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Building a Hierarchical Enablers Framework for Service Business Model Innovation for Sustainable Performance: Evidence from Ghana's Electricity Sector

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Abstract: Selecting an appropriate business model innovation for sustainable performance is a complex decision that requires a decision support tool. However, despite the importance of business model innovation (BMI) for sustainable performance, there has been limited investigation into how a hierarchical enabler framework grounded in service-dominant logic contributes to the sustainability of service firms. This study examines the critical enablers of service business model innovation (SBMI) for sustainable performance within the utility sector, particularly the electricity supply sector in Ghana. Using the best–worst method (BWM), this study identifies and prioritizes three main enablers and eleven sub-enablers, addressing a notable gap in understanding their impact on sustainable performance. The findings reveal that service value creation innovation is the most critical primary enabler, with human capital, technological platforms, and value-based pricing constituting the top three sub-enablers for sustainability performance. This study contributes to the service-dominant logic and BMI discourse by providing a novel hierarchical framework that aids managerial decision making in service-oriented firms, particularly in developing economies. The results underscore the need for utility companies to prioritize investments in key areas, such as human capital, technological advancements, and customer-centric approaches, to drive sustainable business practices and improve overall performance.

Keywords: service business model innovation; best–worst method; service-dominant logic; experiential services; sustainable performance

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1. Introduction

Within the service industry, the utilities sector has emerged as a key sector with far-reaching implications for various aspects of socioeconomic development. Functioning as a significant catalyst for national progress, the utility sector significantly influences productivity, industrialization, and general quality of life. Municipal services, including energy, water, and waste management, are influential actors in the sustainability of cities [1]. Experts highlight [2] the crucial role of energy utilities in achieving sustainable energy development, emphasizing the potential external benefits for society through the increase in the usage of renewables. Recognizing the crucial role of the utility sector within the service industry lays the groundwork for a comprehensive examination of the enablers of service business model innovation for sustainable growth.

The energy sector has undergone a significant transformation, marked by a move towards a broader range of energy services designed to meet changing market needs. This shift is driven by a variety of factors, including the growing importance of eco- and energy efficiency requirements, the emergence of new green energy technologies, and the development of innovative smart energy infrastructure [3]. These sustainability

imperatives of energy firms have led to notable innovative business models such as the Energy as a Service (EaaS) business model, which provides consumers with ancillary services to enhance energy comfort [4]. However, these emerging trends have presented energy firms with a decision-making challenge: how to successfully adapt their business models to the new wave of sustainability consciousness. It has become increasingly crucial for companies to implement sustainable business models to achieve economic benefits while also being mindful of the environment and society [5]. Economic indicators in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) can have a detrimental impact on company profitability, while economic indicators in sustainability reports have a positive effect on company profitability [6]. This highlights the need for more innovative business models to address this complex issue.

The significance of business model innovation in tackling sustainability problems within the service sector has been extensively acknowledged in the academic literature. The authors of [7] emphasize that sustainable business model innovation involves creating value for both customers and firms by addressing environmental and societal needs, underscoring its central position in steering sustainability transitions in service companies. According to [8], a firm's sustainability practices have a positive impact on its performance, which is partially mediated by its business model innovation activities. This highlights the importance of adopting sustainable practices and innovating business models in the service industry. This is supported by [9], who describes business model innovation as adopting an entirely different approach as a strategic measure for the future of business, highlighting its potential to drive sustainable practices and outcomes.

Utility companies face a multitude of economic sustainability performance issues, including financial constraints, demand for investment in renewable energy technologies, and adherence to economic and environmental regulations [10]. These difficulties are exacerbated by the need to strike a balance between environmental, economic, and social factors, as emphasized by the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) [11]. Furthermore, ensuring long-term financial sustainability requires creating value for stakeholders and maintaining the continuity of operations [12]. For example, the Electricity Company of Ghana (ECG) has been confronted with financial constraints, technical and operational inefficiencies, and power supply shortages, which are indicative of a flawed business model [13]. These inadequacies have led to sub-optimal performance, with significant implications for both the general public and industries that depend on continuous power supply to maintain their standard of living and productivity, respectively.

The literature suggests that investigating innovative performance in the service sector, particularly in relation to novel business models within the energy sector, is of utmost importance [14]. These studies emphasize the need to understand business model innovation and argue that digital technology and business model innovation have the potential to overcome obstacles in the energy transition process. The authors of [15,16] highlight the significance of investing in business model innovation to seize opportunities related to energy management, service sector growth, and integration. A synthesis of these findings indicates the pressing need for an innovative business model to address sustainability performance challenges faced by utility companies, particularly energy utilities.

Although some researchers have explored business model innovation in addressing the sustainability agenda [7,8,17], there has been no investigation of a hierarchical enabler framework for business model innovation under service-dominant logic in tackling sustainable performance to the best of our knowledge. This notable gap presents a substantial void in the field of business model innovation. Furthermore, a lack of understanding of BMI enablers and a comprehensive decision model impedes the innovation process, forcing businesses to rely on ad hoc or trial-and-error strategies to innovate their business models [18]. This inefficient approach increases costs, prolongs experimentation, and ultimately reduces profitability, a major determinant of sustainable growth [19]. The study of BMI in the service industry, still in its infancy according to [20], necessitates expanded research to explore the strategic drivers that enable service enterprises to innovate their

business models toward sustainability consciousness. The novelty of our study lies in the identification of the enablers of service business model innovation under the principles of SDL, which have implications for sustainable performance. The approach emphasizes intangible resources, co-creation of value, and leveraging relationships to facilitate enhanced sustainability performance by developing and providing value in ways that are not only economically feasible but also environmentally conscious and socially responsible. Through a comprehensive literature review with an emphasis on service-dominant logic, we identified and ranked the enablers of service-based business model innovation using the best–worst method outlined by [21]. The identified enablers were then examined within the context of Ghana's electricity supply industry, resulting in a hierarchical framework encompassing three main enablers and eleven sub-enablers for service-based business model innovation. This study contributes to the scholarly discourse on business model innovation and service-dominant logic and provides valuable guidance to managers in making informed decisions that affect the economic, social, and environmental imperatives of sustainable performance.

In Section 2, we provide a comprehensive review of the literature on the SBMI and its enabling factors. Section 3 focuses on the research methodology and establishes a hierarchical enabler framework for a successful SBMI implementation. Section 4 presents the findings of this study and discusses the results. Finally, in Section 5, we reflect on the implications of the study's results for managerial practice, acknowledge the limitations of the study, and suggest potential areas for future research.

2. Theoretical and Literature Review

2.1. Sustainable Performance under Service-Dominant Logic

To maintain sustainable performance, a company must ensure that it achieves long-term economic, environmental, and social goals while maintaining financial stability and competitiveness. This entails incorporating sustainable practices into all aspects of the business, including its operations, strategy, and interactions with stakeholders [22]. Economic sustainability refers to a company's capacity to address its immediate financial requirements without impairing its own or others' ability to fulfill future obligations [23]. This involves discovering more effective methods for determining what is essential, establishing priorities for resource allocation, and ensuring the short-term profitability and long-term viability of the organization [24]. The social aspect of sustainability performance refers to a company's efforts to meet societal expectations, foster well-being, and contribute to the welfare of stakeholders and the surrounding community. The concept of value co-creation, which is highly crucial within the framework of service-dominant logic (SDL), emphasizes that organizations create value by considering all stakeholders involved in their processes and within the sphere of their broader ecosystem when pursuing firm value metrics, thus promoting sustainability consciousness and development [25]. Firm value creation can be achieved by incorporating the economic, governance, social, ethical, and environmental dimensions of sustainability performance into strategies [21]. As a result, companies that prioritize innovation and invest in R&D have greater potential for achieving social, environmental, and economic sustainability [26].

