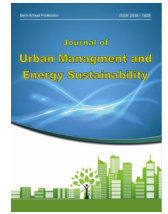


International Journal of Urban Management and Energy Sustainability (IJUMES)

Homepage: <http://www.ijumes.com>



CASE STUDY RESEARCH PAPER

Strategic Leadership Intelligence: A Driver of Sustainable Marketing in Iraq

Ammar Muhi Mustafa Altaamah¹, Ghasem Zarei^{2*}, Mohammad Bashokouh Ajirlou², Naser Seifollahi Anar²

¹ Ph.D. Student, Department of Business Administration, Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Mohaghegh Ardabili, Ardabil, Iran

^{2*} Professor, Department of business management, Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Mohaghegh Ardabili, Ardabil, Iran

ARTICLE INFO

Article History:

Received 2024-08-12

Revised 2026-10-03

Accepted 2024-12-06

Keywords:

Iraqi Organizations,
Paradigmatic Model, Sustainable
Marketing, Sustainable
Marketing Strategies, Strategic
Leadership Intelligence,
Structural Equation Modeling

ABSTRACT

This study develops and tests a model of strategic leadership intelligence as an enabler of sustainable marketing strategy implementation in Iraqi organizations. The study is applied in purpose and follows an exploratory sequential mixed-methods design: the qualitative stage builds the theory and identifies the dimensions of the construct, and the quantitative stage tests the resulting model on an independent sample. In the qualitative stage, twenty academic experts and senior Iraqi managers were selected through purposive and snowball sampling, and data were gathered through semi-structured interviews until theoretical saturation and analyzed following the grounded theory procedures of Strauss and Corbin (1990). In the quantitative stage, 215 usable questionnaires were collected from managers and senior specialists in manufacturing, service, commercial and industrial organizations, principally in Baghdad, Basra and Erbil, using a structured five-point Likert instrument. The qualitative stage identified strategic leadership intelligence, comprising four dimensions vision intelligence, adaptive intelligence, stakeholder intelligence and sustainable decision intelligence as the core phenomenon governing sustainable marketing strategy implementation in the Iraqi business environment. Causal, contextual and intervening conditions, together with strategies and consequences, were identified within a paradigm model. In the quantitative stage, all six tested paths were positive and significant. The strongest was the effect of the core phenomenon on strategies, followed by the effect of strategies on consequences (0.72). A finding requiring theoretical scrutiny is the positive effect of intervening conditions on strategies (0.77), given that these conditions were identified as barriers in the qualitative stage; this inconsistency is examined in the discussion. The study operationalizes strategic leadership intelligence as a measurable four-dimensional construct, links it directly to sustainable marketing strategy implementation, and extends upper echelons theory to the sustainability domain in a high-uncertainty institutional context that is under-represented in the literature.

DOI: [10.22034/ijumes.2024.737688](https://doi.org/10.22034/ijumes.2024.737688)

Running Title: Strategic Leadership Intelligence



NUMBER OF REFERENCES

26



NUMBER OF FIGURES

04



NUMBER OF TABLES

14

*Corresponding Author:

Email: zareigz@gmail.com

Phone: +98453150500

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4949-5871>

INTRODUCTION

The contemporary marketing environment has been profoundly transformed by the expansion of information and communication technologies, and this transformation has made sustainability a central organizational concern. In these conditions, many organizations have turned to sustainable marketing as a novel approach one that focuses on strengthening customer relationships, exploiting environmental opportunities and overcoming challenges, and that looks beyond short-term sales to the continuity and survival of the organization (Kumar et al., 2012; Martin & Schouten, 2012). From this perspective, sustainable marketing has become one of the fundamental requirements of organizational activity in the contemporary economy. Intensifying competition and the proliferation of firms in the market have compelled managers to adopt foresight and anticipate developments in order to preserve their position and secure long-term survival. This is difficult to achieve without leaders possessing strategic intelligence, since such leaders continuously gather and analyses environmental data, identify opportunities and make effective decisions, thereby smoothing the organization's path to development and success (Ireland & Hitt, 1999). The intense dynamism of the business environment and continuous technological, economic and social change have made the need for intelligent leadership more salient than ever. As one of the principal pillars of both public and private organizations, leadership creates the conditions for sustained competitive advantage by directing employee behavior, involving employees in decision-making, developing knowledge and managing change (Bass & Riggio, 2006; Northouse, 2018). The significance of this study arises from the fact that strategic leadership intelligence and sustainable marketing remain relatively emergent domains requiring deeper investigation, particularly in the Iraqi context. The study seeks to connect intelligent strategic leadership with sustainable marketing so that organizations may better understand

customer needs, anticipate future market developments, design more flexible marketing strategies and build stronger stakeholder relationships. Sustainable marketing, as a modern approach, emphasizes the effective use of resources, the creation of customer value and the observance of social and environmental considerations, and can thereby strengthen a firm's competitive position (Kumar et al., 2013). Nevertheless, Iraqi organizations face serious challenges in the practical implementation of sustainable marketing strategies, and a perceptible gap exists between the theoretical importance of this approach and the actual capacity to enact it. Part of this gap is attributable to the limitations of leadership models that lack the capacity to direct resources, exploit innovation and shape a culture supportive of sustainability. The central problem of the present study is therefore how strategic leadership intelligence can be harnessed to implement sustainable marketing strategies appropriate to the characteristics of the Iraqi environment, in a manner that both creates long-term competitive advantage and supports sustainable economic development objectives. Accordingly, the study addresses two questions. (1) What dimensions constitute strategic leadership intelligence in the context of Iraqi organizations, and within what paradigm model does it connect to causal, contextual and intervening conditions, strategies and consequences? (2) To what extent are the relationships among the components of this model confirmed in an independent sample of Iraqi managers and specialists? The remainder of the paper is structured as follows: Section 2 presents the theoretical foundations, supporting theories, prior empirical work and the hypotheses; Section 3 the research method; Sections 4 and 5 the qualitative and quantitative findings; Section 6 the discussion; and Section 7 the conclusion, implications and limitations.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Strategic leadership intelligence as a pillar of managing dynamic organizations

