



Dissertation thesis review

Author: Kwadwo Asante
Title: Enhancing Sustainable Innovation through Environmental Orientation: The Role of Dynamic Capabilities and Organisational Resilience in Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises
Opponent: doc. Ing. Martin Klepek, Ph.D.

Relevance of the dissertation topic

The thesis explores a highly relevant and timely topic. Environmental orientation and sustainable innovation have become central themes in contemporary management research and policy discourse. From this perspective, the candidate positions the research problem well: sustainability is indeed a pressing issue, and SMEs, especially in emerging economies, face unique constraints and opportunities. The introductory framing communicates this urgency convincingly and anchors the project in a meaningful societal context.

Dissertation objectives

The research gap is clearly articulated and grounded in up-to-date academic literature. The candidate reviews the relevant fields sufficiently and builds a coherent argument for examining environmental orientation (EO), dynamic capabilities (DC), organisational resilience (OR) and sustainable innovation (SI) in an integrated model. However, several studies have already examined individual relationships included in the model. While the author acknowledges this, the thesis at times reads as an incremental extension “more or less it is yet another model.” Highlighting more sharply why this specific combination of EO–DC–OR–SI is theoretically original, and what Ghanaian SMEs uniquely contribute to the theoretical debate, would strengthen the justification.

The research objectives architecture is somewhat overloaded. The thesis presents ten research objectives and multiple research questions; this complexity is not always necessary. A more parsimonious structure, one overarching question capturing the whole model, with hypotheses unpacking its internal logic, would improve clarity. However, this is partially dependent on faculty conventions.

Methods, results, and author's contributions

Some parts of the theoretical development are less convincing and would benefit from clearer conceptual articulation. Chapters 2.1.2 and 2.3.4 in particular required multiple readings, yet the underlying logic for positioning organisational resilience within the model still did not become evident. The argument does not sufficiently explain why resilience, rather than another organisational capability, should mediate or complement environmental orientation and dynamic capabilities. I look forward to discussing the author's intended rationale during the defence, where verbal clarification may help illuminate the reasoning.

A minor issue appears in Chapter 2.1.2, where the text introduces the notion of communities. However, communities are not central to the core constructs of the thesis, nor is their relevance to the stated research objectives clearly established. Their inclusion therefore seems marginal and disrupts the otherwise focused theoretical narrative.

Another minor issue is the transition between Chapter 2.2 and 2.2.1. The absence of a short orienting paragraph or preview of the sections that follow interrupts the reading flow. Typically, academic writing at this level provides a brief bridging commentary to guide the reader from one conceptual block to the next, and inserting such a transition here would strengthen the structure of the chapter.

The hypothesis development is coherent but tends to proceed too smoothly, with minimal critical debate. The review of literature leans heavily toward findings that support the proposed relationships. Missing are: opposing results, unresolved tensions, inconsistent findings, or alternative theoretical viewpoints. Including these would have strengthened the argument and demonstrated deeper critical engagement with the literature.

Some hypotheses are rather trivial. For example, H1: *environmental orientation influences sustainable innovation* is not surprising. The author himself cites studies such as Roxas et al. (2017) and Gua & Wang (2022) that have already confirmed this. If the main ambition is instead to test the mediation effects of DCs and OR, then the dissertation should emphasise that as the central research objective, rather than treating the direct effects as major contributions. This is connected with extensive ten research objectives decision. Despite these shortcomings, the theoretical model on page 43 is a clear visualisation and supports reader comprehension.

The sampling strategy is one of the methodological strengths of the thesis. The use of power analysis to determine the appropriate sample size is commendable and demonstrates solid methodological awareness, ensuring that the study is adequately powered to detect the proposed effects.

More problematic, however, is the overall measurement strategy. As is common in this research tradition, the thesis relies almost exclusively on latent variables derived from self-reported Likert-scale items. Yet the author himself acknowledges on page 49 that previous studies have employed objective indicators such as patents and certifications. Despite this recognition, the thesis does not offer any discussion of why these objective measures were not incorporated, what their methodological strengths or weaknesses might be, or how their exclusion may limit the robustness and external validity of the findings. Instead, the work moves directly into a survey-based PLS-SEM design without critically justifying this choice.

This lack of reflection is symptomatic of a broader trend in the literature, where PLS-SEM is often favoured not because it best advances practical relevance but because it increases the likelihood of publication. While this may reflect the realities of “publish or perish,” it also contributes to the widening gap between academic research and managerial practice. Including a more explicit critique (see Mingers 2000) of these methodological constraints and acknowledging the limitations of relying solely on perceptual Likert-scale data, would significantly strengthen the empirical foundations of the thesis.

Chapters 4 and 5 present more than thirty pages of detailed statistical modelling, executed with care and providing ample material for academic discussion. Despite their technical robustness, however, these analyses yield relatively little actionable guidance for practitioners, which reflects a broader pattern in the thesis where theoretical and statistical sophistication is not matched by practical applicability. This issue becomes particularly evident in a conceptual inconsistency on page 97, where the thesis asserts that “sensing capability is a key to firms’ environmental orientation outcomes.” Earlier results, however, indicate that sensing, seizing, and resilient behaviour were *not* statistically supported within the model. This discrepancy creates confusion: if the empirical analysis did not confirm these relationships, it is unclear on what grounds the candidate recommends that firms invest in sensing capability to enhance environmental orientation. Without demonstrated effects on sustainable innovation, such managerial recommendations lack empirical justification and undermine the internal consistency of the thesis.

Significance for practice and development of the scientific field

The theoretical discussion is generally well written, and the academic contributions of the thesis are evident; the candidate demonstrates strong analytical competence and a solid grasp of the relevant literature. However, the managerial implications constitute the weakest part of the work. Many of the recommendations are extremely vague for example, the statement that “SMEs should actively invest in building their resilience capabilities” resembles a doctor telling a patient simply to “get healthy”: correct in principle but offering no actionable guidance. Several other recommendations do not logically follow from the empirical findings. The suggestion that “SME managers should also become efficient in resource management by channelling their financial, cognitive and relational resources to areas that need urgent resources” lacks any clear connection to the new knowledge produced by the study and reads more like generic managerial rhetoric than implications grounded in validated relationships. Compounding this issue, the discussion sometimes elevates capabilities that were *not* supported in the statistical model, such as sensing capability, to the level of key recommendations, which undermines the internal consistency of the thesis. Overall, the work is theoretically rich and academically strong but provides limited practical value for SME managers. Given the candidate’s evident competence and the real-world importance of the topic, this is unfortunate; doctoral research, particularly in the context of SMEs in a developing economy, should strive to generate meaningful managerial impact rather than merely contributing to the “publish or perish” cycle.

Formal requirements of the thesis

The work is formally correct. Only minor discrepancies and typos can be found, such as indentation of data in the table on page 67.

Overall summary

This is a very solid academic work, demonstrating strong scholarly potential and analytical ability. The candidate handles the literature, the statistical modelling, and the theoretical synthesis. The work clearly contributes to the academic understanding of sustainable innovation in SMEs. However, practical relevance, especially managerial implications, remains the most limited aspect of the thesis. The thesis should ensure internal consistency between empirical results and recommendations, justify methodological choices more critically, and articulate more clearly why specific constructs belong in the model.

Authors publications

The list of the publication is impressive for Ph.D. candidate with many Q1 journal articles. Given the breadth and thematic variety of the student’s publication record, it is clear that he possesses strong research talent and a very good understanding of how academic publishing works. I look forward to hearing more about this during the defence.

I do recommend the thesis for defence

Doc. Ing. Martin Klepek, Ph.D.

In Karviná 4.12.2025