2.2. Service Business Model Innovation (SBMI)

Business model innovation refers to the process by which organizations alter their methods of value creation and acquisition and create new value propositions for customers through the integration of innovative resources and novel business processes. This results in the development of new organizational activities and structures for the creation, transmission, and acquisition of value [27]. Service-dominant logic emphasizes the importance of utilizing its concepts to design services to understand economic exchange and value creation, making it an appropriate framework for understanding business model innovation in services [28]. This involves comprehending the journey between business partners and value propositions as service exchanges through the integration of resources

within the service ecosystem [29]. By incorporating the principles of service-dominant logic into business model innovation, organizations can develop models that focus on customer understanding and collaborative creation of value at every stage [30], which is consistent with the pursuit of economic and social sustainability performance.

Value creation innovation includes the strategies that companies use to generate value internally and throughout their value chains [31]. This involves utilizing resources and capabilities to co-create value for customers [32]. In the service industry, value creation is often a collaborative effort involving multiple actors rather than solely the responsibility of the producer. Oertzen's [33] integrative framework illustrates the distributed nature of value creation in the service industry, in which service providers and customers co-create services. The authors of [34] also advocate service-dominant logic (SDL) as a transformative framework, emphasizing the co-creation of value through reciprocal interactions among producers, consumers, and other partners within the service ecosystem. Essentially, service value creation innovation encompasses novel approaches, methods, technologies, and resources employed by a service organization to generate value for its customers' ultimate benefit. This integration recognizes that relationships extend beyond transactions, encompassing ongoing interactions and engagement. In support of this, Ref. [29] explains that SDL prompts a re-examination of the interactions between business partners, viewing value propositions as exchanges within the service ecosystem through the integration of resources.

New business models should address unmet customer needs and engage in novel customer segments [35]. This approach is indicative of value proposition innovation [36]. This study defines service value proposition innovation (SVPI) as a conscious initiative by service providers to offer competitive and unique solutions that not only differentiate their services from competitors but also foster customer loyalty and attract new clientele. This approach is perceptual in nature, centered on strategically positioning a proposition within customer consciousness. Innovations in value proposition should be inherently customer-centric, adapting to evolving needs and underscoring the dynamic and co-creative nature of value. For example, Ref. [37] suggested that the road to achieving sustainability in a digital era should focus on the following key points: enhancing customer experience, adopting customer centricity, building data analytics capabilities, and shifting innovation to the business model level.

Value capture innovation encompasses two key components: innovative revenue models, and novel pricing and cost structures [38]. Innovative revenue models involve a significant shift in how businesses interact and are compensated for their offerings by focusing on creating value through the exploitation of long-term business opportunities that transcend traditional transactions [39]. Revenue models in service business models can be innovated by integrating them with service-dominant logic to reflect the ongoing and dynamic nature of value capture in services. For example, value-based pricing and prioritizing experiential services to capture value align with SDL principles. Service innovations within the SDL framework are based on the application of competencies, with firms utilizing these competencies to promote value and benefit in each transaction or exchange for consumers [40]. Therefore, firms require dynamic reconfiguring capabilities, such as service and experiential innovativeness, to enhance customer satisfaction and generate revenue [41]. This study characterizes service value capture innovation as the collection of creative approaches utilized by service businesses to optimize financial returns from their value creation and proposition endeavors, while simultaneously fostering customer devotion.

In this study, we adapted the taxonomy proposed by [38] and delineated service business model innovation (SBMI) into three fundamental components: service value creation innovation, service value proposition innovation, and service value capture innovation. This structured approach incorporates the principles of SDL to identify the critical enablers of service business model innovation for sustainable performance.

2.3. Service Value Creation Innovation Enablers

2.3.1. Trustworthy Networks (TNs) and Collaborations

Establishing a network and partnership infrastructure based on mutual trust agreements, internal synergies, and collaborations with other network players are essential factors for success [42]. These approaches significantly influence value creation and innovation by fostering a conducive and innovative environment. Trustworthy networks facilitate the free flow of information and promote knowledge sharing among collaborating entities, which is particularly important in the service industry, where knowledge is a critical resource. Knowledge-intensive services, including software development, management consulting, scientific and technical evaluation, business audit, marketing analysis and foresight, complex machinery repair, engineering, data storage and analysis, and telecommunication services predominantly exchanged in business-to-business transactions, play a critical role as connectors between service providers and clients in the power industry [43]. The ability to share insights, best practices, and market intelligence promotes collaborative learning and contributes to the co-creation of value by integrating diverse perspectives and expertise, as highlighted by [44] in their emphasis on cross-organizational collaboration for value co-creation and co-innovation for sustainable growth. Firms can leverage insights from key actors in their networks to further their innovation and sustainability agenda. For example, businesses share knowledge such as green innovation capabilities across various industries through horizontal collaborations and their extended networks, including suppliers and customers in other sectors [45]. Luzzini [46] also posited that achieving superior performance through a dedication to sustainability necessitates a successful partnership with other organizations within a company's supply network. This aligns with [47] who found inter-firm collaboration focused on sustainability to have both direct and indirect (through perceived customer loyalty) effects on business performance. Collaborations built on trust enable effective resource pooling, which is crucial in the service industry, where innovation often requires a combination of human, financial, and technological resources. Trustworthy networks and collaborations facilitate the synergistic use of these resources [48]. Having a trustworthy network adds to a company's adaptability and agility resources, which are crucial for staying ahead in a dynamic service landscape, and pursuing sustainability performance.

2.3.2. Human Capital (HC)

The human capital of an organization, which encompasses competencies, capabilities, and skills, plays a pivotal role in determining its success [42]. Investing in human capital cultivates a culture of innovation and contributes to an organization's competitiveness. In the service industry, where offerings can be diverse and complex, enhancing personnel skills allows a greater degree of specialization. Value creation in the service industry is closely linked to meeting customer needs and expectations, and specialized skills contribute to the creation of unique and high-value services, thereby fostering innovation. The study in [49] also supports this notion by discussing the impact of human capital on knowledge creation capabilities and innovation performance, highlighting the complex relationship between human capabilities and innovation. This implies that the development of human capabilities can have various effects on innovation performance. The authors of [50] emphasized the need for training programs and educational initiatives to stimulate creativity, encourage individuals to think critically, propose novel solutions, and embrace a culture of continuous improvement. Such initiatives are crucial for generating new ideas and approaches in the service sector, in which an innovative workforce is essential. In line with the principles of sustainability, Ref. [51] uncovered a positive correlation between the entrepreneurial traits of self-consciousness, innovation, and environmental commitment. This correlation is instrumental in fostering sustainability and sustainable development. The study implies that the presence of entrepreneurial self-consciousness competence acts as a driving force for innovation and sustainable development. Hence, it is essential for service providers to invest in the development of their human capital through the imple-

mentation of effective recruitment and training processes that select suitable candidates for appropriate roles and promote necessary competencies [42]. Moreover, providing employees with appropriate skills and sustainability orientation training can help align firms' sustainability goals.