In recent years the concept of intelligence in management has moved beyond traditional capabilities such as planning and control to encompass a set of cognitive, emotional and social capacities. To steer complex organizations effectively and confront global competition, today's leaders require a high level of "leadership intelligence" enabling them to comprehend the environment and take strategic decisions (Sternberg, 1997; Northouse, 2018). In contrast to the classical definition that confined intelligence to cognitive ability, contemporary perspectives define it as a set of mental and behavioral capacities for effective interaction. In his theory of successful intelligence, Sternberg argues that effective managers are those able to balance analytical, creative and practical intelligence. This combination enables the individual to analyse complex organizational problems and, when confronting the realities of the workplace, to take decisions that are both practical and appropriate to the circumstances (Sternberg, 1997). Effective leadership in contemporary organizations requires a combination of emotional, social, cultural and spiritual intelligences. Leaders with high emotional intelligence can create an environment founded on trust and cooperation (Bass & Riggio, 2006), while social intelligence assists in managing conflict and strengthening cohesion among employees (Northouse, 2018). The Arabic management literature likewise places particular emphasis on the importance of comprehensive intelligence in organizational leadership, regarding successful leaders as those able to analyse environmental information correctly and identify new opportunities for organizational growth. As the business environment has grown more complex, the concept of strategic leadership intelligence has emerged as an unavoidable necessity. It is a combination of cognitive and managerial capabilities enabling the leader to move beyond operational management, anticipate future change and steer the organization towards long-term objectives (Ireland & Hitt, 1999). The salient characteristic of strategically intelligent leaders is forward-looking

thinking and precise environmental analysis. By anticipating long-term trends and synthesizing diverse information, they construct a comprehensive picture of the organization (Mintzberg et al., 2005; Avery & Bergsteiner, 2011). By aligning human and financial resources with organizational strategy, such leaders are able to create a clear vision and mobilize employees towards macro-level objectives.

Sustainable marketing and the necessity of attending to sustainability in management

In recent decades, mounting global concern over environmental, social and economic issues has made sustainability one of the central axes of management and economic debate. Organizations once concentrated principally on achieving economic profit; today they are expected to attend also to their social and environmental responsibilities. Within this shift, sustainable marketing has emerged as one of the newer approaches in marketing management, seeking to balance the organization's economic objectives against social and environmental requirements (Martin & Schouten, 2012). The concept of sustainability in the management literature is rooted in debates on sustainable development that meets the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own. The concept was first advanced on a broad scale in the report of the Brundtland Commission (World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987) and has since become a foundational principle of economic and managerial policy-making. Within organizational management, sustainability means establishing a balance among the economic, social and environmental dimensions, referred to as the triple bottom line (Elkington, 1997).

Kotler and Armstrong define sustainable marketing as a process through which organizations create value for customers while simultaneously taking into account the long-term interests of society and the environment (Armstrong et al., 2018). Martin and Schouten (2012) likewise re-

gard sustainable marketing as a new paradigm in marketing management, emphasizing the creation of sustainable value for customers, the organization and society. Kumar et al. (2012) show that marketing strategy has travelled a path from ecological marketing in the 1970s to social marketing, then green marketing, and finally sustainable marketing; and in their subsequent systematic review (Kumar et al., 2013) they emphasize that sustainable marketing strategy is effective only when it is decided at the level of corporate strategy rather than at the functional level of marketing a point that bears directly on the role of senior leadership in the present study. One of the fundamental principles of sustainable marketing is attention to long-term rather than purely short-term interests. In traditional marketing, many organizations focused on increasing sales and profit in the short run, but this approach in some cases produced negative consequences for society and the environment. By contrast, sustainable marketing insists that organizations design their marketing activities so that the long-term interests of customers, society and the environment are also taken into account (White et al., 2019). In practical terms, implementing sustainable marketing requires changing traditional marketing practices: organizations must incorporate sustainability considerations into product design, pricing, distribution and marketing communications (Martin & Schouten, 2012). A further important dimension of sustainable marketing is attention to the interests of diverse stakeholders. In traditional marketing approaches the principal focus was on customers and shareholders, but in sustainable marketing the organization's field of attention extends to other stakeholders such as employees, the local community, government and the environment (Kumar et al., 2016). This perspective indicates that an organization's long-term success depends on its capacity to create value for all stakeholders. In developing countries facing challenges such as population growth, pressure on natural resources and infrastructural difficulties, this issue assumes

redoubled importance.

The relationship between strategic leadership intelligence and sustainable marketing strategy

Success in formulating and implementing sustainable marketing strategies depends on the strategic decisions and macro-level orientation of the organization, which are set by senior leaders. The relationship between strategic leadership intelligence and sustainable marketing strategy is significant because sustainability and responsible marketing require a long-term outlook, an understanding of environmental complexity and the ability to balance the conflicting interests of stakeholder's characteristics that constitute the core of strategic leadership intelligence (Ireland & Hitt, 1999). Leaders with high strategic intelligence do not think only of short-term profitability; they regard the organization's long-term survival as contingent on environmental compatibility and responsiveness to societal expectations (Avery & Bergsteiner, 2011). On one hand, strategic leadership intelligence, by strengthening the leader's cognitive and analytical capabilities, makes it possible to identify in good time the market opportunities arising from shifts in consumer behavior towards green and sustainable products (White et al., 2019). On the other hand, a substantial part of the success of sustainable marketing depends on change in the organization's internal culture and structure. Because of their high capacity to direct human and social capital, strategically intelligent leaders are better able to manage internal resistance to the shift towards sustainable processes and to mobilize employees towards social-responsibility objectives (Northouse, 2018). The role of strategic leadership intelligence in orienting sustainable marketing can also be explained from the perspective of stakeholder theory. Unlike traditional marketing, sustainable marketing does not seek merely to satisfy buyer and seller; it takes into account a wide spectrum of stakeholders including society, future generations and the environment. Managing this complex network of relationships

and responding to their diverse needs requires a high level of the social, cultural and cognitive intelligence crystallized in the concept of strategic leadership intelligence (Freeman, 1984; Kumar et al., 2016). Relying on this intelligence, the leader manages the conflicts between the economic objectives of owners and the environmental objectives of local communities, and adjusts marketing strategies so that their output is the creation of shared value for all. In addition, strategic leadership intelligence acts as the principal driver of innovation in sustainable marketing. Implementing sustainable marketing often requires redesigning products, changing the supply chain and devising new methods of distribution and promotion. A strategically intelligent leader, by allocating organizational resources optimally and creating a suitable platform for learning and creativity, prepares the ground for the development of sustainable innovations (Teece et al., 1997). This becomes doubly important in developing markets and in countries such as Iraq that face multiple infrastructural and environmental challenges, since in such environments steering the organization towards sustainable marketing requires courageous, intelligent and flexible decision-making.

