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# Social Entrepreneurship and Social Innovation in Eco-Tourism

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# Chapter 1

## Introduction: Social Entrepreneurship and Social Innovation in Eco-Tourism



Muhammad Khalilur Rahman, Mohammad Mainul Hossain,  
and Noor Raihani Zainol

**Abstract** This chapter sets the conceptual foundation for the book. It provides a background on the development of thought around social innovation, as well as eco-tourism. After introducing various definitions and concepts of social innovation and social entrepreneurship, it then goes on to develop a definition of eco-tourism social entrepreneurship. An analysis of the current state of the environment and tourism leads to the discussion of how eco-tourism and social entrepreneurship can transform the industry for the better. The chapter then describes how social entrepreneurship can effectively make changes to the economic and social systems that are no longer working in the world and tourism. The status of eco-tourism social entrepreneurship in industry, academia and education are then discussed. The final section of the chapter lays out the book's contents.

### 1.1 Introduction to Social Development in Eco-Tourism

Tourism is the third-largest contributor to Malaysia's GDP, after the manufacturing and commodities sectors. A report from the Department of Statistics Malaysia (DOSM) released that the total revenue of tourism sectors in 2019 was 15.9% (DOSM, 2020). A couple of years ago prior to the COVID-19 contagion, the Southeast Asian tourism sector had experienced a significant development stage, therefore, Malaysia initiated the "Visit Truly Asia Malaysia 2020" program which aimed to attract 30 million tourists and achieved tourists' revenue of RM100 billion in 2020 (Chin et al., 2021). The COVID-19 epidemic, however, had a significant negative impact on Malaysia's travel and tourism sector, which caused the campaign to be abandoned. Wijesinghe (2021) mentioned that The National Tourism Policy (NTP) 2020–2030 was subsequently announced by the government on December 23, 2020, to secure the nation's tourism sector and boost Malaysia as a top tourist spot internationally.

Effective tourism marketing salvage based on new rules, enhancing productivity, inclusive and environmentally friendly tourism development, and catastrophic risk management are important strategies for achieving the NTP's agenda. The development of digital technology has impacted the way public travel which has changed how tourism-related businesses operate. Tourism has been a major growth industry

globally comprising the emergence in earnings and wealth, rapid advancement in road transport, moves in consumer lifestyles and values, improved recreational time, globalization and flexibility on a worldwide platform, immigration, special events, effective training, developments in communication and information technologies, travel advertising and promotion, and so on (Aslanova, 2019). Currently, tourist spot which is particularly located in the village area that has been paid attention to globally because of sustainable tourism development to combat environmental issues and global climate change (Rahman & Yeasmin, 2014). Sustainable tourism frequently includes eco-tourism as one of its sub-components. A few of the essential components of eco-tourism are the conservation of the local community's well-being, the inclusion of understanding and educational opportunities, and the engagement of accountable tourist industry performances (Sharma & Sarmah, 2019).

Ecotourism is considered responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and improves the well-being of local people. As Malaysia has vast biodiversity, it provides a spark of hope for the tourism sector to move forward, attracting visitors to experience the natural wonders of the country. On the other hand, smart tourism refers to the technological capabilities of a particular destination, attraction, or tourist (Cheng et al., 2019). Such beautiful nature in one country contributes to eco-tourism development by creating plans for preserving the conservation of the environment and generating money for regional communities. The majority of methods used by social entrepreneurs in tourism to build the industry are intended to assist local societies in some way. Wang et al. (2020) demonstrated that to highlight the social entrepreneurship in eco-tourism, community businesspeople are required to design and develop the location of tourist spots to conserve regional traditions and values.

Moreover, Alisa and Ridho (2020) emphasized that community development takes place when travel-connected efforts support the regional people and ecological atmosphere. Through these practices, able to bring communities together that motivate eco-tourism sectors and community development projects such as promoting resources, sharing information, and trust. Other researchers explained these terms through business techniques to enhance regional residents' understanding of occupations and to increase people's awareness of marketing strategies. Thus, it is recognized that ecotourism is a key driver of the socioeconomic and social growth of local communities by integrating community activities into efforts to attain economic sustainability and environmental protection. The success of eco-tourism is referring to the important parties involved in the eco-tourism development process in social entrepreneurship (governments, local NGOs, residents, and tourists).

## 1.2 Ecotourism and Sustainable Development: Issues and Challenges

Ecotourism has become popular with the increasing attention and awareness of the ecological environment; however, it brings issues and challenges to the sustainable development of the environment. Thus, it is crucial to review the literature in the field of ecotourism and decide on the key exploration issues that are related to ecotourism and sustainable development of the environment. This book chapter uses a theoretically based outline related to ecotourism and sustainable development of an environment that leads to assisting the development of the local community, economy, and social wellbeing of people. This study searches the literature that depends on internet details for information sources about the role of ecotourism in the sustainable development of environmental issues, the social-cultural role of ecotourism, benefits, challenges, challenges of ecotourism in the spread of COVID-19 pandemic, and the role of information technology in the sustainable development of ecotourism industry. Our findings indicate that ecotourism has been increasingly growing. Ecotourism traverses many disciplines, and it is a comprehensive interdisciplinary subject. Based on the explanation of this study, the advancement of ecotourism can be generated with ecosystem services, human disturbance, and practical turn of events. This study emphasizes the role of ecotourism and sustainable development as well as presents readers with new bits of knowledge through instinctive visual images. There has been concerned about the growth of ecotourism development and environmentally responsible development. Xu et al. (2022) define ecotourism that it is a travel or visit to ecological places which supports environmental conservation including the well-being of surrounding communities, understanding as well as knowledge.

Ecotourism is rapidly developing in the tourism sector all over the planet. In the international business arena, ecotourism development is a significant trend and a key component of the sustainable tourism sector as indicated by (Choi et al., 2021). Conservation of ecosystem balance, ecotourism and sustainability are essential. Over the most recent twenty years of ecotourism development, sustainable development has been considered for people's well-being (Wondirad et al., 2020), because ecotourism promotes natural and fresh assets to keep ecological growth and improvement. Community participation, environmental knowledge, and natural preservation can lead to developing sustainable development of ecotourism which in turn reflects social well-being in society. Ecotourism can protect the natural area, and develop the local community, economy and society (Beall et al., 2020). Recently many countries around the world are encouraging the incorporation of income growth for ecologically responsible development. Rahman et al. (2021) stated that environmentally friendly tourism can reduce the negative impact of environmental issues and enable the country's financial progress. Ecotourism is crucial for generating revenue, providing job scope, promoting culture, and people's lifestyles, and improving the standard of living of the community in society. The principal objective of ecotourism focuses on local participation, infrastructure and economic development, long-term sustainable development and promoting social benefits (Valdivieso et al., 2015). Ecotourism is

turning out to be more in demand for the travel industry with unhindered expanding attention to the development of environmental awareness. This growth can lead to environmental issues and economic challenges in ecotourism development.

For instance, because of the lack of public awareness and community participation in ecotourism, the expansion in travelers adversely affects the local ecological environment, economy and culture. In addition, low public awareness of ecotourism can lead to disrespect for culture, environmental protection, infrastructure, and economic burden to address the needs of tourists (Shasha et al., 2020). These challenges and inconsistencies are dire issues to be handled by the sustainable improvement of ecotourism. Particularly against the scenery of the current COVID-19 epidemic, the travel industry has encountered a serious blow, however environmental change and other ecological issues have not been developed (Xu et al., 2022). In this unique situation, confronting these challenges are crucial for reconsidering the future improvement path of ecotourism to explore how the country's government agencies can form proper management strategies while protecting the climate and natural resources to help the sustainable development of the ecotourism industry. Hence, it is important to counsel literature in the area of ecotourism to comprehend the research progress and basic exploration issues to distinguish challenges, realistic strategies and future research direction for sustainable ecotourism development. Cautiously arranging and dealing with the ecotourism destinations give direct advantages like environmental protection, awareness, resource preservation, and financial advantage to the local community. The sustainable development of ecotourism places may mitigate the problems caused because of the small amount of eco-friendly tourism practices such as natural harm, cultural and social deterioration, and losses of ecology. Accordingly, this study plans to comprehend and explore the previous literature and discussed how ecotourism can assist in accomplishing a sustainable tourism industry.

### 1.3 Ecotourism and Sustainable Development

Several sectors have been contributing to sustainable development such as industrials, consumer goods, healthcare, consumer services, technology, tourism, ecotourism, and so on. Ecotourism confirms environmental, financial, community and social sustainability as well as develop the welfare of human being (Choi et al., 2021). Previously, many scholars defined ecotourism. Mondino and Beery (2019) refer to ecotourism as a system of trip organization that motivates cultural activities and assessment of the natural environment. Prasetyo et al. (2020) found that ecotourism may generate huge incomes for societies and contribute to nature conservation for sustainable development. Ecotourism is sociocultural and naturally sustainable that builds the social assets base of the goal and helps the feasibility of the action. The concept of sustainable development was initiated in the 1960s of environmental deprivation due to vulnerable resource management (Machnik, 2021).

Since the environment has turned into a crucial worldwide issue, sustainability might be implemented as a typical policy of sustainable community, economic,

and environmental destination (Geijzendorffer et al., 2017). The development of ecotourism contains three vital features of sustainable development (Khanra et al., 2021). Financial sustainability confirms individuals can achieve the upper level of life quality and benefits are general alike among all people related to the practices. Wondirad et al. (2020) indicated that ecotourism may be most effective as a component of a large preservation strategy of ecological goals. Ecotourism improvement highlights values, norms, and natural aspects and stimulates a significant responsibility for addressing the difficulties of sustainable international travel. Ecotourism is a form of nature-based and educational concerned travel organization that proposes of being culturally, financially, and ecologically renewable. Society-based ecotourism while individuals from the local community are considered protectors of common efficiency of both resources and the environment. Teshome et al. (2021) indicated that locality-centered ecotourism performance may help socioeconomic growth, which confirms the sustainable utilization of all-ecological assets, for example, community and economic requirements might be achieved via the conservation of biological developments, social harmony, strategy for human survival, and ecological differences.

Ecotourism gradually increases environmental concerns among citizens. Therefore, people need a good understanding of the environmental problem to establish an appropriate choice in environmental sustainability. The purpose of ecotourism is vital for environmental sustainability in reducing the impact of pollution. Uddin et al. (2021) worried that whether ecotourism can beneficially reach its goals to contribute to nature conservation, financial development, and social value, and if it directs to abuse and harm of local areas. It can confirm domestic people's welfare by assisting them with changing policies and profits gained from the tourism organization. Wang et al. (2021) identified that ecotourism can improve financial growth with ecologically sustainable development. They are also concerned about ecotourism and ecological stability is one of the crucial elements including community, ecological and financial. Bhuiyan et al. (2010) contradicted that ecotourism success may be attained through effective environmental education. Thus, there is a link between ecotourism and ecological responsibility.

## 1.4 Role of Ecotourism in Sustainable Tourism Industry

Ecotourism also has been considered a strength that enhances regional development and the economics of regions (Picard, 2015; Qiu et al., 2019; Rahman et al., 2021). Ecotourism is a thriving sector in the tourism industry and it consists of advantages through employment rate, attracting investors, and influencing local as well as international business (Hunt et al., 2015; Lerdsuchatavanich et al., 2016). In Costa Rica, it was found that ecotourism made 42% more income in comparison with one of the most popular travel destinations, France (Hunt et al., 2015). Ecotourism has enhanced the increase of revenue from local family businesses (Lyon et al., 2017). In referring to that, two territories of China that were highly impacted by the poverty rate where

the opportunities for job creation in the community as well as financial sustainability have been varied due to the ecotourism's policy system (Li et al., 2018). The empirical data from ecotourism literature had shown that ecotourism could create remarkable profits that might help households in a poverty area. Ecotourism also might be one of the most important sources like other economical contributory activities such as fishing, farming and hunting towards making revenues. These case studies stated above also claimed the beneficial effect of ecotourism booming the economy through creating employability.

## 1.5 Socio-Cultural Role of Ecotourism on Sustainable Tourism

The socio-cultural role is one of the important scopes in the sustainability of the regional tourism industry. The consequences of ecotourism have the impact of optimistic features. The pros of positive socio-cultural advantages of ecotourism have been undermined in constructive and robust effects towards the values and customs of a country (Hall, 2003). Neth (2008) proved Hall's claiming whereas they supported without exceptions that ecotourism consists of a positive influence on social services, the participation of the indigenous community, and creating bonding among them. Furthermore, Acquah et al. (2013) described that the effective implementation of ecotourism tends to maintain cultural unanimity. Nonetheless, Vishwanatha and Chandrashekara (2014) also identified that the positive effects of the socio-culture of ecotourism play a remarkable role in perceiving the customs and values of a regional destination which assists to achieve economic benefits. There is a significant number of researchers who had come up with the findings that the effect of socio-culture in ecotourism has a positive impact in the locality and it also helps in encouraging education, establishing the framework, raising awareness for health and fund, perceiving and respecting the local customs, developing gender equity in the targeted area, cultural establishment (Acquah et al., 2017; Mammadova, 2018; Rahman et al., 2021). Regarding this raising awareness towards ecotourism from the local community, other advantages might be pointed out due to understanding ecotourism, and there are several activities while performing ecotourism which lead to the misconduct of deforestation, fishing, and hunting consecutively (Salman et al., 2021; Walter, 2013).

Moreover, this intends to understand the correlation between protecting the region and the activities of the indigenous community for the conservation of the environment (Chen et al., 2020). Sustainable ecotourism is referred to as the upheld of environmental resources which plays a vital role in tourism principles, therefore, some researchers have identified that ecotourism is the key player. In addition to this, ecotourism contributes to safeguarding the environment by enhancing the green environment, reducing deforestation, conserving flora and fauna, and encouraging energy reserves (Zambrano et al., 2010). Several researchers have also found that

the revenue of ecotourism could collaborate with the development of environmental conservation (Rahman et al., 2021; Picard, 2015; Taylor et al., 2015). Furthermore, other scholars have also identified that ecotourism assists in protecting reserve areas such as marine species, biodiversity, and spaces which is resulting in conserving the biodiversity in the regional area (Fung & Wong, 2007; Lindsey et al., 2005). Ecological stability and preservation are correlated directly to ecotourism to maintain the protection of natural resources and vibes. The practice of effective ecotourism in the area reduces the harmful impact on the atmosphere. Ecotourism encourages to adopt of green upheld commitment through strategies involving the implementation of the least uses of resources therefore, the inhabitants and other occupants in the whole area can be aided substantially (Ashok et al., 2017; Nigar, 2018; Salman et al., 2020, 2021).

## 1.6 Challenges and Benefits of Ecotourism for Sustainable Development

Recently, sustainability based on tourism is crucial for the role of development in the tourism industry. It's been a long time whilst the tourism industry has been captivated by its contribution to eliminating poverty, consuming resources, and global change. Therefore, the importance of the tourism industry relies on the improvement of regional communities to expand benefits such as business opportunities (Ross & Wall, 1999). Sustainable tourism is categorized along with ecotourism development which is explained as a critical issue in the development of emerging purposes (Saha et al., 2015). Ecotourism has been defined with different explanations. According to the International Ecotourism Society (2020), ecotourism refers to “traveling to relatively undisturbed natural areas with the specific objective of studying, admiring and enjoying the scenery and its wild animals and plants”. One of the biggest roles of ecotourism is saving and reducing the environmental impact, raising environmental and cultural awareness, promoting better practices for tourists and economic proficiencies among the local community which enables the host country to understand their environmental and financial strategy (Das et al., 2015; Andriotis & Vaughan, 2003). The sustainable travel sector opens the door for visitors to become concerned about aesthetic necessities, conserving regional natural and social atmosphere, and respecting the custom and historical inheritance (Petrovic & Markovic, 2013). Ecotourism has contributed to saving extinct biodiversity and improving economics in isolated areas (Buchley, 2009); nonetheless, some scholars claimed that the specific meaning and result of the term ecotourism generate it distinctively (Ahmed et al., 2009; Hall, 2004). Ecotourism is categorized into three components; firstly, experiencing closeness to nature and individuals from vibrant cultures and society; secondly, it helps shape the income of poorer people rather than vast global tourism organizations; and thirdly, it reduces the total environmental impact due to traveling (Dowling & Fennell, 2003). Ecotourism assists nature to be conserved by



the protection of the environment. This approach also increases the awareness of environmental values and norms that intend to assure financial security for nature as well as enhance the capabilities of natural resources and regions.

There's a unique link between local residents and assets from protected areas and the ecotourism probability of these areas offers an alternative opportunity for earning living in local communities (Xu et al., 2009). Likewise, ecotourism consists of many purposes involving shareholders with multiple interests, liabilities, and functions (Liu et al., 2013; Shams, 2020). A huge variety of stakeholders, including citizens, administrators, governments, and visitors play a vital role in the development of ecotourism (Santarém & Paiva, 2015). The explanation of ecotourism from different perspectives has been based on practicing ecotourism with multiple intentions simultaneously which makes it more complex while ecotourism faces financial, social, and natural dilemmas (Xu et al., 2009). One noticeable phenomenon is that the intention of tourism trades and tour operators in ecotourism can be intrinsic and extrinsic as well (Swan & Morgan, 2016). As such, decision-makers and destination organization experts in ecotourism should obtain an understanding of the intention that motivates businesses along with accurate measurement (Dowling & Fennell, 2003). Furthermore, the purpose requires the "right" equilibrium of motives; while the travel industry organizations and tour operators are driven by the true intentions of motivating low-effect tourism within the specific objective (the intrinsic motive) and it is also crucial to provide customized aids including supportive activities and incentives mechanisms (the extrinsic motive). Thus, it is expected to tour operators and tourism industry organizations to fall apart from the original purpose for the investment in ecotourism if there's one motive that is found irrational.

This underlines the importance of deciding the needs and demands of ecotourism by shareholders more specifically finance owners could identify the requirements from the beginning of the plans for ecotourism (Osman et al., 2018). For instance, if a travel agent wants to engage willingly with ecotourism, however, the policy maker cannot find the possibilities to improve ecotourism for a particular destination therefore, the opportunity for a travel agent for running a business will be stuck within some limitations which will make the investment towards business inefficient without any support. If the policymakers lead to promote ecotourism within a particular set of goals to bring socio-economic growth and conservation of nature, however, a tour operator might engage in a short-term economic goal which will intend to a contradictory interest with the challenges in the development and management of ecotourism as follows (Njoroge, 2015). Ecotourism shareholders should grasp the aspects of operating a business and conserving the environment and they should evaluate the goal of operating a business in a particular destination leading toward the progress of ecotourism synchronously (Stone, 2015). More importantly, it is essential for developing nations where there are inadequate resources and democratic societies of administration might not only challenge the drastic success of ecotourism but also the risk in the long-term fortune of the development of the ecotourism system in the local community (Wondirad, 2019).

## 1.7 COVID-19 and Its Effect on Ecotourism Industry

In the tourism industry, ecotourism has been contributing widely and it represents a new potential business growth for developing countries. In general, the role of ecotourism is to preserve environmental destruction and be responsible for trips to natural regions which develop the lives of the local community. However, the impact of COVID-19 on the ecotourism industry has had a significant influence, especially in the economic sectors. Due to the adverse effect of the COVID-19 outbreak, several countries have taken early steps to combat this pandemic such as travel restrictions, regular entry screening in the airport and maintaining social distancing from crowded public places (Hossain et al., 2021; Rahman et al., 2021). Therefore, it indicates that the ecotourism industry is truly one of the most crucially affected by the COVID-19 pandemic with a significant effect on both tourist supply and demand. This represents a further drawback hazard in the aspect of a vulnerable worldwide economy, community, geopolitical, and business concerns and inadequate performance among the most important outbound tourism markets. Tourists are generally avoiding the visiting destination if they feel it is a threat and risky to their health (Hasan et al., 2017). Traveling risk and management are linked with tourism destinations which influence tourists' intentions and outcomes are uncertain because of the effect of COVID-19. Ecotourism and the tourism industry are the biggest industries around the world, however, despite this industry, the hospitality and travel industry are recently extremely sensitive to important shocks. It is highly recommended to explore as well as need deep study how the tourism industry will regain from the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Earlier studies found that COVID-19 has been carried an economic crisis in many countries such as Singapore, Bali, Barcelona, Rome, Malaysia, Nepal, Switzerland, and many other countries where those countries were once tourist sports and attractions (Weng et al., 2021).

## 1.8 Ecotourism and Information Technology

The ecotourism industry is one of the rapid industries to apply and use information technology almost totally for business activities and this industry has also become a potential service sector for generating income. Ever since the improvement of ecotourism has been supported by information technology and its achievement depends strongly on technology. Arguably, information technology motivates this incorporation and permits ecotourism goods to be tailored to meet the needs of certain individuals. Due to changes in tourist customer behaviour, the business is becoming more apportioned, with every possible customer belonging to many market segments simultaneously. Information technology has brought with it a lot of new opportunities for enterprise and ecotourism, therefore posing prospects to the business and ecotourism operators, in common. Information technology is used to illustrate various computerized devices which enable transferring of information or data in a network.

Law et al. (2014) showed that information technology can promote a crucial role in the ecotourism and travel business because they create strong use of information. The ecotourism industry has a worldwide link with tourism providers and communities. Online communications allow universal traveling to different tourist spots and bearing peaceful cultures and practices (Palmer & McCole, 2000). One of the reasons is that environmental conservation and saving culture are the main mechanisms of ecotourism, thus, this underlines the truth that tourists utilize technology to find information linked to ecotourism. Sadiq and Adil (2021) identified that online media and Internet users are seeking relevant data from the specific network on the subjects such as reducing weight, hair removal, finding new tourist features and destinations, and dieting.

The development of technology has modernized the overall way of searching for information related to whatever thing including ecotourism. It has encouraged tourists in one way and affected the industry and income of tourism agencies in the other (Buhalis & Law, 2008). Ecotourism is currently deemed an effective and useful component to gain sustainability. The core of ecotourism has a strong concern for natural, ecological, human, and community enhancement. While creating preservation and travel strategies, many countries throughout the world have started to promote as well as support ecotourism sustainability. Ecotourism has community, ecological, and economic consequences not only on inhabitants and a single nation but also globally. It also can assist financial stability by attracting more travelers who are concerned about the environment. With the help of ecotourism, socio-cultural and ecological features are also preserved. By promoting local goods and services, ecotourism assists to preserve the native eco functions, and in the meantime, it contributes to protecting the atmosphere and, as a result, aids to create events that help take care of the atmosphere in the region.

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# Chapter 2

## Social Entrepreneurship and Eco-Tourism: The Context of Social Entrepreneurship Through Tourism Studies from Social and Environmental Perspectives



Noor Raihani Zainol and Nurul Hafizah Mohd Yasin

**Abstract** The continuous search for sustainable practices in the tourism sector paves the way for alternative approaches to social entrepreneurship perspectives. Despite growing research interests in social entrepreneurship, the impact remains fragmented and this has led to calls for a details explanation of the process of social entrepreneurship in tourism sectors. The purpose of this chapter is to address this gap in the social entrepreneurship context by conceptualizing eco-tourism as a strategy to host communities and conserve the environment. By critically explaining the relationship between social entrepreneurship and tourism studies, this paper situates social entrepreneurship tourism within and for local community development. Drawing upon previous literature and case study research, this chapter explores the significance of eco-tourism for the process of social entrepreneurship. The key role is how this chapter explaining all entrepreneurship in these discussions led to the understanding of the issue, its definition, and its development. This chapter contributes to the emerging literature on social entrepreneurship and tourism to enhance the eco-tourism ecosystem as they focus on developing community-based social enterprises.

### 2.1 Perspectives of Social Entrepreneurship

Social entrepreneurship has garnered global attention and becomes an important research area, especially since the 1980s when the term was first coined by Bill Drayton of Ashoka (McGoey 2015; Ashoka 2018) and first written in the management literature (Cagarman et al. 2020) and social change literature around 1960s–1970s (Gray 2012). A good understanding of social entrepreneurship is essential as it is an important category of entrepreneurship. Therefore, a strong comprehension of these terms must begin with understanding entrepreneurship while knowing that society merely modifies entrepreneurship (Jayakar Pai and More 2018). Gandhi and Raina (2018) refer to social entrepreneurship as a procedure or behavior. Other researchers have extended the definition which covers processes and activities commenced to determine, outline, and maximize the opportunities to improve social wealth by



forming new ventures or supervising existing organizations (Kannampuzha and Hockerts 2019). This process engages innovative methods and combines resources to address social needs, inspire social transformation, or create a social context in organizations to help society and environmental issues.

This social value refers to the economic benefit to society, social benefit to people, and quality of life. Moreover, the sustainability of social entrepreneurship activities facilitates job opportunities, thus, increasing the demand of the economy that will stimulate economic growth. At the same time, the entrepreneurial activity could develop activities that respect the environment, thus reducing environmental damage. Initially, Africa's policy makers recognized the potential of social entrepreneurship as a mechanism for addressing social and environmental challenges (Santos et al. 2015). Most social entrepreneurs focus on social innovation, however, gripping to highlight the outcomes of social entrepreneurship and the reason these innovations are needed, and why they can offer the better option in providing these services to society (Oeij et al. 2019).

