

INNOVATIVE GREEN ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND ECO-FRIENDLY STARTUPS: PIONEERING SUSTAINABLE BUSINESS MODELS

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ABSTRACT

India's start-up ecosystem has seen incredible growth in recent years, positioning the Country as one of the world's most promising destinations for entrepreneurial endeavours. This Study explores emerging start-up opportunities in India with a focus on fostering a sustainable and environmentally conscious future. The Indian government's emphasis on sustainable development, coupled with increasing awareness of environmental issues, has created a conducive Environment for innovative entrepreneurs seeking to make a positive impact while achieving Business success. This research investigates various sectors within the Indian start-up landscape that hold immense potential for green entrepreneurship. The study highlights key areas, such as sustainable agriculture, renewable energy, waste management, clean transportation, and eco-friendly technology, where Start-ups can play a key role in contributing to India's sustainability Goals and addressing global environmental challenges.

The escalating environmental crisis necessitates a paradigm shift in entrepreneurial practices, emphasizing eco-friendly and sustainable business models. This study explores the emergence of innovative green entrepreneurship and eco-friendly startups, which prioritize environmental stewardship while generating economic value. By examining successful case studies and conducting in-depth interviews with green entrepreneurs, this research identifies key drivers, challenges, and opportunities in the green startup ecosystem. The findings highlight the crucial role of innovative green entrepreneurship in promoting sustainable development, reducing carbon footprint, and fostering eco-conscious consumer behavior. This study contributes to the existing literature on sustainable entrepreneurship, providing valuable insights for policymakers, entrepreneurs, and stakeholders seeking to cultivate a more environmentally responsible business landscape.

Keywords: Green, Entrepreneurship, Innovation , Growth, Eco-Friendly, Startups, Technology, Sustainable, Business, Development.

1. INTRODUCTION

The world is facing unprecedented environmental challenges, from climate change and deforestation to pollution and biodiversity loss. As the consequences of human activities on the planet become increasingly evident, there is a growing recognition of the need for sustainable and eco-friendly business practices. In response, a new wave of innovative green entrepreneurs and eco-friendly startups is emerging, driven by a passion for environmental stewardship and a commitment to creating sustainable value.

Innovative green entrepreneurship and eco-friendly startups are redefining the traditional boundaries of business, integrating environmental and social responsibility into their core operations. These pioneers are developing novel products, services, and business models that reduce waste, conserve resources, and promote eco-friendly consumption patterns. From renewable energy and sustainable agriculture to eco-friendly packaging and green building materials, innovative green entrepreneurs are tackling some of the world's most pressing environmental challenges.

Despite the growing importance of sustainable entrepreneurship, there is a need for further research on the drivers, challenges, and opportunities facing innovative green entrepreneurs and eco-friendly startups. This study aims to contribute to the existing literature on sustainable entrepreneurship, exploring the emergence of innovative green entrepreneurship and eco-friendly startups, and identifying key factors that facilitate or hinder their success. By examining the experiences and strategies of innovative green entrepreneurs, this research seeks to provide valuable insights for policymakers, entrepreneurs, and stakeholders seeking to promote sustainable development and environmental responsibility in the business sector.

Innovative green entrepreneurship and eco-friendly startups are revolutionizing India's business landscape, promoting sustainability and reducing environmental impact. Here are some key trends and examples:

- **Renewable Energy:** Startups like ZunRoof are promoting solar energy solutions, making personal energy consumption better, cleaner, and more affordable.

- Sustainable Transportation: Companies like Ather Energy and BluSmart are leading the charge in electric vehicles and ride-sharing mobility platforms, reducing air pollution and promoting eco-friendly transportation.
- Eco-Friendly Products: Startups like Phool and Beco are developing innovative products from recycled materials, reducing waste and promoting sustainability.
- Sustainable Agriculture: Companies like Just Organik and Wakao Foods are promoting organic farming practices, reducing chemical usage, and developing sustainable agriculture products .

