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An Overview of Ecopreneurship, Eco-Innovation, and the Ecological Sector

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Abstract: Given the current trend toward a more sustainable and environmentally-friendly economy, the overlap between entrepreneurship and sustainability has become a key research area. Part of this trend is the emergence of ecopreneurial businesses. These businesses are pioneers in using innovation to achieve sustainable growth by exploiting market opportunities. This article presents an overview of the concepts of ecopreneurship, eco-innovation, and the ecological sector. A rigorous review of the literature in this area is presented. The results of this review show the key values and principles that are central to this new stream of research and shed light on opportunities for further research. The primary conclusion is that there is a need for collective collaboration between ecopreneurs, consumers, and producers to achieve long-term sustainability.

Keywords: ecopreneurship; environment; sustainability; ecological sector; eco-innovation

1. Introduction

Concern for the environment and the preservation of natural resources has increased in recent years [1]. According to several studies, firms should orient their business activity toward providing value across three dimensions: economic, social, and environmental [2–4]. The focus on these three dimensions is referred to as the triple bottom line.

A new stream of research has recently appeared in the entrepreneurship literature. This new stream of research explores corporate strategies that focus on the environmental dimension [5]. This focus does not overlook other dimensions (social and economic). However, priority is given to addressing the effect of the negative externalities of firms' economic activity on these firms' immediate surroundings. The goal is, therefore, to build a business model that is sustainable in the long run [6,7]. Ecopreneurship and the ecological sector contribute to achieving this goal. The concept of ecopreneurship is based on three pillars: innovation, caring for the environment, and long-term sustainability [8].

The term ecopreneurship is a portmanteau word formed from combining the form *eco* (as in ecological) and *entrepreneurship*. The term *eco* comes from the Greek work *eikos*, which literally translates as *home*. Ecology is the branch of science that studies how our home functions in the sense of our environment and surroundings. People's interest in taking care of and preserving biological resources has increased in response to a model of production that consumes natural resources more quickly than they can recover. Under such a model, resources are depleted more quickly than they are replenished [9].

Entrepreneurship, on the other hand, is generally defined as the discovery of gaps in the market in which entrepreneurs are capable of spotting and exploring new business opportunities [10–12]. Thus, ecopreneurship is the search for new opportunities that help protect the environment in pursuit of environmental sustainability [13]. Chopra defines ecopreneurship as "entrepreneurship through an environmental lens" [14] (p. 1).

In light of this situation, the popularity of environmentalism and ecologism is increasing from a practical perspective as well as from a purely theoretical or academic perspective [15]. A production model that minimizes the negative externalities affecting the planet is needed [16]. Therefore, studying how key actors such as consumers, distributors, and producers respond to this transition toward a more sustainable and ecological model is of interest [17].

Ecological consumers are primarily characterized by their adoption of environmentally responsible behaviors. Studying the profile of ecological consumers is a key task in the design and execution of an organization's competitive strategy [18,19]. Today, social, political, and technological changes do not take place gradually as the result of a steady trend [20]. Instead, disruptive changes occur over a short period. These rapid, drastic changes cause discontinuities. A new production model has been developed to address this environmental turmoil and ensure long-term well-being [21]. The ecological sector is considered a strategic way of adapting to change [22,23].

Domańska et al. [4] reported that, for firms to strike a balance between value creation across the social, economic, and environmental dimensions, there must be certain incentives at the national level. Accordingly, it is argued that the main challenge for government institutions is to decide on the right level of incentives in the form of subsidies to ensure that firms are green-oriented. Therefore, there is a research gap in the analysis of the role of institutions with respect to ecopreneurship.

In addition, most studies on ecopreneurship have focused on defining the concept in theoretical terms [7,13,14,23]. We, therefore, believe it is important to adopt a real-world focus on creating environmentally-friendly businesses through an alternative commercialization system such as the ecological sector.

This article offers extensive analysis of the current state-of-the-art ecological entrepreneurship and presents an integrative framework. It describes the link between ecopreneurship as a new way to sustainably generate economic activity and the ecological sector as a system that complements ecopreneurship in the pursuit of environmental-friendliness. This article highlights the synergies that arise from collaboration between all actors involved in production, distribution, and commercialization in this business alternative. The aim of this research is to compare previous studies to define and establish the principal features of ecological entrepreneurship as a subcategory of entrepreneurship. This study responds to calls from numerous scholars to further analyze the relationship between environmentalism and entrepreneurship in the business setting [7,23,24]. This study also contributes to advancing the growing literature on ecopreneurship by presenting ideas for future lines of research.

This study is organized into three main sections. Section 2 presents a review of the literature on ecopreneurship and the key factors and features of ecological consumers. In this section, we also describe the status of the ecological sector and the actors that operate within this sector. Section 3 presents the main conclusions of the study. We end the study by discussing implications, contributions, and ideas for further research.