2.3.3. Technological Platforms (TPs)

Technological platforms have been found to have positive effects on firms' economic sustainability. For example, Ref. [52] advocates the potential of blockchain technology to reshape supply chain management, and Ref. [53] emphasizes the adoption of blockchain technology to achieve real-time transparency and cost savings, which can contribute to sustainability performance. Service firms may also employ innovative technologies such as artificial intelligence (AI), the Internet of Things (IoT), and blockchain to develop solutions that address current shortcomings in service delivery [54,55]. These technologies play a critical role in the transformative efforts of service firms, promoting efficiency and reducing operational costs and contribute to a firm's sustainable performance. Service firms can streamline their internal processes and automate routine tasks by integrating digital technologies, resulting in more efficient and convenient services [56,57]. Moreover, the integration of advanced technology, such as AI, has immense potential for enhancing value creation [58]. This can lead to improved economic sustainability performance for firms. For example, power distribution utilities can utilize AI to enhance their value creation capabilities. By employing AI, utilities can facilitate predictive maintenance by analyzing and identifying patterns and anomalies to predict equipment failures before they occur, thereby ensuring system reliability and creating economic value for customers. Additionally, through machine learning, AI algorithms can make dynamic adjustments to grid configurations, optimize energy distribution, and improve the overall grid efficiency, which could impact social sustainability performance.

2.3.4. Customer Enablement (CE)

Ref. [59] defines customer enablement as an organizational endeavor dedicated to equipping customers with essential tools and knowledge to maximize the value customers derive from a business's offerings. This innovative approach not only augments customer experience but also cultivates self-sufficiency, surpassing conventional customer support paradigms. Customers are enabled through customer-focused technological support, resulting in heightened customer engagement, perceived innovativeness, and observable value co-creation behavior [42,60]. It is essential to consider the roles of customer satisfaction, loyalty, and education in sustainability. The importance of customer satisfaction in fostering long-term customer relationships, which ultimately contribute to the sustainability of a business, should not be overlooked [61]. The study in [42] affirmed the principles of customer enablement by highlighting the importance of establishing long-term contracts with customers through information sharing, transparency, and understanding of customers' business objectives. An informed and empowered customer is more likely to experience satisfaction, develop loyalty, and realize the full value of a service offering, which ultimately reflects a firm's sustainability performance [62]. Moreover, the implementation of novel educational strategies by businesses may motivate customers to adopt sustainable behaviors. Through customer enablement, companies can facilitate client education on sustainable practices, ultimately fostering more environmentally conscious choices. As [63] highlights, the roles of customer education and top management involvement in achieving sustainable practices within the food service sector are crucial. This suggests that customer enablement is essential for the successful implementation of sustainable practices. By conveying the environmental and social consequences of their services, businesses can encourage responsible consumption habits that minimize waste. The authors of [64] also recommended innovative educational techniques and the development of skills to empower individuals as agents of change for sustainability.

2.4. Service Value Proposition Innovation Enablers

2.4.1. Personalization and Integrated Bundled Solutions (PI)

Personalization can help address overconsumption, which is a major sustainability issue. As demonstrated by [65], personalized production has a positive impact on sustainable consumption. The study highlights the high level of consumer satisfaction associated with purchasing personalized products, indicating that personalization can result in more efficient consumption and reduced waste of resources. Personalized services often result in deeper long-term customer relationships which can lead to sustained business performance. The study in [66] delved into the concept of sustainable customer relationship management, which is characterized as a combination of business strategies, customer-oriented business processes, and computer systems that aim to integrate sustainability into customer relationship management aligning with the principles of economic sustainability. Bundling of service solutions entails the integration of various products and services into cohesive and personalized packages that are specifically designed to meet the distinct requirements of customers. This approach aligns with the principles of service-dominant logic, which emphasize the combination of resources and the enhancement in value propositions to facilitate the creation of value for customers [67]. Moreover, the noteworthy trend towards servitization within manufacturing enterprises underscores the importance of comprehending the mechanisms by which companies integrate solutions to provide customized products and services [68]. The notion of integrated solutions, which encompasses physical products, services, and information, is of paramount importance in industrial services, signifying the shift from considering integrated solutions as a "nice-to-have" to a "need-to-have" [69].

2.4.2. Multi-Perspective Customer Profiling (MC)

Underserved market segments can be identified through multi-perspective profiling, which can reveal opportunities for firms to differentiate themselves by offering tailored, sustainable products. This differentiation can attract customers and enhance the firm's reputation as a sustainability leader. Some studies [70] have emphasized the need to consider sustainable market segments and the environmental awareness, attitudes, and practices of customers in developing effective marketing strategies, thus demonstrating the role of multi-perspective customer profiling. Customer profiling also facilitates the establishment of social feedback channels that enable businesses to solicit customer opinions on the effectiveness of sustainability initiatives [71]. According to [72], retailers can utilize customer profiling data to offer feedback to their customers regarding their sustainability-related behavior, specifically on food waste, which was found to be a potential route for behavioral change. This approach allows businesses to remain responsive to evolving customer expectations and to adapt their sustainability strategies accordingly. Customer profiling enhances value proposition innovation by providing insights into customer value creation, the dynamic nature of value, and the collaborative efforts required to create and integrate resources into attractive value propositions [73,74]. This approach aligns with service-dominant logic and emphasizes the significance of customer-dominant value perspectives in driving service innovation and value proposition development [67]. Customer profiling information also serves as valuable input, particularly for knowledge-intensive service providers, in segmenting customer markets, thus allowing for more targeted and effective strategies to maximize the impact of marketing efforts and service offerings [75,76].

2.4.3. Service Proposition Resonance (SP)

Service proposition resonance refers to the ability of a value proposition to effectively engage with a target audience, resulting in a significant and meaningful impact. It involves developing a deep understanding of the target audience through an appreciation of their cultural and emotional dynamics, which allows for the development of new products, services, experiences, features, brands, and engagement mechanisms that align with customers [77]. The benefits of service proposition resonance are particularly evident in

knowledge-intensive service contexts. According to [78], resonance of a value proposition is a crucial element in the dyadic relationship between customers and salespeople, and it is essential to address any discrepancies in value propositions to guarantee that the service offering resonates with the customer and effectively communicates reciprocal value promises. A firm's service proposition resonance can be improved by incorporating sustainability into its service proposition, as it enhances the firm's image. According to [79], a firm's sustainability reputation has a strong and significant impact on consumers' attitudes towards the firm. This effect is mediated by the attitude towards the CEO and the attitude towards the firm's first-mover status, leading to increased brand loyalty. The authors of [80] argued that sustainability practices are among the factors that influence a firm's reputation, and can contribute to attracting new customers, retaining existing ones, and building brand loyalty. This contributes to the long-term success and economic sustainability of the business.

