

Artificial Intelligence and Green Innovation: A Pathway to Sustainable Business Practices

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Abstract: Companies today face growing challenges in becoming sustainable. Sustainable business models help companies address environmental, social, and economic problems in creative and responsible ways. This study looks at how artificial intelligence (AI) supports sustainable business models, with a focus on the role of green innovation (such as eco-friendly technologies) in this process. A correlational research design, structural equation modelling (SEM) was applied to survey data collected from 118 senior managers and executives working in science and technology parks across Iran. The findings reveal that AI significantly strengthens both green innovation practices and sustainable business model. Furthermore, green innovation not only directly enhances sustainable business models but also acts as a mediator in relationship between AI and long-term sustainability outcomes. This suggests a sequential relationship: AI adoption drives advancements in green innovation, which in turn enables organizations to reimagine their business models to align with global sustainability goals.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence, Green Innovation, Sustainable Business Model Innovation; SEM

1. Introduction

The most significant challenge facing organizations today is the reality of transformation and change. Undoubtedly, an organization's ability to adapt to such changes is critical to its long-term survival. In today's dynamic and highly competitive market, innovation is crucial for organizational sustainability (Noruzy et al., 2013). Moreover, environmental performance and compliance with ecological regulations now serve as competitive advantages for businesses (Tseng et al., 2013; Wiredu et al., 2024). Consequently, aligning innovations with environmental considerations is imperative. This necessity has given rise to the concept of sustainable innovation, which emphasizes that all innovations must contribute to improving an organization's environmental efficiency. Examples include innovations in production processes that reduce energy and natural resource consumption, enhance recycling efficiency, or minimize environmental pollution (Adomako & Tran, 2024; Ribeiro et al., 2024).

1.1 Sustainable Business Model Innovation

Business model innovation is critical for corporate survival, business performance, and as a source of competitive advantage (Casadesus-Masanell & Zhu, 2013; Ramdani et al., 2019; Gholami et al., 2013). By pursuing innovation in their business models, companies explore novel ways to redefine value propositions, create value, and deliver value to customers, suppliers, and partners (Nazari-Shirkouhi et al., 2015; Bock et al., 2012). Business model innovation is defined as "intentional, innovative, and non-marginal changes to a firm's core business model elements and/or the architecture linking these elements" (Foss & Saebi, 2017, p. 201). Business model innovations potentially yield higher returns than product or process innovations (Lindgardt et al., 2012), and sustainable business models may provide additional advantages, such as risk reduction and enhanced resilience (Tavana et al., 2021; Choi & Wang, 2009), while creating opportunities for diversification and shared value (Porter & Kramer, 2011). To realize these benefits, organizations are increasingly adopting sustainable solutions (Geissdoerfer et al., 2018). Sustainable business model innovation has emerged as a promising approach to advancing corporate sustainability (Guo et al., 2022), which prioritizes generating economic, environmental, and social benefits for all stakeholders over traditional profit-maximization objectives (Bocken et al., 2014; Roshan & Balodi, 2024).

1.2 Green Innovation

Green innovation refers to innovations in products, processes, and management that enable organizations to achieve environmentally sustainable competitive advantages (Agrawal et al., 2024). Seman et al. (2012) define green innovation as software- or hardware-based technological innovations tied to green products or processes, such as energy conservation, waste recycling, eco-friendly product design, or organizational environmental management. Additionally, organizational innovation is regarded as a new perspective, idea, product, service, or process aimed at reducing negative environmental impacts (Liu et al., 2021). Broadly, the goal of green

innovation is to mitigate adverse environmental effects (Tseng et al., 2013; Alipour et al., 2022; Zameer et al., 2020), and it plays a critical role across the entire value chain, from suppliers to consumers (Zhu et al., 2010; Nazari-Shirkouhi et al., 2023a). Studies have demonstrated that green innovation significantly and positively influences sustainable business performance (Heidari et al., 2025; Baeshen et al., 2021; Zhao & Huang, 2022; Liu et al., 2023; Borah et al., 2025).

