

RESEARCH PAPER

The Impact of Social Tourism Entrepreneurship on Tourism Sustainability—A Systematic Review

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ABSTRACT

PURPOSE: Social tourism entrepreneurship is an important topic as it can resolve several social issues and generate sustainable community development. This research aims to examine the impact of social tourism entrepreneurship on sustainable tourism.

DESIGN/METHODOLOGY/APPROACH: The research used a systematic literature review analysis on 20 publications. The PICO¹ framework was adopted to identify the publications on criteria, mainly the relativity with the subject.

FINDINGS: The findings indicated that social tourism entrepreneurship can have a high value for the tourist industry and a positive outcome for society and its sustainability. Three gaps were identified that need to be taken into consideration for future research.

ORIGINAL/VALUE OF THE PAPER: There is a need to examine the existing knowledge on social tourism entrepreneurship and to indicate how new knowledge can be created. The value of this research is that it can be used as grounds for future research.

KEYWORDS: *Sustainable Tourism; Social Tourism Entrepreneurship; Entrepreneurship; Systematic Review; Network; PICO framework*

INTRODUCTION

The concept of social entrepreneurship emerged during the 1980s and has become a popular research topic for economists, scholars and practitioners, together with the concept of social economy (Yildirim and Esen, 2021). Despite its popularity, academia and practitioners have not managed to develop a consensus on how it is defined. This is because the concept has different usage in different regions, and can include a wide range of different career activities, such as entrepreneurship, social work, community development, and environmental science (Aquino *et al.*, 2018). The Skoll Foundation defined social entrepreneurs as “the change agents for society, seizing opportunities others miss, and improving systems, inventing new approaches, and creating sustainable solutions to change society for the better” (Light, 2006, p.18). In many cases, social entrepreneurship is asserted as a form for “social innovation” where social companies adopt policies and practices. These practices and policies contribute not only to the fair distribution of social and economic wealth (Ergul and Johnson, 2011), but also to the adoption of creative ideas that leverage quality of life (Ammirato *et al.*, 2015).

The existing literature indicates that social entrepreneurship can foster societal transformation that can be economic, political or cultural in nature to ensure societal sustainability (Buzinde *et al.*, 2017; Valeri and Baggio, 2021a; 2021b). Since societies need to find a sustainable way to develop and find solutions on some key social issues, i.e., exclusion of some social groups, preserving social structure and societal sustainability (Pandey *et al.*, 2017), such issues have leveraged social entrepreneurship (Rahdari *et al.*, 2016). However, there is limited research on how this contributes to various sectors of the economy and how it can achieve sustainability in those sectors, particularly the tourism sector (Reindrawati, 2018). This research concerns the possible outcomes of social

¹P: Patient, problem and/or population, I: Intervention, C: Comparison, control or comparator, O: Outcome

entrepreneurship in the tourism sector and the sustainability of tourist destinations. A systematic review will be conducted on the impact of social tourism entrepreneurship on sustainable tourism, as examined in the next subsection.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Social Tourism Entrepreneurship and Tourism Sustainability

Tourism is an activity that contributes to a country's economic growth and development (Ammirato *et al.*, 2015) and social life of destinations (Laeis and Lemke, 2016). However, there is evidence that tourist activities have negative impacts on destinations, especially regarding consuming natural resources and social structures (e.g., influencing cultural values, changing moral behaviour, and disrupting family structure and roles) (Situmorang and Mirzanti, 2012). However, there are mixed views; for example, Veretekhina *et al.* (2017) argued that tourist development can create opportunities for people who live on the outskirts of society through the creation of unskilled and low skilled jobs. Another view is that when tourism occurs in a sustainable manner, it may benefit various cultural and social structures (Falcone, 2019). For instance, a museum can benefit from the inflow of tourists that generates income. Tourism (especially mass tourism) can damage natural resources (Pramanik and Ingkadijaya, 2018) and create social problems (Porter *et al.*, 2018). However, social tourism entrepreneurs can develop tourism activities with a solution for such cases since those social entrepreneurs are part of the destination community.

Despite the above arguments, a key issue on social tourism entrepreneurship is the lack of empirical research that indicates its strong link with community development and with tourism sustainability in general (Porter *et al.*, 2018). Despite empirical evidence that indicates the positive outcome of social tourism entrepreneurship to tourism sustainability and overall to society (Aquino *et al.*, 2020), there are some areas that have not been widely examined, e.g., whether those ventures are able to generate profitability (Laeis and Lemke, 2016), and how those ventures are led, together with the fact that they rely on external funding and state subsidiaries (Aquino *et al.*, 2018; Aquino *et al.*, 2021).