2.4.4. Data-Driven Value Propositions (DD)

A study conducted by [81] examined the potential of data-driven business models for professional services, emphasizing the process of transforming data into value as a key activity and data-driven products and services as a value proposition. Companies can acquire valuable insights into customer requirements and preferences, sustainability impacts, and resource utilization using big data. This enables the development of services that not only satisfy customer needs more effectively but also align with their sustainability goals. Managers must create an environment that encourages customers to share their ideas, contribute their expertise, experiment with new products, and express their preferences [82]. This highlights the transformative power of data-driven approaches in shaping value propositions for service innovations. Service firms can improve service quality and ultimately develop new service offerings by continually utilizing customer data through feedback channels. The authors of [83] highlighted the significance of data as a resource in data-driven service delivery networks, stressing its influence on business differentiation, competitive advantage, and operational efficiency. The use of data analytics tools allows service providers to extract valuable insights from the large amounts of data generated during service delivery, leading to more effective resource allocation, enhanced value offerings, improved targeted marketing strategies, and identification of emerging market trends [84]. In a study conducted by [85], it was emphasized that business models driven by smart data play a crucial role in introducing new products and services that align with sustainability dimensions in the context of Industry 4.0.

2.5. Service Value Capture Innovation Enablers

2.5.1. Value-Based Pricing (VB)

Value-based pricing is a strategy by which the price of a service is determined based on the customer's perceived value of the service [86] and is underpinned by factors such as brand image, differentiation, premium pricing strategy, and service proposition resonance [87]. The cost of the service is equated to the benefits it provides to the customer and the focus is on the customer's perception of the value of the product or service and creating long-term value for the buyer, rather than simply covering the cost of providing the service [88]. According to [89], this method is particularly well suited for digital products, where pricing is often based on consumer value perception, which has implications for a firm's economic sustainability. Customers' perceptions of sustainability consciousness influences patronage, loyalty, and purchase behavior [90]. This strategy requires decision-makers to base the price of novelty in services on customers' perceptions of the benefits they offer and how these benefits are traded against the price [42]. Furthermore, value-based pricing is suggested as one of the most profitable pricing methods for companies competing in today's business environment [91], leading to more stable revenue streams. Service firms can leverage the prices of their services in relation to heightened perceived value by customers and market conditions, allowing service firms to capture maximum value during periods of high demand or premium offerings [87].

2.5.2. Alignment of Sales to Different Customer Types (AS)

Service firms can enhance their value capture by aligning their sales to different customer types rather than relying on traditional sales distribution channels [42]. The authors suggest that service firms should adopt smart technologies that cater to the unique needs and preferences of their customer categories. This approach presents corporations with the opportunity to implement tailored marketing tactics and concentrate their resources on their "cash-cow segments" in the hope of increasing revenue [92]. To implement this strategy, service firms must first develop a pricing policy tailored to the specific needs and types of customers. Additionally, they must modify their promotion and communication strategies to align themselves with their target customer segments. The effective use of value-informed pricing and a customer-oriented approach are crucial in this strategy to capture value [93]. Moreover, customer segmentation and profiling are necessary preconditions for adopting this approach as they serve as crucial inputs for customer categorization.

2.5.3. Experiential Services (ESs)

Service firms capture value through experiential services by designing and delivering memorable and immersive customer experiences. To capture value through experiential services, service firms engage in co-creation with customers, focusing on their experience when interacting with the organization [94]. This co-creation results in joint value creation between service firms and customers, with the value determined by the co-creation process [95]. Research by [42] indicates that top-performing service firms employ a mix of advanced managerial tools and marketing solutions to heighten customer experience by establishing win–win relationships. The aim is to increase emotional connections with customers and capture value through customer satisfaction and loyalty. In support of this notion, Ref. [96] posited that experiential satisfaction and value positively influence trust in the service provider, which encourages customer patronage of the value offering. In addition, ensuring a heightened state of customers' experiential value by prioritizing service excellence and customers' aesthetic feelings enables value capture innovation [97]. Firms must prioritize differentiation and increase perceived benefits beyond functional attributes to entice consumers to pay a higher price, thus capturing more value [98] and contributing to its overall economic sustainability.

3. Research Methodology

This section examines the suitability of the BWM for evaluating enablers of the SBMI. The BWM was used to assess the weights of the primary and secondary enablers of BMI within the electricity supply service industry in Ghana. The BWM employs pairwise comparisons and mathematical modeling to determine the relative importance of criteria and alternatives [99]. This simplifies the decision-making process by reducing the number of comparisons required and ensuring consistency. The BWM is well suited for handling ordinal data, making it appropriate for decision-making situations where data may not be purely numerical. This method has been applied in a variety of contexts, including supplier selection for sustainability, technological innovation in small and medium enterprises, and performance assessment of electricity grid corporations [100–102]. To evaluate the relative importance of the various enablers of SBMI through the application of the BWM [21], the following steps were followed.

Step 1. Identifying a set of criteria $C = \{c_1, c_2, \cdots c_n\}$ for decision making.

Step 2. Determining the best (most desirable) and worst (least desirable) criteria.

Step 3. Comparing the best criterion to the others on a 1–9 point scale. A rating of 1 signifies an equally balanced preference between the most desirable criterion and another. Conversely, a rating of 9 indicates an extremely strong preference for the best criterion over another criterion. The outcome provides a best-to-others (BO) vector, stated as $BO = \{a_{B1}, a_{B2}, \cdots a_{Bn}\}$. a_{Bj} indicates the preference for the most desirable criterion B over criterion $j = 1, \ldots, n$.

Step 4. The evaluation of all other criteria was conducted by comparing them to the worst criterion on a scale of 1 to 9. The resultant outcome is represented by the others-to-worst (OW) vector, which is expressed as: $OW = \{a_{1w}, a_{2w}, \cdots, a_{nw}\}^{\top}$, where a_{jw} represents the preference of criterion j over the worst criterion W.

Step 5. Vectors BO and OW can be effectively utilized in a linear programming problem: min ξL subject to

$$\text{s.t} \quad w_B - a_{Bj} \times w_j \leq \xi L \tag{1}$$

$$w_j - a_{jW} \times w_W \leq \xi L \tag{2}$$

$$\sum_{w_j} = 1$$

$$w_j \geq 0, \text{ for all } j.$$

The solution to a linear programming problem comprises the optimal weights $\left(w_1^*, w_2^*, \cdots, w_n^*\right)$, and ξL^* and consistency measure ξL^*. A value of ξL^* closer to zero indicates greater consistency, which signifies that the decisions made by decision-makers are more reliable.

3.1. A Case Study in Ghana's Electricity Supply Sector

Ghana's electricity sector has undergone numerous reforms and changes to enhance its efficiency, reliability, and sustainability. The distribution of electricity is carried out by three main utilities, two of which are state-owned (Electricity Company of Ghana (ECG), Accra, Ghana and Northern Electricity Department Company (NEDCo.), Tamale, Ghana), and one which is privately operated (Enclave Power Company Ltd. (EPC), Tema, Ghana) [13]. The Electricity Company of Ghana (ECG), the largest of the three distribution utilities, primarily oversees the distribution and retail aspects of electricity in the southern part of the country, accounting for approximately 70% of the country's total population [103]. It is fully owned by the government of Ghana and is responsible for distributing power to six of the ten political regions in the country. In recent times, the company has experienced a number of operational and technical issues, including significant system losses and poor network reliability, which have had a negative impact on its financial performance due to the behavior of customers in regards to payments [13]. These challenges have a ripple effect on output, consumption, and investment in the economy [104], leading to advocates calling for the privatization of the company to improve its sustainable performance. The government has resorted to frequent upward adjustments in tariffs to address the challenges in revenue mobilization and ensure a sustainable electricity supply. However, balancing affordability for consumers and ensuring a sustainable electricity supply remains a difficult task. According to the National Energy Statistical Bulletin 2023, ECG remains the leading distribution utility, with a majority share of 79.6%, followed by NEDCo (20.4%) and EPC, with a close to a negligible percentage (0.003%), in terms of total electricity customers. The country generated 8192 GWh from hydro sources, 14,810 GWh from thermal sources, and 162 GWh from renewable sources, resulting in a total of 23,163 GWh in 2022. Approximately 22,478 GWh of electricity was transmitted during the year, with transmission losses of 922 GWh. The total electricity consumption for 2022 was estimated to be 17,547 GWh, with the industrial sector being the largest consumer at 7428 GWh, followed by the residential sector at 7111 GWh. The service, agriculture, and transport sectors recorded 2965 GWh, 33 GWh, and 11 GWh, respectively [105].

