

Exploring responsible management practices and strategies to promote sustainable development in South African companies

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Mini-dissertation accepted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree [Master of Business Administration](#) at the North-West University

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Declaration

I, C Roux, hereby declare that this study **“Exploring responsible management practices and strategies to promote sustainable development in South African companies.”** is my original work and that all sources used have been indicated and acknowledge by means of a complete reference list.

I declare that this work is being submitted for the degree *Master of Business Administration* at the North-West University and has never been previously submitted for any other degree to any other University.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'C. Roux', written over a horizontal line.

Signature

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Table of Contents

Declaration	2
Acknowledgements.....	3
Table of Contents	4
List of Figures	9
List of Tables	10
List of Abbreviations	11
Abstract	12
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY	1
1.1 Introduction.....	1
1.2 Background to the research.....	2
1.3 Statement of the research problem.....	5
1.4 Purpose of the research	6
1.5 Primary research question.....	6
1.5.1 Secondary research question.....	6
1.6 Primary research objective	7
1.6.1 Secondary research objectives	7
1.7 Significance of the research	7
1.7.1 Theoretical contribution.....	8
1.7.2 Practical contribution-to managers and policymakers	8

1.7.3 Contribution to responsible management (related to Sustainable Development Goals)	8
1.8 Research assumptions	8
1.9 Structure of the mini-dissertation	9
1.10 Glossary of terms.....	10
1.11 Chapter Summary.....	11
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW	12
2.1 Introduction.....	12
2.2 Conceptual Responsible Management Model	12
2.2.1 Ethics competence	14
2.2.2 Responsibility Competence.....	17
2.2.3 Sustainability Competence.....	21
2.3 Chapter summary	26
CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY	28
3.1 Introduction.....	28
3.2 Research Philosophy	28
3.2.1 Interpretivist paradigm and philosophy.....	28
3.3 Research Design	30
3.3.1 Cross-sectional explorative research design.....	30
3.4 Target Population	32

3.5 Sampling.....	33
3.5.1 Inclusion Criteria	33
3.5.2 Exclusion Criteria	34
3.5.3 Purposive sampling.....	35
3.5.4 Sample size.....	35
3.6 Data collection	36
3.6.1 Pilot study.....	36
3.6.2 The semi-structured interview guide	37
3.6.3 Field work process	37
3.7 Data Analysis.....	39
3.8 Principles of Trustworthiness	41
3.8.1 Credibility	41
3.8.2 Transferability.....	41
3.8.3 Dependability	42
3.8.4 Confirmability	42
3.9 Ethical considerations	42
3.10 Chapter summary	44
CHAPTER 4: DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION	45
4.1 Introduction.....	45
4.2 The participants demographics profile	45

4.3 Data analysis in answering research questions	46
4.4 Development of the Study's Themes	47
4.5 Research Question 1: What responsible management practices and strategies are being implemented by the company in South Africa?	49
4.5.1 Theme 1: Responsible Management Practices in South Africa.....	49
4.6 Research Question 2: What are the challenges and opportunities of implementing responsible management practices in South Africa?	62
4.6.1 Theme 2: Responsible Management Practices in South Africa: Challenges and Opportunities.....	63
4.7 Research Question 3: How can responsible management practices be used to achieve the SDGs in South Africa?.....	79
4.7.1 Theme 3: Responsible Management Practices for Sustainable Development in South Africa	80
4.8 Findings from the Literature review.....	94
4.9 Findings from the Primary Research	97
4.9.1 Research Question 1	97
4.9.2 Research Question 2	99
4.9.3 Research Question 3	100
4.10 Chapter summary	101
CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS, MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....	102
5.1 Introduction	102

5.2 Answering the research questions.....	102
5.3 Recommendations.....	102
5.4 Managerial Implications	104
5.5 Suggestions for further research.....	105
5.6 Limitations	106
5.7 Researcher Conclusion	107
5.8 Conclusion	107
References	109
Annexure A: Informed Consent	127
Annexure B: Semi-structured Interview guide.....	129
Annexure C: Transcript example	132
Annexure D: Thematic Analysis – First Level coding.....	140
Annexure E: Ethical Approval letter	143
Annexure F: Language Editor letter	145
Annexure G: Turnitin summary report.....	146

List of Figures

Figure 1.1: The 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)	3
Figure 2.1: Conceptual framework for the study	12
Figure 2.2: The 17 Sustainable Development Goals	24
Figure 4.1: A thematic mind map of RM Practices in South Africa	49

List of Tables

Table 4.1: The demographics profile of the participants	45
Table 4.2: Theme 1: Responsible Management Practices in South Africa	50
Table 4.3: Theme 2: Responsible Management Practices in South Africa: Challenges and Opportunities	63
Table 4.4: Theme 3: Responsible Management Practices in South Africa	80

List of Abbreviations

CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
ERS	Ethics, Responsibility, Sustainability
GRI	Global Reporting Initiative
JSE	Johannesburg Stock Exchange
NDP	National Development Plan
RM	Responsible Management
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
UN	United Nations
WBCSD	World Business Council for Sustainable Development

Abstract

The research problem is the lack of knowledge about management practises and strategies employed in private South African organisations to ensure responsible management (RM), which limits our understanding of RM and its conduct. The purpose of the study was to explore the extent to which RM practises and strategies are being implemented by senior managers in private South African organisations and to identify the challenges and opportunities of implementing these practices. The research also seeks to understand how RM practises can be used to achieve the United Nations (UN) Agenda 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) and what specific practises can be identified for broader application in promoting sustainable development. Responsible managers are needed to establish and sustain an ethical, responsible, and sustainable economic framework. The implementation of RM practises requires competencies in ethics, responsibility, and sustainability.

Ten senior managers from private South African companies who are involved in sustainable development strategies voluntarily participated. The study employed a cross-sectional exploratory research design and a qualitative research approach. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to collect qualitative data from a purposively selected sample. The data transcripts from interview recordings were thematically analysed to answer the research questions.

The findings showed that, overall, managers demonstrate a commitment to RM practises and strategies to promote sustainable development, provided they have the competence to do so. It was clearly indicated in the interview data that South African private organisations have a good understanding of the UN Agenda 2030 SDGs, and they prioritise RM practises such as environmental sustainability, community engagement, ethical sourcing, diversity and inclusion, responsible finance, water and waste reduction, and sustainability reporting and communication.

A managerial implication for organisations that set themselves out to conduct RM and sustainability is that they should develop their managers' ethical, responsibility, and

sustainability competence to ensure the integration of RM practises into their daily operations, including ethical investments and sustainability-aligned supply chains and operations. Transparency, reporting, community engagement, diversity, and inclusion are emphasised as crucial elements of RM practices. Collaborations and partnerships with various organisations are also recommended to contribute to RM practises and sustainable development.

Adopting RM practises and strategies reduces costs, improves operational efficiency, and strengthens corporate citizenship. Overall, RM strategies contribute to long-term sustainability, profitability, and success.

Keywords: Ethical management, responsible management practices, sustainable development goals, United Nations Agenda 2030.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction

Responsible management (RM), a pivotal construct within contemporary business strategy, involves the seamless integration of sustainability, responsibility, and ethics into managerial practises (Laasch, 2018). This multifaceted approach has garnered considerable attention from scholars, including Forray and Leigh (2012), Laasch *et al.* (2020c), and Rasche and Gilbert (2015), reflecting its significance in addressing today's organisational challenges. To foster a foundational and collective understanding across the three domains with regards to RM, a brief outline of each domain is presented to shed light on the landscape upon which the study is built.

Ethical management can be broken down into three main areas: normative ethics, which deals with figuring out what is morally right; descriptive ethics, which tries to explain why people make ethical or unethical choices; and ethics management, which focuses on using tools to promote ethical behaviour (Laasch & Conaway, 2015).

In the world of management, tools like total responsibility management, stakeholder mapping, and prioritisation play a crucial role in defining managerial responsibilities (Van Marrewijk *et al.*, 2004; Waddock & Bodwell, 2004). Over the last couple of decades, discussions about corporate social responsibility (CSR) have been framed in various ways in academic research, including concepts like responsible leadership, social entrepreneurship, and corporate citizenship. These concepts all highlight the social aspect of responsibility (Schwartz & Carroll, 2008; Wood & Logsdon, 2019).

Lastly, the idea of sustainability can be traced back to the concept of sustainable development (Brundtland, 1987). Essentially, sustainability looks at how different factors like society, the environment, and economics interact (Barbier, 1987), often referred to as the "triple bottom line" in management (Dyllick & Hockerts, 2002; Elkington, 1998).

In the field of management, sustainability practises draw from both environmental management and corporate sustainability management (Schaltegger *et al.*, 2003). These

practises include tools like sustainability scorecards and life-cycle impact assessments (Finnveden *et al.*, 2009; Hansen & Schaltegger, 2014).

There are a few research gaps found regarding RM practises and strategies with regards to sustainable development. The first gap identified is the lack of research on how RM managerial practises and strategies can be implemented in developing countries like South Africa. Another gap is the lack of research on the challenges and opportunities of implementing RM practises and strategies.

This study is important for a few reasons. First, it contributes to the growing body of knowledge on RM and sustainable development. Second, it provides insights into how RM practises and strategies can be implemented in South African companies, as well as the challenges and opportunities of implementing RM. Third, it helps disseminate the importance of sustainable development in South Africa.

1.2 Background to the research

The concept of sustainability became notably prominent as a holistic ideal encompassing environmental, social, and economic dimensions during the late 1970s and 1980s (Caradonna, 2014). However, it gained substantial traction with the publication of the Brundtland Report, officially known as "Our Common Future," in 1987 (Crowther & Aras, 2008). The Brundtland Report championed sustainable development as both attainable and desirable, grounded in the principle that resources used today should not deplete resources for future generations. This notion yielded the widely accepted definition of sustainable development: "Development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (United Nations General Assembly, 1987).

John Elkington further popularised this sustainability concept with his "Triple Bottom Line" framework (Elkington, 1994). Essentially, this framework shifts focus from mere economic value to encompass environmental and social values (Elkington, 2013). Consequently, organisations are expected not only to deliver economic benefits but also to have

comprehensive impacts on society, the environment, and the economy (Ioannou & Serafeim, 2019).

In September 2015, global leaders unanimously adopted the ambitious "2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development," ushering in the era of SDGs (Setó-Pamies & Papaoikonomou, 2020). These 17 SDGs are a roadmap to address pressing challenges such as poverty eradication, economic prosperity, social inclusion, environmental sustainability, and global peace by 2030. They rely on cooperation and interdependence among nations (Owen, 2017) and were formally adopted by all 193 UN member states in 2015 (UN, 2015). These goals guide sustainable development efforts and are monitored using a framework developed by the UN (Bebbington & Unerman, 2020; Pizzi *et al.*, 2021; Tsalis *et al.*, 2020).



Figure 1.1: The 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

Source: UN website.

South Africa has integrated the SDGs with its National Development Plan (NDP), aligning efforts to achieve both agendas (Haywood *et al.*, 2019). This alignment has significant

implications for the country's national priorities, as it influences the pursuit of both the NDP's objectives and those of the UN's SDG Agenda (PWC, 2016).

The private sector in South Africa, being a major driver of socio-economic development and environmental impact, plays a vital role in aligning and implementing the SDGs. Organisations have a dual role: addressing global development challenges while seizing opportunities for sustainable growth, often referred to as "greening" the economy (Haywood *et al.*, 2019).

Greening the economy, although complex and resource-intensive, is imperative for long-term planetary sustainability. Challenges such as high green technology costs and the need for widespread shifts in consumer behaviour must be overcome. However, the potential benefits, including environmental preservation and economic resilience, make this endeavour worthwhile.

Active involvement of organisations is essential for South Africa to attain the SDGs, as they have the capacity to foster economic prosperity, sustainable employment, resilient infrastructure, and innovative sustainable growth (IHRB, 2015; WBCSD, 2016).

Several international stakeholders, including the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI), the UN Global Compact, and the World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD), have advocated for organisations' increased engagement with the SDGs. These stakeholders emphasise how organisational activities align with the SDGs and the potential benefits of alignment and reporting on these goals (Haywood *et al.*, 2019).

To assess organisations' progress toward sustainable development, it is essential to record and report on their sustainability efforts (Ong & Djajadikerta, 2017). While annual reports are a straightforward medium for reporting sustainability performance, various non-governmental international stakeholders have established standards and guidelines for sustainability reporting (Kuswantoro, 2020).

The GRI, an independent organisation dedicated to sustainability reporting, has developed comprehensive guidelines since 2000 (Istianingsih *et al.*, 2020; Zhang *et al.*, 2020).

Nowadays, organisations often produce standalone sustainability reports based on GRI standards, separate from their annual reports (Tireksani *et al.*, 2021). The issuance of integrated reports by organisations has also been on the rise, although it remains mainly voluntary.

However, it has become mandatory for all listed companies at the Johannesburg Stock Exchange (JSE) in South Africa (Di Vaio *et al.*, 2020; Donkor *et al.*, 2021b; Wang *et al.*, 2020).

1.3 Statement of the research problem

The Sustainable Development Report of 2022 shows that South Africa ranked 108th out of 163 countries in terms of its overall performance of the UN Agenda 2030 SDGs (Sachs *et al.*, 2022). The SDGs are a global call to action for businesses, governments, and civil society to cooperate to create a more sustainable future. It is a set of 17 goals that aim to protect the planet, end poverty, and ensure prosperity for all (United Nations, 2015).

Despite increasing global emphasis on RM practices, “a set of principles and practises that guide businesses in their interactions with society and the environment” (Porter, 2011:7), namely the UNs Agenda 2030 SDGs, there is a need to investigate and determine the extent to which South African companies have integrated and implemented RM practises within their operations. RM practises can play a key role in addressing challenges and helping South African companies achieve their SDGs.

The research problem statement is that the lack of knowledge about management practises and strategies employed in South African private (and public) organisations to ensure RM limits our managerial understanding of what, how, and why of RM. This research gap is important to address because it can help inform policymakers,

businesses, and civil society about the strategies and best practises for promoting RM in South Africa.

The aim of this research is to identify and describe the RM practises and managerial strategies applied by senior managers to achieve SDGs in South African private companies (not public enterprises), thus contributing to the overall knowledge of RM and sustainable business practises in a South African context.

1.4 Purpose of the research

The main purpose of this study is to explore the extent to which RM practices and strategies are being implemented by businesses in South Africa, and to identify the challenges and opportunities of implementing these practices. The research also seeks to understand how RM practices can be used to achieve the UN Agenda 2030 SDGs.

1.5 Primary research question

To what extent have South African companies integrated RM practises and strategies in alignment with the UN's Agenda 2030 for SDGs, and what specific practises can be identified for broader application in promoting sustainable development?

This research question allows the researcher to explore the experiences of senior managers regarding the extent of RM practises and strategy integration within South African companies while also aiming to identify specific practises that can serve as examples for other organisations seeking to promote sustainable development in the country.

1.5.1 Secondary research question

- What responsible management practises and strategies are being implemented by companies in South Africa?

- What are the challenges and opportunities experienced by senior managers regarding the implementation of responsible management practises in South Africa?
- How can responsible management practises be used in South African organisations to achieve the SDGs in the country?

This research question seeks to understand how responsible management practises can be used to achieve the UN Agenda 2030 SDGs. The SDGs are a set of 17 goals that aim to end poverty, protect the planet, and ensure prosperity for all.

1.6 Primary research objective

The primary objective of this research is to explore and identify the specific responsible management practises and managerial strategies used by selected managers in South African companies that can serve as a managerial guide to other organisations seeking to promote sustainable development.

1.6.1 Secondary research objectives

- to identify the responsible management practises that are being implemented by businesses as indicated in the literature.
- to explore the challenges and opportunities experienced by managers regarding the implementation of responsible management practises in South Africa.
- To identify the managerial strategies used by South African senior managers seeking to promote sustainable development as per the 17 SDGs

1.7 Significance of the research

This study contributes to the growing body of knowledge on RM practises and strategies in South Africa. The findings of the study will be used to develop a set of recommendations for how RM practises can be more effectively implemented in South

African companies. The recommendations will be based on the senior managers' experiences and the theoretical literature on RM practices.

1.7.1 Theoretical contribution

The study contributes to the theoretical body of knowledge on RM practises by providing a deeper understanding of how these practises and strategies are implemented in South African companies. The findings of the study help inform future research on RM practises and strategies and contribute to the development of a more comprehensive theory of RM.

1.7.2 Practical contribution-to managers and policymakers

The study might be of practical value to managers and policymakers by providing them with insights into the challenges and opportunities of implementing RM practises in South Africa. The findings of the study will help managers develop and implement more effective RM practises and strategies, helping policymakers create a more supportive environment for responsible business practices.

1.7.3 Contribution to responsible management (related to Sustainable Development Goals)

The study contributes to the field of RM by providing a better understanding of how RM practises and strategies can be used to achieve the UN Agenda 2030 SDGs. The findings of the study help to inform future research on the SDGs and contribute to the development of more effective strategies for achieving these goals.

1.8 Research assumptions

This investigation advanced on the basis of the following assumptions:

- RM practises are being implemented in South African companies, although to varying degrees.

- The integration of RM practises in South African companies may face challenges related to resource availability, management support, and awareness of RM principles.
- Some South African managers are actively employing strategies to promote sustainable development, aligning with the UN Agenda 2030 SDGs)
- RM practises have the potential to contribute positively to achieving the SDGs in South Africa, impacting aspects like environmental stewardship, social responsibility, and ethical business practices.

1.9 Structure of the mini-dissertation

The rest of this mini-dissertation is structured as follows:

Chapter 2: Literature review

This chapter explores the relevant literature from 2019–2023 on the topic of RM and sustainability. The chapter also discusses the different perspectives on the topic, the research that has been conducted on the topic, and the findings from the literature. The gaps in the literature and the need for research on the topic are also addressed.

Chapter 3: Research Methodology

Chapter 3 describes the research design, the population and sampling, the data collection and analysis process and methods used, and the ethical rigour.

Chapter 4: Data Analysis and Interpretation

Chapter 4 presents the data analysis, emerging themes, and findings to answer the research questions. The chapter also indicates the interpretation and discussion of findings supported by the literature.

Chapter 5: Recommendations, Managerial implications, and Conclusions

This chapter concludes the study, providing managerial implications and recommendations for future studies as well as mentioning the limitations of the study.

1.10 Glossary of terms

Responsible management practices (RM) are the processes and procedures that organisations use to integrate social, environmental, and ethical considerations into their decision-making and operations. These practises are designed to ensure that businesses operate in a way that is beneficial to society and the environment, as well as to their own stakeholders (Laasch & Conaway, 2015).

Sustainable development is a complex and multifaceted concept that has been the subject of much debate and discussion in recent years. There is no single definition of sustainable development, but it is generally understood to be development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (Elkington, 2013).

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are a set of 17 goals that aim to end poverty, protect the planet, and ensure prosperity for all (United Nations, 2015). The SDGs are a global call to action for businesses, governments, and civil society to work together to create a more sustainable future.

United Nations (UN) Agenda is a term used to refer to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which was adopted by the UNs General Assembly in 2015. The 2030 Agenda is a global plan of action to end poverty, protect the planet, and ensure that all people enjoy peace and prosperity. It includes 17 SDGs and 169 targets, which are to be achieved by 2030 (United Nations, 2015).

Ethics, in essence, offers valuable guidance to organisations on how they should conduct themselves in every facet of their business operations. It is not just a set of rules; rather, it embodies the fundamental principles and practises aimed at enhancing the overall well-being of humanity (Crowther & Aras, 2008). In simpler terms, the way an organisation behaves does not just impact its stakeholders and shareholders; it ripples through the

entire economy. When an organisation makes ethical and socially responsible choices in its business decisions and strategic planning, it not only benefits itself but also contributes to greater sustainability (Crowther & Aras, 2008).

1.11 Chapter Summary

This chapter introduced the research context and its rationale, emphasising the increasing importance of RM practises in the South African business landscape. It highlighted the significance of sustainable development and explored the research problem and questions. This chapter also presented the research aims and objectives, as well as its potential contributions and limitations. Chapter 1 established the research's theoretical and practical significance, providing a solid foundation for the subsequent chapters.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

Chapter 2 acts as a knowledge framework for understanding the research's theoretical underpinnings by delving into an extensive literature review on the practises and strategies of RM and sustainable development in organisations. It provides a comprehensive understanding of these concepts, tracing their evolution and global relevance. The chapter analyses the UNs Agenda 2030 for SDGs and its role in influencing managerial business practices. Additionally, it explores various theoretical frameworks and models related to RM, offering insights into the conceptual foundations that guide the study.

2.2 Conceptual Responsible Management Model

The conceptual theoretical framework in Figure 2.1 below is a summation of the core factors derived from the literature researched as the basis for this study on RM practises and strategies. The content in Figure 2.1 is discussed below.

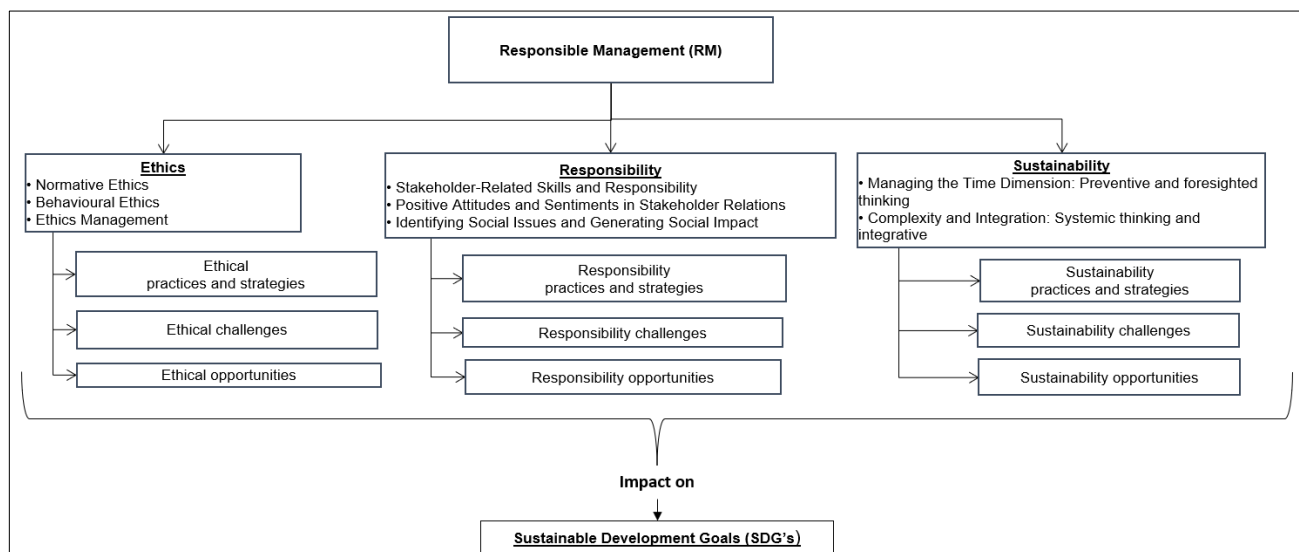


Figure 2.1: Conceptual framework for the study

Source: Researcher's own

During the last decade, concepts such as sustainability, sustainable development, business ethics, and social responsibility became very popular in the business literature and the business world (Toma & Grădinaru, 2018: 50).

