

BEYOND RESOURCE AVAILABILITY: A MULTI-LEVEL DRIVER MODEL OF SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN RESPONSIBLE TOURISM - EVIDENCE FROM TUNG YEE PENG, THAILAND.

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Abstract

This study advances a multi-level framework that explains how individual commitment, community cohesion, and supportive institutional contexts interact dynamically to foster social entrepreneurship in responsible tourism. The research focuses on the Community Enterprises Development for Ecotourism in Tung Yee Peng, Krabi Province, Thailand, and is based on qualitative analysis of 20 stakeholder interviews supported by direct observations and document reviews. The findings reveal that social entrepreneurship is driven by the interaction of individual-level factors such as value-driven motivation, ethical leadership, and environmental awareness; organizational-level factors such as participatory governance, social capital, and external networks; and institutional-level factors such as cultural and religious norms, institutional voids that stimulate innovation, and policy recognition. The results indicate that the dynamic interconnection among these levels, rather than the influence of any single factor, is essential for sustaining socially embedded tourism enterprises. Social entrepreneurship functions as an integrative mechanism that transforms motivations and resources into tangible outcomes of community empowerment, environmental conservation, and community resilience. The study enriches social entrepreneurship literature by provides practical guidance for policymakers, community leaders, and businesses aiming to develop responsible and sustainable tourism models.

Keywords: Community based tourism, Community enterprise, Social entrepreneurship, Sustainable Tourism Development, Responsible tourism

Introduction

In recent years, there has been a growing emphasis on promoting social change and community-oriented innovation to address persistent social and environmental challenges. The concept of social entrepreneurship has increasingly gained traction as a transformative force that harnesses human agency and entrepreneurial initiative to resolve complex issues that market and policy mechanisms often overlook or inadequately address (Yunus, 2008). Defined as the pursuit of sustainable solutions through economic activities that simultaneously generate profit and social impact, social entrepreneurship reflects a paradigmatic shift in the cultural and institutional logic of global enterprise (García-Jurado et al., 2021). It is regarded as a key mechanism for addressing major societal challenges such as poverty, inequality, and environmental issues. Its primary goal is to create social values and to promote long-term social change (Hietschold et al., 2023). In this regard, social entrepreneurship is recognized as a catalyst for poverty alleviation, social inclusion, and sustainable local development (Daskalopoulou et al., 2023; Mair & Martí, 2006; Miller et al., 2012).

Within the tourism sector, social entrepreneurship plays an important role in promoting responsible and community-based tourism models that align economic goals with environmental preservation, cultural revitalization, and social equity (Dahles et al., 2020; De Lange and Dodds, 2017). Social entrepreneurship remains conceptually diverse, it represents a powerful catalyst for sustainable transformation at the community level by emphasizing benefit-sharing, empowerment, and collaboration among multiple stakeholders (Naderi et al., 2019). Through this approach, tourism enterprises can serve as platforms for social value creation that extend beyond economic gain to include education, ecological protection, and

cultural preservation (De Lange and Dodds, 2017). Community enterprises that are driven by social entrepreneurship also act as mechanisms for balancing the interests of multiple stakeholders while encouraging accountability and ethical awareness in tourism practices (McCombes et al., 2015; Chiengkul et al., 2023). Despite its growing significance, empirical research on social entrepreneurship in tourism remains limited and the interaction between its different drivers is not yet fully understood. Previous studies have often examined social entrepreneurship from isolated perspectives, focusing mainly on individual or organizational dimensions, while institutional conditions shaped by culture, religion, and local governance have received little attention in the context of developing economies.

Accordingly, this study aims to expand the understanding of social entrepreneurship within the tourism sector by examining its drivers and mechanisms through a case study of the Tung Yee Peng tourism community, an ecotourism destination in Krabi Province, Thailand, that has been recognized for its commitment to responsible tourism and sustainability. The purpose of this research is to identify the factors that influence the formation of social entrepreneurship in a tourism community enterprise and to analyze how these factors interact to generate social, environmental, and economic value.

Literature Review

Theoretical Foundations of Social Entrepreneurship

Social entrepreneurship integrates entrepreneurial practices with social missions to create transformative change (Mair & Martí, 2006). Unlike traditional entrepreneurship focused on profit maximization, it prioritizes social value through innovation, collaboration, and hybrid models combining commercial and non-profit logics (Santos, 2012; Yunus, 2008). It purposely applies entrepreneurial strategies to tackle unmet needs and systemic inequalities by recognizing opportunities, mobilizing resources, and generating innovative solutions (Peredo & McLean, 2006; Choi & Majumdar, 2015). Social entrepreneurship represents a dynamic process of social innovation that transforms personal motivation and institutional contexts into tangible social outcomes (Hietschold et al., 2023). It encompasses three interrelated dimensions: context (socio-economic conditions shaping opportunities), actor (motivation and leadership), and outcome (measurable social and environmental change) (Popoviciu & Popoviciu, 2011). Driven by intrinsic motivation and social awareness, social entrepreneurs creatively leverage resources to promote collective welfare rather than shareholder profit (Collavo, 2023). Ultimately, social entrepreneurship functions as a process for social innovation, building entrepreneurial capabilities, fostering collaboration, and strengthening community resilience through purposeful and inclusive action (Singh & Singh, 2023).

