

# Uncaptured Value in Sustainable Business Model Innovation: A Systematic Literature Review

## Abstract

**Purpose** – The purpose of this systematic literature review is to define and understand uncaptured value in the sustainable business model innovation process. Defining and understanding uncaptured value can lead to economic growth, sustainable development and competitive advantage which in turn can promote innovation and sustainability and lead to value opportunities with new value creation.

**Design/methodology/approach** – A systematic literature review was conducted using eight databases to identify articles by using the terms value uncaptured, value absence, value surplus, value destroyed and value missed with sustainable business model innovation.

**Findings** – Systematic literature reviews are common in several academic fields of study and reviews exist which focus on sustainable business model innovation with partial use of uncaptured value. This research paper outlines these two concepts into a framework which can be used towards future research, which also is discussed, explained and suggested.

**Originality/value** – A literature framework for the continued research on uncaptured value in sustainable business model innovation has been created and can be used as a stepping stone and discussion subject for the academic field.

**Keywords** – uncaptured value, sustainable business model innovation, sustainability, systematic literature review

**Paper type** – Research paper

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Sustainable business model innovation is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon which has been studied in different academical and industrial fields (Kurek et al., 2023; Molina-Castillo et al., 2021; Sinkovics et al., 2021). The research surrounding sustainable business model innovation has emerged and begun relatively recently (Evans et al., 2017b; Geissdoerfer et al., 2018). Sustainable business model innovation develops and implements new approaches of conducting business that not only prioritize economic growth, but also environmental and social factors, to create value and have a competitive advantage on the market (Ferlito & Faraci, 2022).

Bocken et al. (2019) and Pan et al. (2023) explain that the emerging concept of business model innovation, in combination with the need for incorporating sustainability and sustainable development in business models, led to the field of sustainable business model innovation. Hence, sustainable business model innovation is designed within the nexus of business models and is an overlapping concept containing innovation and sustainability factors. Sustainable business model innovation consists of different value flows, value perspectives and value building blocks where Shakeel et al. (2020) explain that the core logic in developing these models is value creation.

Various value flows, value perspectives and value building blocks are part of sustainable business model innovation, where Ferlito and Faraci (2022) highlight value sections, which consists of different value building blocks. The uncaptured value is explained by Yang et al. (2017a), which can be an effect or result from the value sections, and itself consists of different value perspectives such as value absence, value surplus, value destroyed and value missed. Evans et al. (2017a) adds that new value creation can be a product from the uncaptured value which leads to new opportunities for the business and sustainable business model innovation. Hence, an interplay can developed amongst value flows, value perspectives and value building blocks, which in turn can affect sustainable business model innovation in an organization. In this systematic literature review, attention is given towards uncaptured value due to it having an economical, social and environmental upside in understanding how to avoid uncaptured value or turn it into new value creation through value opportunities.

Different literature reviews surrounding sustainable business model innovation already exists, which partially incorporates various value flows, value perspectives and value building blocks, and the research field is still emerging and developing (Attanasio et al., 2022; Geissdoerfer et al., 2018; Pan et al., 2023; Sinkovics et al., 2021). Approaches to sustainable business model innovation and its processes, such as design thinking (Kurek et al., 2023) and impact on society (Molina-Castillo et al., 2021), has also been reviewed earlier. Hence, a theoretical framework has grown over the years involving aspects such as processes, design and implementation of sustainable business model innovation.

The innovation approach is exemplified by several research papers such as in Andreini et al. (2022), Evans et al. (2017b), Geissdoerfer et al. (2018), Kurek et al. (2023), Pan et al. (2023), Sinkovics et al. (2021) and Snihur and Bocken (2022). On the other side, examples using sustainability approaches can be found in Bocken et al. (2019), Broccardo et al. (2023), Lüdeke-Freund et al. (2020), Nosratabadi et al. (2019) and van Bommel et al. (2020). This indicates that several approaches can be identified and outlined in the existing literature which also highlights an interplay between innovation and sustainability that can lead to value creation but less attention is given to uncaptured value. Furthermore, Yang et al. (2017b) is highlighting the sustainability aspect in business model innovation where value is divided into three life cycle parts, the beginning of life, the middle of life and the end of life. By having a focus on the sustainable business model innovation process, the life cycle parts can

be used to analyze different value perspectives, stakeholders and value assessments. In turn, uncaptured value can lead to new value opportunities.

Sustainable business model innovation has a three-fold problem according to Evans et al. (2017b) and Geissdoerfer et al. (2018). Firstly, many business model innovation meetings and workshops are conducted, but the ideas are not followed up. Secondly, promising sustainable business model concepts are not implemented. Lastly, mostly implemented business models, especially in the start-up context, fail on the market. This can affect the value flows, value perspectives and value building blocks where the innovation process can lead to or result in uncaptured value for the organization. The research question for this systematic literature review will be based on the three-fold problem in sustainable business model innovation and are as follows:

*RQ: How can uncaptured value be defined and understood during the sustainable business model innovation process?*

This research paper provides a systematic literature review of uncaptured value in sustainable business model innovation to amend the existing knowledge gap, contribute to the theoretical framework and identify new research gaps for future research. It's noted that sustainable business model innovation is underexplored in academic studies, according to Geissdoerfer et al. (2017) and (2018), where future research and studies are called for. Kraus et al. (2020) explain that systematic literature reviews can be conducted by using four stages: planning the review, identifying and evaluating studies, extracting and synthesizing data and disseminate the review findings. The methodological approach is on macro level in this systematic literature review. The protocol for this paper will follow the mentioned stages in order to synthesize the existing body of literature in the academic field and identify research gaps which can be further studied in the future.

The introduction to this systematic literature will be followed by a theoretical outline of uncaptured value in sustainable business model innovation containing current insights. Then a methodological approach will be presented, followed by the findings in the systematic literature review. Lastly, a discussion surrounding the findings, providing answers to the research question, and suggestions for future research will conclude this review and research paper.

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