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Investigating the social impact of green innovation: an exploratory study of Vietnamese organisations using "concept cards" interviewing

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Abstract

Purpose – Green innovation by organisations has the potential to create social impact across five dimensions: social capital, collective identities, environmental literacy, community well-being and human capital. However, the link between green innovation and these dimensions of social impact is underexplored, particularly in developing countries such as Vietnam, where environmental policies are still being framed. Thus, this study provides an exploratory analysis of the social impact of green innovation undertaken by organisations in Vietnam.

Design/methodology/approach – The perspectives of a focal organisation in Vietnam and three related stakeholders are examined. Data were obtained from the research participants using a photo-elicitation interviewing strategy with concept cards. A hybrid deductive–inductive approach to thematic analysis identified five themes.

Findings – There is evidence that green innovation positively influences social impact across the five identified dimensions. Additionally, the analysis suggests that green innovation can generate spillover effects amongst stakeholder organisations.

Research limitations/implications – An obvious limitation of this study is that it is based solely on interviews of executives and managers linked to a focal organisation that is already undertaking green innovation. Due to

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Ethical statement: This study was approved by the Western Sydney University Human Research Ethics Committee, under reference number [H13730], in accordance with the ethical standards outlined in the Declaration of National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research 2007 (Updated 2018). Informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to data collection.

Declaration of interest statement: The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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time and resource limitations, it was not possible to examine other sources of information, such as documentary evidence, which would have increased the reliability of the data.

Practical implications – This paper makes two contributions. First, it presents stakeholders' perceptions of the social impact of an organisation's implementation of a green innovation strategy. Second, the study demonstrates the use of a novel photo-elicitation technique – concept cards – in undertaking interviews with busy business executives. Such an approach has rarely been used in business settings.

Social implications – This study provides managers with a framework for measuring the social impact of their green initiatives. It is no longer sufficient to evaluate a firm's financial performance alone. With a growing emphasis on the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, managers must be able to report the impact of their work beyond business boundaries. Our research findings are also insightful for policymakers working in innovation-related government, providing a comprehensive framework for evaluating the social impact of innovation.

Originality/value – This study investigates the emerging concept of green innovation using a novel "concept cards" interviewing technique. The perceptions of individuals from a sample of organisations in Vietnam provide a practical foundation for organisations' future development of effective green innovation strategies.

Keywords Social impact, Green innovation, Concept card interviews, Vietnamese organisations, Thematic analysis

Paper type Research paper

1. Introduction

Organisations recognise that innovation is critical for achieving sustainable business operations (Nidumolu *et al.*, 2009). In response to ever-increasing environmental concerns (Adams *et al.*, 2016), innovation today encompasses both technological and green innovation (also known as eco-innovation). As the name suggests, technological innovation is the use of technology to improve or introduce new products and services (Scherer, 2001), while green innovation ensures a more responsible approach to innovation and includes innovation processes that simultaneously reduce environmental risks (Takalo *et al.*, 2021). Demonstrating the economic return of innovation is no longer the only objective for a business. In line with stakeholder theory (Freeman *et al.*, 2010), companies increasingly take steps to manage the noneconomic expectations of a growing range of influential stakeholders (Jimenez *et al.*, 2021).

Researchers interested in business and management practices can gather significant insights by interviewing internal and external stakeholders in workplace settings. However, the process is not without issues and limitations (Irvine and Gaffikin, 2006). Stereotype responses can limit the usefulness of interview data, and research exploring difficult themes, complex topics, or abstract ideas may create additional challenges (Harper, 2002). For example, when interviewing in Vietnamese, an appropriate interview strategy must be utilised that acknowledges the Vietnamese concept of self-face ("thể diện") and the tendency for participants to provide short and simple responses to interview questions (Nguyen, 2015). Thus, researchers may need to look beyond conventional data collection techniques when interviewing employees about sensitive business information.

This Vietnam-based exploratory study used a photo-elicitation technique (Blinn and Harrist, 1991), which is useful in difficult settings (Copeland and Agosto, 2012), particularly as it results in comprehensive interviews (Collier, 1957) and facilitates richer conversations.

Unlike previous studies (Takalo *et al.*, 2021) that mainly examined the organisational benefits of green innovation, this study set out to focus on the social impact of green innovation. To investigate the research gap, our study adopted a conceptual framework based on the original model by Lee *et al*. (2013), with the overarching research question:

RQ. To what extent do firms engaged in green innovation have a social impact?

