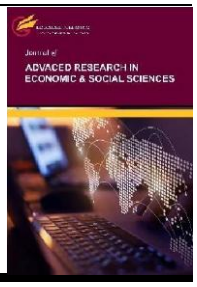
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Green Marketing, Organizational Culture and SME Performance: A Critical Review

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Abstract: The imperative for sustainable business practices has positioned green marketing as a strategic necessity rather than a peripheral ethical choice. However, the translation of green marketing initiatives into tangible Small and Medium-sized Enterprise (SME) performance remains complex and context-dependent. This critical review synthesizes contemporary literature to examine the nexus between green marketing—conceptualized through the Knowledge, Attitude, and Practice (KAP) framework—organizational culture, and SME performance. Moving beyond descriptive accounts, this paper critically evaluates the theoretical underpinnings of the Natural Resource-Based View (NRBV) and the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), highlighting the persistent "attitude-behavior gap" in green consumption and production. A central contribution of this review is the conceptualization of Green Organizational Culture (GOC) as a vital mediating mechanism that bridges the gap between green knowledge, strategic intent, and actualized sustainable performance. By contrasting empirical findings across developed and emerging economies, this paper exposes significant methodological limitations, notably the overreliance on cross-sectional, self-reported data, and contextual biases that marginalize emerging markets like Oman and the broader GCC region. The review culminates in a robust future research agenda, advocating for longitudinal designs, mixed-methods approaches, and the integration of digitalization into green marketing paradigms. Ultimately, this manuscript provides a foundational roadmap for scholars and practitioners aiming to leverage organizational culture to actualize green marketing potential in resource-constrained SME environments.

Key words: Green Marketing; Organizational Culture; SME Performance; Knowledge-Attitude-Practice (KAP); Sustainable Development.

1. Introduction

The global business landscape is undergoing a paradigm shift, driven by escalating environmental degradation, climate change imperatives, and heightened stakeholder demands for corporate sustainability. Within this volatile environment, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) occupy a paradoxical position. On one hand, they are the backbone of global economies, contributing significantly to GDP, employment, and innovation, particularly in emerging markets like Oman and the broader Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) region (Al Mashani, 2025; Kashob & Chakor, 2025). On the other hand, the aggregate environmental footprint of SMEs is substantial, accounting for a disproportionate share of industrial pollution and resource depletion due to historical regulatory exemptions and resource constraints (Rodríguez Molina, & Camacho Ballesta, 2026; Ismail, 2025). Consequently, the integration of green marketing and sustainable practices within the SME sector has transitioned from a niche ethical consideration to a critical strategic imperative (Khan, 2025).

Green marketing, encompassing the modification of products, processes, packaging, and advertising to mitigate environmental harm, has evolved significantly since its inception in the 1980s (Peattie, 2025). Contemporary literature increasingly conceptualizes green marketing through the Knowledge, Attitude, and Practice (KAP) model, which posits that environmental awareness (knowledge) and positive dispositions (attitude) must culminate in tangible operational changes (practice) to yield sustainable competitive advantages (Hemsworth et al., 2026; Panjaitan & Cahya, 2025). However, a critical review of the extant literature reveals a fragmented understanding of how these KAP dimensions translate into measurable SME performance. While numerous studies establish a direct, albeit sometimes tenuous, link between green marketing, financial and market performance (Panjaitan & Cahya, 2025; Khan, 2025), the underlying organizational mechanisms that facilitate or hinder this translation remain underexplored.

This "black box" of organizational dynamics is where Organizational Culture (OC) emerges as a critical, yet frequently overlooked, variable. Organizational culture—the shared values, beliefs, and assumptions that guide employee behavior (Asare Obeng et al., 2025)—acts as the social and psychological infrastructure upon which green strategies are either actualized or abandoned. A Green Organizational Culture (GOC) transcends mere compliance, fostering an environment

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where pro-environmental behaviors are intrinsically motivated and aligned with corporate objectives (Chen & Cao, 2025; Legese et al., 2026). Despite theoretical assertions that culture mediates the relationship between strategic intent and performance (Abdelwahed et al., 2025; Legese et al., 2026), empirical validation within the SME context, particularly in developing economies, remains scarce.