3.2. Evaluation and Process of Analysis

Figure 1 presents an outline of the evaluation and analysis procedure, including identifying enablers, gathering data, assigning weights, and prioritizing using the BWM. The steps are described in detail below.

Step 1. Identifying the hierarchical enablers: Eleven seasoned professionals, each with a minimum of six years of managerial experience in the electricity supply industry, and four professors from academia, with a minimum of six years of teaching experience in innovation management theory, were selected for the study. The managers were geographically distributed between regions as follows: two from Greater Accra, three from Ashanti, two from Western, two from Cape Coast, one from Eastern, and one from Volta. Professors were chosen based on their knowledge of the topic and industry practices through industry–university exchange programs. One professor operated a consultancy firm. The study deemed them to have the necessary knowledge related to the enablers of SBMI.

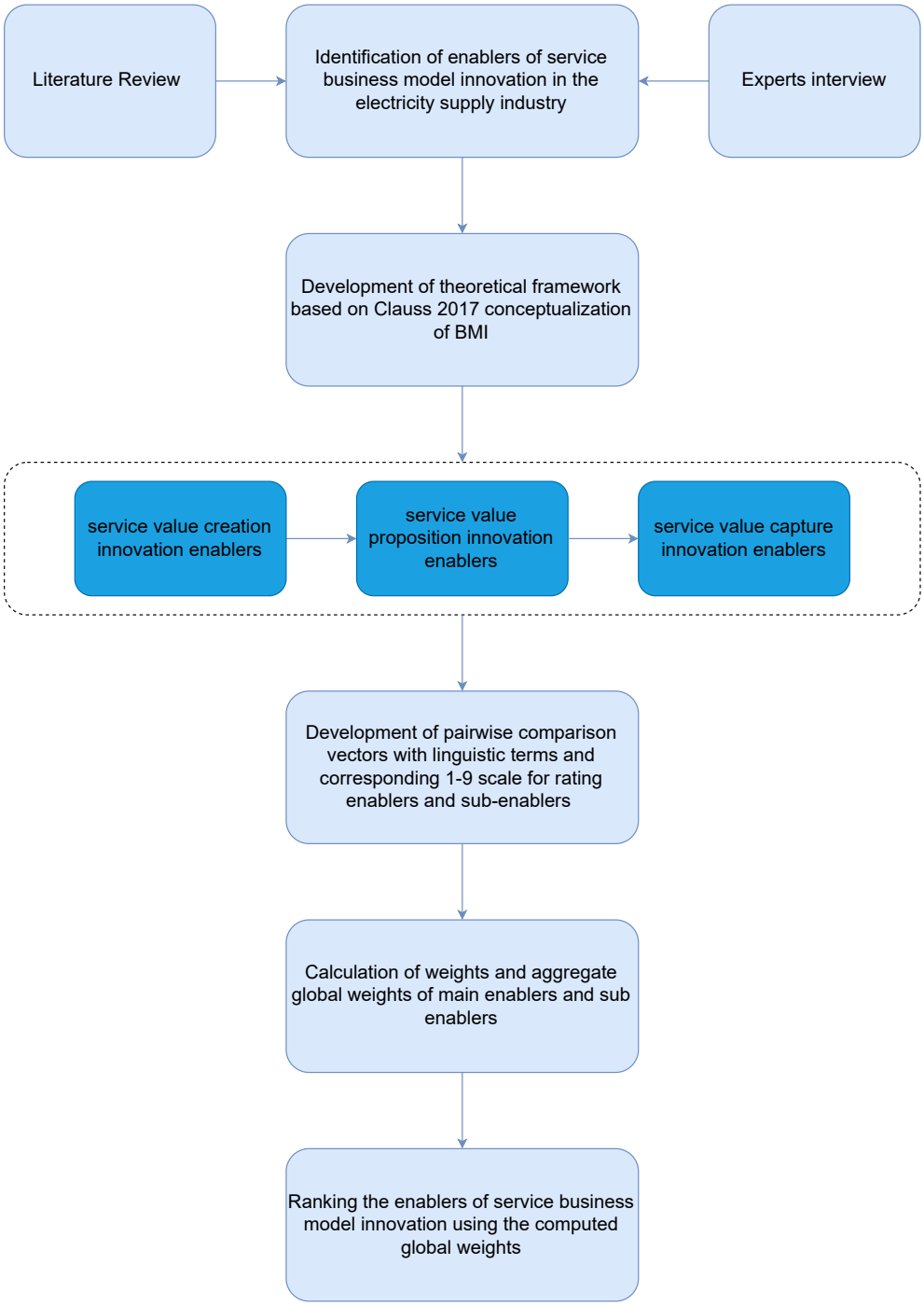

Figure 1. Evaluation and analysis process.

Based on a thorough analysis of the literature and the opinions of the professors, three primary enablers emerged, in alignment with the conceptualization of BMI in [38]: service value creation innovation, service value proposition innovation, and service value capture innovation. Additionally, eleven potential sub-enablers were identified, comprising four sub-enablers each under service value creation innovation and service value proposition innovation, and three sub-enablers under service value capture innovation. These identified enablers with references are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. A theoretical hierarchical enablers framework for SBMI.

First-Level Enabler	Second-Level Enablers	References
Service value creation innovation (SVCl)	Trustworthy network collaborations (TN)	[38,42,44,45] [47–50]
	Human capital (HC)	[51–54]
	Technological platforms (TPs)	[55,56,59,60]
	Customer Enablement (CE)	[61–63]
Service value proposition innovation (SVPI)	Personalization and integrated bundled solutions (PI)	[8,38,65,66,68–71]
	Multi-perspective customer profiling (MC)	[72,75,76,85]
	Service proposition resonance (SP)	[77–80]
	Data-driven value propositions (DD)	[81–83]
Service value capture innovation (SVTI)	Value-based pricing (VB)	[38,42,86,87]
	Alignment of sales to customer types (AS)	[88,90–92]
	Experiential services (ESs)	[93,94,96,97]

Step 2. Identifying the best and worst primary and secondary enablers: The research conducted a survey through a questionnaire to gather insights from key decision-makers. Participants were asked to identify the primary and sub-enablers that they considered most and least important. To ensure clarity and comprehension of the survey tool, participants were given guidance on the scale used. Table 2 presents the results of the analysis of the most and least significant primary and sub-enablers.

Table 2. The best (most important) and worst (least important) enablers of SBMI.