2. Theoretical Framework

A systematic literature review was conducted to develop an integrative framework for ecopreneurship. The Web of Science (WoS) scientific database, which is compiled by Clarivate Analytics, was used. A high level of rigor, quality, and reliability were the main drivers of this decision. Because there is still no consensus in academia concerning environmentally sustainable entrepreneurial activity, various keywords were used to refer to the same concept: ecopreneurship, green entrepreneurship, sustainable entrepreneurship, and environmental entrepreneurship. Emulating the systematic review by Parida et al. [25], the filter was applied only to scientific articles and book chapters.

The following bar chart [Figure 1] shows that ecopreneurship remains in its nascent stages despite following a positively increasing trend. The first articles date from 1992, although it was not until 2010 that the subject became more relevant to scholars. As environmental issues gain popularity among scholars and practitioners, sustainable ways of doing business become an increasingly prevalent subject of study.

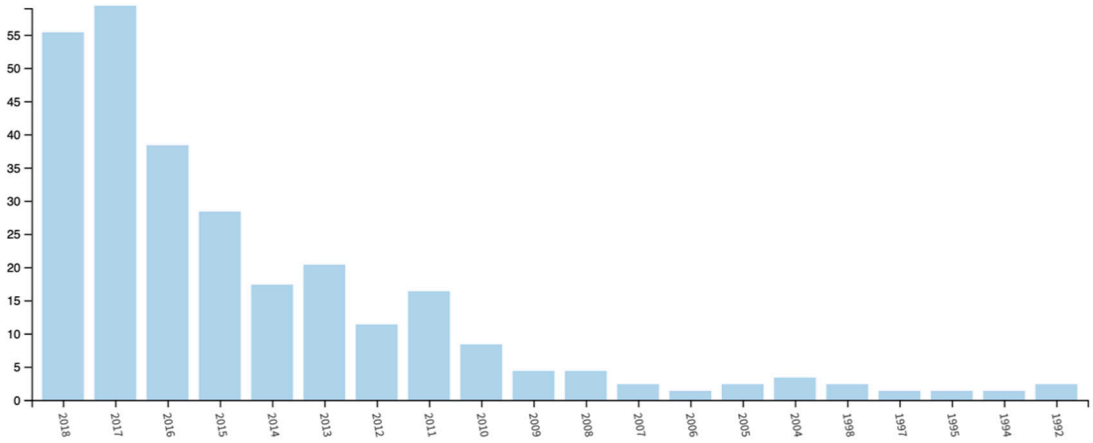

Figure 1. Life cycle of the subject "ecopreneurship" in Web of Science.

The first implication of an ecological transition is that solutions to today's environmental and social problems cannot be found by applying the same methods and processes that caused these problems in the first place. These solutions should be based on innovation that is aimed at sustainable growth and the efficient management of natural resources [26]. Traditionally, natural resources have been in the hands of the government and other state institutions. However, under a new paradigm, it is argued that local actors such as social associations or business networks are becoming key elements in the advancement toward sustainable development through effective exploitation of local resources [27,28]. Similarly, to generate knowledge at the local level, establishing interconnected networks that encourage the creation of new organizations is necessary [29,30].

Knowledge of co-creation is the antecedent to entrepreneurial learning [31,32]. According to the resource-based view, specific resources can provide sustainable competitive advantages [33], and business success is based on obtaining economic rents that exceed those of competitors. Beyond this resource-based view, the adaptive management view and entrepreneurial learning offer the most suitable approach to deal with environmental issues. According to the adaptative management view, entrepreneurial learning takes place not only at the individual level within the firm but also as a result of cooperation and joint participation of the stakeholders in a given environment [27,34].

According to Cantino et al. [27], outperforming competitors in terms of income fails to offer a solution to the social and ecological threats faced by all firms. Therefore, entrepreneurial learning is a key element in the advancement toward the creation of sustainable firms that are capable of protecting the environment [27,35] as well as exploring new opportunities to create environmental value [36].

The negative effects of the economic development model of "take, make, dispose" [37,38] pose a grave threat to the progress of economies on a global scale and the long-term sustainability of natural resources. Social and environmental challenges cannot be solved using the same means of production that created them in the first place. Therefore, part of the process of entrepreneurial learning lies in the development of new business models [39]. The key is to fundamentally break our dependence on the dominant production models. For example, agroecology enables producers to recover their social focus and autonomy. Similarly, the circular economy optimizes the free circulation of both raw materials and waste and firmly favors the local economy. The circular economy is a new business model that aims to achieve more sustainable and environmentally-friendly development, with a particular focus on urban and industrial waste to "achieve a better balance and harmony between the economy, environment, and society" [37] (p. 11) The circular economy, therefore, entails the adoption of production methods that are cleaner and more ethically responsible for the environment as well as promotes awareness among producers and consumers and uses renewable technologies and materials [40].