Social Entrepreneurship in Tourism and Community Development

The concept of social entrepreneurship is increasingly recognized as a pivotal mechanism for fostering social transformation across various sectors, including the tourism industry. Tourism-based social enterprises can function as mechanisms for promoting responsible and community-based tourism by aligning livelihood generation with environmental protection and cultural preservation (De Lange and Dodds, 2017; Dahles et al., 2020). These enterprises integrate economic opportunities with social inclusion and conservation objectives, allowing tourism to serve as a platform for creating shared value among diverse stakeholders (Mair & Martí, 2006; Daskalopoulou et al., 2023).

In this context, tourism functions as both an economic and social process in which entrepreneurship serves as a bridge between community goals and institutional structures (Aquino, Lück, and Schänzel, 2018). Local community enterprise has successfully integrated

livelihood development, environmental conservation, and cultural revitalization into a coherent tourism model (Dahles et al., 2020). Through this integration, the community demonstrates social entrepreneurship operates as a mechanism that maintains economic feasibility while advancing social inclusion and ecological sustainability (McCombes, Vanclay, and Evers, 2015; Naderi et al., 2019). Although the concept of social entrepreneurship in tourism has gained increasing attention, most previous studies have focused primarily on describing successful cases rather than examining the underlying mechanisms and dynamic processes that sustain them over time (Saebi et al., 2019; Daskalopoulou et al., 2023). Current research has not clearly clarified how personal values and motivations interact with organizational practices and institutional contexts in shaping the social entrepreneurship of community based tourism enterprises. A deeper understanding of these interconnections is vital for explaining how communities such as Tung Yee Peng create social value and enhance resilience through entrepreneurial initiatives.

Multi-Level Drivers of Social Entrepreneurship

The formation and expansion of social entrepreneurship are supported by a synergistic configuration of change-oriented individuals, enabling structures, market contexts, and cultural norms. Together, these elements foster the growth of social entrepreneurship as a mechanism to promote sustainable tourism development (De Lange & Dodds, 2017). A review of the relevant literature reveals that the formation of social entrepreneurship is influenced by a range of factors crossing behavioral, psychological, organizational, and institutional dimensions (Mair and Martí, 2006; Santos, (2012); Singh & Singh, 2023). Additionally, Saebi et al. (2019) categorize these factors into three primary levels: individual, organizational, and institutional.

At the individual level, social entrepreneurship is often driven by intrinsic motivation, ethical leadership, and environmental awareness (Miller et al., 2012; Singh & Singh, 2023). Leadership traits (Corbett, 2024) and self-efficacy are also critical determinants that enhance individuals' sense of agency and confidence in their capacity to effect meaningful social change (Hietschold et al., 2023). From a theoretical standpoint, self-efficacy has been shown to significantly influence both entrepreneurial passion and intention (Chiengkul et al., 2023). In many cases, the motivation to engage in social entrepreneurship is rooted in personal experiences or a heightened awareness of pressing social issues. This often fosters an increased sensitivity to social salience and fosters a behavioral intention to initiate action (Singh & Singh, 2023). Such intention is frequently catalyzed by the recognition of social opportunities, where individuals identify avenues to address systemic challenges through initiatives that generate social value (Hietschold et al., 2023). The ability to recognize these opportunities is a critical component in the formulation of targeted interventions aimed at addressing structural social problems, including poverty, educational disparities, and social exclusion (Hockerts, 2010).

At the organizational level, the development of social entrepreneurship depends on business models, organizational flexibility, and context-specific practices (Corbett, 2024). The ability to integrate a social mission with market-oriented strategies, alongside the mobilization of essential resources such as social capital, strategic networks, and partnerships with supportive organizations, serves as a critical determinant of social enterprise success. Enabling social environments characterized by strong civil society engagement and collaboration with nonprofit entities contribute significantly to the establishment and long-term viability of social enterprises (Saebi et al., 2019). Additionally, team cohesion around shared social objectives also reinforces the organizational capacity for social entrepreneurship (De Lange & Dodds, 2017).