Supporting theories

The conceptual model of this study rests on four established theoretical frameworks, each of which explains part of the logic by which leadership capabilities affect organizational strategy and performance.

- Upper echelons theory. Hambrick and Mason (1984) argue that organizational outcomes including strategic choices reflect the cognitive characteristics and values of the organization's top managers, because leaders perceive a complex environment not objectively but through a limited field of vision, selective perception and personal interpretation. This theory supplies the fundamental logic of the present study: if the choice of a sustainable marketing strategy is a function of the leader's perception, then the

cognitive quality of leadership that is, strategic leadership intelligence is a meaningful predictor of the implementation of such strategies. The theory underpins the path from the core phenomenon to strategies (H3).

- The resource-based view. Barney (1991) demonstrates that sustained competitive advantage arises from resources that are valuable, rare, inimitable and non-substitutable. Strategic leadership intelligence as a capability embedded in the individual and in organizational experience, and not readily purchasable or copyable possesses precisely these attributes. This perspective explains why the path from strategies to consequences (H6) leads to sustained competitive advantage.

- Dynamic capabilities theory. Teece et al. (1997) define a dynamic capability as the firm's ability to integrate, build and reconfigure internal and external competences to address a changing environment. This theory directly explains the adaptive intelligence dimension and clarifies why, in a high-uncertainty environment such as Iraq, sustainability is achieved not through rigidity but through continuous reconfiguration. It also provides the logic for the path from causal conditions to the core phenomenon (H1): environmental pressure makes the development of dynamic capability necessary.

- Stakeholder theory. Freeman (1984) conceives the organization as a network of relationships with groups that affect, or are affected by, the achievement of its objectives. This theory underpins the stakeholder intelligence dimension and explains why sustainable marketing cannot be implemented without the capacity to manage conflicting stakeholder expectations. In an empirical study of Indian firms, Kumar et al. (2016) showed that stakeholder pressure is a significant predictor of the adoption of sustainable marketing strategy.

Taken together, these four theories form an explanatory chain: environmental pressure and stakeholder demands (dynamic capabilities theory and stakeholder theory) make the devel-

opment of strategic leadership intelligence necessary; this intelligence, as a rare and inimitable resource (the resource-based view), is translated into sustainable marketing strategies through the leader's perception and interpretation (upper echelons theory); and these strategies lead to sustained competitive advantage.

2.5. Prior empirical work and the research gap

A review of the literature reveals two largely separate research streams. The first focuses on stra-

tegic and sustainable leadership and examines its consequences chiefly at the level of overall organizational performance. The second focuses on sustainable marketing strategy and locates its drivers chiefly in stakeholder pressure and regulation, without introducing the cognitive capability of senior leadership as an independent variable. Table 1 summarizes the principal studies on which this research builds and the gap each leaves open. (Tab. 1)

Table 1: Prior studies and the research gap (Source: Authors)

Author(s) / Year	Focus	Principal finding	Gap remaining
Hambrick & Mason (1984)	Upper echelons theory	Organizational strategic outcomes reflect the cognitive characteristics of top managers	Theoretical and macro-level; does not operationalise the leadership-intelligence construct
Ireland & Hitt (1999)	Six components of effective strategic leadership	Provides a framework for strategic leadership in the twenty-first century	Does not introduce sustainability or marketing into the model
Avery & Bergsteiner (2011)	Sustainable leadership; honeybee and locust approaches	Twenty-three leadership practices that jointly reinforce sustainability and long-term performance	Focuses on the organization as a whole rather than on marketing strategy; evidence largely Western
Kumar et al. (2012)	Evolution of sustainability in marketing strategy	Transition from ecological to social, green and finally sustainable marketing	Review only; no empirical test
Kumar et al. (2013)	Systematic review of sustainable marketing strategy	Sustainable marketing strategy must be decided at the level of corporate strategy	Does not address the senior-leadership mechanism
Kumar et al. (2016)	Stakeholder influence on sustainable marketing strategy (India)	Stakeholder pressure is a significant predictor of sustainable marketing strategy adoption	Does not introduce leadership into the model; Indian context
White et al. (2019)	Shifting consumer behaviour towards sustainable choices	A five-part framework for demand-side intervention	Consumer level; does not cover the organizational leadership level
Martin & Schouten (2012)	Sustainable marketing as a paradigm	Sustainable marketing creates value simultaneously for customer, organization and society	Conceptual and pedagogical; untested in fragile economies

On this basis the research gap is threefold. First, no study has operationalized strategic leadership intelligence as a multidimensional construct and linked it directly to sustainable marketing strategy implementation. Second, the existing literature has been developed chiefly

in mature and stable economies, whereas the dynamism, institutional uncertainty and infrastructural fragility of the Iraqi environment constitute different boundary conditions that limit the transferability of Western findings. Third, no study has proposed a paradigm model for this

linkage in the Iraqi context. By building a model from qualitative data and testing it on an independent sample, the present study targets all three gaps.

Research hypotheses

The paradigm model derived from the qualitative stage (Section 4) identifies the categories but does not test the direction or magnitude of the relationships among them. Drawing on the theories set out in Section 2.4 and on the structure of the paradigm model, six hypotheses were formulated for testing in the quantitative stage:

- H1. Causal conditions (the deficit of traditional leadership models, sustainability demands, the Iraq-specific environment) have a positive and significant effect on the formation of strategic leadership intelligence as the core phenomenon. Theoretical basis: environmental pressure makes the development of dynamic capability necessary (Teece et al., 1997).

- H2. Intervening conditions (short-term performance pressures, weak middle-leadership structure) have a significant effect on the core phenomenon. Theoretical basis: encountering implementation barriers heightens the perceived salience of the need for strategic leadership capability (Hambrick & Mason, 1984).

- H3. Strategic leadership intelligence has a positive and significant effect on the adoption of sustainable marketing strategies. Theoretical basis: strategic outcomes reflect the cognition of top managers (Hambrick & Mason, 1984).

- H4. Causal conditions have a positive and significant direct effect on strategies that does not pass through the core phenomenon. Theoretical basis: stakeholder pressure directly predicts the adoption of sustainable marketing strategy (Kumar et al., 2016).

- H5. Intervening conditions have a significant effect on strategies.

- H6. Sustainable marketing strategies have a positive and significant effect on consequences (sustained competitiveness, long-term value, stakeholder trust). Theoretical basis: rare and

inimitable capabilities lead to sustained competitive advantage (Barney, 1991).