The terms ecopreneurship and environmental entrepreneurship are used interchangeably [16,23] to denote innovative behavior by individuals and organizations that operate in the private sector and

that view an environmental focus as the main pillar of the business model and sustainable competitive advantage. According to Kirwook and Walton [41], ecopreneurship consists of creating new business ideas by stressing sustainability as a basic principle.

By showing the economic benefits of being more ecological and environmentally-friendly, ecopreneurs act as a pull factor that encourages other businesses to be ecologically proactive. This role contrasts with push factors such as government regulations and pressure by stakeholders and organizations such as NGOs [24,42]. Ecopreneurship has also been identified as a new way of participating in the commercialization of ideas, products, and services where the outcome of the exchange between the provider of services and the consumer is positive for both parties as well as for the environment.

Ecopreneurship is related to the economic concept of the common good, which refers to fostering and imparting the human values of dignity, solidarity, sustainability, social justice, democracy, and transparency. The economy of the common good has a broad scope and covers principles that concern not only people but also the environment. The goal is for the firm to conduct its business activities without negatively affecting people and the environment.

According to stakeholder theory [43,44], companies must strive to meet all stakeholders' aims and, thereby, foster social and institutional sustainability. For firms, the application of this model means an increase in economic profitability [45] and even provides the opportunity to gain a competitive advantage by offering consumers a differentiated product. One important group of firms' stakeholders consists of governments and political leaders, who, in recent times, have implemented restrictive, demanding policies to encourage care for the environment. Organizations such as NGOs are playing an increasingly prominent role in a changing world made highly fragile by intensive consumption of natural resources that is exhausting biological reserves.

The opposite stance is the neoliberalism expounded by Milton Friedman [46]. Under this approach, the maximization of economic profit should be the primary objective of all organizations. Accordingly, corporate social responsibility (CSR) would be thought to have a negative impact on financial profitability. Milton Friedman's approach relates to a neoliberal system and a conventional method of production, which is characterized by the pursuit of profit and competition. However, Gamble et al. [44] have argued that the effect of the negative externalities of firms on stakeholders must be reduced. Accordingly, it is essential to find a new economic and production model that responds to the economic, social, and environmental needs of the 21st century from an integral, holistic perspective.

The literature review shows that the terms ecopreneurship, environmental entrepreneurship, and ecological or green entrepreneurship are used interchangeably [16]. The figure of the ecopreneur is limited to a single individual. This individual may be the creator of an organization in the environmental sector or an environmental intrapreneur. Environmental intrapreneurs are defined as employees of existing companies who revitalize and strengthen these companies [47]. In contrast, according to virtually all interpretations, ecopreneurial companies base their behavior on ecological values and promote environmental entrepreneurs both inside and outside the company itself. Similarly, many authors argue that ecopreneurship is intricately linked to the implementation of innovations. Therefore, these two concepts go hand in hand [24,48–50].

Depending on the focus and the way in which innovation occurs, there are different conceptual approaches to ecopreneurship. The most relevant approaches are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Ecopreneurship approaches.

Approach	References	Definition
1	Gerlach [50], Lober [51], Pastakia [52], Petersen and Schaltegger [53]	Ecopreneurship is based on implementing innovations in the environmental sector. The ecopreneur is aware of the environmental impact that her or his business exerts on the surroundings and develops innovations that reduce this impact.
2	Volery [54], Azzone and Noci [55], Isaak [56], Larson [57], Porter and van der Linde [58], Holger [59]	Ecopreneurship is a strategic tool. The application of sustainable policies has a twofold benefit: it improves profit prospects and is kind to the environment.
3	Anderson [60], Kÿro [61], Cantino et al. [27]	Ecopreneurship is a tool to transform society. Ecopreneurs play a key role in the evolution and development of institutions.

Source: Compiled by the authors based on Gerlach [50].

