resources. Consequently, government support not only enhances the advantages of market entry but also secures sustained business viability.

The literature offers two viewpoints. One perspective indicates a significant moderating influence, where proactive trade policy structures directly improve the advantages of global market access, particularly when customized to specific sectoral requirements (e.g., specialty coffee) (Kowalski et al., 2015). On the other hand, some contend that there exists a moderate or conditional impact, emphasizing that excessively bureaucratic or weakly enforced trade regulations can diminish the advantages of market entry, particularly for smallholder business owners encountering compliance and financial obstacles.

From a classical liberal viewpoint, limited government interference encourages entrepreneurship by enabling market dynamics to steer commerce. Conversely, Keynesian and developmental state theories suggest that specific government interventions and strategic partnerships are essential for fostering emerging industries in developing nations, especially in global commodity markets such as coffee (Rodrik, 2004).

The formulation of the third hypothesis is informed by a synthesis of the principal theoretical arguments presented in the preceding framework:

H3: Government policies & trade agreements positively moderate the influence of access to international markets on entrepreneurial growth in global export coffee trade.

Anchored in well-established theoretical foundations, this study advances its scholarly contribution through the development of the following conceptual framework:

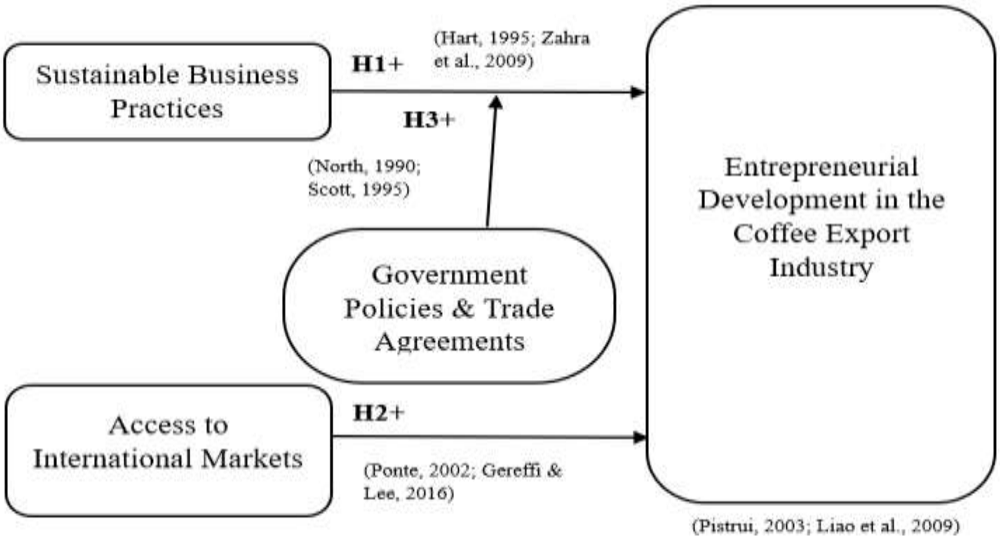

Figure 1. The Paper's Conceptual Framework (Authors, 2025)

3. METHODS

A probability-based sampling strategy was employed in this study, utilizing stratified sampling to achieve balanced representation among key stakeholder groups within the financial services sector across emerging Southeast Asian markets (Bryman, 2016). Data were collected through a structured questionnaire, which was designed in accordance with established literature and incorporated a 5-point Likert scale to measure respondents' attitudes and perceptions concerning ESG-linked financing, capital structure optimization, market uncertainty, and corporate financial performance (Brown, 2011).

To ensure substantive empirical analysis and relevance within the industry framework, this research adopted a purposive stratified sampling methodology aimed at individuals actively engaged in the export-oriented coffee sector across emerging economies. The participant cohort was delineated into four discrete stakeholder segments, selected based on their functional roles and strategic influence on entrepreneurial advancement within the coffee export value chain. These segments comprised: (1) exporting coffee entrepreneurs and founders possessing a minimum of one year of active engagement in managing sustainable operations, navigating international regulatory landscapes, and adapting to strategies for entering foreign markets; (2) supply chain and trade logistics managers who are responsible for overseeing cross-border distribution, ensuring compliance with trade agreements, and coordinating interactions with international buyers or brokers; (3) sustainability and quality control officers tasked with the implementation of environmental and ethical sourcing standards, traceability systems, and relevant certifications (e.g., Fairtrade, Rainforest Alliance); and (4) policy advisors and trade consultants collaborating with coffee cooperatives, industry associations, or public institutions, who directly contribute to the interpretation and operationalization of governmental policies or bilateral trade agreements that impact the coffee export sector.