Methodology

Research design

The present study is applied in purpose. The research design is an exploratory sequential mixed-methods design (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018): the first stage is qualitative and inductive and builds the theory and identifies the dimensions of the construct; the second stage is quantitative and deductive and tests the resulting model on an independent sample. This specification is necessary because grounded theory is an inductive, theory-generating method, and describing the whole study as employing “a quantitative approach and deductive logic” as the previous version did is incompatible with the execution of grounded theory. What in fact occurred is a sequence of induction followed by deduction. Figure 1 depicts this design. (Fig. 1)

The study variables are defined as follows: the core construct is strategic leadership intelligence with four dimensions (vision, adaptive, stakeholder, sustainable decision); the predictor variables are the causal and intervening conditions; the mediating variable is sustainable marketing strategies; and the final dependent variable is organizational consequences.

Qualitative stage

In the qualitative stage, twenty academic experts and senior Iraqi managers were selected through purposive and snowball sampling, and interviews continued until theoretical saturation was reached. Data were analyzed following the three-stage procedure of open, axial and selective coding and the paradigm model of Strauss and Corbin (1990).

Quantitative stage

In the quantitative stage, the population comprised middle and senior managers, marketing and sales supervisors, heads of planning units

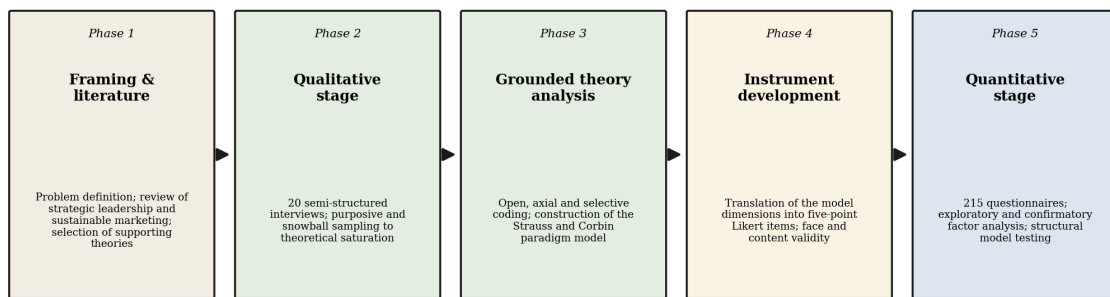
and senior specialists in organizations operating in the manufacturing, service, commercial and industrial sectors of Iraq, particularly in the cities of Baghdad, Basra and Erbil. For this stage, 215 usable questionnaires were collected as the final sample. The principal data-collection instrument was a structured questionnaire with a five-point Likert scale, containing sections for demographic information, the measurement of strategic leadership intelligence and the measurement of sustainable marketing strategy implementation. The questionnaire items were derived directly from the dimensions and indicators identified in the qualitative stage (Tab. 5);

that is, the measurement instrument is an output of the qualitative stage of this same study and was not adapted from an external source.

Ethical considerations

Before each interview, the purpose of the research was explained to the participant and verbal informed consent was obtained. Participation in both stages was voluntary, and participants were assured that the data would be reported in aggregate and anonymous form; for this reason, only, participant numbers are used in the quotations. Questionnaire data were likewise collected anonymously.

Research design: exploratory sequential mixed-methods



The qualitative stage builds the theory; the quantitative stage tests it on an independent sample

(Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018)

Figure 1: Research design (Source: Authors)

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Open coding

From the twenty interviews, a total of 324 initial codes were extracted before merging, which after the consolidation of overlapping items was

reduced to 71 distinct codes. Table 2 presents the eighteen most frequent codes ranked by their frequency across the interviews, and Figure 2 presents the same distribution visually. (Tab. 2 and Fig. 2)

Table 2: The eighteen most frequent codes among the 71 distinct codes, ranked by frequency across the twenty interviews (Source: Authors)

No.	Initial code	Interviews	Total mentions	Priority level
1	Long-term strategic leadership vision	18	96	Highest priority
2	Leader's adaptive capacity in changing environments	17	88	Highest priority
3	Stakeholder management to strengthen sustainable marketing	17	86	Highest priority
4	Evidence-based sustainable leadership decision	16	81	Very high

5	Converting sustainability into competitive advantage	15	77	Very high
6	Implementation gap between strategy and reality	15	74	Very high
7	Organizational culture supporting sustainability	14	69	Very high
8	Context-specific intelligence for the Iraqi environment	13	65	Very high
9	Tension between short-term profitability and sustainability	13	62	High
10	Integrated sustainability and marketing performance indicators	12	58	High
11	Strategic partnerships as a sustainability lever	11	54	High
12	Leader inspiring the team with sustainability values	11	52	High
13	Genuine leadership belief in the sustainability cause	10	48	High
14	Incentive system supporting sustainable behavior	10	47	High
15	Leadership learning from international experience	9	43	Medium
16	Measuring the strategic impact of sustainable marketing	9	41	Medium
17	Building a network of middle leaders committed to sustainability	8	38	Medium
18	Transparency and accountability in sustainable leadership decisions	8	37	Medium