Humanity is currently confronted with profound societal and environmental challenges (Ehgartner *et al.*, 2017; Gray & Milne, 2018). In addressing these significant issues, the field of business management has a pivotal role to play (Antonacopoulou, 2022; Markman *et al.*, 2019). Achieving the sustainability goals set by AU Agenda 2063 and UN Agenda 2030 necessitates the presence of responsible managers equipped with the competence to establish, operate, and sustain an ethical, responsible, and sustainable economic framework in their businesses (Laasch, 2021; Van der Byl *et al.*, 2020).

In this context, the implementation of RM practises in organisations (Gherardi & Laasch, 2021) requires managerial competencies drawn from three domains: 1) ethics, 2) responsibility, and 3) sustainability (ERS) (Forray & Leigh, 2012; Laasch *et al.*, 2020a; Rasche & Gilbert, 2015).

The competence to engage in ethical decision-making and behaviour (referred to as the ethics discipline) highlights the key ethical management competencies such as moral judgement and moral courage (Desplaces *et al.*, 2007; Sekerka *et al.*, 2009).

The competence to fulfil stakeholder responsibilities (referred to as the responsibility discipline) significantly relates to community-building and awareness of social issues (Osagie *et al.*, 2016; Pless *et al.*, 2011).

Lastly, the competence to balance the social, environmental, and economic impacts over time (referred to as the sustainability discipline) while placing emphasis on systems thinking and foresight (Hesselbarth & Schaltegger, 2014; Lans *et al.*, 2014)

The next section explains the RM competencies that managers need to acquire to practise ERS (ethics, responsibility, and sustainability).

2.2.1 Ethics competence

Ethics competencies play a pivotal role in the business domain, contributing to the ethical decision-making processes and actions of individuals and organisations. These competence are grounded in three main concepts of ethics: 1) normative ethics, 2) behavioural ethics, and 3) ethics management, which are explained below.

2.2.1.1 Normative Ethics

Normative ethics provides a philosophical basis for ethical decision-making, often drawing from moral philosophies to guide individuals' actions. Pohling *et al.* (2016) proposed a set of competence, including "normative knowledge" and "awareness of consequences." These competence can be linked directly to consequentialist moral philosophies (Pohling, 2016), which prioritise the outcomes and consequences of actions when determining their ethical value. Similarly, Morales-Sánchez and Cabello-Medina (2013) identified four competence relating to fortitude, prudence, justice, and temperance, aligning with the moral philosophy of virtue ethics. The application of these competence encourages individuals to cultivate virtuous character traits to make ethical decisions in business contexts.

2.2.1.2 Behavioural Ethics

Behavioral ethics explores how psychological factors influence individuals' ethical decisions and actions. Pohling *et al.* (2016) emphasised ethical competence as the ability to make sound decisions in specific situations, closely resembling individual and situational factors studied in behavioural ethics. This alignment suggests that an understanding of human behaviour and situational context is vital for cultivating effective ethical competence in business. Insights from psychological theories of moral development, such as Kohlberg's (1971) stages of moral reasoning and Rest *et al.*'s (1969) theory of moral judgment, also contribute to the development of ethical competence. Additionally, exploring human moral values, as examined by Fritzsche and

Oz (2007) and Schwartz (2005), can provide valuable perspectives on ethical decision-making in the business realm.

2.2.1.3 Ethics Management

Ethics management competence emphasise the organisational and managerial aspects of ethical decision-making. Spurgin (2004) emphasised the importance of recognising ethical business issues and applying ethical frameworks to address them. This competence ensures that organisations recognise and navigate complex ethical dilemmas effectively, fostering a culture of ethical awareness and responsibility. Communication skills are also integral to ethics management competencies. Managers with a solid grasp of the language of business ethics can effectively communicate ethical principles, policies, and guidelines within an organisation. This communication fosters ethical alignment among employees and stakeholders, promoting ethical behaviour and decision-making throughout the business.

Ethics competence in the business domain are shaped by the interplay of behavioural ethics, normative ethics, and ethics management. Drawing insights from moral philosophies, psychological theories, and organisational dimensions, these competence guide individuals, managers, and organisations in making ethical decisions and conducting business with integrity.

2.2.1.4 Ethical practices and strategies

Ethical management practises and strategies contribute to responsible business conduct, promoting transparency, accountability, and trust. This involves implementing ethical codes of conduct, conducting regular ethics training for employees, and establishing mechanisms for reporting and addressing ethical concerns.

Ethical management practises and strategies used by companies for sustainable development include:

- adhering to a code of ethics that guides decision-making and behaviour within the organisation (Ayaya & Pretorius, 2021).
- Implementing robust corporate governance structures and ethical codes of conduct to ensure accountability, transparency, and integrity in business operations.
- transparent disclosure of environmental, social, and governance performance to stakeholders, including investors, customers, and employees (Hsu *et al.*, 2014).
- Establishing and maintaining fair and equitable employment practises that promote diversity, inclusivity, and equal opportunities for all employees (Allmang & Franke, 2020).

2.2.1.5 Ethical challenges

Ethical management challenges include navigating conflicting interests and values, ensuring consistent adherence to ethical standards throughout the organisation, addressing unethical behaviour or misconduct, and balancing short-term financial goals with long-term sustainability objectives (McFarlane, 2015). Organisations need to find ways to address these challenges effectively, such as promoting a culture of ethics and integrity, providing ongoing ethics training and education, establishing clear mechanisms for reporting unethical behaviour, and holding individuals accountable for their actions.

In addition, organisations should actively engage in stakeholder dialogue and embrace open communication channels to ensure that concerns are addressed and sustainable solutions are developed collaboratively (Biancone *et al.*, 2016).

2.2.1.6 Ethical opportunities

Ethical management opportunities include creating a positive organisational culture based on trust, transparency, and fairness; attracting and retaining talented employees who value ethical practices; enhancing the company's reputation and brand value; strengthening relationships with customers and other stakeholders; and gaining a competitive advantage in the market (Coetzee *et al.*, 2022).

2.2.2 Responsibility Competence

Responsibility competence in the managerial context focuses on how individual managers interact responsibly or irresponsibly with various stakeholders to whom they are accountable.

2.2.2.1 Stakeholder-Related Skills and Responsibility

The concept of responsibility competence often encompasses specific stakeholder-related skills that managers need to effectively engage with their stakeholders. Muff *et al.* (2020) highlight "stakeholder relations" competence, emphasising the ability to manage and maintain relationships with diverse stakeholders. Similarly, Miller *et al.* (2012:5) identify "stakeholder communication competence" as a crucial skill for managers to communicate effectively with stakeholders, ensuring transparent and responsible interactions. These stakeholder-related competence are integral to responsible managerial practices, as they enable managers to understand and address the interests and concerns of various stakeholders. By cultivating these skills, managers can foster trust, mutual understanding, and cooperation with stakeholders, leading to more responsible and sustainable business practices.

2.2.2.2 Positive Attitudes and Sentiments in Stakeholder Relations

Stakeholder relations are often influenced by the sentiments and attitudes that managers hold towards others. Pless *et al.* (2011:8) emphasise the importance of a "responsible mindset," which encompasses a sense of ethical responsibility and an awareness of the impact of managerial decisions on stakeholders. This mindset helps managers prioritise responsible actions and consider the broader implications of their choices. Miller *et al.* (2012) further highlight compassion and empathy as crucial attributes for social entrepreneurship competence. Empathy allows managers to understand stakeholders' perspectives and needs, while compassion drives them to act in ways that benefit stakeholders and society at large. These positive attitudes foster responsible and ethical behaviour, promoting a culture of responsibility within organisations.

2.2.2.3 Identifying Social Issues and Generating Social Impact

Responsibility competencies frequently revolve around the ability to identify social issues and create meaningful social impact. Miller *et al.* (2012:15) propose the "ability to create a significant social impact" as a vital competence. This entails going beyond conventional business goals and prioritising actions that benefit society, even if they might not lead to immediate financial gains. It reflects a long-term and sustainable perspective on business operations. Similarly, Muff *et al.* (2020:7) feature a cluster of "change and innovation" competence that aim to find solutions for society's problems. By incorporating innovation and creativity, managers can tackle societal challenges effectively and contribute to positive social change. Responsibility competencies in the managerial context play a central role in promoting ethical and sustainable business practices. Managers with these competencies can skilfully navigate stakeholder relations, fostering trust and cooperation with diverse stakeholders.

Positive attitudes and sentiments, such as a responsible mindset, empathy, and compassion, further enhance responsible managerial behaviour. Furthermore, responsibility competencies drive managers to identify social issues and prioritise social impact alongside financial considerations. This approach aligns with the principles of social entrepreneurship, where managers actively seek solutions to societal problems and contribute to the well-being of the broader community.

2.2.2.4 Responsibility practices and strategies

Responsibility management strategies and practises are vital in the current socio-economic landscape globally, but more specifically for Africa and South African companies, as little is published, to promote sustainable development. The following strategies and practises were derived from the literature:

- Stakeholder engagement
 - Engaging with stakeholders to identify environmental vulnerabilities and develop effective intervention measures (Bakri *et al.*, 2020).

- building strong relationships and partnerships with stakeholders to understand their needs and concerns and incorporating their perspectives into decision-making processes (Andrade & Rhodes, 2012).
- creating partnerships and collaborations with organisations and communities to collectively address social and environmental challenges (Marzouki *et al.*, 2021).

- Supply Chain Management

Implementing responsible supply chain management practices, including selecting suppliers based on social and environmental criteria and working collaboratively to improve sustainability outcomes throughout the supply chain (Sertyesilisik & Sertyesilisik, 2016).

- HR practices

Implementing sustainable HR practices, such as talent acquisition, employee engagement, and proper reward and recognition, to enhance reputation, productivity, and employee retention (Singh *et al.*, 2019).

- Focused social responsibility

Integrating corporate initiatives into business operations, such as philanthropy, community engagement, and environmental conservation (Obert *et al.*, 2021).

- Create a culture of innovation and continuous improvement

Fostering a culture of innovation and continuous improvement to identify and implement sustainable technologies and practises throughout the organisation (Mishra, 2018).

2.2.2.5 Responsibility challenges

Responsibility challenges that an organisation may face when implementing sustainable development strategies and practises can be multifaceted. One of the key challenges is balancing short-term financial pressures with the long-term benefits of sustainable

practises (Susanty *et al.*, 2018). This often requires making initial investments in sustainable technologies or processes, which may not show immediate financial returns. Additionally, there might be resistance to change from some stakeholders within the organisation who are accustomed to traditional, non-sustainable ways of conducting business.

Another challenge is the complexity of supply chain management, especially when it comes to ensuring that all suppliers adhere to social and environmental criteria (Habek & Czarnecka, 2021). Furthermore, companies may face challenges in effectively engaging with stakeholders and addressing their concerns and expectations related to sustainability.

2.2.2.6 Responsibility opportunities

Responsibility opportunities that can arise from implementing sustainable development strategies and practises are manifold. These include:

- Enhanced brand reputation and customer loyalty: Companies that demonstrate a commitment to sustainable practises often enjoy an improved brand image and increased customer loyalty (Zhang & Jiang, 2021).
- Improved operational efficiency and cost savings: Sustainable practises can lead to operational efficiencies and cost savings through reduced energy and resource consumption (Baig *et al.*, 2020).
- Access to new markets and business opportunities: Implementing sustainable strategies can create opportunities to enter new markets, attract environmentally conscious customers, and meet the demands of a growing green consumer base (Masoumik *et al.*, 2014).
- Attraction and retention of top talent: Many employees, particularly millennials and Gen Z, prioritise working for companies that align with their values and contribute to a sustainable future (Khalil *et al.*, 2021).

- Increased resilience and risk management: Sustainable practises can help organisations mitigate risks associated with climate change, regulatory changes, and supply chain disruptions (Wu *et al.*, 2018).
- Increased collaboration and partnerships: Implementing sustainable practises often requires working closely with suppliers, customers, and other stakeholders to create shared value and address sustainability challenges (El-Jadali *et al.*, 2018).

2.2.3 Sustainability Competence

Sustainability competence are fundamental to addressing the multifaceted challenges of sustainability, encompassing complex social, environmental, and economic issues with a future-oriented perspective. This literature review delves into the core features of sustainability competence and explores how they enable individuals and organisations to effectively navigate the time dimension, handle complexity and integration, and foster collaboration in tackling sustainability's problems.

2.2.3.1 Managing the Time Dimension: Preventive and foresighted thinking

Sustainability's future orientation necessitates competencies that manage the time dimension, allowing individuals and organisations to take preventive measures and plan strategically for long-term sustainability. Alberton *et al.* (2020) emphasise the importance of preventive competencies, which involve identifying and addressing potential sustainability risks before they escalate. This proactive approach can mitigate adverse impacts and foster sustainable practices.

Ploum *et al.* (2018) highlight the significance of "foresighted thinking competence," enabling individuals to anticipate future challenges and opportunities. By being future-focused, individuals and organisations can develop sustainable strategies that account for potential changes in the business environment and societal landscape.

Strategic competencies are also integral to effectively managing the time dimension. Alberton *et al.* (2020) and Ploum *et al.* (2018) both emphasise the need for strategic

competence, allowing individuals to develop comprehensive plans and actions that align with long-term sustainability goals. These competencies aid in shaping sustainable practises and enhancing an organisation's resilience in the face of dynamic sustainability challenges.

2.2.3.2 Complexity and Integration: Systemic thinking and integrative

The multifaceted nature of sustainability demands competencies that address integration and complexity. Systemic thinking competence, as featured in various sustainability competence frameworks, enable individuals to grasp the interconnectedness of sustainability issues. This approach considers the interdependence between social, environmental, and economic dimensions, ensuring a holistic understanding of sustainability problems (Bansal & DesJardine, 2014). Integrative competence play a crucial role in handling the diverse aspects of sustainability problems. Kleef and Roome (2007) emphasise the importance of integrating environmental, business, and social dimensions to devise effective sustainability solutions. This competence allows individuals to develop comprehensive and sustainable strategies that balance economic growth with social and environmental well-being.

2.2.3.3 Collaboration for addressing sustainability problems

Given the complexity and multi-sectorial nature of sustainability challenges, collaboration is essential for addressing 'wicked' sustainability problems successfully. Batie (2008) advocates for collaborative competence, emphasising the need to embrace diversity and interdisciplinary competence. By valuing diverse perspectives and expertise, individuals can foster innovative solutions that transcend disciplinary boundaries and promote sustainability.

Building coalitions, collaborations, and networking are other vital competencies that enable individuals and organisations to pool resources, knowledge, and efforts towards sustainable outcomes. Kleef and Roome (2007) emphasise the significance of these

competencies in forging alliances with stakeholders from various sectors to achieve shared sustainability goals.

2.2.3.4 Sustainability practices and strategies

Sustainability practises and strategies in terms of RM include integrating sustainability objectives into business strategies, conducting regular environmental assessments and audits, implementing green procurement practices, promoting energy and resource efficiency (Kasztelan, 2017), adopting clean technologies and renewable energy sources, reducing waste generation and implementing recycling programmes, promoting employee engagement and training in sustainable practices, establishing transparent and open communication with stakeholders, and actively participating in industry initiatives and partnerships focused on sustainability (Almasarweh, 2022).

2.2.3.5 Sustainability challenges

Sustainability challenges include navigating complex and rapidly changing regulatory landscapes, balancing short-term financial goals with long-term sustainability objectives, securing sufficient resources and support for sustainable initiatives (Rehman *et al.*, 2019), overcoming resistance to change and lack of awareness or understanding about the importance of sustainability, ensuring supply chain transparency and responsibility, addressing societal and cultural barriers to sustainable practices, and managing the potential trade-offs between economic growth and environmental and social impact (Daojiu, 2014).

Developing a sustainability-focused business strategy and integrating sustainability objectives into business practises can not only help companies overcome these challenges but also enable them to capitalise on market opportunities, enhance their reputation, attract and retain top talent (Bertagnolli *et al.*, 2021), improve efficiency and reduce costs, mitigate risks (Ghimisi, 2019), and contribute to the overall sustainable development of South Africa.

2.2.3.6 Sustainability opportunities

Sustainability opportunities should be integrated into the company's internal resource management to effectively address environmental concerns and support sustainable development. These include exploring renewable energy sources, adopting circular economy principles, implementing waste reduction and recycling programmes, investing in sustainable product design and development, engaging in stakeholder dialogue and collaboration, and aligning sustainability goals with global frameworks such as the UN SDG (Okřęglicka, 2018). Additionally, organisations can promote RM practises by integrating sustainability into their decision-making processes, investing in renewable energy sources and energy-efficient technologies, supporting local communities, and investing in education and skills development programmes. By implementing these RM practises and strategies (Tangngisalu *et al.*, 2020), South African companies can not only contribute to sustainable development but also gain a competitive advantage in the global business environment and improve their long-term financial performance.

Sustainable Development Goals



Figure 2.2: The 17 Sustainable Development Goals

Source: UN website

The UNs SDGs consist of 17 goals that serve as a universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet, and ensure that all people enjoy peace and prosperity (Ohta *et al.*, 2022). These goals, adopted by all UN Member States in 2015 as part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (Wu *et al.*, 2018), provide a shared blueprint for peace and prosperity for people and the planet. Here are the 17 UN SDGs with explanations:

- SDG 1: No Poverty: End poverty in all its forms everywhere (Wu *et al.*, 2018).
- SDG 2: Zero Hunger: End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition, and promote sustainable agriculture (Werneck *et al.*, 2021).
- SDG 3: Good Health and Well-Being: Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages (Hung *et al.*, 2019).
- SDG 4: Quality Education: Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all (Chou *et al.*, 2022).
- SDG 5: Gender Equality: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls (Plouffe *et al.*, 2020).
- SDG 6: Clean Water and Sanitation: Ensure the availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all (Martínez-Borreguero *et al.*, 2020).
- SDG 7: Affordable and Clean Energy: Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable, and modern energy for all (Anwar, 2021).
- SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth: Promote sustained, inclusive, and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment, and decent work for all (Santi *et al.*, 2022).
- SDG 9: Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure: Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialisation, and foster innovation (Powers *et al.*, 2021).
- SDG 10: Reduced Inequality: Reduce inequality within and among countries (Guerrina *et al.*, 2021).

- SDG 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities: Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable (Shekhar *et al.*, 2023).
- SDG 12: Responsible Consumption and Production: Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns (Orellano *et al.*, 2020).
- SDG 13: Climate Action: Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts (Abad-Segura *et al.*, 2021).
- SDG 14: Life Below Water: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas, and marine resources for sustainable development (Hills & Maharaj, 2023).
- SDG 15: Life on Land: Protect, restore, and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems; sustainably manage forests; combat desertification; halt and reverse land degradation (Guo *et al.*, 2020).
- SDG 16: Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions: Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all, and build effective, accountable, and inclusive institutions at all levels (Eiargue & Climent, 2020).
- SDG 17: Partnerships for the Goals: Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalise the global partnership for sustainable development.

It is evident that the SDGs cover a wide range of crucial areas, aiming to address key global challenges and create a more sustainable and equitable future. To promote sustainable development in South African companies, it is essential to align management practises and strategies with the UNs 17 SDG and their corresponding objectives.

2.3 Chapter summary

Chapter 2 serves as an in-depth exploration of RM practises and strategies and their link to sustainable development as derived from literature. It covered a wide array of literature, including the historical evolution of sustainability concepts, the UNs' SDGs, and various

theoretical frameworks and models related to RM. The researcher analysed how these concepts have evolved and influenced responsibility and business sustainable practises globally. This chapter provides the necessary theoretical foundation to understand the research context, followed by the subsequent Chapter 3 on research design and methodology.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

Chapter 3 focuses on the research design and methodology employed to investigate RM practises and strategies implemented by senior managers in private South African companies. It introduces the research paradigm and methodology to be undertaken to answer the research questions mentioned in Chapter 1. The interpretivist paradigm is discussed, emphasising the qualitative approach, exploratory study design, and choice of population and sample group. Furthermore, the sampling technique, data collection, and data analysis methods, along with outlining the steps to follow to conduct ethical research and qualitative rigour, are discussed.

3.2 Research Philosophy

The idea of research philosophy involves a set of beliefs and assumptions guiding the development of knowledge. Whether one is aware of it or not, assumptions are inherent at different stages of the research process. These assumptions include presuppositions about the scope of human understanding and beliefs related to ontology, epistemology, and axiology (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2020).

3.2.1 Interpretivist paradigm and philosophy

The research was conducted within an interpretivist paradigm, which is grounded in the understanding and interpretation of subjective experiences and social meanings. O'Reilly and Kiyimba (2015:12), stipulate that the interpretivist philosophy “emphasises the importance of interpretation as well as observation in attempts to understand the social world.”

Interpretivism is rooted in a perspective known as life-world ontology, which posits that every observation is influenced by both theoretical perspectives and personal values. From this standpoint, the exploration of the social realm is neither intended nor capable of uncovering an entirely impartial, objective truth (Leitch *et al.*, 2010).

Interpretivism endeavours to construct knowledge by comprehending individuals' distinctive perspectives and the significance they attribute to these perspectives (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

The interpretive research paradigm is also distinguished by its inclination to grasp the world as perceived subjectively, aiming for explanations within the participant's frame of reference rather than through the lens of an objective observer (Ponelis, 2015).

By adopting interpretivism, the research aimed to delve into the subjective experiences of managers and uncover to what extent private South African companies have integrated RM practises and strategies in alignment with the UNs' Agenda for SDGs 2030, and what specific practises and strategies can be identified for broader application in promoting sustainable development.

Ontologically, interpretivism acknowledges the existence of multiple subjective realities and the importance of social interactions in shaping those realities. It views reality as socially constructed (Antwi & Hamza, 2015), with individuals actively participating in the creation and interpretation of meaning. This paradigm recognises that individuals bring their own unique perspectives, beliefs, and values, which influence their understanding of the world.

Epistemologically, within the interpretivist paradigm, this perspective asserts that our understanding of reality is a product of social construction facilitated by human actors (Punch, 2005, as cited in Kuyini & Kivunja, 2017).

Epistemologically, interpretivism rejects the notion of an objective reality that can be studied independently of human interpretation (Punch, 2005, cited by Kuyini & Kivunja, 2017).

It emphasises the importance of qualitative research methods, such as interviews, to explore and understand the complexities of human experiences and the meanings individuals attribute to them. This paradigm acknowledges the role of the researcher as

an active participant in the research process (McKenna *et al.*, 2011), which recognises that the researcher's interpretation and understanding can influence the findings.

The focus was on capturing the richness and nuances of the selected managers' perspectives, allowing for a deeper understanding of the managerial practises and strategies within the South African RM context.