Participants were mandated to possess a minimum of 12 months of direct involvement in coffee export activities, with verifiable exposure to either international market development or the implementation of sustainable business practices. Stratification was executed across dimensions such as firm size (e.g., micro versus SME exporters), country of operation (e.g., Vietnam, Indonesia, Ethiopia, Colombia), and type of export (e.g., raw beans, roasted specialty coffee, certified organic exports). The online survey was disseminated through targeted industry forums, export promotion platforms, and regional trade networks. In Vietnam, outreach was facilitated through organizations such as the Vietnam Coffee-Cocoa Association (Vicofa), local farmer cooperatives, and trade-related LinkedIn groups (e.g., "Vietnam Exporters & Traders Network"). At the regional level, collaboration with ASEAN agricultural trade clusters enabled distribution across Southeast Asia, encompassing Indonesia, Thailand, and the Philippines. On a global scale, survey links were circulated through international forums such as the Specialty Coffee Association (SCA), World Coffee Portal, and within professional research communities like ResearchGate and AgEcon.

The survey employed a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 ("Strongly disagree") to 5 ("Strongly agree"). Out of a total of 547 collected responses, 385 were preserved following the application of rigorous screening criteria to ensure data completeness, role verification, and consistency across respondent categories. This diverse and functionally stratified sample facilitated a comprehensive analysis of how sustainable practices and access to international markets influence entrepreneurial development in the global coffee trade, with a particular emphasis on the moderating impact of governmental policies and trade agreements.

4. RESULTS

4.1. Descriptive Analysis

Table 1 - Descriptive Statistics of "Entrepreneurial Growth in the Global Coffee Export Trade". Source: (The authors, 2025)

		EG1	EG2	EG3	EG4
N	Valid	385	385	385	385
	Missing	0	0	0	0
Mean		3.52	4.12	3.79	4.32
Mode		4	4	4	4
Std. Deviation		.601	.754	.779	.729

Where EG1 to EG4 represent the first four survey items used to evaluate dimensions of entrepreneurial growth in the global coffee export trade.

The mean score of 3.52 for EG1 suggests that, on average, respondents agreed with the fact that their coffee export business has clearly defined growth objectives and strategic expansion plans. The mode value of 4 further indicates that this perception was the most frequently expressed among participants. Consistent descriptive statistical procedures were applied to analyze the remaining variables in the study.

4.2. Reliability Analysis

Table 2 - Reliability Analysis of "Entrepreneurial Growth in the Global Coffee Export Trade". Source: (The authors, 2025)

Reliability Statistics	
ronbach's Alpha	of Items
619	

Item-Total Statistics				
	cale Mean if Item Deleted	cale Variance if Item Deleted	orrected Item-Tota Correlation	ronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
G1	.307	.258	599	603
G2	.726	.844	577	594
G3	.534	.636	528	576
G4	.954	.905	510	582

As shown in Table 2, all dependent variables demonstrated adjusted item–total correlation coefficients of 0.3 or above, confirming satisfactory internal consistency. The overall Cronbach's alpha was calculated at 0.619, surpassing the commonly accepted threshold of 0.6 and remaining higher than any alpha that would have resulted from the removal of individual items. Additionally, for each dependent variable, Cronbach's alpha consistently exceeded the corresponding adjusted item–total correlations, even under hypothetical item-deletion conditions. Consequently, all items were retained for subsequent analysis. Similar patterns of internal reliability were observed across the Cronbach's alpha values of the other measured constructs.

4.3. Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA)

Table 2: Rotated Component Matrix. Source: (The authors, 2025)

Rotated Component Matrix[a]			
Component with loading factors			
1	2	3	4
EG1 .515	SBP1 .683	AIM1 .667	GPTA1 .622
EG2 .614	SBP2 .513	AIM2 .642	GPTA2 .600
EG3 .630	SBP3 .780	AIM3 .682	GPTA3 .655
EG4 .597	SBP4 .750	AIM4 .593	GPTA4 .544

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis. Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.
a. Rotation converged in 7 iterations.