The Motivation Behind this Study

Through the relationship between social tourism entrepreneurship and tourism sustainability, the tourist industry aims to create a new model that will move away from the old model of mass tourism. The old model of mass tourism strengthens destinations and creates the profile of friendly tourists while the new model respects the environment and the social structures of the place that tourists are visiting (Asmelash and Kumar, 2019; Altinay *et al.*, 2016). In this process, social tourism entrepreneurship creates opportunities and jobs for vulnerable groups and invests profits in activities that promote sustainability (Buzinde *et al.*, 2017). However, more research is needed on this issue, not only to identify whether social tourism entrepreneurship applies only

in very particular situations but also if it can apply in a wider framework of tourist development, something that has not been well defined. Authors, e.g., Buzinde *et al.* (2017), Altinay *et al.* (2016), and Aquino *et al.* (2021), have argued that, overall, social tourism entrepreneurship can have a positive impact on destinations. On the other hand, Aliyeva *et al.* (2019) indicated that social tourism entrepreneurship does not always lead to sustainability for reasons such as financial/political. Therefore, social tourism entrepreneurship can be successful under certain conditions that need to be well defined.

Some research indicates that social tourism entrepreneurship focuses mostly on marginalised communities in developing countries (Biddulph, 2018; Laeis and Lemke, 2016) and on small scale organisations (Porter *et al.*, 2018); however, there is doubt regarding whether it can transform the tourist system (Smith, 2017). For this reason, this paper undertakes a systematic literature review to better understand this concept and to make directions for future research, with an emphasis on whether social tourism entrepreneurship concerns only micro or small ventures found in marginal communities in developing countries. Also, to identify whether this is a tourist development model that can change the way that tourist development functions. It is therefore important to discuss the impact of social entrepreneurship on tourist sustainability and whether it occurs in particular markets, such as developing markets or small tourist companies, and how it contributes to tourism sustainability (Skagias *et al.*, 2022).

METHODOLOGY

Research Questions

The systematic review's research questions are developed based on the PICO framework (Schardt *et al.*, 2007). This framework is a flexible research tool as it can be used on various research fields, such as on clinical questions (Huang *et al.*, 2006) and computing (Kumar *et al.*, 2003). The authors selected this method due to its ability to provide effective answers on structuring questions that were used to select the publications in this research, making the selection process and search results more precise and accurate (Schardt *et al.*, 2007).

Based on the PICO framework, the main research question is: What is the overall impact of social tourism entrepreneurship on sustainable tourism? And what areas need future research? The research question concerns the possible outcomes (positive or negative) of social entrepreneurship in the tourism sector on the sustainability of the tourist destinations. It is important to note that this systematic review seeks to find answers on the possible impact that this kind of social tourism entrepreneurship has on the sustainability of a tourist destination, in terms not only of the impact on the natural environment but also on the destinations' social structures.

SEARCH STRATEGY

This systematic review relies on the methodology approach provided from Gough *et al.* (2017), and the approach developed from the Evidence for Policy and Practice Information and Co-ordinating Centre (EPPI centre). More precisely, the authors have considered the remarks given on the criteria from PRISMA (Moher *et al.*, 2009) for the checklist, together with that from the Johanna Briggs Institute (Lockwood *et al.*, 2015). For the implementation of this approach, systematic review is used to examine articles that were published in international scientific publications, mostly journals, up to October 2021, concerned with the scientific principle of tourism. The researchers used SCOPUS, ScienceDirect and Emerald together with generic research on GoogleScholar. To implement the research, the authors used combination keywords such as “social tourism entrepreneurship”, “tourist development”, “social cohesion”, “social economy”, “sustainable tourist development” and “sustainable tourism”. These keywords were chosen because they are directly related to the subject of this research; more precisely keywords that have to deal with sustainable tourism entrepreneurship and tourist sustainability. To be included in this research, the publications should contain the keywords in titles, their keywords, and their abstracts (Bansal *et al.*, 2019).

