

Sustainable Tourism

ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND TECHNOLOGY IN TOURISM AND HOSPITALITY

Series Edited by

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Sustainable Tourism: Entrepreneurship Innovations and Strategies (Volume 1)

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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

Dedicated to our parents and family.

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Foreword

In an era where sustainability has transitioned from a mere buzzword to a pressing global imperative, the tourism industry stands at a pivotal juncture. The integration of sustainable practices in tourism is not just about conserving resources but about rethinking the entire ecosystem of tourism – its stakeholders, practices, and impacts. *Sustainable Tourism: Entrepreneurship Innovations and Strategies*, edited by Manpreet Arora, Che-Jen Su, and Anukrati Sharma, is a timely and comprehensive exploration of how entrepreneurship and innovation are reshaping the landscape of sustainable tourism.

This book is a vital contribution to the discourse on sustainable tourism, bringing together a diverse range of perspectives and expertise. The chapters within provide a multidimensional analysis of sustainable tourism, covering essential topics such as entrepreneurship, innovation, community resilience, cultural sustainability, and the role of emerging technologies. Each chapter not only delves into theoretical frameworks but also provides practical insights, making it a valuable resource for scholars, practitioners, policymakers, and entrepreneurs.

The book begins by offering foundational insights into tourism entrepreneurship, setting the stage for understanding the entrepreneurial dynamics in the tourism sector. It then moves into a detailed examination of the Triple Bottom Line (TBL) model, critically assessing its economic, social, and environmental impacts within the context of sustainable tourism practices in specific regions.

Exploring the challenges and motivations of women entrepreneurs in tourism, the book sheds light on gender dynamics and their implications for sustainable development. It further delves into experiential tourism business models, offering fresh perspectives on enhancing tourist experiences while adhering to sustainable principles.

A compelling case study on community resilience highlights how local communities can leverage cultural assets to build social value through tourism. This is complemented by discussions on managing heritage monuments for responsible tourism, addressing the balance between preservation and promotion.

The role of marketing in steering consumer behaviour towards sustainable choices is also a focal point. The book explores innovative marketing strategies that entrepreneurs can adopt to advocate for and implement sustainable practices.

Innovation and the startup ecosystem are central themes, with chapters discussing the significance of business incubation, skill development, and emerging opportunities in niche sectors like adventure tourism. The intersection of sustainability and creativity is also examined, emphasizing responsible entrepreneurship in fostering sustainable practices in the creative tourism sector.

The human aspect of tourism startups is explored through an analysis of entrepreneurial challenges and employee well-being, underscoring the importance of mental health in sustaining tourism ventures. Additionally, the transformative potential of digital technologies in promoting sustainable tourism practices is thoroughly reviewed.

This book is a must-read for anyone interested in the intersection of tourism, sustainability, and entrepreneurship. The editors have meticulously curated chapters that offer both breadth and depth, ensuring that readers come away with a holistic understanding of the challenges and opportunities in sustainable tourism.

As the global tourism industry continues to evolve, *Sustainable Tourism: Entrepreneurship Innovations and Strategies* serves as a beacon, guiding stakeholders towards a more sustainable and innovative future. It is my hope that the insights and strategies presented in this book will inspire action and foster collaborations that advance the cause of sustainable tourism worldwide.

Professor Furqan Qamar,
Former Professor Jamia Millia Islamia and Founder Vice Chancellor of
Central University of Himachal Pradesh, Dharamshala, India

Preface

Tourism has long been recognized as one of the world's largest and fastest-growing industries, significantly contributing to global economic growth, cultural exchange, and societal development. However, with this growth comes a pressing need for the industry to evolve and adapt in ways that minimize its negative environmental and social impacts. In an era marked by rapid technological advancements, changing consumer behaviours, and increasing concerns about sustainability, tourism entrepreneurs are at the forefront of driving innovative solutions that can reshape the industry. *Sustainable Tourism: Entrepreneurship Innovations and Strategies* provides a comprehensive exploration of how tourism entrepreneurs are integrating sustainability into their business models, addressing emerging challenges, and creating new opportunities for long-term growth.