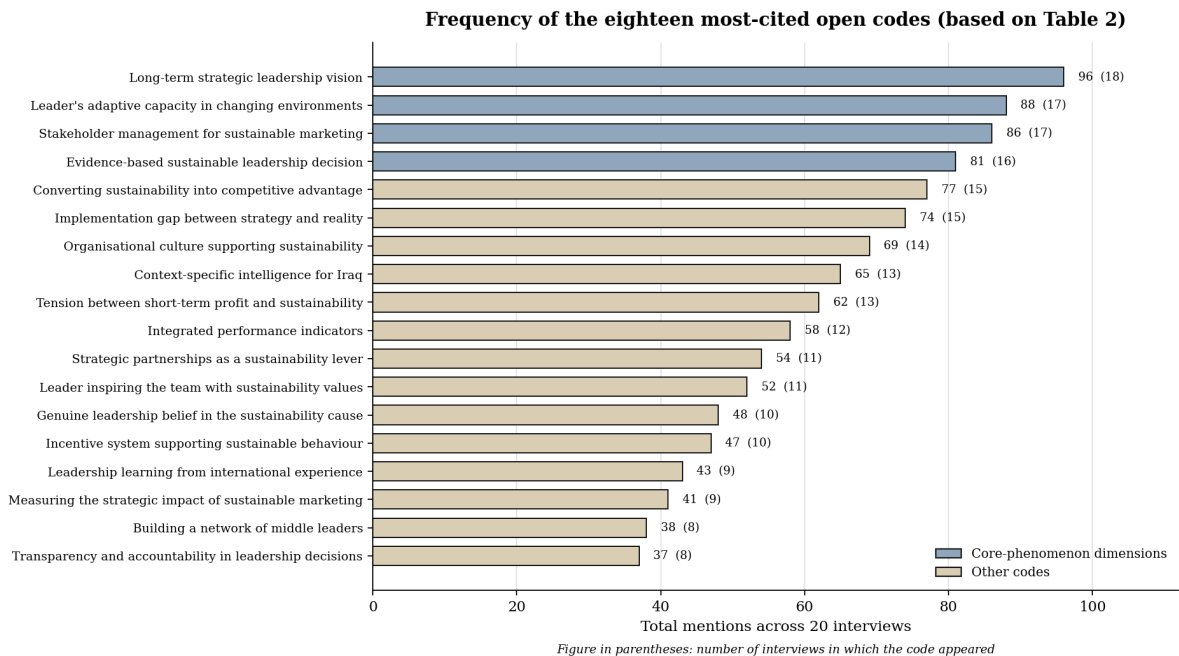


Figure 2: Frequency of the eighteen most-cited open codes (Source: Authors)

The three highest-priority codes leadership vision, adaptive capacity and stakeholder management appeared in 18, 17 and 17 of the twenty interviews respectively, indicating their centrality to the phenomenon under study.

Axial coding

In the axial coding stage, the analysis was raised to a higher level of abstraction, as the initial codes were classified into twelve main categories according to the structure of the Strauss and Corbin (1990) paradigm model. Table 3 presents the detailed results of this classification. (Tab. 3 and 4)

Table 3: Axial coding results: twelve main categories and their paradigmatic axes (Source: Authors)

No.	Main category	Paradigmatic axis	Merged sub-codes	Codes
1	Deficit of traditional leadership models	Causal conditions	Short-term vision constraint, absence of sustainable strategic thinking, weak competitive-environment reading skills	3
2	Rising organizational sustainability demands	Causal conditions	Stakeholder pressure, growing environmental regulation, evolving consumer expectations	3
3	The Iraq-specific business environment	Causal conditions	Environmental ambiguity, market volatility, regional competitiveness	3
4	Strategic leadership intelligence	Core phenomenon	Vision intelligence, adaptive intelligence, stakeholder intelligence, sustainable decision intelligence	4
5	Cultural and organizational environment	Contextual conditions	Organizational culture, leadership legacy, incentive systems	3
6	Legal and regulatory framework	Contextual conditions	Governmental policy, compliance requirements, environmental regulation	3
7	Short-term performance pressures	Intervening conditions	Shareholder expectations, financial pressures, implementation gap	3
8	Weak middle-leadership structure	Intervening conditions	Competency gaps, resistance to change, absence of role models	3
9	Vision intelligence and strategic planning	Strategies	Building a sustainable vision, scenario planning, trend forecasting	3
10	Adaptive intelligence in implementation	Strategies	Change management, organizational learning, strategic flexibility	3
11	Stakeholder management intelligence	Strategies	Building partnerships, converting opponents, managing expectations	3
12	Sustainable marketing strategy implementation	Consequences	Enhancing sustained competitiveness, building long-term value, strengthening stakeholder trust	3

Causal conditions

Table 4: Causal conditions, categories and their textual evidence (Source: Authors)

Causal category	Mentions	Illustrative textual evidence
Deficit of traditional leadership models	14 mentions in 12 interviews	"The greatest obstacle to implementing a sustainable marketing strategy was the absence of a leadership team trained in long-term strategic thinking." Participant 1
Rising organizational sustainability demands	16 mentions in 14 interviews	"The Iraqi consumer today evaluates an organization by the extent of its social and environmental impact and no longer accepts empty slogans." Participant 5
The Iraq-specific business environment	13 mentions in 11 interviews	"In the Iraqi context the leader needs an exceptional contextual intelligence through which to grasp the specificity of the local business environment." Participant 1

The core phenomenon

Selective coding concluded that the overarching core phenomenon of this study is: “the strategic deployment of leadership intelligence, with its

four dimensions, to enable the implementation of sustainable marketing strategies in the Iraqi business environment.” Table 5 presents the dimensions of this phenomenon. (Tab. 5 to 9)

Table 5: Dimensions of the core phenomenon, indicators and their frequency across the interviews (Source: Authors)

Core dimension	Indicators	Frequency	Textual evidence
Strategic vision intelligence	Articulating a clear sustainable future, forecasting trends, reading hidden market opportunities	96 mentions 18 interviews	“The intelligent leader knows how to see what others do not see, and to build on it.” P5
Adaptive leadership intelligence	Strategic flexibility, change management, continuous learning	88 mentions 17 interviews	“Sustainability requires a leadership that continuously reconstructs itself in step with the variables.” P3
Stakeholder management intelligence	Identifying stakeholders, building alliances, managing expectations and tensions	86 mentions 17 interviews	“We succeeded at the point when we turned stakeholders from opponents into partners.” P1
Sustainable decision intelligence	Evidence-based decisions, balancing the short and the long term	81 mentions 16 interviews	“An intelligent strategic decision sacrifices immediate profit for deeper value.” P2

Contextual and intervening conditions

Table 6: Contextual conditions (Source: Authors)

Contextual condition	Concept	Effect on the formation of the phenomenon	Textual evidence
Cultural and organizational environment	Prevailing leadership legacies and incentive systems	Determines the organization's openness to a sustainable strategic leadership approach	“An organizational culture supportive of sustainability does not arrive by decree; it forms through cumulative leadership decisions.” P6
Legal and regulatory framework	Environmental governance policy and prevailing regulation	Requires the alignment of marketing strategies with evolving legal requirements	“The new environmental regulations forced us to rethink our entire marketing model.” P12

Table 7 Intervening conditions: barriers and their effect on strategies (Source: Authors)

Intervening condition	Nature	Effect on strategies	Textual evidence
Short-term performance pressures	Structural–financial barrier	Narrows the scope of investment in sustainable marketing and slows implementation	“Short-term financial pressures destroy the best sustainability strategies.” P2
Weak middle-leadership structure	Human–organizational barrier	Weakens the capacity to execute leadership decisions across organizational levels	“The greatest gap is not in the strategy but in middle leaders capable of translating it.” P7

Strategies and consequences

Table 8: Leadership-intelligence strategies in implementing sustainable marketing (Source: Authors)