INCLUSION AND EXCLUSION CRITERIA

The authors examined several papers and the systematic research resulted in the identification of 90 papers and other publications related to the topic. Most of the publications were identified with what the authors considered the most accurate keywords, “social tourism entrepreneurship” and “sustainable tourist development”.

The authors excluded non-English publications, and those whose content was not related with either social tourism entrepreneurship or sustainable tourism. The inclusion and exclusion process, described below, was used to identify some key readings for this research. The selected readings would provide solid evidence of the examined topic and solid answers on the research question.

SELECTION PROCESS

First, 90 publications were selected; those not in the English language and very generic/did not have any academic research were excluded. This process yielded 20 papers that were exactly the focus of our research that could provide useful insights and conclusions. The emphasis was given to include papers that were published during the past 10 years, and to have a wide geographic coverage including developed countries or regions. The process relied on the work of Lockwood *et al.* (2015) and García-Feijoo *et al.* (2020), who used several selection criteria such as the relevance of the publication with the topic of the research, to be a recent publication and to have a clear methodology and presentation of results.

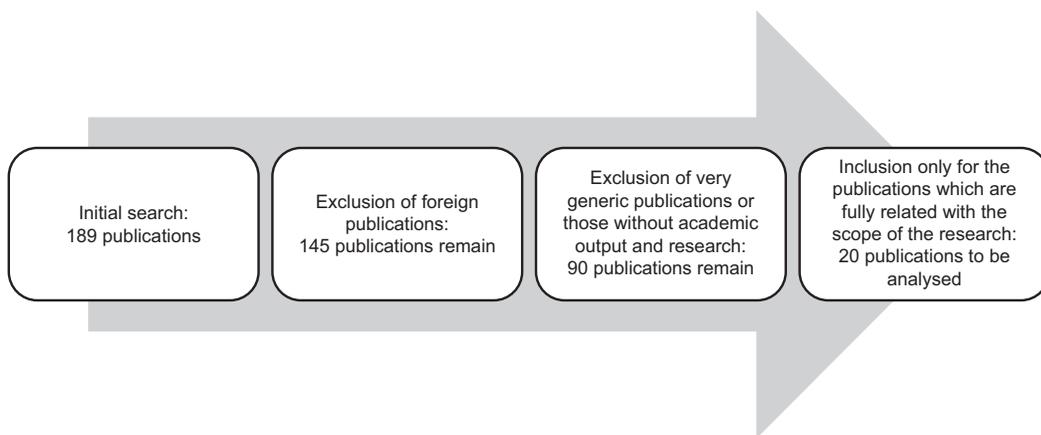


Figure 1: The Process of Reviewing and Selecting The Relevant Publications

Source: Constructed by authors

In the first stage of the systematic literature review, 90 publications were selected. Non-English papers and very generic academic research were excluded. Consequently, 20 papers were selected as they were exactly the focus of our research and could provide useful insights and conclusions. Based on the work of Lockwood *et al.* (2015) and García-Feijoo *et al.* (2020), the authors set 10 key control questions (Table 1) that would help them evaluate the quality of the selected papers (Figure 1).

Table 1: 10 Key Control Questions

Q1: Is there congruity between stated philosophical perspective and research methodology?
Q2: Is there congruity between research methodology and research questions or objectives?
Q3: Is there congruity between research methodology and methods used to collect data?
Q4: Is there congruity between research methodology, and representation and analysis of data?
Q5: Is there congruity between research methodology and interpretation?
Q6: Is there a statement locating the researcher culturally or theoretically?
Q7: Is the influence of the researcher on the research, or vice-versa, addressed?
Q8: Are participants and their voices adequately represented?
Q9: Is the research ethical according to current criteria or, for recent studies, is there evidence of ethical approval by an appropriate body?
Q10: Do conclusions drawn in the research report flow from data analysis or interpretation?