An interpretivist paradigm provides a suitable foundation for exploring the complex and context-bound nature of this study's research topic, aligned with the qualitative inductive approach.

3.3 Research Design

The research design constitutes a thorough plan for establishing a link between conceptual research issues and practical empirical research that is both relevant and achievable. The researcher adhered to a systematic approach before commencing the data collection and analysis phases to validly achieve the study objective (Asenahabi, 2019). Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2020) additionally assert that the research design encompasses the complete strategy used to tackle the research question(s), highlighting the importance of accurately formulating the research question. This study adopted the cross-sectional exploratory research design (Saunders *et al.*, 2019:212).

3.3.1 Cross-sectional explorative research design

The exploratory cross-sectional design used explains the exploratory part first, followed by the cross-sectional. The explorative research design in qualitative research is a dynamic and flexible approach that seeks to investigate and comprehend relatively unexplored or ambiguous phenomena (Creswell, 2019). This design allowed the researcher to delve deeply into a particular subject or topic, aiming to generate new insights and understanding (Saunders *et al.*, 2019:212).

As explained by Creswell (2014) and Saunders *et al.* (2019:212), explorative research is characterised by its open-ended nature, where data collection methods such as

interviews, focus groups, observations, or document analysis are employed to explore the research question comprehensively.

The primary objective of this design is to identify patterns, themes, and emerging concepts without imposing preconceived notions or hypotheses. By embracing the uncertainty of the research process, explorative research provides an opportunity to uncover hidden aspects and unanticipated connections, paving the way for further investigations and the development of more refined research questions in the future.

The exploratory research design was used for the research due to the lack of literature available on specific managerial practises and strategies used to promote sustainable development in private South African companies.

The cross-sectional part of the design refers to the time horizon used. It can be defined as a time element involving a particular phenomenon or study conducted at a specific time (Saunders *et al.*, 2019:212). The particular time horizon used depended on the MBA study schedule, which notes time constraints, especially for academic research studies. Therefore, the cross-sectional time horizon was more appropriate since the researcher conducted a research study for an MBA programme. It was also conducted at a single point in time, providing a snapshot of the perspectives of the managers under study (Yin, 2014). The title of this research, "Exploring RM practises and strategies to promote sustainable development in South African companies," aligns with this time horizon as the study aims to understand the current state of RM practises and strategies within South African private organisations.

It is important to note that the time horizon refers to the duration of data collection (Yin, 2014), not the length of the entire research project. In this research, the data collection phase was carried out within a defined timeframe, spanning several weeks, and depended on the availability and accessibility of the participants.

By collecting data at a single point in time, the research aimed to capture a momentary snapshot of the managers' experiences, perspectives, and decision-making processes. This approach provided valuable insights into their current state, allowing for a

comprehensive understanding of the research phenomenon within a specific temporal context (Ponelis, 2015).

The advantage of the cross-sectional design and the single-point data collection approach was that it enabled the researchers to efficiently gather data from the managers within a shorter timeframe, minimising potential biases that may arise from longitudinal data collection (Rashid *et al.*, 2019).

Additionally, the design provided a focused view of the managers' experiences and perspectives, ensuring that the data collected was reflective of their current circumstances and avoiding potential biases (Yin, 2014) associated with extended data collection periods.

It is important to acknowledge that the snapshot nature of the data collection limits the ability to make causal inferences or observe temporal changes over time (Ponelis, 2015). However, the cross-sectional approach offered valuable insights into the managers' perspectives at a specific moment, which was used to identify patterns, themes, and contextual factors (Yin, 2014) influencing their decision-making processes.

The boundaries of the research study were defined by the South African organisations under investigation. By selecting multiple organisations, the study concentrated on understanding the managerial experiences of RM and sustainability within private companies in the South African context.

3.4 Target Population

As per the definition provided by Saunders *et al.* (2020), the expression "target population" denotes a distinct cohort of individuals that researchers intend to incorporate into their study for the purpose of extrapolating their conclusions. This particular group may be chosen based on specific shared characteristics or traits. The target population constitutes the entirety of individuals or subjects intended for use in the study, representing the comprehensive set of units from which data is gathered to draw inferences or generalise the findings of the study.

The study used a population of senior managers at private companies across South Africa with a job role involving RM in sustainability or a similar job description. These managers are responsible for overseeing and making strategic decisions (Ponelis, 2015) related to their respective areas of responsibility sustainably. E.g., Chief Sustainability Officer (CSO), Sustainability Director/Manager, Environmental Manager/Director, CSR Manager/Director, ESG (Environmental, Social, and Governance) Manager/Director, Ethical Compliance Manager/Director

3.5 Sampling

As stated by Naderifar *et al.* (2017:1), sampling involves selecting a segment of the population to serve as a representative of the whole. The researchers employed non-probability sampling, indicating that not every participant had an equal likelihood of being selected. Bhardwaj (2019) defines sampling as the procedure of choosing a representative sample from a population to reach the research objectives. Probability sampling ensures that each element has a known probability of selection, whereas non-probability sampling lacks a known probability of selection for each individual member of the population.

Purposive sampling was chosen for this qualitative study because it allows for decisions to be made about who or what is sampled, what form the sampling should take, and how many people or sites need to be sampled (Creswell, 2019). Purposive sampling involves the intentional selection of participants from which specialised data can be collected (Creswell, 2019).

When selecting the participants from the population, it is important to set the inclusion and exclusion criteria:

3.5.1 Inclusion Criteria

- Job Title/Position: Senior managers holding strategic managerial roles within a South African organisation, responsible for overseeing and making decisions related to sustainable development and RM practices.

- Experience and Tenure: Managers with varying levels of experience and tenure in their current managerial roles, including both seasoned managers with extensive managerial responsibilities and newer managers who have recently assumed “sustainability” managerial positions.
- Qualifications and Expertise: Managers possessing the necessary qualifications, skills, and expertise required for their “sustainability” managerial roles, which may include educational backgrounds, professional certifications, industry-specific knowledge, and relevant experience in sustainability-related domains.
- Demographic: Senior managers employed at a South African company within the manufacturing sector.

3.5.2 Exclusion Criteria

- Non-Senior Managerial Roles: Individuals holding managerial roles below the senior level were excluded from the study.
- Managers Outside South Africa: Managers not employed in a South African organisation were excluded from the research.
- Lack of Relevant Expertise: Managers lacking the necessary qualifications, skills, or expertise relevant to sustainable development and RM practises were excluded.
- Unavailable Public Profiles: Participants with incomplete or unavailable public profiles on LinkedIn, where relevant job titles and experience cannot be verified, were excluded.
- Incomplete Data: Participants with incomplete or insufficient information in their public profiles on LinkedIn were excluded.
- Organisations not operating in the manufacturing sector (converting raw materials and components into finished products through various production processes)

3.5.3 Purposive sampling

The use of purposive sampling facilitates the curation of a specific cohort endowed with pertinent expertise and knowledge relevant to the research objectives, along with appropriate inclusion and exclusion criteria. Through the proficient use of this method on LinkedIn, the study targeted senior managers who could offer valuable insights and information pertaining to the study's focus on sustainable development and RM. The researcher contacted senior managers fulfilling the necessary job titles and experience according to their individual public profiles on LinkedIn while satisfactorily meeting the inclusion criteria of the target population to identify a sample group. In order to establish effective communication, the researcher endeavoured to reach out to these managers through personal messages and emails. Employing LinkedIn as a platform for connecting with the participants assures the involvement of professionals from diverse industries across South Africa, amplifying the possibility of constructive and relevant data for the research. The study's proposed research was enriched and elevated by the inclusion of targeted managers' perspectives and experiences, culminating in a comprehensive and robust analysis of the research topic.

3.5.4 Sample size

Considerable discussion surrounds the determination of suitable sample sizes in qualitative research. Generally, sample sizes in qualitative research are notably smaller than those in quantitative research (Dworkin, 2012:1319). Dworkin (2012:1319) notes that the literature proposes a range of five to 50 participants as appropriate for qualitative research, taking into account factors such as data quality, the study's scope, and the research topic.

Adhering to best practices, it is recommended that the more homogeneous the population, the smaller the permissible sample size (Renwick, 2019). A population with a narrow range of characteristics may warrant a sample size of approximately ten participants, while more diverse and intricate populations should be represented by samples ranging from 40 to 50 participants (Dworkin, 2012:1320). Crouch and McKenzie

(2006) emphasise that employing fewer than 20 participants leads to superior data quality, as a robust researcher-participant relationship fosters a more natural conversation (Renwick, 2019).

In determining the sample size, the researcher considered the necessity for it to be sufficiently large to effectively capture and describe the phenomenon under study, while also ensuring that individuals could contribute ample, high-quality data to address the research questions. However, the selection of an excessively large sample introduces the risk of managing an overwhelming amount of data for analysis. To address this concern, additional participants were interviewed until reaching data saturation, which denotes the point at which further interviews cease to provide new information (Sargeant, 2012:2).

Within the context of inductive research approaches, saturation is indicative of the adequacy of sampling for theory development. Consequently, a sample size ranging from 10 to 20 participants was considered appropriate for the current study.

3.6 Data collection

The researcher used a semi-structured interview guide to conduct a semi-structured interview (see Annexure B).

3.6.1 Pilot study

A pilot study serves as a technique for assessing and validating an instrument by administering it to a small subset of the target population. Individuals involved in this preliminary study should not be included in the main study (Bhat, 2023).

The pilot study was conducted with two senior managers, each in their own respective private South African companies. The data provided by these managers was excluded from the primary investigation. The pilot study indicated that the participants were content with the semi-structured interview guide's questions, and no recommendations for changes were made.

3.6.2 The semi-structured interview guide

The semi-structured interview guide consisted of pre-determined questions to allow participant engagement and guide the interview conversation. The first section of the semi-structured interview guide collected demographic data, while the second section focused on the research questions and research objectives. The semi-structured interview guide included nine questions that were used during the face-to-face interviews that related directly to the research questions and research objectives and were considered appropriate for the qualitative study. It also allowed the researcher to ask open-ended questions and follow-up probing questions during the interview to ensure participants provided rich and valuable insight.

3.6.3 Field work process

Before commencing the fieldwork, the researcher secured ethical approval for the study from the EMSREC as an NWU Institutional Research Ethics Regulatory Committee (IRERC), who provided an ethical approval letter (Annexure E Reference: NWU-01868-23-A4).

Participants' explicit consent to voluntary participation in the study refers to the procedure of furnishing participants with comprehensive information about the study, enabling them to make an informed decision regarding their participation or non-participation (Kaewkungwal, 2019). This encompasses details about the study's objectives, the procedures entailed, the potential risks and benefits of participation, and the participant's right to withdraw at any point (Baumgartner, 2018). In this investigation, prior to conducting interviews, informed consent was obtained from all participants. Participants provided informed consent by signing a form (see Annexure A). Participants were apprised of the study's objectives, the voluntary nature of participation, and their prerogative to withdraw at any time.

The interview guide (Annexure B) was developed to ensure interviews are conducted in an organised manner. Subsequently, the researcher placed significant emphasis on comprehensive familiarisation with the interview guide and participant.

Interview process: Additionally, meticulous attention was dedicated to fostering an environment wherein participants were at ease with the recording process and reiterated their entitlement to privacy and the option to withdraw from the study at any juncture. Efforts were made to ascertain the participants' comprehension of the study's objectives and rationale.

Furthermore, the researcher conducted the semi-structured interviews in a discreet, noise-free, and disturbance-minimised private setting at the participants' choice or online.

To ensure participants' informed consent, the researcher methodically presented the information sheet pertaining to the investigation and provided the consent form for participants' perusal.

Throughout this process, the researcher underscored that their signature signified their agreement with the content delineated in the information sheet and the overall framework of the investigation.

3.6.3.1 During the semi-structured interviews

The study participants adhered to requisite procedural prerequisites, which encompassed their affirmative commitment to participation and the formal endorsement through signature on the consent form.

The researcher took measures to ascertain the mobile device's operational viability, ensuring an adequate battery charge for the successful execution of interviews lasting between 45 and 120 minutes.

In this investigation, each participant was asked the same set of pre-determined questions in the same order, creating more reliability and validity compared to unstructured interviews (United States Office for Personnel Management, 2008).

The semi-structured interview guide included nine questions that were used during the face-to-face interviews that related directly to the research questions and research objectives. The researcher also used probing questions during the interview to ensure participants provided rich and valuable insight.

Regrettably, the researcher refrained from maintaining contemporaneous observational notes during the interview sessions, a decision made to prevent potential participant discomfort and to facilitate an environment conducive to the participants' unswerving engagement and eye contact with the interviewer. This approach was adopted to foster a more natural and unobtrusive interaction.

Throughout the research, unwavering commitment to the principles of participants' privacy, confidentiality, and protection was upheld as paramount, ensuring that ethical considerations were conscientiously adhered to during all phases of the study.

Each interview was closed by expressing gratitude for participants' voluntary participation and their invaluable time and candid responses.

3.6.3.2 After the semi-structured interviews

Upon the completion of the final interview question, the researcher promptly terminated the recording to safeguard the audio data to avoid potential data loss. Subsequently, the researcher stored the audio data on a secure cloud storage platform to ensure the integrity and confidentiality of the research data.

Each audio recording was systematically catalogued and stored in accordance with a unique alphanumeric code designated for each participant, denoted by abbreviations such as "P1" to signify Participant 1. Importantly, these participant-specific codes were kept confidential and accessible only to the researcher, ensuring the anonymity and security of individual identities.

3.7 Data Analysis

As outlined by Sileyew (2019), the handling of qualitative data is characterised as a non-linear, iterative procedure. Sileyew (2019) defines the collection, analysis, and interpretation of non-numerical data as qualitative research.

An inductive reasoning approach was adopted, which involves deriving general conclusions or themes from specific observations or data (Järvensivu & Törnroos, 2010). The inductive approach also allows research findings to surface naturally, showing up themes from the raw data without using structured methodologies (Bryman *et al.*, 2014:41; Creswell & Creswell, 2018:181).

This research approach was employed to assist the researcher in cultivating a deep and nuanced comprehension of a specific phenomenon. The outcomes may vary from generating findings that can inform practise to developing detailed descriptions of a particular practical problem (Saunders *et al.*, 2020).

The data employed in the study underwent analysis through a thematic analysis approach. Thematic analysis involves the identification of recurring patterns that researchers represent as overarching statements or themes. Therefore, it relies on a high level of confidence in the validity and reliability of the data. As outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006), the subsequent steps delineate thematic analysis:

- Step 1: Acquaintance with the primary data involves reviewing interview transcripts to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the entire collection of primary data gathered (Lawless & Chen, 2019).
- Step 2: Generating initial codes entailed the logical and meaningful organisation of data, along with the segmentation of data into small, meaningful units determined by the specific research issues addressed in this study (Lawless & Chen, 2019).
- Step 3: The examination of the codes produced in step 2 for patterns that encapsulate noteworthy or relevant data constitutes the process of seeking themes (Lawless & Chen, 2019).

- Step 4: The review of themes involves revisiting, refining, and confirming the preliminary themes identified in step 3 to ensure their coherence with the aims and objectives of the study. Additionally, this step includes an assessment of whether there is adequate qualitative data to substantiate these themes (Lawless & Chen, 2019).
- Step 5: The ultimate step in refining themes is the definition of themes, which involves elucidating the core of each topic and, when applicable, analysing the interactions between subthemes and the main theme (Lawless & Chen, 2019).
- Step 6: Conclude the analysis process by preparing a report summarising the examination, discussion, and interpretation of the study's results in relation to the research's aims and objectives (Lawless & Chen, 2019).

3.8 Principles of Trustworthiness

Scholarly literature has extensively examined the fundamental aspects that are integral to ensuring the trustworthiness of qualitative studies. These core facets, as delineated by (Devault, 2019), (Gunawan, 2015), and (Nieuwenhuis, 2020:144), encompass credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

3.8.1 Credibility

Credibility, as elucidated by Korstjens and Moser (2018:121), signifies the extent to which research findings are regarded as authentic and believable. In essence, it pertains to the truthfulness and reliability of the findings. In this study, the principle of credibility was addressed by examining the questions asked to assess whether the responses were consistent with those of other interview participants.

3.8.2 Transferability

Transferability, on the other hand, scrutinises the relevance and applicability of the research across diverse contexts, thus emphasising the generalisability of the findings

(Pratt, 2023). The consideration of transferability was acknowledged by offering an in-depth description of the study population and research context. This approach enabled the researchers to assess the relevance of the findings in different settings. Furthermore, incorporating verbatim responses contributed rich and detailed information about the participants' experiences, aiding readers in comprehending the context in which the findings were derived.

3.8.3 Dependability

Dependability, as posited by Korstjens and Moser (2018:121), is rooted in the ability of another researcher to analyse raw data and reproduce identical findings, underscoring the reliability and stability of the research. Nevertheless, Gunawan (2015:10) posits that dependability might not always be attainable or necessary in qualitative studies, especially when acknowledging the multiplicity of reality and knowledge. Hence, it may not be necessary to ensure dependability in all qualitative research endeavours. Within the research, the consideration of dependability was attended to by guaranteeing transparency and thorough documentation of the research process. This involved furnishing a comprehensive account of the research design, data collection methods, and data analysis procedures. Such clarity facilitates the potential replication of the study by other researchers in the future.

3.8.4 Confirmability

Confirmability, as elucidated by Devault (2019), pertains to the degree to which a researcher impartially interprets research findings based on raw data. It accentuates the importance of neutrality and objectivity in the interpretation of research outcomes. The consideration of confirmability was undertaken by implementing measures to prevent the researcher's biases and assumptions from influencing the findings. This involved employing a coding framework derived from the data itself rather than being imposed by the researcher, as well as employing multiple coders to ensure inter-rater reliability.

3.9 Ethical considerations

Ethics is a branch of philosophy. The relationship between ethics and social science, such as business-related research, is frequently perceived as synergistic, with both fields collaborating in the resolution of practical moral dilemmas. In research, ethical conduct is important as it is concerned with the right and wrong of human conduct and with the principles that should guide our actions (Birnbacher, 1999: 319). Research has an ethical-moral dimension, and the researcher has a moral and professional obligation to be ethical even when the participants in the study are unaware of or unconcerned about ethics (Neuman, 2011:145).

Ethical clearance was obtained to conduct the study (see Annexure E). The Protection of Personal Information Act (POPIA) No. 4 of 2013, which came into effect on July 1, 2021, has implications for the collection, processing, and storage of personal information during research studies.

Any personal information gathered from participants was handled according to the Code of Conduct of the Academy of Science of South Africa (ASSAf), which was formulated in compliance with the POPIA (RSA, 2013).

The following ethical principles have been adhered to in conducting this research:

- Honesty: All aspects of the research were conducted honestly, including the collection, analysis, and reporting of data. The data was not fabricated, falsified, or plagiarised.
- Accountability: The originality and trustworthiness of the research were taken responsibility for. Sources were cited appropriately, and plagiarism was avoided.
- Professional courtesy and fairness: All research participants were treated with respect and fairness. No individual or group was discriminated against.
- Good stewardship of research on behalf of others: Research resources were used responsibly and ethically. Research participants were not misused or exploited.

In addition to these general principles, the following specific ethical considerations were adhered to:

- **Informed consent:** Informed consent was obtained from all research participants prior to their participation in the study. The purpose of the study, the procedures involved, and the potential risks and benefits of participation were explained. Participants have been given the opportunity to ask questions and withdraw from the study at any time.
- **Confidentiality:** The confidentiality of all research participants was protected. Personal information about participants was not shared without their explicit consent.
- **Data security:** Steps were taken to protect the security of all research data. Data will be stored in a secure location, and appropriate security measures have been used to prevent unauthorised access.
- **Conflict of interest:** Any potential conflicts of interest that could bias the research were observed. Activities that could compromise the integrity of the research were avoided.

The researcher understood their responsibility for upholding the ethical standards of research. These ethical considerations are important to ensure the integrity of the research and to protect the rights of research participants. The researcher was committed to conducting the research ethically and in accordance with these principles.

3.10 Chapter summary

This chapter offers a comprehensive depiction of the research design, methodology, and methods employed in this study. It delves into details regarding the target population, sampling strategy, data collection, data analysis, and ethical considerations. The subsequent chapter provides an extensive exploration of data analysis and the interpretation of findings.

Chapter 3 laid the groundwork for the empirical exploration of RM practises in the subsequent chapters.

CHAPTER 4: DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

4.1 Introduction

It was previously mentioned by the researcher that the data underwent thorough analysis and triangulation with contemporary literature, aiming to uncover insights into the integration of RM in South African companies. The purpose of this investigation was to understand to what extent South African companies have integrated RM practises and strategies in alignment with the UNs Agenda for SDGs 2030 and what specific practises can be identified for broader application in promoting sustainable development.

4.2 The participants demographics profile

The participant sample group consisted of a homogeneous group with a mixture of different experienced managers, as indicated in Table 4.1 below.

Table 4.1: The demographics profile of the participants

Participants	Organisation type/sector:	Managerial level/Job title	Number of years managerial experience
1	Waste Management Solution Provider	Sustainability Project Manager	5 Years
2	Business Services	Sustainability Lead	4 Years
3	Manufacturing	Head of Sustainability	15 Years
4	Business Services	Sustainability and Climate Change Manager	3 Years
5	Wholesale and Retail	Senior Sustainability Manager	8 Years
6	Wholesale and Retail	Group Sustainability Officer	14 Years
7	Wholesale and Retail	Sustainability Lead Sub-Saharan	16 Years
8	Wholesale and Retail	Group Sustainability Manager	12 Years
9	Manufacturing	EHS and Sustainability Lead	10 Years

10	Business Services	Global Sustainability and ESG Manager	8 Years
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Table 4.1 indicates the demographics of the voluntary participant managers, indicating their job role and relevance to the study in answering the research questions on RM and sustainability practises and strategies. The data provided by managers is based on their experiences within various private South African organisations from different sectors, including waste management solution providers, business services, manufacturing, wholesale, and retail. The participants were at managerial levels related to sustainability and environmental management. These include: sustainability project manager, sustainability lead, head of sustainability, sustainability and climate change manager, senior sustainability manager, and group sustainability officer. The managerial experience ranged from 3 to 16 years, making them a purposeful sample group that can provide relevant and real-life data.

4.3 Data analysis in answering research questions

The focus of the data analysis was to address the research problem of a lack of knowledge about management practises and strategies employed in South African private organisations to ensure sustainability. The purpose of the study is to explore the extent to which RM practises and strategies are being implemented by senior managers in South African private organisations and to identify the challenges and opportunities of implementing these practices. The research also seeks to understand how RM practises can be used to achieve the UN Agenda 2030 SDGs and what specific practises can be identified for broader application in promoting sustainable development. Using semi-structured interviews, the researcher collected qualitative data from the ten participants in order to accomplish the following research goals:

- *Research Objective 1:* To identify the responsible management practises that are being implemented by businesses as indicated in the literature.