Examples of Eco-Friendly Startups in India

- Ather Energy: Founded in 2013, Ather Energy manufactures electric vehicles, promoting sustainable transportation and reducing air pollution .
- Phool: Founded in 2017, Phool is a biomaterials startup that recycles temple waste flowers into innovative products, promoting sustainability and reducing waste.
- ZunRoof: Founded in 2016, ZunRoof is a leading solar rooftop company, promoting solar energy solutions and making personal energy consumption better, cleaner, and more affordable.
- Yulu: Founded in 2017, Yulu is a technology-driven micro-mobility platform, providing integrated urban mobility solutions and promoting eco-friendly transportation.
- Banyan Nation: Founded in 2013, Banyan Nation is a plastic recycling company, promoting sustainable waste management practices and reducing plastic waste.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

According to Isaak, 2002, an ecopreneur is a person who seeks to transform a sector of the economy towards sustainability by starting business in that sector with a green design, with green processes and with the life-long commitment to sustainability in everything that is said and done .

According to Thierry Volery, 2002, we distinguish between two types ecopreneurs. ‘Environment-conscious entrepreneurs’ are well aware of environmental issues, but they are not in the environmental marketplace... The second category of ecopreneurs, called ‘green entrepreneurs’, are those who are both aware of environmental issues and whose business venture is in the environmental marketplace”.

According to Gliedt and Parker, 2007, green community entrepreneurship is the collective ability to mobilise Resources, including social capital, to provide products or Services that achieve environmental rather than profit maximising goals.

According to Demirel et al., 2017, green entrepreneurs exploit the opportunities that are inherent in environmentally relevant market failures; however, the paradox of green Entrepreneurship may also emanate from the fact that Environmental wellbeing that results from born greens is a public good and, therefore, non-excludable. This property of Non-excludability may push green entrepreneurs (along with their nascent breakthrough innovations) into liminal spaces, where additional costs render green entrepreneurs at a Competitive disadvantage and, thus, limit their economic impact vis-à-vis non-green actors.

Sanjeela Mathur et.al (2016), their study investigates the opportunities and challenges faced by green Entrepreneurs in India, particularly among millennial demographic. The study underscores the immediate requirement for the sustainable strategies to tackle the issues of deterioration of the environment and challenges posed by change in climate which are urgent concern on a global scale.

Stuti Haldar (2019), the paper on ‘Green entrepreneurship in theory and practice insights from India’, explores the emergence of green entrepreneurship in India, which is largely influenced by the growing consumer preference for ecofriendly products within the framework of climate change and sustainable development concerns. It introduced conceptual framework that connects environmental, economic and social dimensions that encourage green entrepreneurship, underscoring its significance in promoting sustainable development.

Lokesh K (2022), A study on green entrepreneurship in India explores the concept of green entrepreneurship, which involves environmental social and problems through entrepreneurial activities that are both environmentally beneficial and financially sustainable. It highlights the increasing significance of green entrepreneurship in India and the necessity for individual to take responsibility for environmental stewardship. The findings of the paper suggest that the incorporating of sustainable practices in business operations is essentials for achieving sustainable growth.

Parminder Kaur et.al (2023), the research paper titled Green entrepreneurship in India: A study of select green business, explores the green entrepreneurship concept by considering sustainable development and environmental awareness in India. It highlights the change in preference of consumers towards ecofriendly products, leading to the emergence of green entrepreneurs who aim to create awareness and promote Sustainable practices. The study

emphasizes the importance of integrating environmental education in early learning stages to cultivate a sustainable mindset in future generations.

Objectives of the Study:

- To investigate the impact of green entrepreneurship on sustainable development.
- To explore the initiatives taken by Government of India to promote green entrepreneurship.
- To study the prospects of Green Start-ups in India
- To Study the impact of green entrepreneurship on sustainable development.
- To analyse the factors leading to the growth of green Start-ups through Case Study

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

As it is an exploratory study, the research paper is primarily dependent on secondary data that was gathered from many Journals, periodicals, and publications. The needs of the study's objectives are taken into consideration when using a descriptive study. The study made considerable use of secondary data.

Green Entrepreneurship:

“Green entrepreneurship is not just about being environmentally friendly, it’s about creating a sustainable business model that benefits both people and the planet.”