The paper makes two contributions. First, it presents stakeholders' perceptions of the social impact of an organisation's implementation of a green innovation strategy. Second, the study demonstrates the use of a novel photo-elicitation technique – concept cards – in undertaking interviews with busy business executives. Such an approach has rarely been used in business settings.

The paper is structured as follows: first, it presents a background discussion regarding the social impact of green innovation. Next, it explains the selected sample and the research method, followed by a discussion of the interviews and findings.

2. Literature review

2.1 Green innovation

Green innovation is an emerging concept that is used interchangeably with similar terms, such as environmental innovation, sustainable development and eco-innovation (De Jesus and Mendonça, 2018). There is no single, widely accepted definition of the concept, and our study is based on the definition proposed by Chen *et al.* (2006), which focuses on innovation related to green products or processes, "including innovation in technologies that are involved in energy saving, pollution prevention, waste recycling, green product design, or corporate environmental management".

2.2 Green innovation in emerging countries

It is important to examine green innovation in emerging countries. In the 1990s, emerging countries contributed just over 10% of the world's gross domestic product (GDP) (World Bank, 2025), but countries such as Vietnam now generate almost one-third of the worldwide production output (Uzar, 2024). This growth has brought expectations for upholding social and environmental standards (Blowfield, 2005), with environmental groups and nongovernmental organisations (NGOs) promoting awareness amongst the public, who are now more familiar with the importance of ecological sustainability (Hoffman, 2000). In a country like Vietnam, where green innovation is in its early stages (Thuyen and Bich, 2024) and environmental policies are still being framed, it is imperative that research is conducted to inform future regulatory frameworks.

Green innovation strategies can be expected to differ across regions, as there are significant institutional differences between firms that operate in countries at more advanced stages of development (Hojnik and Ruzzier, 2016) and their counterparts in less advanced countries. Thus, businesses worldwide adopt different innovation strategies depending on the environment in which they operate, making for interesting comparisons between advanced and emerging economies.

2.3 Social impact of green innovation via innovation actors

To undertake sustained green innovation successfully, an organisation must collaborate with multiple innovation actors, including governments, universities, industries, NGOs and international agencies (Nguyen Dang *et al*., 2022). This study proposes that, as a result of green innovation strategies, a focal organisation may impact various actors (such as internal and external stakeholders) at both the micro- and macro-levels (see Figure A1 [1]).

Grounded in the social rate of return theory (Tewksbury *et al*., 1980), this study defines social impact as "the net effect of an activity on a community and the community wellbeing of individuals and families" (Centre for Social Impact, 2020). However, rather than attempting to measure the social rate of return in terms of monetary benefits to the community and community wellbeing, this study extends the idea to encompass a comprehensive assessment of social impact arising from a collaborative approach to achieving green innovation by multiple organisations.

As such, based on the conceptual framework adopted by Nguyen Dang *et al*. (2022), it is proposed that conducting green innovation has the potential to create social impact across five dimensions: social impact, collective identities, environmental literacy, community well-being and human capital. Table A1 [1] defines each of these dimensions for this study.

3. Methodology

3.1 Sampling design

Purposive sampling was used to select organisations and research participants for interviews. First, to ensure the selected organisations were suitable, each organisation had to (1) be based

in the South Key Economic Zone (SKEZ) of Vietnam, as it accounts for nearly 50% of national GDP (Thanh, 2019); (2) have at least three years' experience in conducting green innovation; (3) display evidence of green innovation collaboration with different stakeholders; (4) display evidence of holding sustainability or green innovation certificates and (5) permit opportunities to conduct multiple interviews with stakeholders. To identify any organisations involved in "greenwashing" (Siano *et al.*, 2017), the researchers also sought advice from relevant government departments and environmental research organisations.

3.2 Sample size

About 16 individuals from domestic, international and NGOs were selected for interviews. Eventually, 12 interviews were analysed. Due to restructuring, the new management of one participating organisation withdrew its consent.

The four chosen organisations – see Table A2 [1] were the focal organisation (coded as Organisation A) and a customer of the focal firm (Organisation B) as well as an intermediary (Organisation C) and supplier (Organisation D) to the focal firm. This selection played a crucial role in providing multiple perspectives. To maintain confidentiality, identifying information relating to the names of participants and organisations was anonymised.