Source: Based on Lockwood *et al.* (2015) and García-Feijoo *et al.* (2020)

Based on the above-mentioned questions, the authors devised Table 2 that represents the quality of the examined papers, which was assessed manually. The papers appear in alphabetical order:

Table 2: Quality of the Examined Studies

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6	Q7	Q8	Q9	Q10
Acevedo-Duque <i>et al.</i> (2021)	Yes									
Angrisano <i>et al.</i> (2016)	Yes	No	No	Yes						
Aquino <i>et al.</i> (2021)	Yes									
Aquino <i>et al.</i> (2018)	Yes									
Bansal <i>et al.</i> (2019)	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Capriello <i>et al.</i> (2017)	Yes									
Delgado (2017)	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Estapé-Dubreuil <i>et al.</i> (2016)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Hallak <i>et al.</i> (2015)	Yes	No								
Hollnagel <i>et al.</i> (2016)	Yes									
Lang and Fink (2019)	Yes	No	No	Yes						
Monshidi and Choolandimi (2016)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes
Pădurean <i>et al.</i> (2015)	Yes									
Raszkowski (2015)	Yes	No								
Serenari <i>et al.</i> (2017)	Yes									
Sigalla and Carney (2012)	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Subhash <i>et al.</i> (2011)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Vinodan, and Meera (2021)	Yes									
Raszkowski (2015)	Yes									
Warnecke (2015)	Yes	No	No	Yes						
Yıldırım and Turan (2012)	Yes	No								

Source: Constructed by authors

RESULTS

The result of this research is divided into two sub-sections; the first represents some basic descriptive data, such as the year of publication and the region where the research took place; the second represents the key analysis that focuses on the overall aims of the paper, the methods used, results and recommendations.

DESCRIPTIVE ANALYSIS

The sample constitutes 20 papers that were published in 2021 ($n = 3$), 2019 ($n = 2$), 2018 ($n = 1$), 2017 ($n = 3$), 2016 ($n = 4$), 2015 ($n = 4$), 2012 ($n = 2$) and 2011 ($n = 1$). From the 20 examined studies, 18 were published in peer reviewed journals, while 1 publication was an academic website from an Indian University. The papers came from various regions, including Italy, India, Australia, Portugal, Brazil, Chile, Iran, Poland, France, Romania, Philippines, and Turkey. Some research was more generic and not country focused.

KEY ANALYSIS

The authors used different criteria for the analysis of the papers:

- the aims of the paper, examining the objectives and what the paper is trying to find;
- the theme of the paper, divided between the impact of tourism social entrepreneurship on rural development, the considerations that may appear, women’s entrepreneurship, and financing of those ventures (Bansal *et al.*, 2019);
- the methods used, concerning the methodological approach to reach the findings;
- the findings and the recommendations set from each research.

Table 3: The Systematic Literature Review Research Findings

Author(s)	Aims of the Paper	Thematic	Methodology (Study Type)	Main Outcomes/Results and Recommendations for Future Research
Aquino <i>et al.</i> (2021)	The research aimed to develop and apply a conceptual model to help in understanding the changes directly and indirectly induced by social tourism entrepreneurship activities in host communities	The impact of social tourism entrepreneurship on community change	A qualitative case study approach was employed on two host communities in the Philippines	Using the three-dimensional model, namely pace of change, scale of change, and degree of social enterprise control, the research showed four emergent changes, lifestyle change, personal development, structural change, and existential change
Acevedo-Duque <i>et al.</i> (2021)	The research aimed to investigate the main motivations that lead tourism and responsible entrepreneurship in Latin America to generate their business strategy, and how this generation creates (or does not create) positive impacts on the community. In other words, whether B-companies in the tourist sector are able to contribute on the recovery from the COVID-19 and the environmental crisis in Latin America	The impact of social tourism entrepreneurship on rural development	Based on grounded theory, the research investigated 57 B-companies in 10 countries in Latin America by using Atlas.ti8 for the qualitative analysis of the examined companies	The outcome of the research was that B-companies are using responsible entrepreneurship to develop an environmental, inclusive and sustainable friendly economy. This is for the benefit of the local communities, while they can be a vehicle of growth on the post-COVID-19 environment and with respect to communities’ natural environment

(continued)

Table 3: The Systematic Literature Review Research Findings (continued)