This paper aims to critically review and synthesize the literature on green marketing, organizational culture, and SME performance. Unlike previous descriptive reviews, this manuscript adopts a critical lens to evaluate theoretical debates (e.g., Resource-Based View vs. Natural Resource-Based View), methodological shortcomings, and contextual gaps. By focusing on the mediating role of organizational culture within the KAP framework, this review seeks to answer the following questions:

(1) How do the dimensions of green marketing (knowledge, attitude, practice) differentially impact SME performance?

(2) In what ways does green organizational culture mediate the relationship between green marketing capabilities and sustainable SME performance?

(3) What are the prevailing theoretical, methodological, and contextual gaps in the current literature, and how should future research address them?

By addressing these questions, this paper contributes to the literature by providing a comprehensive, critical synthesis that moves beyond linear cause-and-effect models, offering a nuanced understanding of the socio-cultural dynamics that drive green innovation in resource-constrained SMEs.

2. Review Methodology

To ensure rigor, transparency, and reproducibility, this critical review was conducted following a systematic literature review (SLR) protocol, adapted to allow for critical synthesis and theoretical debate rather than mere quantitative aggregation (Ebitu et al., 2026; Suazo-Galdames et al., 2025). The review focused on peer-reviewed journal articles and seminal theoretical works, with a concentrated emphasis on contemporary advancements to capture the dynamics of digitalization, post-pandemic supply chain shifts, and heightened climate urgencies.

Search Strategy and Data Sources a comprehensive search was conducted across premier academic databases, including Scopus, Web of Science (WoS), EBSCO Business Source Premier, and Science Direct. The search string utilized a combination of Boolean operators and keyword variations: ("green marketing" OR "eco-marketing" OR "sustainable marketing" OR "green KAP") AND ("organizational culture" OR "green culture" OR "corporate culture") AND ("SME" OR "small and medium enterprises" OR "firm performance" OR "sustainable performance").

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Studies were included if they:

(1) Examined the relationship between green marketing/sustainability initiatives and firm performance; (2) Explicitly addressed or strongly implied the role of organizational culture, internal dynamics, or the KAP framework; (3) focused on SMEs or provided distinct analytical separations for SMEs within broader samples; and (4) were published in high-impact, peer-reviewed journals in the fields of business, management, environmental science, or sustainability.

Studies were excluded if they: (1) focused exclusively on large multinational corporations without disaggregating SME data; (2) were purely conceptual without empirical grounding or theoretical framework development; (3) were published in non-peer-reviewed outlets, conference proceedings, or predatory journals; or (4) focused solely on consumer behavior without linking back to organizational performance or internal cultural drivers.

Data Extraction and Critical Synthesis

Data extraction focused on theoretical frameworks (e.g., RBV, NRBV, TPB, Institutional Theory), methodological designs (cross-sectional, longitudinal, qualitative), contextual settings (developed vs. emerging economies), and key findings regarding the KAP dimensions and the mediating/moderating roles of organizational culture. The synthesis was structured thematically, prioritizing the comparison and contrast of conflicting empirical findings and highlighting the evolution of theoretical paradigms.

Green Marketing: Evolution, Concepts and Contemporary Perspectives

The conceptualization of green marketing has undergone a profound evolution, transitioning from a peripheral "eco-friendly" niche in the 1980s to a central pillar of corporate strategy and competitive advantage (Khan, 2025). Early definitions focused primarily on the physical attributes of products and the ecological consequences of consumption (Peattie, 2025). However, contemporary perspectives define green marketing as a holistic management paradigm that encompasses the entire value chain—from sustainable sourcing and green product design to eco-labeling, green pricing, and the communication of environmental value to stakeholders (Khan, 2025; Peattie, 2025).

The KAP Framework in a B2B and SME Context

While the Knowledge, Attitude, and Practice (KAP) model originated in public health and environmental psychology, its application to organizational green marketing has gained significant traction (Hemsworth et al., 2026; Panjaitan & Cahya, 2025).