Strategy	Implementation mechanism	Success indicator	Textual evidence
Vision and fore-sight strategy	Formulating a clear sustainable vision, defining future scenarios, and linking the vision to marketing indicators	Increased coherence between strategic and marketing objectives	"Once we placed sustainability at the heart of our vision, marketing decisions transformed of their own accord." P1
Adaptation and flexibility strategy	Building flexible leadership teams able to reformulate marketing strategy in response to change	Reduction of the implementation gap between strategy and reality	"The strategic flexibility we built allowed us to continue sustainable marketing even during the 2020 crisis." P3
Stakeholder management strategy	Mapping stakeholders, building strategic alliances, and converting opponents into supporters	Higher rate of social acceptance of marketing initiatives	"Involving the community in designing the initiative before implementation turned it from a company programme into a social movement." P5
Sustainable decision strategy	Building decision models that balance short-term financial objectives against long-term sustainable value	Improvement in the organization's environmental and social performance indicators	"Linking the leadership incentive system to sustainability indicators changed the decision culture of the firm entirely." P9

Table 9: Consequences and outcomes of implementing sustainable marketing strategies (Source: Authors).

Horizon	Outcome	Measurement indicator	Textual evidence
Short term	Improved sustainable marketing performance	Increase in responsible market share	"In the first year of seriously implementing the sustainable marketing approach, the customer satisfaction rate rose by 28% and social-responsibility complaints fell by 40%." P7
Short term	Strengthened organizational credibility	Trust and organizational reputation index	"Our numbers showed that transparency in our marketing reduced the cost of acquiring a new customer proportionally." P13
Long term	Building sustained competitive advantage	Sustained market share and loyalty	"Organizations that deployed strategic leadership intelligence are now in a position competitors cannot easily reach." P4
Long term	Strengthened long-term organizational value	Market value and organizational reputation	"Our investment in sustainable marketing added an intangible value to our brand beyond what we had imagined." P15

Selective coding and the final paradigm model

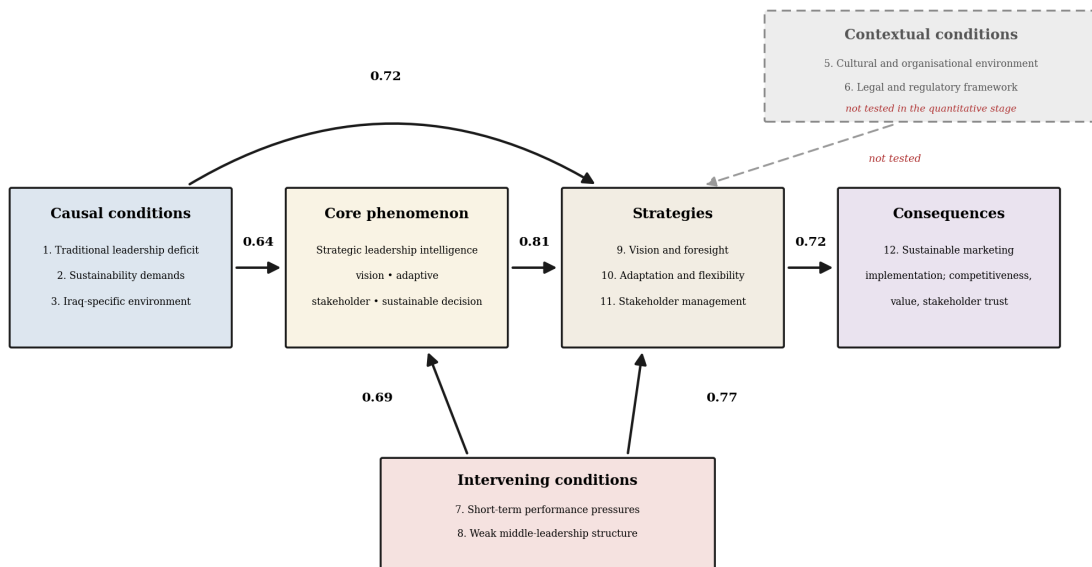
In the selective coding stage, all categories were assembled around the core phenomenon and the complete paradigm model was constructed.

Table 10 presents the integrated structure of this model, and Figure 3 depicts it together with the paths tested in the quantitative stage. (Tab. 10 and Fig. 3)

Table 10: The complete paradigm model of strategic leadership intelligence and sustainable marketing implementation in Iraq (Source: Authors)

Paradigmatic axis	Categories	Essential concepts	Interpretive function
Causal conditions	(1) Traditional leadership deficit (2) Sustainability demands (3) The Iraqi environment	Vision constraint, stakeholder pressure, specificity of the local context	Explains why Iraqi organizations acutely need strategic leadership intelligence
Core phenomenon	(4) Strategic leadership intelligence with its four dimensions	Vision intelligence, adaptive intelligence, stakeholder intelligence, sustainable decision intelligence	The heart of the model around which all categories revolve
Contextual conditions	(5) Cultural environment (6) Legal framework	Leadership legacy, incentive systems, environmental regulation	The surrounding environment that shapes the application of the phenomenon and sets its boundaries
Intervening conditions	(7) Short-term performance pressures (8) Weak middle-leadership structure	Immediate financial expectations, leadership competency gaps	Barriers that weaken the capacity to implement the strategies fully
Strategies	(9) Vision strategy (10) Adaptation and flexibility (11) Stakeholder management	Foresight, strategic flexibility, alliance building	Practical responses for confronting the phenomenon under its varying conditions
Consequences	(12) Sustainable marketing implementation	Sustained competitiveness, long-term value, stakeholder trust	Outcomes demonstrating the effectiveness of the phenomenon in the Iraqi context

Paradigm model and the paths tested in the quantitative stage



Coefficients are standardised path coefficients. Grey dashed line: a path present in the qualitative model but not tested quantitatively.

Figure 3: Paradigm model and the paths tested in the quantitative stage (Source: Authors)

Figure 3 departs from the conventional paradigm diagram in two respects that must be stated explicitly. First, the two paths H2 (intervening conditions → core phenomenon) and H4 (causal conditions → strategies) do not exist in the classical Strauss and Corbin structure and are additions of the present study; their theoretical justification was given in Section 2.6. Second, the contextual conditions (categories 5 and 6) are present in the qualitative model but were not tested in the quantitative stage; this is marked with a grey dashed line in the figure

and is addressed among the limitations. This paradigm model represents a comprehensive and integrated view of the mechanism by which strategic leadership intelligence enables the implementation of sustainable marketing strategies in the Iraqi context. The findings of this qualitative stage provided the theoretical basis for constructing the quantitative measurement instrument: the instrument was built on the four dimensions revealed by axial coding, and each dimension was translated into measurable items on a five-point Likert scale.

