

# Chapter 22

## Post–Pandemic Sustainability Strategies for Zimbabwean SMEs

**Mufaro Dzingirai**

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1518-8275>

*Midlands State University, Zimbabwe*

**Noah Tshuma**

*Midlands State University, Zimbabwe*

**Shingirai Sikomwe**

*Midlands State University, Zimbabwe*

### ABSTRACT

*In the past decade, the issue of sustainability in the context of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) has attracted much attention from scholars and policymakers. Admittedly, the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic has generated much curiosity of scholars with regard to the sustainability of SMEs. Accordingly, this study seeks to explore sustainability strategies that can be employed by SMEs in Zimbabwe in the post-COVID-19 pandemic era. Notably, seven sustainable strategies emerged from the thematic analysis, namely, online marketplaces, leveraging technology, cost-cutting measures, customer relationship, innovation and creativity, sustainable culture, and collaboration and partnerships. The results of this study help the policymakers and practitioners in making sound decisions related to SME sustainability based on empirical evidence.*

### INTRODUCTION

Changes within the business environment have over the years made it difficult for SMEs to operate efficiently and effectively. As such, both developed and developing countries have witnessed the poor performance and collapse of several SMEs. This state of affairs has necessitated the need to deepen

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-7998-7436-2.ch022

our understanding of the sustainability of SMEs. Notably, the sustainability of SMEs has been of paramount importance over the years given the role that these enterprises have been playing in the economy (Klewitz & Hansen, 2014). These enterprises have been struggling over the years and the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic has worsened the already struggling SMEs the world over. Klewitz & Hansen (2014) highlighted that despite the increase in the number of SMEs several of them have failed to survive or sustain themselves for more than five years because of changes in the environment.

The issues of survival, competitiveness and sustainability have remained topical when it comes to the SMEs sector given the changes that have occurred over time. Sannegadu (2020) clearly stressed that change is the only constant thing in the life of any business and organization given that the business environment is not static. This is the reality facing a lot of the SMEs in light of the COVID-19 pandemic which has decimated the normal fabric regarding the conduct of business.

It is generally accepted that SMEs contribute a lot with respect to sustainable economic development and growth in developing and developed economies. Provided that youth unemployment is increasing worldwide since 1997, SMEs are playing a significant role in absorbing the unemployed youths especially graduates (International Labour Organization, 2017). This negative development across the world has forced young people to start their own businesses. According to Dzingirai (2020), SMEs are hailed for fighting against youth unemployment. Although SMEs are of great importance when it comes to self-employment, they are facing sustainability challenges that are threatening their survival, especially in developing countries.

Moreover, SMEs are of great importance in fighting against poverty. By starting new ventures, people are able to generate a stream of income that could help them to eliminate or reduce poverty (Dzingirai, 2021). Notably, Majukwa (2019) stressed that SMEs contribute a lot to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of many developing countries like Zimbabwe. Interestingly, SMEs also contribute significantly to exports since some SMEs, especially from the mining sector, are now focusing much on export business. Although it is very difficult for SMEs to survive beyond five years of operation, they are considered to be the breeding ground for big companies. Lastly, SMEs play a fundamental role in creativity and innovation. Despite the several benefits of SMEs, it is worrisome that many SMEs are facing sustainability challenges especially with the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The scholarly debates revolving around the sustainability of SMEs within the context of SMEs heighten the need for us to deepen our understanding of sustainability issues, especially in the post-COVID-19 era. Surprisingly, very little is known about the post-COVID-19 pandemic sustainability strategies for SMEs especially in the context of Zimbabwe. Keeping this in mind, the objectives of this study are to review the worldwide debates concerning the COVID-19 pandemic and sustainability of SMEs, to review challenges that are faced by SMEs due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and to establish the sustainability strategies for SMEs in the post-COVID 19 era. Interestingly, the agenda for future research are offered in this study.

## **BACKGROUND**

It is common knowledge that SMEs are confronted with a myriad of challenges due to the size of their business operations. Mol-Gómez-Vázquez, Hernández-Cánovas, & Koëter-Kant (2019) undertook a study within the developed countries in Europe about the challenges that were faced by the SMEs after the great depression which negatively affected the financial performance of organizations. The great de-

18 more pages are available in the full version of this document, which may be purchased using the "Add to Cart" button on the publisher's webpage:

[www.igi-global.com/chapter/post-pandemic-sustainability-strategies-for-zimbabwean-smes/280688](http://www.igi-global.com/chapter/post-pandemic-sustainability-strategies-for-zimbabwean-smes/280688)

## Related Content

---

### Critical Analysis of Socio-Intercultural Entrepreneurship

José G. Vargas-Hernández (2021). *International Journal of Sustainable Entrepreneurship and Corporate Social Responsibility* (pp. 28-44).

[www.irma-international.org/article/critical-analysis-of-socio-intercultural-entrepreneurship/279636](http://www.irma-international.org/article/critical-analysis-of-socio-intercultural-entrepreneurship/279636)

### Digital Entrepreneurial Charity, Solidarity, and Social Change

José Manuel Saiz-Alvarez, Jorge Colvin-Díezand Jorge Hernando Cuñado (2017). *International Journal of E-Entrepreneurship and Innovation* (pp. 29-48).

[www.irma-international.org/article/digital-entrepreneurial-charity-solidarity-and-social-change/189099](http://www.irma-international.org/article/digital-entrepreneurial-charity-solidarity-and-social-change/189099)

### Change for Entrepreneurial Chances?: E-Government in the European Union 2020 and 2040

Ina Kayser (2011). *International Journal of E-Entrepreneurship and Innovation* (pp. 46-58).

[www.irma-international.org/article/change-entrepreneurial-chances/52782](http://www.irma-international.org/article/change-entrepreneurial-chances/52782)

### Artificial Intelligence and Automation for the Future of Startups

Richmond Anane-Simonand Sulaiman Olusegun Atiku (2024). *Ecosystem Dynamics and Strategies for Startups Scalability* (pp. 133-153).

[www.irma-international.org/chapter/artificial-intelligence-and-automation-for-the-future-of-startups/335163](http://www.irma-international.org/chapter/artificial-intelligence-and-automation-for-the-future-of-startups/335163)

### Assessing the Relationship Between Retention Factors and Organizational Commitment of University Faculty

Gerald Dapaah Gyamfi (2019). *International Journal of Sustainable Entrepreneurship and Corporate Social Responsibility* (pp. 23-40).

[www.irma-international.org/article/assessing-the-relationship-between-retention-factors-and-organizational-commitment-of-university-faculty/233633](http://www.irma-international.org/article/assessing-the-relationship-between-retention-factors-and-organizational-commitment-of-university-faculty/233633)