All these arguments are challenging in finding effective and sustainable solutions to most social problems that required many of the aspects together with effective business innovation. Such challenge often demands societal transformations in economic, political, and social systems for long-term social impact and sustainable change. Eco-tourism that employs social entrepreneurship to solve social problems has been noticed can help impoverished and marginalized societies so as the environment. Eco-tourism is one of the sustainable developments in the tourism industry that allows visitors to experience and comprehend the natural beauty and diverse wildlife of the area. Additionally, it creates socioeconomic advantages for rural and distant people that live close to the natural environment. Rural communities have a special chance to draw tourists because of their cultural, ethnic, and geographic origins as well as the stunning vistas of rural areas.

Santos (2012) further expanded on the idea of social entrepreneurship theory by including value creation and creating sustainable solutions. As such, social entrepreneurship is described as entrepreneurial activities with a social mission and intention, which address social issues in innovative and creative solutions (Germak and Robinson 2014). In addition to this study, Dwivedi and Weerawardena (2018) point out social entrepreneurship as a multidimensional concept that shows righteous behavior and the skill to recognize the opportunities of value creation and features of risk-taking, pro-activeness, and innovativeness. Value creation is known as a fundamental of social entrepreneurship. These basic elements play an important role in society engagement by providing mutual beneficial exchanges to solve problems. According to Peredo and McLean (2006), social entrepreneurship aims at creating social value and demonstrates the capacity to recognize and exploit opportunities for envision (create the value). Then, social entrepreneurs apply innovation and are willing to accept the risk of creating and distributing social value with scarce resources in pursuing their social venture. While, Newth and Woods (2014) stressed that entrepreneurial alertness, motivation, institutional, organizational, market, and social, and settings as the constructed outcomes of opportunities.

Also, social entrepreneurship involves various levels and entities such as individuals, society, or different perspectives from psychological to political and organizations including non-governmental organizations, for-profit, public organizations, or the government (Suryandharu et al. 2019; Kim et al. 2020). Accordingly, all this conceptualizes social entrepreneurship leads to the establishment of new social enterprises with the ability to recognize the social value in creating social opportunities. However, some concerns establish a specific notion of social entrepreneurship where it may limit the potential for social entrepreneurship to develop (Dacin et al. 2010). Some academics used social entrepreneurs as examples to explain social entrepreneurship. By carrying out a mission to create and sustain social value, identifying and assiduously pursuing new opportunities to further that mission, engaging in a process of continuous innovation, adaptation, and learning, acting boldly without being constrained by the resources at their disposal, and demonstrating increased accountability to the constituencies they serve and for the outcomes produced, social entrepreneurs act as change agents in the social sector. Accordingly, social entrepreneurs' focus emphasized innovation and impact, but not income when dealing with social issues. In other words, social entrepreneurs are driven, and creative, exploit new opportunities, never give up, and change the world for the better with innovative solutions to social problems (Žur 2021). Through new model creation, social entrepreneurs provide products or services that cater directly to social needs based on sustainable development goals. At the same time, they build their values in terms of contributing to society associated with their entrepreneurial talent. Such social entrepreneurs are innovative thinkers; resourceful, and result-oriented toward social impact development.

Furthermore, Ashoka, Schwab, and Skoll who are leading foundations actively promote social entrepreneurship by stressing the social entrepreneur's contribution and performance (Kreitmeyr 2019). It is questionable the reason and the role of social entrepreneurship development in society, especially non-profit organizations. Non-profit organizations need to employ business professionals in terms of their operations and marketing strategy to increase their effectiveness in providing products and services to serve the community better. This innovative way help non-profit organizations face the challenge in regards to their limited resources, funding sources, and high competitors. To the extent their approaches to solving social problems, nonprofit organizations need collaboration with the corporate sectors and cooperation among different levels in society towards a better life. The increasing social problems urge corporations to respond positively and take responsibility in the social sector. Such a response will encourage social entrepreneurship activities by corporate and non-profit organizations, which will enhance both business value and have a positive social impact.

In addition, the increasing social awareness among corporate sectors creates more attention and response to complex social problems. Sustainable social entrepreneurship discovers the variety of entrepreneurial identities aligned with sustainable development practices that must be strengthened over time. Education is essential to sustain the development of social entrepreneurship including knowledge, capabilities, character, and competencies. According to Lee et al. (2021) social entrepreneurship

in eco-tourism nurturing sustainable natural spaces management, were entailing educative and conservation-supporting components. Also, these findings support three principles of eco-tourism, namely nature, learning, and sustainability that refer to environmental, social, and economic efficiencies. This education will lead to social entrepreneurial opportunity, social networking, social identification, and social motivation (Mohamad and Nasir 2019). Social entrepreneurship competence is comprised of a large spectrum of social and functional competencies and motivations to solve social issues/problems. This concept has become increasingly noticeable in commercial markets, academic discourse, and policy-making leading to new market and market niches with initiatives such as fair trade (De Bruin et al. 2017) and microfinance (Casasnovas and Chliova 2020).

## 2.2 Defining Social Entrepreneurs

To make social entrepreneurship successful, social entrepreneurs play a vital role in executing profit generation and social missions. The social entrepreneur is an individual who recognizes, evaluates, and exploits business opportunities that resulted in creating social value through the establishment of an enterprise with an entrepreneurial spirit (Jilinskaya-Pandey and Wade 2019). The social entrepreneur can perform several roles that require the skill and competencies of specialist, functional, and process with very special traits, personalities, and ideas (Praszkier and Nowak 2011) abilities (Nicolás Martínez et al. 2019), leadership skills (Krause 2020) passion on vision (Bernardino et al. 2018), productive network (Terry and Lewis 2018) and tolerate risks (Widjaya and Fortunata 2021). Detailed definition by Tayşir (2019) found that a social entrepreneur is a social leader, value creator, agent of social change, highly accountable, and pursuer of economic opportunities that able to recognize and pursue new opportunities by creating and sustaining social value to serve a specific social mission. Accordingly, by using terms from various sources, According to Abu Saifan (2012), a social entrepreneur is a goal-driven person who employs a variety of entrepreneurial activities to provide social benefit to those who are less fortunate. In other words, those social entrepreneurs are financially independent or sustainable with common characteristics such as innovators dedicated, alert to opportunities, persistent, and committed. In addition, social entrepreneurs together with social capital build sustainable projects for more success in reducing poverty, undertaking conflicting issues, and taking advantage of new opportunities (Praszkier and Nowak 2011). This solution can help drive force for the development of societies or organizations as a potential to stimulate global improvements whether in education, health care, economic development, arts, or related social field, as cited by Kimakwa et al. (2021). Social change is a motivation for the social entrepreneur that makes them involved in a process of continuous innovation, learning, and adaptation in creating competitive advantages, and social added value that offers a solution to society's problems (Zainol et al. 2019). According to Simón-Moya and Rodríguez-research Garca's from 2021, a social entrepreneur develops a completely original

solution to a social issue that demonstrates a determined vision, unrelenting tenacity, and a desire to both locally and globally alter an entire industry. They tackle social issues and offer new ideas for wide-scale change with persistence competencies and willingness to make adjustments as they get more experience. Thus, the great delivery of social value is dependent on effective management practices by a social entrepreneur to ensure the correct assessed needs and values of the people they intend to serve and the communities in which they operate.

### 2.3 Defining Social Business

The emergence of the social business concept is due to the successful ventures in Grameen advocated by Muhamad Yunus after the failure of the government and non-profits to help the poor and underprivileged in Bangladesh (Aker et al. 2020). Social business is an effective solution to social problems such as battling poverty, health problem, education manner, and disabled people and providing employment or care services to improve social performance (Muñoz and Kimmit 2020). Social business is differing from charitable activities in this approach including innovating, expanding, and gaining more people through the power of the free market. Social enterprises combine a social objective with unconventional marketing strategies to produce value on both the social and economic fronts. Social businesses use business strategies and tactics to address the world's social problems in an effort to fulfill their social mission while recovering their entire costs quickly and becoming self-sufficient in the long run (Kickul et al. 2012). A social enterprise only depends on its investors at the start of a development project because it needs to be self-sustaining. The organization's premise is a no-loss, no-dividend business that sells goods or services and pays investors back, but focuses on serving society with the improvement of the poor and underprivileged life. As noted by Kreutzer and Mauksch (2014) social business act as a catalyst of societal transformation in the business, which typically addresses structural problems of society.

It is different from NGOs, which are obligated to spend some of their time and effort soliciting money because they are not intended to fund all of their operating expenses. NGOs were created as a burgeoning type of social enterprise with the explicit social goal of eradicating poverty. Consequently, a social business has all the same elements as a traditional firm, such as products, services, clients, markets, costs, and profits. Because social businesses seem to blend and integrate the traditional principles associated with both for-profit and non-profit activity inside the same company, they stand out as different organizational concepts (Aker et al., 2020) purposefully and intentionally. By giving others with similar circumstances the chance to participate, the concept of social business takes certain ideas from the capitalist economy (Grove and Berg 2014). From an organizational standpoint, this new type of business is similar to profit-maximizing enterprises rather than charity or contribution. Since the idea of social business is closely related to the literature on social

entrepreneurship, it may be said that social business is a subset of social entrepreneurship, which engages both for-profit and nonprofit ventures to address social problems in a creative way. According to the business entrepreneurship perspective, the production of economic value results in the emergence of social wealth. As a result, although not all social entrepreneurs operate social enterprises, those who do are still labeled social entrepreneurs. The social business is self-sustaining, and investors only receive the money they invested—not profits or dividends—because the profits will be used to fund other social enterprises.

## 2.4 Defining Corporate Social Responsibility

For the past forty years, the region has faced a significant task in attaining ongoing economic advancement without compromising social and environmental sustainability due to the region's rapid economic expansion (Du et al. 2019). This is why corporate social responsibility (CSR) is becoming more important for the sustainability of social, economic, and environmental aspects. The three views' main focus is crucial for enhancing social progress and living quality. The CSR initiatives, such as those involving charitable giving, donations, and volunteer work, are distinct from the business's operations (Ajmal et al. 2018; Sardana et al. 2020). This brings up the company's social obligation to support underprivileged groups, accept responsibility for their acts, and develop initiatives that improve their local community. As a result, CSR is a key management concern, and company practices now go far beyond simple altruism or volunteerism thanks to their crucial contribution to societal profit and employment development.

In general, CSR has historically been used to describe an organization's economic, legal, and ethical practices. It also refers to optional actions that create an organization's social interaction, such as corporate philanthropy, corporate volunteerism, and cross-sector partnerships (Ritala et al. 2021). According to Bacinello et al. (2021), businesses should participate in CSR initiatives since they are an important component of society and have a responsibility to support community needs. These initiatives will strengthen the company's reputation and offer some protection from unforeseen threats. Through a variety of initiatives and programs that benefit both business and society, firms that practice CSR contribute to the improvement of the local area and the environment. Through this project, chances for collaboration between businesses, non-profits, governmental organizations, and other enterprises have been created. A fresh definition of corporate social responsibility was also supplied by Kim (2019), who defined it as a system that can regenerate itself by creating knowledge and trust resources.

But only a close interaction with the reference environment in which the firm functions can give rise to these resources. With a variety of actions and initiatives strategically implemented throughout time, the concept of CSR makes a substantial contribution to the business model. When viewed from an institutional perspective, CSR is more generally known as corporate citizenship since it involves businesses

acting as socially responsible citizens and giving back in a way that benefits both parties (Akbari and McClelland 2020). Therefore, governments that are aware that implementing innovative industrial and technological solutions could lower operational costs while minimizing environmental impacts will adhere to this notion (Ritala et al. 2021). An operational manager (supply side) or a marketing manager (demand side) of the value chain often manages or co-manages CSR, reflecting the focus on improving operational efficiency and/or generating income. CSR initiatives will thereby benefit stakeholders and improve corporate and social performance (Carroll 2021).

## 2.5 Defining Social Enterprise

There is a tremendous debate about social enterprise definitions (Defourney and Nyssens 2017; Barraket et al. 2017; Bull and Ridley-Duff 2019). Hence, the definition has been left open to include a variety of organizations that consider themselves social enterprises. To understand the term social enterprise, there are two distinct schools of thought in the US and Europe. In the US, the term refers to market-based approaches to tackling social issues and activities of generating revenue through non-profit organizations, and for-profit organizations that offer public/social goods or operate in the social sector (Vézina et al. 2019). On the other hand, in Europe, the scholars divided into two approaches, in which ‘social’ was initially a collective organizational team, whilst ‘enterprise’ was an organizational unit (Calò et al. 2018). According to Defourney and Nyssens (2017), social entrepreneurs through the process of social entrepreneurship created social enterprises with the social mission to prioritize solutions to unemployment, social cohesion, and social exclusion. In other words, social enterprise is referring to an economic entity or organization that needs a social entrepreneur to form a social enterprise and social entrepreneurship as a process or activity. To get a clear understanding of social enterprises, Defourney et al. (2021) divided it into three dimensions, which are the economic and entrepreneurial dimension, the social dimension, and the involvement governance of social enterprises. Ganz et al. (2018) believed that social enterprises exist between the public and private sectors, in which the government can choose either to act and cooperate or not act and fail. As such, the more difficult the problem is to address with the governments or NGOs, the better opportunity also relevance for a social enterprise to operate in an efficient way on disregarded problems. Wry and York (2017) argue the possibility to distinguish social enterprise from organizations whose priorities are profit-generated and economic contribution. Following that reason, by using the distinction of objectives, Zainol et al. (2019) refine the suitable time for the organizations should be a social enterprise and other organizations that would remain under social business. Those social enterprises should have a clear social mission, interest in social mission, and income generated through trade and profits.

This phrase should also encompass the organization’s activities, size, legal structure, geographic reach, finance, goals, profit-driven nature, linkages to the local

community, ownership, and culture. Since poverty is a significant and widespread societal issue, many social enterprises concentrate on initiatives that promote economic empowerment (Finlayson and Roy 2019). Similar to traditional businesses, social enterprises operate and compete in a variety of market sectors, such as health care, education, housing, children's services, transport, food and farming, homelessness, and environmental services (Zainol et al. 2019). Similar to traditional businesses, social enterprises operate and compete in a variety of market sectors, such as health care, education, housing, children's services, transport, food and farming, homelessness, and environmental services (Zainol et al. 2019). These businesses are primarily focused on three types of social issues: deviant behaviour, social inequality, conflict, and issues relating to human progress and social change. Additionally, Vezina et al. (2019)'s wide understanding of social entrepreneurship highlights novel socially conscious action in business, nonprofit organizations, or hybrid structural forms that bring together social and commercial activities.

To be sustainable, the social enterprise must comprehend its social goal in the context of the market competition in which it operates. With a focus on social innovation, a financially solid business strategy, and the desire to help society or the community, social enterprise owners are now presenting themselves through their social mission as social actors as a result of the pragmatic shift. To serve the dual mandate of the community they serve, social enterprises, however, play a crucial role in social innovation by ensuring ongoing adaptation and learning (Lawrence et al. 2020; Fridhi 2021). Through the growing involvement of varied partners, salaried employees, volunteer workers, users, supporting organizations, and local authorities, this perspective on social businesses plays a vital role in organizational and structural innovation. Social enterprises, in reaction to the fall in private funding and government subsidies, merged the marketplace mechanisms with a social goal as a self-sustaining organization to achieve sustainable innovation for social problems (Murthy et al. 2021). The combination of resources needed to establish sustainability and improve organizational effectiveness is the more significant aspect of social entrepreneurship.

## **2.6 The Contexts of Eco-Tourism in Social Entrepreneurship**

One of the increasingly popular alternatives to traditional tourism is ecotourism. Hector Ceballos Lascurain claims that ecotourism, a form of tourism that involves the preservation and conservation of nature as well as the provision of infrastructure and facilities in tourist destination areas, was formally declared at the First World Conservation Congress in 1966. The manmade ecological environment is also included in these activities, thus they are not just limited to the natural environment. In other words, these activities increase the local community's quality of life while also promoting economic growth and environmental preservation. Ecotourism

is described by the International Ecotourism Society (2015) as ethical travel to natural places that benefit the local community, protect the environment, and engage in interpretation and education to enhance the traveler's experience and awareness. Since there is abundant biodiversity everywhere, there is hope that the tourism industry would advance and draw tourists to the country to experience its natural beauty. Eco-tourism is particularly concerned with the environment's nature and culture aims to reduce environmental harm, and is prepared to fork out a lot of money for high-quality vacations. The concern that the quality of natural resources would only result in a social and cultural disparity in the future of tourism is in line with the fact that natural awareness among eco-tourists contributes to the factors that determine eco-tourism growth (Prakash and Reddy 2020). Exploiting natural resources while benefiting the local community and the national economy are ecotourism activity.

Previous studies have established the following seven principles of eco-tourism as a general framework: (a) Eco-tourism must be related to the preservation of nature and must be able to strengthen local economies; (b) eco-tourism operators should hire and retain a highly skilled workforce; (c) the culture and sensibilities of the local population should be taken into consideration when developing eco-tourism; (d) the implementation of eco-tourism should benefit the local population in terms of health, safety, and economic development; and (e) Eco-tourism must be implemented with caution; (f) the information and services provided in this industry must be of the highest calibre; and (g) as eco-tourism grows, a strong management structure is needed to uphold environmental protection and prevent unrestrained exploration of the natural environment (Eagles 1997). Page and Ross (2002) provided three key ecotourism principles: (1) Conservation is a principle about a concern, responsibility, and commitment towards environmental preservation of nature and culture, conducting responsible business rules, and a sustainable economy; (2) Society participation is a principle of planning and developing ecotourism; and (3) Economy is the principle of developing ecotourism conducted effectively.

Regulation of natural resources is necessary to ensure their continued exploitation for present and future generations. The Eco-tourism Society offers the following principles as a framework for conducting ecotourism responsibly: (1) minimise impact; (2) foster cultural and environmental awareness; (3) provide rewarding experiences for both guests and hosts; (4) provide direct financial benefits for conservation; (5) provide financial benefits and local people with empowerment; and (6) increase sensitivity to host countries' political, environmental, and social issues. Moreover, Oosterman (1999) found that in a country like Indonesia, the criteria of eco-tourism determined by the number of visitors are reduced (refer to the distance between the destination and the main international airport, Bali, and Jakarta) and the majority of the sites are collaborating with international conservation organizations. Such guidelines explained the character of eco-tourism through its nature, sustainability, and most important offering economic value. These economic values can develop the eco-tourism industry, as well as stimulate overall economic growth due to comparative advantage and capital investment (human capital, land, and technology) (Chiu and Yeh 2017).



The development of the tourism concept has changed due to certain circumstances, for instance, global warming has changed the level of people's awareness of environmental preservation. Thus, the changes in their awareness also change their paradigm from the concept of mass tourism to the concept of eco-tourism (Shasha et al. 2020). Ecotourism has the potential, to be an effective tool for sustainable development is the main reason why developing countries are now embracing it and including it in their economic development and conservation strategies. Ecotourism is a platform to minimize its impact on the environment, and the sound of ecology, and prevent the negative impacts of many large-scale tourism activities or progress to development (Massi and De Nisco 2018). Ecotourism is alternative tourism that consists of learning about natural areas through the visit and learning or carrying out activities environmentally friendly. Such nature experience enables effective social and economic development of local communities through social entrepreneurship activities that highlight the positive natural environment. The consistent of quality experience from the tourists will be perceived through their enjoyment of nature and culture. As aforementioned above in the literature, eco-tourism offers tourists an insight into the impact of human beings on the environment and fosters a greater appreciation of natural habitats in one country (Shasha et al. 2020; McNally and Maroun 2018).

Some scholars discovered that medium and low-income countries are conducive to economic growth compared to developed countries such as Latin America. Tourists prefer the tourism goods and services in developing countries due to satisfying demands in terms of price and quality setting including tourism facilities, such as wholesale and retail industries, transportation, and camps. Several ASEAN countries such as Malaysia, Thailand, Cambodia, Vietnam, Philippines, Indonesia, and Lao PDR are the ones that have taken the most eco-tourism project and innovations. Southeast Asia remains one of the top tourist destinations in the world, which is famous for its tropical beaches, forest, cultural heritage, rare and endangered animals, ancient ruins, ornate temples of Buddha, hotels, etc.

Malaysia, which is developing into a more knowledge-intensive and high-value-added economy, is so gifted with a diversity of natural resources and distinctive ecosystems. The Danum Valley Conservation Area in Sabah and Endau-Rompin National Park in Peninsular Malaysia, which is one of the oldest tropical rainforests in the world, were both listed as ecotourism destinations in the Eleventh Malaysia Plan (2016–2020). The center of Khmer culture and a haven for ecotourism are both found in Cambodia. Half of the nation's more than 200 tourist destinations are appropriate for ecotourism (Padeco 2001). In addition to providing residents with a means of income generation, ecotourism destinations with the richest ecosystems and natural areas attract more foreign visitors. These destinations also promote environmental conservation, promote local production, and preserve multiethnic cultures and traditions.

## 2.7 Eco-Tourism Social Entrepreneurship on Society Involvement

Eco-tourism development involves local community participation and support as they are getting the benefits of socio-economic empowerment. The main factors of their support towards tourism development are influenced by monetary advantages, the provision of infrastructure and knowledge, environmental sustainability, and community involvement. Therefore, the eco-tourism development area should provide economic value and serious consideration to the local people in terms of reducing poverty (Shahsha et al. 2020; Zhou et al. 2021). This is consistent with the World Tourism Organization’s (2015) assessment, which found that ecotourism has a significant potential to combat poverty worldwide, particularly in poor and less developed nations. Vietnam’s gross domestic product was boosted by tourism to the tune of 6.7%, while Cambodia’s economic recovery in 1999 was aided by ecotourism to the tune of 9.2%. Since 1982, Thailand’s main source of foreign exchange has continued to be ecotourism. The public should know and understand this great potential through social entrepreneurship education to enhance social improvement. Social entrepreneurs act as storytellers to the public/community about their social activities and social impact that encourage community involvement and prosper community or stakeholders (Sharma and Sarmah 2019). Accordingly, social entrepreneurs have roles in terms of shaping social value in society and creating social value in a humanity complex system including reducing the numbers of poverty, improving health care, and experiencing climate change (McNally and Maroun 2018). Table 2.1 demonstrates the social impact of social entrepreneurship activities/elements by Brock and Steiner (2010).

**Table 2.1** Social entrepreneurship impact

Area	Social entrepreneurship
End goal	Lives changed
Timeframe	Long-term social impact
Owners	Non-profit, for-profit, and hybrid forms
Rewards	Serving the community/public good
Market orientation	Underserved markets
Target market	Ultimately beneficiaries and community
Needs	Reducing needs
Customer orientation	Empowerment
Value creation	Social value
Growth orientation	Scaling social impact
Impact	Solutions to social problems, eliminate the needs

Source Brock and Steiner (2010)

## 2.8 Eco-Tourism Social Entrepreneurship on Environmental Sustainability

Environmental protection (anyone who offers ecotourism in an area must be protected), environmental activity (walking, observing landscapes, studying wildlife, mingling with the local population, buying a souvenir, engaging in a variety of environmentally friendly sports), environmental information (visitors preparation/host preparation), and environmental awareness are all covered under ecotourism (Barna et al. 2011; Xu et al. 2022). The most crucial aspect of eco-tourism is the preservation of the environment, the local culture, and the historical legacy of the tourist destination in order to promote economic growth in rural areas. The factors that determine how competitive a site is as a tourist destination emphasize the availability of natural and cultural resources, as well as suitable infrastructure and facilities. Eco-tourism is complemented, for instance, by the production of organic food as part of the green economy. Consequently, in order to retain and maximize a country's potential for ecotourism, it is necessary to eat healthfully (Sharma and Sarmah 2019).

Additionally, a variety of protected areas, such as eco-zones, eco-villages, eco-farms, etc., are regarded as eco-tourism. Many travelers like eco-tourism because it keeps the effects of tourism on the environment under check. For eco-tourists, the mountains, hills, valleys, lakes, trees, birds, butterflies, etc. have developed into significant attractions. However, other features enable destinations to achieve competitive advantages over time through the introduction of new tourism products and portfolio diversification. Some of these features make destinations attractive to tourists, enabling them to achieve a differentiated position in tourism markets (Eshoo et al. 2018; Aquino et al. 2021). In order to assure destination competitiveness, it is important to fulfill two requirements. Travel agencies, food producers, souvenir sellers, trade firms, and establishments that offer quality programs for excursions to locations with cultural and historical monuments, visits to monasteries and sites of preserved geological heritage, as well as river and lake excursions are all essential to the eco-economic destination's success.