Main Enablers	No. Who Considered as the Best Enabler	No. Who Considered as the Worst Enabler	Sub-Enablers	No. Who Considered as the Best Enabler	No. Who Considered as the Worst Enabler
SVCl	5	0	TN	2	8
			HC	7	1
			TP	5	1
			CE	1	5
SVPI	4	10	PI	5	3
			MC	6	3
			SP	3	4
			DD	1	5
SVTI	6	5	VB	5	1
			AS	6	6
			ES	4	8

Step 3. Determining the best-to-others and others-to-worst vectors: The decision-makers were tasked with rating the top enabler against all other enablers using a scale of 1 to 9. They were also asked to rate the other enablers against the worst enabler using the same scale. Tables 3–6 display the paired responses of decision-maker 01 for both the

primary and secondary enablers. Corresponding bar graphs for the primary and secondary enablers weights are also included, along with consistency ratios shown in Figures 2–5. The relatively low consistency ratios indicate reliable and consistent comparisons.

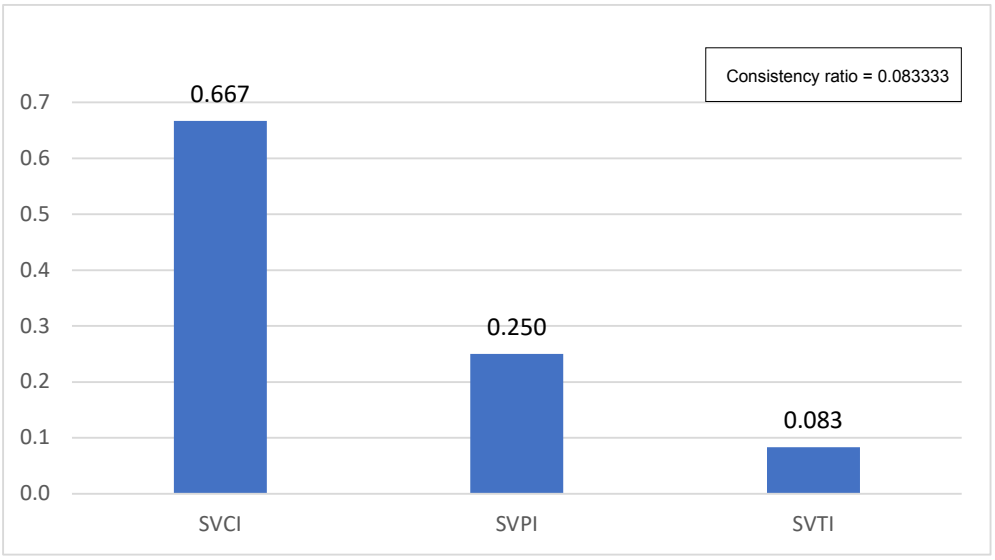

Figure 2. Weights of main enablers of SBMI.

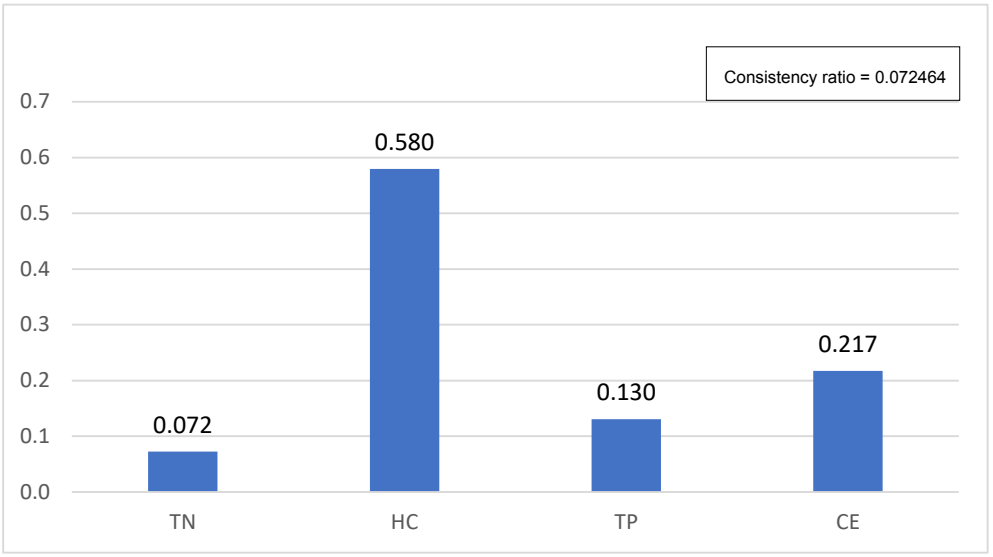

Figure 3. Weights of sub-enablers of SVCI.

Step 4. Calculation of the final optimal weights of enablers: An analysis of the pairwise comparison scores for each primary enabler and its sub-enablers was performed, followed by solving the BWM optimization problem to find the optimal weights for each participant. By averaging the results from all fifteen participants, we determined the final optimal weights for the primary and sub-enablers, which are presented in Table 7. The results are reliable, as ζL^* is close to zero, showing that decision-makers were consistent in their pairwise comparisons.

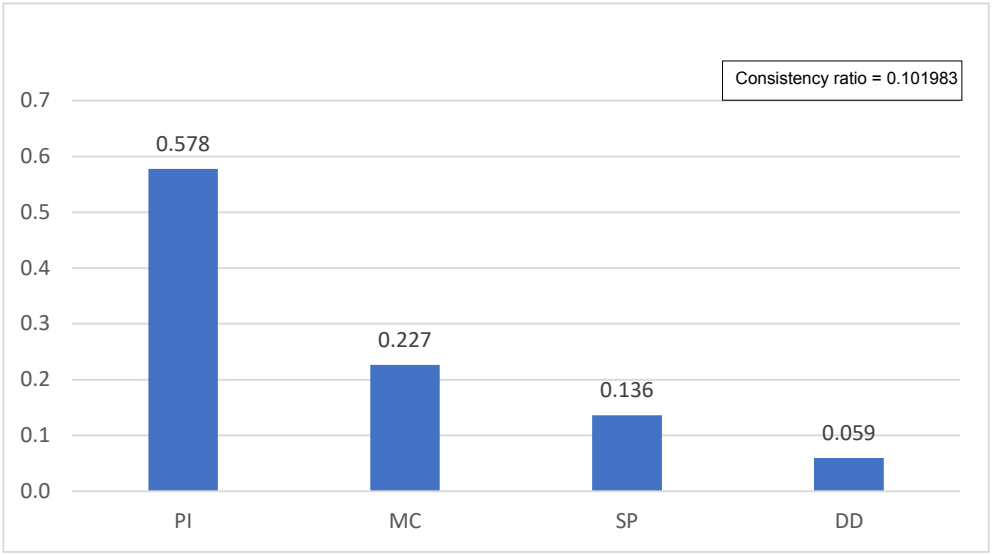

Figure 4. Weights of sub-enablers of SVPI.