At the institutional level, the broader environment consisting of formal regulations, cultural values, and normative systems plays a central role in shaping the conditions that either

enable or constrain social entrepreneurship (Littlewood & Holt, 2018). In many developing regions, the absence of adequate infrastructure and the inconsistency of state support often force communities to initiate self-reliant and socially entrepreneurial activities (Yunus, 2008). Institutional voids are frequently associated with persistent challenges such as poverty, social inequality, and insufficient infrastructure (Saebi et al., 2019). Cultural and religious norms also influence how legitimacy is established and how community behavior is guided (Bull & Ridley-Duff, 2019). Social norms that emphasize justice, collective responsibility, and public-mindedness further contribute to the acceptance and expansion of socially entrepreneurial practices (Littlewood & Holt, 2018). The normative and cognitive dimensions of the institutional environment, together with government regulations and legal frameworks, shape the extent to which social entrepreneurial initiatives can be developed and sustained (Chiengkul et al., 2023). Supportive public policies, including the integration of community-based tourism into local development plans, formal recognition by tourism authorities, and access to grants or subsidies, can enhance both the legitimacy and scalability of these enterprises (Aparicio, Turro, & Noguera, 2020). However, institutional support is often uneven, leading communities to engage in institutional work. This process involves the creation, negotiation, and maintenance of alternative governance structures that ensure operational continuity and local autonomy (Lawrence & Suddaby, 2006).

The literature indicates that social entrepreneurship is a key mechanism linking social, environmental, and economic goals in tourism. Its emergence depends on interactions among individual, organizational, and institutional factors. However, most studies examine these factors separately rather than exploring their interconnections. This study therefore adopts a multi-level framework to analyze how these factors interact in the Tung Yee Peng community and how they contribute to responsible tourism development

Methodology

This study utilized a qualitative research approach, incorporating semi-structured interviews, direct observations, and document analysis to investigate the development of social entrepreneurship within the Tung Yee Peng community. Data collection procedures were approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of ECNIDA, with certification provided under Certificate of Analysis No. 2021/0135 and Protocol ID No. ECNIDA 2021/0152. To ensure the integrity of the data, all materials were translated from Thai to English by two additional experts in the field, including co-authors, and subsequently underwent final proofreading by a native English speaker. A combination of purposive and snowball sampling methods was used to select 20 key informants, including: (1) the president and committee members of the Community Enterprises Development for Ecotourism; (2) local villagers, producers, and freelance guides; (3) representatives of local government agencies; (4) officials from provincial and national tourism authorities; (5) members of tourism business associations and enterprises; and (6) representatives from supporting organizations and civil society.

Data analysis proceeded in three iterative stages. First, interview transcripts were coded inductively to identify recurring concepts and patterns. This was followed by deductive coding, guided by the theoretical framing of individual, organizational, and institutional drivers. The resulting codes were organized into thematic categories corresponding to these three levels, and the patterns of interaction between levels were systematically analyzed. Inter-coder reliability was established through an expert review process in which three academic specialists in social sciences, innovation, and tourism independently examined the coding and thematic framework to confirm consistency and validity. To enhance the credibility of the findings, themes were compared and cross-validated with field observations and secondary data, ensuring triangulation across multiple sources of evidence.

Results

Responsible tourism Community enterprise context

Tung Yee Peng is a small coastal community situated on the eastern side of Lanta Yai Island in Krabi Province, Thailand. Officially established in 1963, the community covers approximately 1,383 acres, of which around 989 acres are used for agriculture, while more than 752 acres consist of mangrove forests and upland watershed areas. The landscape features low hills, dense mangrove ecosystems, and a saltwater canal connecting to Lanta Bay. The population is predominantly Muslim, with ancestral roots extending back over a century. Most residents rely on small-scale fisheries, rubber cultivation, and limited rice and vegetable farming for household consumption. Deeply guided by Islamic values, the community perceives natural resources as sacred gifts, fostering a strong ethic of conservation and a deep connection to the surrounding environment, particularly the mangrove forest that defines its ecological and cultural identity.

Responding to growing interest in sustainable tourism, the community voluntarily established a community-based tourism to promote environmental conservation and responsible tourism development. In 2003, the Community Enterprises Development for Ecotourism in Tung Yee Peng was formally founded and later recognized by government agencies for its contribution to sustainable local development. The Tung Yee Peng Ecotourism Committee manages tourism activities, oversees benefit-sharing, and coordinates with other community groups to ensure equitable opportunities and reduce potential conflicts. The enterprise currently includes 145 member households from a total of 294 in the community. It began with 15 members inspired by the vision of community-led tourism. Membership requires a minimum shareholding of 800 Thai baht, with members entitled to dividends and the right to transfer or withdraw shares within one year. Rules governing land and resource use are established through community consensus to maintain social harmony and prevent disputes. This enterprise promotes responsible tourism practices centered on sustainability and community well-being. Its eco-tourism services include long-tail boat tours, kayaking through mangrove forests, walking and cycling tours, and conservation activities such as tree planting and waste management. A key attraction is the Mangrove Forest Boat Tour, conducted in traditional paddled boats locally known as "Gondola Thailand." These tours are offered in three formats: sunrise bathing, forest and sea bathing, and moonlight bathing during full moon nights. Optional meals, refreshments, and visits to nearby attractions. Currently, the enterprise members are divided into individual shareholders and joint investors. Regular meetings are held monthly to review performance and plan development strategies, while annual general meetings ensure transparency and equitable profit distribution. The evolution of Tung Yee Peng from a small fishing village into a well-organized tourism enterprise demonstrates how local values, shared governance, and environmental stewardship can drive sustainable community transformation. Its experience exemplifies the integration of economic, social, and ecological dimensions that underpin responsible tourism and highlights the importance of linking individual motivation, collective organization, and institutional support to achieve community resilience and long-term sustainability