Author(s)	Aims of the Paper	Thematic	Methodology (Study Type)	Main Outcomes/Results and Recommendations for Future Research
Vinodan and Meera (2021)	The research aimed to examine whether for-profit social entrepreneurship can contribute to the sustainable tourist development of Chennai, the capital city of Tamil Nadu (a city that has attracted a significant number of tourists)	The impact of social tourism entrepreneurship on rural development	A mixed method research approach was used. It combined in-depth interviews in a sample of 43 industry experts and on 310 individuals who responded on the structured questionnaires	The research indicated that social entrepreneurship in tourism can deliver social changes that will accelerate the tourist development of a destination without having a negative impact on its sustainability. Also, it indicated that there are several concerns about the impact of such entrepreneurship on local societies, which can be the starting point of any future research
Bansal <i>et al.</i> (2019)	This is a systematic literature review that tries to identify the key trends around social tourism entrepreneurship and the key thematic examined in the current literature	The impact of social tourism entrepreneurship on rural development	Systematic literature review in 173 research papers— Descriptive research	The research identified several themes such as innovation, women's entrepreneurship, etc. Also, it identified several research gaps, such as the lack of a conceptual framework, the inability to measure the impact of social tourism entrepreneurship on sustainability, the role of governmental and institutional agencies and the lack of cases from developing countries. Future research must focus on closing the above-mentioned gaps.
Lang and Fink (2019)	This research concerns how rural social tourism entrepreneurs can use social networks to find support for their venture. It is essential for early stages of those ventures to reach a network that will support the initiative of their start-ups	The impact of social tourism entrepreneurship on rural development – Financing	The research used a case study analysis on two ventures, one in Ireland and another in Greece. Qualitative research approach was used to interview participants	The research indicates a conceptual framework for developing networks that provide the necessary assistance for rural social tourism entrepreneurship. Needs to be further tested on future research

(continued)

Table 3: The Systematic Literature Review Research Findings (continued)

Author(s)	Aims of the Paper	Thematic	Methodology (Study Type)	Main Outcomes/Results and Recommendations for Future Research
Aquino <i>et al.</i> (2018)	The purpose of this paper was to conceptualise social tourism entrepreneurship and how it affected sustainability. Its significance lay in proposing a research framework	The impact of tourist social entrepreneurship on rural development	Critical analysis of the existing literature— Descriptive research	The paper produces a conceptual framework to help the audience better understand the relationship between social tourism entrepreneurship and sustainability. The framework is recommended for future empirical research to examine its validity.
Delgado (2017)	The aim was to examine the initiatives related to social tourism entrepreneurship in Europe, with a focus on Portugal	The impact of social tourism entrepreneurship on rural development	A qualitative research approach was used to study four cases of ventures related to social tourism entrepreneurship	The finding revealed that social tourism entrepreneurship can be a device of sustainable development for many rural areas, without hurting social structures or natural resources. There is a need for more research in Europe and to encourage the local communities not to hesitate to invest into social tourism entrepreneurship.
Capriello <i>et al.</i> (2017)	The paper examines the case of Piedmont in Italy, where it investigates the role of social tourism entrepreneurship in relation to events that can leverage tourist sustainability	The impact of social tourism entrepreneurship on rural development— Financing	Qualitative research was used to interview 67 social tourist entrepreneurs	The finding indicated that community event organisations can benefit a local community and promote sustainability. Several constraints were identified, mostly on availability of resources. It is suggested that government and local agencies must provide those entrepreneurs with more funds and access to resources.
Serenari <i>et al.</i> (2017)	This research focused on the impact of social tourism entrepreneurship on sustainable development in Chile regions near protected areas	Considerations for social tourism entrepreneurship	A case study analysis was based on material gathered for the Los Rios region in Chile—Qualitative study	The research found that many local entrepreneurs had focused on eco-tourism. The case study analysis does not indicate any important negative aspect. For this reason, it promotes the use of eco-tourism as a means of entrepreneurship that favours sustainability.

(continued)

Table 3: The Systematic Literature Review Research Findings (continued)