- *Research Objective 2:* To explore the challenges and opportunities experienced by managers regarding the implementation of responsible management practises in South Africa.
- *Research Objective 3:* To identify the managerial strategies used by South African senior managers seeking to promote sustainable development as per the 17 SDGs.

4.4 Development of the Study's Themes

The 10 transcripts (Annexure C) from interviews provided the data to be analysed using thematic analysis. The stages described by Braun and Clark (2017) in Chapter 3 were followed in the thematic analysis of the data. Thematic analysis involves identifying recurring patterns in the data and representing them as overarching themes (Annexure D). The process of thematic analysis consists of several steps.

First, the researcher became familiar with the primary data by reviewing interview transcripts to gain a comprehensive understanding of the data collected. This step helped the researcher become acquainted with the entire collection of data. Next, the researcher generated initial codes by organising the data in a logical and meaningful way. The data was segmented into small, meaningful units based on the specific research questions to be addressed in the study. This step helped in organising the data for further analysis.

After generating initial codes, the researcher examined these codes for patterns that encapsulated noteworthy or relevant data. This process involved seeking themes that emerged from the data. The researcher looked for recurring patterns or themes that represented important aspects of the data. Once potential themes were identified, the researcher reviewed and refined them. This step involved revisiting the preliminary themes and ensuring their coherence with the aims and objectives of the study. The researcher also assessed whether there was enough qualitative data to support these themes. The next step in the analysis process was defining the themes. This involved elucidating the core of each theme and analysing the interactions between subthemes and the main theme. The researcher aimed to provide a clear definition of each theme

and understand how they related to each other. Finally, the analysis process was concluded and written up in this mini-dissertation report. A thematic mind map was created as a structural foundation for the study, as displayed in Figure 4.1.



Figure 4.1: A thematic mind map of Responsible Management Practices in South Africa

The mind map serves as a structural framework for presenting the study's empirical findings in the next sections.

4.5 Research Question 1: What responsible management practices and strategies are being implemented by the company in South Africa?

The section presents three themes, each encompassing numerous subthemes, to elucidate the findings related to the research question.

4.5.1 Theme 1: Responsible Management Practices in South Africa

The theme focuses on the importance of RM practises and strategies in promoting sustainable development within a company. It highlights the need for these practises to be integrated into the overall company strategy. The theme also covers examples of successful strategies implemented by companies and how these strategies align with the goal of sustainable development.

The evolution of the emerging theme is presented in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2: Theme 1: Responsible Management Practices in South Africa

Subthemes	Emerging Theme
1.1: Responsible Management Practices for Sustainable Development.	1: Responsible Management Practices in South Africa.
1.2: Responsible Management Practices in South African Businesses and their Similarities to the Companies of the Participants	
1.3: Promoting Sustainable Development through Managerial Strategies.	

The following section outlines the sub-themes that played a role in the development of the theme, "*Responsible Management Practices in South Africa.*"

4.5.1.1 Subtheme 1.1: Responsible Management Practices for Sustainable Development

The subtheme discusses the implementation of RM practises and strategies in a company to promote sustainable development. It emphasises the integration of these practises into the overall business operations. The following was found within the collected qualitative data:

Environmental sustainability: The organisations prioritise RM practises such as waste reduction, energy efficiency, and environmentally friendly processes. They invest in energy-efficient technologies, waste reduction programmes, and employee training. They also focus on responsible sourcing, eco-friendly materials, and reducing plastic waste.

Participant 1 indicated: *“We prioritise RM practices by focusing on waste reduction, energy efficiency, and environmentally friendly processes.”*

According to the literature, sustainability opportunities should be integrated into the company's internal resource management to effectively address environmental concerns and support sustainable development. These include exploring renewable energy sources, adopting circular economy principles, implementing waste reduction and recycling programmes, investing in sustainable product design and development, engaging in stakeholder dialogue and collaboration, and aligning sustainability goals with global frameworks such as the UNs SDGs (Okřęglicka, 2018).

Community engagement: The organisations support local communities through education, health, and skills development programmes. They collaborate with local organisations and promote community participation in sustainable development.

Participant 2 indicated: *“Common practices include environmental sustainability, community engagement, ethical finance, and promoting diversity and inclusion.”*

Literature stipulates that organisations should integrate corporate initiatives into business operations, such as philanthropy, community engagement, and environmental conservation (Obert *et al.*, 2021). This ties in directly with SDG 11: Sustainable Cities and

Communities: Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable (Shekhar *et al.*, 2023).

Ethical sourcing: The organisations prioritise ethical sourcing and work with suppliers who share their ethical and environmentally friendly production practices. They trace and verify product origins to promote responsible production practices.

Participant 6 said: *“Our approach to RM practices and strategies revolves around a comprehensive sustainability framework. This framework encompasses various key areas, including environmental conservation, ethical sourcing, social responsibility, and community engagement.”*

From the literature, one can conclude that implementing responsible supply chain management practices, including selecting suppliers based on social and environmental criteria and working collaboratively to improve sustainability outcomes throughout the supply chain (Sertyesilisik & Sertyesilisik, 2016), contributes to ethical sourcing within organisations.

Diversity and inclusion: The organisations prioritise diversity and inclusion in their workforce to create a more equal and inclusive workplace. They prioritise fair hiring and equitable chances for employees.

Participant 4 indicated: *“We focus on sustainability reporting, climate action, diversity and inclusion, community engagement, and offering sustainability consulting services to clients.”*

According to literature, implementing sustainable HR practices, such as talent acquisition, employee engagement, and proper reward and recognition, to enhance reputation, productivity, and employee retention (Singh *et al.*, 2019) and establishing and maintaining fair and equitable employment practises that promote diversity, inclusivity, and equal opportunities for all employees (Allmang & Franke, 2020) could promote diversity and inclusion within organisations.

Responsible finance and investments: The organisations integrate RM practises into their daily operations, including ethical investing and sustainability-aligned investments.

Participant 2 said: *“We ensure that our impact investments not only align with the SDGs but also genuinely contribute to the social and environmental outcomes we aim to achieve. This rigorous monitoring process is fundamental to our commitment to responsible finance and sustainable development.”*

According to Bertagnolli *et al.* (2021), developing a sustainability-focused business strategy and integrating sustainability objectives into business practises can not only help companies overcome these challenges but also enable them to capitalise on market opportunities, enhance their reputation, attract and retain top talent, improve efficiency and reduce costs, mitigate risks, and contribute to the overall sustainable development of South Africa (Ghimisi, 2019).

Water and waste reduction: The organisations prioritise water and waste reduction efforts, implementing water-saving technology, recycling, and waste reduction programmes. They collaborate with local water conservation programmes to promote responsible water use.

Participant 3 said: *“We focus on resource efficiency, minimising water and energy usage throughout our brewing processes. Our waste management practices emphasise recycling and waste reduction, diverting a significant portion of waste away from landfills.”*

Within the literature, reference is made to waste reduction by stipulating that organisations adopt clean technologies and renewable energy sources, reduce waste generation and implement recycling programmes, promote employee engagement and training in sustainable practices, establish transparent and open communication with stakeholders, and actively participate in industry initiatives and partnerships focused on sustainability (Almasarweh, 2022).

Sustainability reporting and communication: The organisations prioritise sustainability reporting and communication efforts, including energy-efficient office lights and promoting a sustainable commuting culture.

Participant 4 indicated: *“We focus on sustainability reporting.”*

Within the literature, transparent disclosure of environmental, social, and governance performance to stakeholders, including investors, customers, and employees, is highlighted as important to ensure efficient sustainability reporting and communication (Hsu *et al.*, 2014).

Overall, the organisations demonstrate a commitment to RM practises and strategies to promote sustainable development, including environmental sustainability, community engagement, ethical sourcing, diversity and inclusion, responsible finance, water and waste reduction, and sustainability reporting and communication.

4.5.1.2 Subtheme 1.2: Responsible Management Practices in South African Businesses and Their Similarities to the Companies of the Participants

The theme discussed in the input is the use of RM practises in South African and global businesses. These practises include environmental compliance, sustainable supply chain management, energy efficiency, waste reduction and recycling, community engagement, diversity and inclusion, transparency, and reporting. The input also mentions how the organisation supports and implements these practices, particularly focusing on waste reduction, energy efficiency, and community engagement. It is noted that these practises are common in South African business literature and align with the company's own practices. The importance of these practises for promoting RM, sustainability, and ethical business conduct is emphasised. The following was found within the qualitative data:

Responsible management practices in South African business literature: The input highlights various RM practises commonly found in South African business literature. These include environmental compliance, sustainable supply chain management, energy

efficiency, waste reduction and recycling, community engagement, diversity and inclusion, transparency, and reporting.

Participant 8 indicated: *“Our approach is in harmony with many of these practices, with particular emphasis on optimising our supply chain for efficiency and reducing waste through recycling.”*

Participant 6 said: *“Our approach to environmental compliance ensures that we adhere to local and international standards for environmental protection.”*

Kleef and Roome (2007) emphasise the importance of integrating environmental, business, and social dimensions to devise effective sustainability solutions to promote RM practises and strategies.

Alignment with company practices: Many participants mention that their company aligns with these RM practices. They provide examples of how their organisation supports waste reduction, energy efficiency, community engagement, transparency, and reporting.

Participant 1 indicated: *“We share common ground with these practices, particularly in waste reduction, energy efficiency, and community engagement. Our waste management services align with waste reduction and recycling goals, while our sustainability projects emphasise energy efficiency.”*

Pless et al. (2011:8) emphasise the importance of a "responsible mindset," which encompasses a sense of ethical responsibility and an awareness of the impact of managerial decisions on stakeholders. This mindset helps managers prioritise responsible actions and consider the broader implications of their choices.

Importance of responsible management practices: The input emphasises the importance of RM practises for promoting sustainability, ethical business conduct, and social and environmental responsibility. It is mentioned that these practises are crucial for solving global problems and meeting sustainability goals.

Participant 5 indicates: *"While specific approaches may vary, the underlying dedication to ethical and sustainable business conduct is a shared commitment that we, along with many others, embrace."*

Participant 10 indicated: *"Our company, like many others, integrates these practices into our operations to align with global and local sustainability objectives and to ensure we meet our social and environmental responsibilities. These practices are essential for maintaining trust, minimising our environmental footprint, and contributing to the well-being of the communities in which we operate."*

According to the literature, this approach considers the interdependence between social, environmental, and economic dimensions, ensuring a holistic understanding of sustainability problems (Bansal & DesJardine, 2014). Integrative competence play a crucial role in handling the diverse aspects of sustainability problems. Kleef and Roome (2007) emphasise the importance of integrating environmental, business, and social dimensions to devise effective sustainability solutions.

Global and local sustainability goals: The input highlights that RM practises are not only important in South Africa but also globally. It is mentioned that businesses worldwide are recognising the need to align their operations with these practises to address environmental, social, and economic issues.

Participant 3 indicated: *"Our commitment to diversity and inclusion aligns with these South African practices, as does our dedication to transparency and reporting. This parallel approach underscores our belief that responsible management practices are not only a global standard but also an integral component of ethical business conduct in the South African business landscape."*

Haywood et al. (2019) stated that the private sector in South Africa, being a major driver of socio-economic development and environmental impact, plays a vital role in aligning and implementing the SDGs. Organisations have a dual role: addressing global

development challenges while seizing opportunities for sustainable growth, often referred to as "greening" the economy.

Integration of sustainability into company strategy: Several participants mention that their organisation integrates sustainability into its overall strategy through the adoption of RM practices. They emphasise the importance of these practices in promoting sustainable development and corporate citizenship.

Participant 3 indicated: *"We remain committed to these principles as integral to our operations and our responsibility as corporate citizens."*

Okęglicka (2018) indicated that sustainability opportunities should be integrated into the company's internal resource management to effectively address environmental concerns and support sustainable development.

Compliance with local and international standards: It is mentioned that RM practices, such as environmental compliance, are implemented to meet local and international standards. This highlights the commitment of companies to ethical and responsible business conduct.

Participant 6 indicated: *"Our approach to environmental compliance ensures that we adhere to local and international standards for environmental protection."*

Based on literature to assess organisations' progress toward sustainable development, it is essential to record and report on their sustainability efforts (Ong & Djajadikerta, 2017). While annual reports are a straightforward medium for reporting sustainability performance, various non-governmental international stakeholders have established standards and guidelines for sustainability reporting (Kuswanto, 2020). The GRI, an independent organisation dedicated to sustainability reporting, has developed comprehensive guidelines since 2000 (Istianingsih *et al.*, 2020; Zhang *et al.*, 2020).

Focus on transparency and reporting: Transparency and reporting are mentioned as crucial elements of RM practices. Companies prioritise accountability and stakeholder

communication through transparent reporting of their sustainability initiatives and progress.

Participant 9 said: *“We align with these practices, emphasising compliance with environmental regulations, promoting sustainability throughout our supply chain, adopting energy-efficient technologies, implementing waste reduction and recycling programmes, engaging with local communities, fostering diversity and inclusion in our workforce, and maintaining transparency through regular sustainability reporting.”*

According to Hsu *et al.* (2014), transparent disclosure of environmental, social, and governance performance to stakeholders, including investors, customers, and employees, is one of the crucial elements of RM.

Emphasis on community engagement and diversity: Community engagement, diversity, and inclusion are highlighted as important aspects of RM practices. Companies recognise the need to build relationships with local communities and create inclusive and innovative workplaces.

Participant 7 indicated: *“Our community engagement and support for local farmers align with the practise of community engagement, and our strong commitment to diversity and inclusion mirrors the importance placed on these values in South African business practices.”*

Obert *et al.* (2021) stated that integrating corporate initiatives into business operations, such as philanthropy, community engagement, and environmental conservation, creates emphasis on community engagement and diversity, according to literature.

Promotion of sustainability and social fairness: The input emphasises that RM practises contribute to sustainability and social fairness. Companies aim to reduce their environmental impact, improve communities, and promote ethical and sustainable business conduct.

Participant 5 indicated: *“While specific approaches may vary, the underlying dedication to ethical and sustainable business conduct is a shared commitment that we embrace.”*

Miller *et al.* (2012:15) propose the "ability to create a significant social impact" as a vital competence. This entails going beyond conventional business goals and prioritising actions that benefit society, even if they might not lead to immediate financial gains.

Industry-specific examples: Some participants provide industry-specific examples of how their organisation implements RM practices. These examples include climate change consulting, packaging innovation, ethical sourcing in the fashion industry, and waste management services in the brewing industry.

Participant 7 indicated: *“We place a strong emphasis on sustainable supply chain management by working with suppliers to ensure responsible sourcing and ethical labour practices. Our efforts to reduce waste through packaging innovation and recycling initiatives resonate with the global focus on waste reduction and recycling.”*

Implementing responsible supply chain management practices, including selecting suppliers based on social and environmental criteria and working collaboratively to improve sustainability outcomes throughout the supply chain (Sertyesilisik & Sertyesilisik, 2016).

The input discusses RM practises in South African and global businesses, including environmental compliance, sustainable supply chain management, energy efficiency, waste reduction, community engagement, diversity and inclusion, transparency, and reporting. It emphasises the importance of these practises for promoting sustainability and ethical business conduct. The input also mentions how companies align with these practices, integrate sustainability into their strategies, comply with local and international standards, focus on transparency and reporting, engage with communities, and promote sustainability and social fairness. Industry-specific examples are provided to illustrate the implementation of these practices.

4.5.1.3 Subtheme 1.3: Promoting Sustainable Development through Managerial Strategies

Waste management and managerial strategies are crucial for promoting sustainability. These strategies include waste reduction, energy efficiency, and community engagement. These strategies help companies reduce costs, improve operational efficiency, attract eco-conscious consumers, increase market share, and meet regulatory requirements. They also strengthen corporate citizenship and contribute to long-term sustainability, profitability, and success. By implementing these strategies, companies can achieve SDGs and maintain a competitive edge. The following was found:

Deployment of various managerial strategies: The companies have employed various managerial strategies for sustainability, including sustainable agriculture, energy efficiency, garbage reduction, and community engagement. These strategies help the company achieve its business goals by reducing costs, improving operational efficiency, and enhancing brand reputation.

Participant 7 indicate: *“These strategies encompass sustainable agriculture practices, energy-efficient initiatives, waste reduction measures, and community engagement. Our commitment to sustainable agriculture not only supports local farmers but also resonates with our goal of responsible production and consumption.”*

Bertagnolli *et al.* (2021) and Ghimisi (2019) suggest that a sustainability-focused business strategy can help companies overcome challenges, capitalise on market opportunities, enhance reputation, attract and retain top talent, improve efficiency, reduce costs, mitigate risks, and contribute to South Africa's sustainable development.

Sustainable solutions with clients: The companies tailor their sustainable solutions with clients, such as creating garbage sorting systems and conducting energy and trash audits, to support their sustainability, cost reduction, and operational efficiency requirements. Waste and carbon footprints are reduced by optimising the supply chain and increasing distribution efficiency, which also lowers costs and emissions.

Participant 1 indicated: *“We **work closely with our clients** to develop tailored sustainability solutions. For instance, we have helped retail clients implement efficient waste sorting systems that reduce landfill waste and increase recycling rates. These solutions not only align with our clients' sustainability goals but also contribute to cost savings and operational efficiency.”*

According to El-Jadali *et al.* (2018), implementing sustainable practises often requires working closely with suppliers, customers, and other stakeholders to create shared value and address sustainability challenges.

Diversity and inclusion programmes: The company has diversity and inclusion programmes to foster workplace inclusivity, which improves social duty, employee morale and productivity, and environmental impact while saving money. The company offers sustainable investing portfolios that consider environmental, social, and financial factors, supporting SDG 8 and SDG 12. The company prioritises water management, recycling, and reusing materials and invests in education, skills, and health in operating communities to cut costs, protect the environment, and support local development.

Participant 3 indicated: *“**Promoting diversity and inclusion** within our workforce is a managerial strategy that aligns with our business objective of fostering an equitable and productive work environment.”*

Allmang and Franke (2020) indicate that establishing and maintaining fair and equitable employment practises promotes diversity, inclusivity, and equal opportunities for all employees.

Sustainable practices for cost-cutting, environmental protection, and community development: Sustainability reporting, energy-efficient practices, diversity and inclusion programmes, and community participation strengthen the company's brand reputation, attract customers, empower staff, and support its business and SDGs.

Participant 8 indicated: *“The strategies we employ at “company” align seamlessly with our overall business objectives. By focusing on waste reduction, energy*

*efficiency, and sustainable supply chain management, we not only reduce our environmental impact but also enhance our **operational efficiency and cost-effectiveness.***”

Baig *et al.* (2020) stated that sustainable practises can lead to operational efficiencies and cost savings through reduced energy and resource consumption.

Sustainable Practices in Companies to Boost Brand Reputation and Benefit Communities: The companies employ eco-friendly textiles, renewable energy, waste reduction, consumer education, and diversity and inclusion programmes to boost brand reputation, attract eco-conscious consumers, enhance market share, reduce environmental impact, and benefit communities.

Participant 10 indicated: *“These strategies align with our overall business objectives by reducing operational costs, **enhancing our brand reputation**, and ensuring we meet regulatory compliance. They also open new opportunities for innovation and business growth as sustainability becomes an increasingly important consideration for consumers and investors.”*

According to Bertagnolli *et al.* (2021), developing a sustainability-focused business strategy and integrating sustainability objectives into business practises can not only help companies overcome these challenges but also enable them to capitalise on market opportunities, enhance their reputation, attract and retain top talent, improve efficiency and reduce costs, mitigate risks, and contribute to the overall sustainable development of South Africa (Ghimisi, 2019).

Sustainability practices and their benefits for the company: The company's sustainable buying process, packaging optimisation, food waste reduction, energy-efficient technologies, and community partnerships support its goals of responsible creation, environmental impact reduction, and social responsibility. Recycling, waste reduction, energy efficiency, community participation, and workforce diversity have increased the company's efficiency, competitiveness, and community and environmental benefits. These sustainability practises align with the company's goals, reduce

environmental impact, improve operational efficiency, enhance brand reputation, and support regulatory compliance and profitability.

Participant 5 said: *“My company has implemented a range of successful managerial strategies to promote sustainable development, all in alignment with our broader business objectives. We prioritise **sustainable sourcing by incorporating eco-friendly materials** into our clothing lines. Energy efficiency initiatives, such as the adoption of renewable energy sources and energy-efficient systems in our stores, help us reduce our carbon emissions. Waste reduction programmes have been integral to minimising waste at the production and retail levels.”*

Sustainability practises and strategies in terms of RM include integrating sustainability objectives into business strategies, conducting regular environmental assessments and audits, implementing green procurement practices, and promoting energy and resource efficiency (Kasztelan, 2017).

Overall, the theme highlights that companies are implementing RM practises and strategies to promote sustainable development. These practises include environmental sustainability, community engagement, ethical sourcing, diversity and inclusion, responsible finance, water and waste reduction, and sustainability reporting and communication. The companies align with these practises and recognise their importance in promoting sustainability, ethical business conduct, and social and environmental responsibility. These practises contribute to long-term sustainability, profitability, and success by reducing costs, improving operational efficiency, enhancing brand reputation, attracting eco-conscious consumers, and meeting regulatory requirements.

4.6 Research Question 2: What are the challenges and opportunities of implementing responsible management practices in South Africa?

The section uses three themes, each encompassing numerous subthemes, to elucidate the findings related to the study objective.

4.6.1 Theme 2: Responsible Management Practices in South Africa: Challenges and Opportunities

The theme emphasises the importance of RM practises in addressing social and environmental issues, as well as building trust and reputation with stakeholders. It also mentions the need for collaboration and partnerships to overcome challenges and maximise the benefits of RM practices. The evolution of the emerging theme is presented in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3: Theme 2: Responsible Management Practices in South Africa: Challenges and Opportunities

Subthemes	Emerging Theme
2.1: Challenges and Solutions for Implementing Responsible Management Practices in South Africa	2: Responsible Management Practices in South Africa: Challenges and Opportunities
2.2: Unique Opportunities for Responsible Management Practices and Sustainable Development	
2.3: Measuring and Assessing the Impact of Responsible Management Practices and Strategies	

The following section outlines the sub-themes that played a role in the development of the theme, "Responsible Management Practices in South Africa: Challenges and Opportunities."

4.6.1.1 Subtheme 2.1: Challenges and Solutions for Implementing Responsible Management Practices in South Africa

The challenges outlined in the input include access to sustainable technologies, supply chain sustainability, measuring and reporting sustainability efforts, adapting to regional requirements, complexity of supply chain dynamics, awareness and behaviour change, challenges in the retail and fashion industries, collaboration with local communities and

organisations, compliance expertise, consumer engagement, funding and skill limits for sustainability projects, impact assessment, limited resources, managing global supply chains while promoting sustainability, navigating complex and ever-changing regulations, organisational resistance to new sustainability practices, resource allocation, socioeconomic disparities and diversity and inclusion concerns, and supplier collaboration. To address these challenges, the company takes a proactive and adaptable approach, explores new solutions, and works with technology suppliers and industry professionals. These findings were supported by the following contributions from the participants:

Approach to addressing challenges: adapt and explore new solutions; work with technology suppliers and industry professionals; use sustainable financing and investment mechanisms; promote responsible practises throughout the value chain; track success with key performance indicators; and provide transparent reporting.