Focal Organisation A is a domestic printing company in Vietnam and has been operating for over 40 years. Because Organisation A deals mainly with business-to-business (B2B) customers, both domestic and international, it was ideally positioned as the focal organisation for this study. Organisation A provided advice on the selection of its stakeholder organisations.

Organisation B, a customer of Organisation A, is a foreign-owned organisation in Vietnam that is experienced in fast-moving consumer goods (FMCGs). Organisation C, a Vietnamese NGO, has been a key player in the domestic non-profit sector for 15 years and is an intermediary between Organisation A and the government sector and other stakeholders. Organisation D is a domestic paper supplier to the focal organisation.

3.3 Participants

The demographic profiles of the 12 interviewees are presented in Table A3 [1]. In addition to senior management, junior managers and employees were included to counter the under-representation of these two groups in existing green innovation studies (Khan *et al.*, 2021). All participants were familiar with the focal organisation's strategy around green innovation.

3.4 Data collection

The lead researcher conducted semi-structured interviews using the concept card tool. The interviews took place in the participants' offices in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, with each interview lasting between one and a half and two hours. The concept cards used in this study combined the flashcard method (Groves and Kahn, 1979) and picture cards, displaying text and visual stimuli to help instigate rich and deep communication.

A set, or stack, of 15 concept cards was created for this study (refer to Figure A2 [1]), each containing an image and keyword, presented in both English and Vietnamese. The keywords were categorised according to the five dimensions of social impact defined in Table A1 [1]: social capital, collective identities, environmental literacy, community well-being and human capital. Analysis of the existing literature in light of the social impact framework of Lee *et al.* (2013) provided a pool of keywords related to the five dimensions. Following a pilot test, 15 keywords were identified: trust, diverse network, participation in community, self-categorisation, social acceptance, social proactivity, concern for environmental problems, concern for environmental laws, products for improving environmental quality, renewable energy, physical health, happiness, good social interaction, onsite training programme and international training programme.

The concept card interviews consisted of three rounds, conducted until data saturation was reached (Francis *et al.*, 2010). In line with recommendations made in previous studies, we

completed an initial round of 12 interviews. We then reviewed the content of each successive interview. When no new contribution was made to our identified themes, we completed our interviews.

In the first round, the interviewer presented 15 cards in random order. Participants were asked to select any three cards that they believed were most relevant to their experience of green innovation and its associated social impact. Then, they ranked their chosen cards according to their priority of concerns before discussing the concepts. In the second round, having removed the cards selected by the participant in round one, participants were invited to expand on their stories from round one, choosing as many cards as they wished from the remaining stack. In round three, blank cards were provided to participants, allowing them to record any additional ideas they wanted to express.

4. Data analysis and discussion

Data analysis was performed initially by the first author and continued in feedback loops with the entire author team. All interviews were audio-recorded with the participants' permission. In line with the agreement signed with the participating organisations, transcription was not outsourced to external transcribers. Also, none of the audio recordings could be sent to team members who were based overseas. All interviews were transcribed verbatim in Vietnamese and then translated by the first author. To ensure accuracy, one of the Vietnam-based co-authors reviewed the translations and matched them with the original transcripts.

Following the process outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006), the first step in the analysis involved the researchers checking the transcripts for accuracy against the tape recordings. The first author translated the verbatim account into English using an online tool. The main objective was to preserve the meaning and content and, as far as possible, the general tone. Individual transcripts were read repeatedly and coded to identify initial themes, which were annotated in the margins.

The analysis was initially theoretically driven (Braun and Clarke, 2006), as the researchers used the social impact framework of Lee *et al.* (2013) to identify the main themes. Eventually, a hybrid deductive–inductive thematic analysis approach was adopted and yielded five main themes (Table 1). The resulting themes are discussed below.

4.1 Theme 1: social capital

Social capital is the sum of the actual and potential resources embedded within, available through and derived from the networks of relationships possessed by an individual or a unit (Nahapiet and Ghoshal, 1998). Our analysis demonstrates that undertaking green innovation can impact the creation of social capital on two levels: organisational and personal.

4.1.1 Sub-theme: organisational social capital. First, undertaking green innovation requires collaboration (Melander and Pazirandeh, 2019) and strong interorganisational linkages (Tidd, 1995). Strong ties within an organisational network result in a high degree of trust, which encourages partners to make greater resource commitments to the relationship (Capaldo, 2007). It was not surprising to find that most participants identified social capital as an outcome of the innovation process. As explained by one participant:

> . . . we (now only rely on) a paper supplier that . . . must also buy paper from the manufacturer (with) . . . an FSC certificate. (Participant 2, Female, Organisation A)

Most of the participants selected concept cards 1 and 2 (depicting "trust" and "diverse networks") – refer to Figures A3 [1] and A4 [1] in the first round of interviews.