This book is a timely contribution to the discourse on sustainable tourism, offering a multi-dimensional view of the entrepreneurial landscape. It is designed to bridge the gap between theory and practice, bringing together scholarly research, case studies, and practical insights on how sustainability can be achieved through innovative entrepreneurial strategies. Throughout the chapters, the reader will encounter a range of perspectives on the entrepreneurial journey, from the challenges faced by women entrepreneurs in remote regions to the role of emerging technologies in transforming tourism practices. The authors, who come from diverse academic and professional backgrounds, share their expertise in areas such as tourism marketing, community-based development, financing sustainable ventures, and leveraging cutting-edge technologies for environmental stewardship.

The book opens with foundational insights into tourism entrepreneurship and its vital role in fostering sustainable development. Early chapters provide a framework for understanding key sustainability concepts such as the Triple Bottom Line (TBL) model and the circular economy, demonstrating how entrepreneurs can leverage these principles to create impactful and responsible tourism businesses. It explores the integration of sustainability across various dimensions, including economic, social, and environmental factors, and presents real-world examples of how these principles are being applied in different regions.

The chapters also delve into the intricacies of managing a sustainable tourism business, highlighting strategies that promote innovation, resilience, and growth. From adopting green marketing techniques and digital innovations to understanding the emotional landscape of tourism startups and the well-being of employees, the book covers a broad spectrum of topics that are essential for

entrepreneurs looking to navigate the complexities of modern tourism. Furthermore, the inclusion of financial strategies and models, such as impact investing and community-based funding, underscores the importance of securing the necessary capital to support sustainable ventures.

Ultimately, *Sustainable Tourism: Entrepreneurship Innovations and Strategies* is a comprehensive guide that equips researchers, policymakers, and tourism entrepreneurs with the knowledge and tools needed to drive positive change within the tourism sector. The integration of sustainable practices into the tourism business model is not just a trend but a necessity for ensuring that the industry remains viable for future generations. Through this book, readers will gain insights into how entrepreneurial innovation, responsible business practices, and the use of emerging technologies can help build a tourism sector that is sustainable, inclusive, and socially responsible.

Each chapter in this volume reflects a vital aspect of the evolving tourism landscape, from addressing the challenges faced by startups to exploring the role of advanced technologies in reshaping the sector. As we venture deeper into an era where sustainability is not optional but a core driver of success, this book stands as a timely and essential resource for those committed to creating a more sustainable and equitable tourism industry.

The journey begins with Chapter 1, 'Understanding Tourism Entrepreneurship: Key Concepts and Insights', by Prof. (Dr) Poonam Khurana, Renuka Kapoor, and Prof. (Dr) Madhu Arora. This introductory chapter sets the stage by outlining the significance of entrepreneurship in tourism, and how it can be used as a tool to address both challenges and opportunities in a rapidly changing industry.

Chapter 2, 'Adopting the Triple Bottom Line (TBL) Model for Sustainable Tourism: An Analysis of Economic, Social, and Environmental Impacts in Northeast India', by Dr Indrajit Dutta and Dr Meenu, takes a deep dive into how the TBL model can guide sustainable tourism practices in Northeast India, emphasizing the balance between economic growth, social equity, and environmental preservation.

In Chapter 3, 'Sustainability and Tourism Entrepreneurship: Challenges and Motivations of Women Entrepreneurs', Dr Priyanka Chadha, Dr Gitanjali Upadhaya, and Dr Manpreet Arora explore the role of women entrepreneurs in Himachal Pradesh, shedding light on their contributions to eco-friendly business practices and community development within the tourism sector.

Chapter 4, 'Experiential Tourism Business Models: Theoretical Exploration and Model Testing', by Mourad Aarabe, Nouhaila Ben Khizzou, Naoual Bouhtati, Lhoussaine Alla, and Ahmed Benjelloun, examines the integration of experiential tourism models with sustainable practices, illustrating the future potential of these business approaches in tourism.

Chapter 5, 'Community Resilience, Social Value, and the Jackie Clarke Collection', by Mary O'Keeffe, focusses on heritage tourism and its potential for community development, offering a case study from Ireland that highlights how tourism can promote social value while preserving cultural heritage.

Chapter 6, 'Marketing for Change: Innovative Strategies for Entrepreneurs to Foster Sustainable Tourism', by Zhang Zhanyue, delves into the marketing

and promotional strategies that tourism entrepreneurs can employ to promote sustainability, with a case study on Basecamp Explorer in Kenya demonstrating the practical application of these strategies.