According to Approach 1 [50–53], ecopreneurship is based on the successful implementation of innovations that result in new products or services. Petersen and Schaltegger [53] describe ecopreneurship in terms of recognizing, creating, and exploiting opportunities presented by the market using ecological innovations. The proponents of Approach 2 define ecopreneurship as a strategic tool [54–59]. These authors' research shares one key principle: that the activities carried out in the ecopreneurial sector give the organization a competitive advantage [54]. These scholars view environmental issues as one of the priorities of corporate strategy [55,56]. Along these lines, Porter and van der Linde [58] argue that innovations that lead to an improvement in organizational productivity are associated with greater competitiveness. The logic behind this assertion is that these organizations have a much smaller negative impact on the environment but also have better cost structures. Furthermore, the quality of the products and services that they supply is higher. Approach 3 has a sociological focus [27,60,61]. The proponents of this approach study how the origins of the environmental economy and the principles of ecology relate to the entrepreneurial and business spirit. The cited proponents of this approach have concluded that business and, thus, entrepreneurial spirit can be used to change society [60,61]. Thus, this approach addresses the role of ecopreneurs in society and the way that ecopreneurship can be used as a vehicle for change in social structures [61]. Based on the adaptative management approach, the learning processes of a social network are totally integrated into the social structure. Hence, the exploitation of new opportunities sometimes requires institutional changes [27,62].

Given these different approaches to ecopreneurship, it is important to highlight differences with respect to social entrepreneurship. Social entrepreneurship refers to innovative behavior by individuals or organizations in the private sector that place social goals at the center of their corporate strategy [63,64]. Social entrepreneurs combine entrepreneurial activity with a social mission [65]. They identify unexploited resources and create new services and products based on these resources to improve general well-being [66,67]. Using the concept of social entrepreneurship in its broadest sense as concern for society, the term "social" implicitly encompasses environmental issues. Thus, from a certain perspective, social entrepreneurship includes environmental entrepreneurship [68,69].

2.1. Eco-Innovation

As explained earlier, ecopreneurship cannot be understood without considering innovation [70]. Ecopreneurship and innovation are two distinct yet interrelated concepts that have a symbiotic relationship in the context of environmental development. The Environmental Technology Action Plan (ETAP), which was adopted by the European Commission (EC) to promote eco-innovation and the use of environmental technologies [71], defines environmental innovation as follows: "the

production, assimilation, or exploitation of a novelty in products, production processes, services, or in management and business methods, which aims, throughout its life cycle, to prevent or substantially reduce environmental risk, pollution, and other negative impacts of resource use (including energy)."

In 2004, the EC cited eco-innovation as one of the key factors to Europe's competitiveness: "Eco-innovation is any innovation resulting in significant progress toward the goal of sustainable development, by reducing the impacts of our production modes on the environment, enhancing nature's resilience to environmental pressures, or achieving a more efficient and responsible use of natural resources." In addition, ecological innovation helps reduce costs, take advantage of new development opportunities, and improve a company's image in the eyes of customers [72].

According to Tomás-Estrada [73], innovation that is applied to cities can be defined as the actions aimed at improving the functioning of the city in economic, social, and environmental terms. These three dimensions promote urban innovation. We focus on the environmental dimension, which refers to the practice of encouraging a reduction in the environmental impact of business.

Eco-innovation is a key element because it increases value for both producers and consumers while reducing negative impacts on the environment [73]. In a global context, where change is increasing and innovation is disruptive [74], sources of competitive advantage must be created [75], and differentiation strategies must be developed through eco-innovation. Investment in eco-innovation enables firms not only to gain a privileged market position but also to maintain this position in the long term. If firms are unable to compete through cost, they can compete through innovation [33,76]. The trend is positive and increasing, and the data reflect the tertiarization of the economy. Therefore, eco-innovation should not be overlooked in service sectors [77]. In the ecological domain, these innovations may originate by viewing the environment as an engine for strategic change [78]. Eco-innovations can take place in three business areas, as Table 2 shows [79].

Table 2. Types of eco-innovation.

Types of Eco-Innovation	Description
Process innovations	These innovations relate to the production of goods and services. The goal is usually to enhance eco-efficiency. In most cases, these improvements are based on the use of more environmentally-friendly production technologies [80].
Organizational innovations	These innovations relate to restructuring within the firm. These innovations primarily concern employees and the organization of their work tasks. New forms of management such as the adoption of environmental management models also fall into this category.
Product innovations	These innovations refer to the development of a completely new product or service or the improvement of an existing product or service. For example, ecological design could offer a good alternative to producing products that use natural resources more efficiently. The use of recycled organic materials is an example of the improvement of an existing product. The development of long-term sustainable environmental technologies such as renewable energy technologies entails the development of new products in the market [2,80].

The evolution and development of eco-innovation and ecopreneurship would be impossible without the support of other key elements in the ecological transition [Figure 2]. These elements include ecological consumers, whose consumption habits define a new lifestyle.