Multi-Level Drivers of Social Entrepreneurship in the Tung Yee Peng community

1) Individual-Level Drivers

Individual-level drivers, particularly intrinsic motivation and ethical leadership, are critical catalysts for social entrepreneurship in Tung Yee Peng. However, these factors are not sufficient on their own. Our findings suggest that individual commitment is amplified by the

presence of strong community values and a shared sense of environmental responsibility. For example, as the President of the Community Enterprises Development for Ecotourism stated,

"I wanted to establish tourism in the village... If I were to pursue it privately, it would not bring me happiness. I want to develop it in a way that allows the community to participate."

This perspective reflects a public-oriented decision-making process guided not by personal economic gain but by the intention to generate collective value, happiness, and social meaning. These insights highlight that individual motivations for social entrepreneurship are deeply embedded in ethical leadership and civic responsibility, where personal commitment aligns with a broader social mission. Environmental awareness and the recognition of natural capital further act as catalytic forces shaping entrepreneurial behavior. For instance, the community's active participation in the greenhouse gas reduction initiative demonstrates how environmental stewardship becomes a shared value. This initiative emerged through collaboration among three key entities: the Ecotourism Committee; the Community Forestry Committee, and the Village Committee; each representing a distinct form of collective agency within Tung Yee Peng community. For example, as a social enterprise director in Krabi Province, who collaborated closely with the community, noted:

"The community has demonstrated a strong commitment to development. ... the T-VER project, local mangrove forests have been designated as community forests, a designation made possible by collective action which led to the development of low-impact ecotourism activities."

The role of individual leadership and personal characteristics has been pivotal in building collaborative partnerships and aligning diverse actors toward a shared vision. The leaders' intrinsic motivation is closely linked to their ethical orientation and ability to recognize social opportunities. Guided by moral integrity and a deep sense of responsibility toward the community, they approach leadership not as a position of authority but as a form of service. By reframing challenges such as outmigration, the loss of cultural capital, and external dependency as opportunities for renewal, local leaders have initiated innovative and ethical solutions that underpin community development. Furthermore, the early community leaders deliberately chose not to operate as private entrepreneurs; instead, they prioritized inclusivity, transparency, and moral accountability as the foundation of their leadership. This approach demonstrates a combination of entrepreneurial passion, ethical commitment, and long-term strategic thinking. As one local government officer and community leader explained:

"We asked ourselves how we could overcome people's disbelief and build trust within the community. We began by showing sincerity and fairness in every step, ensuring that everyone could see our intentions and share in the process. ... We planned carefully together, with the belief that true leadership means serving the people and acting responsibly for the benefit of all."

In summary, individual-level factors represent the foundational motivation behind the emergence of social entrepreneurship in Tung Yee Peng. The ethical values, environmental awareness, and leadership of local actors transform social and ecological challenges into collective opportunities. Shaped by local context and guided by shared vision, their agency demonstrates how personal commitment grounded in community values drives socially responsible and sustainable tourism development.

2) Organizational-Level Drivers

The emergence of social entrepreneurship in Tung Yee Peng is supported by a strong internal structure and active external networks that enable the continuous mobilization of human, social, and community resources. The community's strength lies in its ability to define and manage its identity as a community enterprise committed to social impact, cultural preservation, sustainability, and self-reliance. Recognized as a model of sustainable development, Tung Yee Peng maintains flexibility while pursuing clear goals through its tourism committee, which develops strategic plans, local regulations, and equitable benefit-sharing systems. These include operational rules for boat services, limits on non-local operators, and a conservation fee for visitors that supports a communal development fund. Regular collaboration with government and private partners helps strengthen planning, training, and local economic activities. This participatory governance fosters shared ownership, organizational commitment, and sustained collective motivation among members. As reflected by gondola rower:

"Now, we make decisions together as a committee... within the boundaries of our community rules. From another perspective, it's about creating employment. When crises occur, we are resilient. We recover together."

Social capital within the community forms a strong internal foundation, while external linkages to broader networks such as the Lanta Island Community-Based Tourism Network, the Krabi Provincial Chamber of Commerce, the Krabi Provincial Community Development Office, the Lanta Island Tourism Business Association, and private-sector tourism operators further enhance the community's strategic positioning. These partnerships have facilitated collaborative development initiatives, including capacity building, knowledge exchange, and the promotion of social value. The Community Enterprises Development for Ecotourism in Tung Yee Peng serves as a central hub for initiatives campaign, which have received funding and supporting by academic institutions and development agencies. At the international level, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has contributed to the rehabilitation of community forests and financed the construction of an educational mangrove bridge to support conservation and sustainable tourism management. For example, representative from a civil society organization reflected,

"We are implementing a carbon credit project in collaboration with the Mae Fah Luang Foundation. ... Community forests can generate significant oxygen. This contributes to long-term environmental sustainability and allows local tourism to operate in alignment with mainstream tourism in a sustainable manner."