Chapter 7, 'Cultural Sustainability: Managing Heritage Monuments for Responsible Tourism Entrepreneurship', by Rahul Kaundal, explores the management of heritage monuments through responsible tourism practices, emphasizing the collaboration of governments, communities, and entrepreneurs in preserving cultural heritage.

Chapter 8, 'Innovation, Business Incubation, and Skill Development in Startup Ecosystem: A Scientometric Review of Global Research', by Vaishali Dhiman and Dr Manpreet Arora, presents a bibliometric analysis of the inter-relationships between innovation, incubation, and skill development, identifying key trends and areas for future research in the startup ecosystem.

Chapter 9, 'Entrepreneurship Opportunities in Adventure Tourism: Insights from a Bibliometric Study', by Animesh Kumar Sharma, Rahul Sharma, and Rajesh Verma, discusses the growth of the adventure tourism industry, highlighting the importance of leadership and community engagement in shaping its future.

Chapter 10, 'Integrating Sustainability and Responsible Entrepreneurship in Creative Tourism: Trends, Challenges, and Best Practices', by Ishani Sharma and Arun Aggarwal, focusses on creative tourism and the integration of sustainability within this sector, offering strategies for responsible entrepreneurship and the adoption of circular economy principles.

Chapter 11, 'Financing Sustainable Tourism Ventures: Innovative Financial Models and Strategies', by Dr Syeda Tayyaba Ijaz, discusses the financial aspects of sustainable tourism, including the importance of green bonds, venture capital, and community-based funding as tools for driving sustainability in tourism businesses.

In Chapter 12, 'Harnessing Innovation: Effective Marketing Strategies and Implementation Challenges for Tourism Entrepreneurs', Barkha and Manisha Soni examine the innovative marketing strategies employed by tourism entrepreneurs and their impact on performance. The study highlights the significance of green marketing, digital marketing, and organizational innovation in enhancing enterprise performance. However, the chapter also explores the challenges faced by entrepreneurs in implementing these strategies, particularly in overcoming market barriers. The findings provide valuable academic and practical insights into how these marketing approaches can enhance the competitiveness of SMEs in the tourism sector, emphasizing their crucial role in fostering growth and addressing emerging challenges.

Chapter 13, 'The Emotional Landscape of Tourism Startups: A Literature Review on Entrepreneurial Challenges and Employee Well-Being', by Anu Sohail and Dr Manpreet Arora, examines the entrepreneurial challenges faced by tourism startups and their impact on employee well-being. This systematic literature review highlights issues such as financial instability, competition, and the need for sustainable business practices. It also discusses the factors influencing employee well-being, including role strains, stress, work-life conflict, and lack of motivation.

The study stands out as one of the few to systematically address both entrepreneurial challenges and employee well-being in the tourism sector, offering critical insights for future research and practice.

Finally, Chapter 14, 'Digital Horizons: A Review on Unleashing the Role of Emerging Technologies in Transforming Sustainable Tourism', by Kanika, Prof. Sanjeev Kumar Sharma and Prof. Upasna Joshi Sethi, explores how emerging technologies – such as AI, Blockchain, Big Data, Cloud Computing, AR/VR, and IoT – are transforming sustainable tourism. The study highlights four key themes: AI-driven decision support, immersive technologies for cultural preservation, smart tourism for enhanced visitor experiences, and leveraging data analytics for sustainability. It examines the significant benefits and challenges of integrating these technologies in ecotourism and provides guidance on how innovation can foster a more sustainable and resilient tourism sector.

Each chapter in this book offers critical insights into the complex and evolving world of sustainable tourism entrepreneurship. It serves as a valuable resource for researchers, policymakers, and entrepreneurs who seek to understand the innovations, strategies, and financial frameworks that will shape the future of tourism.

Sustainable Tourism: Entrepreneurship Innovations and Strategies is an essential guide for anyone interested in navigating the challenges of sustainability in tourism while promoting responsible and inclusive practices that benefit both the industry and the communities it serves.

