

Community-based tourism and entrepreneurship: towards a model for poverty alleviation and sustainable development

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Abstract | This article portrays the relationship between CBT and entrepreneurship and unpacks them in context where culture and capacity building are important. It develops a model that serves to facilitate entrepreneurship for CBT development taking into account concepts of sustainability and entrepreneurship. This article was written using secondary data sources only from extant literature on community-based tourism, entrepreneurship, innovation and capacity building. It is a conceptual paper. It argues that sustainable development could be a viable pathway for inclusive development in which entrepreneurs innovate in their collective groups or cooperatives. The article suggests that entrepreneurship has no boundaries, does not discriminate and can be practiced anywhere and anytime. To achieve that, the role of institutions is fundamental for capacity building in CBT development – government, Non-governmental organizations, the private sector and universities must prioritize capacity building as a sine qua non for sustainable tourism development. The article posits that within discourses of entrepreneurship, sustainable development and local culture, the university is situated in a reciprocal relationship with CBT ventures and communities to undertake directed and focused capacity building that facilitates CBT development and holistic community development.

Keywords | Tourism, community-based tourism, entrepreneurship, capacity building, sustainability

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1. Introduction

The idea of sustainability has influenced tourism to respond to its negative effects thereby shifting it from being mass to sustainable tourism (Sawatsuk et al., 2018). Community-based tourism (CBT) is a form of tourism which emerged in response to the debilitating effects of mass tourism affecting local people (Zefnihan & Alhadi, 2018) as CBT aims to counteract mass tourism (Connelly & Sam, 2018).

Despite the negativities (which must always be recognised and placed in perspective), tourism can contribute positively to the development of local communities. Amongst the positive contributions which tourism can make is entrepreneurship by assisting them to start their own businesses often at low cost and offer new tourism products and services (Sharif & Tuan Lonik, 2017). The offer of new products takes place within and around communities using available human and natural resources. Entrepreneurship is an important vehicle to bring about development in society as it plays the dual role of infusing economic and societal transformation (Dhahri & Omri, 2018b). There are gaps in entrepreneurship research regarding a comprehensive framework that assesses the contribution of entrepreneurship to socio-economic and environmental sustainability in the pursuit of the Triple Bottom Line (TBL) or 3BL of social, environment and financial/economics (Dhahri & Omri, 2018b).

Poverty and inequality are twin topics of concern particularly in developing countries because of their interrelationship (Giampiccoli & Mtapuri, 2017). There is global stratification in both developing and developed countries showing that the gap between rich and poor citizens is increasing (Zajda, 2011). Lately, the COVID-19 pandemic has deepened the inequalities between citizens and countries (Stiglitz, 2020). As noted by Stiglitz (2020) inequalities existed before the pandemic, they were evinced more glaringly during the pandemic and they will deepen further if governments do not act

now. This presents an opportunity to transform the tourism sector to take new directions 'escaping the unsustainable tourism path' and get on a fundamentally different approach (Butler, 2020). While the world is facing one of its most severe crises of a health nature among the financial crises of the past 30 years due to the lockdown restrictions, this has shown the weaknesses of neoliberal capitalism (van Niekerk, 2020). In this context this paper supports a transformation of the tourism sector – a major global economic sector – towards a CBT approach proposing a CBT model related to entrepreneurship, with entrepreneurship being a necessary feature to foster socio-economic development.

This article focuses on the relationship between CBT and entrepreneurship in order to construct a model based on capacity building which is synonymous to skills development. In order to achieve this aim, the article will unpack issues related to entrepreneurship in a CBT setting. The concept of entrepreneurship is defined while making the distinction between individual and collective entrepreneurship. Matters related to CBT, namely, capacity building, the pre-eminence of local culture, CBT ownership and management, CBT for sustainable development (SD) and sustainable tourism (ST) are unpacked in support of the argument for an entrepreneurial framework in a context of CBT. The role of public institutions and innovation is done to present the numerous possibilities found in CBT.

2. Methodology

This article is conceptual in terms of construction. This article was written using secondary data sources only from extant literature on community-based tourism, entrepreneurship, innovation and capacity building. The secondary sources were systematically perused and analysed for

their relevance and aptness in relation to the topics of community-based tourism, entrepreneurship, innovation, capacity building, poverty and sustainable development. Secondary research is cost-effective because it utilises already existing information available in the public domain – in this case journal articles, books and internet sources were used to compile this article.