The success of the community's organizational model is also closely tied to its institutional partnerships with nonprofit organizations, including the Community Organizations Development Institute, the Thailand Environment Institute, the Mae Fah Luang Foundation, the Sustainable Development Foundation of Krabi, the Thai Ecotourism and Adventure Travel Association, and the Responsible Tourism Association of Thailand. These partnerships play a critical role in fostering knowledge development and enhancing long-term livelihood capacities. Academic institutions further contribute to this external network by providing research-based insights, technical assistance, and policy advocacy that reinforce the community's operational framework. As noted by a representative from the Provincial Association of Community-Based Tourism,

“Tung Yee Peng holds regular monthly meetings to coordinate community activities, with support from agencies such as the Social Development Office, the Tourism Authority of Thailand, the municipal government, the district administration, and the Ministry of Natural Resources.”

In summary, the organizational-level enablers of social entrepreneurship in Tung Yee Peng include a participatory governance structure, transparent and equitable benefit-sharing systems, the ability to engage effectively with cross-sectorial networks, and diversified funding sources. These mechanisms are reinforced by strong social capital, which functions as both bonding and bridging networks, fostering trust, collaboration, and collective learning within and beyond the community. External partnerships also act as knowledge intermediaries that connect local wisdom with scientific expertise, stimulating innovation and organizational learning.

3) Institutional-Level Drivers

The development of social entrepreneurship in Tung Yee Peng arises from a combination of internal motivation, organizational structure, and supportive structural and policy factors. Community values, cultural norms, and public awareness form the foundation for the acceptance and legitimacy of social entrepreneurship. These values are rooted in collective responsibility, environmental stewardship, and pride in local identity. Leaders and residents are dedicated to protecting their socio-cultural systems from externally driven development. The institutional context in Tung Yee Peng is guided by Islamic cultural values, which emphasize justice, solidarity, and compassion as moral duties. These principles shape social interactions and economic behavior, promoting fairness, mutual aid, and stewardship toward nature. Additionally, the institutional context in Tung Yee Peng is also influenced by Islamic cultural values, which nurture solidarity, reciprocity, and empathy. These cultural and religious foundations, supported by the moral authority of local religious leaders, have fostered a shared value system that strengthens social cohesion and community governance. For example, representative from local villagers reflected,

“Our way of life follows Islamic principles. We work not only for income but for peace and fairness. Tourism must respect the environment ... Caring for nature is part of our faith.”

Furthermore, the presence of institutional voids in the past highlights the importance of contextual enablers. The historical lack of public infrastructure and sustained government support compelled the community to initiate its own development efforts, relying on internal resources and collective organization. These constraints became opportunities that motivated community to develop ecotourism enterprises rooted in self-reliance and social responsibility. Although the state still lacks a comprehensive support system for social enterprises, such as long-term funding or legal frameworks, the role of government remains important in supporting community-based tourism driven by social entrepreneurship. In particular, collaboration and support from local government bodies, including the Subdistrict Administrative Organization, the municipal office, and provincial agencies, have helped guide the community toward establishing a sustainable social enterprise. Furthermore, the integration of CBT into local development plans, coupled with support from national agencies such as the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT), the Social Development Office, and the district governor of Ko Lanta, has resulted in strategic initiatives including the "Tung Yee Peng Tourism Festival" and "Krabi Go Green," which aim to balance tourism with environmental preservation. Support from external organizations has also played a crucial role in complementing community efforts. Programs

such as the Pracharath initiative and environmental conservation networks have helped bridge resource and knowledge gaps. These include projects related to clean energy and low-carbon tourism, such as the installation of solar panels on tour boats and training in carbon footprint assessment and environmental impact reduction. These efforts have been supported by academic institutions, government agencies, and private sector actors. An experienced official working with the community emphasized this collaboration by stating,

“The support comes from three key sources: academic expertise, political or bureaucratic institutions, and the civic energy of the people ... However, any support that comes in must also be appropriate to the community’s context... harmony and well-being within the community, we must ensure mutual understanding and legitimacy before implementation.”

The institutional-level drivers in the case of Tung Yee Peng community clearly demonstrate that social entrepreneurship thrives when it is embedded in a supportive institutional environment. Despite the absence of fully developed state mechanisms, the community has been able to draw on cultural values, localized relationships, and ad hoc external support to cultivate a social ecosystem conducive to sustainable and community-oriented enterprise. Moreover, the increasing policy recognition local and national authorities has strengthened its institutional legitimacy, ensuring continuity of support, integration into development planning, and broader visibility. This recognition has helped transform informal community initiatives into a formally acknowledged social enterprise framework that balances cultural heritage, environmental conservation, and economic resilience.