Chapter 1

Understanding Tourism Entrepreneurship: Key Concepts and Insights

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Abstract

Tourism entrepreneurship is a burgeoning field that combines the allure of travel with business acumen. The tourism industry is one of the largest and fastest-growing industries. This development calls for entrepreneurs to serve growing markets for innovation and value creation. Tourism entrepreneurship has the potential to positively impact social and economic aspects. It can stimulate local economies by offering jobs, supporting local suppliers, and promoting cultural exchange. Moreover, it can promote sustainable practices such as preserving cultural heritage, reducing environmental impacts, and enhancing community involvement. The significance of tourism entrepreneurship lies in identifying opportunities, leveraging resources, and implementing creative ideas to serve tourists while generating economic gain. However, the tourism industry is highly competitive, seasonal, sensitive to external shocks, and based on intangible experience making it challenging for tourism entrepreneurs. Traditional tourism industries are being reshaped by technological advancement, offering new business models to entrepreneurs. Despite developments, there is a lack of comprehensive frameworks that integrate unique characteristics of tourism with entrepreneurial theories. The paper contributes by providing a conceptual framework for introduction to tourism entrepreneurship, highlighting its significance, opportunities, and challenges and exploring factors contributing to entrepreneurial success in tourism. The study also addresses the essence of technology and digital tools for growth and competitiveness in modern business models. By bridging theoretical perspectives with practical case studies, the paper

enhances the understanding of dynamics within tourism entrepreneurship. The discussion concludes with recommendations for future research directions, emphasizing sustainable business practices and leveraging technology and digital innovation for tourism ventures.

Keywords: Tourism entrepreneurship; entrepreneur; tourist; sustainable; technology; innovation; Airbnb

Introduction

Entrepreneurship has gained more attention in tourism research. Tourism is one of the fastest-growing industries globally and this opens avenues for entrepreneurs and new business start-ups to serve growing markets (Solvoll et al., 2015). There is a strong need for innovation in tourism and entrepreneurs can take this as an opportunity to meet the demand innovatively. New technologies are emerging in tourism to replace conventional products and services and tourism is experiencing changing customer preferences for travel experiences (Prabhugaonkar et al., 2020). Entrepreneurs can play an important role in leveraging digital capabilities to transform prior business models. The present need for sustainability in the tourism sector also approaches entrepreneurs to prevent the overuse and unsustainable exploitation of tourism attractions and resources (Ivasciuc & Ispas, 2023). The tourism sector is largely unorganized, consisting of numerous small and medium tourism enterprises (SMEs). In this context, entrepreneurship is becoming an increasingly important for the development of tourism.

Tourism entrepreneurship is a necessity for the survival of tourism due to growing tourism markets, changes in travel motivation and priorities, evolving trends in tourism, rising competition, and an increasing number of new tourists. According to Sheldon and Daniele (2017), 'Tourism entrepreneurship is the process of identifying, evaluating, and exploiting opportunities to create new tourism businesses or to introduce new products, services, or practices into existing tourism businesses'. It involves identifying opportunities and developing ideas to meet the needs and desires of travellers. The tourism entrepreneur can reap tremendous profits in tourism products such as accommodation and hospitality, food and beverages, adventure and recreation, ecotourism, and niche tourism.

The chapter aims to provide a comprehensive introduction to tourism entrepreneurship. The chapter begins by offering a conceptual framework for tourism entrepreneurship, examining the unique nature of tourism and the characteristics of entrepreneurship. The chapter highlights the diverse opportunities it offers to tourism entrepreneurs for their ventures. Following the fundamental framework, the study delves into the significance of tourism entrepreneurship and promoting sustainable development by leveraging natural and cultural resources. The chapter also examines the inherent challenges including seasonality, lack of knowledge and skills, language barrier, market competition, and

sustainability concerns. A case study of Airbnb's successful tourism entrepreneurship venture will provide insights to aspiring tourism entrepreneurs. By the end of the chapter, readers will understand tourism entrepreneurship, with knowledge of its significance, opportunities, and challenges. The chapter will benefit a wide range of readers, including aspiring entrepreneurs, academics and researchers, tourism professionals, investors, policymakers, and development planners.