Dr. R. K. Pachauri, Nobel laureate and former Chairman of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change

Green entrepreneurship refers to the process of creating and managing a business venture that prioritizes environmental sustainability and social responsibility. This approach to entrepreneurship involves developing innovative products, services, and business models that minimize harm to the environment, promote sustainable practices, and foster social responsibility. Green entrepreneurs focus on reducing environmental impact by minimizing waste, pollution, and carbon footprint, while also promoting eco-friendly consumption patterns, sustainable resource management, and environmentally responsible operations. By integrating environmental and social considerations into business decisions, green entrepreneurs aim to generate economic value while promoting sustainable development and positive environmental change. Ultimately, green entrepreneurship has the potential to drive innovation, create new economic opportunities, and contribute to a more sustainable future.

Green Innovation: Green innovation refers to the development and implementation of new or improved products, services, or processes that reduce environmental harm and promote sustainability. It involves the creation of novel solutions that minimize waste, pollution, and carbon footprint, while also conserving natural resources and promoting eco-friendly practices. Green innovation can be applied across various industries and sectors, from renewable energy and sustainable agriculture to eco-friendly manufacturing and green building. It requires a collaborative approach, combining cutting-edge technology, innovative business models, and sustainable design principles to create environmentally responsible solutions. By fostering green innovation, businesses and organizations can reduce their environmental footprint, improve their brand reputation, and capitalize on new market opportunities, ultimately contributing to a more sustainable and environmentally conscious future.

Green Startups Landscape in India:

The green startups landscape in India is thriving, with numerous innovative ventures emerging in recent years. Here are some key highlights:

- **Top Green Energy Startups:** India is home to over 57 green energy startups, including ReNew Power, Avaada Energy, Exponent Energy, and Matter, which have collectively received funding of over \$12.7 billion .
- **Green Entrepreneurship Initiatives:** Programs like the Greenr Sustainability Accelerator are supporting green startups in India, providing them with funding, mentorship, and networking opportunities .
- **Innovative Solutions:** Indian green startups are developing innovative solutions, such as waterless sanitation systems (Ekam Eco), sustainable menstrual products (Stonesoup), and circular economy solutions for waste management (Plastroots) .
- **Challenges and Opportunities:** Despite facing challenges like limited access to finance and immature markets, green startups in India are poised for growth, driven by government initiatives, increasing consumer awareness, and the need for sustainable solutions.

Overall, the green startups landscape in India is promising, with a growing number of innovative ventures and supportive initiatives driving sustainable development and environmental responsibility.

Fostering an Eco-friendly Startup Environment: Fostering an eco-friendly startup environment requires a multi-faceted approach that involves various stakeholders, including governments, incubators, accelerators, investors, and the startups themselves. Here are some strategies to promote an eco-friendly startup environment:

Government Initiatives

1. Tax incentives: Offer tax breaks to eco-friendly startups.
2. Grants and funding: Provide grants and funding for sustainable projects.
3. Regulatory support: Simplify regulations and licensing processes for eco-friendly startups.
4. Green infrastructure: Invest in green infrastructure, such as renewable energy and green buildings.

Incubators and Accelerators

1. Sustainable resources: Provide access to sustainable resources, such as renewable energy and eco-friendly materials.
2. Mentorship: Offer mentorship and guidance on sustainable business practices.
3. Networking: Facilitate networking opportunities with other eco-friendly startups and stakeholders.
4. Impact measurement: Help startups measure and track their environmental impact.

Investor Support

1. Impact investing: Encourage impact investing, which prioritizes both financial returns and environmental impact.
2. Sustainable funding: Provide funding for sustainable projects and initiatives.
3. Environmental due diligence: Conduct environmental due diligence on startups before investing.

Startup Strategies

1. Sustainable business model: Develop a sustainable business model that prioritizes environmental responsibility.
2. Eco-friendly operations: Implement eco-friendly operations, such as reducing energy consumption and waste.
3. Supply chain management: Ensure sustainable supply chain management practices.
4. Stakeholder engagement: Engage with stakeholders, including customers, employees, and investors, to promote environmental responsibility.

