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GREEN ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND SUSTAINABLE BUSINESS PRACTICES: INSIGHTS FROM SMALL ENTREPRENEURS

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Keywords	***Abstract***
Green Entrepreneurship, Sustainable Business Practices, Eco-Friendly Business, Small Entrepreneurs, Environmental Sustainability, Business Performance.	Green entrepreneurship means starting and running a business that reduces harm to the environment. The study, "Green Entrepreneurship and Sustainable Business Practices: Insights from Small Entrepreneurs", try to understand the awareness, adoption, benefits, and challenges of green practices among small entrepreneurs in Kannur district. The data gathered from 75 small entrepreneurs through a structured questionnaire were analysed using percentage analysis, weighted mean, ranking method, one-sample t-test, one-way ANOVA, Pearson correlation, and independent samples t-test. It revealed that small entrepreneurs have good awareness of green entrepreneurship but they follow such practices to some extent only. Energy conservation is the most common form followed by them, while the use of renewable energy is not much common. The main benefits from such practices are better image and higher customer satisfaction. However, high costs, limited finance, and lack of technical knowledge are major challenges prevailing. The study also found that small entrepreneurs with greater awareness increases the use of green practices and have more benefits. It suggests that better awareness, financial support, technical assistance, and

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	government initiatives can encourage more small entrepreneurs to use green business practices.

INTRODUCTION

Green entrepreneurship means starting and running a business that reduces harm to the environment. It encourages entrepreneurs to save energy and water, reduce waste, recycle materials, use eco-friendly packaging, and adopt green technologies. Environmental problems have increased the importance of using green practices which help small entrepreneurs to have better image and higher customer satisfaction. However, high costs, limited finance, and lack of technical knowledge are major challenges prevailing. This study examines the awareness, usage, benefits, and challenges of green entrepreneurship among small entrepreneurs and suggests ways to promote such practices.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Abbas and Bulut (2024) explained that green entrepreneurship helps the businesses to achieve economic growth and also protect the environment. They pointed out that 'innovation, sustainable business practices, and environmental responsibility' are very important for long-term business success. Anwar et al. (2024) studied the relationship between 'green entrepreneurial orientation and environmental performance'. They found that businesses using green practices improve their environmental performance and strengthen their competitive advantage.

Schaltegger and Wagner (2011) stated that sustainable entrepreneurship combines business growth with environmental protection. They explained that responsible and innovative business practices help to create both economic and environmental value. York and Venkataraman (2010) explained that entrepreneurs can solve environmental problems by developing eco-friendly products and services. They also pointed out that innovation helps the businesses to remain competitive and to protect the environment.

Hall, Daneke, and Lenox (2010) stated that sustainable entrepreneurs focus on creating social and environmental value than earning profits only. They also noted the importance of innovation in achieving sustainable development. Nidumolu, Prahalad, and Rangaswami (2009) found that sustainable business practices help to reduce costs, to improve efficiency, to increase productivity, and to create new business opportunities which leads to long-term business success.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Now a days environmental problems such as climate change, pollution, and the shortage of natural resources have increased the need for sustainable business practices. Green entrepreneurship helps the entrepreneurs to grow their businesses and to protect the environment by saving energy, reducing waste, recycling materials, and using eco-friendly technologies. Though the government provides different support schemes, many small entrepreneurs still face challenges such as low awareness,

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lack of finance, high costs, and limited technical knowledge. These challenges discourage small entrepreneurs to use green business practices.

STUDY SIGNIFICANCE

This study is important because it helps to understand the awareness and the usage of green practices among small entrepreneurs in Kannur district. It also explains the benefits of using green practices and the challenges they face while practicing them. The findings will help the entrepreneurs to understand how green practices contribute to business performance, in minimising costs, in satisfying customers, and in improving competitiveness. The study will also help government agencies, policymakers, and financial institutions to design policies, training programmes, and financial support to encourage green entrepreneurship.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

1. To study the level of awareness of green entrepreneurship among small entrepreneurs in Kannur district.
2. To assess the use of green business practices among small entrepreneurs in Kannur district
3. To identify the benefits gained from adopting green practices.
4. To examine the challenges faced by small entrepreneurs in implementing green entrepreneurship.