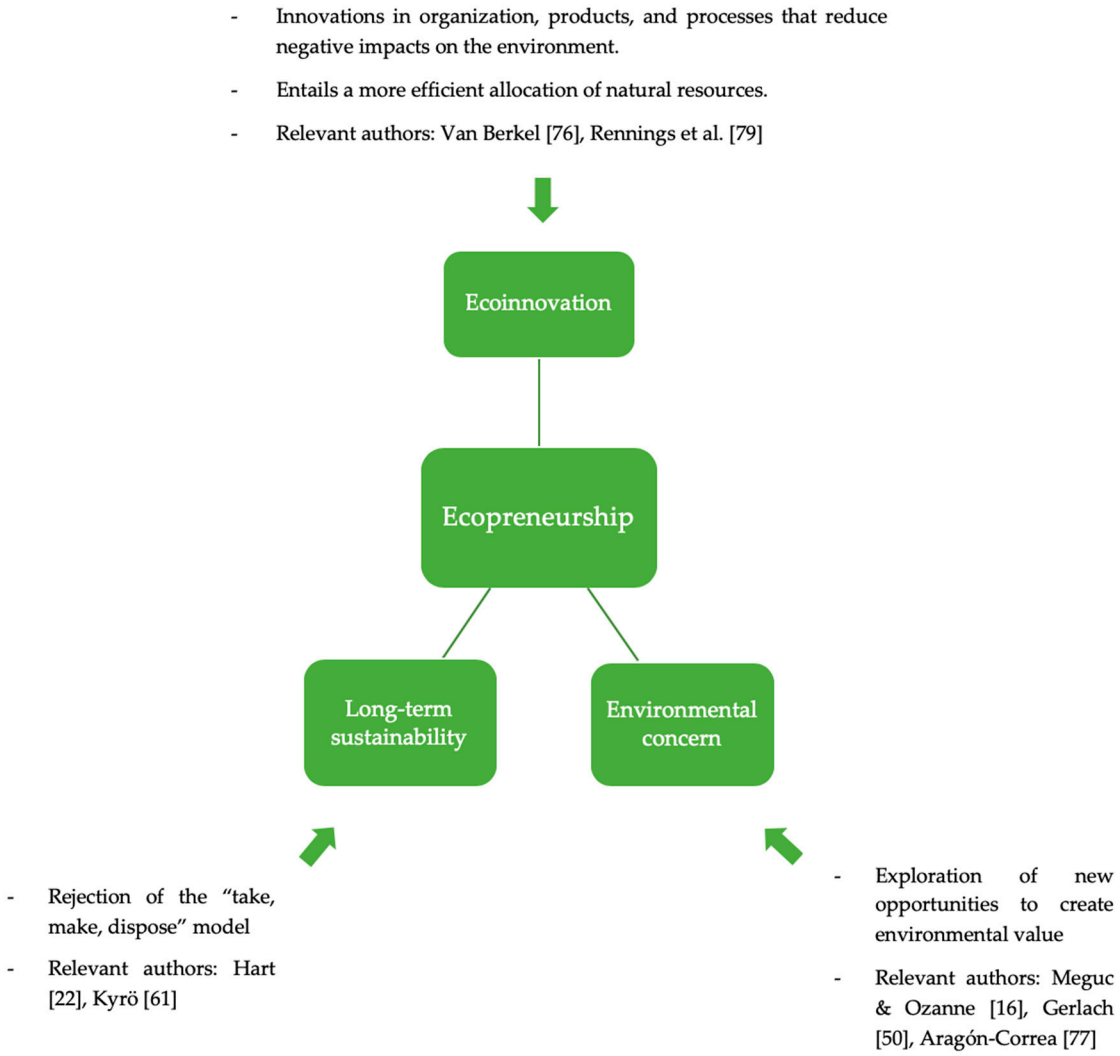

Figure 2. Linkages between the main concepts covered by this study.

2.2. Characteristics of Ecological Consumers

The ecological consumer landscape is shaped by the values, norms, and habits of consumers in a given context. Peattie [81] argued that the development and evolution of production and consumption systems that seek a balance with the environment and long-term sustainability ultimately depend on the willingness of consumers to collaborate and encourage more ecological consumption practices [82]. Consumers must, therefore, identify with this new production model and must be aware of the environmental impact of the production and consumption of the products they use. Accordingly, consumers who feel that their decisions have a significant environmental and social impact are more willing to behave sustainably. This is the only way to achieve a shift toward economies that are more viable in the long term and economies that are more environmentally-friendly.

According to Pardave [83], ecological consumers avoid any product that is synonymous with unnecessary waste and threatens the environment. In other words, ecological consumers avoid products with production processes that harm the planet and that entail an abuse of biological resources [83]. According to this definition, ecological consumers uphold not only a lifestyle but also a new model of understanding the way we live. This new model proposes local, non-excessive consumption and production of small quantities of goods and services [84].