Tourism

In recent years, the tourism sector has emerged as one of the most significant economic sectors, contributing significantly to the growth of businesses (Morteza Bagherifard et al., 2013). Every nation attempts to increase its income through tourism (Adnan Hye & Ali Khan, 2013; Lee & Chang, 2008). Over the next decade, it is anticipated that tourism will increase at a greater rate than the overall economy and many other sectors. Additionally, over 370 million jobs are expected to be supported by the tourism business by 2026 (Sotiriadis, 2018). Naturally, the tourism industry keeps growing, providing opportunities for entrepreneurs to launch a business venture. Entrepreneurship and innovation are vital components of the tourist sector and are essential to its sustained growth on a regional and worldwide scale (Parra López et al., 2009; Stojanović, 2018). Entrepreneurship in tourism is increasingly recognized as a strategy for promoting economic development in underdeveloped regions. Many countries actively encourage the creation of new tourism businesses, especially in economically disadvantaged areas (Solvoll et al., 2015). Entrepreneurship plays a vital role in transforming the supply of leisure and recreational opportunities. Additionally, entrepreneurship is viewed as a key driver of tourism growth, both regionally and globally (Mahmoud et al., 2020). The most common form of tourism are nature-based tourism (also referred to as rural tourism); Ski tourism (mountain and winter tourism); adventure and youth tourism; spa and wellness tourism; urban, city, and cultural tourism; religious or pilgrimage tourism; and maritime tourism (Ateljevic & Li, 2017). It includes five direct commercial sectors such as 'accommodation, transport carriers, attractions, tour operators and wholesalers, promotions and distributions, and retail services'. These open up avenues for entrepreneurs to convert their innovative ideas into business ventures for solving societal problems or offering new products and earning profits

Entrepreneurship

The concept of entrepreneurship was initially used in the 17th century and has since evolved to become a hot topic of conversation. The central idea of entrepreneurship concept is the development and recognition of opportunities, along with the willingness and initiative to take advantage of them, and the establishment of new businesses in risky and unpredictable circumstances to turn a profit (Sotiriadis, 2018). Scholars define entrepreneurship in a variety of ways. A few are listed below.

- ‘Entrepreneurship is a Bridge that makes the connection between Society and founded institutes for utilizing economic advantages and satisfaction of economic wishes’ (Cole, 1946).
- ‘The creation of an innovative economic organisation (or network of organisations) for the purpose of gain under conditions of risk and uncertainty’ (Dollinger et al., 1999).
- ‘The process of creating something new with value by devoting the necessary time and effort, assuming the accompanying financial, psychic and social risks, and receiving the resulting rewards of monetary and personal satisfaction and independence’ (Hisrich & Peters, 1998).
- ‘An activity that involves the discovery, evaluation and exploitation of opportunities to introduce new goods and services, ways of organising, markets, processes and raw materials through organising efforts that previously had not existed’ (Shane & Venkataraman, 2000).
- ‘The identification and exploitation of previously unexploited Opportunities’ (Hitt et al., 2001).
- ‘We define entrepreneurship as a context-specific social process through which individuals and teams create wealth by bringing together unique packages of resources to exploit marketplace opportunities’ (Ireland, 2001).
- ‘The result of a systematic and disciplined process of applying innovation and creativity to opportunities and needs in the market’ (Scarborough et al., 2019).

The key features in the definitions include idea creation, innovation, economic benefit, risk, uncertainty, problem-solving, opportunity identification, and creativity. Thus, entrepreneurship is an exploration of new ideas that can solve the problems of society by offering innovative products or services.

The entrepreneur is ‘a person who undertakes a wealth-creating and value-adding process, through incubating ideas, assembling resources and making things happen’ (Kao, 1994). An entrepreneur is someone who looks for change, responds appropriately to it, and seizes the opportunity (Drucker, 1989). An entrepreneur does not only bring new ideas but also acts on them. Some characteristics possessed by entrepreneurs are risk-taking, innovation, commitment, motivation, and obsession with opportunities (Sotiriadis, 2018).

Tourism Entrepreneurship

In recent years, the study of entrepreneurship in the tourism has gained significant momentum. Entrepreneurship is becoming increasingly important in the tourism sector, just as it is in other industries. The tourism sector is heavily dependent on entrepreneurship, as its success and sustainability are directly tied to entrepreneurial initiatives (Crnogaj et al., 2014). Ongoing research into responsible and sustainable practices in the tourism sector is paving the way for alternative approaches that contribute to its growth. These efforts prioritize local communities in the development of innovative tourism entrepreneurship and strategic growth initiatives (Işık et al., 2019). Entrepreneurship in tourism is increasingly

recognized as a strategy for promoting economic development in underdeveloped regions. Many countries actively encourage the creation of new tourism businesses, especially in economically disadvantaged areas (Jóhannesson & Huijbens, 2010; Solvoll et al., 2015). The constant shifts in tourist motivations and preferences, evolving tourism trends, growing demand for new tourism products and services, rising numbers of tourists, and intensified industry competition all make tourism entrepreneurship essential for the survival of tourism companies (Lordkipanidze et al., 2005; Pirnar, 2015). Tourism entrepreneurship is a multi-dimensional field that contributes to global peace, employment creation, foreign exchange earnings, regional balance, the development of rural areas with tourism attractions, and the preservation of cultural heritage and the environment, including wildlife habitats (Sociedad et al., 2019). A few tourism entrepreneurship definitions are listed below:

- ‘Tourism entrepreneurship is the process of identifying, evaluating, and exploiting opportunities to create new tourism businesses or to introduce new products, services, or practices into existing tourism businesses’ (Sheldon & Daniele, 2017).
- ‘Tourism entrepreneurship is the process of creating, organizing, and managing a new tourism venture to turn a profit’ (Aquino et al., 2018).
- ‘Tourism entrepreneurship is the process of identifying and exploiting opportunities to create new tourism products, services, or experiences that meet the needs of tourists and create value for stakeholders’ (Porter et al., 2018).
- ‘Tourism entrepreneurship is the process of creating and managing new tourism businesses that are innovative, sustainable, and socially responsible’ (Mottiar et al., 2018).
- ‘The process of developing new tourist enterprises that are founded on a thorough grasp of the local context and that contribute to the sustainable growth of the destination is known as tourism entrepreneurship’ (Peredo & Wurzelmann, 2015).
- ‘Tourism entrepreneurship is the process of creating new tourism businesses that are based on a deep understanding of the tourism market and that can successfully compete in the global marketplace’ (Crouch, 2011).

Innovation is a core trait of tourism entrepreneurship. Successful entrepreneurs in this field constantly strive to stand out by bringing new and unique ideas, products, or services in the market. Tourism entrepreneurship inherently requires taking calculated risks. There are several types of products and services offered by tourism entrepreneurs such as accommodation and hospitality, food and beverage, adventure and recreation, cultural and heritage, sustainable and ecotourism, and niche tourism.

A tourism entrepreneur is a ‘person or a group of people who create and manage tourism goods’ (Khanka, 2010). An individual with a passion for travel and acumen for business can be a proven trailblazer in the travel industry by sustainably offering distinctive travel experiences. Tourism entrepreneurs stay sharply

attuned to market trends, consumer preferences, and shifting demands, continuously adapting their offerings to meet travellers' evolving needs. Entrepreneurs venture beyond their comfort zones, invest resources, and navigate uncertainties to pursue their business opportunities.

Significance of Tourism Entrepreneurship

The tourism sector in India has experienced remarkable growth and has become a vital and thriving industry in the country. It contributes nearly one-third of India's foreign exchange earnings and provides more employment opportunities than any other sector. Tourism entrepreneurship is necessary for the survival of tourism businesses due to the shifting motivations and priorities behind travel, the ongoing evolution of tourism trends, the expanding market for new products and services, the influx of more tourists, and the escalation of fierce industrial competition (Pirnar, 2015). The advantages of tourism entrepreneurship are listed in Table 1.1.

Table 1.1. Tourism Entrepreneurship Advantages.

| | |
|---------------------------|--|
| Economic advantages | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase employment • Reduce disguised unemployment in agriculture • Expand existing business • Increase investment • More local enterprises |
| Socio-cultural advantages | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote local products • Strengthen local culture • Reduce migration • Improve the quality of life • Heritage protection • Improve knowledge and skills of entrepreneurship |
| Environmental advantages | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protect natural heritage • Protect rural culture • Preserve biodiversity • Minimize waste • Promote sustainable development • Proper land management • Safeguard environmental quality |

Source: Lordkipanidze et al. (2005).