Ensuring that a green innovation programme runs smoothly to achieve green key performance indicators (KPIs) requires a supply chain with multiple stakeholders from different backgrounds and experiences. The social capital gained across organisations through such a collaborative approach is substantial.

Table 1. Main themes

Themes	Definition of theme	Sub-themes
Social capital	Social relationships based on trustworthy and diverse networks, social proactivity, and participation by individuals in the community, for mutual success in society	Organisational social capital
	Sources: Putnam (1995), Onyx and Bullen (2000), Narayan and Cassidy (2001)	Personal social capital
Collective identity	Refers to belonging to a social community that reflects self-categorisation with positive attitudes	Changing the mindset
	Sources: Simon and Klandermans (2001), Ashmore *et al.* (2004)	Shared sense of purpose
Human capital	Defined as people's attributes, including skills, knowledge, capabilities, and attitudes needed for personal development and wellbeing	Educating and developing the community
	Sources: OECD (2001), Stroombergen *et al.* (2002)	International training of the employees
Environmental literacy	A basic functional education for all people, which provides them with the elementary knowledge, skills, and motives to cope with environmental needs and contribute to sustainable development	Employee literacy
	Source: UNESCO (1997)	External stakeholder literacy
Wellbeing	Obtaining psychologically and economically a harmonious quality of life in human development	Long-term effect on health
	Sources: Ormel *et al.* (1999), Nieboer *et al.* (2005)	Happiness

Source(s): Authors' own creation; concepts' definitions were extracted, modified by the original authors – the sources were mentioned above in the table

> We cannot do this alone. The key stakeholders . . . helped promote and guide other stakeholders (volunteers: university students and teachers). (Participant 8, Female, Organisation B)

4.1.2 Sub-theme: personal social capital. Previous research (Nguyen Dang *et al*., 2022) has hypothesised how partners working on a green project can bond together and feel pride at a personal level in achieving something meaningful. As pointed out by others (e.g Lazega *et al*., 2006), this is the homophily effect: people working on a socially significant project connect more with others working in the same field and upholding the same values and beliefs. Our interviews also revealed that people can form their own network of relationships. One interviewee acknowledged that, "*. . . when going green, it just gradually makes me feel that I trust the partners working with me.*" (Participant 12, Female, Organisation D).

4.2 Theme 2: collective identity

"Collective identity" was the next theme identified by participants in their selection of concept cards 4 and 5 (depicting "self-categorisation" and "social acceptance") – refer to Figures A5 [1] and A6 [1] in two interview rounds.

4.2.1 Sub-theme: changing the mindset. We define collective identity as a set of characteristics seen as intrinsic to a group of people who share a specific purpose and are interested in similar outcomes (Wry *et al*., 2011). When individuals work on a project, they may start to identify strongly with each other (Sivasubramaniam *et al*., 2012). However, our interviews with the participants revealed a spillover effect that was not part of the original theoretical framework – a change in mindset:

> I started realising some benefits of changing and developing my mindset . . . I started feeling that I want to contribute more to (the) community; . . . I want to be a member of the green innovation supply chain. (Participant 1, Male, Organisation A)

The quote above reflects the strong internal drive for belonging to a valued team that the participant developed in response to a socially responsible initiative. It also demonstrates the role of the team (Ajzen, 2005) in shaping a members thinking around green innovation. As argued by Secchi and Bui (2018), a group provides a suitable environment for people to consider or discount the opinions of others. Our study demonstrates that as team members engage and participate in the project, their thinking around green initiatives changes or adapts.

4.2.2 Sub-theme: shared sense of purpose. Another concept observed during the interviews was the shared sense of purpose that the employees felt with their organisation's goals around green innovation.

> We share a common mindset, striving to change employee and partner perceptions about the importance of going green. Through small actions, we can make a big, long-term impact and foster unity in our goals. (Participant 12, Female, Organisation D)

Contrary to the frequently reported disconnect between employees and their employers (Debevoise, 2019), our findings show that when an organisation is seen to be undertaking a socially impactful project, such as a green innovation project, employees can experience an alignment in values and a connection to the company's vision and mission (Morris, 2024). This effect is evident from the quote above, demonstrating the employee's line of sight (Morris, 2024) with the organisation's strategic objectives. Team members may find the inherent meaningfulness of their role in a socially responsible project an incentive for achieving the firm's objectives.