These organizations also provide accommodations. Over time, all types of sustainable ecotourism can elevate the socioeconomic standing of the local populace (Gabriel-Campos et al. 2021). Eco-tourists who are deeply concerned with the environment's ecology and culture. They aim to reduce environmental harm and are prepared to pay a premium for high-quality vacations. Due to their homogeneity and mass production, modern products are not preferred by tourists today. Growing environmental and cultural awareness, together with worry that the quality of natural resources will only result in social and cultural inequity in tourist locations, are the main factors influencing the expansion of ecotourism. Therefore, effective eco-tourism development contributes to enhancing stakeholder welfare in or around the eco-tourism location. Additionally, the project will guarantee environmental sustainability (Armono et al. 2021).

## 2.9 Policy Support for Eco-Tourism

Ecotourism is one of the potential tourism industries in the world today. Many developed and developing countries have been enhancing their economy through ecotourism development. Ecotourism growth has boosted the economies of many industrialized and developing countries. Malaysia has placed a premium on tourism development to maximize foreign exchange profits. Malaysia has placed a premium on tourism development to maximize foreign exchange profits. To encourage the growth of economies in ecotourism planning and promotion, government involvement is required. The government might launch efficient planning and development initiatives to advance ecotourism in this region. Again, for social, environmental, economic, and cultural reasons, the government must ensure that local people participate in the growth of ecotourism. Governmental organizations are becoming more interested in collaborative projects, allocating funds and resources to them, and taking a significant part in the planning, creation, and administration of ecotourism operations. Some of the factors that have influenced governments' strategies are the significance of ecotourism as a national and regional socioeconomic engine, the potential for ecotourism to contribute to environmental management and enhancement, and the profile of ecotourism as a tool for international development.

While the business sector depends on government support to preserve the industry's long-term viability, governments are ready to play an active and collaborative role in ecotourism. Sustainability issues influencing ecotourism are a top priority since government agencies have significant control over many factors that influence how much benefit ecotourism may provide to communities (Simpson 2008). First, the government announced the implementation of the Ninth Malaysia Plan, which took place between 2006 and 2010. Significant efforts were undertaken during the plan period to maximize the tourism industry's potential for increased economic and societal impact (Malaysia Ministry of Tourism and Culture (2016). Promoting Malaysia as a well-known international tourist destination and domestic tourism abroad were the key goals. There have been more concerted attempts made to allocate and refocus funds towards enhancing the essential tourist infrastructure and facilities as well as creating more innovative tourist goods and services. Because of the protection of natural features such as wildlife sanctuaries, national parks, mountains, and islands, ecotourism has drawn increasing attention during the plan era.

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# Chapter 3

## Social Innovation: Social Practices Contributing to Social Development



Noor Raihani Zainol and Muhammad Khalilur Rahman

**Abstract** This chapter seeks to understand the challenge of social innovation in eco-tourism practices and value creation. Drawing from the concepts of social innovation, this chapter attempts to explore the nature of innovation in different social organizations. Although social innovation contributes to economic growth and continuous development, they are the area where the innovation source usually goes unnoticed. Social innovation about social matters has attracted all fields and sectors with numerous domains. Taken in this way, social innovation should be approached through a new lens, considering the current cultural and business system to be failing to meet social demands allowing the effort to reduce social gaps experienced in different ways. These gaps fill by the eco-tourism sectors in developing the local community economy and conservation of nature. The environmental issue should be considered in every aspect of development to achieve the sustainable goals of social entrepreneurship. Such social innovation represents changes that increase community trust while simultaneously creating value throughout certain areas portrayed as social practices or routines. Therefore, this chapter covers the topic of causing change, social innovation practices, rural development, and value creation.

### 3.1 Challenges of Causing Change

The world is facing challenges that not only people's quality of life but also the planet's ability to support human habitation for the foreseeable future. The issues are vast in scale and intricate, including gender inequity, poverty, hunger, a lack of education, and sustainability and climate action. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were established by the United Nations in response to these concerns in order to end world poverty, safeguard the environment, and ensure that everyone lives in prosperity and peace by the year 2030 (Liguori and Bendickson 2020). Therefore, social innovation takes into account new creations that are market-based, scalable, and offer a long-term solution to structural societal issues. As a result, this argument against social entrepreneurship in eco-tourism emphasizes the necessity of maintaining a profitable company while innovating for societal good (Matrapazi and Zabaniotou 2020).

Also, it shows a change that transcends the resolution of societal issues for society or the environment. For instance, Matteucci (2020) reported that the hospitality and tourism service corporation Hilton's "Travel with Purpose" program has made a formal commitment to social innovation by halving its environmental footprint and tripling its social impact investment by 2030. By making this promise, Hilton became the first significant hotel chain to set science-based goals for lowering carbon emissions and disposing of no soap in landfills. By addressing environmental sustainability, enhancing inclusion, benefiting the communities in which it operates, assisting women and youth globally, and promoting positive social and environmental change to improve the globe, these efforts demonstrate an ecotourism context (Matteucci 2020). Competitiveness based on the over-exploitation of local resources presents difficulties and complexity in evaluating sustainability in eco-tourism; this will result in major expenses for the future of local populations. Tourism destinations must be competitive in order to reap not just financial rewards but also benefits to local social cohesion and the preservation of natural and cultural qualities.

The ability of eco-tourism destinations to raise eco-tourism spending, attract more tourists while giving them satisfying, memorable experiences, and do so profitably while enhancing the well-being of destination residents and preserving the natural capital of the destinations for future generations is the systematic approach to the determinants of eco-tourism destinations' competitiveness (Michael et al. 2019). While ecotourism depends on respecting the area's carrying capacity limits, avoiding excessive resource use while still ensuring the presence of a significant number of visitors to ensure the economic viability of the services to be provided and generating social benefits related to employment, revenues, and social cohesion for the local communities (Litheko 2021; Gabriel-Campos et al. 2021). In consequence, loyal tourists are extremely important to ensure they repeat the visit or recommend the destination to friends, relatives, and family, as they do not demand publicity campaigns, and tend to be more sensitive to the values of the place (Aslanova 2019; Lee et al. 2021).

Rural and mountainous locations have difficulty financing solar systems, making it difficult to provide the community with the sustainable energy it needs to address its socioeconomic concerns (Ervural et al. 2018). Renewable energy sources as a solution for rural areas also need a thorough funding plan from banks or private investors. For the development of ecotourism, the public and commercial sectors have to work together on these financial concerns. Collaboration of development programs for the production and marketing of eco-food can be successfully implemented to support this partnership in terms of the eco-tourism idea and help the community achieve financial success while also raising awareness of health and environmental issues (Sullivan and Rosenberg 2019). Eco-tourism becomes a chance to preserve biodiversity as well as a way for individuals to make money.

The growth of ecotourism benefits the preservation of the environment and wise use of natural resources, the lowering of unemployment and poverty, the preservation of water, air, and land, the rise of competition and market dominance, as well as the growth of social entrepreneurship (Buzinde et al. 2017; Dahles et al. 2020). As a result, the growth of eco-tourism destinations and the diversity of the tourist

industry's service offerings create opportunities for the emergence of novel business models and the revival of long-forgotten industries. The long-term viability of ecotourism development in ecologically sensitive places depends on both the preservation of the area's ecological integrity and the use of environmental resources for the creation of tourism experiences (Aslanova 2019). Moreover, social innovations have brought answers to issues including poverty, illiteracy, human trafficking, pollution, and climate change as well as social and environmental demands. The goal of this innovation mission is to serve the needs of underprivileged, destitute, indigenous, disabled, and homeless children (Gong et al. 2020). Eco-tourism requires a higher level of operational efficiency because of the absence of innovative knowledge among social entrepreneurship practitioners.

Additionally, infrastructure takes into account the demand for visitors as well as the supply of public safety, transportation services, medical systems, financial systems, educational systems, and other services involved in the population (Nguyen 2022; Nega et al. 2019). Tourism infrastructure plays a crucial role in the long-term development of ecotourism as well as the overall advancement of ecotourism destinations in delivering the necessary services to tourists as a part of the regional ecotourism offering. Despite a location's abundance of natural beauty, infrastructure can hinder the successful growth of ecotourism (Shasha et al. 2020). Keeping in mind that the development of infrastructure, such as roads and lodging, as essential drivers of developing the eco-tourism sector, depends on the relationship between the local community and the eco-tourists (Wei 2021; Aslanova 2019). Since eco-tourists need specific services to feel better during their stay at the chosen eco-tourist destination, the arrival of eco-tourists improves the effectiveness of human resources at the destination. In particular, there is an increase in demand for infrastructure services such as water supply, waste disposal, communication, and electricity supply as they are essential for eco-tourists to function comfortably at the chosen location. Sustainable ecotourism depends on the effective local community and visitor interaction (Cheng et al. 2019).

Eco-tourism is currently one of the major sectors to support e-business, also known as business-to-business and business-to-consumer communications (Pranita and Kesa 2021). Although a location's physical features may draw tourists, technological advancements may significantly affect how eco-tourists perceive a particular location psychologically. For instance, travelers could easily explore a wealth of information about the destination and event of interest using their digital devices. As a result of the influence of growing technology on visitors' demand for goods and services to improve their quality of life and enrich their experiences, eco-tourism destinations today are facing a number of new problems from both consumers and the environment itself. ICT is therefore crucial in determining how ecotourism will develop in the future (Saseanu et al. 2020). Thus, eco-tourism sites can identify the types of changes that have taken place and respond proactively to problems and obstacles.

For eco-tourism, it is a novel method and business model (Robbins et al. 2018), as ICT has never been connected to travel and tourism management. Before the Internet became commercialized, it was utilized for travel and tourism. Yet, a

growing concern among technology users is whether they can be trusted to adopt new technologies, such as social media and mobile technology, in order to gather and use vast amounts of big data to develop novel value propositions (Law et al. 2018; Cai et al. 2019). Connecting eco-tourism operations to various community stakeholders through responsive platforms, recognizing extensive communication flows, and improving the technological decision support system for eco-tourism development would all have a detrimental impact (Pencarelli 2020).

### **3.2 The Nature of Innovation in Social Organization: Focus on Eco-Tourism**

Social innovation research has become more and more popular, while a variety of societal issues have presented difficulties for market actors as well as society at large. These worries include the severe disparities that are expanding across countries internationally, the challenges of adolescence and adulthood, and the disconnect between happiness and rising GDP and welfare and well-being contributions (Litheko 2021). To address these issues, the public, corporate, and nonprofit sectors must take action. Social innovation will then serve as a catalyst for societal change (Boukas and Chourides 2016). Despite receiving a lot of attention, social innovation rarely applies to the ecotourism industry (Walker and Chen 2019). Yet, eco-tourism can bring in money for underdeveloped places to relieve poverty, as well as build social capital for nearby populations and lessen environmental problems. This suggests that eco-tourism might be a productive environment for fostering social innovation. The introduction of the sharing economy in various eco-tourism and hospitality sectors has made a variety of advances in tourism more elusive in recent years (Aquino et al. 2018). These innovations have been restricted to talent development, sustainability, and eco-tourism activities.

All sectors—public, private, and nonprofit are included in, connected to, and ultimately dependent upon social innovation. Due to the market failure of all three sectors, it frequently takes a new combination or transformation of already existing parts in all three sectors to find a solution to social problems (Howaldt et al. 2015). Industry sectors like eco-tourism, which are characterized by low pay, difficult working conditions, and significant labor turnover, can perform better thanks to social innovation. Due to its potential to stimulate both social and commercial added value along the supply chain, eco-tourism is acknowledged as a promising area for investigating social innovation. Eco-tourists from high and upper-middle-income nations spend their vacation time and money in places that are still developing. Hence, promoting ecotourism is a way for nations whose economies heavily rely on tourism to reduce poverty through inclusive economic growth. According to Hadi et al. (2021), and Sun et al. (2021), participants and stakeholders in the ecotourism sector have begun to recognize their responsibilities to the community and have increased their participation in social innovation initiatives. Ergul and

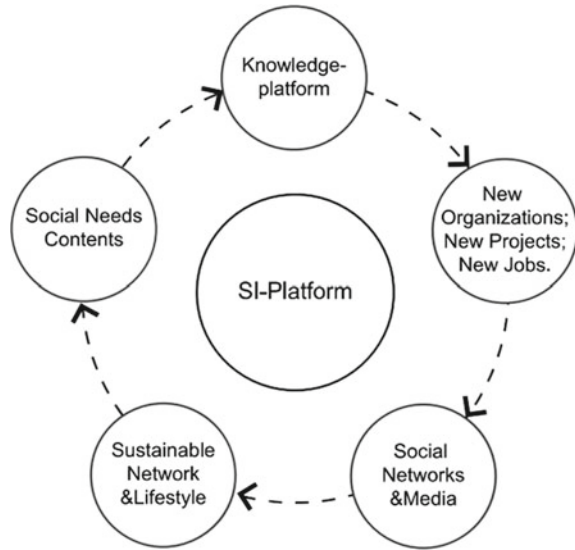
Johnson (2011) believed that social entrepreneurship is typically connected to environmentally friendly and sustainable initiatives including eco-tourism, fundraising, and community involvement.

The World Tourism Organization's (UNWTO 2001) release of the global code of ethics for tourism, which serves as the foundation for ethical ecotourism, was a critical step in boosting sustainability in the ecotourism sector. Certification of global sustainable tourism has been developed to serve as the industry standard and highlight ethical behaviour (Travelife 2017; GSTC 2017). It goes without saying that the sharing economy has been viewed as the pinnacle of social innovation, partly because it makes the case for reducing waste through resource efficiency and building social capital through sharing. Getting financial, long-term, and social rewards is one of the sharing economy's driving forces. The sharing economy, especially for millennials, is a response to their limited earning potential as well as their growing environmental conscience and desire for social relationships (Martin 2016).

Figure 3.1 demonstrates how social innovation is used in eco-tourism that focuses on design service activities. It is important for the construction of a knowledge platform and the aims of the organization's design. The need for social innovation has been recognized in a particular region through a participatory approach. Through these approaches, social innovation can be implemented with the association of the local government, industries, agencies, local peoples, and cross-disciplinary design teams to build a local knowledge platform. In other words, social innovation in eco-tourism able to integrate design resources and promotes social innovation that meets common social needs (community-centered design), as a new paradigm of social innovation (Eddyono et al. 2021). This process leads to the design's participation in community social innovation in a form of structure and social identity power that results in a sustainable harmonious community.

As a conceptual extension of the innovative nature of socioeconomic growth, social innovation is currently an important topic in scientific study and has been utilized in ideological and academic arguments regarding the nature and role of innovation in contemporary society (Walker and Chen 2019). According to Schubert (2018), any novelty that occurs in society spreads across the social fabric and is more or less progressively recognized by society. As a result, social innovation begins with a general innovative notion. Such innovation refers to new strategies or methods put forth to enhance the economic and social performance of public and private organizations, to end the social player's crisis, and to fill in the gaps left by a lack of rules and regulations. According to Von Jacobi et al. (2017), social innovation is a relationship between activities that emancipate collective arts and the alteration of social relations in human societies. Regional planning and social policies are two other areas where social innovation has emerged. More recently, eco-tourism development plans that emphasize community development and environmental conservation have received special attention from social innovation practices (mountains, hills, valleys, lakes, trees, birds, butterflies, etc.). Communities are one of the primary drivers of ecotourism, drawing visitors to experience their way of life. To further understand how the localities influence the surrounding environment and attract tourists.

**Fig. 3.1** Social innovation platform



As a result, it becomes important to consider social innovation while making any decisions about the growth of tourism sites. However, it is still important to recognize that eco-tourism and social innovation share a similar commitment to addressing community needs and involving them in the decision-making process (Aslanova 2019; Sharma and Sarmah 2019; Litheko 2021). The application of these concepts of such new thinking about citizens, participation, and rights at practical and operational levels in the development of ecotourism destinations raises new and innovative methods involving decision-making, planning, and development of tourism destinations (Aksoy et al. 2019).

### 3.3 Scaling and Impact: Social Innovation Practices

The notion surrounding “Social Innovation” (SI) has been actively discussed and practiced for the well ten years and is not something new. The importance of SI has been recognized for many decades but is still a topic that is ignored in social sciences and innovation literature and remains a relatively under-researched area (Slee et al. 2021; Nicholls and Edmiston 2018; Tracey and Stott 2017). However, social innovations have evolved and increased in popularity due to the prevailing techniques and alternatives on how to address social issues by providing solutions that are enduring or social values that consistently promote the progression of community growth and expansion prospects, which focused on social programs or activities, in which society was struggling with at the time. In preparation for the rapidly changing world and globalization, SI needs to develop and sustain new growth opportunities

through social inclusion, health care, education, resource efficiency, employment, developing new competencies, and overcoming environmental challenges, in a range of areas toward transformation and meeting the demands of society (Porter et al. 2019; Znajdić and Rahmouni 2019).

Initially, SI was diffused through organizations, which then led to the formulation of new ideas and innovations (Komatsu Cipriani et al. 2020). Therefore, social entrepreneurs need to understand the capabilities of their organisations in implementing SI practices. This is to provide effective solutions to address social problems and improve the organization's short-term and long-term adaptability and performance (Fougère and Meriläinen 2021) resulting in actions that changed the organizational system. Also, SI is related to the establishment and development of new concepts, strategies, and methods that support the social enterprise (SE) in achieving its mission to improve well-being by satisfying changing desires, social relations, and enablement. Chalmers and Balan-Vnuk (2013) expand this concept by introducing novel and different perspectives which transition from present conditions to improving overall practices within the enterprise. For some researchers, SIs are not viewed as temporary solutions, given that the social enterprise (SE) must address the root causes of social problems, which quickly spread and become long-lasting if not addressed (Dinant et al. 2017; Slee et al. 2021).

There are different approaches and theoretical frameworks created by researchers towards the term 'social' in SI, which helps to distinguish the concepts surrounding SI from other types of innovation (Oeij et al. 2019; Ayob et al. 2016). Moreover, this helps to distinguish SI types due to the intention of the social innovator to transform sustainable social arrangements to be adopted and diffused. While some concepts tend to be quite particular and neglect cases of SI, other researchers use concepts that are far-reaching describing initiatives and enterprises, which fail to be innovative, even if socially orientated. Hence, scholars and other researchers must combine their studies in an attempt to introduce new concepts or ideas that influence change at the societal level which could help to create SI on a much wider scale (Repo and Matschoss 2019). Other scholars and researchers define SI in terms of social impact, which demonstrates the complexity and multi-faceted nature of SI (Schubert 2018; Siegner et al. 2018).

Therefore, by gathering various concepts, definitions, research, and practices globally, SI could be characterized by its novelty in meeting ecological and societal needs, and usefulness, with the capability to improve the ability of society to act. Typically, SI requires a form of social participation in the process of creation or diffusion with innovative behavior (Chin et al. 2019). Innovation is said to be socially attractive when it is accepted socially and broadly distributed within society to transform or to depend on certain situations, which are eventually established as novel social practices or become routine. In the organizational context, the Schumpeterian standpoint of innovation approached to understand the link between conventional and SI. Indeed, Schumpeter's SI occurs when the innovative entrepreneur reengineers the social connections within the backbone of the organization to enhance overall functionality and convert innovation into a social responsibility or by introducing social reasoning into a much broader community (Montgomery 2016; Ziegler 2017).

On the other hand, other researchers tend to struggle to develop a sociological framework for SI study, which combines the structural perspective of SI and the organization. Nowadays, the majority of organizations adopt SI as a practice towards acquiring social responsibility in adopting actions to address complicated social problems and to offer solutions in addressing social problems to access untapped and profitable markets (Oeij et al. 2019; Gupta et al. 2020). For example, the social enterprise can alleviate or eliminate unnecessary social problems in social programs that do not meet the needs of the community with little social impact. However, by introducing some of the methods mentioned above, social enterprises (SEs) can improve their SI practices which can reduce the possibility of failure of existing or potential social programs (Ometto et al. 2019). However, for this to eventuate, organizations need to recognize and explore the intentional efforts of those who create, maintain, and disrupt existing 'mindsets' (i.e. ways of thinking) about social problems, to shape the creation and development of new and innovative solutions (Hausmann 2015). Accordingly, this presents the potential to move beyond institutional processes to ensure that transformation occurs and is successful relative to social programs or activities. As such, these efforts will help the ability of organizations to proactively deploy resources in addressing social or environmental issues and enhance the role of management in value creation by utilizing prevailing resources to address social issues successfully (Gramescu 2016; Noor Raihani et al. 2019).

A growing number of studies have shown that organizations require adequate resourcing in balancing such competing priorities, identifying and recognizing opportunities, and allocating organizational resources to SI efforts. Accordingly, this enables the social entrepreneur to manage scarce resources more closely, and determine which programs or elements are providing the most value, to focus on to achieve better outcomes (Powell et al. 2019). Seen in this light, SI is spread rapidly beyond sectors, disciplines, and topographical boundaries. According to Defourny and Nyssens (2017), the social entrepreneur shares information with others to expand the practice of SI in other regions or geographical areas through the development of branches. This expansion to other locations increases the geographical area, as well as increases the number of individuals or communities they serve concerning social problem solutions. SI not only serves vulnerable populations but also serves internally (Phillips et al. 2019). Therefore, organizations effectively play an important role in cultivating marginalized people in society on SI when the people competently solve issues and improve their own lives and problems. Indeed, SI is a process of learning to give societies involved in those programs the tools or means to take care of themselves and manage difficult situations in life on their own (Porter et al. 2019). Thus, as mentioned earlier, SI plays a crucial role in the creation of social cohesion in empowering people to overcome difficulties. Through SI practices, SEs can identify the importance of their resources and capabilities, and leverage these elements to produce a greater impact. Moreover, SI leads to social change that impacts economic and continuous improvement in society, thereby reducing poverty, and increasing the independence of individuals.

Scaling is important in maximizing the social impact of SI by spreading out too much broader contexts in resolving the immensity of social problems that need to be



efficiently and effectively addressed (Noor Raihani et al. 2019; Pittz and Intindola 2021; Han and Shah 2020). Gramescu (2016) mentioned that scaling is necessary for SEs as it enables them to assist the needs of communities by already having a viable solution that innovatively shifts the complexity of the situation into SI. However, to simplify the progression of scaling SI, the researcher needs to search for relevant organizational or operational models (Cannatelli 2017; Islam 2020). Scaling drives the social mission to create sustainable or long-term change through a social engagement network by collaborating for the development and growth of societies, communities, and regions. Although, in the rapid development of social entrepreneurship a crucial challenge is scaling towards SI which emerges as a significant and complex issue in the present debate to overcome global social problems (Gramescu 2016; Han and Shah 2020; Giudici et al. 2020). On the other hand, many SI ideas and programs fail to achieve their potential without scaling due to insufficient mechanisms to help and support the ideas, which leads to the motivation of the researcher of this study to investigate. As suggested by Kucher (2021), social entrepreneurs should be familiar with and comprehend the most effective and acceptable approach to scaling their innovation. It is believed that scaling contributes to a separation made between direct and indirect impact. Direct impact points towards enlarged coverage, size, and activities of SEs, while indirect impact refers to the influence, which encourages others to make social change.

Several researchers agree that scaling is more concerned with the social impact without necessarily emphasizing more on the size of SEs (Lyon and Al Faruq 2018; Verver et al. 2021). Scaling is more about reaching a greater number of people using useful tools to enhance social impact and is not restricted to size, in which scaling can reproduce the main component of SI within the programs or projects as a result of the programs/projects or SE model, and not recreate its components. Meanwhile, social innovation on the concept of the social value added in reducing social problems and system changes in avoiding non-productive programs/activities. The outcomes attributed to scaling were generated beyond those social organizations. Moreover, by improvising these social projects or programs, scaling plays an important role in achieving a vast quantity of recipients and enhancing the understanding of social problems (Islam 2020). Bull et al. (2014) believe that successful scaling has more to do with reducing the need to solve social problems, while at the same time increasing the number of people whose needs are being fulfilled through successful scaling.

Furthermore, the scaling of SI processes varies widely varied in terms of the definition and concepts, even though limited theoretical and empirical research has been performed. It first begins by understanding the intention of scaling and for what purpose, whether for a social organization, programs or initiatives, etc. (Viviani and Maurel 2019; Bolzan et al. 2019) and the means to scale, in which the scaling strategy focuses on enhancing improving processes internal to the organization or diffusing a verifying a certain idea or notion. However, some researchers agree that it is not worth scaling in every project, but social entrepreneurs should contemplate scaling the potential innovation already developed (Desa and Koch 2014; Cannatelli 2017). Accordingly, this is because some SIs are considered to remain at a local scale and not be spread to wider contexts, whereas, some are considered worthy of spreading

further and of influencing or benefiting a greater population of people. As cited by André and Pache (2016) scaling is a beneficial concept to mobilize resources and to recognize the key points of influence that require a qualified strategy, a coherent vision, and capability. Further, it needs a unique solution that is adaptable and can be executed quickly in different situations with different social issues.