3. Literature review

Sustainable development and CBT

Sustainable development presents as a viable pathway for inclusive development. It can re-orient development strategies improve the symbolic relationship between socio-economic and environmental systems for good of present and future generations (Dahri & Omri, 2018a). In this context entrepreneurship becomes relevant as it is important for the production of sustainable products and services, and a solution for social and environmental challenges faced by communities (Dahri & Omri, 2018a). For example, the development of rural tourism requires appropriate entrepreneurial skills (Sharif & Tuan Lonik, 2017). Researches on the relation between entrepreneurship and sustainable development have looked at the contribution of entrepreneurship to various dimensions of sustainable development (Dahri & Omri, 2018a). The research done by Zahra and Wright (2016) attempted to reconcile entrepreneurship with a more social aim and proposed new approaches to entrepreneurship directed at addressing persistent societal conditions (Zahra & Wright, 2016). The next section looks at entrepreneurship.

Entrepreneurship is relevant in tourism as it has been shown that tourism opens up possibilities that impact economic growth through initiatives undertaken by entrepreneurs. This has resulted in policies that support entrepreneurship and sustaina-

ble tourism in many countries of the world (Pădurean et al., 2015). Small businesses must be supported, that is within the complexity and changes happenings in the business environment, because they are drivers of socio-economic growth and government institutions and experts suggest entrepreneurship as a strategy to face economic crisis (Ribeiro-Soriano & Kraus, 2018). Fundamentally, culture is seen relevant in entrepreneurship. So there is

...growing worldwide recognition of entrepreneurship as an engine of economic, technological, and social progress has drawn attention to its cultural ideological foundations. A growing body of research suggests that entrepreneurial activities are culturally grounded in that they are determined as well as constrained by national cultures. The variety of entrepreneurial activities in a society is similarly shaped by values, norms, and practices, that is, their institutional setting. Yet, at a time when different countries seem eager to spur entrepreneurial activities, researchers continue to overlook these differences, often promoting a version of entrepreneurship that based on the U.S. experiences (Bruton et al., 2018:351).

Similarly to other economic sectors entrepreneurship is important in CBT. From this perspective, “CBT is defined as an alternative form of sustainable tourism development that involves tourism enterprises owned and/or managed by community members with the intent to create and maximize opportunities and benefits for the local community” (Ditta-Apichai et al., 2020:225). It is noted the “CBT’s ability to stimulate an entrepreneurial culture that leads to the creation of employment, income generation, skills develop-

ment and ultimately the empowerment of the local populace” (Setokoe, 2020:31). The next section looks at entrepreneurship and social innovation.

Entrepreneurship and social innovation

Entrepreneurship is vital for poverty reduction (Sutter et al., 2019) and it is a milestone that indicates progress and is important for the prosperity and development of countries (Ribeiro-Soriano & Kraus, 2018). In such a context entrepreneurship can be adjudged as interrelated to sustainable development (Dhahri & Omri, 2018b). As such it is recognised for its potential for the transformation of products and services and the emergence of new projects and solutions to societal and environmental problems (Dhahri & Omri, 2018b:6). Three perspective emerge from literature research (Sutter et al., 2019) named remediation, reform, and revolution. As such “remediation perspective assumes that poverty is the result of scarce resources and that the provision of resources will allow entrepreneurship to flourish”; “reform perspective assumes that markets are potentially powerful engines of poverty alleviation, though such outcomes are dependent on the extent to which such markets are inclusive”; and a revolutionary perspective “questions and critiques the basic tenets of capitalism such as self-interest, individualism, and the primacy of economic outcomes” (Sutter et al., 2019:197).

Entrepreneurship has various definitions and can also be seen as harnessing potential transformational change in society in general, including in its institutions (Sutter et al., 2019). Entrepreneurship can be defined as a solution to poverty to consist of efforts to introduce changes that seek to positively influence poor people’s lives by improving the economic and non-economic welfare of individuals or communities (Sutter et al., 2019). Entrepreneurs can be anyone, rich or poor, any

colour, any religion, anywhere and lack of access to intellectual property protection, finance, or skilled staff does not mean they cannot have successful businesses (Ács et al., 2018:17). This last issue, although seemingly obvious, needs to be emphasised because it indicates that anybody or any groups of people can be entrepreneurial even if they have very few resources. It also means that entrepreneurship has no boundaries, it does not discriminate and can be practised anywhere and anytime. Peredo and McLean (2006) argue that social entrepreneurship is when a person attempts to create social value by taking the opportunity to create that value through innovation, while accepting risk and refusing to accept the limitations in available resources.