HYPOTHESES

$H_0$1 : There is no significant difference between male and female entrepreneurs regarding their awareness of green entrepreneurship.

$H_0$2 : The adoption level of sustainable business practices does not significantly vary among small entrepreneurs belonging to different age groups.

$H_0$3 : The levels of awareness, adoption of sustainable business practices, perceived benefits, and challenges among small entrepreneurs do not significantly differ from the assumed test value (2).

$H_0$4 : Awareness of green entrepreneurship and the adoption of green practices are not significantly related.

$H_0$5 : Adoption of green practices and benefits received by small entrepreneurs is not significantly related.

$H_0$6 : Adoption of green practices and the challenges faced by small entrepreneurs is not significantly related.

Jayanthy K C, Midhun Krishnan P B, Anil Chandran S, Aparnadevi M (2026). Green Entrepreneurship and Sustainable Business Practices: Insights from Small Entrepreneurs**.** International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research & Reviews, 5(7),382-394.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study is analytical and descriptive to examine green entrepreneurship and sustainable business practices among small entrepreneurs in Kannur District, Kerala. The study covers both registered and unregistered small entrepreneurs engaged in manufacturing, trading, retail, and service activities. The data gathered with the help of a structured questionnaire from 75 small entrepreneurs selected using convenient sampling method were analysed using percentage analysis, weighted mean, ranking method, one-sample t-test, one-way ANOVA, Pearson correlation, and independent samples t-test.

DISCUSSION

The collected data are analysed in the following section.

Table 1 : Profile of Entrepreneurs and Enterprises

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	43	57.3
	Female	32	42.7
Age	Below 30	22	29.3
	31 - 40	17	22.7
	41 - 50	23	30.7
	Above 50	13	17.3
Educational Qualification	SSLC	6	8.0
	Higher Secondary	21	28.0
	Graduate	28	37.3
	Post graduate	20	26.7
	Professional degree	0	0.0
Nature of business	Manufacturing	17	22.7
	Trading	17	22.7
	Service	18	24.0
	Retail	23	30.7
Years of business	Below 5 years	19	25.3

Jayanthy K C, Midhun Krishnan P B, Anil Chandran S, Aparnadevi M (2026). Green Entrepreneurship and Sustainable Business Practices: Insights from Small Entrepreneurs. International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research & Reviews, 5(7),382-394.

experience	5 - 10 years	21	28.0
	11 - 15 years	20	26.7
	Above 15 years	15	20.0
Number of employees	Below 5	18	24.0
	5 - 10	19	25.3
	11 - 20	21	28.0
	Above 20	17	22.7
Total		75	100.0

Out of the 75 small entrepreneurs, 43 (57.3%) were male and 32 (42.7%) were female.

Among the 75 respondents, 23 (30.7%) belonged to the 41 - 50 age group, followed by 22 (29.3%) below 30 years, 17 (22.7%) in the 31 - 40 years group, and 13 (17.3%) above 50 years.

The majority of the respondents were Graduates (37.3%), followed by Higher Secondary (28.0%), Postgraduates (26.7%), and SSLC (8.0%). None of the respondents possessed a professional degree.

Among the respondents, 23 (30.7%) were engaged in Retail business, 18 (24.0%) in Service, and 17 (22.7%) each in Manufacturing and Trading.

Most respondents have 5 - 10 years of business experience (28.0%), followed by 11 - 15 years (26.7%), below 5 years (25.3%), and above 15 years (20.0%).

Regarding number of employees, 21 (28.0%) enterprises employed 11 - 20 employees, followed by 19 (25.3%) employing 5 - 10 employees, 18 (24.0%) employing below 5 employees, and 17 (22.7%) employing more than 20 employees.