Specifically, investors often demand to scale from social entrepreneurs in SEs for investment decisions and in guaranteeing resource refunds (Barnabas et al. 2020). As such, the scaling concept is sufficient to describe the various ways of developing SI, its spread, and it's becoming institutionalized. Largely, it is difficult for SEs to produce the needed resourcing for scaling SI, especially related monetary resources, commercial resources, and social and human capital (Weber et al. 2012). However, scaling allows the utilization of insufficient resources by supporting programs or projects, which have already proven to be successful (Dimitriadis et al. 2017; Battilana 2018). Accordingly, this situation forces them to scale by applying different options to attain these resources, which are determined by the effectiveness of each strategy in the scaling process. Accordingly, SEs require a long-term strategy for growth and concentrating on the complexity of strategies and dynamics of scaling up SI in complex systems to achieve greater social impact. Notably, the knowledge of the scaling process is critical given that many social issues are significant in scale to assist SEs to achieve sustainability (Powell et al. 2019; Din et al. 2021). The aim of scaling strategies is to provide an effective segmentation of SEs, thereby enabling the strategies to be implemented efficiently. Therefore, there is a need for SEs to scale, in turn, helping them to construct a strategy that assists in organizing their resources and capabilities more efficiently. As such, they can act effectively in monitoring and improving their social programs, as well as their organizations in identifying the strengths and weaknesses of SI.

### **3.4 Eco-Tourism: A Platform for Rural Development**

Eco-tourism provides a platform for rural development in a community is the support of stakeholders, (e.g., host community, entrepreneurs, and community leaders) and currently advocating the inclusion of stakeholders in the planning process (Aslanova 2019). A sustainable eco-tourism development in the rural area will contribute to improved resiliency within the local community. Some strategies are needed to ensure the sustainable development of rural eco-tourism and to sustain the local community's resiliency (Gong et al. 2020). Community-based ecotourism has appeared as a precious instrument to alleviate poverty, preserve biodiversity, and deliver accountable and sustainable tourism offers. Eco-tourism is a type of tourism where there is mutual interdependence between the requirements of tourists, the community, and environmental conservation (Rastegar 2019; Jamal and Higham 2021). The resident's involvement in eco-tourism increases the rural development in one state for the eco-tourist destination.

Some of the attributes of the eco-tourist destination contribute to rural development including accessibility, attraction, accommodation, and activities. Accessibility of the rural destination helps the eco-tourist to choose a broad variety of paths and attractions for their movements. This decision on the destination influences by the features of tourists by the spatial allocation of resources and consumes an attraction network. Also, attractions of the destination impact the pattern of low-intensity consumption associated with more set patterns of consumption and greater intensity with greater variation. Finally, the presence of prominent or distinctive attractions will improve the patterns of space consumption, with tourists willing to travel long distances to visit them (Shasha et al. 2020). Meanwhile, accommodation focus on the surrounding places within the movement patterns of the destination including static, and hub and spoke patterns. Static motion patterns indicate staying at the lodging place most of the time, while hub and spoke movements are characterized by daily journeys to nearby attractions coupled with exploration around the accommodation place (Paramitha et al. 2019; Trinanda and Sari 2020). Eco-tourism activities play an important role for eco-tourism in a rural area that refers of the activities available at the location and what customers will participate in during their visit. Eco-tourism activities are important motivators for visitors to visit a specific destination.

In terms of economics (locals' money generation in rural areas funding conservation), jobs created, encouraging the adoption of new working practices, and reviving sometimes-depressed economies, eco-tourism is significantly advancing rural development (Sharma and Sarmah 2019; Shasha et al. 2020). The benefits of ecotourism activities for rural areas are numerous. In many uplands and climatically marginal places, community diversification is a crucial activity. Because of the industrialization of tree harvesting and processing as well as the decline in demand for timber, forest regions have experienced severe socioeconomic issues in recent years. If the unique advantages of the forest environment for recreational use are realized and cultivated, rural tourism can help forestry by diversifying income sources for forest communities (Dey et al. 2020; Sukaesih et al. 2021). The host community's and eco-tourists' perceptions of what makes the area desirable to come and live in are crucial to heritage preservation. Promoting local arts and crafts is one way that people can use their cultural history as a marketing tool to draw tourists to their communities.

Even rural enterprises not directly involved in eco-tourism can profit from tourist activity by forming close linkages with tourist facilities and providing services or goods in a community. Eco-tourism creates new prospects for industry (Lee et al. 2021). This eco-tourism promotes the growth of related businesses like gas stations, and new companies are established to meet the demands of tourists for hospitality services, leisure activities, and arts and crafts for rural development. The eco-tourism industry is frequently marketed as an exciting and expanding industry that is compatible with the vigour and excitement of young people in rural areas (Dey et al. 2020; Gabriel-Campos et al. 2021). Opportunities for training and hands-on involvement in managing eco-tourism firms, particularly those in small communities, expand career prospects. Likewise, the growth of ecotourism in rural areas creates jobs in the hospitality and catering industries as well as in transportation, retail, and information/heritage interpretation (Aleksandrova et al. 2021).

In addition, the local people can provide existing outlets for visitor information services, such as shops, thus benefit from the additional customers, that visitors provide. Eco-tourism-generating regions for rural development highlight the stresses of urban living and the remoteness from the natural environment has created a desire for escape from the single culture of city living. Rural areas offer an idealized release from stress and the opportunity to re-engage with a simpler, quieter way of life that offers relaxation (Wei 2021; Aslanova 2019). Demand fuelled by social media, over-familiarity, and congestion with traditional eco-tourist resorts and increased interest in alternative attractions, with its voracious appetite for content and the resultant over-exposure of many traditional eco-tourist destinations that interested in eco-tourism experiences for their lifestyle productions. Such peace increased environmental awareness and interest in the association between humans and the environment (Wan et al. 2017; Zhao and Li 2018).

Green issues have raised the attractiveness of rural experiences as ecologically sustainable eco-tourism (Law et al. 2016). Transportation, communications, and any barriers to travel have facilitated the accessibility of rural areas. Most eco-tourists in various categories known as backpackers, free independent travelers, and long-haul travel fond of the accessibility and attractiveness of rural destinations. In response to these categories, better-educated travelers have increased interest in outdoor recreation and eco-tourism drives a need for unique experiences and rural eco-tourism, because of its fragmented nature and diversity of offerings, can satisfy this need (Sudhagar 2019; Mackenzie 2019). With this interest, they have to change their work patterns, especially leisure time and income and focus on shorter breaks with many choices of leisure activities.

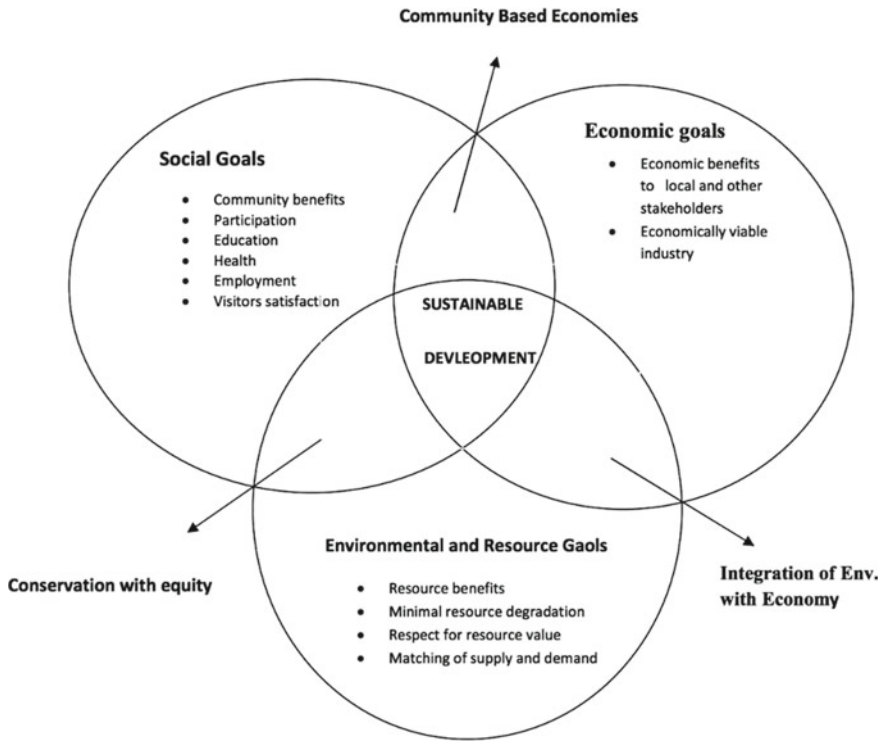
An increasing desire for authentic experiences is agreeing to be found in genuine country experiences and lifestyles, including interaction with local people (Paulino et al. 2020; Sánchez-Martín et al. 2020; Gajić et al. 2020). With the proper promotion and marketing activities for rural development through eco-tourism, it could bring lots of benefits to society. It could be a sustainable revenue-generating project for rural development that helps inflow resources from the urban to the rural economy (Sharma and Sarmah 2019; Gabriel-Campos et al. 2021). Indirectly, it can stop rural residents from moving to metropolitan regions and keep them there for ongoing development that requires both short- and long-term planning, execution, and monitoring to protect rural areas (Cheng et al. 2019; Mohanty et al. 2021). The growth of rural areas depends heavily on environmental management, local involvement, effective laws, sustainable marketing, and realistic planning. According to Choudhury (2019), Dey et al. (2020) and Lee et al. (2021), eco-tourism will become a crucial tool for sustainable human development, helping to reduce poverty, create jobs, regenerate the environment, and advance local communities and other underprivileged groups in the nation.

### 3.5 Value Creation in Social Eco-Tourism

If eco-tourism is effectively handled, it can be highly helpful in many ways. It goes without saying that well-managed eco-tourism will boost local economies, raise living standards, and lead to various types of development in the host communities. If it is not handled appropriately, it will end up being the main factor in a number of risks in the host communities. Because of this, mass tourism has been identified as a significant element that has had negative effects on host regions' social and environmental conditions. Mass tourism has detrimental effects on the environment and society, as well as economic inflation and leakage, habitat destruction, the extinction of species and wild life, and numerous social illnesses and issues (Banday and Ismail 2017; Wang and Wang 2018; Kongbuamai et al. 2020). World Tourism Organization (WTO) placed a strong emphasis on sustainable tourism in Agenda 21 for the travel and tourism industry in 1995. Sustainable tourism is defined as meeting the needs of current tourists and host regions while preserving and enhancing opportunity for the future. It is intended to result in resource management that meets economic, social, and aesthetic needs while preserving cultural integrity, crucial ecological processes, biological diversity, and life support systems (Buchsbaum 2004). Whereas the 1995 World Conference on Sustainable Tourism, hosted by UNESCO, established the standards for sustainable tourism, including being commercially feasible, ethically, and socially just for local people, and ecologically acceptable over the long term.

Through this method, tourism development can concentrate on its sustainability tenets, which include resource utilization, minimizing adverse effects on nature and society, maintaining the ecosystem, using a holistic tourism planning strategy, promoting the local economy, enlisting the participation of as many locals and stakeholders as possible, building excel capacity, informing visitors and residents about responsible tourism, and regularly conducting research. These are the steps that need to be taken in conjunction to achieve real sustainable ecotourism that can aid in the development of many poor nations where ecotourism has the potential. Yet, due to its major effects on a variety of fields, including the environment, the economy, society, and culture, ecotourism has come to be considered a component of sustainable development. Since eco-tourism cannot be separated from other resource-based activities, it ensures that the type, scale, location, and development strategy are appropriate, sustainable over time, and that the environment's capacity to support other activities and the process is not harmed (Mackenzie and Gannon 2019; Hall 2019; Nguyen et al. 2019). Because it is a holistic approach to managing all types of resources carefully to meet the needs of ecological, social, economic, and aesthetic imperatives while also incorporating other life support systems, it is referred to as being as complex as sustainable development (Hall 2019). Figure 3.2 shows these values of sustainable tourism.

Common eco-tourism traits include scaled-back travel, environmental protection through active conservation rather than passive preservation, and community participation. The loss of sustainable living conditions and long-term competitiveness should therefore be avoided (Nowacki et al. 2018). Several certification systems



**Fig. 3.2** Sustainable tourism values (Source Murphy and Price 2005)

have been formed at the international, national, industrial, and governmental levels to add social value to ecotourism and demonstrate the attainment of ecotourism requirements above and beyond public environmental and social standards (Tai and Yang 2016). The maintenance and preservation of natural resources also depend on educating tourists about environmental issues in eco-destination areas. Values and perspectives, two sociopsychological categories, have proven to be more useful in predicting support for environmental protection. These factors—familiarity with outcomes, assigned responsibility to act, and natural concern—are influenced by values that are oriented in various ways in terms of how people seem.

This value plays a critical role in forecasting behaviour toward environments and also impacts travel activities, destination choice, and preferences (Schismenos et al. 2019). To achieve sustainability in eco-destination locations, environmental awareness among tourists helps to foster pro-environmental behaviour. These viewpoints promise that eco-tourism will be beneficial for long-term environmental preservation and community growth. Also, the visitor will have an emotional state or emotions following the consumption of the product or trip, which could result in exhilaration, rage, passion, or unhappiness. Due to the intensely emotional nature of the event, this is especially true for ecotourism (Jamroz and Lawonk 2017). This is

especially important in the context of ecotourism since people who participate in social causes like environmental sustainability feel better about themselves. The environment shouldn't be endangered during the process of creating value for social eco-tourism destinations and local communities, but it can still contribute to sustainable regional development because it addresses both social problems and ecological conservation. The residents need to be taught about environmental conservation in order to make sure they appreciate the significance of value creation for the environment and the local area (Akan et al. 2020). Bennett (2017) indicated that numerous environmental nonprofits have launched ecotourism programs in developing and undeveloped nations as businesses based on the conservation strategy, including the World Wide Fund for Nature and groups like the International Eco-tourism Society.

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# Chapter 4

## Understanding How Social Entrepreneurship Fit into the Eco-Tourism Discourse



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**Abstract** This chapter attempts to understand the way of social entrepreneurship can fit into eco-tourism discourse. The impact of social entrepreneurship in eco-tourism has changed the local community economy and society. Different contexts of eco-tourism account for how they embrace these channels to society. The effectiveness of social entrepreneurship matters more for eco-tourism sectors when the sustainability and development of society are low. With limited opportunities in local communities, eco-tourism is becoming a viable option for a social solution. An understanding of this chapter guiding this study focuses on the concept of eco-tourism, in terms of local community development (income generation and wellbeing) and the environment. Social and environmental are major types of social entrepreneurship in eco-tourism that deal with social complexities and contribute to job creation and economic growth. The foremost purpose of this chapter is to appraise a strategy for eco-tourism development as a platform for the sustainable local community, at the same time promoting environmental sustainability. This chapter mainly considers current opportunities for social entrepreneurship practices in eco-tourism, where tourism is one of the fastest expanding sectors, which has been leaving positive impacts on sustainable development.

### 4.1 The Sustainable Development Model in Eco-Tourism Enterprise Management

Ecotourism businesses must be based on the concept of ecotourism, fully grasp the significance of ecological management, and effectively handle the interaction between the flow of resources, the flow of economic activity, and the ecological environment. The only way to effectively exploit resources and achieve the survival of the fittest, including self-configuration, reduction, organization, and regulation, is with a sound ecological and economic system (Zheng et al. 2017). In addition, tourist businesses' stronger ecological management is another source of social and economic advantages, in addition to the government's role in promoting and increasing people's knowledge of environmental preservation. In terms of social advantages, the introduction of environmentally friendly goods and services is crucial to gaining the

support of tourists and enhancing the company's eco-friendly reputation (Nikolaeva et al. 2018; Litheko 2021). While it is possible to save energy and save costs through government incentives, better management, institutional innovation, technical level, and other ways in the economic interests of this crucial aspect.

The management paradigm in ecotourism has altered as a result of ecotourism development (Hutsaliuk et al. 2021). This evolution of management concepts fosters ecological management consciousness, which has grown to be a crucial component of the new model of ecological management in eco-tourism. It also improves innovation management awareness. After considering the development of an ecological eco-tourism management model, the so-called ecological management idea is the actual foundation of eco-tourism firms on cleaner production, greener marketing, and ecological finance, strategy, culture, and management philosophy (Soenarto et al. 2019; Rosyafah et al. 2020). The potential for the growth of ecotourism could be maintained by these scientific management and monitoring systems. Basic resource condition management includes both humanities structures constructed for the growth of tourism resources as well as the natural resources of ecotourism areas, ecological carrying capacity, and ecological environment's resilience ability. Although the emphasis in the process of establishing eco-tourism is on the idea of enjoying nature and conserving the environment, basic service amenities are also required (Carvache-Franco et al. 2019; Fitriasaki et al. 2019).

Moreover, colocalization and coherence between humanistic facilities and natural resources are crucial for ensuring sustainable growth. Natural resources only provide the fundamental conditions for the development of ecotourism; their sustainable development also requires scientific planning and oversight. Even good resources will be destroyed if basic ecotourism resources are produced without effective management (Provalova et al. 2019; Gong et al. 2020). Regulations regarding resource exploitation, public education about environmental preservation, personnel investments, scientific research, and environmental rules pertaining to the sustainable development of ecological eco-tourism are the primary components of management and monitoring (Shedenov et al. 2019). The fundamental external environment of the eco-tourism business is made up of environmental components, including the economic environment and social environment of the eco-tourism system. First, the amount of people's consumption and the rate of economic growth influence customers' choices. Also, due to commerce, trade, and other activities, the economies of tourist destinations will have a considerable impact on the number of visitors (Wang 2020; Dyankov and Todorova 2019).

When the number of visitors increases by a certain percentage, the economic development of the ecotourism sector determines the carrying capacity of regional ecotourism, while the growth of the ecotourism sector determines the resource investment needed in the process of ecotourism industry development and sustainable development (Shedenov et al. 2019; Gong et al. 2020). On the other hand, the social context of ecological eco-tourism acts as a softer environment that supports the growth of eco-tourism. It entails infrastructure facilities as well as the state of social security, transportation, health, and other areas (Nulkar 2013). In addition to these, locals' environmental participation and understanding also have an impact

on the sustainable growth of ecotourism. Eco-tourism sustainable development is guided by a number of principles, including resource environment (coordination of civil infrastructure and natural resource endowment), economic environment (social economy and tourism industry economy), social environment (social security and stability and social environmental protection awareness), and management control (responsible resource exploitation laws, investments in environmental protection, and environmental education) (Tang et al. 2021).

By reorienting the management paradigm in the economy of territorial entities, which manifests itself in changing the structure of a socio-economic system, adding new structural elements, and finding new qualities and characteristics, the management system based on sustainable development is required to institutionalize and functionally modernize. Sustainable eco-tourism aims to increase awareness of environmental issues, as well as the provision of hands-on learning opportunities. It is an effort to put more emphasis on getting to know the locals, which will aid in understanding their habits, traditions, and values. In this regard, visitors should: show interest in the environment while exercising caution; select lodging that complies with sustainability standards; and respects the way of life, culture, language, and customs of the local community. As a result, this sustainable ecotourism approach encourages the long-term management of resources to satisfy economic and social demands, uphold cultural integrity, and preserve distinctive environmental processes.

## **4.2 Social Entrepreneurship: Collaboration, Networking, and Legal in the Eco-Tourism Sector**

Lifestyle operators, those concerned with the sustainability of the environment, and those that understand social values and give back to the communities serve as examples of social entrepreneurship in the eco-tourism sector. The preservation of cultural and historical materials demands a tremendous amount of human labour; this is especially true now because it is essential to socioeconomic progress and, eventually, to sustainable development for human survival (Provalova et al. 2019). To the greatest extent possible, all parties involved in heritage conservation must cooperate with various social groups in order to protect natural and cultural resources (Litheko 2021). The industry actors and stakeholders involved in eco-tourism participate in a wide range of networks and cooperative projects. In a field that is very competitive on a worldwide scale, tourists can choose between destinations. There are many trips to crowded places where the tourism industry forces the place to accommodate its needs, which may be at odds with living sustainably within the needs and wishes of the place and its local residents. Such cooperation enables individuals to develop social connections and networking in order to realize common objectives in heritage protection and support local communities in producing their revenue.

As a result, the links get stronger and networking continues for social and economic development, benefiting future generations' focus on cultural preservation (Harilal and Tichaawa 2020; Rosli et al. 2017). This networking might take the form of links between individuals and organizations or between individuals and ecotourism-related organizations, such as cooperation, coordination, or collaboration to meet a shared objective or need. These networking concepts emphasize the development of a shared result that cannot be achieved by a single entity, whether it be an individual or an organization. It also involves interests and power, which are easily diluted in the shortened use of terms like cooperation, co-creation, coordination, etc. In developing nations, sustainable ecotourism development includes stakeholder cooperation (Rahmani and Roitman 2018; Tamrin and Kamaluddin 2021).

This consistency in the development of tourism products should be understood in terms of (1) efficient resource use (saving water and energy); (2) knowledge of and adherence to legal environmental protection principles; (3) willingness to participate in environmental initiatives undertaken by other stakeholders and organizations; and (4) demonstration of responsibility and concern for the state of the environment. Local communities demand a role in development concerns so they may defend their interests and improve decision-makers' endemic lack of openness and accountability (Muganda et al. 2013). The five dimensions of collaborations—within and between institutions, across states, industries, and nations, as well as over time—can be used to categorize the frontiers of knowledge that will be expanded as a result of collaboration. Consensual standards must be established in order to guarantee commitment and confidence in ecotourism partnerships. This provides a chance for re-engagement but also carries a responsibility to others. As a result, rather than fighting for more collaborative agendas, the ecotourism partnership develops synergies (Shasha et al. 2020).

Heritage is what we leave behind for future generations to learn from, marvel at, and enjoy. It also refers to what we live today. The implementation of legal protection for eco-tourism should cover a wide range of issues, including enhancing scientific knowledge of nature, management, and potential of the natural, cultural, and creative resources, improving understanding of local community practices and needs, and developing effective cross-border promotion to encourage contacts and active networking and to grab stakeholders' attention (Sharma and Sarmah 2019). The folklorist should be able to be improved as a regional resource that was both economically beneficial and socially acceptable to the local populace under the cultural heritage management model. On the other hand, the legal definition of eco-tourism covers intellectual property, which includes innovations, literary and artistic works, as well as symbols, names, and pictures that are employed in commercial contexts. The government grants exclusive rights known as "intellectual property rights" (IPRs) as compensation for human ingenuity and as evidence of its intangible economic value. IPRs are used in commercial operations (Punchihewa 2020; Jaelani et al. 2020). Intellectual property rights serve as a tribute to the work's creators and are anticipated to foster innovation in the ecotourism industry. Folklore, History, and Traditional Cultural Expression have a significant potential for ecotourism growth and a high ability to capture attention (Benson 2019).



Unfortunately, despite their urgency to be recognised and safeguarded as an integral aspect of intellectual property, such intangible cultural objects continue to be underestimated, unappreciated, and unprotected. The basic goals of law in ecotourism are to develop market mechanisms, create market regulations, and safeguard market order (Gozgor et al. 2019). It is suggested that the Ecotourism Law, and Ordinance of Eco-tourism Development and Management be promulgated to raise the level of ecotourism legislation. These laws would create a legal framework for ecotourism, protect the orderly growth of the sector, strengthen government oversight of the implementation of ecotourism laws and regulations, and ensure that all levels of government and their related departments adhere to and carry out ecotourism laws (Li et al. 2019; Eshun and Tichaawa 2020). Monitoring is required to determine whether the administrative conduct's entity content is proper and legal.

This enables the government's operations to be improved. It is required to establish a relatively independent supervising mechanism of eco-tourism laws and regulations and grant the greater ability to supervise objects in order to effectively monitor the application of eco-tourism laws and regulations in government (Fitriasari et al. 2019). In order to improve the overall effectiveness of the legal supervision of eco-tourism, we need to strengthen the judiciary's oversight of its execution. The quality of the eco-tourist planning directly relates to the conservation of tourism resources since the places involved in creating eco-tourism are frequently sensitive areas of fragile ecological settings. Experts in sociology, environmental science, culture, economics, and other subjects should carry out a thorough scientific demonstration prior to launching a new eco-tourism project. The planning can only be put into action with the appropriate agencies' consent, and it is important to build up a system for evaluating the environmental impact of using eco-tourism resources.

### 4.3 Social Eco-Tourism: Critical Reflections

Tourism and society have a cycle affected by each other through the impact of social entrepreneurship practices in eco-tourism. These social trends reflect the need to address social and environmental issues/problems creatively and sustainably. This practice has become inevitable in terms of social development and sustainability of this development. The movement of these sectors is directly related to society and is open to all kinds of interactions. The effects of social elements in eco-tourism on social development and the efforts to make social development sustainable are not sufficiently mentioned in the literature. Social entrepreneurship shared a similar approach with commercial business in terms of budgeting, organizing, promoting, monitoring, and controlling processes.

There are several business opportunities in eco-tourism sectors that adapt social elements such as health tourism, local infrastructure development (water, sanitation, hygiene), improvement of accessibility to knowledge and skill/social capital and networking, and informal education and training (skill development and process) (Aslanova 2019). To more understand the coordination between eco-tourism and

social entrepreneurship requires high awareness among the related parties regarding our biodiversity. Different departments or agencies need to promote sustainable development through eco-tourism activities and development for sustainable use (Takele 2019; Shasha et al. 2020). Social entrepreneurs continuously generate new ideas and efforts towards envisioning potential areas for development that give values and links to eco-tourism empowering public policy and planning for eco-tourism development programs.

