

# FROM LOCAL TO GLOBAL

# ADVANCES IN THE STUDY OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP, INNOVATION AND ECONOMIC GROWTH

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ADVANCES IN THE STUDY OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP,  
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**FROM LOCAL TO GLOBAL:  
ECO-ENTREPRENEURSHIP  
AND GLOBAL  
ENGAGEMENT WITH THE  
ENVIRONMENT**

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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

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**Noah Hoback**, Ph.D., is currently the Assistant Director and Programs Manager of Outdoor Recreation for Schriever Space Force Base. His research focuses on the retired population and adults over 55 travel experiences. His research specifically investigates to what degree certain barriers (pandemics, health, social, psychological, or financial) impact an individual's likelihood to travel. He is also interested in how or to what degree travel can help improve the quality of life for individuals over 55. His research can benefit tourism businesses to help understand a growing population that is traveling later in life. It can help these businesses understand what this population needs and wants to visit their attraction/destination and how to fill slower times of the year.

**Jacob Hochard**, Ph.D., is the Knobloch Associate Professor of Conservation Economics in the University of Wyoming's Haub School of Environment and Natural Resources. He combines geospatial and causal inference analysis with mathematical modeling to improve the management and valuation of land, water and wildlife. Before joining the University of Wyoming, he worked as a Faculty Fellow with the US Environmental Protection Agency, an Assistant Professor at East Carolina University and a Research Affiliate with the North Carolina Agromedicine Institute. He has led over \$2.2 million in interdisciplinary projects, supported by federal agencies, non-profit organizations and private foundations, with research articles and commentaries being featured in outlets such as *Science*, *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* and *Nature Sustainability*.

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**Mary Katherine Scott**, Ph.D., has built a research portfolio based on interdisciplinary methodology and ethnography. Her fieldwork in the Yucatán, Mexico investigates the effects of tourism on cultural identity (re)negotiations and revitalizations in zones of cross-cultural encounter. That is, she explores how tourists' consumption of Maya culture and history catalyzed local ethnic Maya artisans, archaeologists, restaurant and hotel workers, tour guides and other tourism workers to reconsider and revitalize their connection to a heritage that was all but eradicated by the Spanish in the 16th century. Ultimately, she is curious about the ways tourism can contribute to artistic, cultural, environmental, economic and other kinds of sustainability. Her academic writings have appeared in scholarly journals, edited volumes and other peer-reviewed publications within the humanities and social sciences. Her work is of value to scholars working in tourism studies, cultural anthropology, museum studies, art history, Mayanist and Latin American studies and other interdisciplinary fields.

**Tyler Shreve** was born and raised in Buffalo, Wyoming, where he grew up being immersed in the outdoors. Spending most of his childhood and young adult life fly fishing, hiking, hunting and backpacking, he developed a strong connection with Wyoming's nature and wildlife. After spending three years in Oregon competing in college golf and working on a degree in psychology, he realized that he was pursuing the wrong career path and transferred home to the University of Wyoming (UW) where he completed his Bachelor's degree in Environmental Systems Science and Environmental Natural Resources. He is now pursuing a Master's degree in Environment, Natural Resources, and Society in the UW Haub School for Environment and Natural Resources. He is currently a Research Assistant on the collaborative project between the Haub School and WYWildlife for Tomorrow.

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has published and co-published 63 articles in peer-reviewed academic journals, in addition to 18 conference proceedings. He conducts research on a range of developmental issues linked to tourism, hospitality and events management with specific focus on the developing context. His vision is to contribute in advancing STH's vision to create sought after leaders in the tourism and hospitality sector in Africa.

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# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION TO VOLUME: THE CURRENT AND FUTURE STATE OF ECO-ENTREPRENEURSHIP

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The environmental detriments associated with mass consumption (Kurland & McCaffrey, 2016), issues of greenwashing (Szabo & Webster, 2021), and the duality of activist and market logics (Mars & Lounsbury, 2009) add complexity to balancing ecological and economic values in consumer settings. The value of iconography and branding in conservation has long been recognized (Caldwell & Henry, 2020; Douglas & Winkel, 2014; Hayden & Dills, 2015). Eco-entrepreneurship aims to cultivate the environmental and economic aspects of business practice and motivate eco-friendly ventures that simultaneously sustain economic benefits (Mars & Lounsbury, 2009). Extant literature supports the value of eco-entrepreneurship, yet more research is needed to comprehensively understand the extent of the field to include the rise of eco-tourism and the field of environmental innovation (Hoalst-Pullen et al., 2014; Jayasinghe et al., 2021; Mars & Lounsbury, 2009). The chapters included in this volume seek to address this gap through the lens of diverse contexts, including eco-entrepreneurship in higher education, branding, conservation funding, cultural and industrial eco-tourism, political ecology, and the exploration of digital platform development. Together, the chapters provide discourse on the intersection and current state of eco-entrepreneurship and eco-tourism, while making recommendations for developing practices to set the stage for innovations of the future.