Green Knowledge: In the SME context, green knowledge refers to the cognitive capital required to understand environmental regulations, sustainable technologies, and the lifecycle impacts of products. Recent literature emphasizes that green knowledge is not merely about awareness but involves "absorptive capacity"—the ability of an SME to recognize, assimilate, and apply external environmental knowledge to internal operations (Haqqani et al., 2026).

Green Attitude: This dimension captures the psychological disposition of SME owners and managers toward environmental stewardship. According to the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), attitude, coupled with subjective norms and perceived behavioral control, dictates behavioral intention (Hemsworth et al., 2026; Panjaitan & Cahya, 2025). In SMEs, where the owner-manager's personal values often inextricably intertwine with corporate strategy, green attitude is a potent predictor of strategic intent.

Green Practice: The behavioral manifestation of knowledge and attitude, encompassing the actual implementation of green supply chain management, waste reduction, energy efficiency, and eco-innovation (Ismail, 2025).

A critical debate in contemporary literature is the persistent "attitude-behavior gap"—the phenomenon where high levels of green knowledge and positive attitudes fail to translate into actual green practices (Khan, 2025). In the SME context, this gap is frequently attributed to resource poverty. SMEs may possess the attitude and knowledge to adopt green practices but lack the financial capital, technological infrastructure, or economies of scale to implement them (Ismail, 2025; Legese et al., 2026). Furthermore, the literature is increasingly critical of "greenwashing"—the deceptive practice of marketing products as environmentally friendly without substantive operational changes (Persakis et al., 2025; Koch & Denner, 2025). Recent studies argue that without a deeply embedded organizational culture, green marketing initiatives in SMEs risk being perceived as superficial greenwashing, which can severely damage brand equity and stakeholder trust in an era of hyper-transparency (Khan, 2025).

Organizational Culture and Sustainable Business Practices

Organizational culture (OC) is widely recognized as the social glue that dictates how an organization navigates external adaptation and internal integration (Asare Obeng et al., 2025). In the context of sustainability, the emergence of Green Organizational Culture (GOC) represents a critical shift from viewing environmental management as a compliance issue to treating it as a core cultural value (Chen & Cao, 2025).

GOC is defined as the shared assumptions, values, and artifacts that prioritize environmental stewardship and guide pro-environmental behaviors across all organizational levels (Chen & Cao, 2025; Legese et al., 2026). It transcends formal environmental management systems (EMS) by embedding sustainability into the informal norms and daily routines of employees. A strong GOC fosters an environment where flexibility, innovation, and risk-taking are aligned with ecological goals, driving green product innovation and eco-design. Conversely, highly rigid, hierarchy-driven cultures often struggle to foster the intrinsic motivation required for proactive sustainability initiatives unless driven by stringent external regulatory pressures (Asare Obeng et al., 2025).

The Role of Green Human Resource Management (GHRM)

A critical mechanism for developing GOC is Green Human Resource Management (GHRM). Empirical studies demonstrate that GHRM practices—such as green recruitment, environmental training, and eco-centric performance appraisals—signal organizational priorities to employees, thereby socializing them into a green culture (Momeni Mahmouei, 2025; Khan et al., 2025). In SMEs, where formal HR structures are often absent, the owner-manager plays a disproportionate role in modeling pro-environmental behaviors and establishing the cultural tone (Ismail, 2025). The literature highlights a symbiotic relationship: GHRM cultivates GOC, and a strong GOC, in turn, reinforces the efficacy of GHRM practices by providing a supportive social context for green behaviors (Momeni Mahmouei, 2025; Khan et al., 2025).

Critical Perspectives on Cultural Change in SMEs

While the benefits of GOC are well-documented, the literature reveals a critical tension regarding cultural change in SMEs. Unlike large corporations that can mandate cultural shifts through massive change-management programs, SME culture is

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deeply entrenched in the founder's worldview (Ismail, 2025). Therefore, shifting an SME's culture toward sustainability requires more than strategic mandates; it requires a fundamental realignment of the owner-manager's cognitive frameworks and the organization's core identity. Furthermore, critics argue that much of the GOC literature suffers from conceptual tautology, where culture is defined by the very behaviors it is supposed to explain, necessitating more rigorous, independent operationalization of cultural constructs (Abdelwahed et al., 2025).