Eco-tourism can be distinguished by nature, learning, and sustainability that dwell on social, environmental, and economic efficiencies for the betterment of livelihoods and are representative of nature-based tourism. Thus, eco-tourism act as the driver of rural community development that has extraordinary capabilities to offer rural communities advantages (Choudhury 2019). The development can be structured through self-learning and obtaining knowledge, applying knowledge in practice, and innovation and creativity. In this regard, to ensure sustainability in eco-tourism development, basic knowledge and skills are required including formal or informal education (training, institution) and experience. All elements enable the eco-tourism player sectors to accumulate knowledge, increase, and be aware of their human capital, at the same time they apply these skills and know-how into practice (Sharma and Sarmah 2019). As consequence, the rural location can gain relatively small investments to produce sustained changes with social entrepreneurship practices. In eco-tourism, social entrepreneurship focuses on the process of creating value by innovatively combining different resources and stimulating social change.

In other words, the process of creating value draws from the social context that forms the outcome of developing a good understanding of the process (Wei 2021). Hence, the players in eco-tourism sectors can plan their resources in terms of availability or constraint to encourage social entrepreneurial activity and affect the social structures. The social entrepreneurship approach in eco-tourism decisions highlights both the changes in the social entrepreneurial system and the policies that address the social complex challenges faced by communities and rural development. It appears that the active intervention of policymakers in business affairs departs from an obsolete political system and social-economic model in favor of the formation of a social entrepreneurial ecosystem in eco-tourism. Thus, a sustainable social eco-tourism sector requires rural economic advantages including social, cultural, attributes, models, and nature.

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# Chapter 5

## Exploring Digitalization-Driven in Innovative Eco-Tourism Sector



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**Abstract** Digitalization in community capacity-building programs is part of sustainable tourism development. The eco-tourism village must define its concept and potential to be developed, as well as facilitates a conducive environment for growth planning. The advent of information and communication technologies has led to the digital economy that required a major transformation of eco-tourism sectors by redesigning all processes innovatively. Information technology is a combination of technology, infrastructure, computer, and electronic systems used to input, store, process, reproduce, and transmit data between two points, namely the data source and the data target. In other words, it is a system of digital data flow from sender to receiver. From here, it can be understood that information technology help to create a digital communication system between two or more parties that can be applied in eco-tourism sectors. This chapter aims to reveal the role of digital in eco-tourism sectors such as offering products and services. Through digitalization, the user (tourist) will experience their personalized world when the devices are interconnected with all different eco-tourism providers.

### 5.1 Processes of Social Innovation in Eco-Tourism

Innovations aim to protect the existing competitive advantage to increase efficiency and effectiveness, and sustain it, within the organization towards the environment, society, and personnel. Innovation in this context offers a solution to the problems of jobless, environmental pollution, and poverty in the local community and causes local development and consequently social change called social innovation (Živojinović et al. 2019). Social innovation raises the standards of living sustainably among the local community, increases individuals and groups' abilities, and increases the production capacity of organizations. Moreover, social innovation plays an important role in eliminating inequalities, causing social change, and providing sustainable development (Diepenmaat et al. 2020). Usually, for-profit organizations or non-profit organizations trigger social changes with their personnel, community, and environmental innovations. Social innovations cause social change as they change the socio-economy of the local community (Rao-Nicholson et al. 2017). Through the process

of social innovation, the local communities are transformed into social entrepreneurs in their environment, thereby ensuring rural and regional development.

Organizing environmental, community, and personnel innovations in the places where organizations operate, and engaging in social innovation activities are important for organizations' transformation, local community benefit, and social development (Wittmayer et al. 2019; Tracey and Stott 2017). Phills et al. (2008) agree that social innovation is a novel solution to a social problem that is more effective, efficient, sustainable, or just than existing solutions and for which the value created accrues primarily to society as a whole rather than private individuals. Meanwhile, Ashoka (2018) believes the methodology of social and economic value creation is at a system level of change that addresses the root of the social problems. This process of social innovation is associated with the application of innovative, practical, sustainable, market-based approaches to benefit society in general and low-income or under-served populations in particular. Eco-tourism not only builds social entrepreneurial skills at a local level but also links community members to the larger world in ways that create knowledge, understanding, and appreciation of other people (Aksoy et al. 2019). Social innovation is not limited to the realm of social entrepreneurship but stretches to encompass a wide range of social fields that may have little to do with entrepreneurship in a conventional business context that can reach beyond the boundaries of the public, private, and civil sectors. Thus, eco-tourism is recognized as a promising field for social entrepreneurship and social innovation due to its potential for stimulating both social and financial added value towards transformation or solution to social problems (Oeij et al. 2019; Aksoy et al. 2019). Social innovation is effective to improve the performance of industries like eco-tourism, which is characterized by low pay, hard working conditions, and high labor turnover (Gallouj et al. 2018).

Many of the current social innovations in tourism are combined with web-based technologies such as social platforms, which offer opportunities for individual exchanges as in the sharing economy. These technical developments have resulted in new social practices as online social networks are transformed into corporeal social networks as the hospitality/tourism exchange takes place (Alcaide Lozano et al. 2019). Innovative use of technology may also lead to new concepts of travel collaboration. One example is the possibility of using mobile apps to create temporary, place-based social networks of previously unconnected people. As part of a wider project on the digital economy, such a web-based mobile application was developed to facilitate the collaboration between tourists at a campsite (Mosedale and Voll 2017; Pronello and Camusso 2017). The collaboration included the sharing of information (which generated an initial sense of community amongst the network users) but also offers for help such as lifts or going shopping (Akdü 2020). Such collaborative initiatives facilitated by technology incorporate not only the consumption of tourism but also the exchange of people and cultures to strengthen communities as well as social/regional development.

## 5.2 Digitalization for the Eco-Tourism Development

Rural eco-tourism development is a part of the village development in terms of offering unique packages, traditional character, and function as a small-scale village that was originally controlled by the village community (Gong et al. 2020; Wei 2021). These eco-tourism activities not only contribute to the rapidness of business activities but also increase economic growth, increase social inclusion, and develop cultural and social activities that form the basis of regional development. The transformation of digital innovation has revolutionized eco-tourism business activities, products and experiences, business ecosystems, and tourist destinations. As a result, this transformation changes the roles, relationships, and competencies of producers and consumers. The digital platforms help to increase the variety and volume of products, services and eco-tourism experiences including transaction speed, market awareness and market feedback (Sarkar and George 2018; Bansal et al. 2019). In eco-tourism sectors, digitalization plays an important role to tourists, who rely on digital tools to search, order, and pay for the services such as lodging or supporting facilities within a social structure that incorporates procedures and traditions. The rural community has several responsibilities and functions that are seen as economic diversification, not only in agricultural production but also in the development of eco-tourism and entrepreneurship (Saseanu et al. 2020). Through this development, digital provides efficient tools for eco-tourism agents that enable customers to identify, personalize, and purchase products (Cave and Dredge 2020). In addition, digitalization changes the business model and leads rural communities to become digital businesses and workplaces, and transforms the process to create a digital environment.

Also, digital use supported infrastructure in formulating the strategy for sustainable eco-tourism development (De Lange and Dodds 2017). Eco-tourism act as an information-intensive sector, associated with extensive and dynamic information search, in order to make and compare choices. To ensure sustainable eco-tourism, it has become a necessity for promoting eco-tourism in the online environment effectively (Sarkar and George 2018). Thus, they required a number of activities, tourism portals, creation of presentations, optimization for search engines (SEO), campaigns of e-mails, and appearing on various social networks (Facebook, Twitter, Youtube, Instagram) (Arora et al. 2019; Gössling and Michael Hall 2019). The digital platform should provide a friendly interface and relevant content to visitors' needs, where to find information structured about a wide range of eco-travel services including (flight information, car rentals and hotels). This platform must be exciting and updated to attract the users (eco-tourist) to return again. Digital brochures can be made available in real-time to customers across the globe, with details information regarding the packages (Ponnappureddy et al. 2017; Benjamin et al. 2021).

### 5.3 Digital for Eco-Tourism Product Marketing

The use of digital is the core of the business. Eco-tourism marketing can facilitate and speed up the distribution of information and announcements to the public if it utilizes the use of digital. It will be an additional method to existing conventional business marketing methods (Vidickienė et al. 2021). Digital applications in business are among the catalysts to the success and effectiveness of business operations. Specifically, the use of digital is necessary to create a professional distribution of information; effective marketing; catalysts to business activity; a quick, easy and authentic way; and efficient and information-rich access (Tiago et al. 2021; Rahmadian et al. 2021). Digital or ICT is needed in making informed decisions related to the 5W-1H elements (what, where, who, which, when and how) of a business including conditions, regulations, and terms (Clarizia et al. 2019). In today's new economy, the knowledge-based economy, speed and time are important and a must. By using digital platforms such as websites, SMS and e-mail, those involved in business activities will not be left behind, both in terms of access to information and its benefits. It provides tools and applications for managing ecotourism destinations, thus, laying the foundation for creating specific policies towards the development of environmentally responsible ecotourism (Katsoni and Dologlou 2017; Almeida-Santana et al. 2020). Entrepreneurs need to understand and look ahead to the impact in decision-making. So, references and guidance are a must. The knowledge or knowledge possessed by an entrepreneur is fundamental, and how to acquire and acquire additional knowledge is through efficient and effective access to information. The information obtained by the customer or potential customer must be authentic and in line with current developments so that the customer is not confused (Ngoasong 2017). Therefore, entrepreneurs must understand digital or ICT. According to Jadhav and Mundhe (2011) information technology helps the tourism industry as follows:

1. *Marketing*: It has a strong impact on hospitality and tourism. A customer's first experience with a business begins with a visit to a company's website. It contains photos and reviews from past customers. Information technology is used for online advertising, editorials and newsletters, special websites to provide specific information, regions, search engine marketing, email promotions, word of mouth through social networks such as blogs with customer reviews, communities such as free Flickr, websites photo sharing (Tiago et al. 2021), YouTube video sharing site, discussion groups and Facebook. In particular, the use of advertising, social media, blogs, and online purchases can be done effectively to help customers make better decisions, especially when competitors do the same.
2. *Computer System*: It allows communication between organizational networks with various locations to be connected more easily. It also helps keep staff on the same site and makes it easier to access information, making the customer experience better. Inquiries from customers, update information, and bookings can be found in one system (Kazandzhieva and Santana 2019). The booking system, for example, can be done efficiently and quickly. Studies show that more



than half of those who travel make reservations online when they have a choice. So, the real time system used for sales and bookings is worth it.

3. *Mobile communication*: Tablets and mobile smartphones have replaced desktop computers, making them almost extinct (Wörndl and Herzog 2020). This is very helpful as many travelers carry some type of mobile device with them while traveling. This helps the hotel business ensure customers are kept informed of changes and delays in their bookings, submit offers, and upload ads using a global ranking system.
4. *Creating a customer experience*: Information technology provides an initial online experience. For example, web content based on pre-trip experiences broadcast audio or video clips online. Audio tours are delivered for use on a site via an MP3 player. It also allows interpretations to be made via a mobile phone or handheld device. Information technology also connects customers with experience in an area. So, we can recommend some of the visits or experiences or other things to be seen or felt on a website (Buhalis and Sinarta 2019). In this way, we can help customers understand how they can be a part of a larger visitor experience.

There is still a lack of research to determine the popularity and effectiveness of a marketing medium. Perhaps, the best option is by way of combining any type of application to suit a particular situation, as follows:

**Website:** The website uses a method of presenting information using online documentation in a way that can attract attention. Many travel companies use websites as a place to promote their business. An attractive and simple site will attract the attention of internet users (Mohseni et al. 2018). In the future, access to the internet will not be limited to computers only, but it can be used through other media such as television. To market ecotourism products, relevant websites can be built to show the credibility and authority of a product or place. Elements that need to be emphasized when building or maintaining a website are elements such the background of the place/product; related pictures; facilities around or places of interest around the destination; location map; and booking form (Grilli et al. 2021). The use of websites as a tool to promote ecotourism is very important. For example, its role in promoting homestay marketing is recognized by scholars (Zeng et al. 2020; Diwyarthi et al. 2020; Lakmali and Kajendra 2021). New media offer a cheaper way as a marketing vehicle as well as provide more opportunities for consumers or information seekers to interact. Today's marketing campaigns must incorporate social media as one of the vehicles in ecotourism marketing campaigns in all countries of the world. Information seekers who are also potential customers of ecotourism products need an information-seeking approach that is more personal, intelligent, creative, and interactive in communicating (Chatterjee and Dsilva 2021). Websites can help the marketing of ecotourism products to be more competitive if they can offer a display of interesting, creative content and encourage interactive communication. Important features need to be given serious attention when building and maintaining a website. In this context, an ecotourism product website needs to be dynamic in nature while maintaining its basic appeal (Tetiawat et al. 2018; Hoang et al. 2022). Examples of existing

websites can be studied carefully and elements that are considered interesting can be applied in the websites we build.

When the desire arises to go on vacation or travel, among the first things to do is to find information about the place to visit, accommodation, transportation tickets, currency exchange rates, and so on. Websites are an important source of information that customers want (Vinzenz et al. 2019). This also applies to those who want to find information related to ecotourism products, for example, the homestay website which is an important and influential source of information to promote and encourage tourism (Grilli et al. 2021). This leads to the concept of digitalization or e-tourism (e-tourism), which is the use of information and communication technology (ICT) by tourists and entrepreneurs to change the processes and value chain in the tourism industry (Chatterjee and Dsilva 2021). E-tourism consider as the pursuit of traditional tourism activities, through electronic methods, particularly the internet (Dolnicar 2020; Mohseni et al. 2018). The development of e-tourism is now changing the way advertising, marketing and resource management. Taking the example of home stay products as a leading ecotourism product, in a study conducted to identify the top 10 home stay websites listed through Google search engine, informed how the power of marketing using ICT can reach the end of the world with just one click. Among the “*inapdesa*” product websites that can be listed are as follows:

1. <https://www.homestay.com/malaysia>

This website is in the top position and the website was founded in 2013 by two veterans of the tourism industry, namely Tom Kennedy and Debbie Flynn to make homestays a popular choice of mainstream tourism accommodation. The website lists a total of 50,000 accommodations in over 160 countries around the world, with 202 accommodation options in Malaysia. Using the full English language, this website lists accommodation options like boarding houses, and not “*inap desa*” according to the concept of the Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture Malaysia (Fig. 5.1).

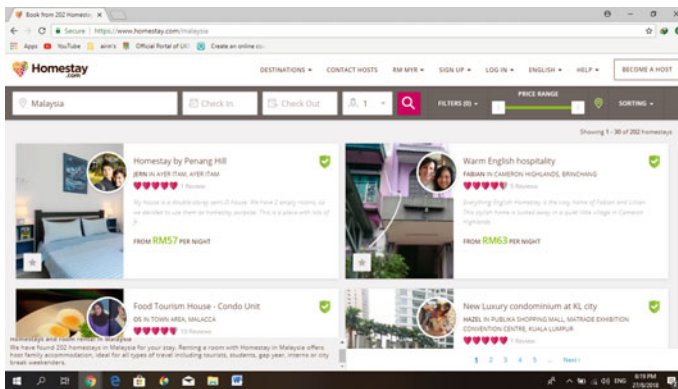


Fig. 5.1 Example of a commercial boarding house website in Malaysia

2. <https://www.booking.com/homestay/country/my.html>  
This website is an international commercial site founded in 1996 in Amsterdam, The Netherlands. Booking.com now has more than 17,000 employees in 198 offices in 70 countries around the world, in 40 languages, and 231 destinations worldwide. On this website, there are 1,629 accommodations listed for Malaysia (Fig. 5.2).
3. <https://www.tourism.gov.my/niche/homestay>  
It is the official website of the Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture, Malaysia, which lists homestays as one of the tourism products to be offered to 25.9 million tourists who came to Malaysia in 2017. All homestays placed under the Ministry’s umbrella are screened and selected to meet the criteria designated (Fig. 5.3).
4. <http://thesmartlocal.com/read/family-homestay-destinations>  
The commercial website is based in Singapore and was founded by Bryan Choo, an entrepreneur with an interest in traveling, enjoying food, writing and producing films. He views websites like TripAdvisor as writing reviews of tourist spots based on the views of foreigners, and thus are unlikely to represent the real experiences of locals. This site is visited by most Singaporeans, who give their opinions on places, food, customs and interesting environments in Singapore and Malaysia (Fig. 5.4).
5. <http://www.malaysia.travel/en/us/experiences/a-bit-of-culture/homestay>  
This website is part of the official website of the Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture which lists 35 homestays throughout Malaysia that are under the auspices and registered under the Ministry. Based on the home stay concept used by the Ministry, visitors will stay in a guest room in a village house together with the host. The village will be registered if there are at least 10 houses that open their doors to outside guests. The home stay management in the village must arrange programs and activities featuring local culture and arts to be felt

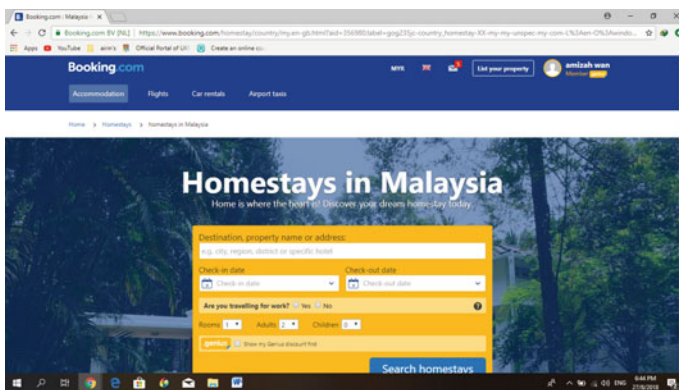


Fig. 5.2 Example of an international commercial boarding house website

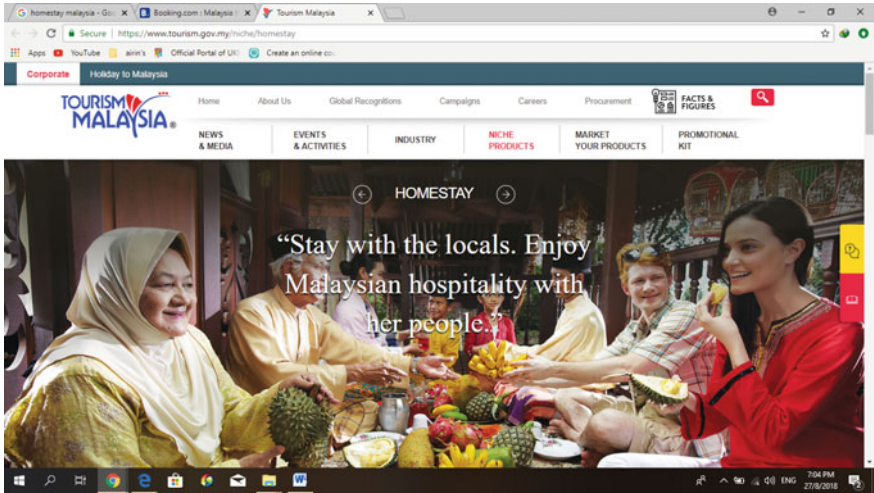


Fig. 5.3 “*inap desa*” website of the Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture Malaysia

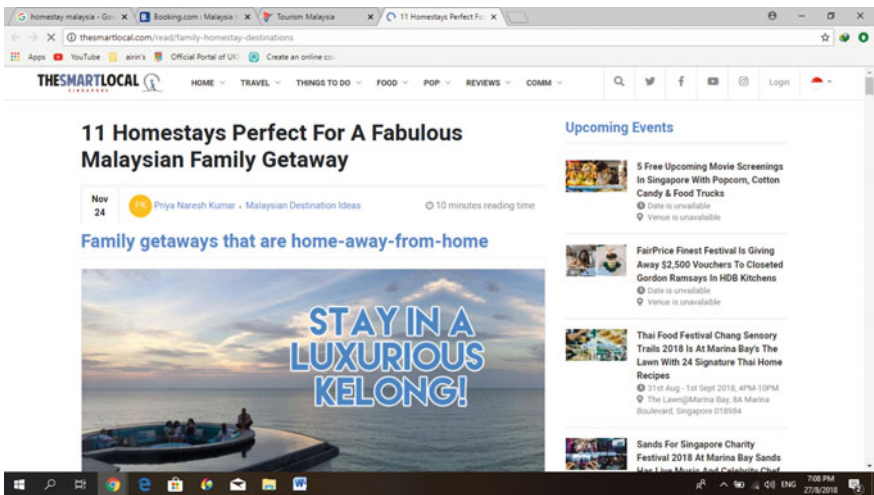


Fig. 5.4 Example of a commercial “*inap*” house website in Singapore

by outside guests. This concept does not mean any accommodation such as boarding houses and chalets (Fig. 5.5).

6. [https://www.ibilik.my/short\\_term\\_rentals](https://www.ibilik.my/short_term_rentals)

This website considers as the largest website in terms of room rental/home stay/short term in Malaysia, with over 100,000 room listings posted online throughout Malaysia, including in Kuala Lumpur, Ampang, Bangsar, Cheras, Setapak, Damansara, Petaling Jaya, Subang Jaya and Penang. The link to this

URL lists various home stay options in Cameron Highlands, Penang, Kota Kinabalu and Melaka, accompanied by a photo display and yesterday’s rental price (Fig. 5.6).

7. <https://www.airbnb.com/s/Malaysia>

The Airbnb site is well known around the world and also lists options from Malaysia. The URL link takes the user directly to an interface display that asks for information on the date of the visit and the number of visitors who wish

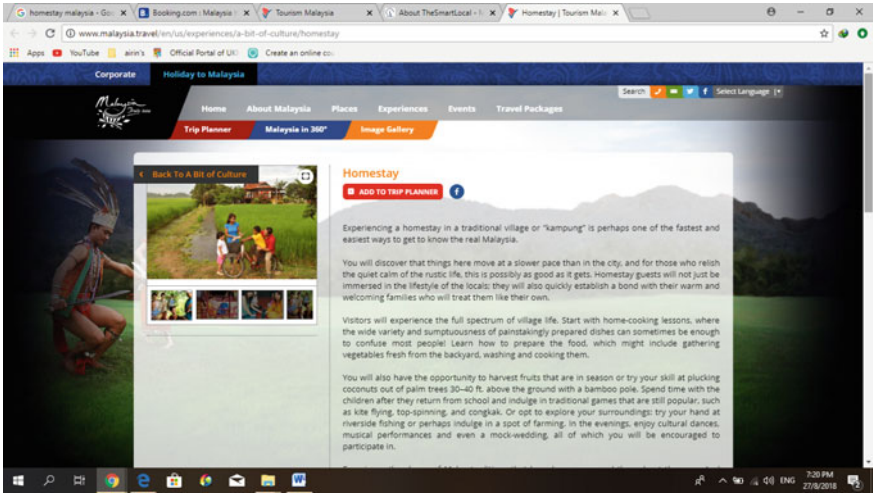


Fig. 5.5 Example of a website that displays homestay information in Malaysia

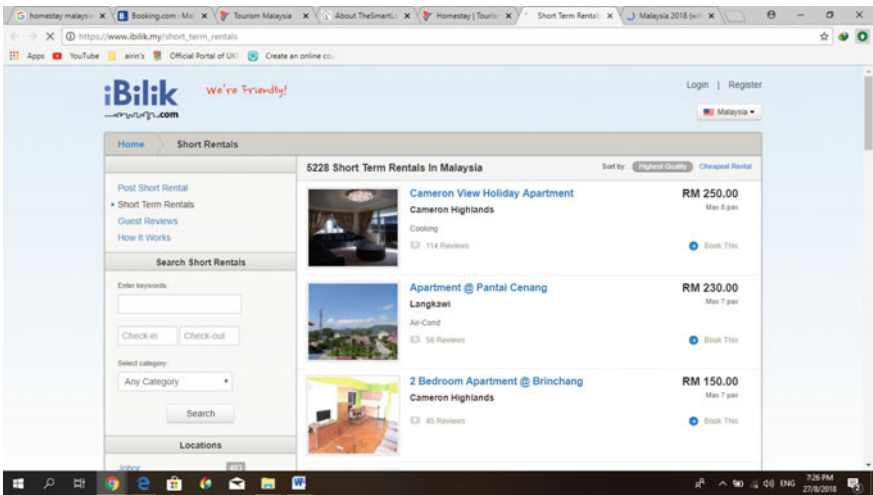


Fig. 5.6 Example of a commercial “inap” house website

to book a room. At the bottom is a wide selection of rooms or apartments for rent, followed by tenant reviews. However, home stay options according to the official concept of this study were not found (Fig. 5.7).