Entrepreneurship is embedded in deep socio-cultural, and institutional contexts (Audretsch et al., 2017) and it cannot be divorced from the country where it is practised which takes into consideration the culture, risk appetite and ideology of indigenous people which may differ substantially with Western cultures. Therefore, entrepreneurship has a context and is a process with over-bearing socio-cultural influences on business start-ups which in turn are influenced by property rights, government regulations, and level of economic development (Acs & Szerb, 2010).

The concept of entrepreneurship has, however, some common characteristics. While accepting the difficulty and lack of a common definition of entrepreneurship the usual common features include opportunities, risk taking, motivation and innovation while others look at the output or output of entrepreneurship, such as high growth, value creation and spill over effects (Acs & Szerb, 2010). Within the entrepreneurship ecosystem various pillars have been indicated, they are: opportunity perception, start-up skills, risk acceptance, networking, cultural support, opportunity perception, technology absorption, human capital, competition, product innovation, process innovation, high growth, internationalization, and risk capital

(Ács et al., 2018). Under the circumstances, it is also evident that every entrepreneurial ecosystem is different with its own idiosyncratic circumstances (Kreuzer et al., 2018). Entrepreneurial ecosystems are geographically circumscribed but not confined to an exact geographical scale (Kreuzer et al., 2018).

Importantly, in entrepreneurship social innovation is paramount, “innovation always lies at the centre of entrepreneurship” (Yan & Yan, 2015:1054; see also Ribeiro-Soriano & Kraus, 2018:313) making the entrepreneur “a person with the vision to see an innovation and the ability to bring it to market” (Ács et al., 2018:17). Thus, a distinction must be made “between the small business owners who replicates what others are doing and an entrepreneur who innovates” (Ács et al., 2018:17). It is suggested that an innovation encompasses a creative new idea that creates business value as a product, logistics, process, management, or institutional innovation as in a disruptive or incremental process (Dodds, 2012). However, it does not emerge only from technological change as this became clear when people became interested in changes transport, distribution, education (Spear, 2011). Within tourism, innovation concepts are confusing because what others consider as innovative, may be dismissed by others as mere adaption of existing concepts (Dodds, 2012). In tourism, while it is believed that only large firms are innovative, small businesses can also be innovative to bring revolutionary changes by virtue of collaborations and sharing of information and knowledge among themselves (Dodds, 2012). Again, innovation can be of different types and in the tourism sector it can be induced by government policy, changing demographics, the environment, or social issues, artistic or design based meant to improve the visitor experience or quality of service (Dodds, 2012). For instance, innovation can bring advantages (MacKay & Campbell, 2012) such as in CBT with multi-year, and multi-pronged approach that brings together many stakeholders with education

and partnership systems. However, Carmo, et al., (2000) are of the view that valorising entrepreneurship has the risk of passing the responsibility of ensuring a dignified standard of living from social and political spheres to the individual.

Various types of entrepreneurship have been postulated. Equally, entrepreneurship pillars related to a greater role for entrepreneurship in the social context. Zahra and Wright (2016) proposed five pillars on which the evolving social role of entrepreneurship can have its impact. Entrepreneurship models which are more contextualized within the sustainability concept are also present such as green entrepreneurship and sustainable entrepreneurship (Domańska et al., 2018). Collective entrepreneurship and community-based entrepreneurship are also in existence. In this context it is fundamental to recognise that community orientation is consistent with entrepreneurship and that cultural identity can function to propel entrepreneurship (Peredo & Chrisman, 2006). Thus, it is proposed that community-based enterprises (CBE) can be a viable strategy for sustainable local development (Peredo & Chrisman, 2006).

This article considers collective enterprises also as a cooperative form, therefore it follows the line of thoughts that considers that as in worker-owned cooperative literature, cooperative entrepreneurship and collective entrepreneurship are used interchangeably (Burrell & Cook, 2009:10). Cooperatives can be used in tourism however, from an Asian perspective, it has also been noted that the relevant “role of participatory and community-based organisations like cooperatives in promoting tourism has yet to be recognised” (Verma, n.d). However, it is suggested that cooperatives can improve rural tourism when rural tourism development is implemented at three levels, namely, individual, organisational and community levels (Aref & Gill, 2009) thus, rural cooperatives make a difference in rural tourism. (Aref & Gill, 2009). There is a link between cooperative principles and values with responsible and CBT so that responsi-

ble and CBT approach can be enhanced by using cooperative organisational structures in the sector (Peric & Durkin, 2013). Cooperatives in tourism can be found, for example, in China where cooperative can facilitate poverty alleviation (Yang & Hung, 2014) and in Malaysia (Mohamad & Hamzan, 2013) where a cooperative is used to manage a CBT.