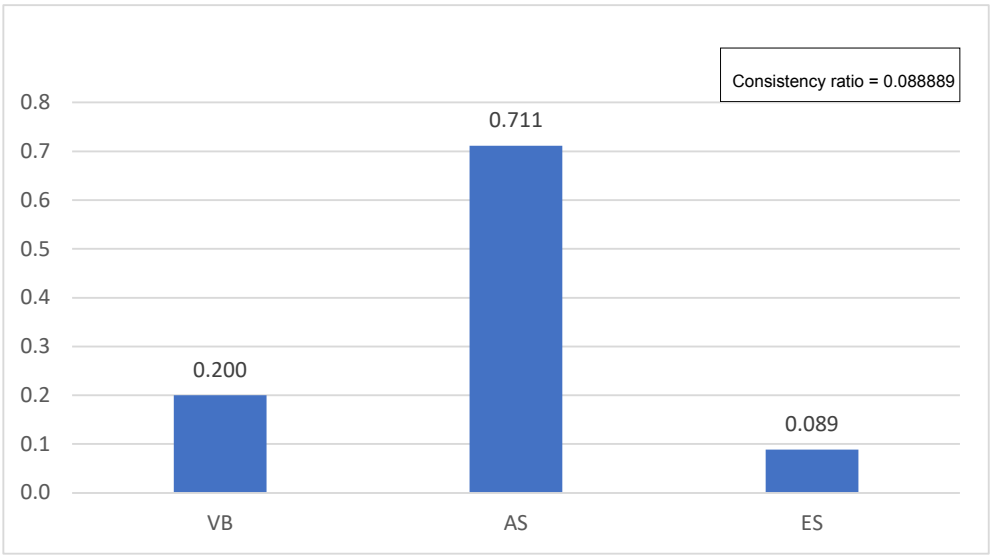

Figure 5. Weights of sub-enablers of SVTI.

Step 5. Calculation of the global weights of sub-enablers: To determine the global weights of the secondary enablers, we multiplied the respective primary-enabler weights by their corresponding secondary-enabler weights. The outcomes are detailed in Table 7, which also provides a ranking of all sub-enablers according to their global weights. As shown in Table 7, human capital achieved the highest global weight of 0.159, whereas service proposition resonance received the lowest global weight of 0.045.

Table 3. Pairwise comparison of participant 01 for the main-enablers of SBMI.

BO Vector	SVCl	SVPI	SVTI
Best main enabler: SVCI OW Vector	1	3 Worst main enabler: SVTI	7
SVCI SVPI SVTI		9 4 1	

Table 4. Pairwise comparison of participant 01 for the sub-enablers of SVCl.

BO Vector	**TN**	**HC**	**TP**	**CE**
Best sub-enabler: HC	8	1	5	3
OW Vector		Worst main enabler: TN		
TN		1		
HC		7		
TP		2		
CE		4		

Table 5. Pairwise comparison of participant 01 for the sub-enablers of SVPI.

BO Vector	**PI**	**MC**	**SP**	**DD**
Best sub-enabler: PI	1	3	5	9
OW Vector		Worst main enabler: DD		
PI		8		
MC		5		
SP		4		
DD		1		

Table 6. Pairwise comparison of participant 01 for the sub-enablers of SVTI.

BO Vector	**VB**	**AS**	**ES**
Best main enabler: AS	4	1	7
OW Vector		Worst main enabler: ES	
VB		3	
AS		9	
ES		1	

Table 7. Global weights of main and sub-enablers of SBMI.

Main Enabler	**Average Weights**	**Sub-Enablers**	**Local Weights**	**Global Weights**	**Rank/cri**	**Overall**
SVCl	0.425	TN	0.151	0.064	3	7
		HC	0.374	0.159	1	1
		TP	0.33	0.14	2	2
		CE	0.145	0.062	4	9
SVPI	0.225	PI	0.283	0.064	2	7
		MC	0.311	0.07	1	6
		SP	0.199	0.045	4	11
		DD	0.208	0.047	3	10
SVTI	0.35	VB	0.376	0.132	1	3
		AS	0.362	0.127	2	4
		ES	0.262	0.092	3	5

4. Discussion of Results

This study employed the BWM to assess the weights of the primary and sub-enablers. Participants were asked to evaluate pairwise comparisons of the main enablers and their corresponding sub-enablers. Tables 3–6 illustrate the results of participant 01's pairwise evaluations, while Figures 2–5 also depict the weights of the primary enablers and their associated sub-enablers. However, our analysis focused mainly on the results presented in Table 7.

4.1. Ranking of Main Enablers

The evaluation indicates that among the three primary enablers, service value creation innovation (SVCI) emerges as the most significant enabler, with an average weight of 0.425. This outcome underscores the pivotal role of SVCI in steering service enterprises' innovativeness towards sustainable business model innovation. The concept encapsulates all innovative approaches of how companies strategically reconfigure their resources and capabilities, specifically through their human capital and technology, to generate unique service offerings or solutions [31]. A notable illustration is the transformation of Amazon from an initial business-to-consumer (B-to-C) firm into a multifaceted service platform that facilitates retail and other prominent cloud services for other businesses (B-to-B ecommerce) [106]. This evolution exemplifies a significant value creation innovation, reflecting not only a reconfiguration in the business's vision, mission, and strategies, but also showcasing the firm's technological prowess, integral to the SVCI logic. The positioning of SVCI (encompassing network collaborations, human capital, technological platforms, and customer enablement) at the forefront of the rankings reflects the growing prominence of the service-dominant logic (SDL) framework, which has emerged as a transformative perspective that emphasizes value co-creation through interactions between producers, consumers, and other partners in the service ecosystem [34].

Service value capture innovation (SVTI) ranks second as the next desirable enabler, followed by service value proposition innovation (SVPI). Despite SVTI's second-place ranking, Ref. [107] suggests a negative correlation between value capture innovation and firm performance, implying that the benefits of SVTI are not guaranteed but limited when implemented in isolation. The authors of [107] explain that value capture innovation efforts require a systemic change to realign functional activities with the new value capture model; otherwise, it will lead to local optimization and compromise overall business model performance. This highlights the need to integrate value capture innovation with other dimensions of BMI, particularly value creation innovation. This idea is supported by [108], who emphasized the important dynamics between value creation and value capture in business model innovation, particularly in the shift to outcome-based service provision. The study stresses the need to align value capture innovation with value creation innovation for successful business model innovation, further justifying value capture innovation alone may result in a negative or zero-sum effect. Hence, the relatively close position of SVTI to SVCI in the rankings demonstrates the importance of their close association or integration. According to [109] it is essential to strike a balance between value creation and capture strategies, especially in situations where businesses collaborate to co-create value, because maintaining a sustainable business model necessitates capturing a share of the value generated by innovation.

The ranking placed service value proposition innovation (SVPI) last, which can be attributed to managerial cognitive limitations in understanding the value potential of a new business model or preposition and the neglect or misunderstanding of the role of interactions within the value proposition concept [110,111]. To facilitate this understanding and promote effective business model innovation, Ref. [108] emphasizes the importance of interactions, collaborative relationships between customers, and an integrated value proposition and capture approach to transforming a firm's business model.