Martínez [85] affirmed that such consumers tend to be aware of their practices in terms of the consequences of their consumption habits. These practices can contribute positively to sustainable development as well as the quality of life where they live and the surrounding area. The contribution

is possible because these practices place less priority on the higher costs that must be borne to support this type of consumption in the long run. Therefore, ecological consumers are often associated with the Greek philosophy of stoicism. According to stoicism, life cannot be understood without a concern for others. It relates to the awareness that people have of the environment where they live. Thus, the main aim is to achieve a state of happiness and wisdom by constantly eliminating superfluous conveniences, material goods, and wealth.

Antonetti and Maklan [86], on the other hand, affirmed that feelings of guilt and responsibility, which are the fruits of consumption, encourage ecological consumers to alter their habits in pursuit of more environmentally-friendly practices. Thus, they argued that, when consumers experience these feelings, they view themselves as the main threat to the environment because of their consumption behaviors and, therefore, decide to alter their habits. Changing these habits means consuming more environmentally-friendly products that are produced using non-conventional production methods. Thus, in the context of ecopreneurship, the firm in its capacity as an organization also represents a key element of the ecological transition.

2.3. Ecological Companies and Products

Regarding ecological companies and products, we must first distinguish between ecological products, fair trade, and local consumption. Although these three concepts are intricately linked and are not promoted through conventional distribution channels, they have certain differences. In all three cases, consumers that seek ecological, fair trade, or local products show a willingness to shift toward a more sustainable model of production and consumption [87]. In many cases, it is a question of consumer activism, which is synonymous with embracing certain values to fight against threats to the environment and social justice. The related lifestyles of vegetarianism and veganism also support the fight for animal welfare. Vegetarian consumers belong to the group of consumers who are aware of their surroundings and seek to build a model in which economic activity goes as far as possible not to harm the available natural and biological resources. In the search for a more sustainable and environmentally-friendly system, many stakeholders have the power and the responsibility to carry out this transformation in pursuit of the common good [88]. This is so because achieving more sustainable practices requires the coordination and support of all parties involved in the production and consumption processes [Figure 3].

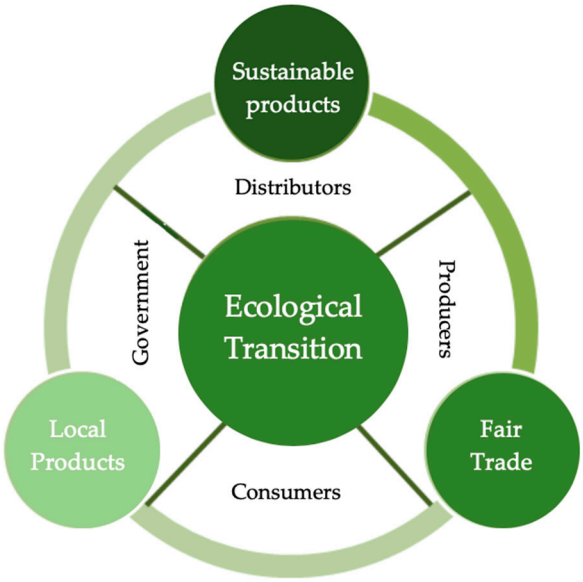

Figure 3. Key elements of ecological transition. Source: Compiled by the authors.

2.3.1. Fair Trade

According to the World Fair Trade Organization (WFTO), fair trade is a trade system based on dialogue, transparency, and respect that seeks greater equality in international trade by focusing on social and environmental criteria. It contributes to sustainable development by offering better trade conditions and ensuring the rights of disadvantaged producers and workers. It is an alternative system of intermediary-free trade designed to support the development of people and fight poverty. The WFTO enables workers to enter an international market that they would, otherwise, be unable to access.

Ultimately, the decision lies with the consumer. It is, nonetheless, necessary to have an effective distribution network that works together and is capable of reaching the consumer through promotion and help from the government. Therefore, synergies between different groups affected by the ecological transition are necessary to achieve long-term well-being for everyone [89]. These synergies are only possible with the alliance and cooperation of the producers and distributors as well as the demands of consumer activists. These consumers are aware of the need for environmental protection and a healthy diet free from toxic substances.

In different European countries, different stakeholders have promoted this kind of consumption and production. In Germany, the government has applied several trade policies in supermarkets and distributors, rewarding more environmentally-friendly products and encouraging the consumption of healthy, sustainable food [90]. All producers in this industry have been affected by these new regulations and have had to adapt their strategies and products to meet the government's demands. In contrast, in France, external regulations have been unnecessary because the supermarkets already stock these new products [91].