Interaction of Drivers and Outcomes of Social Entrepreneurship

The findings demonstrate that social entrepreneurship in the Tung Yee Peng community emerges through a continuous interaction among individual, organizational, and institutional drivers. This interaction forms a multi-level mechanism that translates personal motivations and community values into collective structures and, ultimately, into transformative outcomes for sustainable tourism development. By examining this process through the lenses of transformational mechanisms, the study explains how ethical leadership, social capital, and institutional adaptation converge to create a socially embedded and ecologically responsible tourism model.

At the macro level, the institutional and socio-cultural environment of Tung Yee Peng creates the conditions that shape individual motivations and moral orientations toward social entrepreneurship. Religious beliefs and local norms of mutuality provide the moral framework that guides individual behavior and legitimizes collective action. These cultural values emphasize environmental stewardship and social responsibility, fostering what can be described as a moral ecology that encourages individuals to act not for personal profit but for community well-being.

As a local community development specialist emphasized,

“Caring for society must begin with personal responsibility, starting from small actions... we tried to build participation, create ownership, and plan every step toward a shared vision of balance, living with nature, and maintaining warmth within our community.”

This sense of collective purpose illustrates how macro-level values and institutional norms are internalized as personal motivations for responsible action. Social entrepreneurship in the Tung Yee Peng community can therefore be viewed as a culturally grounded process in which structural conditions nurture pro-social and environmental orientations that support

sustainable tourism. Within this interactive system, decision-making and behavior are guided by coordination, transparency, and collective governance that ensure accountability to the community. From an organizational perspective, participatory structures, equitable benefit-sharing, and community consultation transform individual intentions into collective action. These practices strengthen legitimacy and trust while embedding social values within the operation of the community enterprise. This business model emphasizes ecological sensitivity, fairness, and local control, which are fundamental principles of community-based and responsible tourism. Local villagers also described the diversification of tourism-related livelihoods through eco-learning, seagrass planting, and mangrove restoration, explaining that tourism provides jobs for many people and that benefit-sharing contributes to village development. These practices show how organizational actions foster inclusive economic opportunities, reinforce social cohesion, and promote environmental awareness, contributing to the long-term goals of sustainable tourism. At the household level, community members use their skills in to create small-scale innovations that reflect self-reliance and local creativity. These individual efforts complement the broader community enterprise and enhance overall social and economic resilience.

From a transformational perspective, the combined actions of individuals and organizations influence institutional structures and sustainability outcomes. Community initiatives such as the Tung Yee Peng Tourism Festival, mangrove reforestation, and carbon reduction programs illustrate how local innovation can transform tourism governance and development into more sustainable systems. These initiatives reflect three principal outcomes of social entrepreneurship in Tung Yee Peng: empowerment, environmental conservation, and community resilience.

Empowerment is achieved through participatory governance and shared ownership that ensure equitable benefit distribution and strengthen residents' sense of agency in resource management. This empowerment is both economic and psychological, enhancing confidence, social identity, and collective efficacy. At the individual level, values such as trust, reciprocity, and faith-based ethics encourage cooperation and shared responsibility toward community well-being.

Environmental conservation is expressed through mangrove protection, low-impact tourism, and carbon reduction programs, reflecting the community's belief that "the forest belongs to the people, and the people belong to the forest." These practices embed environmental ethics into tourism operations and ensure that economic activities remain ecologically balanced. Cooperation between local and provincial authorities has made environmental stewardship a shared social norm within community governance.

Community resilience is demonstrated by the enterprise's ability to adapt to challenges. Cultural norms, reliance on local resources, and collaboration with partners have strengthened adaptive capacity. At the same time, sustainable tourism models that combine cultural values with fair benefit-sharing ensure that sustainability integrates environmental, social, and ethical dimensions. These interconnected processes show how individual actions influence broader transformations, creating a continuous cycle between values, collective structures, and institutional renewal. Social entrepreneurship functions as an integrative mechanism linking moral intention, organizational practice, and institutional adaptation to advance sustainable tourism development.