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**From Local to Global: Eco-Entrepreneurship and Global Engagement with the Environment  
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To begin, Davidson et al. discuss the potential behind integrating eco-tourism and eco-entrepreneurship with higher education to facilitate the development of transferable skills while meeting place-based strategic priorities. Davidson and colleagues use the University of Wyoming Outdoor Tourism and Management program as a model to identify key benefits and challenges of interdisciplinary eco-entrepreneurship and eco-tourism programs. In doing so, they offer insights into future directions. In the third chapter, Foerster et al. illustrate how consumer and entrepreneurial values are conveyed and reinforced through local eco-branding. They draw from an interdisciplinary set of literatures to conceptualize the notion of eco-consumption spaces and iconological communication of values through local eco-branding. Recommendations for research and practice exploring the integration of iconological progression and cultivation of eco-consumption spaces are provided. In the next chapter, Carr et al. examine innovative strategies in conservation funding through an exploration of “WYldlife for Tomorrow,” a flagship program between Wyoming Game and Fish and the WYldlife Fund. The chapter discourse delves into the challenges of modern conservation funding and collaborations across the environmental, business, and educational sectors, highlighting the promise of collaborative funding to conservation project success.

Moving to the entrepreneurial elements of eco-tourism, the next chapter explores cultural tourism as a mechanism of eco-minded practice. Specifically, Scott provides a detailed illustration of the connections between (and complexities of) art, cultural heritage and tourism, and community sustainability, health, and overall well-being. Scott uses her own experiences in the Yucatán and other similar research endeavors to explore the social and eco-entrepreneurial factors of cultural and community sustainability. Respective challenges, the influence of tourism, and perspectives on the roles of communication and relationship building in promoting multi-faceted sustainability efforts are discussed.

The next two chapters empirically analyze travel patterns to identify eco-tourism innovation. Li examines psychological well-being among campers at Wuling National Forest Recreation Area and Xitou Nature Education Area, both of which are located in Taiwan. Li relates travel distance, living circles, and regional variations to camper experiences. Key results include that campers in closer living circles, those who travel shorter distances, and those who live in the central region of Taiwan perceived higher levels of psychological well-being when compared to others. Conclusions from the study include management and empirical implications of the findings and how results can be used to inform future promotional and guest services. Additionally, Li provides recommendations for practice and scholarship, including a proposal for refining Ryff's (1995) Scales of Psychological Well-being theory relevant to eco-tourism. Thereafter, Hoback and colleagues examine pre- and post-retirement shifts in the travel patterns of adults aged 55–80 (i.e., the Baby Boomer generation). The variables examined include frequency of travel, modes of transportation, domestic and international travel, and perceived barriers to travel that often confront older adults. Results highlight differences in time, and obligations that play a role in travel patterns in pre- and post-retirement periods, along with the negative impacts of poor health, financial constraints, and accessibility limits on travel.

The next chapter explores the development of eco-tourism models and opportunities for eco-entrepreneurship. First, Ajayi et al. utilize case studies in two countries, Nigeria and South Africa, to identify key intersections of political ecology and eco-entrepreneurship. Through the cases, the authors explore constructs such as extant policy on (eco)entrepreneurship, financing, administration, business registration, and international participation. Results reveal entrepreneurial policymaking that favors economic growth over environmental sustainability. The intricacies and implications of the international promotion of green initiatives are also discussed. Next, Sargsyan explores the features of and challenges facing sustainable tourism development through the lens of industrial areas. Using three case studies in the USA and Germany, he identifies best practices for the integration of industrial tourism with sustainable practices. Sargsyan then turns attention to the development of sustainable industrial tourism in Armenia, noting potential industrial areas and providing suggestions for future practice. In the closing chapter, Pacheco et al. detail the development and management of the Smart Tourist Destination Model in Cuenca, Ecuador. Considerations for strategic tourism development are offered.

We trust that the value of this volume is found in the diversity of perspectives from around the globe that are included. The stories of success, failure, and potential detailed within these pages address the challenges and opportunities that are created by eco-entrepreneurship and eco-tourism. Such innovative solutions and sanguine advice promise to inform creative, connected, and sustainable pathways forward.