1.3 Artificial Intelligence

Artificial intelligence (AI) refers to machines designed to perform intelligent tasks traditionally carried out by humans (Karizaki et al., 2024; Wang et al., 2022). Today, AI and blockchain technologies can revolutionize existing processes, develop innovative business models, and transform industries (Ertel, 2024). AI adoption reduces costs and enhances business forecasting and operations (Agarwal et al., 2021). Consequently, organizations increasingly focus on AI due to its high potential for improving performance (Badghish & Soomro, 2024). AI offers opportunities to address modern societal challenges, significantly contributing to quality of life and environmental conservation (de Andreis et al., 2024). AI can optimize production processes, enhance resource efficiency, and facilitate the creation of eco-friendly materials. By leveraging AI, manufacturers can reduce environmental footprints while improving operational efficiency and product quality. AI enables effective resource management, minimizes waste, optimizes production, and supports sustainable material development—key factors in advancing industries toward more sustainable production paradigms (Lodhi et al., 2024; Wang & Zhang, 2025; de Andreis et al., 2024). Furthermore, studies highlight AI’s role in driving green innovation (Wang et al., 2025; Cheng et al., 2025; Farmanesh et al., 2025). Recent studies, such as Latifi et al. (2024), emphasize the importance of technological quality frameworks—similar to those applied in virtual reality contexts—in understanding how technological attributes influence user perceptions and behavioral intentions, which can be extended to green innovation and sustainable practices.

1.4 Conceptual Model

In today’s world, AI stands as one of the most transformative modern technologies, reshaping numerous facets of business. This technology enables organizations to achieve significant improvements in their processes, products, and services. However, alongside AI’s numerous advantages, challenges persist in implementing sustainable business models. Sustainable business models are designed to benefit not only organizations but also society and the environment. In this context, green innovation is recognized as a key approach that empowers organizations to optimize natural resource utilization and reduce adverse environmental impacts. Consequently, this study investigates AI’s role in driving sustainable business model innovation, with a specific focus on analyzing the mediating role of green innovation in this process. The findings can guide organizations in designing more effective strategies to integrate AI and green innovation into their business models, thereby advancing sustainable development and minimizing environmental harm. Figure 1 illustrates the research’s conceptual model.

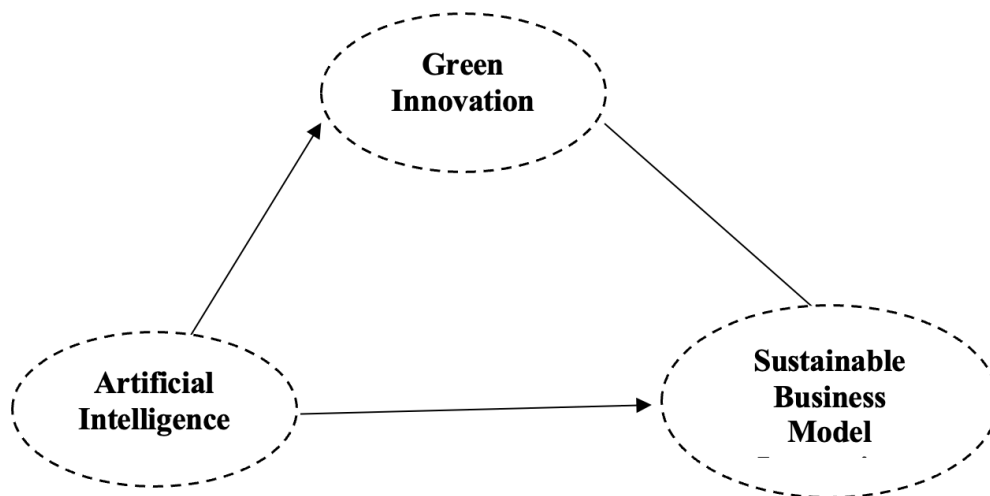


Figure 1: Research Conceptual Model

2. Research Methodology

The present study employs a descriptive-correlational methodology based on structural equation modeling (SEM), as it investigates relationships between variables through a structural equation modeling framework.

2.1 Statistical Population and Sample

The statistical population consisted of managers and deputy managers of Iranian science and technology companies. A total of 130 questionnaires were distributed among this population in 2024, of which 118 were returned and analyzed.

2.2 Data Collection Tools

Sustainable Business Model Innovation (SBMI) was measured using the 9-item questionnaire developed by Bhatti et al. (2021). Green Innovation (GI) was assessed via the 6-item questionnaire by Chang (2011). AI was evaluated using the 22-item questionnaire by Chen et al. (2022). This tool measures five dimensions: AI Management (3 items); AI-Based Decision-Making (4 items); AI Infrastructure (5 items); AI Skills (5 items); AI Readiness (5 items). All items were rated on a five-point Likert scale ranging from *strongly disagree* (1) to *strongly agree* (5).