Education and Awareness

1. Workshops and training: Organize workshops and training programs on sustainable business practices.
2. Environmental awareness: Raise environmental awareness among startups, investors, and stakeholders.
3. Case studies: Share case studies and success stories of eco-friendly startups.
4. Networking events: Host networking events to connect eco-friendly startups with investors, mentors, and other stakeholders.

By implementing these strategies, we can foster an eco-friendly startup environment that promotes sustainable development, environmental responsibility, and innovation.

Impact of Green Entrepreneurship on Sustainable Development:

The impact of green entrepreneurship on sustainable development is profound and far-reaching. By prioritizing environmental sustainability and social responsibility, green entrepreneurs play a crucial role in promoting sustainable development. One of the key ways in which green entrepreneurship contributes to sustainable development is by reducing the environmental impact of business operations. Green businesses develop innovative solutions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, conserve natural resources, and minimize pollution, thereby promoting a low-carbon economy and mitigating the effects of climate change.

In addition to its environmental benefits, green entrepreneurship also has a positive social impact. Green businesses create new job opportunities in sustainable sectors, contributing to economic growth and development. Moreover, green entrepreneurship promotes eco-friendly practices, reducing pollution and environmental hazards that harm public health. Green businesses often involve community-based initiatives, empowering local communities and promoting sustainable development. By promoting sustainable development, green entrepreneurship also contributes to the achievement of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly Goal 13 (Climate Action).

Green entrepreneurship also has a significant economic impact. By driving innovation, green entrepreneurship enables businesses to stay competitive in a rapidly changing market. Green businesses tap into emerging markets for sustainable products and services, creating new revenue streams. Moreover, green entrepreneurship leads to cost savings through reduced energy consumption, waste reduction, and improved resource efficiency. Overall, green entrepreneurship is a key driver of sustainable development, promoting environmental stewardship, social progress, and economic growth. By supporting green entrepreneurship, we can create a more sustainable future for all.

Solutions to Promote Green Entrepreneurship:

Promoting green entrepreneurship requires a multi-faceted approach that addresses the various challenges and barriers faced by green entrepreneurs. One key solution is to provide government initiatives that support green entrepreneurship, such as tax incentives, grants, and funding opportunities. Governments can also simplify regulations and provide regulatory support to green entrepreneurs, making it easier for them to start and grow their businesses. Additionally, governments can establish green incubators and accelerators that provide resources, mentorship, and funding to green startups.

Another important solution is to provide education and training programs that equip entrepreneurs with the knowledge and skills needed to start and grow a green business. This can include courses, workshops, and seminars on green entrepreneurship, as well as mentorship programs that pair experienced green entrepreneurs with startups. Green business plan competitions can also be an effective way to promote green entrepreneurship, by providing a platform for entrepreneurs to showcase their ideas and compete for funding and resources.

Access to finance is another critical factor in promoting green entrepreneurship. Green venture capital funds, crowdfunding platforms, and green banks can provide the necessary funding for green startups to grow and scale. Impact investing, which prioritizes both financial returns and social or environmental impact, can also be an effective way to support green entrepreneurship.

Networking and collaboration are also essential for promoting green entrepreneurship. Establishing networks for green entrepreneurs, fostering partnerships between green startups and corporates, and encouraging collaboration between green startups and research institutions can all help to facilitate the growth of green businesses. Hosting events and conferences on green entrepreneurship can also provide a platform for green entrepreneurs to connect, share ideas, and learn from each other.

Raising awareness and promoting green entrepreneurship through marketing and media coverage is also crucial. Launching awareness campaigns, promoting green entrepreneurship through social media, and securing media coverage can all help to raise the profile of green entrepreneurship and attract more entrepreneurs, investors, and customers to the sector.

Finally, providing infrastructure and resources is essential for supporting the growth of green entrepreneurship. Establishing green incubators and accelerators, providing shared resources such as office space and equipment, and facilitating technology transfer from research institutions to green startups can all help to support the growth of green businesses. Establishing green entrepreneurship hubs can also provide a physical space for green entrepreneurs to connect, collaborate, and grow their businesses.