Where the survey items SBP1 to SBP4, AIM1 to AIM4, and GPTA1 to GPTA4 correspond to the coded questions representing the two independent variables and the moderator variable, respectively.
As reported in Table 2, the rotated component matrix successfully grouped all 16 sub-variables into four distinct factors, each corresponding to the dependent variable, the two independent variables, and the moderator. Notably, all sub-variables exhibited factor loadings above 0.50, and none were eliminated during the factor extraction process.

4.4. Multiple Linear Regression Analysis

Table 3 - Coefficients. Source: (The authors, 2025)

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	6.446	.956		4.999	.000
	SBP	.362	.755	.350	4.533	.000
	AIM	.403	.791	.390	4.080	.000

a. Dependent Variable: EG
Where **EG**: mean of EG1 to EG4; **SBP**: mean of SBP1 to SBP4; **AIM**: mean of AIM1 to AIM4.
As indicated in Table 4, the t-test significance (Sig.) values of .000 are well below the conventional alpha threshold of 0.05. This demonstrates that the independent variables—sustainable business practices and access to international markets—significantly influence the dependent variable, entrepreneurial growth in the global coffee export trade. Accordingly, both hypotheses are confirmed.

4.5. Moderator Analysis

Table 5: Moderator Results Analysis of "government policies and trade agreements"

Model : 1
Y : EG
X : AIM
W : GPTA
Sample Size: 385
****
OUTCOME VARIABLE:
EG
Model Summary

R	R-sq	MSE	F	dl1	dl2	p
.566	.537	.568	5.212	3.0	381.0	.000

Model

	coeff	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
constant	6.924	.868	65.345	.000	6.389	6.678
AIM	.356	.913	4.252	.000	.366	.325
GPTA	.367	.850	4.363	.000	.394	.371
Int_1	.420	.906	4.611	.000	.375	.349

Where GPTA: mean of GPTA1 to GPTA4

As shown in Table 5, the p-value for the interaction term (Int_1) is 0.000, which falls well below the 0.05 significance level, indicating a statistically significant moderating effect of government policies & trade agreements on the relationship between sustainable business practices and entrepreneurial growth. The interaction coefficient of 0.420 suggests that government policies & trade agreements amplifies the positive influence of sustainable business practices on entrepreneurial growth in the global coffee export trade. Therefore, hypothesis H3 is supported.

5. DISCUSSION

5.1. Result Summary

Sustainable business practices and access to international markets impacts entrepreneurial development in the coffee export industry with coefficients of 0.35 and 0.39 respectively. Also, government policies & trade agreements moderate the relationship between access to international markets and entrepreneurial growth in the global coffee export trade with a coefficient of with 0.42.

5.2. Theoretical Implication

The empirical evidence supporting the assertion that sustainable business practices (SBPs) exert a positive influence on entrepreneurial development within the coffee export sector ($\beta = 0.35$) substantiates the Resource-Based View (RBV), which posits that capabilities oriented towards sustainability—such as eco-certification and ethical sourcing—can serve as strategic, inimitable assets (Hart, 1995; Golicic & Smith, 2013). This outcome is in strong alignment with the perspectives of Zahra et al. (2009), who contend that sustainable innovation contributes to enhanced reputation and improved market access. Nonetheless, the study challenges more skeptical viewpoints, such as those presented by Del Río-González (2005), who questioned the overall benefits of clean technology adoption in contexts characterized by inadequate regulation or fragmentation. In contrast to assertions that SBPs may impose burdens on small enterprises (Dentoni et al., 2012), our findings indicate that when sustainability is strategically integrated, it acts as a catalyst—rather than a limitation—for entrepreneurial growth. While scholars such as Sachs (2015) conceptualize SBPs as instruments for inclusive growth, our findings broaden the theoretical discourse by emphasizing their instrumental role in fostering global competitiveness. Consequently, SBPs not only address ethical obligations but also emerge as fundamental enablers of sustained entrepreneurial legitimacy.