3. Findings

3.1 Measurement Model Test

The measurement model evaluates the reliability (internal consistency) and discriminant validity of constructs and instruments. Based on Nazari-Shirkouhi et al. (2023b) framework, three criteria were applied: Item reliability: Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) factor loadings ≥ 0.6 , with statistical significance ($p < 0.01$) validated via a 500-subsample bootstrap test (Gefen & Straub, 2005; Tavarna et al., 2021; Tavarna et al., 2022). Composite reliability: Assessed using Dillon-Goldstein's rho (ρ_c), requiring values ≥ 0.7 . Average variance extracted (AVE): Threshold of ≥ 0.50 , indicating the construct explains $\geq 50\%$ of indicator variance (Chin, 1988). As shown in Table 1, all constructs met these criteria, confirming robust reliability and validity of the measurement model.

Table 1: Factor Loadings, Composite Reliability, and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) of Research Variables

Variable	Item	Factor Loading	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability	Average variance extracted
AI Management	1	0.947	0.868	0.921	0.798
	2	0.95			
	3	0.771			
AI-Based Decision-Making	1	0.894	0.890	0.924	0.754
	2	0.892			
	3	0.889			
	4	0.794			
AI Infrastructure	1	0.795	0.807	0.868	0.571
	2	0.646			
	3	0.653			
	4	0.817			
	5	0.843			
AI Skills	1	0.806	0.905	0.929	0.724
	2	0.841			
	3	0.848			
	4	0.885			
	5	0.874			

Variable	Item	Factor Loading	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability	Average variance extracted
AI Readiness	1	0.83	0.865	0.903	0.650
	2	0.787			
	3	0.825			
	4	0.758			
	5	0.828			
Green Innovation	1	0.837	0.913	0.933	0.699
	2	0.891			
	3	0.842			
	4	0.84			
	5	0.87			
	6	0.729			
Sustainable Business Model Innovation	1	0.887	0.944	0.953	0.692
	2	0.875			
	3	0.795			
	4	0.803			
	5	0.778			
	6	0.794			
	7	0.882			
	8	0.853			
	9	0.81			

Discriminant validity was evaluated using two criteria outlined by Chin (1988): first, item alignment, which requires that indicators load most strongly on their assigned construct—meaning higher factor loadings on their own construct than on others—with minimal cross-loadings; and second, the AVE comparison, where the square root of the AVE for each construct must exceed its correlations with all other constructs.

Table 2: Cross-Factor Loadings for Assessing Questionnaire Validity

	AI	Green Innovation	Sustainable Business Model Innovation
AI1	0.947	0.468	0.413
AI2	0.950	0.450	0.424
AI3	0.771	0.461	0.385
AI4	0.894	0.480	0.338
AI5	0.892	0.610	0.451
AI6	0.889	0.538	0.414
AI7	0.794	0.434	0.406
AI8	0.817	0.604	0.425
AI9	0.843	0.606	0.344
AI10	0.795	0.627	0.444
AI11	0.646	0.289	0.329
AI12	0.653	0.498	0.354
AI13	0.806	0.481	0.402
AI14	0.841	0.460	0.533
AI15	0.848	0.447	0.446

	AI	Green Innovation	Sustainable Business Model Innovation
AI16	0.885	0.435	0.437
AI17	0.874	0.531	0.471
AI18	0.787	0.342	0.351
AI19	0.825	0.411	0.282
AI20	0.758	0.438	0.345
AI21	0.830	0.531	0.524
AI22	0.828	0.439	0.398
GI1	0.560	0.837	0.516
GI2	0.600	0.891	0.546
GI3	0.554	0.842	0.481
GI4	0.536	0.840	0.500
GI5	0.595	0.870	0.474
GI6	0.524	0.729	0.409
SBMI2	0.540	0.518	0.887
SBMI3	0.434	0.453	0.875
SBMI4	0.378	0.414	0.795
SBMI5	0.478	0.482	0.803
SBMI6	0.521	0.465	0.778
SBMI7	0.464	0.482	0.794
SBMI8	0.532	0.547	0.882
SBMI9	0.505	0.448	0.853
SBMI1	0.349	0.426	0.810

As shown in Table 2, all dimensions demonstrate the highest factor loadings on their respective constructs, with a minimum gap of 0.1 between their own construct’s loadings and those of others. This confirms the adequate discriminant validity of the research constructs.

Table 3 reveals that the square roots of AVE for all research variables are greater than their correlations with other variables, satisfying the second criterion for discriminant validity. Additionally, the sub-diagonal correlation coefficients indicate positive and significant relationships between all variables.