In this review of the European ecological sector, the Nordic countries (Denmark, Finland, Sweden, Norway, and Iceland) deserve special attention. These countries are the major force in ecological consumption and production [92]. For example, Denmark was the first country to regulate ecological products, which created a national logo for this type of market 25 years ago. Surveys show that 97% of the population is familiar with this industry. Pursuing this environmentally-friendly path, Denmark aspires to become the first country that only produces ecological food. In the Nordic countries, the government, consumers, and the business world have joined forces. Innate values and principles in the national culture and customs place Denmark in a leading position in terms of market share of ecological products and per capita consumption of ecological products [92,93].

In commercial terms, the ecology sector reflects a trend that resembles that of healthy restaurants or healthy living [94]. As soon as consumers demand that supermarkets stock ecological products, these businesses will be the first to display them on their shelves. As of today, however, supermarkets do not consider this sector to be profitable. Thus, price should not be a determinant of whether to make this kind of purchase because the slightly higher price is justifiable on the grounds of quality, the value offered to the consumer, and the value received by the producer on the other side of the world [93].

Like many other institutions that support fair trade, Oxfam is fully aware that the satisfaction of Western customers is crucial to support the business model in the long term and to achieve the economic profitability it needs to continue. Thus, the aim of this type of organization consists of analyzing the current trends in Europe and studying how these trends can be met with the resources and capabilities in disadvantaged parts of the globe such as South America.

2.3.2. Local Consumption

Local consumption can be achieved by establishing sustainability policies in specific settings where this type of consumption is a key driver of the economy. Informal networks can also be established by purchasing products from producers who are known to consumers or cooperatives that sell their products in the local town or region. Local consumption is part of an ecosystem where the preference is for local goods and services as part of a social system that promotes environmental sustainability and a healthy diet. Consuming local products also reduces both companies' and consumers' carbon footprints

because it reduces or even removes intermediaries from the interactions between the producer and the consumer. This reduction in the number of intermediaries decreases greenhouse gas emissions from transporting these products.

The fact that the number of intermediaries is lower also implies that products are fresher because the time that elapses between being collected and reaching the consumer is lower. Furthermore, artificial substances are unnecessary to keep the products fresh for longer. Therefore, local consumption usually refers to small-sized and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) located in a particular area that promote ecological and sustainable values [94,95].

Shrivastava and Kennelly [96] as well as Cantino et al. [27] used the concept of the place-based enterprise in their research. For these authors, this concept refers to organizations that act on a local scale and that play a key role in the development and advancement of sustainability policies in their immediate surroundings. Through the adaptative management view and knowledge co-creation, this type of firm can follow the path toward sustainability [97]. As mentioned earlier, the role of government institutions in the management of natural resources is gradually being taken by local organizations. Collaboration between all stakeholders and local organizations is necessary to ensure the success of adaptative management and knowledge of co-creation [98].

2.3.3. Organic Products

Lastly, organic products respect the environment through chemical-free production that is free from fertilizers, pesticides, and the like [99]. However, if these products are not obtained locally, the carbon footprint of the product will be greater, which reduces its green value. Thus, it is easy to see how these three concepts (organic, fair trade, and locally grown) are interrelated.

Organic products and organic meat offer a production system that differs from conventional production to achieve a balance between the economy and nature. Furthermore, this is a profitable formula for sectors that produce natural products using organic methods, which eliminates the consumer-health and environmental risks associated with chemical products such as the fertilizers and conservatives used in conventionally produced food [100].

Another important instrument is the organic label. Regulations governing organic production are imposed by the European Union (EU) under the EU Organic Logo. Since its creation in 1992, this logo has provided a key tool to encourage environmental action by EU member states. It is one of the measures included in the EU's Sustainable Consumption and Production and Sustainable Industrial Policy Action Plan.

This logo is voluntary, so it depends fully on the seller's willingness to sell this type of product or, conversely, to use conventional methods. The advantages of this logo include enhancing customers' trust in the product by indicating the strict standards it must meet to be considered organic. Products are inspected annually, and the logo is recognized in all countries that form part of the agreement. The reputation of the firm is positively affected by showing a concern for the environment and social awareness [72].

Organic agriculture is defined by the European Commission as an "agricultural method that aims to produce food using natural substances and processes and tends to have a limited environmental impact" [101]. The criteria used to determine whether a product is organic include the following: periodic crop rotation so that resources in a given location are not exhausted and are used efficiently, the limitation of pesticides, fertilizers, antibiotics, or any chemical product, the prohibition of transgenic and genetically modified organisms, the promotion of local species because of their capacity to adapt to local conditions, and organic feeding and free range rearing of livestock.

In Europe, the demand for organic production greatly outweighs the supply because the mechanisms to respond to the demands of increasingly environmentally-aware consumers are still insufficient. Therefore, although the preference is to consume locally produced products, organic consumption often relies on internationally sourced products. Accordingly, organic products that are commonly imported to the EU include coffee from Brazil, kiwi fruit from New Zealand, rice from

Thailand, and coconuts from Peru. Producing this type of food is also strongly related to fair trade. In addition, the leaders of companies that produce organic food as well as crop and livestock farmers are much younger than the average worker in this sector of Europe [91].