The affirmative correlation between access to international markets and entrepreneurial growth ($\beta = 0.39$) substantiates fundamental principles of Internationalization Theory and Network Theory, which assert that external market engagement fosters entrepreneurial aspirations through enhanced exposure to competition, learning opportunities, and economies of scale (Johanson & Vahlne, 2015; Chetty & Agndal, 2007). This finding corroborates Gereffi and Lee's (2016) proposition that integration into global value chains confers performance advantages upon small exporters. However, it simultaneously contests Narula's (2014) cautionary perspective that globalization frequently disproportionately benefits well-capitalized firms at the expense of those with limited resources. While the present study resonates with liberal economic paradigms that advocate for market openness, it reveals that mere access is inadequate unless strategically optimized. The evidence partially challenges critiques offered from post-colonial viewpoints, which assert that export dependency may confine producers to low-value segments (Ponte, 2002). Instead, our results indicate that international access has the potential to stimulate innovation and scalability, contingent upon the entrepreneur's adaptive capabilities. Thus, this research reinforces the theoretical assertion that access serves as a facilitator of growth—but one that is contingent upon absorptive capacity and adept institutional navigation.

The observation that government policies and trade agreements significantly moderate the nexus between market access and entrepreneurial growth ($\beta = 0.42$) validates essential principles of Institutional Theory, which posits that formal structures significantly influence organizational behavior and the realization of opportunities (Scott, 1995; Bruton et al., 2010). The findings are consistent with Kowalski et al. (2015), who argue that well-targeted trade frameworks bolster the competitiveness of SMEs within global supply chains. Yet, this study challenges classical liberal assumptions that minimal regulatory interference best promotes entrepreneurship. Our findings instead support developmentalist theories (Rodrik, 2004), demonstrating that proactive state interventions—such as Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) and export facilitation—foster conducive institutional conditions for entrepreneurial scaling. Furthermore, the evidence contests weaker institutional perspectives that portray trade policies as neutral or marginal in their impact, reinforcing the view that policy alignment with market access strategies enhances entrepreneurial viability. This suggests that supportive regulatory environments do not merely diminish transaction costs; rather, they actively co-create pathways for entrepreneurial advancement. Hence, the moderating influence of policy emerges as both a structural and strategic mechanism for entrepreneurial development.

5.3. Practical Implications

The findings of the study affirm that SBPs play a pivotal role in fostering entrepreneurial advancement, indicating that coffee-exporting firms ought to institutionalize sustainability as a fundamental operational paradigm. This entails an emphasis on agroecological practices, transparent traceability mechanisms, and ethical labor frameworks, which not only conform to global market expectations but also augment brand credibility and attract investment opportunities. Exporters are encouraged to capitalize on third-party certifications such as Rainforest Alliance or Fairtrade to penetrate premium markets and secure financing linked to environmental, social, and governance (ESG) criteria (Golicic & Smith, 2013). In order to mitigate financial constraints, national trade agencies should implement subsidy initiatives and sustainability-focused capacity-building workshops.

The affirmative influence of access to international markets underscores the necessity for trade facilitation services specifically designed for SMEs. Coffee entrepreneurs are urged to enhance their competitive edge by developing multilingual e-commerce capabilities, implementing digital traceability systems, and establishing direct trade relations with foreign buyers. Export promotion agencies can facilitate this enhancement by streamlining customs processes and coordinating virtual buyer-seller matchmaking initiatives. These insights further indicate the imperative for specialized training in regulatory compliance and logistics management to empower small-scale exporters (Gereffi & Lee, 2016).

In light of the substantial moderating influence of government policies & trade agreements, it is essential for policymakers to acknowledge that access to international markets generates scalable entrepreneurial outcomes only when it is accompanied by conducive regulatory frameworks. Governments ought to prioritize policy coherence that aligns national export strategies with the specific needs of various sectors (Kowalski et al., 2015). This encompasses the negotiation of bilateral Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) that incorporate streamlined certification processes for sustainable coffee, enhance infrastructural development, and invest in research and development hubs related to trade. Furthermore, inter-agency collaboration among ministries of agriculture, trade, and environment can institutionalize cross-sectoral support for coffee entrepreneurs aiming for global integration.

5.4. Limitation

This study primarily concentrated on entrepreneurs operating within emerging coffee-exporting markets, which may restrict the applicability of the findings to larger-scale commercial exporters or cooperatives situated in developed economies. Additionally, the cross-sectional nature of the design limits the capacity to discern causal or time-sensitive interactions among market access, the implementation of sustainability measures, and shifts in policy. While stratified sampling ensured a degree of contextual diversity, certain regional disparities may not have been adequately represented due to biases in platform accessibility or non-responses from informal entrepreneurs.