Author(s)	Aims of the Paper	Thematic	Methodology (Study Type)	Main Outcomes/Results and Recommendations for Future Research
Angrisano <i>et al.</i> (2016)	The research examined UNSECO processes in relation to the preservation of Historic Monuments. In this case UNESCO promotes the creation of social tourism entrepreneurship, where social entrepreneurs aim to protect the heritage and promote tourism	The impact of social tourism entrepreneurship on rural development	This is a literature review that goes into existing cases and literature findings—Descriptive research	The research indicated that in fragile ecosystems and societies, social tourism entrepreneurship can find solutions to promote social cohesion and create welfare without damaging the destination's heritage. In this case, UNESCO has initiatives and actions that have brought positive outcomes. It is suggested that destinations with rich heritage utilise UNESCO's tools and frameworks.
Estapé-Dubreuil <i>et al.</i> (2016)	The purpose of this paper was to investigate investment funds that focused on social tourism entrepreneurs whose operations are related with tourist sustainability	Finance	Qualitative research was used to rely on a case study analysis of an investment club in France	The research revealed that potential investors do not only consider the financial outcome but also the social implications. This is a positive outcome, and indicates that social tourism entrepreneurs can become an attractive target for investors.
Hollnagel <i>et al.</i> (2016)	The research examined the case of social entrepreneurship through elderly care initiatives and how they promote sustainability in major cities	Considerations for social entrepreneurship	A literature review aimed at the creation of a framework for social entrepreneurship—Descriptive research.	This paper is not directly related to the tourism sector; however, the authors developed a conceptual framework that was recommended to be used also in social tourism entrepreneurship to measure their impact (negative or positive) on urban cities.
Monshidi <i>et al.</i> (2016)	The research aimed to investigate the overall effects of social tourism entrepreneurship in a rural and poor areas in Iran, especially on its sustainability. The research included social ventures related to tourism	The impact of social tourism entrepreneurship on rural development	In-depth interviews were conducted with 200 individuals, including entrepreneurs and officials—Qualitative research	The research found that social tourism entrepreneurship has significant effects on rural development. Initiatives, including tourism, can bring positive results for a society and can become a driver of social change without affecting its social values. There should be more research on poor rural areas.

(continued)

Table 3: The Systematic Literature Review Research Findings (continued)

Author(s)	Aims of the Paper	Thematic	Methodology (Study Type)	Main Outcomes/Results and Recommendations for Future Research
Hallak <i>et al.</i> (2015)	The research aimed to determine whether there were gender-based differences in the relationship that a social tourism entrepreneur had between the nature of the destination and self-efficacy	Women entrepreneurship	Drawing on a quantitative research approach, a sample of 298 questionnaires was distributed for social tourism entrepreneurs divided between male and female subgroups in Australia	The research indicated that women social tourism entrepreneurs have high levels of self-efficacy. Women must be encouraged to take risks to start a social venture on tourism. This will have positive results for the local economy, and will strengthen social cohesion.
Pădurean <i>et al.</i> (2015)	The research aimed to examine the access of social tourism entrepreneurs to the Regional Operational Programme (ROP) given from the EU and the Romanian government. Funding is particularly important for those ventures due to the limited resources that they have on their disposal	Finance	Quantitative research used secondary data. The authors had gathered statistical data from various sources to make econometric analysis on SPSS— Quantitative study	From the analysis made, there is evidence that the EU's structural programmes had made a significant contribution to social tourism entrepreneurship. However, there is a need for further research, including the use of primary research.
Raszkowski (2015)	The value of this research was that it focused not on the views of experts or of the entrepreneurs, but on the views of the citizens of regions in Poland affected by social tourism entrepreneurship	The impact of social tourism entrepreneurship on rural development	A quantitative research approach relied on the results made from a sample of 422 citizens in a Polish region	The research indicated that the participants had a positive view on social tourism entrepreneurship. They believed that it could have a positive influence in the social environment, it can create jobs and it does not hurt the natural environment.
Warnecke (2015)	The research aimed to study gender equity on social entrepreneurship in today's business environment and its impact on sustainability	Women entrepreneurship	This is an extended literature review that aimed to produce a conceptual framework— Descriptive study	The research outcome was that the so-called "green agenda" must not discriminate between male and female entrepreneurs. All genders must have equal access to resources. Future research should use primary data to confirm if this is happening

(continued)

Table 3: The Systematic Literature Review Research Findings (continued)

