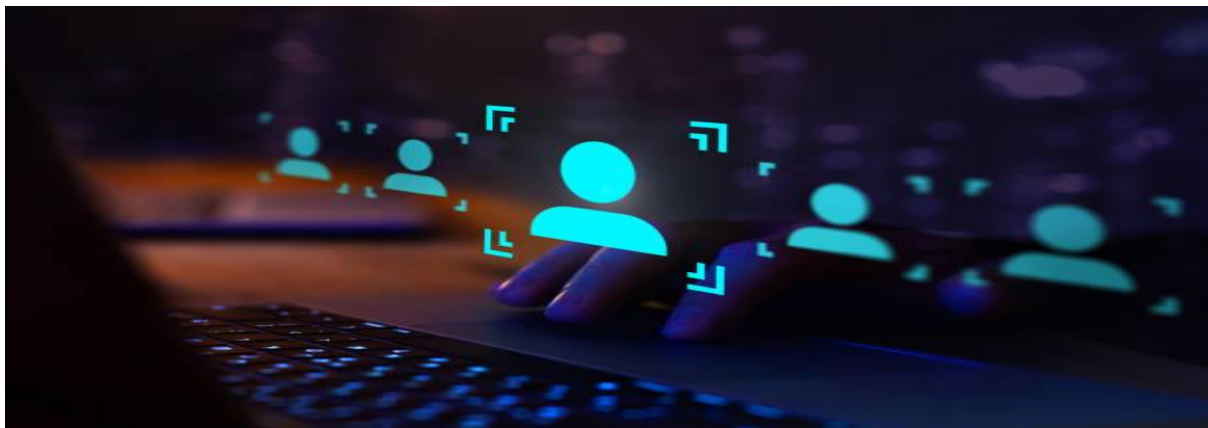


Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) Impact and Relevance on/to Non-Traditional Sectors: SMEs, Gig Economy, and Emerging markets in Australia

Results

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December 2024



Source: <https://www.istockphoto.com/search/2/image-film?page=8&phrase=market>

The focus of this article is to present the results of my research on the impacts and relevance of Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) practices in Australia's non-traditional sectors: small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), the gig economy, and emerging markets. The use of a mixed-methods research methodology is most appropriate for this research given the diversity and dynamism of non-traditional sectors. This approach captures both the macro-level dynamics and micro-level experiences within these industries.

The previous article (Research Questions) presented four distinct questions. The most recent article (Research Methods) outlined the mixed-research methods as the preferred research methodology to collate specific data that offers a comprehensive understanding of sector-specific trends and challenges.

SMEs

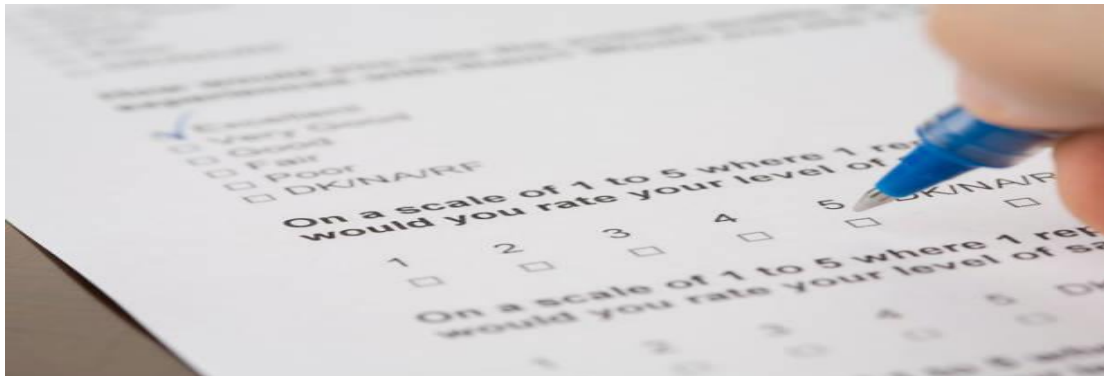
The research findings indicate that SMEs perceive ESG as a significant factor in achieving competitive differentiation. However, barriers such as financial constraints and limited expertise often impede widespread adoption. Qualitative responses from interviews highlighted a general enthusiasm for ESG practices, particularly in fostering trust among stakeholders. Quantitative data corroborate these findings, with 70% of SME respondents ranking governance as their primary ESG focus.

The Gig Economy

In the gig economy, the social dimension of ESG dominates discourse and practice. Interview data underscore an acute focus on issues such as fair wages, worker rights, and equitable treatment, with environmental considerations taking a secondary role. Surveys revealed that 60% of respondents identified inconsistent regulatory frameworks as the most significant barrier to effective ESG integration. Qualitative data further highlight the tension between the flexibility inherent to gig work and the structured requirements of ESG adherence.

Emerging Markets

Emerging markets demonstrate a stronger alignment of ESG practices with broader developmental goals, particularly in fostering social equity and climate resilience. Qualitative insights reveal that businesses operating in these markets frequently integrate ESG principles into their strategies to address local socio-economic challenges. However, quantitative findings indicate persistent barriers, with 75% of respondents citing funding gaps as a major obstacle to ESG adoption.



Source: [https://www.istockphoto.com/search/2/image-film?page=8&phrase=market%](https://www.istockphoto.com/search/2/image-film?page=8&phrase=market%20research)

A sample of an interview questionnaire (see Appendix 1) is designed to collect the qualitative data from targeted respondents.

The results of this research underline the sectoral diversity in ESG perceptions and practices, as well as the complex barriers to adoption. The following chapter, Discussion, will critically analyse these findings in the context of existing literature, exploring their implications for policy, strategy, and future research. It will also provide recommendations for fostering ESG integration in Australia's non-traditional sectors.

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Appendix 1 Interview Questionnaire

1. General Awareness	
What does ESG mean to you, and how do you perceive its relevance to your industry or business sector?	On a scale of 1 to 5 (1 = Not Important, 5 = Very Important), rate how important ESG is to your sector.
2. Implementation Challenges	
What challenges does your organisation or sector face when integrating ESG principles into operations?	What are the primary challenges your organisation faces in implementing ESG practices? (Select all that apply) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High costs • Lack of expertise • Inconsistent policies • Resistance to change • Limited access to ESG frameworks
3. Sector-specific Impact	
How do you see ESG impacting the sustainability and growth of in your sector/industry in the near future?	How significantly has ESG influenced the following areas in your sector? (1 = No Influence, 5 = High Influence) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business sustainability • Employee satisfaction • Community impact • Regulatory compliance
4. Social and Governance Aspects	
How has your sector addressed social issues such as fair wages, diversity, or governance practices under ESG frameworks?	Rank the following aspects of ESG based on their importance to your organization (1 = Most Important, 3 = Least Important): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environmental sustainability • Social equity (e.g., wages, diversity) • Corporate governance
5. Metrics and Reporting	
What kind of metrics or tools does your organisation use (or need) to measure ESG performance?	Does your organisation currently use ESG reporting or measurement tools? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes • No • Planning to implement
6. Policy and Future Outlook	
What role should government policies or international standards play in advancing ESG in your sector?	How likely are you to adopt ESG practices in the next three years? (1 = Not Likely, 5 = Very Likely)