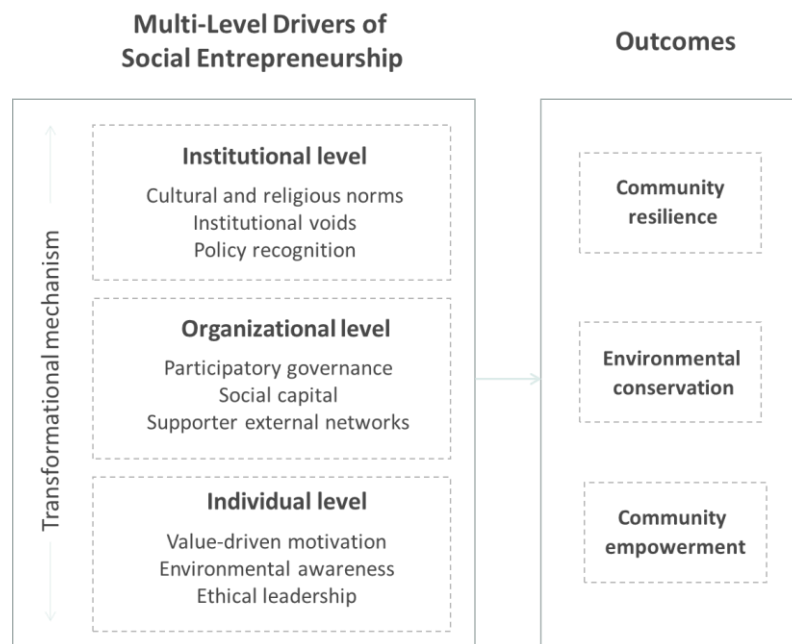


Figure 1: Multi-level Interaction of Drivers and Outcomes of Social Entrepreneurship

As illustrated in Figure 1, the diagram of multi-level interaction of drivers and outcomes of social entrepreneurship in the Tung Yee Peng community demonstrates how drivers at the individual, organizational, and institutional levels are interconnected through transformational mechanisms that translate motivation and structure into tangible social outcomes. In particular, the combination of ethical leadership, participatory governance, and institutional recognition gives rise to three closely related outcomes: community empowerment, environmental conservation, and community resilience. Together, these outcomes represent the distinctive model of socially embedded and ecologically responsible tourism that has emerged in the Tung Yee Peng community.

Discussion

The results indicate that the emergence of social entrepreneurship in Tung Yee Peng is closely linked to individual values rooted in community ethics and environmental responsibility. Consistent with the principles of responsible tourism, community leaders have prioritized social and environmental well-being over private economic gain. Their motivation is deeply value-driven, aiming to generate transformative change through equitable governance and fair benefit distribution (Spenceley et al., 2021). Environmental awareness is also central to this process, as reflected in the community's long-term conservation initiatives such as mangrove forest restoration, formal recognition of community forests, and the promotion of eco-friendly tourism activities including traditional paddle boating, reforestation, and waste management. These behaviors demonstrate ethical leadership and moral agency, where personal responsibility aligns with collective goals. The findings support Hietschold et al. (2023), who argue that social entrepreneurship is often driven by ethical commitments such as local pride, empowerment, and community accountability. Similarly, Bansal et al. (2019) emphasize the importance of local leadership in fostering rural innovation and community-based enterprise development. In Tung Yee Peng community, individual moral convictions have been transformed into practical initiatives that promote youth participation, cultural revitalization, and shared well-being. This reflects how responsible tourism can act as a mechanism for social entrepreneurship rooted in moral purpose and local knowledge.

At the organizational level, the development of social entrepreneurship in Tung Yee Peng has been facilitated by well-defined governance structures and inclusive management systems. Participatory governance, transparent decision-making, and equitable benefit-sharing strengthen trust and legitimacy among community members. These organizational mechanisms align with the core principles of responsible tourism, emphasizing fairness, inclusiveness, and collective participation (Spenceley et al., 2021). Collaborations with external actors, including public agencies, private tourism operators, and academic institutions, further enhance the resilience and adaptability of the community enterprise. Such partnerships provide access to knowledge, resources, and training while reinforcing accountability and continuous learning. These findings are consistent with De Lange and Dodds (2017), who highlight that collaborative networks enhance the long-term sustainability of social enterprises in tourism. The interplay of trust, participation, and external collaboration allows Tung Yee Peng to function as a platform for innovation and shared governance, transforming individual motivation into community-wide benefits. At this level, the results are strongly connected to social capital theory, which posits that trust, networks, and shared norms are vital for collective action and resource mobilization. In Tung Yee Peng, social capital operates as both bonding which fosters unity within the community and bridging capital which connects the enterprise to external institutions and markets.

Beyond individual and organizational dimensions, the sustainability of social entrepreneurship in Tung Yee Peng is embedded within a broader institutional framework shaped by cultural and religious values. Islamic ethics and community norms of reciprocity and solidarity have provided the normative foundation for social legitimacy and collective action. Similar to Shu et al. (2021), Islamic perspectives promote social responsibility by emphasizing ethical behavior, social justice, and community welfare, all of which underpin the community's collective orientation toward sustainable development. These shared belief systems foster a sense of environmental stewardship as a moral duty and position development within a framework of unity and mutual respect. This perspective is consistent with Berthod (2018), who emphasizes that institutional environments shape organizational behavior through shared rules and cultural expectations. Thus, these findings can be connected to Institutional theory; particularly its three pillars explain how formal policies, cultural norms, and shared belief systems collectively shape organizational legitimacy. Additionally, formal institutional structures have also played an important role in sustaining the community enterprise. The integration of community-based tourism into local development plans, together with official recognition by the Tourism Authority of Thailand and the Krabi Provincial Community Development Office, has legitimized the operations of Tung Yee Peng as a recognized social enterprise. This reflects Littlewood and Holt's (2018) argument that regulatory and policy frameworks are essential in shaping the legitimacy of social enterprises. Moreover, the community's proactive engagement in institutional work, as described by Lawrence and Suddaby (2006), demonstrates its ability to innovate and adapt in response to institutional voids. Despite limited state support and infrastructure, the community has created hybrid governance arrangements that combine social, environmental, and economic goals, illustrating institutional innovation and resilience in practice.