SME Performance and Sustainability

The evaluation of SME performance in the context of green marketing requires a departure from traditional, purely financial metrics. The contemporary paradigm embraces the Triple Bottom Line (TBL) framework, which assesses performance across economic, environmental, and social dimensions (Bhatti et al., 2025).

Redefining Performance

Beyond Financial Metrics Financial performance indicators (e.g., ROI, ROA, profit margins) remain crucial for SME survival, particularly in volatile emerging markets like Oman (Kashob & Chakor, 2025). However, relying solely on financial metrics obscures the value generated by green marketing, such as enhanced brand reputation, customer loyalty, risk mitigation, and access to green supply chains (Khan, 2025). Recent literature advocates for a multidimensional construct of "Sustainable Organizational Performance," which captures the synergistic effects of economic viability, environmental stewardship, and social responsibility (Zheng et al., 2025).

The Resource Poverty Paradox

A central theme in the SME sustainability literature is the "resource poverty paradox." SMEs are inherently constrained by limited financial capital, lack of specialized technical expertise, and restricted access to green technologies (Ismail, 2025). Consequently, the initial investment required for green marketing—such as sourcing eco-friendly materials, obtaining green certifications (e.g., ISO 14001), or investing in energy-efficient machinery—can severely strain SME cash flows, leading to short-term financial deterioration (Legese et al., 2026). However, the Natural Resource-Based View (NRBV) posits that these very constraints can drive frugal innovation and unique competitive advantages (Iliyas & Barca, 2025; Zheng et al., 2025). By adopting green practices, SMEs can achieve long-term cost reductions through waste minimization, energy efficiency, and process optimization, ultimately enhancing economic performance while mitigating environmental impact. The critical debate lies in the temporal dimension: green marketing often requires short-term financial sacrifices for long-term sustainable performance, a trade-off that is exceptionally challenging for resource-constrained SMEs to navigate (Khan, 2025).

Methodological Challenges in Measuring SME Green Performance

Methodologically, measuring SME green performance is fraught with challenges. The lack of standardized reporting frameworks for SMEs means that researchers often rely on subjective, self-reported perceptions of performance rather than objective, verifiable data (Kashob & Chakor, 2025). This reliance on perceptual measures introduces common method bias and limits the generalizability of findings (Polas, 2025). Furthermore, the attribution problem—isolating the impact of green marketing on performance from other confounding variables (e.g., macroeconomic shifts, general management quality)—remains a significant hurdle in empirical SME research.

The Relationship between Green Marketing and SME Performance

The direct relationship between green marketing and SME performance is one of the most extensively researched, yet highly contested, areas in contemporary business literature. The synthesis of recent empirical findings reveals a complex, non-linear relationship heavily contingent on contextual and moderating variables.

The Positive Nexus

Innovation, Differentiation, and Premium Pricing a substantial body of literature supports a positive relationship between green marketing and SME performance. From a strategic perspective, green marketing enables SMEs to differentiate their offerings in crowded markets, creating a Unique Selling Proposition (USP) that resonates with the growing demographic of eco-conscious consumers (Panjaitan & Cahya, 2025; Khan, 2025). Studies demonstrate that green knowledge and practices foster product and process innovations, which directly enhance operational efficiency and market competitiveness (Haqqani et al., 2026). Furthermore, the literature highlights the potential for "green premium pricing." Consumers with high environmental concern and perceived value are often willing to pay a premium for eco-friendly products, thereby improving the profit margins of SMEs that successfully communicate their green credentials (Panjaitan & Cahya, 2025). In B2B contexts, adopting green marketing practices allows SMEs to integrate into the global supply chains of multinational corporations, which increasingly mandate strict environmental compliance from their suppliers (Ismail, 2025).