Table 2 : Level of Awareness of Green Entrepreneurship

Statement	Aware	Neutral	Not aware	Weighted score	Weighted Mean	Rank
Importance of protecting the environment.	70	4	1	219	2.92	I
Eco-friendly technologies.	62	9	3	209	2.79	III
Ggreen business practices improve business reputation.	67	7	1	216	2.88	II
Environmental benefits of sustainable business practices.	59	13	3	206	2.75	IV

Jayanthy K C, Midhun Krishnan P B, Anil Chandran S, Aparnadevi M (2026). Green Entrepreneurship and Sustainable Business Practices: Insights from Small Entrepreneurs**.** International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research & Reviews, 5(7),382-394.

Government schemes for green businesses.	51	18	6	195	2.60	V
Green finance options for businesses.	31	24	10	161	2.15	VI

Small entrepreneurs have a good level of awareness of green entrepreneurship. Environmental protection is essential received the highest mean score (2.92) and ranked first, followed by green business improves reputation (Mean = 2.88, Rank II) and awareness of eco-friendly technologies (Mean = 2.79, Rank III). Awareness of the environmental benefits of sustainable business practices also recorded a relatively high mean (2.75, Rank IV). However, knowledge of government schemes (Mean = 2.60, Rank V) and knowledge of green finance (Mean = 2.15, Rank VI) were comparatively lower.

Awareness of Green Entrepreneurship between Male and Female Entrepreneurs.

$H_0 1$: There is no significant difference between male and female entrepreneurs regarding their awareness of green entrepreneurship.

Table 3 : Awareness of Green Entrepreneurship between Male and Female Entrepreneurs

Gender	Mean	SD	t-value (Independent Samples *t*-Test)	p-value	Remarks
Male	4.15	0.56	1.28	0.205	Not significant
Female	4.05	0.60			

Although male entrepreneurs 4.15 (SD = 0.56) reported a slightly higher mean awareness score than female entrepreneurs 4.05 (SD = 0.60), the difference is not statistically significant ($t = 1.28$, $p > 0.5$).

Table 4 : Adoption of Sustainable Business Practices among Small Entrepreneurs

Business Practices	Highly adopted	Adopted	Not adopted	Weighted Score	Weighted Mean	Rank
Energy conservation	52	18	5	197	2.63	I
Use energy-efficient equipment	50	20	5	195	2.60	II
Waste reduction	49	20	6	193	2.57	III
Recycling	45	23	7	188	2.51	IV
Water conservation	43	24	8	185	2.47	V
Eco-friendly packaging	40	25	10	180	2.40	VI
Renewable energy usage	30	28	17	163	2.17	VII

Jayanthy K C, Midhun Krishnan P B, Anil Chandran S, Aparnadevi M (2026). Green Entrepreneurship and Sustainable Business Practices: Insights from Small Entrepreneurs**.** International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research & Reviews, 5(7),382-394.

Energy conservation was the most widely adopted sustainable business practice, with the highest weighted mean of 2.63 (Weighted Score = 197), securing the first rank. Use of energy-efficient equipment ranked second with a weighted mean of 2.60 (Weighted Score = 195), followed by waste reduction (Mean = 2.57, Weighted Score = 193) in the third rank. Recycling (Mean = 2.51, Weighted Score = 188) and water conservation (Mean = 2.47, Weighted Score = 185) ranked fourth and fifth, respectively. Eco-friendly packaging obtained a weighted mean of 2.40 (Weighted Score = 180) and ranked sixth. Renewable energy usage recorded the lowest weighted mean of 2.17 (Weighted Score = 163) and ranked last, indicating that it was the least adopted sustainable practice among the respondents.

Age Group and Adoption of Sustainable Business Practices

$H_0$2: The adoption level of sustainable business practices does not significantly vary among small entrepreneurs belonging to different age groups.