5.5. Future Research Direction

Future research should employ a longitudinal framework to investigate the impact of alterations in trade policy or climate adaptation initiatives on the entrepreneurial lifecycle within the coffee export sector. Comparative case studies between certified and non-certified exporters could yield deeper insights into how sustainability influences innovation and profitability over time. Scholars are encouraged to explore the digital transformation of the global coffee trade, such as the application of blockchain technology for traceability or artificial intelligence in market forecasting, as a mediating variable in entrepreneurial development. Additionally, subsequent investigations should consider gender-specific entrepreneurial experiences and resilience, particularly in regions where women-led coffee enterprises are underrepresented yet play crucial roles within their communities.

5.6. Conclusion

This study presents critical empirical and theoretical contributions by elucidating the manner in which sustainable business practices and access to international markets facilitate entrepreneurial growth within the global coffee export industry, particularly when government policies and trade agreements function as institutional enablers. The findings indicate that the integration of internal capabilities with external alignments is imperative for fostering competitiveness, growth, and enduring sustainability. For policymakers, exporters, and support institutions, the evidence underscores the necessity of a multi-stakeholder approach—one that intertwines green innovation, trade readiness, and regulatory frameworks. Ultimately, the enhancement of entrepreneurial ecosystems in emerging markets through sustainability initiatives and trade facilitation can lead to equitable assimilation into global value chains and reframe coffee from a volatile commodity into a vehicle for inclusive development.

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APPENDIX: Survey

Table 6. Survey Questionnaire

Background information

How many years have you been directly involved in coffee export-related activities?	Less than 1 year	1–3 years	4–6 years	7–10 years	More than 10 years
What is your current professional role in the coffee export value chain?	Coffee Entrepreneur / Founder	Supply Chain or Logistics Manager	Sustainability / Quality Control Officer	Policy Advisor / Trade Consultant	Other (please specify): _____________
Which type of coffee product(s) does your organization primarily export?	Raw (green) coffee beans	Roasted specialty coffee	Certified organic coffee (e.g., Fairtrade, Rainforest Alliance)	Instant or processed coffee products	Other (please specify): _____________
In which country is your organization primarily based?	Vietnam	Indonesia	Ethiopia	Colombia	Other (please specify): _____________

No.	Variables	Coded Sub-variables	Content
1.	Entrepreneurial Growth	**EG1**	My coffee export business has clearly defined growth objectives and strategic expansion plans (Pistrui, 2003).
		EG2	I consistently invest in expanding the scale and scope of my coffee export operations (Dutta & Thornhill, 2008).

		EG3	My business has entered new geographic markets or product segments in recent years (Liao et al., 2009).
		EG4	I actively pursue innovation and long-term value creation in global coffee trade (Gundry & Welsch, 2001).
2.	Sustainable Business Practices	**SBP1**	My enterprise adopts eco-friendly agricultural methods such as organic certification or agroforestry (Dyllick & Hockerts, 2002).
		SBP2	We implement sustainable supply chain practices to ensure transparency and ethical sourcing (Hart, 1995).
		SBP3	Our sustainability practices enhance export performance and competitiveness (Zahra et al., 2009).
		SBP4	We actively pursue certifications like Fairtrade and Rainforest Alliance to align with international market standards (Golicic & Smith, 2013).
3.	Access to International Markets	**AIM1**	Our company has stable partnerships with foreign importers that facilitate international market entry (Gereffi & Lee,2016). We export to premium niche markets, such as organic or specialty coffee segments (Chetty & Agndal, 2007).
		AIM2	We benefit from trade infrastructure and networks that support global coffee exports (Ponte, 2002).
		AIM3	Our organization frequently adapts its market strategies in response to global trade dynamics (Johanson & Vahlne, 2015).
		AIM4	We export to premium niche markets, such as organic or specialty coffee segments (Chetty & Agndal, 2007).
4.	Government Policies & Trade Agreements	**GPTA1**	Government trade agreements have lowered barriers and facilitated export opportunities in the coffee sector (Kowalski et al., 2015).
		GPTA2	National policies and FTAs align with the strategic needs of sustainable coffee exporters (Voora et al., 2019).
		GPTA3	Government-backed certifications and compliance support enhance our ability to meet international standards (North, 1990).
		GPTA4	National regulations provide a stable institutional framework for scaling entrepreneurial coffee exports (Scott, 1995).

Survey link:
https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSc87ChLophro0VhuBc3DZ8jKau4bdrFnMG4JePmFg4sw6L2yQ/viewform?usp=dialog