3. Contradictory Findings

The Cost Barrier and Market Skepticism Conversely, a significant stream of research reports insignificant or even negative short-term relationships between green marketing and financial performance. Critics argue that the costs associated with green R&D, eco-labeling, and sustainable sourcing often outweigh the immediate financial returns, particularly for micro and small enterprises operating on thin margins (Ismail, 2025; Legese et al., 2026). Additionally, the phenomenon of consumer skepticism and greenwashing fatigue complicates the performance outcome. If consumers perceive an SME's green marketing claims as inauthentic or merely a ploy to justify higher prices, the resulting backlash can severely damage brand equity and sales performance (Büyükkarakaş, 2026). This contradiction suggests that green marketing is not a universal panacea for SME performance; rather, its efficacy is contingent upon the authenticity of the practices, the accuracy of consumer perceptions, and the supportive capacity of the internal organizational environment.

The divergence in empirical findings is largely explained by contextual moderators. In developed economies with stringent environmental regulations and high consumer purchasing power, green marketing consistently yields positive performance outcomes (Khan, 2025). However, in emerging markets like Oman, where price sensitivity is high and regulatory enforcement may be nascent, the financial returns on green marketing are less certain (Al Mashani, 2025; Kashob & Chakor, 2025). This contextual disparity underscores the danger of applying Western-centric green marketing models to emerging economies without accounting for institutional voids and local market dynamics.

The Mediating Role of Organizational Culture

To resolve the contradictions surrounding the direct impact of green marketing on SME performance, recent scholarship has shifted focus toward the mediating mechanisms that translate strategic intent into operational reality. Organizational culture, specifically Green Organizational Culture (GOC), has emerged as the critical "black box" in this nomological network (Abdelwahed et al., 2025; Legese et al., 2026).

Bridging the Gap between KAP and Performance

The KAP model posits that Knowledge and Attitude lead to Practice. However, as previously noted, the "attitude-behavior gap" frequently disrupts this progression. Organizational culture acts as the vital bridging mechanism. A strong GOC provides the psychological safety, shared norms, and intrinsic motivation required to convert individual green attitudes into collective organizational practices (Chen & Cao, 2025; Asare Obeng et al., 2025). When an SME possesses a robust GOC, green knowledge is not merely stored as intellectual capital; it is actively disseminated, debated, and applied to solve operational problems. Similarly, positive green attitudes are reinforced through socialization processes, peer influence, and leadership modeling, ensuring that environmental stewardship becomes a normalized, expected behavior rather than an isolated, voluntary act (Legese et al., 2026). Consequently, it is the cultural actualization of green knowledge and attitude—manifested as tangible green practices—that ultimately drives sustainable performance (Abdelwahed et al., 2025).

Theoretical Underpinnings: NRBV and TPB

The mediating role of organizational culture is best explained through the integration of the Natural Resource-Based View (NRBV) and the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB).

NRBV Perspective: Zheng et al. (2025) and Haqqani et al., (2026) argue that competitive advantage derived from the natural environment is rooted in three capabilities: pollution prevention, product stewardship, and sustainable development. These capabilities are not merely technological; they are deeply embedded in the organization's culture and human capital. A GOC facilitates the continuous learning and cross-functional collaboration necessary to develop these tacit, socially complex, and causally ambiguous capabilities, which are immune to rapid imitation by competitors (Haqqani et al., 2026; Iliyas & Barca, 2025).

TPB Perspective: From a behavioral standpoint, TPB asserts that behavior is driven by intention, which is shaped by attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control (Hemsworth et al., 2026). Organizational culture directly influences the "subjective norms" (the perceived social pressure to engage in green behavior) and "perceived behavioral control" (the organizational support and resources available to execute green practices). Therefore, a supportive GOC amplifies the behavioral intentions of SME employees, ensuring that green marketing strategies are executed with fidelity and vigor (Hemsworth et al., 2026; Panjaitan & Cahya, 2025).