Table 5 : Adoption of Sustainable Business Practices among Entrepreneurs of Different Age Groups

Source	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	(One-Way ANOVA) F	p-value	Remarks
Between Groups	2.68	3	0.893	2.52	0.064	Not Significant
Within Groups	25.14	71	0.354			
Total	27.82	74				

The F-value is 2.52 ($p > 0.05$). Hence, the null hypothesis is accepted and there is no statistically significant difference in the adoption of sustainable business practices among entrepreneurs belonging to different age groups.

Table 6 : Benefits of Sustainable Business Practices on Business Performance

Benefit	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Weighted Score	Weighted Mean	Rank
Improved business image	54	18	3	201	2.68	I
Increased customer satisfaction	51	20	4	197	2.63	II
Reduced operating costs	48	22	5	193	2.57	III
Increased sales	45	24	6	189	2.52	IV
Increase profitability	43	25	7	186	2.48	V
Better employee motivation	42	26	7	185	2.47	VI
Customer loyalty has improved	41	27	7	184	2.45	VII

Jayanthy K C, Midhun Krishnan P B, Anil Chandran S, Aparnadevi M (2026). Green Entrepreneurship and Sustainable Business Practices: Insights from Small Entrepreneurs**.** International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research & Reviews, 5(7),382-394.

The results indicate that improved business image was the most important benefit of adopting sustainable business practices, with the highest weighted mean of 2.68 (Weighted Score = 201), ranking first. Increased customer satisfaction ranked second with a weighted mean of 2.63 (Weighted Score = 197), followed by reduced operating costs (Mean = 2.57, Weighted Score = 193) in the third position. Increased sales obtained a weighted mean of 2.52 (Weighted Score = 189) and ranked fourth. Increase in profitability (Mean = 2.48, Weighted Score = 186) and better employee motivation (Mean = 2.47, Weighted Score = 185) ranked fifth and sixth, respectively. Customer loyalty has improved recorded the lowest weighted mean of 2.45 (Weighted Score = 184) and ranked seventh.

Table 7 : Challenges Faced by Small Entrepreneurs in Adopting Green Entrepreneurship

Challenges	High	Medium	Low	Weighted Score	Mean	Rank
High investment cost	55	16	4	201	2.68	I
Limited finance	52	18	5	197	2.63	II
Lack of technical knowledge	48	20	7	191	2.55	III
Limited government support	45	22	8	187	2.49	IV
Low customer awareness	40	25	10	180	2.40	V
Customers are not willing to pay more for green products	37	26	12	175	2.33	VI

The findings reveal that high investment cost is the most important challenge faced by small entrepreneurs in adopting green entrepreneurship, with the highest weighted mean of 2.68 (Weighted Score = 201) and Rank I. Limited finance ranked second with a weighted mean of 2.63 (Weighted Score = 197), followed by lack of technical knowledge (Mean = 2.55, Weighted Score = 191) in the third position. Limited government support recorded a weighted mean of 2.49 (Weighted Score = 187) and ranked fourth. Low customer awareness obtained a weighted mean of 2.40 (Weighted Score = 180) and ranked fifth. Customers' unwillingness to pay more for green products had the lowest weighted mean of 2.33 (Weighted Score = 175) and ranked sixth.

Awareness, Adoption, Benefits, and Challenges of Green Entrepreneurship among Small Entrepreneurs

$H_0$3: The levels of awareness, adoption of sustainable business practices, perceived benefits, and challenges among small entrepreneurs do not significantly differ from the assumed test value (2.00).

Jayanthy K C, Midhun Krishnan P B, Anil Chandran S, Aparnadevi M (2026). Green Entrepreneurship and Sustainable Business Practices: Insights from Small Entrepreneurs**.** International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research & Reviews, 5(7),382-394.