Participant 2 indicated: *“Company's” approach to addressing additional challenges in promoting responsible management practices is marked by adaptability and resourcefulness. We actively seek innovative solutions and collaborate with technology providers and industry experts to surmount challenges related to accessing sustainable technologies. Our financial expertise allows us to secure funding for sustainability initiatives, leveraging sustainable financing and investment instruments. To ensure supply chain sustainability, we engage with our partners, promoting responsible practices throughout our value chain. Robust measurement and reporting systems underpin our efforts, enabling us to track progress through key performance indicators and transparent reporting.”*

According to the literature, implementing sustainable practises often requires working closely with suppliers, customers, and other stakeholders to create shared value and address sustainability challenges (El-Jadali *et al.*, 2018).

Offer scalable solutions to help clients manage regional requirements: Take a holistic approach, incorporate sustainability into the design process, maintain a flexible

supply chain, use technology to optimise resource efficiency, and invest in staff education and training.

Participant 8 indicated: *“Firstly, we prioritise employee education and training, ensuring that our team is well-informed about the latest sustainability regulations and practices. This knowledge equips our employees to adapt to regulatory changes and enhances their understanding of the importance of sustainability. Resource constraints are managed through strategic resource allocation. We invest in innovative, sustainable technologies and process improvements that not only enhance our sustainability efforts but also reduce costs. This efficient resource management allows us to overcome the challenge of resource limitations.”*

Literature indicates that implementing sustainable strategies can create opportunities to enter new markets, attract environmentally conscious customers, and meet the demands of a growing green consumer base (Masoumik *et al.*, 2014).

Stay compliant with regulations, emphasise long-term benefits, and promote a culture of responsibility: Collaborate with local communities and organisations. Invest in compliance expertise. Focus on consumer education and engagement. Foster a culture of continuous improvement. Offer scalable solutions to meet funding and skill limits. Regularly review and assess the impact.

Participant 8 indicated: *“To address the challenges associated with implementing responsible management practices at “company” in South Africa, we have developed a comprehensive approach. We maintain a vigilant focus on compliance and regulatory expertise, keeping a dedicated team to monitor and adapt to evolving regulations. This ensures that we stay aligned with the ever-changing legal landscape. Additionally, we emphasise the long-term benefits of sustainability, treating upfront investments as opportunities for future gains. We also engage our stakeholders, including employees, customers, and local communities, to cultivate a shared sense of responsibility for sustainability.*

Innovation and technology play a significant role in our efforts, enabling us to reduce our environmental footprint and operational costs. Lastly, our culture of continuous improvement empowers employees to actively contribute to our responsible management practices. This holistic approach allows us to address and overcome the challenges associated with responsible management in South Africa, aligning them with our broader business objectives and unwavering commitment to sustainability.”

The literature stipulates that organisations should foster a culture of innovation and continuous improvement to identify and implement sustainable technologies and practises throughout the organisation (Mishra, 2018).

Provide customised, sustainable solutions to address limited resources: Provide advice services, prioritise stakeholder engagement, foster a culture of sustainability, and adapt and innovate to meet financial targets.

Participant 7 indicate: *“To overcome resource constraints, we emphasise innovation and cost-effective solutions. We continuously seek ways to reduce resource consumption, improve operational efficiency, and find environmentally friendly alternatives in our processes and product offerings. These innovations help us navigate resource limitations while advancing sustainability.”*

Participant 8 indicated: *“Resource constraints are managed through strategic resource allocation. We invest in innovative, sustainable technologies and process improvements that not only enhance our sustainability efforts but also reduce costs. This efficient resource management allows us to overcome the challenge of resource limitations.”*

According to the literature, sustainable practises can lead to operational efficiencies and cost savings through reduced energy and resource consumption (Baig et al., 2020).

Stay current on regulations and support change management: Take a proactive and adaptable approach in sub-Saharan Africa. Strategically allocate resources. Provide

advisory support, create an inclusive work environment, and engage with local communities. Actively collaborate with suppliers who share sustainability goals.

Participant 7 said: *“The Sub-Saharan African “company” is proactive and adaptable. We monitor and engage with regulators to ensure compliance, train and empower our partners, and encourage innovation to find resource-efficient solutions. Community engagement projects boost economic opportunities, education, and clean water access to address socio-economic factors. Energy-efficient technology and recycling and waste management infrastructure improvements are also being considered to address infrastructure issues.”*

Literature has made it clear that the implementation of sustainable practises can help organisations mitigate risks associated with climate change, regulatory changes, and supply chain disruptions (Wu *et al.*, 2018).

The input discusses various challenges and approaches to RM and sustainability in different industries. It emphasises the importance of adapting to regional requirements, collaborating with local communities and organisations, and addressing challenges related to awareness and behaviour change. The input also highlights the need for continuous improvement, impact assessment, and navigating complex regulations. Additionally, it mentions the importance of resource allocation, supplier collaboration, and addressing socioeconomic disparities and diversity and inclusion concerns.

4.6.1.2 Subtheme 2.2: Unique Opportunities for Responsible Management Practices and Sustainable Development

The companies have found unique, RM opportunities that support sustainable development and the UN SDGs. These opportunities include using data analytics and technology to improve waste management and resource efficiency, promoting circular economy principles, supporting community-based SDG projects, exploring impact investment alternatives, and implementing initiatives for diversity and inclusion. These opportunities align with various SDGs, such as responsible consumption and production, industry innovation and infrastructure, climate action, gender equality, reduced

inequalities, and more. Overall, the company's commitment to RM contributes to sustainable development and the achievement of the SDGs. The following unique opportunities for RM practises and sustainable development were found in the participants' contributions:

Waste management and resource efficiency: The company uses data analytics and technology to optimise waste management, reduce waste, and improve resource efficiency. This supports SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production) and SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure).

Participant 1 indicated: *“We've invested in data analytics and technology to gather and analyse data from our waste management operations. This has allowed us to provide clients with valuable insights into their waste generation patterns and opportunities for improvement. By optimising waste management, we contribute to SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production) by reducing waste and promoting resource efficiency. We also actively promote circular economy principles. We work with clients to find ways to reuse and recycle materials, reducing the need for virgin resources and minimising waste. This aligns with SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure).”*

According to the literature, SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production) ensures sustainable consumption and production patterns (Orellano *et al.*, 2020).

Circular economy: The company promotes circular economy principles by encouraging clients to reuse and recycle materials, reducing waste and virgin resource use. This aligns with SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production) and SDG 15 (Life on Land).

Participant 3 indicated: *“our commitment to the circular economy principles through recycling and repurposing packaging materials also reinforces our dedication to responsible consumption and the preservation of terrestrial life, as linked to SDGs 12 and 15. These unique opportunities exemplify our belief that businesses can drive positive change while ensuring their long-term success by actively contributing to sustainable development.”*

Literature indicates that SDG 15 (Life on Land) protects, restores, and promotes sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems; sustainably manages forests; combats desertification; and halts and reverses land degradation (Guo *et al.*, 2020).

Impact investment: The company offers impact investment services that support SDGs such as poverty reduction, education, and sustainable energy access. This aligns with SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) and SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure).

Participant 2 indicated: *“company” has delved into impact investment opportunities that offer both financial returns and measurable positive social or environmental impacts. These investments align with SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) and SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure) by driving economic growth and innovation.”*

Literature stipulates that SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) promotes sustained, inclusive, and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment, and decent work for all (Santi *et al.*, 2022), and SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure) builds resilient infrastructure, promotes inclusive and sustainable industrialisation, and fosters innovation (Powers *et al.*, 2021).

Community collaborations: The company collaborates with local non-governmental organisations and communities to support education, healthcare, entrepreneurship, and job creation. This contributes to SDG 4 (Quality Education), SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), and SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals).

Participant 7 indicated: *“we have identified and explored unique opportunities that contribute to sustainable development and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in South Africa. Some of these opportunities include: Our operations contribute to job creation, particularly in our local manufacturing and distribution networks. Providing employment opportunities supports SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) Through our community projects, we invest in education and skills development initiatives. This empowers individuals and*

communities, aligning with SDG 4 (Quality Education). Collaborating with local organisations, NGOs, and governmental bodies provides opportunities to address sustainability challenges collectively. This aligns with SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals)."

According to the literature, SDG 4 (Quality Education) ensures inclusive and equitable quality education and promotes lifelong learning opportunities (Chou *et al.*, 2022), and SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth). Promote sustained, inclusive, and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment, and decent work for all (Santi *et al.*, 2022) and SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals). Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalise the global partnership for sustainable development.

Renewable energy: The company provides renewable energy consulting services to help clients transition to cleaner energy sources, supporting SDG 7 (affordable and clean energy) and SDG 13 (climate action).

Participant 7 indicated: *"We invest in renewable energy sources to reduce our carbon footprint and reliance on non-renewable energy. This aligns with SDG 7 (Affordable and Clean Energy) and SDG 13 (Climate Action)."*

Literature indicated that SDG 7 (Affordable and Clean Energy) ensures access to affordable, reliable, sustainable, and modern energy for all (Anwar, 2021) and SDG 13 (Climate Action) takes urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts (Abad-Segura *et al.*, 2021).

Sustainable agriculture: The company supports sustainable agriculture initiatives to address SDGs for poverty reduction, zero hunger, and excellent education.

Participant 3 indicated: *"Our community partnerships and support for sustainable agriculture and education initiatives further contribute to SDGs related to poverty reduction, zero hunger, and quality education."*

According to the literature, SDG 1 (No Poverty): End poverty in all its forms everywhere (Wu *et al.*, 2018); SDG 2 (Zero Hunger): End hunger, achieve food security and improved

nutrition, and promote sustainable agriculture (Wernecke *et al.*, 2021); and SDG 4 (Quality Education): Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all (Chou *et al.*, 2022).

Responsible manufacturing and consumption: The company promotes responsible manufacturing and consumption through initiatives such as sustainable material innovation, circular fashion, and sustainable packaging solutions. This aligns with SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production) and SDG 14 (Life Below Water).

Participant 1 indicated: *“By optimising waste management, we contribute to SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production) by reducing waste and promoting resource efficiency.”*

Participant 7 indicated: *“We explore opportunities for sustainable packaging solutions, which not only reduce waste but also contribute to SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production) and SDG 14 (Life Below Water) by reducing plastic pollution.”*

Literature indicated that SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production) ensures sustainable consumption and production patterns (Orellano *et al.*, 2020) and SDG 14 (Life Below Water) conserves and sustainably uses the oceans, seas, and marine resources for sustainable development (Hills & Maharaj, 2023).

Water stewardship: The company has water stewardship programmes to conserve resources and address water constraints, supporting SDG 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation) and SDG 13 (Climate Action).

Participant 5 indicated: *“We also prioritise innovation in sustainable materials, incorporating eco-friendly options into our products to promote responsible consumption, sustainable production, and action on climate change. These endeavours reflect our commitment to a more responsible and ethical fashion industry, aligning with the SDGs and driving positive impacts in environmental sustainability and social responsibility.”*

Within the literature, it is evident that SDG 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation) ensures the availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all (Martínez-Borreguero *et al.*, 2020) and SDG 13 (Climate Action) takes urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts (Abad-Segura *et al.*, 2021).

Ethical supply chain management: The company collaborates with local suppliers and farmers to promote ethical procurement and support local economic growth. This aligns with SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) and SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production).

Participant 8 indicated: *“By collaborating with local suppliers and farmers, we can support small-scale producers, reduce our carbon footprint through shorter supply chains, and promote ethical sourcing practices. This not only contributes to local economic development but also aligns with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly Goal 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) and Goal 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production).”*

Literature indicates SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth). Promote sustained, inclusive, and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment, and decent work for all (Santi *et al.*, 2022), and SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production): ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns (Orellano *et al.*, 2020).

Healthcare and vaccine accessibility: The company focuses on improving healthcare and vaccine supply and accessibility, supporting SDG 3 (good health and well-being) and SDG 17 (partnerships for the goals).

Participant 8 indicated: *“company has identified unique opportunities in relation to responsible management practices that contribute to sustainable development and align with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). One such opportunity is our focus on promoting access to affordable vaccines and healthcare, aligning with SDG 3 - Good Health and Well-being. Furthermore, we actively engage in partnerships and collaborations with government agencies, healthcare organisations, and local communities, contributing to SDG 17 -*

Partnerships for the Goals. These collaborative initiatives aim to strengthen the capacity for sustainable development through resource mobilisation, knowledge sharing, and collective action.”

According to the literature, SDG 3 (good health and well-being) ensures healthy lives and promotes well-being for all at all ages (Hung *et al.*, 2019) and SDG 17 (partnerships for the goals). Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalise the global partnership for sustainable development.

The input discusses various unique opportunities that organisations have found to promote RM and support sustainable development and the UNs SDGs. These opportunities include using data analytics and technology to optimise waste management and resource efficiency, promoting circular economy principles, engaging in impact investment and green finance, implementing initiatives for diversity and inclusion, supporting local sourcing and community collaborations, investing in renewable energy, and advocating for sustainable packaging solutions. These opportunities align with different SDGs such as responsible consumption and production, industry innovation and infrastructure, climate action, clean energy, gender equality, reduced inequalities, and partnerships for goals. Overall, these unique opportunities demonstrate the organisations' commitment to RM and contribute to sustainable development and the SDGs.

4.6.1.3 Subtheme 2.3: Measuring and Assessing the Impact of Responsible Management Practices and Strategies

The company evaluates its RM practises using multiple methods and metrics. These include measuring waste diversion, energy and resource use, sustainability cost savings, customer feedback, environmental impact studies, employee involvement, and community outreach. These measurements and indicators provide a comprehensive view of the company's RM practises and enable continuous improvement and alignment with sustainability goals. The following measures and assessments of the impact of RM practises and strategies found in the participants' contributions can be grouped into four

main categories: environmental impact, financial performance, stakeholder engagement and transparency, reporting, and measuring impact.

Environmental Impact: Environmental impact is about tracking and improving company usage of energy, water, and raw materials, monitoring emissions, and assessing responsible sourcing and waste management practices.

- *Energy and resource consumption:* Tracking company usage of energy, water, and raw materials to improve efficiency.
- *Energy consumption per unit of production:* Tracking energy consumption to meet Sustainable Development Goal 7 (Affordable and Clean Energy).
- *Environmental impact assessments:* Conducting studies to measure the environmental impact of RM practices.
- *Greenhouse gas emissions:* Monitoring emissions to ensure compliance with Sustainable Development Goal 13 (Climate Action).
- *Product sustainability:* Measuring the percentage of sustainable and eco-friendly materials in products to assess progress in implementing responsible sourcing practices.
- *Supply chain transparency:* Conducting regular audits of supply chain partners to ensure ethical and sustainable practices.
- *Waste diversion rates:* Tracking waste diverted from landfills to recycling or sustainable disposal methods.
- *Waste reduction:* Monitoring garbage generation and diversion rates to align with SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production).

These findings are supported by the following contributions from the participants, supported by available literature:

Participant 5 indicated: *“We track various environmental indicators, such as energy consumption, water usage, and waste generation. This allows us to assess the impact of our energy-efficient systems, water conservation efforts, and waste reduction initiatives.”*

Participant 6 indicated: *“We monitor key environmental metrics, supply chain transparency, community impact, product sustainability, customer feedback, ethical sourcing scores, diversity and inclusion, and renewable energy usage. This data-driven approach not only helps us track our progress but also allows us to set targets, identify areas for improvement, and align our practices with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).”*

According to the literature, sustainability opportunities should be integrated into the company's internal resource management to effectively address environmental concerns and support sustainable development. These include exploring renewable energy sources, adopting circular economy principles, implementing waste reduction and recycling programmes, investing in sustainable product design and development, engaging in stakeholder dialogue and collaboration, and aligning sustainability goals with global frameworks such as the UNs SDGs (Okřeǳlicka, 2018).

Financial Performance: Financial performance is about tracking and measuring various aspects of a company's operations to improve efficiency, meet sustainability goals, and ensure ethical and responsible practices.

- *Compliance:* Tracking legal and regulatory compliance to ensure RM practises align with industry standards and requirements.
- *Cost savings:* Assessing financial savings from sustainability efforts like cutting energy or waste disposal costs.
- *Financial performance:* Assessing financial performance in relation to sustainability initiatives to determine the economic benefits of RM practices.

- *Impact investment results:* Monitoring impact investments involves establishing impact measures associated with the SDGs, conducting regular reporting, on-site visits, audits, and engaging independent third-party assessors or auditors to validate impact claims made by investee companies.

These findings are supported by the following contributions from the participants, supported by available literature:

Participant 2 indicated: *“Financial indicators, such as cost savings and returns on impact investments, offer insights into the economic benefits of our sustainability initiatives.”*

Participant 8 indicated: *“Financial performance is evaluated to understand the return on investment for our sustainable initiatives and how they contribute to our overall financial sustainability.”*

As stated in the literature, improved operational efficiency and cost savings: Sustainable practises can lead to operational efficiencies and cost savings through reduced energy and resource consumption (Baig *et al.*, 2020).

Stakeholder Engagement: Stakeholder engagement is about tracking and improving company usage of resources, measuring environmental impact, monitoring emissions, and ensuring ethical and sustainable practises throughout the supply chain.

- *Community impact:* Assessing the positive impact of community involvement programmes on the communities where the company operates
- *Community outreach success:* evaluating the success of community outreach programmes to measure the social impact of RM practices.
- *Consumer feedback:* gathering and analysing consumer input on sustainability activities to understand their perspectives and preferences.

- *Customer satisfaction and feedback:* Getting feedback from clients to evaluate the social and stakeholder impacts of RM practices.
- *Diversity and inclusion:* Measuring diversity and inclusion efforts to achieve SDG 5 (Gender Equality) and 10 (Reduced Inequalities).
- *Employee engagement:* Measuring employee involvement and satisfaction to assess the social effect of RM practices.
- *Employee surveys:* Collecting employee input on diversity and inclusion programmes to evaluate their impact on the workforce.
- *Health outcomes:* Assessing the impact of RM practises on health outcomes and quality assurance requirements
- *Reach, health, and education benefits:* Measuring the impact of projects on health, education, and local business growth to support SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being), 4 (Quality Education), and 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth).

These findings are supported by the following contributions from the participants, supported by available literature:

Participant 10 indicated: *“For community impact, we measure the reach of our projects, health and education improvements, and local business growth, contributing to SDG 3, SDG 4, and SDG 8. Our diversity and inclusion metrics are crucial, promoting goals under SDG 5 and SDG 10. Additionally, we prioritise transparency and adhere to international reporting standards, reinforcing our commitment to responsible practices and the SDGs.”*

Participant 5 indicated: *“We evaluate the outcomes of our community engagement initiatives, measuring the positive contributions to the communities in which we operate.”*

Participant 2 indicated: *“Feedback from clients and stakeholders, along with employee engagement surveys, informs our understanding of the social and stakeholder impacts of our practices.”*

According to recent literature engaging with stakeholders to identify environmental vulnerabilities and develop effective intervention measures (Bakri *et al.*, 2020), Building strong relationships and partnerships with stakeholders to understand their needs and concerns, incorporating their perspectives into decision-making processes (Andrade & Rhodes, 2012), and creating partnerships and collaborations with organisations and communities to collectively address social and environmental challenges (Marzoukiet *et al.*, 2021).

Transparency, reporting, and measuring impact: Transparency, reporting, and measuring impact involve tracking and monitoring various aspects of a company's operations to improve efficiency, meet sustainability goals, and assess RM practices. This includes tracking energy, water, and raw material usage, measuring environmental impact, monitoring emissions and waste management, and conducting audits of supply chain partners.

- *Collaboration and resource mobilisation:* Measuring the impact of partnerships through collaborations, resource mobilisation, and shared goals
- *Partnership impact:* Measuring the impact of partnerships on achieving sustainability and health goals.
- *Transparency and reporting:* Prioritising transparency and following international reporting requirements to support responsible practices and the SDGs.
- *Transparency and reporting metrics:* Using transparency and reporting metrics to communicate information about RM practises and strategies

These findings are supported by the following contributions from the participants, and supported by available literature:

Participant 2 indicated: *“Transparency and reporting, following recognised standards, allow us to share our progress openly. This data-driven approach provides a holistic view of our responsible management practices’ effectiveness, empowering us to continually enhance our sustainability efforts and create a positive impact within our organisation and the broader community.”*

Participant 8 indicated: *“Transparency and reporting metrics help us share information effectively, and we evaluate community engagement by assessing the depth of our involvement and the tangible benefits to local communities.”*

Participant 4 indicated: *“our sustainability reporting features comprehensive reports with key performance indicators (KPIs) that provide transparency on our environmental and social performance, enabling us to track our progress and assess the impact of our responsible management practices.”*

From the literature, one can conclude that sustainability practises and strategies in terms of RM include integrating sustainability objectives into business strategies, conducting regular environmental assessments and audits, implementing green procurement practices, and promoting energy and resource efficiency (Kasztelan, 2017).

The company evaluates its RM practises using multiple methods and metrics. These include measuring waste diversion, energy and resource use, sustainability cost savings, customer feedback, environmental impact studies, employee involvement, and community outreach. These measurements and indicators provide a comprehensive view of the company's RM practises and enable continuous improvement and alignment with sustainability goals.

4.7 Research Question 3: How can responsible management practices be used to achieve the SDGs in South Africa?

The section uses three themes, each encompassing numerous subthemes, to elucidate the findings related to the study objective.

4.7.1 Theme 3: Responsible Management Practices for Sustainable Development in South Africa

The theme emphasises the significance of RM practises in achieving the SDGs and highlights the role of collaborations and partnerships in promoting these practices. It also suggests that organisations should engage in RM practises and strategies to contribute to sustainable development. The evolution of the emerging theme is presented in Table 4.4.

Table 4.4: Theme 3: Responsible Management Practices in South Africa

Subthemes	Emerging Theme
3.1: Responsible Management Practices and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)	3: Responsible Management Practices for Sustainable Development in South Africa.
3.2: Collaborations for responsible management and sustainable development	
3.3: Promoting Sustainable Development through Responsible Management Practices and Strategies	

The following section outlines the sub-themes that played a role in the development of the theme, "Responsible Management Practices for Sustainable Development in South Africa."

4.7.1.1 Subtheme 3.1: Responsible Management Practices and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

RM practises play a crucial role in achieving the SDGs. The theme of the input is RM and its role in achieving the SDGs. The input highlights how RM practises align with various SDGs, such as climate action, responsible consumption and production, clean water and sanitation, decent work and economic growth, and industry innovation and infrastructure. It emphasises the importance of collaboration, partnerships, resource efficiency, waste

reduction, ethical sourcing, and transparency in achieving the SDGs and creating a sustainable and equitable future. The following findings were highlighted with a contribution from the participants:

It was found that RM practises help achieve the SDGs by integrating business goals with the SDGs, addressing stakeholder requirements, and encouraging sustainability, innovation, transparency, and collaboration. RM practises support various SDGs, such as climate action (SDG 13) through renewable energy investments and carbon reduction, responsible water use (SDG 6), circular economy and sustainable sourcing (SDG 12), and local sourcing for job creation and economic growth (SDG 8).