Opportunities

The key opportunities for tourism entrepreneurship are discussed below:

- *Diversification and innovation in tourism products and services:* For tourism firms, innovations are crucial for enhancing customer experience and are key to achieving success and surviving in a highly competitive global market (Yachin, 2019). Entrepreneurs must bring innovations to the market, and SMEs are particularly well-suited for this task, serving as effective platforms for entrepreneurial innovation. A rise in the number of entrepreneurs within SMEs can drive economic growth (Rusu & Florin, 2015).
- *Sustainable tourism entrepreneurship:* There are opportunities for entrepreneurs in sustainable tourism. It should be viewed as a reasonable measure to prevent the overuse and unsustainable exploitation of tourism attractions and resources (Ivasciuc & Ispas, 2023). Young entrepreneurs in the Romanian Carpathian Mountains are motivated to pursue sustainable tourism because of their intrinsic drive, awareness of alternative energy sources, and managerial skills to effectively utilize local resources and infrastructure (Lordkipanidze et al., 2005). Lifestyle entrepreneurs in tourism can target niche market consumers by developing innovative products that not only stimulate regional development but also promote the creation and replication of niche market offerings (Ateljevic & Doorne, 2000).
- *Economic and social impact:* Tourism entrepreneurship and SMEs in the tourism sector can unlock unexpected development opportunities, driving economic growth and fostering innovation in regions and countries (Rusu & Florin, 2015). Entrepreneurship in tourism development fosters economic growth, social stability, and sustainable development. It also addresses societal challenges and contributes to increasing GDP (Kavya, 2021).
- *Use of technology:* Entrepreneurship is evolving with the advent of new technologies such as big data, analytics, social media, and crowdfunding, which are reshaping business practices. This shift is giving rise to new forms of entrepreneurship, such as digital entrepreneurship, which acknowledges and leverages digital capabilities to transform existing business models (Ratten, 2023). There is a potential to succeed in tourism entrepreneurship by integrating technology into the business model.

These efforts not only enhance regional and national economic stability but also support social and environmental well-being.

Challenges

There are several challenges faced in tourism entrepreneurship. Some are discussed below:

- *Lack of knowledge and skills:* The global tourism industry predominantly comprises micro-, small-, and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). The United

Nations World Tourism Organization estimates that SMEs account for approximately 80% of all tourism businesses worldwide (Md Ramli et al., 2022). A lack of knowledge can hinder entrepreneurs from innovating and adopting new technologies in their businesses during this new era. They have been in the tourism business for many years but still lack the knowledge to attract potential customers and in promotional strategies. One of the major concerns is the lack of digital knowledge. It is vital for any business to get digitalized and technology upgraded to be competitive in the market and so the tourism industry (Khokhobaia, 2020). To be a market player and successful entrepreneur, it is necessary to gain the required knowledge. The talent or expertise required for any task is the skill. SMEs still lack the skill to be innovative or unique in tourism (Md Ramli et al., 2022; Weiermair et al., 2007).

- *Language barriers*: Fluency in English is crucial for tourism entrepreneurs to effectively engage with international tourists. However, many entrepreneurs face language barriers, which can impede their business operations (Ku Sulong et al., 2023). Tourism entrepreneurs face challenges such as difficulty in understanding unfamiliar accents and the need for additional resources to effectively communicate with international tourists. The creation of specialized digital applications to decode and interpret foreign accents can significantly enhance entrepreneurs' ability to communicate their services more effectively in real time.
- *Seasonality nature*: The seasonality inherent in the tourism sector presents unique challenges for entrepreneurs, particularly in managing resource allocations. Seasonality affects venture development, including strategies for maintaining and developing a flexible resource base that can adapt to seasonal fluctuations, as well as approaches for integrating business activities and employing dual business models (Lundin & Söderholm, 1995; Solvoll et al., 2015).
- *Market competition*: Tourism entrepreneurs frequently face challenges, particularly when competing against well-established industry players with significant capital and large market shares. To stay competitive, these entrepreneurs often need to continuously innovate, develop new travel booking methods and creative ways to enhance the overall travel experience (Prabhugaonkar et al., 2020). As already mentioned, tourism tourism consists majorly of SMEs, who have little or no formal qualifications; use mostly family resources and labour; lack business planning and growth strategies; less spending on marketing; and possess non-economic motives. This made it difficult for entrepreneurs to survive in the competitive environment.
- *Sustainability concerns*: Balancing economic growth with environmental sustainability presents a major challenge. Entrepreneurs must integrate sustainable practices into their operations while maintaining their business's competitive edge (Čapeta et al., 2023; Streimikiene et al., 2021). It is crucial to plan and develop tourism in a purposeful and sustainable manner by finding a balance between environmental, economic, and social objectives. Sustainable tourism management must focus on meeting tourists' needs, ensuring a meaningful experience for consumers, raising their awareness of sustainability issues, and promoting sustainable tourism practices. There are significant challenges in transforming the environment, increasing consumer motivation