Table 8 : Awareness, Adoption, Benefits, and Challenges of Green Entrepreneurship among Small Entrepreneurs

Variable	Mean	SD	t-value (One-Sample *t*-Test)	p-value	Remarks
Awareness of Green Entrepreneurship	2.68	0.46	12.83	0.000	Significant
Adoption of Sustainable Business Practices	2.48	0.63	6.55	0.000	Significant
Benefits of Sustainable Business Practices	2.54	0.60	7.87	0.000	Significant
Challenges in Green Entrepreneurship	2.51	0.63	7.11	0.000	Significant

The mean awareness score (Mean = 2.68, SD = 0.46), the mean adoption score (Mean = 2.48, SD = 0.63), the mean perceived benefits score (Mean = 2.54, SD = 0.60), and the mean challenges score (Mean = 2.51, SD = 0.63) were significantly higher than the test value, 2. This indicates that small entrepreneurs possess a significantly high level of awareness regarding green entrepreneurship and have adopted such practices to some extent. They are experiencing considerable benefits from adopting such practices and are also facing challenges in implementing green entrepreneurship practices

Relationship between Awareness, Adoption, Benefits, and Challenges

$H_0$4 : Awareness of green entrepreneurship and the adoption of green practices are not significantly related.

$H_0$5 : Adoption of green practices and benefits received by small entrepreneurs is not significantly related.

$H_0$6 : Adoption of green practices and the challenges faced by small entrepreneurs is not significantly related.

Table 9 : Relationship between Awareness, Adoption, Benefits, and Challenges

Variables	Pearson's r	p-value	Interpretation
Awareness x Adoption	0.624	<0.001	Moderate positive, significant
Adoption x Benefits	0.731	<0.001	Strong positive, significant
Adoption x Challenges	−0.458	<0.001	Moderate negative, significant

Jayanthy K C, Midhun Krishnan P B, Anil Chandran S, Aparnadevi M (2026). Green Entrepreneurship and Sustainable Business Practices: Insights from Small Entrepreneurs**.** International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research & Reviews, 5(7),382-394.

There is a moderate positive and statistically significant relationship between awareness of green entrepreneurship and the adoption of green practices ($r = 0.624$, $p < 0.05$). Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected, which shows that higher awareness encourages small entrepreneurs to use green business practices .

The study also revealed a strong positive and significant relationship between the adoption of sustainable business practices and business benefits ($r = 0.731$, $p < 0.05$). Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected. This indicates that, entrepreneurs who follow more green practices receive greater benefits, such as improved business image, higher customer satisfaction, increased profitability, and customer loyalty.

A moderate negative and significant relationship was found between the adoption of sustainable business practices and challenges ($r = -0.458$, $p < 0.05$). Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected. This means that higher challenges, such as financial limitations, lack of technical knowledge, and market difficulties, reduce the adoption of green practices. Providing better support and reducing these challenges can encourage entrepreneurs to use green business practices.

FINDINGS

- Out of 75 small entrepreneurs, 57.3% are male and 42.7% are female.
- Most of the respondents were in the 41-50 years age group (30.7%) followed by below 30 years (29.3%), 31-40 years (22.7%), and above 50 years (17.3%).
- Most respondents were graduates (37.3%), followed by higher secondary (28.0%), postgraduates (26.7%), and SSLC (8.0%). None of the respondents had a professional degree.
- Retail businesses accounted for the highest proportion (30.7%), followed by service (24.0%), while manufacturing and trading each represented 17 (22.7%) respondents.
- The highest proportion of entrepreneurs had 5-10 years of business experience (28.0%), followed by 11-15 years (26.7%), below 5 years (25.3%), and above 15 years (20.0%).
- Most enterprises employed 11-20 employees (28.0%), followed by 5-10 employees (25.3%), below 5 employees (24.0%), and above 20 employees (22.7%).
- Environmental protection is essential recorded the highest awareness score (Mean = 2.92), followed by green business improves reputation (Mean = 2.88) and awareness of eco-friendly technologies (Mean = 2.79). Knowledge of green finance recorded the lowest awareness score (Mean = 2.15).
- Male entrepreneurs (Mean = 4.15, SD = 0.56) reported slightly higher awareness than female entrepreneurs (Mean = 4.05, SD = 0.60). However, the results showed no significant difference between them ($t = 1.28$, $p = 0.203$).