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# CHAPTER 2

## ECOTOURISM IN HIGHER EDUCATION: A MODEL IN INTERDISCIPLINARY PROGRAM DESIGN

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### ABSTRACT

*This chapter highlights a case study at the University of Wyoming (UW) to explore the role of integrating ecotourism and eco-entrepreneurship into higher education at the bachelor's level. The university has developed a modern, comprehensive curriculum, and practical learning opportunities with local communities, conservation organizations, and industry stakeholders through a state-funded initiative. The program equips students with essential knowledge and eco-entrepreneurial skills for the sustainable development of ecotourism, outdoor recreation, and tourism industries. The chapter presents a pedagogical model as a replicable framework for other institutions aiming to incorporate sustainable, eco-centric curricula into their programs. The findings can guide policymakers, educators, and stakeholders in designing programs that synergize environmental sustainability and eco-entrepreneurial innovation to promote global sustainable development and successful higher education experiences.*

**Keywords:** Ecotourism education; eco-entrepreneurship education; sustainability education; community-based learning; sustainable development; outdoor recreation

## INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the concepts of nature-based travel and environmentally conscious business endeavors have emerged as pivotal elements within the realm of sustainable outdoor recreation and tourism advancement (Day et al., 2022). As worldwide apprehensions surrounding ecological deterioration and the necessity for conscientious economic methodologies heighten, these domains have garnered noteworthy consideration due to their capacity to facilitate safeguarding, communal empowerment, and fiscal expansion (Fennell, 2003). This document offers an outline of the contemporary landscape encompassing nature-based travel and ecologically mindful entrepreneurial pursuits, underscoring their significance in bolstering ecological steadiness and enduring livelihoods.

Nature-based travel, often referred to as ecotourism, revolves around practices that prioritize the safeguarding of natural assets, cultural legacy, and the prosperity of local societies. Explorers partake in this form of tourism to encounter and admire the magnificence of natural environs while mitigating the detrimental consequences of their journeys on the surroundings, nearby communities, and cultural traditions. By engaging deeply with unspoiled settings and participating in educational and conservation-oriented undertakings, enthusiasts of ecotourism aim to enrich their comprehension of ecological systems and play a role in their safeguarding. Consequently, ecotourism has emerged as a driving force behind the enhancement of ecological consciousness, the preservation of some natural areas, and the advancement of sustainability.

Ecotourism revolves around responsible travel practices prioritizing the conservation of natural resources, cultural heritage, and the well-being of local communities (Baloch et al., 2023). Participants engage in ecotourism to minimize their impact on the environment, local community, and cultural heritage while still experiencing and appreciating nature. Through immersion in natural environments and participating in educational and conservation-focused activities, ecotourists seek to deepen their understanding of ecological systems and contribute to their preservation (Rahman et al., 2022). As a result, ecotourism has become a stimulus for raising environmental awareness, supporting conservation efforts, and promoting sustainable development (Rahman et al., 2022; Xu et al., 2023).

In parallel, eco-entrepreneurship has emerged as a dynamic approach to fostering sustainable economic growth (Nuringsih & Nuryasman, 2021). Eco-entrepreneurs harness their innovative spirit and business acumen to create ventures prioritizing environmental and social responsibility (Doe, 2022). They strive for business models that balance profitability, ecological preservation, and community well-being by integrating sustainable practices. Eco-entrepreneurs work toward tackling ecological dilemmas while conceiving inventive resolutions and amenities that cater to the requisites and aspirations of environmentally aware clients.

Despite their immense potential, both ecotourism and eco-entrepreneurship encounter challenges and complexities. Rapid tourism growth can strain fragile ecosystems and disrupt local communities if not carefully managed (Gill & Williams, 1994). Similarly, limited access to financial resources, regulatory barriers, and the need to balance social and environmental goals with profitability

are all key considerations for eco-entrepreneurs (Dioko, 2017). Addressing these complexities requires a comprehensive grasp of the present climate, including emerging trends, optimal practices, and continuous efforts in sustainability, among other facets.

The purpose of this chapter is to contribute to the academic discourse surrounding ecotourism and eco-entrepreneurship by providing insights from a successful case study of a state-funded ecotourism and eco-entrepreneurship-related program implemented by a state-run, land grant institution within the USA. We aim to highlight this initiative's valuable lessons and applications, demonstrating its potential for replication in other contexts using similar means and tactics. This chapter informs policymakers, stakeholders, and aspiring eco-entrepreneurs about the possibilities and benefits of developing state-funded programs that foster sustainable practices and economic growth by analyzing this case study.