Author(s)	Aims of the Paper	Thematic	Methodology (Study Type)	Main Outcomes/Results and Recommendations for Future Research
Sigalla and Carney (2012)	The research aimed to investigate women entrepreneurs' views and experiences in relation to micro-financing for their ventures in Tanzania, where funding for small ventures is a very important issue	Women entrepreneurship—Finance	Quantitative research was used on women who participated in training programmes provided by NGOs in Tanzania and issues of financing from the NGOs	The research found that social values are often a barrier to women's entrepreneurship in Tanzania, a country that attracts tourists; most of the women's ventures focus on tourist regions. The role of NGOs can educate the women, provide micro-financing, and increase their autonomy to be successful in their ventures.
Yıldırım and Turan (2012)	The research aimed to indicate the potential positive impact of social tourism entrepreneurship on cultural tourism	The impact of social tourism entrepreneurship on rural development	This is a case study analysis. A sample of 6 ventures related to cultural tourism in Turkey was used through adaptive re-use projects—Qualitative research	Social tourism entrepreneurship in cultural tourism cannot bring huge income or financial benefits for those involved. It therefore recommends using social entrepreneurship, that has some potential, and its contributions to sustainability. The expectations in many cases are still moderate.
Subhash <i>et al.</i> (2011)	This paper deals with the issues of micro-financing for social tourism entrepreneurs in Goa (India) and the impact of their operation for the sustainability or the destination.	Finance: The impact of social tourism entrepreneurship on rural development	This is quantitative research in two subgroups (tourists and entrepreneurs). The primary data were collected with a questionnaire—Quantitative study type	Issues like global warming and the financial crisis are important for both subgroups. Tourists consider the operation of social tourism entrepreneurs positive with a positive impact on sustainability. On the other hand, the entrepreneurs are quite concerned with the funding and regarded that only few have access to funds and other resources given from the government and NGOs

Source: Constructed by authors

Some key findings from the above table are that researchers such as Aquino *et al.* (2018) and Lang and Fink (2019) have remarked that social tourism entrepreneurship can support sustainable development on destinations where the social and physical environments are fragile. The essence of social tourism entrepreneurship is to boost tourism without damaging the destination's eco- and

social-systems (Laeis and Lemke, 2016). Furthermore, social tourism entrepreneurship can be a driver for tourist development and sustainability in destinations with different characteristics and features, as shown by Delgado (2017), who examines the case of Portugal, Subhash *et al.* (2011) who examined the case of India, and Acevedo-Duque *et al.* (2021) in Latin America.

The key trend that appears from the current analysis is that social tourism entrepreneurship can leverage some certain groups, such as women, to take the initiative and create tourist businesses with value for the society. There are some issues that need to be addressed in future research or to generate a related discussion. For example, Yıldırım and Turan (2012) refer to the fact that social tourism entrepreneurship has a positive impact on tourism sustainability, but still social tourist ventures are struggling to generate profit—something with which authors like Laeis and Lemke (2016) and Aquino *et al.* (2021) seem to agree—while they depend on state funding; this needs to be addressed for future research. Figure 2 portrays some of the key issues noticed in Table 3 and need to be resolved:

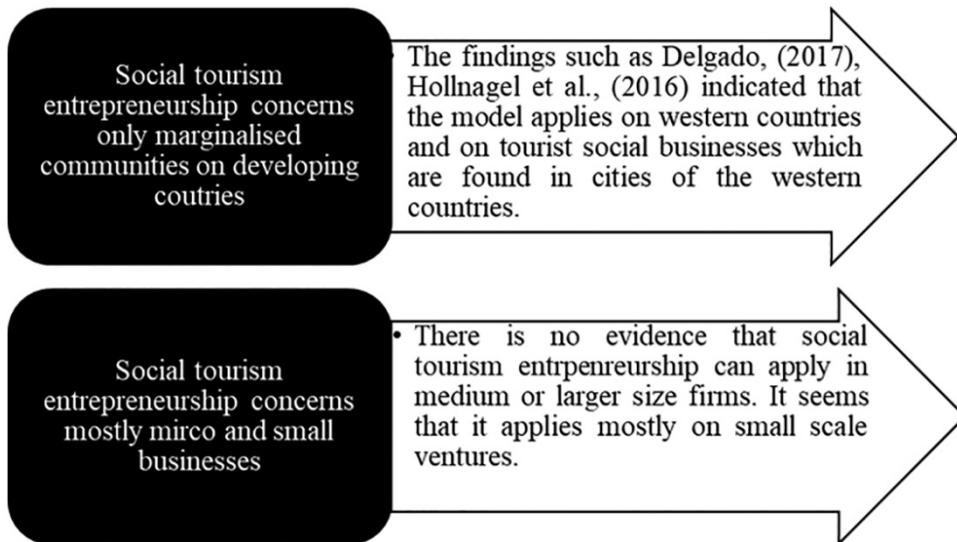


Figure 2: Clusters of Key Issues Which Have Emerged on This Research

Source: Constructed by authors

IMPLICATIONS

From the analysis of the examined papers, it seems that social tourism entrepreneurship can have a positive impact on sustainability including preservation of social values (Raszkowski, 2015) and cultural monuments, financial output (Estapé-Dubreuil *et al.*, 2016), and protecting the natural environment (Serenari *et al.*, 2017). On the other hand, Yıldırım and Turan (2012) noted that even though social tourism entrepreneurs can give high value to the destination, the financial outcomes

for them are limited. Vinodan and Meera (2021) have mentioned that there are several concerns about the real impact of social tourism entrepreneurship on the societies of least-developed countries, such as India, where many individuals regard the social transformation that tourist development brings as a threat for sustainability while social entrepreneurs are not able to ensure the sustainability of tourist development.