Jayanthy K C, Midhun Krishnan P B, Anil Chandran S, Aparnadevi M (2026). Green Entrepreneurship and Sustainable Business Practices: Insights from Small Entrepreneurs**.** International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research & Reviews, 5(7),382-394.

- Energy conservation was the most widely adopted sustainable business practice (Mean = 2.63), while renewable energy usage was the least adopted practice (Mean = 2.17).
- The ANOVA result showed no significant difference in the adoption of sustainable business practices among different age groups ($F = 2.52$, $p = 0.064$).
- Improved business image was the most important perceived benefit (Mean = 2.68 followed by increased customer satisfaction (Mean = 2.63). Customer loyalty received the lowest mean score (Mean = 2.45).
- High investment cost was the major challenge faced by entrepreneurs (Mean = 2.68), followed by limited finance (Mean = 2.63) and lack of technical knowledge (Mean = 2.55). Customers' unwillingness to pay more for green products was the least reported challenge (Mean = 2.33).
- The one-sample *t*-test revealed that the level of awareness was significantly higher than the test value 2 (Mean = 2.68, SD = 0.46, $t = 12.827$, $p < 0.05$).
- The level of adoption of sustainable business practices was also significantly higher than the test value (Mean = 2.48, SD = 0.63, $t = 6.550$, $p < 0.05$).
- The perceived benefits of sustainable business practices were significantly high (Mean = 2.54, SD = 0.60, $t = 7.870$, $p < 0.05$).
- The challenges faced in implementing green entrepreneurship were also significant (Mean = 2.51, SD = 0.63, $t = 7.110$, $p < 0.05$).
- The study found a moderate positive and significant relationship between awareness and the adoption of green practices ($r = 0.624$, $p < 0.05$). Therefore, greater awareness encourages the adoption of green business practices.
- There was a strong significant positive relationship between the adoption of sustainable business practices and perceived business benefits ($r = 0.731$, $p < 0.05$). This indicates that entrepreneurs who adopt more green practices experience greater benefits, such as improved business image, higher customer satisfaction, and better business performance.
- There was a moderate significant negative relationship between the adoption of sustainable business practices and the challenges faced by entrepreneurs ($r = -0.458$, $p < 0.05$). This means that greater challenges, such as high investment cost, limited finance, and lack of technical knowledge, reduce the adoption of green business practices among small entrepreneurs.

SUGGESTIONS

- Small entrepreneurs should be encouraged to adopt energy conservation, waste reduction, water conservation, recycling, and eco-friendly packaging as part of their regular business activities.

Jayanthy K C, Midhun Krishnan P B, Anil Chandran S, Aparnadevi M (2026). Green Entrepreneurship and Sustainable Business Practices: Insights from Small Entrepreneurs**.** International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research & Reviews, 5(7),382-394.

- Business associations and educational institutions should organise regular training programmes on sustainable business practices and environmental management.
- Entrepreneurs should educate customers about the benefits of eco-friendly products to increase customer awareness and willingness to support sustainable businesses.

CONCLUSION

Green entrepreneurship helps small entrepreneurs grow their businesses while protecting the environment. Most entrepreneurs are aware of green entrepreneurship and follow green business practices to some extent. They believe that these practices improve their business image, increase customer satisfaction, and support business growth. However, they also face problems such as high investment costs, lack of finance, limited technical knowledge, and inadequate government support. The study found that greater awareness leads to greater use of green business practices, which also brings more benefits to the business. Therefore, creating more awareness, providing financial and technical support, and improving government assistance are necessary to encourage more entrepreneurs to use green business practices.

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CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The authors declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

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