

Tourism Social Entrepreneurship for Sustainable Community Development : Review and Conceptual Framework

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This paper explores **Tourism Social Entrepreneurship (TSE)** as an innovative strategy to promote **sustainable community development**, especially in marginalized or underdeveloped regions. The authors argue that while tourism can provide economic benefits, it often follows a profit-driven capitalist model that exacerbates social inequalities. SE is proposed as an **alternative market-based approach** focused on **creating social value** alongside economic viability.

The paper reviews existing literature on social entrepreneurship and its intersection with tourism, highlighting emerging models such as ecotourism, volunteer tourism, and social tourism. It categorizes tourism social enterprises into three types: **suppliers** (e.g., local producers), **providers** (e.g., community-based experience facilitators), and **intermediaries** (e.g., responsible tour operators). These align with broader **social innovation strategies** aimed at reducing inequalities and **building local capacities**.

A **conceptual framework** is proposed that integrates TSE, community development, and the **Community Capitals Framework**—including natural, human, financial, social, political, cultural, and built capitals. The model emphasizes community **solidarity** and **agency**, the central role of **social entrepreneurs as change agents**, supportive local policies, and alignment with community needs. It promotes **bottom-up development** and the empowerment of local populations.

In conclusion, the paper positions TSE as a promising but still under-theorized path for transforming tourism into a **driver of social transformation**. It calls for further empirical research to test and refine the proposed framework and to better understand how TSE can effectively contribute to sustainable community development.

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Abstract

Since tourism happens within, and utilises the resources of, various communities, these localities have been at the forefront of tourism entrepreneurship and development initiatives. However, these communities, particularly those located in underdeveloped countries, are often faced with various social problems. There is also little indication that their participation in tourism provides them with meaningful and sustainable outcomes. Tourism social entrepreneurship (TSE) is suggested as a market-based strategy to address social challenges whilst maximising the benefits that tourism may provide to local communities. This paper aims to review and conceptualise TSE as a feasible strategy for sustainable community development. By critically reviewing and analysing the literature, this paper situates TSE within and for community development. A framework that incorporates concepts of community development, TSE and community capitals is proposed. This conceptual paper adds to the developing literature on TSE and may aid the actors in the TSE system as they embark on new social enterprises.

Keywords: community development, conceptual framework, social entrepreneurship, social enterprise, social entrepreneur, tourism

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Note: This is a pre-publication copy. The full version of this paper was published in the Proceedings of the Council for Australian Tourism and Hospitality Education (CAUTHE) Conference 2018.

To cite: Aquino, R.S., Lück, M., & Schänzel, H.A. (2018). Tourism social entrepreneurship for sustainable community development: Review and conceptual framework. In T. Young, P. Snolik, & G. McGinnis (Eds.), *CAUTHE 2018: Get Smart: Paradoxes and Possibilities in Tourism, Hospitality and Events Education and Research* (pp. 369-379). Newcastle, Australia: The University of Newcastle.