Social tourism entrepreneurship can have high value for the tourist industry and a positive outcome for society and its sustainability. However, there are some barriers that need to be taken into consideration. For example, Subhash *et al.* (2011), discussed the issue of micro-financing and access to financial resources given from the NGOs and the government, while Sigalla and Carney (2012) talked about social values in some developing countries that prohibited women from launching social ventures, while it focuses only on micro and small-scale businesses and not on larger ones. On the other hand, Pădurean *et al.* (2015) indicated that the EU's structural funds have an important role in providing access to social tourism entrepreneurship in its member states, especially the poor regions of the union, while Sigalla and Carney (2012) indicated that NGOs have a positive role in ensuring that entrepreneurs have access to finance. Overall, social tourism entrepreneurship has a positive impact on sustainability. However, the systematic analysis indicated several research gaps that can be dealt with in future research.

Research Gap 1: There is limited research and limited discussion on the case of profitability for those ventures. Yıldırım and Turan (2012), Laeis and Lemke (2016) and Aquino *et al.* (2020, 2021) have mentioned the fact that there is evidence that social tourism ventures give value to society and contribute to the sustainability of the destination. However, research seems not to focus on the sustainability of those ventures that are undermined, and the focus is only on the sustainability of the destination, while Vinodan and Meera (2021) argued the social tourism entrepreneurship can be profitable. This means that future research would show a light on this issue and indicate how those ventures can ensure their profitability.

Research Gap 2: Aquino *et al.* (2021) noticed that there is a great deal of attention on developing countries and communities facing severe social problems. Some authors, like Delgado (2017) and Hollnagel *et al.* (2016) have mentioned that there is a need to produce further research on what is happening in Western countries. Currently the trend is to focus mostly on developed countries.

Research Gap 3: Another issue is women's ventures. Researchers such as Sigalla and Carney (2012), and Hallak *et al.* (2015), argued that women can have an important role in such initiatives, while women's social tourism entrepreneurship can strengthen social cohesion to have a positive role on sustainability. From a critical point of view, social tourism entrepreneurship aims to help social groups to become productive and to generate values for a society and at the same time to contribute to the sustainability of those societies. Having in mind that women are often marginalised in several societies, social tourism entrepreneurship seems to contribute to the leverage of women in our societies.

There are other issues that academia must not forget, such as access to finance, since there were different approaches, but also the fact that several researchers, such as Angrisano *et al.* (2016), Warnecke (2015), Hollnagel *et al.* (2016), and several others have generated conceptual frameworks that need to be addressed in future research, together with the role of social barriers (Sigalla and Carney, 2012), and the role of women (Hallak *et al.*, 2015). Finally, it is important to consider Bansal *et al.* (2019), who claim that it is important to find a way to measure the impact of social tourism entrepreneurship on sustainability. Nonetheless, the three research gaps identified in this paper must have the immediate attention of academics.

CONCLUSIONS

Social tourism entrepreneurship can have an important impact on a destination's sustainability (Skagias *et al.*, 2021; Trivellas *et al.*, 2017). The outcome of this systematic research indicates that there are some issues that need to be taken into consideration such as access to funding and how social tourism entrepreneurs can measure it (Nousia *et al.*, 2018). For this reason, it is important that future research helps us fill in the research gaps identified in this paper.

The key limitation was that this is a systematic review, meaning that it examines past research while a considerable number of the examined publications are also systematically reviewed. Therefore, a future direction will be to produce evidence that is more empirical. Another important point to consider is that many researchers generated conceptual frameworks, but they do not move on with the empirical research that validates those conceptual frameworks, something that may happen in future research. Also, future research can focus on several issues examined in this paper, including whether social tourism entrepreneurship should only focus on marginalised areas and countries, the case of profitability and women entrepreneurship.

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