Tourism in Wyoming witnessed impressive growth in 2022, bolstering the state's economy and employment opportunities. The industry experienced a remarkable surge, contributing \$247 million to the state's tax revenue (Dean Runyan Associates, 2023). Direct travel expenditures reached a noteworthy \$4.5 billion, underscoring the substantial economic impact of tourism activities, Wyoming's second largest economic industry, second only to energy. Moreover, tourism played a pivotal role in job creation, employing approximately 33,000 individuals, the largest private employment sector in the state. These figures highlight the robustness and significance of Wyoming's tourism industry, which drives economic growth and is a vital source of employment for a significant portion of the state's workforce.

The Outdoor Recreation and Tourism Management (ORTM) program at the UW is an advanced and integrative academic curriculum that adopts a multidisciplinary perspective on the study of outdoor recreation, tourism, and sustainability. This program incorporates the focal principles of ecotourism and eco-entrepreneurship. Aimed at preparing students for the multifaceted and dynamic fields of ORTM, this academic program is also designed to produce proficient practitioners within ecotourism and eco-entrepreneurship. The pedagogical philosophy of the ORTM program reflects an understanding of these fields as perpetually evolving sectors requiring a specialized set of knowledge and skills (e.g., career competencies). Through a rigorous curriculum, the ORTM program facilitates the acquisition and development of these competencies, thereby enabling students to navigate and respond to the intricacies and challenges inherent within the outdoor recreation and tourism industry. In doing so, the program cultivates a cadre of professionals who are not only conversant with current industry trends and practices but are also capable of contributing to the sustainable evolution of these sectors or engaging in ecotourism or eco-entrepreneurship post-graduation.

The ORTM major experienced a significant swell in student enrollment over the past few years. From a modest number of 23 students in the program's first year (2018–2019 academic year), the major witnessed an impressive growth trajectory, attracting a cohort of 82 students in 2020 and 2021 (Geneva, 2022). This profound growth in student interest and enrollment reflects the growing recognition and appeal of the ORTM program, driven by its interdisciplinary curriculum, experiential learning opportunities, and strong industry partnerships.

The surge in student numbers indicates the rising demand for education and career opportunities in outdoor recreation and tourism with an interdisciplinary focus that includes environmental sustainability and local community development, further solidifying the program's relevance within the academic landscape.

The program's curriculum covers various subjects relevant to the field. Courses may include environmental education, ecotourism principles, sustainable resource management, outdoor leadership, tourism marketing, customer service, community development, and adventure planning. By exploring these areas, students comprehensively understand the various dimensions of ORTM with an interdisciplinary focus on environmental sustainability. One of the program's key strengths is an emphasis on collaboration and partnerships. The UW has established strong connections with local communities, conservation organizations, governmental agencies, and industry stakeholders. These partnerships provide students with valuable networking opportunities, internships, and hands-on projects that enable them to apply their knowledge in real-world settings. This collaboration also ensures that the program stays attuned to industry trends and best practices, keeping the curriculum relevant and responsive to the needs of the field.

The program incorporates ecotourism principles throughout its curriculum. Courses dedicated to ecotourism give students a deep understanding of sustainable tourism practices' ecological, cultural, and economic aspects. Students explore environmental interpretation, conservation strategies, sustainable resource management, and the ethical considerations involved in ecotourism operations. Through theoretical instruction, case studies, and field experiences, students develop a holistic understanding of the principles and practices of responsible tourism.

Moreover, the program strongly emphasizes eco-entrepreneurship, fostering innovation and sustainability among its students. Courses and workshops devoted to the domain of entrepreneurial pursuits furnish students with indispensable resources for formulating and executing environmentally conscious commercial undertakings. Within these educational modules, they acquire insights into sustainable commercial frameworks, evaluation of social and ecological impacts, fiscal administration, stratagems for market promotion, and the assimilation of ecologically responsible practices into corporate activities. By fostering entrepreneurial acumen alongside a disposition for inventive ideation, the curriculum bestows upon students the capacity to serve as agents of transformative evolution and originality within the sphere of open-air leisure and tourism.

A pivotal facet of the educational curriculum entails experiential edification, replete with opportunities that engage students directly in enterprises associated with nature-based travel and eco-commercial ventures, acknowledged as quintessential components of education within domains linked to ecotourism (Mak et al., 2017). Through participation in internships, field excursions, and practical undertakings, students gain the opportunity to collaborate alongside community leaders and professionals entrenched in the sector, amass practical proficiencies, and apply their erudition to real-world scenarios. These engagements might span collaborations with local eco-excursion facilitators, formulation of blueprints for sustainable communal tourism, or active involvement in incubation initiatives geared toward eco-commercial endeavors. By immersing themselves in these