Cooperatives are therefore seen as relevant in tourism. Despite various challenges and development trajectories the co-op model has continued to motivate people, and co-op movements have endured and flourished in many countries around the world (SAF, 2003) and “cooperative structures are indeed feasible, in a wide variety of social, economic, political and cultural settings. The community-based alternative would most likely incorporate some if not all aspects of the cooperatives movement” (Ife, 2002: 135). Cooperative entrepreneurship represents a model of community growth (Tewari, 2011). Cooperatives can contribute to local and countries’ economic, environmental and social sustainability such that there is a need to valorise their positive effects at all levels and platforms (Peric & Durkin, 2013). Importantly cooperatives should not be seen as an inferior organisational structure. Cooperatives have produced socio-economic outcomes that are better than those done by firms and public institutions (Borzaga et al., 2009). Again, they can also be least efficient as any privately firm (Fields, 2011). Cooperatives can be relevant in innovation as they can take advantage of the collective knowledge of its members (Reynolds, 2013; see also Yan & Yan, 2015). This certainly can facilitate the formation and diffusion of innovative ideas. The expansion of cooperative is seen positively and ‘as a way forward;’ in the post COVID-19 times as “cooperatives are equipped as optimistic entrepreneurs: their member-centered mission and their self-help values, democracy and solidarity, might prove vital in the local and global sustainability of the challenges our societies are facing” (Billiet et

al., 2021:105). In this context “policymakers are recommended to create a conducive institutional, legal, and administrative ecosystem for cooperatives” (Billiet et al., 2021:105).

The informal sector is also correlated to CBT because of its income generating capacity, involvement of women and co-operatives representing an accessible suitable entry point for the into the paid work (CBD, online, see also Brewer Lama 2000). A study proposed two main CBT models: “a single, community owned structure (type 1) (community lodge) and multiple micro and small enterprises under a common organizational umbrella (type 2)” (Mtapuri & Giampiccoli, 2013:6). In these cases, both individual and cooperative entrepreneurship is possible especially type 2 and also considering that the two models (type 1 and type 2) can also coexist.

3. Towards a model of CBT and entrepreneurship

The purpose of this section is to advance a model whose aim is to facilitate CBT development through capacity building and innovation assisted by the university. This model aims to open up a debate and putting forward a model upon which future research can focus. Based on the above literature review, the model (Figure 1) configured in the form of a triangle indicates the embeddedness/circumscription of the various actions taken within the entrepreneurship pillars, sustainable development/sustainable tourism principles and local cultural context. Community-based tourism development has to be based on local culture, and be (as any form of tourism should be) sustainable in all its aspects, and be entrepreneurial. All these actions should embrace the characteristics of CBT and the attendant principles indicated in the internal top part of the triangle towards CBT enterprise (See Figure 1).

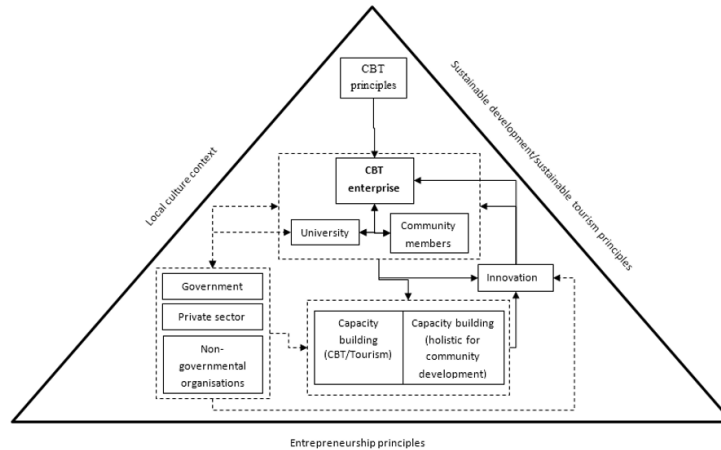


Figure 1 | Model directed CBT development through capacity building and innovation assisted by the university. Source: Author elaboration based on Govender & Giampiccoli, 2018 and Giampiccoli, Saayman & Jugmohan, 2014).

In this triangle there are three key elements (university, CBT enterprise, and community members) linked together in a reciprocal relationship representing an ecosystem. The CBT enterprises, besides the business itself, is also about the people who are directly involved – owning and managing the CBT enterprise – whereas local community includes other community members not necessarily directly involved in the CBT enterprises but living in the same location (where the CBT enterprises operate and have impacts). This relationship serves to favour capacity building in CBT/tourism matters but also other community development issues – because capacity building is the ‘training ground’ for holistic community development. At the same time capacity building in CBT should “be structured in such a way that it enables a CBT venture to grow in scale” (Dłużewska & Giampiccoli, 2021:7). Etzkowitz et al. (2000), is of the view that a university of the future must adopt an entrepreneurial paradigm with a ‘third-mission’ to develop the economy because knowledge is created at the university in order to spur on industrial innovation.