Here are some solutions to promote green entrepreneurship:

Government Initiatives

1. Tax incentives: Offer tax breaks to green entrepreneurs and startups.
2. Grants and funding: Provide grants and funding for sustainable projects and research.
3. Regulatory support: Simplify regulations and licensing processes for green businesses.
4. Green infrastructure: Invest in green infrastructure, such as renewable energy and green buildings.

Education and Training

1. Green entrepreneurship courses: Offer courses and training programs on green entrepreneurship and sustainable business practices.
2. Workshops and seminars: Organize workshops and seminars on green entrepreneurship, sustainable innovation, and environmental sustainability.
3. Mentorship programs: Establish mentorship programs that connect green entrepreneurs with experienced mentors and industry experts.

Incubation and Acceleration

1. Green business incubators: Establish incubators that provide resources, funding, and support to green startups.
2. Accelerator programs: Offer accelerator programs that help green startups scale and grow.
3. Co-working spaces: Create co-working spaces that foster collaboration and innovation among green entrepreneurs.

Funding and Investment

1. Impact investing: Encourage impact investing in green startups and sustainable projects.
2. Green venture capital: Establish green venture capital funds that invest in sustainable startups.
3. Crowdfunding: Promote crowdfunding platforms that support green entrepreneurship and sustainable projects.

Networking and Community Building

1. Green entrepreneurship networks: Establish networks that connect green entrepreneurs, investors, and industry experts.
2. Conferences and events: Organize conferences, events, and trade shows that promote green entrepreneurship and sustainable innovation.
3. Online platforms: Create online platforms that facilitate collaboration, knowledge sharing, and resource exchange among green entrepreneurs.

Research and Development

1. Sustainable research: Fund research on sustainable technologies, products, and services.
2. Green innovation hubs: Establish hubs that foster innovation and entrepreneurship in sustainable technologies.
3. Technology transfer: Promote technology transfer from research institutions to green startups and businesses.

Green Entrepreneurs – Some Case Studies :

ReNew Power, founded by Sumant Sinha in India, is a remarkable example of green entrepreneurship. The company has become one of India's largest renewable energy companies, with over 5 GW of operational capacity. ReNew Power has made significant contributions to reducing carbon emissions and promoting sustainable development in India.

Another inspiring example is Patagonia, founded by Yvon Chouinard in the USA. Patagonia has become a leader in sustainable manufacturing, using environmentally-friendly materials and practices to produce outdoor apparel. The company's commitment to sustainability has earned it numerous awards, including the "Most Innovative Company" award at the Fast Company Innovation Festival 2019.

Avaada Energy, founded by Vineet Mittal in India, is another successful green entrepreneurship venture. The company has developed over 1 GW of renewable energy projects, reducing carbon emissions and promoting sustainable development. Avaada Energy's innovative approach to renewable energy has earned it the "Best Renewable Energy Company" award at the India Energy Awards 2020.

Seventh Generation, founded by Jeffrey Hollender in the USA, is a pioneering green entrepreneurship venture. The company has become a leading brand in eco-friendly household products, promoting sustainable living and reducing environmental impact. Seventh Generation's commitment to sustainability has earned it numerous awards, including the "Best for the World" award at the B Lab Awards 2019.

Biocon, founded by Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw in India, is a successful biotechnology company that has developed innovative eco-friendly solutions. The company's products, including enzymes and biofuels, have reduced environmental impact and promoted sustainable development. Biocon's commitment to sustainability has earned it numerous awards, including the "Best Biotech Company" award at the BioAsia Awards 2020.

4. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, green entrepreneurship and eco-friendly startups are crucial drivers of sustainable development and environmental responsibility. By prioritizing environmental sustainability and social responsibility, green entrepreneurs can create innovative solutions to pressing environmental challenges, while also generating economic value and promoting sustainable development.

The growth of green entrepreneurship and eco-friendly startups has the potential to transform industries, create new job opportunities, and promote sustainable consumption patterns. However, this growth requires a supportive ecosystem, including government policies, funding mechanisms, and networking opportunities.

As the world continues to grapple with environmental challenges, the importance of green entrepreneurship and eco-friendly startups will only continue to grow. By promoting green entrepreneurship and supporting eco-friendly startups, we can create a more sustainable future for all.

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