4.3 Theme 3: human capital

Our research examined the role played by firms undertaking green innovation and their contribution to developing human capital (Nguyen Dang *et al*., 2022). Collaboration across multiple sectors contributes significantly to the generation of ideas. When a socially responsible innovation project is driven with the involvement of multiple stakeholders, it has a lasting impact on skills development and capability enhancement (Herrera, 2016).

Our research demonstrates how undertaking green innovation impacts human capital development along two lines: (1) educating and developing the community and (2) further development of human resources at work.

4.3.1 Sub-theme: educating and developing the community. Human capital is not restricted to a firm's workforce, and innovative organisations help develop community capital (Hancock, 2001). The focal firm and its stakeholders particularly identified the importance of organising training programmes for the local community while undertaking the green initiative. Participants selected concept cards 14 and 15 (depicting "onsite training program" and "international training program") – refer to Figures A7 [1] and A8 [1] in the first and second rounds of interviews to discuss educational programmes in the community.

> To align with our CSR (corporate social responsibility) goals, we have training programs to raise environmental awareness among student volunteers . . . and teachers . . . to expand the 'I Love Water' program. (Participant 8, Female, Organisation B)

As evident from the above quote, green innovation projects lead to an exchange of information, paving the way for creating relationships between the innovating organisation and nearby communities (Lombardi *et al*., 2020). This is not a one-off phenomenon; ongoing green operations can strengthen collaboration between the firm and its neighbourhood.

4.3.2 Sub-theme: international training of employees. Organisations recognise the need for continuous workforce training (Bauernschuster *et al*., 2009) because of innovations being undertaken to remain competitive. Researchers have argued that training programmes have a

double effect, not only developing selected employees but also contributing to the productivity of the entire workforce (Dumas, 2008).

Our interviews revealed that the participating firms organise international training for employees. Some countries are years ahead of others in implementing green processes. Japan has been at the forefront of adopting technologies and practices to minimise the environmental impact of its operations (Forbes, 2023). It is not surprising to hear participants discuss training conducted overseas to boost firms' human capital by providing employees with knowledge, skills and expertise.

> We . . . have opportunities to participate in field trip visits (e.g. we went to Japan) to visit the partner factory to learn about the green process program, . . . we learned techniques and processes to minimise production waste to cut costs and protect the environment. (Participant 4, Female, Organisation A)

Researchers have previously examined international knowledge spillovers (Lee, 2006), with some studies also demonstrating an impact on the family members of training participants (Kugler *et al.*, 2015). While the interview data from our study did not probe for impact across employees' personal networks, participants clearly articulated the impact of green innovation-related training on internal and external human resources.

4.4 Theme 4: environmental literacy

4.4.1 Sub-theme: employee literacy. Environmentally literate individuals can be expected to support pro-environmental behaviour and thus contribute to solving environmental issues. Firms undertaking green innovation directly and indirectly help raise awareness of the (environmental) cause on two fronts (Minton and Cabano, 2024): first, by helping employees become more aware and educated about the issues, and, second by spreading awareness and related information to external stakeholders. Participants selected concept cards 8 and 9 (depicting "environmental problem concern" and "social proactivity") – referring to Figures A9 [1] and A10 [1] in the first and second rounds of interviews to initiate the discussions.

> In the past, I just heard about the general definition of environmental protection and the story stopped there . . . but gradually, when I directly joined in specific projects, I deeply understood the environmental issues that affect our products. (Participant 11, Female, Organisation C)

During the interviews, it was clear that environmental management is no longer the domain of a few subject specialists. Green initiatives are so fundamental to a firm's success that environmental knowledge cannot be isolated within an organisation. The valuable role that employees can play is now recognised. By aligning their daily activities with the firm's environmental values, employees can contribute significantly to green initiatives (Gullo and Haygood, 2009).

4.4.2 Sub-theme: external stakeholder literacy. For a sustainable green innovation programme, it is important that external stakeholders, including community-level organisations, buy into the initiative (Ledley *et al*., 2014) and educate themselves about the issue. The focal organisation, driving green innovation, may lead on information sharing with stakeholders, and this may have a ripple effect. As stakeholders are interconnected in today's information age, any actions adopted by one organisation will be observed – and possibly replicated – by others in the stakeholder ecosystem (Crane, 2020).