QUANTITATIVE FINDINGS

Test of normality

Table 11: Kolmogorov–Smirnov test (Source: Authors)

Variable	K–S statistic	Significance
Vision intelligence	0.074	0.086
Adaptive intelligence	0.069	0.094
Stakeholder intelligence	0.081	0.072
Sustainable decision intelligence	0.077	0.083
Sustainable marketing	0.071	0.091

Since the significance level for all variables exceeds 0.05, the assumption of normality is not

rejected, and the use of parametric statistical methods is therefore appropriate.

Exploratory factor analysis

Table 12: Sampling adequacy index (Source: Authors)

Index	Value
KMO	0.918
Bartlett's chi-square	2386.54
Significance	0.000

The KMO value of 0.918 indicates very good sampling adequacy for factor analysis. Bartlett's test is also significant; the correlation

matrix is therefore suitable for factor extraction and factor analysis can proceed.

Confirmatory factor analysis

Table 13: Range of item factor loadings (Source: Authors)

Construct	Factor loading range
Vision intelligence	0.78 – 0.84
Adaptive intelligence	0.76 – 0.82

Stakeholder intelligence	0.75 – 0.83
Sustainable decision intelligence	0.78 – 0.86
Sustainable marketing	0.77 – 0.87

All factor loadings exceed 0.7, indicating that the items explain their respective constructs

adequately (Hair et al., 2022); no item therefore needs to be deleted.

Hypothesis testing (structural model)

Table 14: Structural model path coefficients (Source: Authors)

Hypothesis	Path	Path coefficient	t-statistic	p-value	Result
H1	Causal conditions → Core phenomenon	0.64	7.12	0.000	Supported
H2	Intervening conditions → Core phenomenon	0.69	8.45	0.000	Supported
H3	Core phenomenon → Strategies	0.81	12.36	0.000	Supported
H4	Causal conditions → Strategies	0.72	9.58	0.000	Supported
H5	Intervening conditions → Strategies	0.77	10.21	0.000	Supported
H6	Strategies → Consequences	0.72	9.44	0.000	Supported

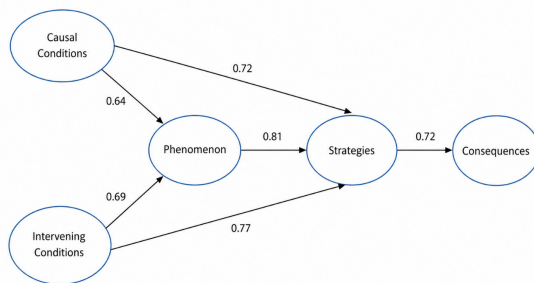


Figure 4: Structural model in standardized coefficients (Source: Authors)

The results in Table 14 show that all six tested paths are significant at the 95 per cent confidence level (all t-values exceed 1.96). The strongest relationship in the model is the path from the core phenomenon to strategies, with a standardized path coefficient of 0.81. The correct interpretation of this coefficient is as follows: for a one standard-deviation increase in strategic leadership intelligence, sustainable marketing strategies increase by 0.81 of a standard deviation. This finding is consistent with the prediction of upper echelons theory (Hambrick & Mason, 1984), which holds that an organization's strategic output reflects the cognition of its top managers.

The core phenomenon is most strongly affected by the intervening conditions (0.69) and then by the causal conditions (0.64). The direct path from causal conditions to strategies (0.72) suggests that part of the formation of strategies does not necessarily pass through the core phenomenon but is shaped directly by environmental pressure; this is consonant with the report of Kumar et al. (2016) on the direct effect of stakeholder pressure on the adoption of sustainable marketing strategy. Finally, the path from strategies to consequences, with a coefficient of 0.72, indicates that the strategies adopted contribute significantly to the realization of the desired consequences.

RESULTS AND CONCLUSION

Interpreting the principal findings in the light of the literature

The first and most robust finding of the study is the identification of four dimensions of strategic leadership intelligence. The value of this finding lies in the fact that the dimensions were neither borrowed from the Western literature nor assumed in advance, but emerged from twenty interviews with Iraqi managers. Their convergence with the existing literature is nonetheless

notable: the adaptive intelligence dimension is in effect the embodiment of dynamic capability at the level of the individual leader (Teece et al., 1997); the stakeholder intelligence dimension corresponds to what Freeman (1984) calls the capacity to manage a network of relationships; and the sustainable decision intelligence dimension addresses the tension between short- and long-term horizons that Avery and Bergsteiner (2011) regard as the dividing line between “honeybee” and “locust” leadership. This convergence strengthens construct validity. More novel, however, is the emergence of “context-specific intelligence for the Iraqi environment” as one of the most frequent codes (65 mentions across 13 interviews), which has no place in existing frameworks and points to the necessity of localising the concept of strategic leadership in fragile economies. The second finding is the superiority of the path from the core phenomenon to strategies (0.81) over the direct path from causal conditions to strategies (0.72). This pattern carries a clear managerial implication: environmental pressure alone does not produce a sustainable marketing strategy; that pressure must pass through the filter of leadership cognition in order to be translated into strategy. If the interpretation rests on verified data, this finding is precisely what Kumar et al. (2013) proposed at the theoretical level: sustainable marketing strategy is a decision at the level of corporate strategy, not at the functional level of marketing.

An inconsistency requiring explicit examination: the sign of the intervening-conditions effect

The most important interpretive issue in this study is the positive and strong effect of intervening conditions on strategies (0.77) and on the core phenomenon (0.69). At first sight this finding contradicts the qualitative findings of the same study: in Table 7, the intervening conditions are explicitly defined as barriers short-term performance pressures that “narrow the scope of investment in sustainable marketing and slow implementation”, and weak middle leadership

that “weakens the capacity to execute leadership decisions”. If these are barriers, the theoretical expectation is that their path coefficient should be negative. Read literally, a coefficient of +0.77 states that the greater the short-term financial pressure and the weaker the middle leadership, the stronger the sustainable marketing strategies a proposition that is neither theoretically defensible nor consistent with the study’s own interviews.