3. Conclusions, Limitations, and Future Research

This article offers an integrative framework of the current state of a new stream of entrepreneurship: ecopreneurship. Our review of the literature on this concept identifies its key features. This study also contributes to the literature by exploring the links between ecopreneurship and eco-innovation. Both of these terms are based on the pursuit of environmental-friendliness. In this framework, it is crucial to note the key role of consumers in promoting green practices and choosing organic products. It is necessary to understand the importance of the long-term search for sustainability by entrepreneurs [102] as well as scholars [103] and to search for ways to encourage care for the environment, which is ultimately our home (*eikos*).

To achieve sustained and consistent progress in this sector, active collaboration between consumers, producers, distributors, and the government is necessary. The promotion of a more sustainable and environmentally-friendly production model will not work unless sustainable policies and initiatives are supported by all parties involved in the production and consumption processes. Consumers play a crucial role in this sense because they ultimately determine product value through their consumer habits [101]. However, consumer activism achieves nothing unless the government supports this activism with laws and measures that ensure that consumers' demands are met and that production and distribution are compliant. The positive contribution of all actors can, therefore, foster operational synergies in the sector [104]. Thus, both prevalence in the market and the ease of distribution will increase consumers' access to this type of product to benefit people's health and take better care of the environment [105].

In addition, introducing certain organic, fair trade, and local products in supermarkets reflects a change in mentality. There is a general trend toward increasing the range of products that are certified with the organic logo. However, a minimal rotation of these products is necessary to keep them on the supermarket shelves. Therefore, collaboration between producers, distributors, consumers, and public agencies is necessary to achieve this steady, consolidated growth [43].

Although ecopreneurship is in a phase of constant growth and progress, it also faces numerous difficulties that hinder its development and prevent it from being fully exploited. The main challenge is to achieve sustainable long-term growth. As mentioned earlier, the prosperity of this phenomenon ultimately depends on the concerted effort of all actors. Therefore, steady, consolidated growth is affected by the actions of all those involved. Another major challenge facing this sector is the lack of information and, particularly, the lack of visibility of this business model or products derived from this business model. As Brugarolas and Rivera [105] affirmed, ecological consumers would be prepared to consume goods with the organic logo. However, they feel that the information at their disposal is limited, and they know little about this new form of production. Therefore, the prominence of the sector in the market must be increased to promote and incentivize society to modify its consumption habits. The key element in resolving this issue is to find a place where supply and demand converge. This demand is growing and is driven by a growing concern for environmental issues [5].

3.1. Limitations and Implications

One of the limitations of this article is that it only analyzes the concept of eco-innovation as a determinant of ecopreneurship, overlooking other crucial factors such as environmental entrepreneurial orientation. This article offers a theoretical framework for ecopreneurship that is of interest for ecopreneurs as well as firms focused on innovation for environmental sustainability, organizations seeking to promote CSR policies, and governments that wish to contribute positively to the environment and society.

3.2. Future Research

Several potential lines of research on ecopreneurship and sustainability may be highlighted. First, the theory must be developed and broadened. Although numerous authors have studied this concept, a more solid theoretical grounding is necessary, and the concepts and definition related to ecopreneurship must be unified. It would be of interest to analyze ecopreneurship and eco-innovation initiatives through empirical testing to offer insight into the effects of ecopreneurs and their firms on communities and society [6,106]. As mentioned earlier, ecopreneurship can be a source of a competitive advantage [53]. Therefore, it is essential to understand how ecopreneurs create value beyond the economic or financial dimension, which contributes positively in both a social and ecological sense [107,108]. It is also important to analyze the key factors of ecopreneurship that directly affect profitability in economic terms. Several authors, including Donaldson [45], have affirmed that applying this model can improve companies' economic profitability. Similarly, based on their theory of shared value, Porter and Kramer [109] have argued that creating social and environmental value has positive effects on financial performance. The main aim is, therefore, to analyze sustainability-derived financial effects on companies. Besides financial performance, it would be of major interest to study the effects of the environmental performance of these kinds of ecopreneurial firms on their immediate surroundings. For example, scholars could quantitatively measure whether the impact on the environment is as expected. There are, therefore, numerous lines of investigation to pursue in the area of measurement scales. Because this topic is in its early stages, measurement scales to evaluate constructs such as environmental performance are scarce. Lastly, the role of institutions is fundamental to move toward a more sustainable and environmentally-friendly world. Therefore, studying the role of institutions as moderators of the relationship between eco-innovation and environmental performance provides a major opportunity for further research.

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