Participant 1 indicated: *“The companies’ initiatives align with specific SDGs; for example, our waste reduction and recycling efforts support SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production), while our focus on energy efficiency contributes to SDG 13 (Climate Action). Additionally, our commitment to community engagement and job creation aligns with SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth).”*

Participant 5 indicated: *“Our water conservation efforts contribute to this goal by reducing water usage and promoting responsible water management.”*

Literature indicated that SDG 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation) ensures availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all (Martínez-Borreguero *et al.*, 2020), SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production) ensures sustainable consumption and production patterns (Orellano *et al.*, 2020), and SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) promotes sustained, inclusive, and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment, and decent work for all (Santi *et al.*, 2022).

It was found that RM implementation enables resource efficiency, waste reduction, diversity, inclusivity, and ethical supply chains, supporting SDGs on clean energy, clean water, decent work, innovation, responsible consumption and production, climate action, reduced inequality, and strong institutions. RM practises align with specific SDGs, such as zero hunger (SDG 2), affordable and clean energy (SDG 7), responsible consumption

and production (SDG 12), climate action (SDG 13), life on land (SDG 15), and peace, justice, and strong institutions (SDG 16).

Participant 6 indicated: *“Ethical labour practices, transparency, and responsible management principles contribute to building strong and just institutions within our organisation and supply chain SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions).”*

Participant 3 indicated: *“Our recycling and circular economy practices preserve land and minimise waste impact, aligning with SDG 15 (Life on Land). These responsible practices actively contribute to the global pursuit of the SDGs, reflecting our commitment to sustainability within our business operations.”*

Participant 8 indicated: *“SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production) “company’s” RM strategies encompass ethical sourcing, waste reduction, and sustainable supply chain management. These practices align with the need for responsible consumption and production by minimising resource wastage and environmental impacts.”*

Participant 8 indicated: *“our focus on reducing greenhouse gas emissions, improving energy efficiency, and waste reduction aligns with SDG 7 and SDG 12, addressing sustainable energy and responsible consumption.”*

According to literature SDG 2 (Zero Hunger) End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition, and promote sustainable agriculture (Wernecke *et al.*, 2021), SDG 7 (Affordable and Clean Energy) Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable, and modern energy for all (Anwar, 2021), SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production) Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns (Orellano *et al.*, 2020), SDG 15 (Life on Land – Protect) restore, and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, halt and reverse land degradation (Guo *et al.*, 2020) and SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions) Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all, and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels (Ejarque & Climent, 2020) (Eiargue & Climent, 2020).

It was found that RM implementation contributes to achieving the SDGs by promoting resource efficiency, diversity, inclusivity, ethical supply chains, climate action, innovation, and consumer awareness. RM practises support the SDGs on responsible consumption and production, inequality, decent work and economic growth, climate action, industrial innovation, and sustainable consumer behaviour. RM practises help create a sustainable and equitable future by addressing global concerns and supporting the SDGs.

Participant 7 indicated: *“The implementation of responsible management practices (RM) significantly contributes to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in various ways. Firstly, RM focuses on sustainable resource use, reducing waste, and minimising environmental impact. These efforts align with SDGs related to environmental sustainability, such as SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production) and SDG 13 (Climate Action).”*

Participant 5 indicated: *“Responsible management (RM) practices serve as a linchpin for advancing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in multiple dimensions. They foster resource efficiency, promote diversity and inclusion, ensure ethical supply chains, drive climate action, fuel innovation, and enhance consumer awareness. These practices directly contribute to SDGs related to responsible consumption and production, reduced inequality, decent work and economic growth, climate action, industry innovation, and sustainable consumer behaviour. By incorporating RM practices into our corporate ethos, we contribute to a sustainable and equitable world while aligning our efforts with the overarching objectives of the SDGs.”*

According to the literature, sustainability opportunities should be integrated into the company's internal resource management to effectively address environmental concerns and support sustainable development. These include exploring renewable energy sources, adopting circular economy principles, implementing waste reduction and recycling programmes, investing in sustainable product design and development, engaging in stakeholder dialogue and collaboration, and aligning sustainability goals with global frameworks such as the UNs SDG (Okřęglicka, 2018). Additionally, organisations

can promote RM practises by integrating sustainability into their decision-making processes, investing in renewable energy sources and energy-efficient technologies, supporting local communities, and investing in education and skills development programmes. By implementing these RM practises and strategies (Tangngisalu *et al.*, 2020), South African companies can not only contribute to sustainable development but also gain a competitive advantage in the global business environment and improve their long-term financial performance.

Overall finding: RM practises help achieve the SDGs by addressing environmental, social, and economic issues. RM promotes resource efficiency, waste reduction, diversity, inclusivity, ethical supply chains, climate action, innovation, and consumer awareness. These practises align with various SDGs, including responsible consumption and production, reduced inequality, decent work and economic growth, climate action, industry innovation, and sustainable consumer behaviour. RM implementation supports the creation of a sustainable and equitable future.

4.7.1.2 Subtheme 3.2: Collaborations contributing to responsible management and sustainable development

The theme discusses how collaborations and partnerships contribute to RM practises and sustainable development. It emphasises the importance of integrating responsible practises into business operations to drive positive environmental, social, and economic impacts. The collaborations mentioned include partnerships with local NGOs, government agencies, international sustainability organisations, academic institutions, industry alliances, and non-profit organisations. These collaborations contribute to the overall objectives by providing specialised expertise, additional resources, and a broader reach within communities. They also foster knowledge sharing, collective impact, community engagement, research and development, and compliance with regulations. The input highlights the significance of these collaborations in achieving SDGs and promoting responsible business conduct. The companies actively engage in collaborations and partnerships to promote RM practises and sustainable development. These collaborations contribute to their overall objectives in several ways:

Knowledge Sharing: Collaborations with sustainability organisations, industry associations, and academic institutions allow the company to stay informed about the latest developments in RM practises and foster innovation.

Participant 3 indicated: *“Collaboration with academic institutions fuels research, innovation, and knowledge exchange, enriching our sustainability initiatives.”*

Engaging with stakeholders to identify environmental vulnerabilities and develop effective intervention measures (Bakri et al., 2020).

Collective Impact: Partnerships with like-minded organisations enable the company to pool resources and expertise, amplifying the impact of their sustainability initiatives and addressing larger challenges.

Participant 7 indicated: *“Our company actively collaborates and partners with organisations, including NGOs, academic institutions, industry peers, and local communities, to advance responsible management practices and sustainable development. These partnerships are integral to achieving our sustainability objectives. They provide us with valuable insights, resources, and expertise, enhancing our understanding of emerging sustainability trends and enabling us to tackle complex challenges like climate change and water resource management. Collaborations also help us engage with stakeholders effectively and amplify our impact by reaching a broader audience. Additionally, these partnerships support our advocacy for policy changes and foster innovation, contributing to our commitment to creating a more sustainable and equitable world.”*

creating partnerships and collaborations with organisations and communities to collectively address social and environmental challenges (Marzouki et al., 2021).

Community Engagement: Collaborations with local communities and non-profit organisations support community development projects and contribute to the company's CSR goals.

Participant 2 indicated: *“Partnerships with local communities and non-profit organisations enable us to engage in meaningful community development projects. These projects align with our corporate social responsibility goals and contribute to our broader sustainability objectives.”*

Participant 6 indicated: *“Collaborating with non-governmental organisations allows us to tap into their expertise and resources to drive initiatives related to community engagement, environmental sustainability, and social impact. These partnerships directly support our objectives related to reducing inequality (SDG 10) and responsible consumption and production (SDG 12).”*

Organisations need to build strong relationships and partnerships with stakeholders to understand their needs and concerns and incorporate their perspectives into decision-making processes (Andrade & Rhodes, 2012).

Research and Development: Collaborating with research institutions and universities leads to innovative solutions and insights that support the company's sustainability objectives and improve RM practices.

Participant 4 indicated: *“collaborates with academic institutions to support research and education in areas related to sustainability and responsible management. These partnerships foster knowledge sharing, inform best practices, and enhance our ability to provide cutting-edge sustainability solutions to clients.”*

Participant 2 indicated: *“Collaborations allow us to pool resources and expertise with like-minded organisations, amplifying the collective impact of our sustainability initiatives. Together, we can tackle larger challenges and drive meaningful change.”*

Fostering a culture of innovation and continuous improvement to identify and implement sustainable technologies and practises throughout the organisation (Mishra, 2018).

Supplier Collaborations: Engaging with suppliers ensures ethical sourcing and supply chain practices, contributing to responsible consumption and production goals.

Participant 3 indicated: *“Partnering with our suppliers underscores our commitment to responsible sourcing and ethical supply chain practices.”*

Participant 6 indicated: *“We work closely with our suppliers to ensure that responsible sourcing and ethical supply chain practices are upheld. These collaborations enhance transparency, support ethical labour standards, and contribute to our overall objective of responsible consumption and production (SDG 12).”*

Participant 10 indicated: *“By partnering with organisations that share our sustainability goals, we can leverage collective knowledge and efforts to address complex challenges more effectively. This approach also helps us achieve greater alignment with the Sustainable Development Goals, creating a synergy that promotes sustainable development on a broader scale.”*

Implementing responsible supply chain management practices, including selecting suppliers based on social and environmental criteria and working collaboratively to improve sustainability outcomes throughout the supply chain (Sertyesilisik, 2016).

Government and Regulatory Alliances: Collaborations with government bodies and industry associations help the company navigate evolving regulations and stay compliant while proactively addressing sustainability challenges.

Participant 6 indicated: *“Engaging with governmental bodies and industry associations enables us to stay informed about regulatory changes and industry standards. These partnerships help us ensure compliance and support our overall goals of responsible and sustainable operations.”*

Ethical management opportunities include creating a positive organisational culture based on trust, transparency, and fairness; attracting and retaining talented employees who value ethical practices; enhancing the company's reputation and brand value; strengthening relationships with customers and other stakeholders; and gaining a competitive advantage in the market (Coetzee et al., 2022).

Overall, these collaborations and partnerships are essential for the company's RM strategy, enabling them to drive positive change, support sustainable development, and uphold their commitment to being a responsible corporate citizen. These collaborations contribute to the company's overall objectives by allowing them to tap into specialised expertise, access additional resources, broaden their reach within communities, foster innovation, stay informed about the latest developments, pool resources with like-minded organisations, engage in community development projects, support research and education, and ensure compliance with regulations. These collaborations are essential for driving positive change, making a meaningful impact on society and the environment, and upholding the company's commitment to being a responsible corporate citizen and a leader in sustainability.

4.7.1.3 Subtheme 3.3: Promoting Sustainable Development through Responsible Management Practices and Strategies

The theme of the input is recommendations for organisations seeking to promote sustainable development through RM practises and strategies. The input provides several key recommendations, including integrating sustainability into the organisation's mission and strategy, involving stakeholders in decision-making, setting clear and measurable sustainability goals, fostering collaboration and partnerships, investing in employee education and engagement, promoting transparency and reporting, embracing innovation and technology, advocating for supportive policies, and maintaining a long-term perspective. These recommendations aim to guide organisations toward effectively advancing RM practises and contributing to sustainable development. Based on the input, the recommendations for organisations seeking to promote sustainable development through RM practises and strategies can be summarised into the following themes:

Integration and Embedding: Organisations should integrate sustainability into their mission, strategy, and culture, making it a core value and an integral part of decision-making and operations.

Participant 1 indicated: *“Ensure that sustainability is deeply embedded in your organisation's mission and strategy, making it an integral part of decision-making and operations and collaborate with employees, clients, suppliers, and communities to build a shared commitment to sustainability. Their involvement and insights are crucial for driving meaningful change.”*

According to literature, companies that demonstrate a commitment to sustainable practises often enjoy an improved brand image and increased customer loyalty (Zhang & Jiang, 2021).

Stakeholder Engagement: Collaboration with employees, clients, suppliers, and communities is crucial for building a shared commitment to sustainability and driving meaningful change.

Participant 2 indicated: *“Engage all stakeholders early and often to foster shared commitment. Stay informed, adapt, and be ready to embrace innovation and technology. Celebrate and transparently communicate your successes, and advocate for supportive policies.”*

Miller *et al.* (2012:5) identify "stakeholder communication competence" as a crucial skill for managers to communicate effectively with stakeholders, ensuring transparent and responsible interactions.

Goal Setting and Measurement: Organisations should set clear, measurable sustainability goals aligned with the SDGs and establish KPIs to track progress and enhance transparency and accountability.

Participant 8 indicated: *“Set specific, measurable sustainability goals and KPIs, regularly reporting on progress.”*

Participant 7 indicated: *“Set clear, measurable sustainability goals and engage with stakeholders to foster a sense of collective responsibility.”*

Miller *et al.* (2012:15) propose the "ability to create a significant social impact" as a vital competence. This entails going beyond conventional business goals and prioritising actions that benefit society, even if they might not lead to immediate financial gains.

Education and Training: Investing in employee education and engagement can create a workforce that champions sustainability and RM practices.

Participant 10 indicated: *"Investing in employee training can create a workforce that champions sustainability."*

Participant 8 indicated: *"Invest in employee training, embrace innovation and technology, and prioritise regulatory compliance."*

According to literature, companies that demonstrate a commitment to sustainable practises often enjoy an improved brand image and increased customer loyalty (Zhang & Jiang, 2021).

Transparency and Reporting: Organisations should prioritise transparency in communication and reporting, demonstrating accountability, and building trust with stakeholders.

Participant 3 indicated: *"Monitor and transparently report on progress, utilising insights to adapt and improve."*

Participant 5 indicated: *"Transparency, both in communication and reporting, is essential for building trust."*

The literature clearly states that transparent disclosure of environmental, social, and governance performance to stakeholders, including investors, customers, and employees, is beneficial for organisations (Hsu *et al.*, 2014).

Innovation and Collaboration: Embracing innovation, technology, and partnerships with like-minded organisations can lead to impactful solutions and amplify the impact of sustainability initiatives.

Participant 6 indicated: *“Engage your workforce in sustainability efforts, fostering a culture of responsibility and innovation among employees. Prioritise continuous improvement, regularly reviewing and adjusting responsible management practices to remain responsive to evolving sustainability challenges and opportunities.” Collaboration with a diverse array of stakeholders, including suppliers, NGOs, and government entities, can magnify your sustainability impact and bring fresh perspectives to your initiatives.*

Implementing sustainable practises often requires working closely with suppliers, customers, and other stakeholders to create shared value and address sustainability challenges (El-Jadali et al., 2018).

Compliance and Risk Management: Organisations should ensure compliance with relevant regulations and incorporate sustainability risks into their risk management strategies.

Participant 10 indicated: *“Measuring and evaluating the impact of responsible management practices is essential, as is compliance with relevant regulations. It is crucial to maintain a long-term perspective, advocating for sustainability, and staying flexible to address evolving challenges effectively.”*

Literature reveals sustainable practises can help organisations mitigate risks associated with climate change, regulatory changes, and supply chain disruptions (Wu et al., 2018).

Long-term Perspective: Maintaining a long-term perspective, advocating for sustainability, and staying flexible to address evolving challenges effectively are essential for sustainable development.

Participant 3 indicated: *“Advocate for industry-wide collaboration to address sustainability challenges collectively and remember that sustainability is a long-term commitment requiring patience, persistence, and unwavering dedication to your goals.”*

One of the key challenges is balancing short-term financial pressures with the long-term benefits of sustainable practises (Susanty *et al.*, 2018). This often requires making initial investments in sustainable technologies or processes, which may not show immediate financial returns.

Community Engagement: Supporting local communities and engaging in initiatives that address local needs can contribute to responsible business conduct and build a reputation for sustainability.

Participant 3 indicated: *“Actively engage with a diverse array of stakeholders, including employees, communities, industry peers, and regulatory bodies, listening to their input and fostering open dialogue.”*

Literature indicates integrating corporate initiatives into business operations, such as philanthropy, community engagement, and environmental conservation (Obert *et al.*, 2021), is beneficial to organisations.

Measurement and Evaluation: Organisations should measure and evaluate the impact of RM practises to identify areas for improvement and make informed decisions.

Participant 6 indicated: *“Set clear, measurable sustainability goals that adhere to the SMART framework, enabling effective monitoring.”*

According to the literature, sustainability practises and strategies in terms of RM include integrating sustainability objectives into business strategies, conducting regular environmental assessments and audits, implementing green procurement practices, and promoting energy and resource efficiency (Kasztelan, 2017).

Advocacy and Policy Support: Organisations should advocate for supportive policies and industry-wide collaboration to address sustainability challenges collectively.

Participant 7 indicated: *“Embrace technology and innovation, advocate for supportive policies, and remain adaptable to evolving circumstances.”*

Implementing sustainable practises often requires working closely with suppliers, customers, and other stakeholders to create shared value and address sustainability challenges (El-Jadali *et al.*, 2018).

Ethical Supply Chain Management: Upholding ethical supply chain practises contributes to responsible consumption and production.

Participant 5 indicated: *“Regularly monitor and adapt your practices, with a focus on ethical supply chain management.”*

Implementing responsible supply chain management practices, including selecting suppliers based on social and environmental criteria and working collaboratively to improve sustainability outcomes throughout the supply chain (Sertyesilisik & Sertyesilisik, 2016).

Continuous Improvement: Organisations should prioritise continuous improvement, regularly reviewing and adjusting RM practises to remain responsive to evolving sustainability challenges and opportunities.

Participant 3 indicated: *“Monitor and transparently report on your progress, utilising insights to adapt and improve. Advocate for industry-wide collaboration to address sustainability challenges collectively and remember that sustainability is a long-term commitment requiring patience, persistence, and unwavering dedication to your goals.”*

Fostering a culture of innovation and continuous improvement to identify and implement sustainable technologies and practises throughout the organisation (Mishra, 2018)

Overall, to promote sustainable development through RM practises and strategies, organisations should integrate sustainability into their mission and strategy, involve stakeholders in decision-making, set clear and measurable goals, prioritise transparency and reporting, invest in employee training, collaborate with like-minded organisations, adapt to changing trends, measure and evaluate impact, comply with regulations, maintain a long-term perspective, and advocate for sustainability. These practises will

help organisations make a meaningful contribution to sustainable development and reap the benefits of RM.

In this section, the integration of all the findings in answering the research questions is provided. Firstly, the findings from the literature review are presented, followed by findings derived from the empirical research conducted.

4.8 Findings from the Literature review

In conducting the literature review, the importance of the UNs Agenda 2030 for SDGs and its influence on managerial business practises are clearly indicated. The UNs SDGs, which were adopted by all UN Member States in 2015, aim to end poverty, protect the planet, and ensure peace and prosperity for all people (Ohta *et al.*, 2022). These goals serve as a universal call to action and provide a shared blueprint for sustainable development. A thorough understanding of the 17 SDGs and their inclusion in business strategies and practises came to the fore in the literature research as pivotal areas to be addressed in South African organisations to promulgate RM and sustainable business practices.

The existing theoretical frameworks and models related to RM were indicated. The expansion of concepts like sustainability, sustainable development, business ethics, and social responsibility in the business literature and world is noted (Toma & Grădinaru, 2018). The field of business management has a crucial role in addressing societal and environmental challenges (Ehgartner *et al.*, 2017; Gray & Milne, 2018; Antonacopoulou, 2022; Markman *et al.*, 2019). Responsible managers are needed to establish and sustain an ethical, responsible, and sustainable economic framework (Laasch, 2021; Van der Byl *et al.*, 2020).

The implementation of RM practises requires competence in ethics, responsibility, and sustainability (Gherardi & Laasch, 2021; Forray & Leigh, 2012; Laasch *et al.*, 2020a; Rasche & Gilbert, 2015).

The ethical competence include ethical decision-making and ethical behaviour, fulfilling stakeholder responsibilities, and balancing social, environmental, and economic impacts over time (Desplaces *et al.*, 2007; Sekerka *et al.*, 2009; Osagie *et al.*, 2016; Pless *et al.*, 2011; Hesselbarth & Schaltegger, 2014).

Findings from various studies emphasised the importance of ethical competence in business decision-making, which is influenced by individual and situational factors explored in behavioural ethics (Pohling *et al.*, 2016). Psychological theories of moral development, such as Kohlberg's stages of moral reasoning and Rest *et al.*'s theory of moral judgment, contribute to the development of ethical competence (Kohlberg, 1971; Rest *et al.*, 1969). Understanding human moral values, as examined by Fritzsche and Oz (2007) and Schwartz (2005), provides valuable perspectives on ethical decision-making in the business domain. Ethical management competencies focus on the organisational and managerial aspects of ethical decision-making. Recognising ethical business issues and applying ethical frameworks are crucial for navigating complex ethical dilemmas effectively (Spurgin, 2004). Communication skills play a vital role in ethics management, as managers need to effectively communicate ethical principles, policies, and guidelines within the organisation to foster ethical alignment among employees and stakeholders.

Ethical management practises and strategies contribute to responsible business conduct, including implementing ethical codes of conduct, conducting regular ethics training, and establishing mechanisms for reporting and addressing ethical concerns. Adhering to a code of ethics, implementing robust corporate governance structures, transparently disclosing environmental, social, and governance performance, and promoting fair and equitable employment practises are examples of ethical management practises used for sustainable development (Ayaya & Pretorius, 2021; Hsu, Ou, & Ou, 2014; Allmang & Franke, 2020). Ethical management challenges include navigating conflicting interests and values, ensuring consistent adherence to ethical standards, addressing unethical behaviour or misconduct, and balancing short-term financial goals with long-term sustainability objectives (McFarlane, 2015). To address these challenges, organisations should promote a culture of ethics and integrity, provide ongoing ethics training, establish clear mechanisms for reporting unethical behaviour, and hold individuals accountable.

Ethical management opportunities include creating a positive organisational culture based on trust, transparency, and fairness, attracting and retaining talented employees who value ethical practices, enhancing the company's reputation and brand value, strengthening relationships with customers and stakeholders, and gaining a competitive advantage in the market (Coetzee *et al.*, 2022). Muff *et al.* (2020) highlight "stakeholder relations" competence, emphasising the ability to manage and maintain relationships with diverse stakeholders. Similarly, Miller *et al.* (2012) identify "stakeholder communication competence" as a crucial skill for managers to communicate effectively with stakeholders, ensuring transparent and responsible interactions. Pless *et al.* (2011) emphasise the importance of a "responsible mindset," which encompasses a sense of ethical responsibility and an awareness of the impact of managerial decisions on stakeholders. Miller *et al.* (2012) further highlight compassion and empathy as crucial attributes for social entrepreneurship competence. Miller *et al.* (2012) propose the "ability to create a significant social impact" as a vital competence.