Empirical Evidence of Mediation

Recent empirical studies provide robust support for the mediating role of organizational culture. For instance, Legese et al. (2026) found that green knowledge management positively influences green innovation and performance, but this relationship

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is significantly amplified by the presence of a green organizational culture. Similarly, Abdelwahed et al. (2025)demonstrated that organizational culture positively influences green attitudes, which in turn drive pro-environmental behaviors. In the SME context, where formal structures are weak, the informal cultural fabric is the primary vehicle for aligning individual behaviors with corporate sustainability goals (Ismail, 2025; Legese et al., 2026). Thus, organizational culture is not merely a contextual backdrop; it is an active, mediating variable that determines the efficacy of green marketing investments.

A critical synthesis of the reviewed literature reveals profound theoretical, methodological, and contextual debates that currently define the boundaries of knowledge in this domain.

Theoretical Debates: RBV vs. NRBV vs. Institutional Theory

Theoretically, the field is characterized by a tension between internal capability-driven views and external pressure-driven views. The Resource-Based View (RBV) and its extension, the NRBV, dominate the literature, emphasizing that green performance stems from unique, internally cultivated resources and cultures (Zheng et al. 2025; Haqqani et al., (2026). However, critics argue that the NRBV underestimates the coercive, mimetic, and normative pressures exerted by the institutional environment (Marculetiu et al., 2026). In emerging economies like Oman, SMEs often adopt green practices not because of an intrinsic cultural commitment or a pursuit of competitive advantage, but as a response to institutional pressures, such as government mandates (e.g., Oman Vision 2040) or the demands of foreign partners (Al Mashani, 2025; Kashob & Chakor,2025). Future theoretical frameworks must integrate Institutional Theory with the NRBV to explain how external pressures are internalized and transformed into authentic organizational culture and green practices.

Methodological Critiques

The Cross-Sectional Trap Methodologically, the literature suffers from a severe overreliance on cross-sectional, quantitative survey designs. The vast majority of studies measuring the KAP model, organizational culture, and SME performance utilize self-reported, perceptual data collected at a single point in time (Khan, 2025; Kashob & Chakor, 2025). This approach is fundamentally inadequate for capturing the dynamic, evolutionary nature of organizational culture and the long-term, lagged effects of green marketing on financial performance. Common Method Variance (CMV) and social desirability bias further compromise the validity of self-reported green practices, as SME managers may overstate their environmental commitments to appear socially responsible (Polas, 2025). There is a glaring absence of longitudinal studies, objective performance metrics, and mixed-methods research that can uncover the "how" and "why" behind the statistical correlations (Ebitu et al., 2026).

Contextual Gaps

The "WEIRD" Bias and the Emerging Market Void Contextually, the literature exhibits a pronounced "WEIRD" (Western, Educated, Industrialized, Rich, Democratic) bias. The overwhelming majority of empirical studies on green marketing and organizational culture are conducted in Europe, North America, or developed Asian economies (Khan, 2025; Paul & Ebitu et al., 2026). The specific dynamics of SMEs in emerging markets, particularly in the GCC region and Oman, remain critically underexplored. SMEs in Oman operate within a unique institutional context characterized by a heavy historical reliance on hydrocarbon revenues, a rapidly shifting regulatory landscape driven by Vision 2040, and a cultural milieu where family ties and tribal affiliations deeply influence organizational behavior (Al Mashani, 2025; Kashob & Chakor, 2025). Applying Western-derived models of GOC and green consumer behavior to this context without adaptation risks theoretical invalidity. For instance, the concept of "peer influence" in green purchasing may manifest differently in a collectivist, high-context culture like Oman compared to an individualistic Western society (Panjaitan & Cahya, 2025). Addressing this contextual void is not merely a matter of geographical expansion; it is essential for testing the boundary conditions and generalizability of existing green marketing theories.

4. Research Gaps and Future Research Agenda

Based on the critical synthesis, this paper identifies four primary research gaps and proposes a comprehensive future research agenda to advance the field.

Gap 1: The Temporal Dynamics of Green Culture and Performance

- The Gap: The assumption that green culture immediately yields performance improvements ignores the temporal lag inherent in sustainable investments and cultural evolution.
- Future Agenda: Scholars must employ longitudinal research designs to track the evolution of GOC and its lagged impact on SME performance over 3-5 year periods. Time-series analyses and panel data techniques should be utilized to establish causal directionality and account for the delayed financial returns of green marketing initiatives.