4.2. Ranking of Sub-Enablers

Human capital (HC) has the highest global weight of 0.159 among the eleven identified sub-enablers, signifying its importance in facilitating sustainable performance in service enterprises. The unique characteristics inherent in services necessitate the development of a skilled and adaptable workforce capable of comprehending and anticipating customer needs given their direct influence on service quality and, to a broader extent, the firm's sustainability performance. Ref. [14] emphasizes the significance of human capital in enhancing a company's innovative performance through the accumulation of knowledge, skills, and capabilities. Moreover, human capital encompasses the managerial capabilities

essential for identifying, evaluating, and effectively leveraging potential opportunities for business model innovation. Entrepreneurial skills empower managers to not only recognize viable prospects for innovating the business model, but also to execute them [112]. The findings of [113] underscore the significant influence of sustainable leadership on economic, social, and environmental outcomes, by emphasizing the impact of proactive sustainability strategies and sustainable leadership on corporate sustainability performance. This suggests that leadership competencies, such as entrepreneurial skills, play a crucial role in shaping sustainability outcomes. The implementation of human sustainability policies enable organizations to recruit and retain skilled individuals, which ultimately bolsters human capital and enhances the sustainability performance of the organization [114].

Technological platforms, a sub-enabler under the SVCI category, rank second among the various sub-enablers contributing to service business model innovation (SBMI) with a global score of 0.14. This emphasizes the increasingly importance of technology to contemporary business practices, as evidenced by [115], who highlight the antecedent role of technological innovation in propelling both business model innovation and overall company success. Technological processes can potentially promote eco-friendly behaviors [116], thereby influencing a business's commitment to sustainability. Service enterprises can leverage innovative technologies such as artificial intelligence (AI), the Internet of Things (IoT), and blockchain to create solution sets that cater to customers' changing needs and preferences and the firm's sustainability imperative [54,55,117]. The authors of [117] explore the use of IoT technology to pursue sustainability, providing insights into technology's application in the hospitality industry for sustainable purposes.

Value-based pricing (VB) holds the third highest global weight among the sub-enablers of SBMI with a value of 0.132, and is ranked top among the sub-enablers of service value capture innovation (SVTI). Value-based pricing significantly impacts a company's revenue and profit margins [91]. This pricing strategy considers the perceived value of the customer, as opposed to solely covering costs plus a margin, and has the potential to lead to increased profitability. Ref. [57] highlighted the significance of understanding customers' perceived value and its connection to pricing in a discussion of a pricing strategy based on customer value. By adopting this strategy, businesses can achieve economic sustainability given the impact of value-based pricing on profitability outcomes. Service firms must prioritize customers' perceived value of the service offerings [86] and possess strong value capture capabilities to effectively monetize the value they create [118] to take advantage of this strategy.

The third spot under the category of service value capture innovation enablers was occupied by experiential services. Although these services are increasingly becoming significant in the service industry, they may not be as central in the utilities sector, but they are predominant in sectors where customer experience is at the core of operations, such as the hospitality and retail sectors [119,120]. The utility sector has traditionally focused on delivering reliable, efficient, and sustainable services, such as water, energy, and waste management [1]. Moreover, the sector is often heavily regulated and involves significant infrastructure [121,122]. In the sector, sustainability issues focus on integrating sustainability principles into the organization's operations and resource management, investment pressures for adopting renewable energy and carbon-neutral technologies, and economic and environmental regulations in achieving sustainability [2,10]. Due to these reasons, it is challenging to prioritize experiential services in the context of utilities, which may contribute to its relative position. However, the prominence of technology in business model innovation suggests an avenue for innovative immersive experiences for customers, thereby facilitating the creation of experiential services in the utilities sector and service sector as a whole.

However, among the sub-enablers that ranked last in their respective primary categorizations, experiential services (ESs) ranked fifth, with a global weight of 0.092; followed by customer enablement (CE), which ranked ninth with a global weight of 0.062; and service proposition resonance (SP), which ranked last with a global weight of 0.045. The relative

rankings of experiential services to customer enablement and service proposition resonance demonstrate the growing prominence of utility sectors prioritizing customer experiences due to the concept of customer centricity in the service sector [123–125]. Utility companies are beginning to recognize the value of the customer experience as a differentiator. For example, a deficit in the service innovation delivery cycle can lead customers to seek alternative service offerings to fulfill their needs. According to [126], this situation creates a potential demand for firms with alternative services to capitalize on such service innovation deficits and quickly introduce innovative services to the market, especially when competing firms' readiness for convertibility is high. Such service innovations can be pursued using experiential innovativeness [127], which posits that the success of an innovative practice is ultimately evaluated by customers. Service firms can achieve customer satisfaction through the provision of experiential services that align with the customer-centric perspective of experiential innovativeness.

5. Managerial Implications

This study offers crucial insights into both the electricity supply and broader service sectors by highlighting the significance of integrating principles from service-dominant logic into business model innovation endeavors to promote sustainability performance. Business model innovation is an emerging innovation concept that is difficult to implement. Service enterprise managers are increasingly acknowledging the significance of business model innovation and its capacity to enhance a firm's sustainability. Managers should therefore seek to prioritize investments in service value-creation innovation as a strategic imperative for sustained performance. In today's highly competitive service industry, which is marked by customer centricity, the need for firms to innovate and maintain performance levels that satisfy customer preferences has become increasingly critical because of their centrality to economic and social sustainability performance. According to respondents, leveraging key resources and capabilities such as human capital, technological platforms, and value-based pricing strategies is instrumental in this regard. Although not the highest ranked, the study also advocates the increasing importance of experiential services in the services industry and advises managers that heightened customer experiences in their business model innovation are crucial for sustained performance. Managers should therefore consider these factors to drive sustainable business practices and improve overall performance.

Moreover, this study employs an established approach to rank various hierarchical enablers, providing a valuable tool for service enterprises and managers in developing economies. This framework assists service enterprises in more effectively evaluating the impact of enablers on business model innovation within the service industry. For instance, managers in the electricity supply industry in Ghana and other countries have a tool to assess and comprehend the complexities of innovating a service business model towards sustainable performance. The identified framework of enablers for service business model innovation, although subject to evolution over time, serves as a structured basis for decision making. Ranking these enablers helps managers focus on key factors in prioritizing limited funds and resources, aiding in the justification and selection of sustainable conscious strategies. The application of this framework offers a practical and informed methodology to enhance business model innovation in the service industry.

Conclusions

The research offers a pioneering effort in proposing a hierarchical enabler framework for service business model innovation (SBMI) in the electricity supply sector, with a specific focus on the Electricity Company of Ghana (ECG). Our methodology, utilizing the best–worst method (BWM), aimed to systematize and prioritize essential enablers for enhancing the sustainable performance of service firms. This endeavor resulted in the development of a hierarchical framework comprising three primary enablers and eleven sub-enablers,

serving as a strategic guide for innovations in the service sector, including managerial and policy-related initiatives.

Despite these contributions, the scope and methodology of this study are limited. The focus on a single sector restricts generalizability, and literature-based identification of enablers may introduce biases. Additionally, the study applied the BWM to rank the enablers of SBMI. Future research could consider other multi-criteria decision modeling tools, such as PROMETHEE, VIKOR, MAUT, AHP, SMART, and Fuzzy TOPSIS, to offer a broader validation of the identified enablers. Also, adopting methodologies such as DEMATEL could provide deeper insights into the interactions and associations among enablers, thereby enhancing our understanding of their systemic impacts on SBMI.

Furthermore, with the study's main findings—that is, the relatively high ranking of service value creation innovation, human capital, and technological platforms—the study suggests the need for investments in workforce development and digital transformation strategies. These enablers can drive transformation efforts towards sustainable performance within the context of this study. These insights pave the way for further research in these domains, and future research could investigate how they contribute to a firm's sustainable performance. Such studies could provide further insights to complement the findings of the present study.

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