The Government, private sector and non-governmental organisation are not excluded but hold a ‘secondary’ position meaning that they become involved in the process in ad hoc circum-

stances. It is however, proposed that government should be also seen as the main facilitator by putting in place the necessary policies, resources and facilities to accomplish the required training. Government, more than the private sector and non-governmental organisation, should be the leader linked to the key role of the university. Government, the private sector and non-governmental organisations can be involved directly with the university, for purposes of capacity building or in connection with the ensemble of university/CBT enterprises/community members depending on the needs. For Etzkowitz and Leydesdorff (1995) a “triple helix” of academic-industry-government relations is a key component of any national or multinational innovation strategy in the late twentieth century’.

Innovation is seen as a result of capacity building but also it stems from other possible forms of relationship with the university, CBT enterprises and community members and, maybe secondarily, coming from relationships with government, the private sector and non-governmental organisations. At the same time, innovation reverts back to the same relationship (university, CBT enterprises, and community members) and most importantly to the CBT enterprise. It is the CBT venture that should be the protagonist in innovation and the

University for patenting the products. The relationship between university, CBT enterprises, and community members is reciprocal, hence the arrow is two ways (double arrows lines). This is because it is important that university staff involved do not act in a patronising/paternalistic way but ensure that capacity building happens through a mutual exchange between university, CBT enterprises and community members. In this context there should be no any form of institutionalized dependency, institutionalized racism but provide a break with Eurocentric approaches.

4. Discussion

Community-based tourism is a specific form of alternative tourism whose aim is to counteract conventional/mass tourism and give priority to local disadvantaged communities. However, more often than not, people involved in CBT – which is aimed to disadvantaged community members – lack material and immaterial resources. It is thus important that CBT ventures, especially in their first stages of development link with external entities which should become the facilitators of the CBT venture. Community-based tourism enterprises should be controlled, owned and managed by local disadvantaged community members whereas external parties are often required as facilitators. In this context it is important that this facilitation assist the CBT project and its members, to become always more independent in all aspects of CBT development. A fundamental need become capacity building. A capacity building that should go beyond the merely technical tourism/CBT issues but be comprehensive adding the CBT members beyond their tourism venture thus assisting them in their general livelihood. This issue is very important because tourism remains, as much as can be important, only one aspect of a person's livelihood needs. The relationship between the fa-

ilitators should be long term. Thus, the sustained long-term presence of university institutions, and recognising the value and relevance of the knowledge and skills of local people is important in bottom-up approaches. The promotion of alternative development approaches based on local context should be supported.

The above process should be conscribed and embedded by the local culture, sustainability parameters and the need to foster people entrepreneurship spirits and practices. A sustainable development approach, entrepreneurship, local culture and capacity building are all elements that in different ways are relevant to CBT development processes. It is within the context of local culture, sustainability and entrepreneurship that a long-term sustainable development based on local culture own evolution and geared with entrepreneurial increase the chances of success for CBT members (and indirectly also for the larger community) social-economic holistic development. In this context the possibility to increase local innovations related to, but also beyond, the CBT ventures become naturally the movement connected with the CBT milieu in one side and capacity building in the other side. Innovation that they will also be embedded on local culture, sustainability and entrepreneurship milieus.

5. Conclusion

This article looked at entrepreneurship, community-based tourism, culture and innovation and developed a model for effective capacity development. As such, after examining the various elements, this article presented a model directed at facilitating CBT development through capacity building and innovation with the lead role being ascribed to the university. This model is not, by any means, exhaustive but it aims to open a debate and put forward a fresh model upon which future

research can scaffold. The model proposes that within discourses of entrepreneurship, sustainable development and local culture, the university is in a reciprocal relationship with CBT ventures and community members to undertake directed and focused capacity building that facilitates CBT development and holistic community development. In this context innovation is key while government, private sector and non-governmental organisation are seen as a coadjutant with government assuming the lead role.

In proposing this model, this article contributes to the debate on tourism development with a focus on CBT with specific reference to sustainable development. Government's role is sacrosanct and important in laying the foundations for this to happen. The sustained long-term presence of university institutions, and the value and relevance of the knowledge and the skills of local people is important in bottom-up approaches that lead to the promotion of alternative development approaches based on local context.

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