8. <https://caricarihomestay.com/>

This website is the effort of Makrokosmos Resources Sdn Bhd which created this search directory specifically for smartphone users and social media such as Facebook. After finding the desired accommodation information, users can contact directly with the home stay operator, without going through a middleman. Users can also get discounts from bookings through this site (Fig. 5.8).

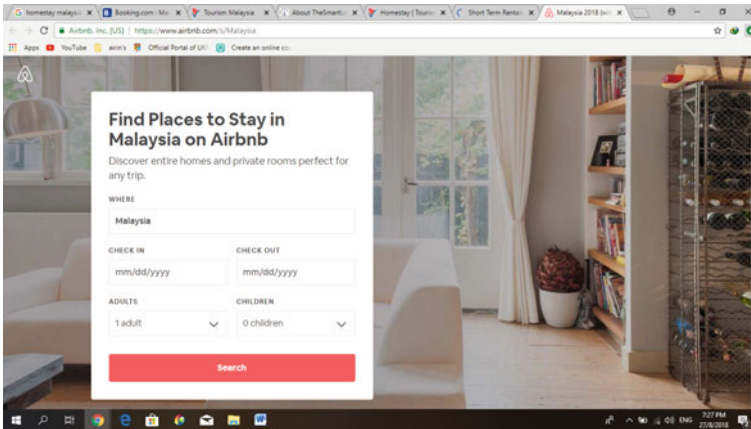


Fig. 5.7 Example of a commercial “*inap*” house website

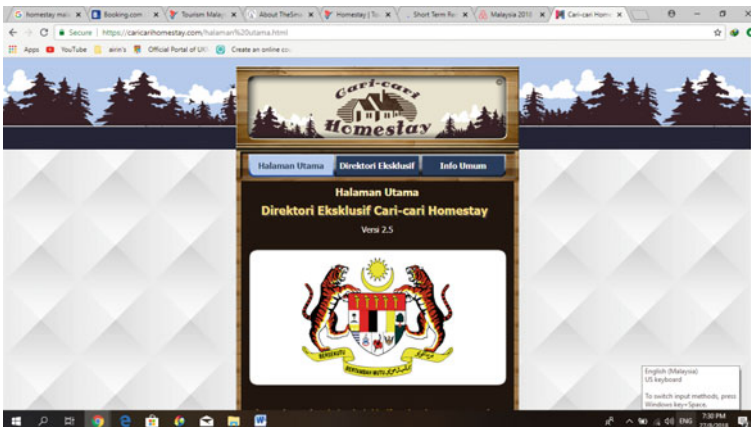


Fig. 5.8 Example of a commercial “*in a*” house website

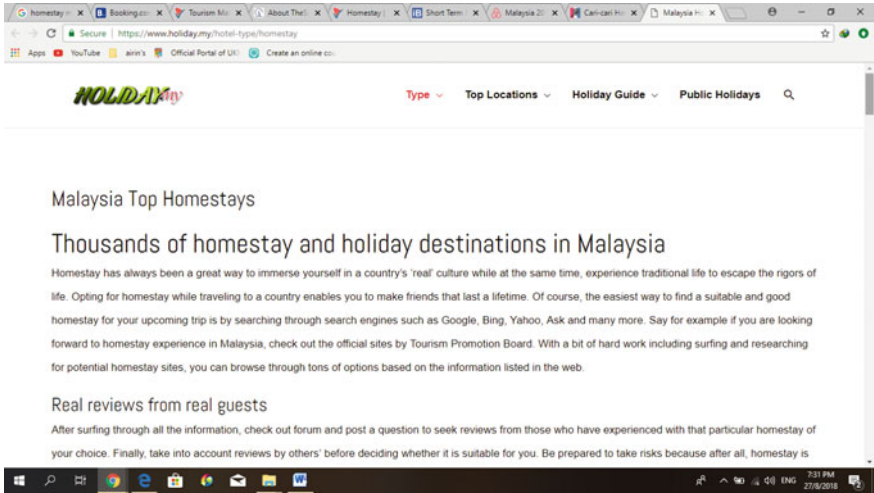


Fig. 5.9 Example of a commercial “*inap*” house website

9. <https://www.holiday.my/hotel-type/homestay>  
The next website was developed by Hong Kong-based Asia mind Network. Homestays are said to be the best way to enjoy and appreciate the local culture and life, as well as the best opportunity to forge lifelong friendships. The site also gives some tips to browsers who are looking for information, for example booking early to avoid disappointment. The site also includes a school holiday calendar to help users make decisions (Fig. 5.9).
10. <https://www.mudah.my/Malaysia/Accommodation-all-9020>  
Mudah.my is operated by 701 Search Pte. Ltd. also based in Singapore and owned by Telenor Group of Norway. The mudah.my website focuses on the sale and purchase of goods, but there are also sellers who offer room rental and private home stays. Accommodation options are also many, namely almost 10 thousand rooms, apartments, and homestays (Fig. 5.10).

Apart from the “*inap desa*” website, some well-known websites that also market the world’s ecotourism products are as shown in Table 5.1.

**SMS/Whatsapp/Telegram:** This method should be done between members of the group and disseminated using the EWOM (electronic word of mouth) technique. The presentation of the announcement was done briefly by including the web address as an extended reference. In this business in the future, a systematic form of application and SMS notification system that is suitable for the business needs to be created with features as outlined by the management. For ecotourism-related products or places, a lot of information can be disseminated about their benefits, beauty, and uses via SMS/Whatsapp, or telegram. This type of marketing requires the skill of writing effective ‘copywriting’ sentences.

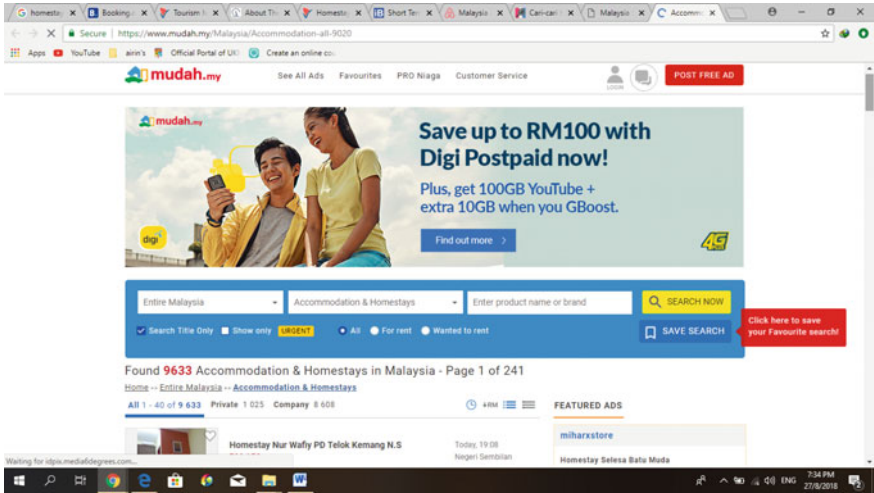


Fig. 5.10 Example of a commercial “*inap*” house website

**E-mail:** Nowadays, the cheapest, easiest, most efficient, and most effective communication is by using email. There are various e-mails that are free and paid depending on the situation and wishes. Sending documents in various forms, transferring files, such as pictures and including voice sending is one thing that is possible if using e-mail. Many purchases of ecotourism products available far inland can be marketed via email (Alcántara-Pilar et al. 2017). These emails can be sent to new-interested customers as well as to existing customers to promote the latest products or sales promotions conducted from time to time.

**Electronic Commerce:** Electronic commerce is also known as e-commerce. It is a business system that uses information technology facilities, especially advanced telecommunications. E-commerce can be divided into two types namely e-commerce between business and business and e-commerce between business and consumer. E-commerce between businesses involves transactions between two or more companies where one party is the supplier company to the other party. E-commerce between businesses and consumers involves transactions between sellers of end products and consumers (Notarstefano and Gristina 2021). E-commerce uses the internet to create a network that unites customers, sellers and third parties such as banks, finance companies, credit card companies and so on in one secure electronic environment for all parties. With the advent of e-commerce, a company or individual can conduct transactions of buying and selling products or ecotourism places anywhere in the world (Xie et al. 2022). It is now widely used especially in western countries and is even recognized by international companies and market experts as a business and marketing sector that cannot be ignored. The Internet can be one of the main business locations that conduct business dealings with goods and services in two ways, namely the first, marketing and selling goods and services and accepting electronic payments.



**Table 5.1** Websites that market world ecotourism products

Bil	Website	Details
1	 <p>Greenloons</p>	Reliable and transparent information on authentic, responsible, sustainable, and eco-certified ecotourism travel experiences around the world. The goal of this website is to make it easy to connect travelers with a meaningful, unique, and impressive vacation
2	Green global travel blog	(Location: Atlanta, Georgia, USA) Produce articles on eco-tourism locations, green living, conservation, travel and product reviews. Green Global Travel is a website dedicated to encouraging people to travel and live more consciously and encourage others to make a positive impact
3	 <p>Good Nature</p>	(Location: Boulder, Colorado) Blog on Travel Stories, Travel Tips, Wildlife, Nature and Nature Photography. Good Nature Travel is an official travel blog that focuses on seeing the most amazing natural places in the world with minimal impact
4	Every Steph	(Location: Bologna, Emilia-Romagna, Italy) Blog posts on Travel guides, travel destinations, healthy recipes and lifestyles. Stefania, a full -time traveler originally from Italy would like to show you how sustainable travel can go easily with a touch of luxury
5	 <p>Tour The Tropics</p>	Blog posts about Eco-tourism destinations and Wildlife tourism. The Tropics Tour was founded out of a beneficial interest in conservation, a love of diversity and a desire to share the best tours on Earth for the tropics
6	The Crowded Planet	(Location: Milan, Lombardia, Italy) Articles on ecotourism, nature travel, and responsible travel from around the world. Margherita and Nick, are adventurers interested in nature and wildlife
7	 <p>Impact Travel Alliance</p>	Offers stories and explains things to inform and motivate you to pursue self-adventure, travel sustainably, and enjoy the beautiful and precious wildlife on the planet, including information on travel, camping, destinations, environment, wildlife, and responsible eco equipment. It also includes notes on travel, camping, destinations, surroundings, wildlife, and great eco equipment

(continued)

**Table 5.1** (continued)

Bil	Website	Details
8	Tourism News Life	(Location: India) News and events related to tourism trends, places to visit, and Indian tourism news
9	The Conversation	(Location: Boston, Massachusetts) An independent platform for analysis and commentary written by scholars, edited by journalists, and addressed to the general public
10	Soul Travel Blog	(Location: London, England, UK) A sustainable travel blog with a mission to make travel easier, and help travelers find the most inspiring and sustainable travel options around the world

Among the popular e-commerce sites nowadays are Shoppee, Lazada, E-bay and a few more (Prasetyo et al. 2021). Eco-tourism industry players can market their downstream products as well as travel packages on appropriate e-commerce sites. There are many advantages of e-commerce including quick and fast transactions while saving costs, promotions by a merchant for ecotourism destinations in the interior, expanding the market, and integrate all internal parts of the company with a business transaction to improve the quality of service (Feng and Liu 2021). For example, a customer will get his ordered goods in a short period of time and e-commerce allows the customer's order to be sent immediately to the internal part of the company concerned for immediate processing.

**Important Features of the Application:** Chen et al. (2020) examined the conceptual model of information retrieval by online travelers, by examining the micro-planning process through the internet. Based on the literature in the field of tourism, they found that communication, consumer habits and information science, tourist planning could be broken down into a series of searches that reflect the specific problems faced. Another study presents a conceptual framework of web user engagement in tourism information search for understanding online and offline integrated search behavior. The information retrieval experience is characterized as a process that includes several elements such as prior information retrieval experience and knowledge, online retrieval strategy, information processing and storage, online retrieval barriers, reasons for terminating online retrieval, summarizing information, information exchange, and more information retrieval through other sources (Valeri and Katsoni 2021). Meanwhile Sharma et al. (2022) studied how potential customers complete their bookings through online services, compared to other booking methods. Their study found that the likelihood of booking online is increasing if users are attracted to a particular website in search of information. Regardless of the socio-demographic background of prospective tourists, the likelihood of booking is also increasing if the products sold through the website are felt to be transparent and easy to understand, or if booking-related communications will incur additional costs.

**Visual/Sound Display:** Among the main things that are emphasized in the visual display are the graphical user interface, layout and any visual part in the website. The visual display factor impacts the first impression of the browser arriving at the website (Pérez-Vega et al. 2018). The five studies conducted in detail include format, graphic design, text, photographs and information arrangement structure. In short, the features examined were graphic diversity, font face suitability, use of photos, information layout and background music.

**Quality and Type of Information:** The quality and type of information will influence the views and perceptions of users on whether the website is useful in conveying the desired information (Tavitiyaman et al. 2021). Informative content should be up-to-date and frequently updated, contain gallery writing and photos as well as have access to other relevant links such as weather forecast sites and money exchange sites. The latest promotions, culture-based events or gatherings and seasonal activities also need to be uploaded periodically. Thus, the eight features to be examined are lodge privilege information (Ma et al. 2018), cost and price display (Cherapanukorn and Sugunnasil 2022), map and logistics to location (Giglio et al. 2019), links to other related sites (Rather et al. 2019), access to other services (Harrigan et al. 2017), photo gallery illustrations (Pérez-Vega et al. 2018), visitor counter (Hena et al. 2021), and lastly update the date (Pourmorshed et al. 2022).

**Ease of Use:** After examining the visual display and content of the information, the next thing to be evaluated is the ease of using the website. Ease of use means the extent to which users feel how easy it is to browse the website. The four criteria assessed were practical and easy-to-find information, interface navigation, language and translation, and local cultural display.

**Interactivity:** Interactivity or mutual friendliness is the extent to which a computer application responds to user queries. The best interactivity is when an app is able to answer any user query. This dimension combines the latest ICT sophistication and the current needs of users. A total of six criteria were studied in this dimension, namely online booking, downloadable materials, SPT 360 e-travel application, feedback and comments or testimonials, clear contact details and also links to social media. The last criterion i.e., links to social media is an addition from the author himself based on current needs and improving the framework of Giannopoulos and Mavragani (2011).

**Page Personalization:** Page personalization emphasizes the aspect of meeting the needs and wants of users and is more advanced than interactivity (Kim and Han 2014; Piccoli et al. 2017). Three items are evaluated in the personalization of the site, namely features according to individual wishes, can communicate/chat directly with entrepreneurs and also features/B2B environment (business-to-business). In a modern era where conventional marketing methods have become less suitable for reaching larger targets, the use of technology should be fully adopted, at least using digital marketing methods for a business. Digital marketing is defined as a promotional activity for a product or brand through electronic media applications (Bala and Verma 2018). Its function is as a medium of exchange of product or service information to customers. In addition, entrepreneurs can use this

method to build and maintain relationships with customers. Digital marketing is more cost-effective than conventional marketing methods in terms of the reduced sales cycle, measurability, providing more convenience and achieving targeted results (Nisar and Yeung 2018). Digital marketing now and in the future aims to generate sales from internet users. So, the easiest way to create an online marketing network is to use an email that can be linked to other online applications such as Google places, websites, social media, online advertising, special portals, image marketing, location-based such as Foursquare, and website (Puthussery 2020). A digital marketing strategy is an action plan that needs to be developed using an existing online network to attract customers to a business product or service. In the digital era, the use of computers should not only be focused on normal or basic operations such as keeping accounts or managing finances, doing typing, in fact, it should be used more than that (Schuhbauer and Hausmann 2021). There are various methods of digital marketing, including using websites, SMS distribution methods, E-mail, electronic commerce, using social media, and mobile marketing (Rather et al. 2019; Bala and Verma 2018).

#### **5.4 Issues and Future of Eco-Tourism Marketing Using Digital Platforms**

The measure of success of digital implementation in knowledge-oriented business marketing is determined by several factors, namely always using new and innovative applications and approaches, doing business regularly and systematically, always being ready in a safe and informed environment, developed and always positive, have knowledge and informed, as well as have efficient and effective management (Alford and Jones 2020; Sarkar and George 2018). The aforementioned characteristics can occur if the use of digital is expanded in the eco-tourism business that wants to be run. With the use of digital, among others, using the internet is an effective and appropriate method or way to increase business and marketing of eco-tourism products or places in an immediate period (Shamim et al. 2021). The government provided various incentives and suggestions to get closer and better with digital platforms. Thus, enhancing the marketing of eco-tourism products is frequently mentioned in the mass media (Jiang et al. 2021). These methods of marketing are expected to facilitate, and speed up the distribution of information and dissemination to the public that using the internet as a medium will be an additional method to the existing business marketing methods. Applying digital in business is one of the catalysts to the success and effectiveness of any business operation is no exception in the marketing of ecotourism products. However, limiting factors such as internet capacity, internet coverage and digital equipment constraints should be taken into account as factors that will reduce the effectiveness of eco-tourism marketing using a digital platform (Pencarelli 2020). Information on the website or promotion on eco-tourism is supposed to cover all activities (Darma and Noviana 2020) such as

public alimentation, warehouse management, accommodation, purchasing, sales, accounting, finance, human resources, reservations, payment, financial reports, etc.

This platform will offer adaptability and flexibility, in other words, to offer the most convenient and comprehensive, in a short time, but includes all information needed by the users (tourists). Thus, the tourist is connecting directly to the information that enables them to search and find the best deals by accessing various websites, comparing destinations, hotels, or flights, but most importantly, the possibility of knowing the views and experiences of those who were in those destinations through different social networks, blogs, or forums (Pencarelli 2020; Bala and Verma 2018; Valeri and Katsoni 2021). The tourist will refer to the view shared and opinions of *netizens*, so the tour operators, travel agencies, and hotels can advertise at minimum cost and attract new customers by promoting services and interacting with those who spend time on this type of network. As consequence, expedite communications and services, as the digital generation is willing to take spontaneous decisions, and make last-minute reservations, which led to the development of facilities such as electronic check-in. Digitalization has heavily influenced the changes in their actions in the eco-tourism market and how customers interact with travel agencies that attract more customers' attention and interest via presented online (Buhalis et al. 2019). Direct interaction with the eco-tourism market offers the possibility for eco-tourism service providers to react to market changes in real-time. Digital technologies become a must for eco-tourism organizations that had to rethink their activities and adopt new marketing and communication strategies, to maintain in a dynamic and highly competitive market (Yetimoğlu and Uğurlu 2020). The collaboration between tourism providers such as hostels, homestays, hotels, treatment facilities, travel agencies, and their customers and brings them together in a virtual platform (Pencarelli 2020). This practice (digital eco-tourism) increased their efficiency through the automation of several processes, which implicitly leads to cost reduction, and access to the global market highlights the competitiveness through appropriate management of resources.

The structure of the eco-tourism portal must be relevant and customized according to the customer's preferences and focus on adding value and building loyalty and trust in tourists that have fundamentally changed their preferences. To ensure the sustainable eco-tourism sector in terms of social, cultural, economic and environmental terms, the establishment of regulations and standards is required to win consumer confidence (Buongiorno and Intini 2021). It is necessary to promote destinations in key tourism portals, engines and search gateways and on destination lists through as many links as possible so that descriptors are not limited by country name or tourism. For reliable tourism, it is mandatory to develop a brand image for improving consumer confidence and its reflection in any web strategy. The emergence of digital has led to a change in tourist's behavior because they have direct access to a much larger amount of information provided by tourism organizations (Mills and Law 2013), such as destinations, products, services and prices transform the tourists in some people more critical and meticulous in the choice of holiday destination. The important outcome is customer satisfaction must be ensured alongside the online transactions and the quality and complexity of the services offered, the security

and authenticity of the information and transactions. All this information helps to reduce uncertainty and risks, in terms of travel quality (Yekimov et al. 2022). Thus, environment-based marketing is a vital tool in increasing eco-tourism activities and environmental sustainability. This practices in general influence performance, as well as innovativeness, effectiveness, competitive advantage, and efficiency (Zhang et al. 2020; Suhermawan and Aurelia 2018).

In consequence, organizations can position themselves competitively in order to attract potential clients and investors from different countries and especially those that embrace eco-tourism (Polonsky 2014). In promoting eco-tourism products, they should know the tourist demand in terms of the degree of comfort, relaxation means, outdoor and indoor activities, fun choices in serving mass, price, duration of residence, transport, etc.). Hence, the development of an eco-tourism economy is linked with the digitalization of all its activities. The process of digitalization of the eco-tourism industry will help to increase its competitiveness since customers will have a better quality of service, and eco-tourism service companies will receive higher revenues from their activities. Thus, under the influence of digital transformation, important trends have emerged in the eco-tourism industry at the present time. Using the opportunities of innovative and digital technologies in the field of eco-tourism has a positive impact on making the tourism industry more competitive in the modern digital economy. There are some advantages regarding digitalization as follow: (1) Propose digital infrastructure support from parties; (2) mentoring support, and (3) policy support.

## **5.5 Knowledge Dynamics in the Eco-Tourism—Social Entrepreneurship**

Knowledge management is the process of effectively recording, classifying, storing, expanding, and updating experiences and knowledge in an organization (Shah and Abualrob 2012). It is said that the knowledge management process covers the way to develop and establish the technology for creating and protecting to design and create an environment or activity for discovering new knowledge. Due to this reason, the vital knowledge dynamics were realized and implanted in the daily operation routine (Bandera et al. 2017). In an organization, a knowledge management system encompasses the selection; acquisition, learning, creation, expansion, integration, construction, and storage of knowledge to further develop the managerial culture system (Masenya 2022). This mechanism development can be achieved through incentives and rewards to acquire tacit knowledge. On the other hand, Nesje (2015) focuses on the explicit knowledge that covers planning, organizing, and classifying existing knowledge in an organization including documentary data, work division details, work records, manuals, reports, pictures, programs, images, and sound through the application of information technology. This knowledge could effectively manage

from inside or outside the organization by setting up an electronic database to transform knowledge into specific symbols for the systematic, handy, and clear understanding and application of the organizational members. These changes inside and outside of the organization, connected explicit and tacit knowledge, provided the best practice and offered competitive advantages toward the organization's vision. In addition to this knowledge management, Lau and Lee (2015) attempt to connect with members' minds and members' potential to create and solve problems.

## 5.6 Sustaining Innovative Social Entrepreneurship

Most of the social entrepreneurship models are associated with innovation at the bottom of the pyramid by social entrepreneurship organizations as they forge new pathways to make the innovations available. Social innovation research focuses on identifying government and firm strategies for industrial and economic growth. The most important innovation is a catalyst to generate and diffuse innovations and innovations do not necessarily include all segments of the population. Such innovation leads to the building of an innovation ecosystem with a great social need and where incentives for the provision of products and services by the for-profit sector are lacking and where governments also do not invest (enough) in satisfying the social need. The emphasis on social impact brings a new dimension to the country's development highlighting new models, processes, and actors for diffusing innovations and highlighting the importance of linkages and interactions among diverse types of social organizations (Surie 2017). The social entrepreneurship processes (Swanson and Zhang 2011) act as catalysts by bringing new resources (including knowledge) into the system through their links and interactions with other types of organizations. Thus, social entrepreneurship development can be facilitated through new institutions and policies that favor the entry of new players.

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# Chapter 6

## Business Models for Social Entrepreneurship in Tourism



Nurul Hafizah Mohd Yasin and Nur Farihin Abd Hadi Khan

**Abstract** Tourism in Malaysia has grown significantly. Malaysia recorded a total of 26 million tourists in 2019, ranking 22nd in the world in absolute terms. Malaysia is not only known as one of the countries with an equatorial climate which is a hot and humid climate throughout the year but is also popular for its unique nature. In Malaysia, various attractive places have their uniqueness such as Redang Island, Perhentian Island, Mount Kinabalu, Tioman Island, Langkawi Island, Poring Hot Spring, and many more that are an attraction to tourists. Most tourists from foreign countries choose Malaysia as a tourism destination for the uniqueness and beauty of nature in Malaysia. Not only that, but they are also attracted to the diversity of cultures and traditions such as customs, dance, food, and others that exist in Malaysia. This is not the case, every race in Malaysia has its dance, traditional food, and customs. For example, the Kadazan Dusun has its traditional food such as Bosou, Tuhau, and others that cannot be found anywhere except in Sabah, Malaysia. The traditional dance of this race is the Sumazau Dance. Not only that, there are many more unique cultures and traditions, not including other races in Malaysia such as the Malays, Indians, Chinese, Bidayuh, Iban, Murut and many more. Malaysia is also quite famous for its harmony. Malaysia is known for its harmony because Malaysians can live together in harmony in one country despite different races, religions and ethnicities. This is what makes Malaysia unique compared to other countries. With all these advantages, Malaysia has become one of the most famous tourist countries in the world. Due to this, the tourism industry in Malaysia is growing rapidly in a short period. The development of the tourism industry has benefited not only travelers but also the communities to which tourists travel and the organizations that directly and indirectly serve those visitors. Therefore, this chapter will discuss social entrepreneurship in tourism as a means of getting involved in the industry. This chapter also discusses a few observations on how social entrepreneurship in tourism is carried out.