Table 3: Correlation Matrix and Square Roots of AVE

	AI	Green Innovation	Sustainable Business Model Innovation
AI	0.861		
Green Innovation	0.672	0.836	
Sustainable Business Model Innovation	0.569	0.585	0.832

3.2 Structural Model Test

The proposed conceptual model for predicting sustainable business model innovation was evaluated using SEM. To test the hypotheses, the Partial Least Squares (PLS) method was employed for model estimation. A bootstrap test (with 500 subsamples) was applied to calculate t-statistics for determining the significance of path coefficients. Figure 2 illustrates the tested model, depicting relationships between variables, with values inside circles representing the explained variance of the constructs.

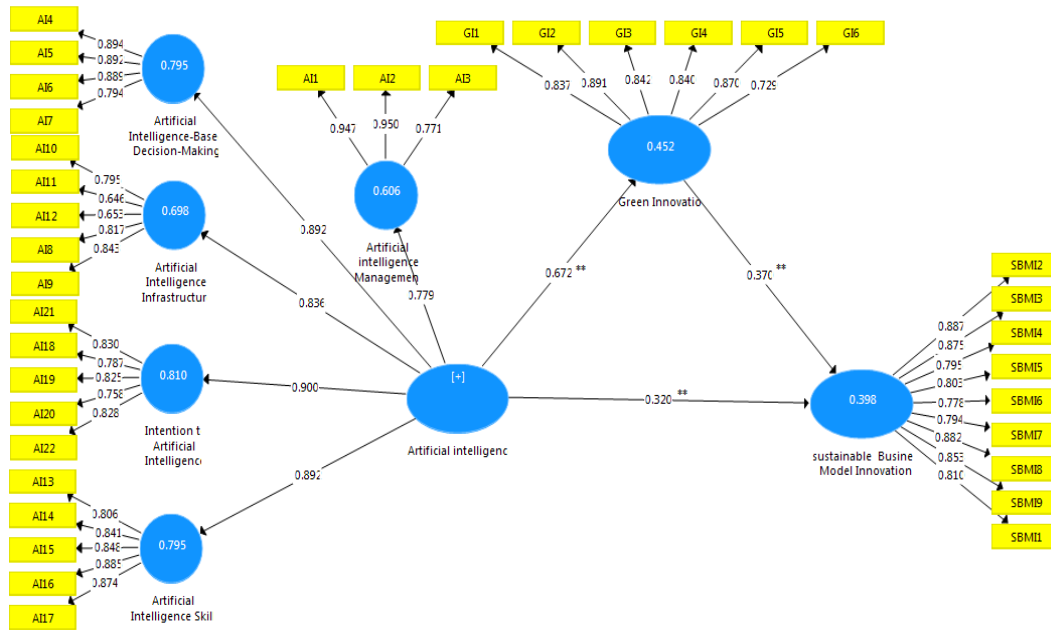


Figure 2: Tested Model

Table 4 reports the estimated path coefficients and explained variance of the research variables.

Table 4: Path Coefficients and Explained Variance

Variables	Path Coefficients	t-Values	Explained Variance
On Sustainable Business Model Innovation from:			
Green Innovation	0.37**	3.153	0.398
AI	0.32**	3.361	0.398
On Green Innovation from:			
AI	0.67**	11.688	0.45

*p<0.05, **p<0.01

As shown in Table 4, the effects of AI on green innovation and sustainable business model innovation are positive and statistically significant. Similarly, the impact of green innovation on sustainable business model innovation is also positive and significant. Furthermore, the model explains 40% of the variance in sustainable business model innovation and 45% of the variance in green innovation. Table 5 presents the indirect coefficients.

Table 5: Indirect Coefficients

Indirect Paths	Indirect Effects	T Statistics	P Values
AI -> Green Innovation -> sustainable Business Model Innovation	0.249	2.997	0.003

As observed in Table 5, green innovation plays a significant and positive mediating role in the effect of AI on sustainable business model innovation. For the tested model in this study, the absolute Goodness-of-Fit Index (GOF) value was 0.66, indicating a strong model fit. Values above 0.36 are considered acceptable and reflect adequate model quality.

4. Discussion

The present study aimed to investigate the impact of AI on sustainable business model innovation through the mediating role of green innovation using SEM. Results indicated that the proposed model demonstrated a relatively good fit with the data, explaining 40% of the variance in sustainable business model innovation and 45% of the variance in green innovation.