Responsibility competence is crucial to ensuring management strategies and practises include engagement with stakeholders, implementing responsible supply chain management practices, implementing sustainable HR practices, integrating corporate social responsibility initiatives into business operations, building strong relationships and partnerships with stakeholders, creating partnerships and collaborations with organisations and communities, and fostering a culture of innovation and continuous improvement. Responsibility challenges include balancing short-term financial pressures with the long-term benefits of sustainable practices, resistance to change from some stakeholders, the complexity of supply chain management, and effectively engaging with stakeholders (Susanty *et al.*, 2018). Responsibility opportunities include enhanced brand reputation and customer loyalty, improved operational efficiency and cost savings, access to new markets and business opportunities, attraction and retention of top talent, increased resilience and risk management, and increased collaboration and partnerships (Khalil *et al.*, 2021).

Sustainability competence are essential for addressing the challenges of sustainability, including social, environmental, and economic issues. These competence involve

managing the time dimension by taking preventive measures and planning strategically for long-term sustainability (Alberton *et al.*, 2020). They also require systemic thinking and integrative approaches to understand the complexity of sustainability problems and develop comprehensive strategies. Collaboration is crucial for addressing sustainability problems, and competencies such as embracing diversity and building alliances with stakeholders are important (Kleef & Roome, 2007). Sustainability practises and strategies include integrating sustainability objectives into business strategies, conducting environmental assessments, implementing green procurement practices, and promoting employee engagement (Kasztelan, 2017).

Sustainability challenges include navigating regulatory landscapes, balancing financial goals with sustainability objectives, and addressing resistance to change. However, developing a sustainability-focused business strategy and integrating sustainability objectives can help overcome these challenges and capitalise on market opportunities (Daojiu, 2014). Sustainability opportunities include exploring renewable energy sources, implementing waste reduction programmes, and aligning with global frameworks like the UN SDGs (Okreglicka, 2018). By implementing RM practises and strategies, companies can contribute to sustainable development and improve their long-term financial performance.

4.9 Findings from the Primary Research

The primary study findings are presented according to the themes associated with each research question.

4.9.1 Research Question 1

What responsible management practices and strategies are being implemented by companies in South Africa?

Organisations prioritise RM practises such as environmental sustainability, community engagement, ethical sourcing, diversity and inclusion, responsible finance, water and waste reduction, and sustainability reporting and communication. They invest in energy-

efficient technologies, waste reduction programmes, and employee training. They support local communities through education, health, and skills development programmes. They prioritise ethical sourcing and work with suppliers who share their ethical and environmentally friendly production practices. They prioritise diversity and inclusion in their workforce. They integrate RM practises into their daily operations, including ethical investing and sustainability-aligned investments. They prioritise water and waste reduction efforts and collaborate with local water conservation programmes. They prioritise sustainability reporting and communication efforts. Overall, they demonstrate a commitment to RM practises and strategies to promote sustainable development.

It was found that RM practices, such as environmental compliance, sustainable supply chain management, energy efficiency, waste reduction and recycling, community engagement, diversity and inclusion, transparency, and reporting, are commonly discussed in South African business literature. Many companies align with these practises and implement them in their operations, particularly focusing on waste reduction, energy efficiency, and community engagement. These practises are important for promoting sustainability, ethical business conduct, and meeting global and local sustainability goals. Companies integrate sustainability into their overall strategy and comply with local and international standards. Transparency, reporting, community engagement, diversity, and inclusion are emphasised as crucial elements of RM practices. Industry-specific examples of these practises are provided.

It was found that companies are employing various managerial strategies for sustainability, including sustainable agriculture, energy efficiency, waste reduction, community engagement, circular economy operations, sustainable sourcing, renewable energy, waste management, diversity and inclusion, consumer education, and community partnerships. These strategies support the company's business goals by reducing costs, improving operational efficiency, enhancing brand reputation, attracting eco-conscious consumers, increasing market share, promoting responsible consumption and production, meeting regulatory requirements, strengthening corporate citizenship, and achieving SDGs. Overall, these tactics contribute to the company's long-term sustainability, profitability, and success.

4.9.2 Research Question 2

What are the challenges and opportunities as experienced by senior managers regarding the implementation of responsible management practices in South Africa?

It was found that the company takes a proactive and adaptable approach to address these challenges. They explore new solutions, work with technology suppliers and industry professionals, and use sustainable financing and investment mechanisms. They also promote responsible practises throughout the value chain, track success with key performance indicators, and provide transparent reporting. The company offers scalable solutions to help clients manage regional requirements, incorporate sustainability into the design process, optimise resource efficiency through technology, and invest in staff education and training. They also emphasise compliance with regulations, collaboration with local communities, consumer education and engagement, and continuous improvement. Additionally, they provide customised solutions for addressing limited resources, prioritise stakeholder engagement, and foster a culture of sustainability. They stay current on regulations, support change management, strategically allocate resources, create an inclusive work environment, and actively collaborate with suppliers who share sustainability goals.

It was found that the companies have identified unique opportunities for RM practises that align with sustainable development and the UN SDGs. These opportunities include using data analytics and technology for waste management and resource efficiency, promoting circular economy principles, supporting community-based SDG projects, exploring impact investment alternatives, implementing initiatives for diversity and inclusion, providing renewable energy consultancy services, supporting sustainable agriculture, promoting responsible manufacturing and consumption, implementing water stewardship programmes, and promoting ethical supply chain management. These opportunities contribute to various SDGs such as responsible consumption and production, industry innovation and infrastructure, climate action, gender equality, reduced inequalities, and more.

It was found that the company evaluates its RM practises using multiple methods and metrics. These include measuring waste diversion, energy and resource use, sustainability cost savings, customer feedback, environmental impact studies, employee involvement, and community outreach. These measurements and indicators provide a comprehensive view of the company's RM practises and enable continuous improvement and alignment with sustainability goals. The measures and assessments of the impact of RM practises and strategies can be grouped into four main categories: environmental impact, financial performance, stakeholder engagement and transparency, reporting, and measuring impact.

4.9.3 Research Question 3

How can responsible management practices be used in South African organisations to achieve the SDGs in the country?

It was found that RM practises play a crucial role in achieving the SDGs. These practises align with various SDGs, such as climate action, responsible consumption and production, clean water and sanitation, decent work and economic growth, and industry innovation and infrastructure. RM integrates business goals with the SDGs, addresses stakeholder requirements, and encourages sustainability, innovation, transparency, and collaboration. It enables resource efficiency, waste reduction, diversity, inclusivity, and ethical supply chains, supporting the SDGs on clean energy, clean water, decent work, innovation, responsible consumption and production, climate action, reduced inequality, and strong institutions.

It was found that collaborations and partnerships with various organisations, including NGOs, government agencies, sustainability organisations, academic institutions, industry alliances, and non-profit organisations, contribute to RM practises and sustainable development. These collaborations provide specialised expertise, additional resources, and a broader reach within communities. They also foster knowledge sharing, collective impact, community engagement, research and development, and compliance with

regulations. Collaborations and partnerships are significant in achieving SDGs and promoting responsible business conduct.

Sustainable development can be promoted through RM practises and strategies by integrating sustainability into their mission and strategy, involving stakeholders in decision-making, setting clear and measurable goals, prioritising transparency and reporting, investing in employee training, collaborating with like-minded organisations, adapting to changing trends, measuring and evaluating impact, and complying with regulations. These practises enable organisations to contribute to sustainable development and profit from RM.

4.10 Chapter summary

This chapter was dedicated to the data analysis and interpretation, focusing on identifying the overarching themes within the participants' responses. From the data analysis, it became evident that South African companies are actively implementing RM practises that align with the SDGs, fostering environmental and social sustainability while supporting broader business objectives. These practises address challenges, highlight opportunities, and promote long-term success by contributing to sustainable development and enhancing competitiveness in a sustainability-focused world. Chapter 4 laid the groundwork for the discussion, recommendations, suggestions, and conclusion in the subsequent chapter.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS, MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter concludes the study. It situates the answers to the research questions. It provides managerial implications and recommendations, proposes avenues for future research, and acknowledges the study's limitations.

5.2 Answering the research questions

The research questions posed in Chapter 1 were answered as discussed in Chapter 4. The answers to the managerial strategies provided by South African senior managers in private South African organisations seeking to promote sustainable development as per the 17 SDGs in the UN Agenda 2030 are indicated in the recommendations below.

5.3 Recommendations

Based on the primary research, the following recommendations can be made as managerial strategies to be used to practise sustainability and RM in South Africa:

- 1) *Prioritise responsible management practices*: Organisations should prioritise practises such as environmental sustainability, community engagement, ethical sourcing, diversity and inclusion, responsible finance, water and waste reduction, and sustainability reporting and communication.
- 2) *Invest in energy-efficient technologies and waste reduction programmes*: Organisations should invest in energy-efficient technologies and waste reduction programmes to reduce their environmental impact and improve operational efficiency.
- 3) *Support local communities*: Organisations should support local communities through education, health, and skills development programmes to contribute to their well-being and sustainable development.

- 4) *Prioritise ethical sourcing:* Organisations should prioritise ethical sourcing and work with suppliers who share their ethical and environmentally friendly production practices.
- 5) *Integrate responsible management practices into daily operations:* Organisations should integrate RM practises into their daily operations, including ethical investing and sustainability-aligned investments.
- 6) *Collaborate with local water conservation programmes:* Organisations should collaborate with local water conservation programmes to prioritise water and waste reduction efforts.
- 7) *Emphasise sustainability reporting and communication:* Organisations should prioritise sustainability reporting and communication efforts to demonstrate their commitment to RM practises and strategies.
- 8) *Align with industry-specific responsible management practices:* Organisations should align with industry-specific RM practises to meet global and local sustainability goals.
- 9) *Implement sustainable strategies:* Organisations should implement sustainable strategies such as sustainable agriculture, energy efficiency, waste reduction, circular economy operations, sustainable sourcing, renewable energy, waste management, diversity and inclusion, consumer education, and community partnerships to promote sustainability and meet business goals.
- 10) *Evaluate and measure impact:* Organisations should evaluate their RM practises using multiple methods and metrics to measure waste diversion, energy and resource use, sustainability cost savings, customer feedback, environmental impact, employee involvement, and community outreach. This enables continuous improvement and alignment with sustainability goals.

5.4 Managerial Implications

The managerial implications of the findings are as follows:

- 1) *Executing responsible management practices*: Organisations should prioritise the development of managers to build adequate competence in sustainable practises.
- 2) *Invest in sustainable development goal implementation*: Organisations should not shy away from investing in implementing the 17 SDGs that are suitable to their business, as investment initially can be cost-effective in the long term.
- 3) *Support local communities*: Organisations should support local communities through education, health, and skills development programmes. This will help build strong relationships with the community and contribute to sustainable development.
- 4) *Collaborate with suppliers who share ethical and environmentally friendly practices*: Organisations should work with suppliers who share their ethical and environmentally friendly production practices. This will help promote responsible sourcing and contribute to sustainable development.
- 5) *Integrate responsible management practices into daily operations*: Managers should integrate RM practises into their daily operations, including ethical investing and sustainability-aligned investments. This will help align business goals with sustainability goals and promote responsible business conduct.
- 6) *Emphasise transparency, reporting, and diversity and inclusion*: Organisations should prioritise transparency, reporting, diversity, and inclusion as crucial elements of RM practices. This will help build trust with stakeholders and promote sustainable development.
- 7) *Explore new solutions and collaborate with industry professionals*: Organisations should explore new solutions, work with technology suppliers and industry

professionals, and use sustainable financing and investment mechanisms. This will help address sustainability challenges and promote RM practices.

- 8) *Evaluate responsible management practices using multiple methods and metrics:* Organisations should measure and assess the impact of RM practises using multiple methods and metrics. This will provide a comprehensive view of the organisation's performance and enable continuous improvement and alignment with sustainability goals.
- 9) *Collaborate with various organisations:* Organisations should collaborate with NGOs, government agencies, sustainability organisations, academic institutions, industry alliances, and non-profit organisations. This will provide specialised expertise, additional resources, and a broader reach within communities, contributing to RM practises and sustainable development.
- 10) *Integrate sustainability into mission and strategy:* Organisations should integrate sustainability into their mission and strategy, involve stakeholders in decision-making, set clear and measurable goals, prioritise transparency and reporting, invest in employee training, and comply with regulations. This will enable organisations to contribute to sustainable development and profit from RM.

5.5 Suggestions for further research

To pave the way for future research endeavours, it is essential to propose areas for exploration. Potential directions for future studies may encompass:

Further research could explore the specific strategies and initiatives that companies are implementing to prioritise RM practices, such as waste reduction, energy efficiency, and community engagement. This research could delve into the specific actions taken by companies in different industries and regions to understand the effectiveness of these strategies in promoting sustainability.

Additional research should focus on the impact of RM practises on financial performance. This research could analyse the financial benefits and cost savings that companies

experience as a result of implementing sustainable practices, such as energy-efficient technologies and waste reduction programmes. It could also examine the potential for RM practises to attract eco-conscious consumers and increase market share.

Further research could investigate the role of collaborations and partnerships in promoting RM practises and sustainable development. This research could explore the types of organisations that companies are partnering with, the benefits and challenges of these collaborations, and the specific outcomes and impacts that result from these partnerships. Additionally, this research could examine the role of collaborations in addressing specific SDGs and how they contribute to overall sustainability efforts.

5.6 Limitations

The researcher encountered various limitations over the course of this project. These limitations are discussed below:

- *Restricted Sample Size:* This research is predicated on a relatively small participant sample size, consisting of ten senior managerial individuals. This constraint may impede the generalisability of the findings to the entirety of South African corporate entities.
- *Qualitative Methodology:* The study's use of a qualitative research methodology may restrict the extrapolation of its findings to a broader population.
- *Cross-Sectional Design:* The adoption of a cross-sectional research design may not sufficiently capture the temporal dynamics and transformations in RM practises over time.
- *Participant Bias:* The research participants comprised senior managers actively involved in RM endeavours, which could introduce a potential response bias, favouring more affirmative responses.
- *Geographic Scope:* This research may not encompass the full gamut of regional variations in RM practises within the extensive landscape of South Africa.

5.7 Researcher Conclusion

After concluding my study, it became evident that the examination of Responsible Management (RM) practices and strategies in South Africa has provided valuable insights into the challenges and opportunities within the implementation process. The findings highlight the pivotal role of RM practices in advancing sustainability, aligning with both local and global sustainability goals, and significantly contributing to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Notably, I found that private companies in South Africa exhibit a commendable commitment, particularly in prioritizing key RM practices such as environmental sustainability, community engagement, ethical sourcing, diversity and inclusion, responsible finance, and initiatives addressing water and waste reduction.

I have also noted there is an emphasis on sustainability reporting and communication. Tangible investments in energy-efficient technologies, waste reduction programs, and comprehensive employee training attest to a sincere commitment to long-term sustainability, profitability, and overall success.

I believe South African companies have the potential not only to ensure their enduring viability but also to play a transformative role in shaping a more sustainable future for all.

5.8 Conclusion

The study aimed to explore the extent to which RM practises and strategies were implemented in South Africa and to identify the challenges and opportunities of implementing these practices. The research also sought to understand how RM practises could be used to achieve the SDGs and identified specific practises for broader application in promoting sustainable development.

Overall, it can be concluded that RM practises are essential for promoting sustainability, meeting global and local sustainability goals, and achieving the SDGs. Private companies in South Africa are prioritising practises such as environmental sustainability, community engagement, ethical sourcing, diversity and inclusion, responsible finance, water and

waste reduction, and sustainability reporting and communication. They are investing in energy-efficient technologies, waste reduction programmes, and employee training. They are also collaborating with various organisations and implementing strategies such as sustainable agriculture, circular economy operations, renewable energy, and waste management. These practises contribute to long-term sustainability, profitability, and success. In summation, this dissertation has delved into the heart of RM practises and their implications for sustainable development in South African companies.

The findings underscore the ongoing commitment to sustainability within these organisations and the realisation of having the competence of ethics, responsibility, and sustainability as managers as they intertwine their operational strategies with broader societal and ecological goals. The implications are far-reaching, as they encourage businesses and stakeholders to embark on a path of sustainable corporate citizenship, fostering a harmonious coexistence between corporate objectives and global imperatives for environmental and social welfare. In this lies the potential for South African companies to not only secure their own long-term viability but also play a transformative role in the pursuit of a more sustainable future for all.

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Appendices

Annexure A: Informed Consent



Date:

ETHICS INFORMED CONSENT

NORTH-WEST UNIVERSITY: MBA Research

Researcher: Chanté Roux

e-mail: c.rouxchante@gmail.com

Research Supervisor: Prof Yvonne du Plessis

e-mail: Yvonne.duplessis@nwu.ac.za

Dear Participant,

This **Informed Consent Statement** serves to confirm the following information, as it relates to the officially **approved MBA research project**, with EMS-REC ethical number NWU-01868-23-A4 at the North-West University, on ***“Exploring responsible management practices and strategies to promote sustainable development in South African companies”***:

1. The research approach to be followed is a qualitative research design, using a semi-structured interview guide that will utilise pre-determined, mostly open-ended questions whereby participants are allowed to communicate their views on the noted topic. In addition, essential background information such as job title and qualification is asked to better inform the data and purpose of this study.
2. The estimated completion time for the interview is 60 minutes.
3. If, at any point during the interview, the participant should feel uncomfortable, the participant will have the opportunity to make their discomfort known and immediately end their participation.
4. It should also be emphasised that participation in this study is voluntary and with the participant's consent without any form of coercion.
5. The confidentiality, anonymity and privacy of participants are guaranteed. All complex data, including completed documents and company documentation, will be kept in a lockable safe. The data will be safely held in a fireproof vault for five years before being destroyed, following South African electronic equipment disposal rules. All soft data, including transcripts, interviews, and digital documentation, will be kept on a secure digital hard drive with password-protected electronic files.
6. A summarised copy of the final report will be available to the participants on request.

If you have any questions you can contact:

Research supervisor: Prof Yvonne du Plessis at yvonne.duplessis@nwu.ac.za

Researcher: Chanté Roux c.rouxchante@gmail.com / 084 563 6959

Please tick each box

I confirm that I have read and understand the participant information sheet for the above study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions, and have had these answered satisfactorily.

☐

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason, and without any adverse consequences or penalty.

☐

I understand that this project has been reviewed by, and received ethics clearance through, EMS-REC (Ethics Committee).

☐

I understand who will have access to the data provided, how the data will be stored, and what will happen to the data at the end of the research project.

☐

I understand how this research will be reported and published.

☐

I understand how to raise a concern or make a complaint.

☐

I agree to voluntarily take part in the study.

☐

Participant's Consent (Please consent by signing with a pseudo-code)

I, the participant, confirm that I have read and comprehended the Informed Consent conditions and give my unqualified consent to Ms Chanté Roux and Prof Yvonne du Plessis to utilise the information from the interviews in this study for this MBA study and academic publications. As a result of this request for participation in the above-mentioned study, I grant consent to the processing of certain personal information in terms of section 18 of the POPI Act.

Name and designation	Signature	Date
Consent Participant:	Pseudo code:	

We thank you.

Annexure B: Semi-structured Interview guide



Semi-structured interview guide

Title of the study: Exploring responsible management practices and strategies to promote sustainable development in South African companies.

Semi-structured interview guide

Participant no:

Demographic information

Organisation type/sector:

Managerial level/Job title:

Number of years in management/managerial experience:

Introduction:

Thank you for participating in this research interview. The purpose of this interview is to explore the extent to which responsible management practices and strategies are being implemented by businesses in South Africa, and to identify the challenges and opportunities associated with implementing these practices. Additionally, we aim to understand how responsible management practices can contribute to achieving the UN Agenda 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Your insights and experiences as senior manager and sustainability representative of a private company will provide valuable information for this study.

Confidentiality:

All the information you provide will be treated with strict confidentiality. Your identity and the company's identity will be kept anonymous in any reports or publications resulting from this research. If you have any concerns or questions about confidentiality, please let me know.

Before we begin, I would like to ask for your consent to record this interview for accuracy and reference purposes.

Main question	Interview questions
1. What responsible management practices and strategies are being implemented by	1.1 Can you please provide an overview of the responsible management practices and strategies implemented in your company to promote sustainable development? How are these practices integrated into your overall business operations?

the company in South Africa?	1.2 What specific responsible management practices have you observed in the literature that are commonly implemented by businesses in South Africa? Are any of these practices similar to those implemented in your company? 1.3 Can you share some examples of managerial strategies utilized by your company that have been successful in promoting sustainable development? How do these strategies align with your overall business objectives?
2. What are the challenges and opportunities of implementing responsible management practices in South Africa?	2.1 In your experience, what are the major challenges faced by businesses in South Africa when it comes to implementing responsible management practices? How does your company address or overcome these challenges? 2.2 Are there any unique opportunities that your company has identified or explored in relation to responsible management practices? How do these opportunities contribute to sustainable development and achieving the SDGs? 2.3 How does your company measure and assess the impact of its responsible management practices and strategies? Are there any specific metrics or indicators used to evaluate the effectiveness of these practices?
3. How can responsible management practices be used to achieve the SDGs in South Africa?	3.1 From your perspective, how do responsible management practices contribute to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)? Can you provide examples of how your company's practices align with specific SDGs? 3.2 Are there any collaborations or partnerships that your company engages in to further promote responsible management practices and sustainable development? How do these collaborations contribute to your overall objectives? 3.3 Based on your experience and insights, what recommendations would you give to other organisations seeking to promote sustainable development through responsible management practices and strategies?

Closing:

If there are any additional points or perspectives you would like to add on the managerial aspects of sustainability practices and strategies in organisations, please feel free to do so.

Thank you for sharing your valuable insights and experiences during this interview. Your contribution will greatly contribute to the understanding of responsible management practices and strategies for sustainable development in South African private industries.

Annexure C: Transcript example

Participant no: 0002

Demographic information

Organisation type/sector: **Business services**

Managerial level/Job title: **Sustainability lead**

Number of years managerial experience: **4 years**

Introduction:

Thank you for participating in this research interview. The purpose of this interview is to explore the extent to which responsible management practices and strategies are being implemented by businesses in South Africa, and to identify the challenges and opportunities associated with implementing these practices. Additionally, we aim to understand how responsible management practices can contribute to achieving the UN Agenda 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Your insights and experiences as a representative of a private company will provide valuable information for this study.

Confidentiality:

All the information you provide will be treated with strict confidentiality. Your identity and the company's identity will be kept anonymous in any reports or publications resulting from this research. If you have any concerns or questions about confidentiality, please let me know. Before we begin, I would like to ask for your consent to record this interview for accuracy and reference purposes. Is it okay if I proceed with audio recording?

Research question

1. What responsible management practices and strategies are being implemented by the company in South Africa?

Interview questions

1.1 Can you please provide an overview of the responsible management practices and strategies implemented in your company to promote sustainable development? How are these practices integrated into your overall business operations?