## 6.1 How Social Entrepreneurship Influencing Business in Tourism

There are several ways to understand how social entrepreneurship influences business in tourism. This chapter will concentrate on four main characteristics that can influence business in tourism: tourism entrepreneurs, sustainability, social intrapreneurs, and destination development. These topics are essential as they are hot topics in the literature and will be influenced by the concept of social entrepreneurs. The purpose of this topic is to examine how bringing the concepts of social entrepreneurship to various fields influences how people think about these issues. Finally, this should make it easier to identify prospective future research fields and broaden interest in social entrepreneurship throughout the tourist research community as a whole.

## 6.2 Tourism Entrepreneurs

First, it is important to identify the key player in the tourism industry to influence business in social entrepreneurship. In the tourism industry, there are few examples of key players or entrepreneurs, which are readily identified. Different sorts of entrepreneurs are a prominent area of interest among tourism entrepreneurs and small business experts. For example, the founders of technology-related start-ups that develop swiftly have characterized growth-oriented entrepreneurs in tourism, as well as entrepreneurs who focus on crafts or the development of the culture in certain communities. A seasoned hotelier who develops a new hotel management group to take advantage of a specific market opportunity is an example of this type of entrepreneur. These sorts of entrepreneurs can be recognized in the social enterprise, even though they were developed to explain entrepreneurship for “for-profit” or “non-profit” purposes. These types of classifications lay the groundwork for more detailed social entrepreneurs, which will be examined later in the chapter. The categorization of tourism entrepreneurs, according to Koh and Hatten (Rankhumise and Masilo 2002; 2016), is dependent on the approach utilized. It is divided into original, innovative, and imitative tourist entrepreneurs using a product differentiation technique. They identify lifestyle, social, marginal, closet, serial, and nascent tourism entrepreneurs using a behavioral method. The behavioral approach has received increased attention in the tourist literature, and as previously said, particular attention has been paid to lifestyle entrepreneurs. As a result, tourism entrepreneur researchers must broaden our understanding of who these people are in the tourism industry player. As a novel addition to the typology, it is evident that the concept of social entrepreneurs fits well into this subgroup of studies on tourist entrepreneurs in influencing social entrepreneurship business. Social entrepreneurs are now included in the latest lists of entrepreneurial types, according to Koh and Hatten (2002). As a

result, it is now widely acknowledged that such entrepreneurs exist in the tourism industry, and the concept has gained widespread acceptance. As a result, the rapidly increasing interest in and research on social entrepreneurs has a distinct place.

### 6.3 Sustainability

After we identified the key player that can influence the business in tourism, we then focus on sustainability in tourism social entrepreneurship. According to WCED (1987) sustainable development can be defined as “development, which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”. According to some academics, such as Young and Tilley (2006), entrepreneurs that focus on both the social and environmental aspects of their firm are more likely to be sustainable. This offers an alternative perspective to the research’s exclusive social (Boluk 2011) or socio-environmental (Boluk and Mottiar 2014) lenses. The tourism industry operations have resulted in a mass of unsustainable consequences that have been heavily condemned. The doubts that have been raised pose a threat to the application of sustainable tourism. The most focus has been paid to the environmental component of sustainability (Lu and Nepal 2009). Some businesses that care about the environment have begun to change their business practices to limit (and report) their cumulative impacts. Tourism businesses, on the other hand, have been chastised for adopting just those sustainability initiatives that will increase earnings, offer public relations possibilities, or meet regulatory criteria (Sheldon and Parks 2011).

### 6.4 Social Intrapreneurs

Social intrapreneurs are employees who establish or motivate their companies to provide social value through innovation. Intrapreneurs build new enterprises within current firms, taking advantage of new chances to generate revenue (Pinchot 1985). Individuals are motivated to bring about change in the workplace, regardless of its size, by introducing new products or services (Miller 1983). Telumbde (2006) recognizes the characteristics of intrapreneurs who contribute to organizational innovation in small and medium-sized businesses. Only a little amount of research has been done on intrapreneurship in the service industries, notably tourism. Sundbo (1997), on the other hand, investigated how organizations may manage and structure the innovation process in service enterprises. Sundbo (1997) proposed four stages for internal innovation organization:

- Idea generation
- Transformation into an innovation project
- Development

- Implementation of the innovation as a commercial product.

Supporting intrapreneurship in the tourism business presents several good opportunities and constraints. First, it is critical that employees in the tourism industry feel valued at work; motivated to examine their intrapreneurial capability in order to boost their productivity. Second, in order to stimulate ideation, an adequate support system is important in establishing tourism businesses to have an open and effective communication system.

## 6.5 Destination

Destinations have a wide variety of stakeholders. It is possible that the objectives of a social entrepreneur could have a negative impact for a destination. For example, a decision to open homestay could result in some local opposition. In such circumstances, the social entrepreneur's goals may collide with the ambitions of the destination management organization, resulting in stress and the need for cautious negotiation and cooperation to reach an agreement. The impact of a social entrepreneur on a tourism location or local area is undeniable. The nature and scope of this impact can vary greatly, but all stakeholders in the destination should be aware that this sort of entrepreneur is on the rise. Destinations have institutional and informal organizations that help plan, steer, and coordinate their development. Local businesses are a significant element of these groups, but they are the only ones. Tourism destinations will be impacted by social entrepreneurs, whether as part of their mission or as a side effect, and these influences may be negative or beneficial. As mentioned previously in the general literature on social entrepreneurship, the key person may already be active in a destination, but they have not been labeled as a social entrepreneur, but rather as a community leader, ambassador, or volunteer. As a result, social entrepreneurs are not always welcome addition to a destination; they have simply not been identified as such. As a result, social entrepreneurs present potential and problems for existing destination management organizations, and they must be included in their institutional and policy frameworks. Finally, the authors discussed the importance of social entrepreneurship in tourism, namely in terms of entrepreneurship, sustainability, social intrapreneurship, and destination development. Moving forward, tourism researchers have a lot of room to improve their current knowledge base and, in particular, to look into issues that are important from a tourist standpoint. The chapter asked how important it was to understand social entrepreneurs for the industry, stakeholders, and destination, and the importance is obvious from a variety of perspectives, as discussed above to influence the success of the business. Figure 6.1 shows how social entrepreneurs are relevant to a wide range of themes in the literature, preventing the formation of research silos in which social entrepreneurship experts seek out their vein of study. The convergence of common ground and interests depicted in Fig. 6.1 should help to advance social entrepreneur



**Fig. 6.1** Tourism social entrepreneurs. *Source* Adapted from Mottiar and Boluk (2017)



research, thought, and understanding of the social entrepreneurship of the tourism sector as a whole.

## 6.6 Approaches to Eco-Tourism Effectiveness Using Social Business Models

According to Wood (2008), eco-tourism is an area where social entrepreneurs can work together. Eco-tourism social businesses are familiar with community-based organisations. The presence of local communities in natural resources is critical when building and administering an eco-tourism region. This necessitates that ecotourism initiatives benefit the local community (Asadi & Kohan 2011). The key player of eco-tourism referred to as ecopreneurs, which is individuals, who operate economically viable business while maintaining the core values that inspired them to create their business (Dixon and Clifford 2007). There has been little research on eco-tourism entrepreneurship in practice, but Boluk and Mottiar (2014) found a link between the pro-social and pro-environmental goals of many of their South African and Irish studies. The authors emphasized an environmental necessity that influenced their social focus and, as a result, their lifestyle choices. Quality of life, appreciation of the outdoors, and related activities all contributed to a desire to live in rural areas. Rural living also provided an opportunity for the informants to make a direct contribution to their community, which was of great importance to them. There are several approaches to eco-tourism effectiveness using social business models. The first is leveraging the supply chain. One of the most important approaches for optimizing tourism's economic and social benefits is to ensure that the benefits stay in the community. By sourcing products from the local community, "economic leakage" is reduced. A strong emphasis is placed on obtaining products from within the community.

This emphasis on local sourcing may also have broader cultural/heritage implications. For example, Malaysia's best eco-tourism experiences are found in places like Taman Negara, Endau Rompin, parts of Langkawi, and Sarawak and Sabah on the island of Borneo. The incorporation of local groups including tourist guides ensures money stays in the community. Second, is an eco-tourism campaign, incorporating conservation agencies and the government to run a tourism campaign with the goal of raising awareness of conservation activities, respecting local culture, and improving the lives of local people. The purpose of the campaign is to involve in tourism activity, particularly travelers. Many tourism areas experience over-exploitation and cultural shifts as a result of this tendency. Local communities will become more conscious as a result of the campaign that they are not simply an object of tourism, but also a subject of tourism, with the right to a better life and responsibilities in managing and protecting their places. The third is to conduct a nature-learning program for eco-tourism effectiveness program. This approach can be implemented within ecotourism areas in which visitors are invited to interact with nature and see the biodiversity. All activities are tightly regulated to ensure that they do not hurt the environment. Tourists are only allowed to take photographs and are not permitted to damage the plants, litter, or feed the animals, to name a few examples of control. Tourists will also learn that if nature is not preserved, some animal and plant species will become extinct, the earth's temperature will rise, and climate change will worsen.

## **6.7 Funding Social Entrepreneurship: For-Profit and Public Government**

A social entrepreneur is a person who creates social value by combining or bringing together resources in a new or different way to address social needs, or by forming new organizations to promote and encourage social change. While social entrepreneurship is not a new phenomenon, it has seen tremendous development in years, with the general public increasingly recognizing it as an essential and unique aspect of the country's social, economic, and political environment. It also provides opportunities for multinational corporate executives, to gain information and interact with others in the corporation best interests in order to produce social value for those in need or the underprivileged (Abu Saifan 2012; Dees 1998; Seelos and Mair 2005). In Malaysia, there are around 20,000 social companies as reported by *The Star Online* (2020), including those run on a volunteer basis, with approximately 64% centered in the Klang Valley. Starting a new social business necessitates locating funding sources that are primarily concerned with social rather than commercial value creation. Thus, access to funding has been given special consideration by the financial services sector, such as business financing, invoice trading, balance sheet consumer lending, and crowdfunding.

Activities may include meetings between companies and financial institutions, as well as expanded exposure to bank lenders and venture funders where the

project leaders may present their proposals to investors (Mirvis and Googins 2018). Besides, social entrepreneurs play a significant role in the funding of social initiatives. There are cases where social entrepreneurship operational funds have been depleted, thus social entrepreneurs are looking for venture capital to support their operations (Braga & Ferreira 2014; Boschee 1995). Fortunately, a new trend toward social venture capital investment has revolutionized social entrepreneurship. For instance, there are venture capital firms that give financial resources, advice, and inter-organizational linkages to innovative social initiatives. The recent trend of venture capital investment in social enterprises has given rise to a new business model for social entrepreneurs, in which the entrepreneur can swap operational control of the firm for financial assistance. Meanwhile, several public organizations also offer business advice to social entrepreneurs; yet, monetary resources are required to realize social entrepreneurs' ambitious social ideas. Governments at all levels are required to offer social entrepreneurs the most assistance possible as they bring resources and leadership to communities that require their services to address some of their most urgent issues (Zainal Abidin and John Kaka 2014). In Malaysia for instance, the Short-Term Economic Recovery Plan (PENJANA) may provide a matching grant to social enterprises that can crowd-source contributions and donations to undertake their social projects. The matching grants can help social entrepreneurs to grow their operations and employ additional young people and graduates. More to the points, the government may also encourage both public and private sector Investments in social companies (as the third sector) with performance or outcome-based returns.

## 6.8 Crowdfunding for Eco-Tourism Social Project

Crowdfunding has been widely accepted as a campaign, which opens opportunities for the public to provide financial assistance to a certain project in any market. It is an innovative approach for funding a range of new establishments, allowing for-profit, cultural, and social project entrepreneurs to request investment from a large number of people in exchange for future products or stock (Mollick 2014). It is in addition to traditional financing sources such as banks, business angels, and venture capital organizations, which is a new means to obtain money online (Beier and Wagner 2014). There is evidence that donations from socially motivated individuals could help tourism sectors boost their income. As such, the emergence of incubators and other support groups for tourism-related projects is a significant trend (Day and Mody 2016). Schwienbacher and Larralde (2010) suggest that there are two parts to the crowdsourcing definition, (i) Refers to the objective of the crowdfunding effort, and (ii) refers to the goal of the investors. Understanding the behavior of founders and funders when deciding to run a crowdsourcing campaign may help global and local establishments to develop and implement appropriate marketing strategies for their target projects. The collected funds may be treated as a loan with the expectation of a return on investment, or the funders are compensated for their support of a project or maybe treated like investors in crowdsourcing campaigns, with ownership holdings

or other benefits in exchange for their contributions (Mollick 2014). In the case of ecotourism social projects, it is believed that the attempt to develop projects should involve local communities so that they can become the subject of development, and not merely passive objects (Situmorang and Mirzanti 2012). As such, crowdfunding has been used to generate public interest in projects, especially one that is still in the early phases of development. This is especially true in businesses where programs aim to develop complementary product ecosystems (Mollick 2014).

A possible reason for doing crowdfunding is that funding is a major issue for social entrepreneurs since the funding sources accessible to regular for-profit enterprises are not the same as those available to social entrepreneurs (Day and Mody 2016). For instance, in many locations in Southeast Asia, conservation efforts are chronically underfunded, particularly for neglected ecosystems like mangrove forests (Friess 2017). Because government backing and worldwide research programs have failed to provide the needed resources to conduct the projects, researchers, therefore, have turned to crowdfunding and characterized it as their necessary response to governmental negligence (Addison and Stevens 2022). More to the point, crowdfunding for ecotourism social projects may strive to enhance environmental awareness, and appreciation for local culture, and improve the lives of residents (Situmorang and Mirzanti 2012). For instance, many ecotourism projects that are located in rural regions have limited or non-existent waste treatment services (Friess 2017).

Thus, financial assistance from crowdfunding could help in improving the services and ease the lives of local communities. At the same time, crowd-funding creators can utilize crowdsourcing to demonstrate demand for new projects, which can lead to financial assistance from more traditional sources (Mollick 2014). Starting with fundraising among the public could open up opportunities for financial assistance from conventional financial establishments. Instead of fighting for the attention, affection, and interest of a small group of specialists, by conducting crowdfunding, the researchers may compete for the attention, affection, and interest of a large, geographically dispersed audience, encouraging different assessments of creators' work and ideas (Addison and Stevens 2022). Moreover, as most crowdfunding initiatives are heavily integrated into social media, thus they can draw a large number of people, allowing not only for the formation of public opinion but also for the conduct of dialogue with society (Dzhandzhugazova et al. 2017). The crowd-funding project puts money directly in the hands of researchers, bypassing the overheads that institutions deduct from typical grants (Addison and Stevens 2022). By making these initiatives more visible through online means, publics were able to connect with and support specific projects. It also exposes such efforts to the scrutiny of a broader audience, which may have opposing viewpoints (Addison and Stevens 2022).

Furthermore, the tourism industry has found a specific emphasis on the crowd-funding approach. Among the most effective crowd-funding projects are those focused on nature preservation, learning about the sights, physical travel, and other valuable activities that elicit strong emotions (Dzhandzhugazova et al. 2017). For example, to assist environmental preservation, the crowdfunding social project sponsored a tree-planting initiative (Situmorang and Mirzanti 2012). Besides, there is also a crowdsourcing adoption project for a specific bird species, by donating a certain

amount and getting an adoption certificate, soft toy, stickers, and bookmark in return (Addison and Stevens 2022). On the other hand, the recommended crowdfunding initiatives for community empowerment are related to community development, building schools and offering scholarships, collaborating with local communities, and educating people (Situmorang and Mirzanti 2012). Henceforth, the success of crowdfunding for ecotourism social projects is affected by various factors. First, it is seen that non-profits projects have a better track record when it comes to crowdfunding (Belleflamme et al. 2013). Perhaps due to the crowdfunding founders' capacity to navigate the interests of many parties (Addison and Stevens 2022), the project might accomplish a certain financial goal for a shorter period. At the same time, projects with a lower target, a higher trip rating, and more supporters would perform better in terms of funding (Li et al. 2016). A high number of supporters could be reached by broadcasting the projects through various social networking.

The public has become borderless in this rapidly changing digital environment. Since the public may get information from across borders over the internet, large networks are believed to be correlated with successful funding (Mollick 2014) and have become critical for founders to seize the market opportunity and secure their long-term project success. It was supported by Beier and Wagner (2014) that the usage of Twitter for tourist project crowdfunding campaigns has a substantial influence. Although not all founders might not link to their social networking accounts, social network size still predicts success. It is seen previously that the performance of tourist crowdfunding is influenced by social media (Li et al. 2016). To conclude, the objective of this chapter is to highlight and discuss the importance of crowdfunding as one of the financial assistances to ecotourism social projects. As a result of globalization, ecotourism-related companies are taking advantage of the chances to reach public interests, both locally and worldwide. Simultaneously, as technology advances and information become more readily available over social networking, the public's expectations have grown in importance and have been steadily growing. As a result of this trend, global ecotourism social project founders are having to reconsider their fund-raising techniques to crowdsourcing for better funding.

## 6.9 The Best Practices of Social Eco-Tourism Sectors

Eco-tourism provides more than just beautiful, unspoiled scenery; it also educates people on how to protect and care for the environment, as well as how to improve the welfare of local communities in the area. While individuals continuously learn about their human nature, they will indirectly realize their obligation to enhance people's lives and preserve the environment through social responsibility. In the tourism sector, the demand for tourists and businesses to be more ecologically and socially responsible is increasing. While both the boomer and millennial generations are the two main sources of consumer spending power, they are becoming more conscious of the impact of their trips to destinations and local communities (Sheldon and Daniele 2017).

In order to ensure that the social eco-tourism sectors must run efficiently, it is essential to set criteria for assessing the actions, that is establishing the best practices. It is crucial to ascertain the best way to accomplish things, as decided through trial and error, and proven to be the most sensible path of action. For academicians, figuring out the component values of social eco-tourism and how to use it to maximum effect and returns for the many parties involved might be a difficult task. This is due to changing consumer tastes, with more experienced visitors choosing less regimented group travel and more intimate encounters with people and places (Sheldon and Daniele 2017). As a result, the social eco-tourism project founder must develop skills in reacting to project breakdowns with revolutionary and financially viable solutions. Thus, the social eco-tourism best practices are believed to be connected to the definition of social entrepreneurship by Noruzi et al. (2010), which highlighted three general components that are responding to project failure, transformational innovation, and financial sustainability of the project.

The question is, how can the project founder mitigate the negative consequences while retaining the positive outcomes of eco-tourism projects for social benefits and human community development? If these concepts are grouped into a system, the major goals of social eco-tourism may be identified (Dzhandzhugazova et al. 2019). As a result, establishing global and national guidelines to govern social eco-tourism operations based on eco-tourism principles is critical for the effective growth of social eco-tourism projects, particularly in developing regions. As such, Cobbinah (2015) concluded that there are five broad principles of eco-tourism based on similar characteristics (Donohoe and Needham 2006; Hetzer 1965; Honey 2008; Page and Dowling 2002; The International Ecotourism Society 1990), which can be used as heuristic standards for social eco-tourism projects. The principles are: (1) environmental conservation, (2) cultural preservation, (3) community engagement, (4) economic rewards, and (5) vulnerable group empowerment (Cobbinah 2015). Hence, one of society initiatives is to solve specific issues related to eco-tourism projects while also informing and contributing to a broader range of system change explorations. Pollock (2015) has highlighted the importance of acknowledging the existing system's systemic and structural weaknesses, as well as for forward-thinking industry actors to conceive and co-create new ways.

To make it possible, the social eco-tourism project founder should collect statistics on eco-tourist visits, in order to better understand present levels of engagement and to serve as a starting point for future mitigation initiatives. If the number of visitors grows fast, new mitigation measures or rules may be required (Samia et al. 2017). At the same time, a dynamic decision-making process is enabled by monitoring the wildlife and local human populations. The processes for monitoring and evaluation must be organised, new methodologies and system of measurement must be developed, and their value, utility, and effectiveness must be appraised (Mair and Marti 2006; Taplin et al. 2014). The constant monitoring of facilities and a methodical approach to social eco-tourism project development would also aid in the resolution of a number of critical challenges, such as the establishment of integrated tourist destinations and environmental tourism for various tourist groups. Besides, the project founders should promote community-based tourism as the preferred social

eco-tourism option. Integrating local society with the planning and operation of a social ecotourism project provides more socially sustainable practices. For instance, there should be a social eco-tourism project where students and volunteers are trained to create skilled work in the community. As a result, any introduction of eco-tourism-related education is likely to be led by visionary intrapreneurs from higher education institutions, or innovative start-up laboratories and incubators that work beyond the official higher education bounds (Sheldon and Daniele 2017).

Therefore, through this effort, the project founders might achieve a positive outcome since it can assist the local community economically and, more crucially, it can create revenue for the organizations involved. It may also limit the probability of local people being overly reliant on eco-tourism projects for financial support (Armadita and Day 2017; Samia et al. 2017). Bringing all these together, it is suggested that social eco-tourism founders play the role of change agents in the eco-tourism sector. By following the key competencies suggested by Sherman (2011), the project founders should take action to tackle problems, dare to pursue a daring goal despite the doubts of others, have a mix of tenacity, zeal, and dedication to achieve goals, able to rise to the worst situation, seeing fresh ideas and thinking outside the box, envisioning different points of view than their own and lastly, connecting with others to form strong bonding. In conclusion, it is important to remember that the applied recommended strategy may be used not only to diagnose the condition of social ecotourism projects in selected areas but also to develop new strategies for marketing the most successful eco-tourism destinations (Kotler et al. 2015; Dzhandzhugazova et al. 2019). Hence, the recommended suggestions are not exhaustive and other discussions of best practices are always available.

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# Chapter 7

## Promoting Digital Entrepreneurship and Ecotourism Development Through Smartphone



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**Abstract** Digital technology in the recent era makes it easy to stay in touch with friends, and family, and work remotely. The usage of smartphones is a crucial and useful device for the new generation. Thus, this book chapter aims to explore the impact of smartphone usage on digital entrepreneurship and the ecotourism sector. This study used secondary data sources related to digital technologies, including journals and web sources accessible on the Internet. The findings indicated that the smartphone has captured a phenomenal revolution in entertainment, and communication due to its continual development of digital technologies. The findings also identified the development of using smartphones in current situations, attaining experience, better satisfaction, development of smartphone applications, and accessing social networking in smartphone devices which have portrayed the impact of smartphones' proliferation in the context of entrepreneurship and ecotourism sector.

### 7.1 Introduction

The world has adopted new technology as one of the most important required facilities in their everyday life (Jusoh and Al Fawareh 2017; Rahman and Hassan 2021). The usage of smartphones is a crucial and useful device for the new generation. This technological advancement has also brought massive benefits to both the entrepreneurship and ecotourism industries. Due to the affordability of smartphones, several users particularly tourists and business owners utilize smartphones significantly. Information and communications technologies (ICTs) have had an important effect on the whole tourism business (Dias and Afonso 2021), providing an increase to a young generation of tourism clients. The development of advanced technologies has changed how goods as well as consumer facilities are manufactured and produced (Choudrie et al. 2021). ICTs are now an essential component of the digital marketing and tourism sector businessmen and travelers use technology to develop better experiences and generate more individual experiences. Scholars have specifically argued about the types of progress that ICTs may contribute if the consequences are always beneficial and positive (Anand et al. 2021; Tam et al. 2020). For instance, they showed that businesspeople or entrepreneurs, and travelers may benefit from smartphones and their applications. Considering the advent of the digital market, they are essential

to entrepreneurs' capacity to launch, and expand a business and capitalize on new opportunities, which, in return, supports regional and country business sustainability.

At present, it is very general for users of smartphones to download ecotourism-related applications which are very prevalent and well-known. Although the development of smartphones has supported the strength of the tourism issue significantly, however, little has been known regarding how it has impacted the on-the-go trip experience. Similarly, visitors look for information to assist them in making choices about trying to explore new attractive destinations (Kang et al. 2020), because of this, it is important to know the features of smartphone applications utilized among users, as well as the products and services that visitors look for while utilizing a smartphone for travel applications. In the ecotourism industry, the smartphone offers different features through applications and a wide range of usage. As it has become a growing industry in the telecommunication segment (Saraswathi et al. 2017), it is considered an integrated part of everyday life. For example, searching information, google Maps, browsing social media platforms, writing an ecotourism-related blog, hotel booking, transportation and flight booking, medical facilities, and many others. Furthermore, Ganapathy et al. (2022) identified that ecotourism-related smartphone applications have five fundamental factors which are convenience and ease to use of the application, serviceability of the mobile application, the functional value of the application, loyalty of application, and understandable experience. They also further examined the two issues that are gaining knowledge and satisfaction.