The results revealed a positive and significant effect of AI on green innovation. This finding aligns with studies by Wang et al. (2025), Cheng et al. (2025), and Farmanesh et al. (2025). AI's ability to provide innovative solutions for environmental challenges—such as optimizing energy consumption, streamlining supply chains, and minimizing waste—plays a critical role in advancing sustainable technologies. For instance, AI-driven simulations and predictive analytics enable organizations to forecast environmental impacts, facilitating data-driven decisions for eco-friendly strategies. Furthermore, AI enhances cross-organizational collaboration, accelerating the development and adoption of green innovations.

AI also exerted a positive and significant influence on sustainable business model innovation, consistent with findings from Lodhi et al. (2024), Wang & Zhang (2025), and de Andreis et al. (2024). As a transformative technology, AI empowers businesses to redesign operational processes, reduce costs, and align economic goals with environmental sustainability. Machine learning algorithms enable organizations to identify inefficiencies, optimize resource use, and tailor customer-centric solutions that balance profitability with ecological responsibility and business performance (Bagherabad et al., 2025). By analyzing consumer behavior, AI tools help firms develop products and services that meet market demands while adhering to sustainability principles (Saremi et al., 2024).

Green innovation significantly mediated the relationship between AI and sustainable business model innovation. This result corroborates research by Baeshen et al. (2021), Zhao & Huang (2022), Liu et al. (2023), and Borah et al. (2025). Green innovation drives systemic changes in organizational processes, products, and services, reducing ecological footprints while enhancing economic efficiency. By integrating clean technologies and sustainable practices, businesses achieve cost savings, strengthen brand reputation, and unlock new market opportunities. Continuous improvements in supply chain management and waste reduction further solidify the alignment between innovation and long-term sustainability (Nazari-Shirkouhi and Samadi, 2025).

5. Conclusion

This study aimed to investigate the impact of AI on sustainable business model innovation and the mediating role of green innovation. Findings revealed that AI has a positive and significant effect on green innovation, aligning with prior research. AI serves as a creative and effective tool for addressing environmental challenges, fostering technologies that reduce resource consumption and minimize ecological footprints. For instance, AI optimizes energy management, supply chains, and waste reduction while enabling predictive simulations for sustainable decision-making. AI also directly enhances sustainable business model innovation by empowering organizations to design novel solutions that create customer value and achieve economic, social, and environmental sustainability. Key mechanisms include process optimization, cost reduction, and data-driven insights into consumer preferences, enabling firms to balance profitability with ecological responsibility. The mediating role of green innovation underscores its importance in translating AI's potential into sustainable business practices. By integrating clean technologies and circular economy principles, organizations reduce operational waste, strengthen brand reputation, and unlock new market opportunities. In summary, this research highlights the critical role of AI and green innovation in advancing sustainable development goals. These findings emphasize the need for businesses to prioritize AI-driven strategies and green practices to remain competitive while fulfilling their social and environmental responsibilities.

In contrast to prior research that primarily examines the direct effects of AI or green innovation separately, our study investigates the mediating role of green innovation in the relationship between AI and sustainable business model innovation. Unlike earlier studies limited to specific technological applications or industry contexts, our research provides a comprehensive model based on data collected from Iranian science and technology parks, offering regional insights into how AI-driven green innovation facilitates sustainable business transformation. Additionally, by employing SEM approach, we quantitatively demonstrate the sequential process through which AI adoption fosters green innovation, which subsequently leads to sustainable business model innovation, thus advancing theoretical understanding of these interconnected phenomena.

5.1 Limitations and Future Directions

A primary limitation of this study is its reliance on self-reported data collected through questionnaires, which may be influenced by respondents' biases. To enhance the validity of findings, future research could adopt mixed-methods approaches (qualitative and quantitative) to gain deeper insights into the relationships between variables. Additionally, this study focused on managers and deputy managers of Iranian science and technology companies, and the results may be shaped by cultural, economic, and social factors specific to this region. Future studies could explore how these factors influence variable relationships across diverse contexts to improve generalizability.

Another limitation is the cross-sectional design, which restricts conclusions to a specific time frame. Longitudinal designs in future research could examine how innovation-related behaviors and variable impacts evolve over time. Finally, the correlational nature of this study must be acknowledged. While results indicate relationships between variables, causal inferences should be drawn cautiously.

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Ethics Declaration

This research did not involve any human or animal subjects requiring formal ethical clearance. All data were collected through voluntary, anonymous surveys and complied with institutional and professional ethical standards.

AI Declaration

Artificial intelligence tools were not used in the generation of content or analysis in this paper. All writing, data collection, and analysis were conducted manually by the authors.

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