> Going green is challenging, but our company is lucky to receive lots of support, guidelines and encouragement from other partners, . . . I think it will create value - something like a spill-over effect . . . and I always remind my staff of this philosophy to continue and develop this green process. (Participant 12, Female, Organisation D)

4.5 Theme 5: well-being

Well-being, which is the state of improving the quality of life of individuals, is one of the most important indicators in the Human Development Index (Morse, 2023). Previous research (Ahmad *et al*., 2023) has suggested a link between green innovation technologies and human well-being.

Green innovation helps to reduce ecological footprints and contributes to people's wellbeing (Aldieri *et al*., 2019) by promoting their physical and mental health (Isham *et al*., 2021).

4.5.1 Sub-theme: long-term effects on health. Some participants concurred that a greener environment positively influences the health of individuals. However, they perceived this impact as occurring in the long term, selecting concept card 11 (depicting "good physical health") – referring to Figure A11 [1] and disregarding any immediate effects. This perception may stem from the assumed lag between the implementation of an innovation and its resulting impact.

> When we can contribute to reducing unnecessary issues, unnecessary burdens which make the environment better by undertaking green innovation, we can have better health, but this is a long-term impact, I think. (Participant 11, Female, Organisation C)

4.5.2 Sub-theme: happiness. Humans have a natural connection to their environment. According to the biophilia hypothesis in Wilson (1984), people's well-being improves when they interact with their environment. It seems that the more individuals know about climate change and other facts regarding environmental degradation, the more concerned they are about it. Our interviews revealed that individuals' awareness of contributing to a "greener" environment also contributed to their own happiness –– refer to Figure A12 [1].

5. Contribution

5.1 Contribution to theory

This study makes two key contributions to the green innovation literature. First, most prior studies have only examined the economic (e.g. Vasileiou *et al*., 2022) or environmental (Singh *et al*., 2020) consequences of green innovation. While a handful of studies (e.g. Tang *et al*., 2023) have tried to test the social impact of green innovation empirically, these studies were not carried out systematically. Our study contributes by comprehensively examining social impact from various dimensions that have not been previously tested in this discipline.

Second, most current research on green innovation relies on surveys and interviews. The case study approach is also popular ($n = 68$), with a handful of studies ($n = 3$) employing experimental design (Oduro *et al*., 2022). This paper introduces novelty to the literature by presenting a photo-elicitation technique. It is the only study in the field of green innovation that uses creative, visual stimuli to help trigger discussions.

5.2 Contribution to practice

This study provides managers with a framework for measuring the social impact of their green initiatives. It is no longer sufficient to evaluate a firm's financial performance alone. With a growing emphasis on the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, managers must be able to report the impact of their work beyond business boundaries. Borrowing the framework from Lee *et al*. (2013), the authors suggest measuring social impact on multiple dimensions. Our framework is based on stakeholder involvement, which underpins any success in undertaking green initiatives.

Our research findings are also insightful for policymakers working in innovation-related government, providing a comprehensive framework for evaluating the social impact of innovation. Moreover, our research demonstrates the impact of innovation across a stakeholder network. If government policies encourage collaboration across industries, public agencies and research centres, this may assist in increasing the macro-level social impact.

6. Conclusion, limitations and future research

In general, innovation requires multiple skills, resources and capabilities, both internal and external to an organisation (Leiponen, 2005). This paper provides evidence that green innovation – when undertaken in collaboration with stakeholders – fosters social impact across multiple dimensions.

An obvious limitation of this study is that it is based solely on interviews of executives and managers linked to a focal organisation that is already undertaking green innovation. We acknowledge the presence of sampling bias, as participating firms may already be positively oriented towards green innovation.

Next, due to time and resource limitations, it was not possible to examine other sources of information, such as documentary evidence, which would have increased the reliability of the data. To achieve rigour in this field, future research on the topic should consider employing triangulation by collecting data from a variety of sources. This approach would help provide a more comprehensive picture of the social impact of green innovation.

Future research should expand the sample, including a broader range of innovation actors and participants from government and the community. It is acknowledged that government policies are critical tools in promoting green innovation and harnessing social impact. We recommend that future interviewers investigate the perceptions of company executives of the influence of different economic and environmental policies on high-impact green innovation strategies.

Note

1. Please see it on the Online Appendix.

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Supplementary material
The supplementary material for this article can be found online.

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