The use of smartphones in the aspect of entrepreneurship tendency among businesspeople has been identified substantially (Hossain et al. 2020). Because it encourages young entrepreneurs to become ambitious and make additional money rather than their regular income. The development of smartphone-based entrepreneurship may provide various opportunities and also motivates to make innovative entrepreneurial propensity which can help to earn money, frequently with minimum or no expense. Moreover, social networking and several types of applications installed in smartphones which are also discovered the advantage of technology (Saraswathi et al. 2017). The features that are included in smartphones are internet browsing, different application, playing games, tracking health status, emailing, listening to music, watching movies and videos, chatting, photo sharing, e-book and journal reading, creating documents, and others. Moreover, social media access from a smartphone has created a vested interest to use the smartphone (Yuan et al. 2021). Masiu and Chukwuere (2018) point out that the usage of smartphones is dramatically increased due to those exciting features such as biometrics, internet browsing, entering email, and accessibility of social media in the twenty-first century. The purpose of the present chapter is to explore the understanding and importance of smartphones and their effect on digital entrepreneurship and the ecotourism industry. Subsequently, the chapter also reviews the adoption of smartphones and their role in entrepreneurship and the ecotourism industry.

## 7.2 Smartphone Adoption on Digital Entrepreneurship

In general, entrepreneurship refers to innovation and development of the business which is often shown within small and medium businesses (Katila et al. 2012). The adoption of smartphone technology in entrepreneurship which is associated with smartphone applications that can help a business owner in different ways such as via reduced spending, monitoring the business status, online transactions, enhanced profits, reasonable benefits, and the opportunity to establish new enterprise frameworks (Soluk et al. 2021; Remane et al. 2017). In a general sense, the adoption of smartphone technology is typically becoming much more crucial despite their generation, structure, region, or trade. Enterprises may develop strong value and achieve economic benefits by utilizing digital technologies (Soluk et al. 2021), which could encourage them to start their own business (Autio et al. 2018). The adoption of smartphone technology can be essential for underdeveloped countries. Nevertheless, there is a lack of justification for the impact of utilizing digital technologies in entrepreneurship from prior findings (Nambisan 2017). Thus, enhancing the widespread research in this discipline which is very important, and it may also support entrepreneurs in resolving certain difficulties that are imposed by organizations. Furthermore, Soluk and his colleagues (2021) emphasized that the majority of the study that has been conducted on the adoption of digital technology and mainly concerned with developed countries, in which the facilities and accessibility are very diverse compared to those in underdeveloped nations, for example, in the aspect of internet service, mobile networks use and the accessibility of relatively affordable devices. Given that smartphone technology allows enterprises to take advantage of commercial prospects and it could have a significant effect on entrepreneurial ventures.

## 7.3 Smartphone Adoption on Ecotourism Development

In the advance of information and communication technologies (ICTs) instruments, smartphone technology is one of the pioneering tools of ICTs which has achieved popularity during the last decade. Because of this, attention to how smartphones affect tourism has raised in the present years. In common, ecotourism refers to a component of tourism that includes taking liable for travel particularly focusing on natural areas, environmental preservation, and enhancing the welfare of the community as well as society. The adoption of smartphone technology in the ecotourism industry may benefit different investors and it can also persistently assess the tour schedules or substitute utilizing e-route information sources attained through smartphones (Vallespín et al. 2017; Tussyadiah 2016). Moreover, as indicated by Xiang et al. (2015), smartphones and travel applications are becoming prevalent in searching for information that guides travelers to select their destination. There are several studies have investigated how tourism-linked applications impact tourists' behavior. The significance of customer creativity as a determinant of smartphone utilization and

discovered that stronger smartphone utilization was favorably linked with tourists who were youthful, female, knowledgeable, and had better earnings (Tussyadiah 2016). Chen et al. (2018) determined the causes and effects of utilizing a smartphone for a job while on travel. Another study by Vallespín et al. (2017) found that younger visitors utilized smartphones heavily for browsing information, although, visitors aged (35–44 years old) were inclined to make travel purchases. They also identified that distinctions in gender, family status, learning, earnings, and profession had no tangible impact on smartphone use. Some demonstrated that travelers may utilize their smartphones device to connect to the internet, however, outcomes linked to traditional information search behavior, including before travel, may not be valid to such behavior during travel while traveling (Kang et al. 2020). Therefore, the adoption of smartphone technology addressed the technical viewpoints of travel behavior where it can influence travelers to adopt the smartphone applications.

## 7.4 Role of Smartphones on Entrepreneurship

The role of smartphone technology has been contributing to the entrepreneurship sector profoundly, where this technology reflects positively on business owners in their daily industry activities. Many researchers predicted that smartphone technology is an emerging service that represents crucial value in online business, and it could rapidly substitute the adoption of more traditional desktop applications, with customers realizing the clear aspects of smartphones applications and their friendliness features (Kennedy-Eden and Gretzel 2021; Tan 2017). Similarly, Dias and Afonso (2021) manifested that due to the increasing popularity of smartphone and their applications, small business has experienced a significant in the era of consumer technology. The use of information and communication technologies (ICTs) provides several entrepreneurship developments that are always rising because of economic assets as well as new expertise (Asongu et al. 2018). The smartphone comes with advanced features such as web browsing, personalized applications, touchscreen, Wi-Fi connectivity with a lot more memory storage, and a particular operating system that may affect significantly small and medium entrepreneurs. Moreover, Web 2.0 can be accessed conveniently through a smartphone as like in a computer while it is connected to the internet, thus, enterprises and consumers can communicate effectively in terms of products and services. Smartphone has become so popular in everyone's life around the world. A vast number of entrepreneurs around the globe are using smartphones for many purposes in their daily life (Kibona and Rugina 2015). As smartphones have developed in terms of adding features drastically; therefore, these facilitate people to access social media less effortlessly. According to the report of the International Telecommunication Union, the percentage of people who have access to mobile phones is around 60% (Sarfoah 2017). There is also another interesting fact that people penetrate smartphone usage more in developing countries (Henry and Quansah 2013). For instance, Malaysia has the highest rate of using smartphones where “55 percent of Malaysians use their mobiles to listen to music,

half 50 percent play online games and almost seven out of ten 67 percent Malaysians watch online videos on their phones”. On the other hand, a study by Alabdulkareem (2015) revealed that approximately 73% of students and 100% of instructors in that research utilized WhatsApp. WhatsApp was moreover demonstrated to be utilized by female students for academic research, particularly when they were included in bunches. The U.S. market research firm online Marketer (2016) reported that the Asian area has the highest ratio of smartphone access in the globe, while Taiwan has the largest smartphone access ratio in this region at 73.4%. Thus, based on the above explanation, it is understood that the impact of smartphone technology on the entrepreneurship sector has significantly contributed.

## 7.5 Role of Smartphones on Ecotourism

The remarkable technological advancement has brought enormous benefits to human life as such in the area of the travel industry. “Smartphones, the Internet-enabled devices incorporated with computer applications and software, are among the eminent breakthroughs in this latest century” (Ng et al. 2017). Due to the effectiveness, compatibility, affordability, convenience, and mobility of smartphones tourists are being incorporated with smartphones for destination purposes (Asongu et al. 2018; Pullen et al. 2015). These smartphones offer more features through the capabilities of downloading customized or personalized applications or documentation as tourists have become familiar with smartphone-centric tourism. Because of prevalent smartphones applications usages, several customers have changed their behavior (Hossain et al. 2020). The new smartphones’ features facilitate several applications and vastly increase their productivity (Wang et al. 2020). Additionally, a broad range of facilities, including networking, navigation, and personalized information seeking, are available. For consumers, the service of smartphones is not only a communication tool but also a continuation of their identity and behavior. The acceptance of smartphone technology applications, which are producing enormous changes in how the travel industry operates and how people travel, is an example of this phenomenon (Lu et al. 2015). The application of smartphones has been developing a novel technique for tourist people while they are traveling, known as m-travel, which is described as utilizing applications designed for smartphone devices to help tourists in their travel and events in a certain place (da Silva and da Rocha 2012; Lin et al. 2020). Yu and Dutkiewicz (2013) indicated that connectivity to exclusive resources given access by mobile technology which enables highly engaged visitors’ experiences, stands out among many benefits of applications. In the ecotourism sector, smartphone technology can be able to obtain information rapidly on several issues which influence travel including weather, hotels, entertainment, and service of transportation (Dias and Afonso 2021; No and Kim 2014). By using smartphone technology, tourists can access a diverse range of information that can help them to successfully solve issues, discuss their experiences and save memories. Access to these sources of knowledge and study has transformed thoughts and attitudes incorporating highlighting

greater adaptability, less preparation, and more traveling. Given the widely demonstrated positive connection between ICT and effective governance, it may be possible that smartphone technology can regulate the impact of governance on the environment for the ecotourism sector. The rationale behind the idea that mobile devices can enhance governance and create better business environments is typically on the role of ICT in minimizing any potential information asymmetry (public organizations and ecotourism agencies) that can be linked to operating business. Similarly, smartphone technology may operate as sharing information technology that can develop products in the doing of the enterprise (Ameen et al. 2021).

This chapter has discussed and explored how smartphone technology and its applications have contributed to the entrepreneurship and ecotourism sectors. The study has demonstrated that smartphones are transforming the ecotourism environment, pursuing to meet the advancing demands of visitors who need a high-speed connection to related information and different types of subjects. In general, modern tourists are their own tourist companies, seeking diverse experiences and through smartphones, tourists can access facilities and information wherever and at any time. Smartphone technology has changed the way travelers live and the tourism area experience. As an innovative technology of ICT, the smartphone is recognized significantly by many scholars, and it has cleared the way for a vast selection of services at every stop, maintaining travelers informed and more connected. There are many small and medium enterprises that have adopted the smartphone strategies such as mobile applications, blogs, information seeking, search machine optimization, and social networking. Smartphone-based research is still required to develop and increase the entrepreneurship and ecotourism sector.

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# Chapter 8

## Role of Digital Social Entrepreneurship in Ecotourism Development



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**Abstract** Nowadays, digital entrepreneurship and innovative business in ecotourism have been rising greatly, probably a consequence of the most current global pandemic. Their development over the past ten years has been because of the dissemination of technology into visitors' everyday life and the demand for travel that incorporate economic value and multiple experiences. The purpose of this present chapter is to explore and demonstrate key issues and research dimensions in the adoption of digital entrepreneurship and the innovation ecotourism industry. The study has encompassed a significant analysis based on prior literature reviews from the secondary databases. Moreover, this chapter addresses the impact of digital technology on entrepreneurship and the ecotourism sector.

### 8.1 Introduction on Digital Social Tourism

The penetration of digital technology has become part and parcel of our living and working environments. Digital technologies are swiftly and continuously producing new business models whereas existing models could be modified. Social enterprise on the e-platform has been extended to a great extent. Jelinčić (2021) said that Digital technology along with the tourism sector has expanded steadily over the past few decades. The development of new digital technology in the tourism sector has been aided by changing weather patterns, rising environmental awareness, extensions of the desire for offering better tourism amenities, the need for more justifiable tourism advancement, and the emerging tourism market competition.

According to Daniele and Quezada (2017), social entrepreneurs in the tourism industry imply market-based methods to help local communities by enhancing livelihoods and spreading knowledge of the business models among the stakeholders. Thus, it is demonstrated that tourism based on social entrepreneurship within business opportunities is considered a dual mission aimed at economic sustainability and environmental preservation as an important benefactor to economic and social development for local communities (Dahles et al. 2020; Scheyvens and Biddulph 2017). Sheldon et al. (2017) propose that ecotourism initiative is affiliated to lead the outlook of the tourism industry as a substitute approach to rural development in terms of contribution to environmental conservation; likewise, it plays an important role

in providing economic benefits to the rural population (Das and Chatterjee 2015), and it discourages people on migrating from rural to urban areas. In other words, the achievements can be acquired through ecotourism initiatives are: (I) the creation of job opportunities for rural communities and (II) the conservation of social and environmental sustainability.

Additionally, the Covid-19 pandemic leads to the rapid growth of digital knowledge which is focused on new commercial opportunities in digital community entrepreneurship, generating data and analytics in such a way, mobile devices, the Internet of things, artificial intelligence, public media, blockchain, and cloud computing (Rusch et al. 2022). This has led to the emergence of new business personalities who could think more sophisticatedly. Similarly, according to Boix-Domènech and Rausell-Köster (2018), digital social entrepreneurship undermines the activities related to building, cultural heritage, audio-visual broadcasting, imaginative artistry, records, libraries, publishing festivals, visual arts, music creation, and radio. This sector is currently attracting innovative entrepreneurs and is regarded as a significant driver of economic development. Therefore, the adaptation of digital social technologies has accelerated the growth of cultural and creative industries in sectors where cutting-edge technology is luring investors in digital social entrepreneurship. The evolution of digital societal entrepreneurship in ecotourism manufacturing is a fascinating area for new business ideas, according to Tomczak and Stachowiak (2015), because it requires little initial capital, achieves high digital accessibility, and focuses on approving worthwhile ventures. Considering this, both business and managerial skills indicate entrepreneurial creativity (Tsolakidis et al. 2020). The goal of this investigation is to conduct a literature evaluation on the function of digital social business in the ecotourism industry and how to promote the growth of ecotourism.

## 8.2 Digital Social Entrepreneurship

According to Huarng and Yu (2011), entrepreneurship is a powerful strategy for taking risks in pursuit of personal fulfillment and financial gain. According to Weiermair et al. (2006), the term “entrepreneurship” is widely debated and encompasses characteristics of innovative management, enterprise decision-making, adventure-someness, persistence, and insistence because of new financial opportunities. The entrepreneur’s personality displays a unique trait that they need to succeed, originality, concept, anticipation, self-sufficiency, and positive thinking which is also significant in this situation (García-Tabuenca et al. 2011).

The web economy categories in both newly activated and established companies in the entrepreneurial sector. Start-ups and established businesses are challenged to innovate by the fierce competition of the online economy to be successful. Digital entrepreneurship encompasses all activities involved in enhancing associated businesses through automated networks using digital and technical ways to generate

cash. According to Williamson et al. (2019), the individual who runs a digital business is engaged in some kind of enterprise that uses digital technologies for practical, societal, and managerial purposes.

Digital entrepreneurship is frequently categorized by the flexibility of high-tech invention, which includes innovation, fresh thinking, and the transformation of occupational developments turns to market revenue (Kaňovská and Bumberová 2021). For instance, it tends to a sound notion into one that is novel in terms of adding value to the digital market. According to Endres et al. (2022), advanced digital entrepreneurs are compelled to adapt themselves to an atmosphere of fierce competition for digital businesses where their ideas for the items which are provided in the market for the exposure of digital entrepreneurs. The achievement of a digital entrepreneur relies on the capability of creating efficient use of digital technology.

### **8.3 Importance of Digital Social Entrepreneurship in the Local Context**

The economic development and quality of life in small communities are remarkably influenced by entrepreneurship. To be more precise, business owners work diligently to support their communities, nations, and the state of the economy. The digital business owner creates opportunities rather than looking for work that enhance the purchasing capabilities of the community by creating jobs for local unemployed people. Expanding their business and maintaining standard practices for business assist to build up a robust quality of life for the locals. Entrepreneurs use locally produced resources and other facilities that allow them to join their supply chain to distribute prosperity and investment to regional populations. According to Duspara et al. (2016), it is crucial to implement policies for the growth of social entrepreneurship based on new digital technologies, knowledge, and investment that results in bringing a sustainable competitive advantage and sustainable development, as well as provide small business owners legal and administrative support for the development of business concept and strategies.

Additionally, the greater use of digital technology developed by SMEs can increase employability and economic growth, and highlighting the benefits of digital entrepreneurship “may create opportunities for remote work, flexible hours, and working from home. Particularly when new technologies are paired with the accessibility of open and accessible data, it can play a significant role in promoting gender equality and social and economic inclusion, encourage local development, and contribute to sustainable development.”

Digitization and the growth of information and communication technology, which are changing the corporate environment, business practices, and opportunities for new forms of commercial operations, are major factors in the development of digital social entrepreneurship (Ngoasong 2015). Rather than launching a new business in a largely non-digital industry. Hull et al. (2006) emphasize, “it is easy to become

a digital entrepreneur. For example, the time required to create a website that sells existing products is comparatively short". As a result of the ease of use, "many entries exhibit appallingly low quality and poor customer service making it hard for the quality digital entrepreneurs to succeed" according to the article. Digital technologies provide "tremendous growth opportunities but require entrepreneurs to fully unlock their economic potential as the basis of a new business or unable of the transformation application already established firms" (Van Welsum 2016). Many locally-born digital entrepreneurs can move fast across boundaries. The capacity to recognize new business opportunities facilitated by technology is one of the keys to being a successful digital entrepreneur.

#### **8.4 Policy of Digital Social Entrepreneurship and Ecotourism**

People love to do travel blogging or vlogging nowadays. Wu and Pearce (2014) note that these blogs address aspects of travel that are crucial, such as applying for paperwork, booking tickets, vehicles, and accommodations, revealing local lifestyles, clarifying customs measures, proposing things to do in different places, and offering travel guidance. Due to the enormous popularity of blogging, modern tourists pay close attention to blog comments when picking where to go on holiday. (Tian et al. 2015). Even though an examination of the effects of social media on significant social media sites, including Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, LinkedIn, and Twitter (Moro and Rita 2018), has been undertaken, these platforms have mostly been ignored.

Additionally, the mobile applications that are available on phones are currently prominently popular due to the positive effects of the visitors' experiences in a multi-purpose way (Chatzopoulos et al. 2017). According to Jung et al. (2018), mobile apps are more difficult to use in a ubiquitous usage environment due to time limits, lighting conditions, bandwidth, and other concerns. As a result, user adoption of mobile applications significantly relies on the application's ability to adapt to the particular usage context. Additionally, search engine marketing or search engine optimization (SEO) has grown rapidly in the digital world in regards to helping captivate international clients and the kinds of tourist destinations they should promote. Search engines have evolved into one of the most important ways for travelers to find and filter information, as well as a crucial channel for hotels and tourist attractions to connect with potential customers (Gulbahar and Yildirim 2015).

Tourism marketers must comprehend the dynamic nature of search engine user behavior in order to design a successful search engine optimization campaign (Marine-Roig et al. 2017). A tourism location benefits from SEO improvement because it boosts productivity and aids in the development of communication strategies. However, the Internet and online platforms have become people's one-stop service when looking for information about a place, making them the most significant locations for destination branding (Tolica et al. 2017).

Nonetheless, the establishment of long-term collaborations with travelers and businesses involved in the travel industry is made possible by mobile apps. In accordance with the current business environment, mobile applications can improve the client experience by introducing new and innovative travel-related concepts (Hsiao et al. 2019). Additionally, mobile applications assist users in learning and comprehending more about the travel-related information, goods, and services offered by a destination. Therefore, it has been proven that travel managers utilize their mobile devices to create marketing strategies for service providers (Pabel and Prideaux 2016).

## 8.5 Effect of Social Entrepreneurship on Ecotourism

Digital social entrepreneurship in eco-tourism has a huge impact on economic, social, psychological, environmental, cultural, and technological levels. To sustain a competitive advantage in the tourism business, a tourist destination's socio-economic system must be able to create and adopt new creative and technological advancements (Pencarelli 2020). The effects of digital social entrepreneurship on eco-tourism can be of three dimensions economic, socio-psychological, and other dimensions (which consist of the environmental technological, and cultural dimensions) (Crnogaj et al. 2014; Theuns 2002). These dimensions are explained below.

### 8.5.1 *Economic Dimension*

Already the economic effect on digital social entrepreneurship consists of eco-tourism which is narrated by scholars. More precisely, the comparative advantages shown in eco-tourism by digital social entrepreneurship are examined in terms of the increase in tourist income and the GDP—do the increase in tourist income and the growth of employment and tourist revenue, as well as by fostering economic inequality at both the reason and social levels (Canaleta et al. 2004).

Furthermore, the impact on independent contractors as well as concurrent part-time employment is crucial. Part-time employment may entail a population whose primary occupation is another line of work or a population whose primary occupation is tourism with modern part-time tourist operations focusing on the internet social entrepreneurship company which is known as freelancing. Additionally, in this current study, the economic aspects of digital social entrepreneurship in ecotourism are examined in terms of investments that are attracted, promotion of the tourist destination, reduction of operating costs, augmentation of the destination's economic value, augmentation of profitability, augmentation of innovation, and evaluation of comparative advantage in the tourism market (Boes et al. 2016; Pearce 2001).

The economic effects of being looked upon promoting regional development, increasing tax income, supporting small and medium-sized firms, enhancing tourism

infrastructure, expanding economic reach, and optimizing fixed equipment. By increasing the visibility of an archaeological site to tourists, for instance, the tourist destination's attractions are enhanced, and these increase the chance to become beneficial on the visibility of the local tourist services. The customer satisfaction index has a significant impact on social economic entrepreneurship just as it did above from the demand side (Deng et al. 2013). Similarly, lodging costs could be minimized by utilizing cutting-edge technological tools, such as browser software that serves as a guide to finding the best deals in a tourist destination, which has favorable effects on the supply side (by boosting the attractiveness of the tourist destination due to comparative advantage) as well as the demand side (by increasing the tourist satisfaction index) (Song et al. 2011).

### ***8.5.2 Socio-Psychological Dimensions***

These aspects include characteristics and traits that affect the supply (in terms of the local community of the tourist destination) and the demand (in terms of the impacts on the tourist client), as well as the interactions between people while a tourist is on travel. The social benefits of tourism amenities include the urbanization, community development, and professional mobility of the local population in a destination that is becoming more popular, as well as the interaction between locals and visitors, and the tourist's exposure to local culture and their lifestyles (Hosany and Witham 2010). Along with the tourist experience of taking part in a traditional ritual, participating in a local festival means meeting people from various cultural backgrounds and drinking local wine, viewpoints, and social customs (Axelsen and Swan 2010). Additionally, there are consequences of digital entrepreneurship on social capital, organizational learning, and group dynamics in regard to the supply of ecotourism services. The total satisfaction, expectations, and experience with the human interactions at the tourist destination are measured using the tourist loyalty index, which is included from the viewpoint of the traveler (Cossó-Silva et al. 2019).

For the visitor, the particular emotion and social transformation resulting from co-creating the tourism product are equally unique experiences (Daskalaki et al. 2015). It includes attitudes toward the host destination (Funk and Bruun 2007), engagement with the local culture, attractiveness, proximity to tourism service providers, and the range of emotions toward the destination (Al-Msallam 2020), as well as interpersonal interactions with hosts and general sociability throughout the tour.

It expresses the attitude toward the host destination, cultural interaction, and usual social behavior. Tourist interaction has some effect on the local people of a tourism destination (Lin and Miller 2003). For example, the tourist-client rewards the intimacy and trust that develop between a host and a guest with a positive evolution after the tour. These intimacy and trust are both outcomes of the social interaction when developing a tourist product and/or virtual tour of the hosting and visit areas, then during the tourist's travel duration and tour in the host environment as well as

in the larger environment of the tourist destination, the vibes after the tour among the tourists.

The social-psychological impact of digital entrepreneurship and creative industries can affect the development of the tourism sector and at the individual level, and through a cultural-creative historical tourism ecosystem, it helps local culture (Haessly 2010), or an organizational change, where the companies and organization of finance have a common vision which allows the improvement by providing knowledge management.

### ***8.5.3 Technological and Environmental Dimensions***

This group includes the tourist industry's technological, geographical, and environmental components. The environmental impact of tourism includes the positive externalities from alternative tourism and sustainable development and the negative externalities from tourism development, such as the environmental harm mostly caused by mass and unregulated tourism (Biondo 2012). As a result, conflict arises towards the natural resource depletion in tourism development approaches that causes harm to other economic sectors, as well as structural issues with urban planning and the physical layout of tourist infrastructure. In tourism development, innovation and creativity are important components of sustainability, particularly where conversations are conducted (Brem and Puente-Díaz 2020). Since creativity derives from sustainable economic, social, cultural, and environmental choices, it is closely tied to sustainability in the tourism industry.

The procurement of the tourism industry which is mostly based on modern technology and imaginative roles has played an important character in boosting competitiveness in the tourism industry. The innovation of mobile applications has reduced the gap between tourists and service suppliers, generated new ideas, and successfully reached new spectators (Psomadaki et al. 2022). Additionally, the usage of customer relationship management (CRM) software in the tourism industry has improved online interconnections with the assistance of co-create travel-related commodities and advertising the travel destinations (Buhalis and Sinarta 2019).

The use of biometrics has increased security and mobility, while the development of software based on the global positioning system (GPS) has substantially increased the diversity of travel services at destinations by creating a new digital travel market where every travel provider and traveler could meet and facilitate their requirements. Data-driven tourism experiences, big-social data in tourism, and narrative engines are just a few examples of the new experiences and technology tools that have contributed to the tourism industry as a result of the ingenuity and integrity of tourism entrepreneurs.

This study evaluated digital social enterprises and their function in fostering potential development and ecotourism destination development in an effort in conjunction with literature on ecotourism development. It has been tried to portray how digital social entrepreneurship has focused the eco-tourism. This study showed that



the economic, sociopsychological, technological, and environmental components are crucial for both the long-term sustainability of the environment and the benefits of tourism development. Hence, it can be represented that the role of digital social entrepreneurs in tourism development can be encouraged whereas the gap can be closed to establish a sustainable tourism economy in the context of social communities.

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