Gap 2: Objective Measurement and Mixed-Methods Approaches

- The Gap: The reliance on self-reported, perceptual data obscures the actual environmental and financial impact of green marketing.
- Future Agenda: Future research must integrate objective, verifiable metrics (e.g., utility bills for energy efficiency, waste audit reports, verified financial statements) with perceptual data. Furthermore, qualitative and mixed-methods approaches (e.g., case studies, ethnographic observations) are urgently needed to explore the nuanced, everyday interactions through which GOC is negotiated, resisted, or embraced by SME employees.

Gap 3: The Intersection of Digitalization and Green Marketing (Industry 4.0)

- The Gap: The current literature largely treats green marketing and digitalization as separate silos, ignoring the transformative potential of Industry 4.0 technologies (AI, Big Data, Blockchain, IoT) in enabling green practices.
- Future Agenda: Research should investigate how digital capabilities act as antecedents or moderators in the KAP framework. For example, how does the adoption of Big Data Analytics enhance Green Knowledge? How can Blockchain technology mitigate consumer skepticism and reduce the Greenwashing gap by providing transparent, verifiable supply chain data? Exploring the "Twin Transition" (digital and green) in SMEs is a highly promising frontier (Khan, 2025).

Gap 4: Institutional Voids and Supply Chain Spillovers in Emerging Markets

- The Gap: The influence of institutional voids (e.g., weak regulatory enforcement, lack of green financing) in emerging markets like Oman on the green marketing-performance nexus is poorly understood.
- Future Agenda: Future studies should examine how SMEs navigate institutional voids to achieve green performance. Additionally, research should explore supply chain spillover effects: How do the green cultural practices and marketing demands of large multinational anchor tenants in the GCC influence the sustainability trajectories of their local SME suppliers? Network-level analyses of SME clusters could provide valuable insights into the diffusion of green culture.

5. Conclusion

The transition towards a sustainable global economy necessitates the active participation of Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs). This critical review has synthesized the complex interplay between green marketing, organizational culture, and SME performance, moving beyond simplistic linear models to expose the nuanced dynamics of the Knowledge, Attitude, and Practice (KAP) framework. The literature unequivocally demonstrates that while green knowledge and positive attitudes are necessary precursors, they are insufficient on their own to generate sustainable competitive advantage. The persistent "attitude-behavior gap" and the threat of greenwashing highlight the critical mediating role of Green Organizational Culture (GOC). GOC serves as the vital socio-psychological infrastructure that translates strategic green intent into authentic, operationalized practices, ultimately driving multidimensional sustainable performance.

However, the field is currently hindered by theoretical fragmentation, methodological myopia, and a profound contextual bias toward developed economies. The application of the Natural Resource-Based View (NRBV) and the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) must be contextualized within the institutional realities of emerging markets like Oman, where resource constraints, cultural collectivism, and shifting regulatory landscapes create a unique paradigm for green entrepreneurship.

For practitioners and policymakers in the GCC and similar emerging economies, the implications are clear. Fostering green marketing is not merely a matter of launching eco-friendly ad campaigns or sourcing green materials; it requires a fundamental cultural transformation. Policymakers must move beyond punitive regulations and instead cultivate an enabling environment—through green financing, capacity-building, and institutional support—that lowers the barriers to green practice for resource-constrained SMEs. SME owners and managers must recognize that cultivating a Green Organizational Culture, supported by Green HRM practices, is the most potent mechanism for aligning employee behaviors with sustainability goals, thereby bridging the gap between green ambition and tangible, sustainable performance.

Ultimately, this review provides a foundational roadmap for future scholarship. By embracing longitudinal, mixed-methods, and contextually grounded research, the academic community can unlock the full potential of SMEs as drivers of the global green economy, ensuring that the pursuit of profitability and the preservation of the natural environment are no longer viewed as mutually exclusive, but as deeply intertwined imperatives for future survival and success.

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