At “company”, we’ve embedded responsible management practices at the heart of our operations to champion sustainable development. Our strategies span three crucial areas: environmental stewardship, where we emphasize energy efficiency and waste reduction; community engagement, involving educational programs and skill development for local communities; and ethical finance, which prioritizes investments aligned with sustainability goals. These practices are seamlessly integrated into our business operations, ensuring that every decision, from investments to

daily practices, aligns with our unwavering commitment to responsible management and contributes to a more sustainable future.

Probing question - Can you please provide an example.

In South Africa, as in “company”, responsible management practices are widespread among businesses. Common practices include environmental sustainability, community engagement, ethical finance, and promoting diversity and inclusion. These shared principles highlight a collective commitment to responsible management and sustainability in South African businesses, reflecting the idea that these practices should be an integral part of business operations.

1.2 What specific responsible management practices have you observed in the literature that are commonly implemented by businesses in South Africa? Are any of these practices similar to those implemented in your company?

I am not sure I understand, the question.

Interviewer: In South Africa, as well as globally, there are several common responsible management practices implemented by businesses. These often include Environmental Compliance, Sustainable Supply Chain Management, Energy Efficiency, Waste Reduction and Recycling, Community Engagement, Diversity and Inclusion, Transparency and Reporting

Your observation is spot on, and it aligns with the common responsible management practices not only in South Africa but globally. These practices are pivotal in addressing sustainability challenges and fostering responsible business conduct. At “company”, we certainly resonate with many of these practices, particularly in environmental compliance, energy efficiency, waste reduction, and community engagement, as mentioned earlier. Furthermore, our focus on diversity and inclusion underscores our commitment to creating an inclusive and innovative workplace. Transparency and reporting are also core to our values, ensuring that we communicate our sustainability efforts effectively to our stakeholders. These practices collectively support our broader goal of integrating sustainability into our business model and promoting sustainable development.

1.3 Can you share some examples of managerial strategies utilized by your company that have been successful in promoting sustainable development? How do these strategies align with your overall business objectives?

Sustainable Investment Portfolios: We offer sustainable investment options that consider environmental and social impact alongside financial returns. This strategy aligns with our objective to provide ethical and responsible financial services while contributing to SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) and SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production).

Employee Engagement and Inclusivity: “Company” places a strong emphasis on diversity and inclusion within our workforce, fostering a work environment that promotes creativity and innovation. This strategy aligns with our business objective to attract and retain top talent while contributing to SDG 5 (Gender Equality) and SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities).

These strategies are not just stand-alone initiatives; they are fully integrated into our core business objectives. By offering sustainable investment options and promoting a diverse and inclusive workplace, we achieve our financial goals while making a positive impact on society and the environment, contributing to sustainable development.

Probing question – How would you say these strategies align with the overall business objectives?

Sustainable Investment Products: By offering sustainable investment products, we align with our core business objective of providing valuable financial services to our clients. At the same time, these products attract a segment of clients who are seeking ethical and responsible investment options. This not only grows our client base but also aligns with our commitment to responsible financial practices and ethical finance. Thus, our sustainable investment products enhance our brand and financial objectives while contributing to sustainability goals.

Diversity and Inclusion Initiatives: Promoting diversity and inclusion in our workforce aligns with our objective to be an employer of choice. A diverse and inclusive workplace fosters innovation and creativity, which ultimately contributes to achieving our business goals. It allows us to attract and retain top talent, creating a dynamic workforce that can better serve our clients and adapt to the evolving financial landscape. Furthermore, it aligns with our commitment to societal progress by promoting gender equality and reducing inequalities, reinforcing our reputation as a responsible corporate citizen.

In essence, these strategies are not only ethically sound but also strategically beneficial. They strengthen our brand, attract clients, and empower our employees, contributing to the achievement of both business objectives and sustainable development goals.

Research question

2. What are the challenges and opportunities of implementing responsible management practices in South Africa?

Interview question

2.1 In your experience, what are the major challenges faced by businesses in South Africa when it comes to implementing responsible management practices? How does your company address or overcome these challenges?

At “company”, we address these challenges through a comprehensive approach. We maintain dedicated experts who navigate the regulatory landscape, ensuring compliance. To overcome resource constraints, we offer flexible and tailored sustainability solutions. To meet evolving expectations, we actively engage with clients and stakeholders, striving to understand and align with their sustainability goals. To combat resistance to change, we prioritize employee training and communication efforts, fostering a culture of sustainability within our organization. By acknowledging and tackling these challenges collaboratively, we endeavour to promote responsible management practices and sustainable development effectively.

Probing question - How does your company address or overcome these challenges? What approach does the company implement to address this challenge?

“company” addresses and overcomes the challenges associated with promoting responsible management practices through a multifaceted approach. To navigate the complex regulatory environment in South Africa, we maintain a dedicated team that monitors and interprets regulations, ensuring compliance with evolving requirements and engaging with regulatory bodies. To tackle resource constraints, we offer scalable and customizable sustainability solutions, tailoring our offerings to meet the specific needs and budgets of our clients. To keep pace with changing expectations, we actively engage with clients and stakeholders, aligning our services with their sustainability objectives. Furthermore, to overcome resistance to change, we invest in extensive employee training and communication programs that foster a culture of sustainability within our organization, making it easier for our team to embrace new practices and initiatives. Through this proactive, adaptive, and education-driven approach, “company” effectively addresses these challenges and advances responsible management practices.

Probing question - Any other challenges?

While the challenges mentioned are among the most common, other challenges can emerge depending on the specific context and industry. These might include issues like access to sustainable technologies, securing funding for sustainability initiatives, ensuring supply chain sustainability, and effectively measuring and reporting on sustainability efforts. At “company”, we remain vigilant in identifying and addressing any additional challenges that may arise, tailoring our strategies to meet evolving needs and promote responsible management practices effectively.

Probing question – Your companies’ approach to address the challenge?

“Company’s” approach to addressing additional challenges in promoting responsible management practices is marked by adaptability and resourcefulness. We actively seek innovative solutions and collaborate with technology providers and industry experts to surmount challenges related to accessing sustainable technologies. Our financial expertise allows us to secure funding for sustainability initiatives, leveraging sustainable financing and investment instruments. To ensure supply chain sustainability, we engage with our partners, promoting responsible practices throughout our value chain. Robust measurement and reporting systems underpin our efforts, enabling us to track progress through key performance indicators and transparent reporting. In essence, our approach is tailored to address each challenge effectively, combining financial acumen, innovation, collaboration, and data-driven decision-making to promote responsible management practices in a rapidly evolving business landscape.

2.2 Are there any unique opportunities that your company has identified or explored in relation to responsible management practices? How do these opportunities contribute to sustainable development and achieving the SDGs?

Indeed, “company” has identified and explored unique opportunities that contribute to sustainable development and align with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Some of these opportunities include:

Impact Investment: “company” has delved into impact investment opportunities that offer both financial returns and measurable positive social or environmental impacts. These investments align with SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) and SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure) by driving economic growth and innovation.

Green Finance: Our focus on green finance involves providing financial solutions for projects that have a positive impact on the environment. This aligns with SDG 13 (Climate Action) by supporting projects that reduce carbon emissions and mitigate climate change.

Diversity and Inclusion Initiatives: Our commitment to diversity and inclusion contributes to achieving SDG 5 (Gender Equality) and SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities). By fostering a diverse and inclusive work environment, we empower a broader segment of society and promote gender equality within our organization.

These unique opportunities not only align with our business objectives but also contribute to sustainable development by addressing specific SDGs. They showcase “company’s” dedication to both ethical financial practices and the broader societal and environmental goals set forth by the United Nations.

2.3 How does your company measure and assess the impact of its responsible management practices and strategies? Are there any specific metrics or indicators used to evaluate the effectiveness of these practices?

“Company” adopts a thorough system for measuring and assessing the impact of our responsible management practices and strategies, encompassing a range of metrics and indicators.

Environmental impact metrics, including carbon emissions reduction, energy efficiency, and waste reduction rates, provide quantitative data on our ecological footprint.

Financial indicators, such as cost savings and returns on impact investments, offer insights into the economic benefits of our sustainability initiatives.

Feedback from clients and stakeholders, along with employee engagement surveys, informs our understanding of the social and stakeholder impacts of our practices.

We also monitor the performance of impact investments, aligning with specific SDGs.

Transparency and reporting, following recognized standards, allow us to share our progress openly. This data-driven approach provides a holistic view of our responsible management practices' effectiveness, empowering us to continually enhance our sustainability efforts and create a positive impact within our organization and the broader community.

Probing question – Please elaborate how your company monitor the performance of impact investment?

Monitoring the performance of impact investments at “company” involves a multifaceted approach:

Impact Metrics: We establish specific impact metrics aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that correspond to the focus of each investment. For example, if the investment is in a renewable energy project, we may measure metrics related to energy production, carbon emissions reductions, or the number of jobs created.

Regular Reporting: Investee companies or projects are required to provide regular reports on their progress towards achieving the defined impact metrics. These reports are typically reviewed by our impact investment team.

On-site Visits and Audits: In some cases, particularly for larger or high-impact investments, we conduct on-site visits and audits to verify the reported data and assess the actual impact on the ground.

Third-Party Assessments: Independent third-party assessors or auditors may be engaged to conduct impact assessments and validate the impact claims made by investee companies.

Long-Term Monitoring: Impact investments are typically viewed as long-term commitments, and monitoring extends over the investment's lifecycle to ensure that the intended impacts are sustained and additional opportunities for improvement are identified.

By employing this comprehensive approach, we ensure that our impact investments not only align with the SDGs but also genuinely contribute to the social and environmental outcomes we aim to achieve. This rigorous monitoring process is fundamental to our commitment to responsible finance and sustainable development.

Research Question

3. How can responsible management practices be used to achieve the SDGs in South Africa?

Interview questions

3.1 From your perspective, how do responsible management practices contribute to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)? Can you provide examples of how your company's practices align with specific SDGs? (Provided image of the 17 SDG goals to refer to whilst answering question)

Responsible management practices play a pivotal role in contributing to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by addressing pressing global challenges and promoting sustainable development. Here are examples of how “company's practices align with specific SDGs:

SDG 5: Gender Equality: Our focus on diversity and inclusion within our workforce aligns with SDG 5. By promoting equal opportunities and fostering an inclusive workplace, we contribute to reducing gender inequalities in the professional sphere.

SDG 7: Affordable and Clean Energy: Our emphasis on sustainable financing for renewable energy projects and responsible energy usage aligns with SDG 7. We support the transition to clean energy and increased energy efficiency, contributing to affordable and clean energy access.

SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth: Our impact investments, particularly those focused on job creation and sustainable economic growth, align with SDG 8. These investments not only create employment opportunities but also drive economic development in various regions.

SDG 13: Climate Action: Our green finance initiatives and sustainable investment products align with SDG 13. These practices support projects that reduce carbon emissions and mitigate climate change, furthering the global efforts to combat climate change.

SDG 17: Partnerships for the Goals: “company's” collaborations with various stakeholders, including clients, industry partners, and sustainability organizations, contribute to SDG 17 by fostering partnerships that promote sustainable development.

Probing question - How do you think the implementation of RM help contribute to the achievement of these SDG's?

The implementation of responsible management (RM) practices significantly contributes to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by aligning business objectives with specific SDGs, addressing the needs of various stakeholders, fostering innovation and problem-solving for sustainable solutions, promoting transparency and reporting on sustainability efforts, and encouraging collaboration and partnerships. RM practices provide a structured and systematic approach to address the core issues that the SDGs aim to resolve, creating a positive synergy between business operations and global sustainability goals, ultimately leading to a more equitable, sustainable, and prosperous future.

3.2 Are there any collaborations or partnerships that your company engages in to further promote responsible management practices and sustainable development? How do these collaborations contribute to your overall objectives?

Yes, “company” actively engages in collaborations and partnerships to further promote responsible management practices and sustainable development. These collaborations are integral to our overall objectives in several ways:

Knowledge Sharing: We collaborate with sustainability organizations, industry associations, and experts to stay informed about the latest developments in responsible management practices. This knowledge-sharing fosters innovation and ensures that our practices remain cutting-edge.

Collective Impact: Collaborations allow us to pool resources and expertise with like-minded organizations, amplifying the collective impact of our sustainability initiatives. Together, we can tackle larger challenges and drive meaningful change.

Community Engagement: Partnerships with local communities and non-profit organizations enable us to engage in meaningful community development projects. These projects align with our corporate social responsibility goals and contribute to our broader sustainability objectives.

Research and Development: Collaborating with research institutions and universities can lead to innovative solutions and insights that support our sustainability objectives and improve our responsible management practices.

These collaborations and partnerships are essential to our approach in achieving responsible management and sustainable development goals. By leveraging the knowledge, resources, and expertise of diverse partners, we enhance our ability to drive positive change and make a meaningful impact on society and the environment.

3.3 Based on your experience and insights, what recommendations would you give to other organisations seeking to promote sustainable development through responsible management practices and strategies?

Based on my experience and insights at “company”, I offer the following recommendations to organizations seeking to promote sustainable development through responsible management practices and strategies.

First, integrate sustainability into the core of your organization, making it a fundamental part of your culture and strategy.

Second, set clear and measurable sustainability goals aligned with the SDGs. Engage all stakeholders early and often to foster shared commitment. Stay informed, adapt, and be ready to embrace innovation and technology. Celebrate and transparently communicate your successes, and advocate for supportive policies.

Above all, be patient and persistent, recognizing that sustainable development is a long-term journey with enduring rewards. These recommendations can guide organizations in effectively advancing responsible management practices and contributing to a more sustainable future.

Closing:

Thank you for sharing your valuable insights and experiences during this interview. Your contribution will greatly contribute to the understanding of responsible management practices and strategies for sustainable development. If there are any additional points or perspectives you would like to add, please feel free to do so.

Annexure D: Thematic Analysis – First Level coding

Sort ID	Category	Code	Case	Text
1	Responsible Management Practices in South Africa	Practice	Participant 1	We prioritize responsible management practices by focusing on waste reduction, energy efficiency, and environmentally friendly processes.
2	Responsible Management Practices in South Africa	Integration of these practices into overall business operations	Participant 1	we actively engage with clients to implement waste reduction initiatives and optimize resource usage.
3	Responsible Management Practices in South Africa	Integration of these practices into overall business operations	Participant 1	Sustainability isn't separate from the company; it's seamlessly integrated into our day-to-day operations to minimize environmental impact while maximizing efficiency and cost-effectiveness.
4	Responsible Management Practices in South Africa	Integration of these practices into overall business operations	Participant 10	we've adopted a range of responsible management practices and strategies to drive sustainable development.
5	Responsible Management Practices in South Africa	Examples of integration	Participant 10	We have set specific environmental targets, including reducing our carbon footprint and increasing energy efficiency across our operations.
6	Responsible Management Practices in South Africa	Integration of these practices into overall business operations	Participant 2	we've embedded responsible management practices at the heart of our operations to champion sustainable development.
7	Responsible Management Practices in South Africa	Examples of integration	Participant 2	Common practices include environmental sustainability, community engagement, ethical finance, and promoting diversity and inclusion.
8	Responsible Management Practices in South Africa	Examples of integration	Participant 2	commitment to responsible management and sustainability in South African businesses
9	Practices implemented in the company Responsible Management Practices in South Africa	alignment with global goals of sustainability and social equity.	Participant 3	Circular Economy Approach: We've adopted a circular economy approach in our operations
10	Practices implemented in the company Responsible Management Practices in South Africa	community engagement	Participant 3	Community Investment: We've developed an extensive community investment program that focuses on education, skills development, and health in the communities where we operate. This strategy reinforces our commitment to local development and aligns with our business objectives by building positive relationships with the communities that support our operations.

11	Practices implemented in the company Responsible Management Practices in South Africa	emphasizes the importance of these practices in ethical and sustainable business conduct	Participant 3	These strategies not only promote sustainable development but also enhance our overall business objectives. They reduce operational costs, mitigate risks, improve our brand reputation, and ensure the long-term viability of our business in a world where sustainability is increasingly vital to success.
12	The major challenges faced by businesses in South Africa	The company's approach	Participant 3	At “company”, we address these challenges through a multi-pronged approach:
13	The major challenges faced by businesses in South Africa	The company's approach	Participant 3	Dedicated Compliance Team: We maintain a dedicated team that closely monitors and interprets the regulatory landscape, ensuring compliance and actively engaging with regulatory bodies.
14	The major challenges faced by businesses in South Africa	The company's approach	Participant 3	Customized Solutions: To address resource constraints, we offer customizable sustainability solutions to our clients, tailoring our offerings to fit their specific needs and budgets.
15	The major challenges faced by businesses in South Africa	The major challenges	Participant 3	We maintain dedicated expertise to navigate the complex regulatory landscape
16	The major challenges faced by businesses in South Africa	The major challenges	Participant 3	offering clients tailored sustainability solutions that fit their specific needs and resources.
17	The major challenges faced by businesses in South Africa	The major challenges	Participant 3	Actively engaging with stakeholders, including clients and industry organizations
18	Practices implemented in the company Responsible Management Practices in South Africa	transparency and Reporting	Participant 4	commitment to sustainability reporting provides transparency about our environmental and social performance
19	Practices implemented in the company Responsible Management Practices in South Africa	Carbon reduction initiatives and environmental responsibility	Participant 4	we've undertaken carbon reduction initiatives, including energy-efficient practices and transitioning to renewable energy sources, which not only reduce our carbon footprint but also support our goal of minimizing environmental impact.
20	Practices implemented in the company Responsible Management Practices in South Africa	Carbon reduction initiatives and environmental responsibility	Participant 4	We've also prioritized diversity and inclusion through dedicated programs, promoting a more inclusive workplace, with a focus on gender balance and equal opportunities, in alignment with our broader business objectives

21	Practices implemented in the company Responsible Management Practices in South Africa	community engagement	Participant 4	Furthermore, by encouraging community engagement and volunteering, we make a positive impact on local communities, reinforcing our commitment to being a responsible corporate citizen.
22	The major challenges faced by businesses in South Africa	To address these challenges	Participant 5	Compliance Expertise: We invest in expertise to navigate the regulatory landscape, ensuring that we meet all requirements while minimizing administrative burdens.
23	The major challenges faced by businesses in South Africa	To address these challenges	Participant 5	Resource Allocation: We allocate resources strategically to prioritize sustainability initiatives and ensure that they receive the attention and investment required.
24	The major challenges faced by businesses in South Africa	To address these challenges	Participant 5	Supplier Collaboration: We actively collaborate with suppliers who share our sustainability goals, working together to source eco-friendly materials and ensure responsible practices throughout the supply chain.
25	The major challenges faced by businesses in South Africa	To address these challenges	Participant 5	Consumer Engagement: We focus on consumer education and engagement through marketing campaigns and initiatives that highlight the value of sustainable fashion choices.
26	The major challenges faced by businesses in South Africa	To address these challenges	Participant 5	Impact Assessment: We regularly review and assess the impact of our responsible management practices; selecting relevant metrics to gauge progress and ensure we stay on track.

Annexure E: Ethical Approval letter



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Senate Committee for Research Ethics
Tel: 018 299-484
Feziwe.Mseleni@nwu.ac.za

06 September 2023

ETHICS APPROVAL LETTER OF STUDY

Based on approval by the **Economic and Management Sciences Research Ethics Committee (EMS-REC)** on, 25/08/2023 the Economic and Management Sciences Research Ethics Committee hereby **approves** your study as indicated below. This implies that the North-West University Senate Committee for Research Ethics (NWU-REC) grants its permission that, provided the special conditions specified below are met and pending any other authorisation that may be necessary, the study may be initiated, using the ethics number below.

Study title: Exploring responsible management practices and strategies that promote sustainable development in South African companies.

Study Leader/Supervisor (Principal Investigator)/Researcher: Prof Y du Plessis

Student: C Roux (23436832)

N	W	U	-	0	1	8	6	8	-	2	3	-	A	4
Institution				Study Number						Year			Status	

Status: S = Submission; R = Re-Submission; P = Provisional Authorisation; A = Authorisation

Application Type:

Commencement date: 06/09/2023

Expiry date: 06/09/2024

Risk: Minimal

Approval of the study is initially provided for a year, after which continuation of the study is dependent on receipt and review of the annual (or as otherwise stipulated) monitoring report and the concomitant issuing of a letter of continuation.

Special in process conditions of the research for approval (if applicable):

•

General conditions:

While this ethics approval is subject to all declarations, undertakings and agreements incorporated and signed in the application form, the following general terms and conditions will apply:

- The study leader/supervisor (principle investigator)/researcher must report in the prescribed format to the EMS-REC:
 - annually (or as otherwise requested) on the monitoring of the study, whereby a letter of continuation will be provided, and upon completion of the study; and
 - without any delay in case of any adverse event or incident (or any matter that interrupts sound ethical principles) during the course of the study.
 - The approval applies strictly to the proposal as stipulated in the application form. Should any amendments to the proposal be deemed necessary during the course of the study, the study leader/researcher must apply for approval of these amendments at the EMS-REC, prior to implementation. Should there be any deviations from the study proposal without the necessary approval of such amendments, the ethics approval is immediately and automatically forfeited.
 - Annually a number of studies may be randomly selected for an external audit.
 - The date of approval indicates the first date that the study may be started.
- In the interest of ethical responsibility, the NWU-SCRE and EMS-REC reserves the right to:*

- request access to any information or data at any time during the course or after completion of the study;
- to ask further questions, seek additional information, require further modification or monitor the conduct of your research or the informed consent process;
- withdraw or postpone approval if:
 - any unethical principles or practices of the study are revealed or suspected;
 - it becomes apparent that any relevant information was withheld from the EMS-REC or that information has been false or misrepresented;
 - submission of the annual (or otherwise stipulated) monitoring report, the required amendments, or reporting of adverse events or incidents was not done in a timely manner and accurately; and / or
 - new institutional rules, national legislation or international conventions deem it necessary.

The EMS-REC would like to remain at your service as scientist and researcher, and wishes you well with your study. Please do not hesitate to contact the EMS-REC or the NWU-SCRE for any further enquiries or requests for assistance.

Yours sincerely,

Mark
Rathbone

Digitally signed by Mark Rathbone
DN: cn=Mark Rathbone, o=North-
West University, ou=Business
management,
email=mark.rathbone@nwu.ac.za,
c=ZA
Date: 2023.09.06 14:06:27 +02'00'

Prof Mark Rathbone
Chairperson: NWU Economic and Management Sciences Research Ethics Committee

Annexure F: Language Editor letter



Marieta Grundling (MBA)

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edit@profeditmba.co.za

24 November 2023

To Whom It May Concern

This serves to confirm that the MBA Dissertation: **Exploring responsible management practices and strategies to promote sustainable development in South African companies** by **C Roux** was edited. The language, presentation, referencing system (both in-text and against the Reference List), were checked and corrected.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Marieta Grundling', is written over a horizontal line.

M Grundling

24 November 2023

Annexure G: Turnitin summary report

23436832:Final_Turn-it-in_test.docx		Chante Roux
ORIGINALITY REPORT		
15%	11%	8%
SIMILARITY INDEX	INTERNET SOURCES	PUBLICATIONS
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