Three explanations are possible, and choosing among them is possible only by returning to the questionnaire items. The first and most likely: the items measuring this construct probably captured not the severity of the barrier but awareness of the barrier and the capacity to manage it. In that case the construct is in fact “management of intervening conditions”, and the positive sign becomes entirely logical: organizations that better recognise and manage barriers have more robust sustainable strategies. If so, the construct must be renamed to match what was actually measured. The second: the items may have been reverse-coded and the reversal not accounted for in the reporting. The third: encountering a barrier heightens the perceived salience of the need for strategic leadership capability – a mechanism predicted by dynamic capabilities theory. This explanation is acceptable for H2 but less persuasive for H5, which is a direct effect on strategies. The findings of this study indicate that strategic leadership intelligence is one of the fundamental factors in the successful implementation of sustainable marketing strategies in Iraqi organizations. This conclusion suggests that in the complex, volatile and competitive Iraqi environment, the mere possession of resources, marketing plans or formal structures is insufficient for the realisation of sustainable marketing; what is required is leadership capable of analysing the environment, anticipating the future, balancing short- and long-term interests, and taking responsible strategic decisions. On this basis, sustainable marketing is less a purely operational activity than a function of the quality of leader-

ship and of the capacity to steer the organization intelligently.

Among the dimensions of strategic leadership intelligence, vision intelligence plays an important role in orienting the organization over the long term and institutionalising a sustainable approach, since leaders able to articulate the future and grasp macro-level trends are better placed to keep the organization away from episodic and reactive decisions. Adaptive intelligence likewise demonstrated that in unstable environments sustainability is achieved not through rigidity but through intelligent flexibility. The findings further clarified that stakeholder intelligence and sustainable decision intelligence are two complementary pillars of sustainable marketing implementation: leaders able to identify and manage the expectations of diverse stakeholders are better placed to secure the necessary social legitimacy, trust and cooperation.

REFERENCES

- Armstrong, G., Kotler, P., & Opresnik, M. O. (2018). *Marketing: An introduction* (14th ed.). Pearson.
- Avery, G. C., & Bergsteiner, H. (2011). *Sustainable leadership: Honeybee and locust approaches*. Routledge.
- Barney, J. (1991). Firm resources and sustained competitive advantage. *Journal of Management*, 17(1), 99–120. <https://doi.org/10.1177/014920639101700108>
- Bass, B. M., & Riggio, R. E. (2006). *Transformational leadership* (2nd ed.). Psychology Press.
- Creswell, J. W., & Plano Clark, V. L. (2018). *Designing and conducting mixed methods research* (3rd ed.). SAGE.
- Elkington, J. (1997). *Cannibals with forks: The triple bottom line of 21st century business*. Capstone.
- Fornell, C., & Larcker, D. F. (1981). Evaluating structural equation models with unobservable variables and measurement error. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 18(1), 39–50. <https://doi.org/10.1177/002224378101800104>
- Freeman, R. E. (1984). *Strategic management: A stakeholder approach*. Pitman.
- Hair, J. F., Hult, G. T. M., Ringle, C. M., & Sarstedt, M. (2022). *A primer on partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM)* (3rd ed.). SAGE.
- Hambrick, D. C., & Mason, P. A. (1984). Upper echelons: The organization as a reflection of its top managers. *Academy of Management Review*, 9(2), 193–206.
- Henseler, J., Ringle, C. M., & Sarstedt, M. (2015). A new criterion for assessing discriminant validity in variance-based structural equation modeling. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 43(1), 115–135. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11747-014-0403-8>
- Ireland, R. D., & Hitt, M. A. (1999). Achieving and maintaining strategic competitiveness in the 21st century: The role of strategic leadership. *Academy of Management Executive*, 13(1), 43–57. <https://doi.org/10.5465/ame.1999.1567311>
- Kotler, P., & Keller, K. L. (2009). *Marketing management* (13th ed.). Pearson.
- Kumar, V., Rahman, Z., & Kazmi, A. A. (2013). Sustainability marketing strategy: An analysis of recent literature. *Global Business Review*, 14(4), 601–625. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0972150913501598>
- Kumar, V., Rahman, Z., & Kazmi, A. A. (2016). Assessing the influence of stakeholders on sustainability marketing strategy of Indian companies. *SAGE Open*, 6(3). <https://doi.org/10.1177/2158244016667991>
- Kumar, V., Rahman, Z., Kazmi, A. A., & Goyal, P. (2012). Evolution of sustainability as marketing strategy: Beginning of new era. *Procedia – Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 37, 482–489. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2012.03.313>
- Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. SAGE.
- Martin, D., & Schouten, J. (2012). *Sustainable marketing*. Pearson.
- Mintzberg, H., Ahlstrand, B., & Lampel, J. (2005). *Strategy bites back: It is a lot more, and less, than you ever imagined*. FT Prentice Hall.
- Northouse, P. G. (2018). *Leadership: Theory and practice* (8th ed.). SAGE.

- Podsakoff, P. M., MacKenzie, S. B., Lee, J.-Y., & Podsakoff, N. P. (2003). Common method biases in behavioral research: A critical review of the literature and recommended remedies. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 88(5), 879–903. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0021-9010.88.5.879>
- Sternberg, R. J. (1997). *Successful intelligence: How practical and creative intelligence determine success in life*. Plume.
- Strauss, A., & Corbin, J. (1990). *Basics of qualitative research: Grounded theory procedures and techniques*. SAGE.
- Teece, D. J., Pisano, G., & Shuen, A. (1997). Dynamic capabilities and strategic management. *Strategic Management Journal*, 18(7), 509–533. [https://doi.org/10.1002/\(SICI\)1097-0266\(199708\)18:7](https://doi.org/10.1002/(SICI)1097-0266(199708)18:7)
- White, K., Habib, R., & Hardisty, D. J. (2019). How to SHIFT consumer behaviors to be more sustainable: A literature review and guiding framework. *Journal of Marketing*, 83(3), 22–49. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022242919825649>
- World Commission on Environment and Development. (1987). *Our common future*. Oxford University Press.

COPYRIGHTS

©2023 The author(s). This is an open access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY 4.0), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, as long as the original authors and source are cited. No permission is required from the authors or the publishers.



HOW TO CITE THIS ARTICLE

Mustafa Altaamah, A. M., Zarei, G., Bashokouh Ajirlou, M. and Seifollahi Anar, N. (2024). Strategic Leadership Intelligence: A Driver of Sustainable Marketing in Iraq. (e737688). *International Journal of Urban Management and Energy Sustainability*, 5(4), e737688

DOI: [10.22034/ijumes.2024.737688](https://doi.org/10.22034/ijumes.2024.737688)