The interaction among the three analytical levels operates through what Saebi et al. (2018) describe as transformational mechanisms, in which individual moral agency and value-driven motivation are translated into collective organizational practices and, subsequently, into institutional adaptation. In Tung Yee Peng, personal ethics and environmental responsibility have evolved into participatory governance systems that institutionalize fairness and transparency, while community-level collaboration has reconfigured formal and informal rules governing tourism and environmental management. This dynamic is not linear but cyclical:

institutional contexts, including religious norms and policy recognition, continuously reinforce individual values and collective behaviors, thereby sustaining a self-renewing system of social entrepreneurship. The reciprocal feedback between individuals, organizations, and institutions creates a loop of learning and adaptation, enabling the community to maintain balance between economic viability, cultural integrity, and ecological preservation. Through this interconnected process, social entrepreneurship in Tung Yee Peng functions as a transformative mechanism that bridges moral intention, organizational capability, and institutional evolution, driving long-term sustainability within responsible tourism. In this community, cross-level interaction functions as a dynamic and interconnected process rather than a simple sequence of causes and effects. Individual agency grounded in moral conviction is activated within flexible organizational structures that promote collaboration, transparency, and shared ownership. These collective practices are further reinforced by institutional arrangements such as cultural norms of reciprocity, Islamic values of stewardship, and formal policy recognition from local authorities. Together, these mechanisms generate three key outcomes: community empowerment, environmental conservation, and resilience. The continuous flow of influence, in which individual values shape organizations and collective actions contribute to the evolution of institutional norms, illustrates how social entrepreneurship operates as an integrative mechanism that connects moral intention, organizational capability, and institutional adaptation.

From a theoretical standpoint, this study supports and extends existing frameworks of social entrepreneurship by emphasizing the importance of cultural, institutional, and contextual embeddedness. While much of the previous literature highlights innovation and opportunity recognition as primarily individual processes, the Tung Yee Peng case provides empirical evidence that social entrepreneurship is also a collective, value-oriented, and context-dependent phenomenon. It emerges through the interaction between moral values, social capital, and institutional negotiation rather than through isolated entrepreneurial action. This finding contributes new theoretical knowledge by illustrating that social entrepreneurship in community-based contexts operates as a culturally mediated process in which shared beliefs and governance systems shape entrepreneurial behavior and social outcomes. This perspective refines multi-level theories by demonstrating that, within responsible tourism, social entrepreneurship functions as a socially embedded system of moral practice and collective action that connects individual agency with institutional adaptation. The findings therefore both support and enrich existing theories while offering a culturally informed understanding that broadens the conceptual scope of social entrepreneurship in tourism development. Specifically, the study advances theoretical knowledge by positioning social entrepreneurship as a moral economy that links cultural values, community governance, and policy frameworks to achieve sustainable development outcomes.

From a practical standpoint, the findings demonstrate that community-based enterprises can successfully align commercial goals with social and environmental missions when supported by participatory structures and adaptive institutional frameworks. Policymakers can draw on this experience to design enabling environments that strengthen community leadership, cultural capital, and institutional legitimacy. Supportive measures should integrate social entrepreneurship education, ethical leadership training, and mechanisms that enhance local capacity for innovation and collaboration. Policy frameworks should also address institutional gaps by establishing clear legal recognition, financial incentives, and technical support mechanisms that enable social enterprises to scale their impacts. The case also demonstrates that socially responsible tourism depends not on expansion but on balance, maintaining harmony between visitor numbers, local well-being, and ecological integrity. Tourism businesses can apply this knowledge by adopting social entrepreneurship principles,

embedding ethical and environmental values into management practices, and viewing local communities as co-creators rather than beneficiaries of tourism. For other communities, strengthening local governance, ensuring transparent benefit-sharing, and nurturing local champions who can lead collaborative initiatives are essential strategies.

Despite its contributions, this study has certain limitations. As a qualitative case study, the findings are context-specific and may not be directly generalizable to all community tourism enterprises. Future research should apply mixed-method designs to validate the multi-level framework across diverse cultural and institutional settings. Longitudinal studies would also be valuable for understanding how interactions among drivers evolve over time and how external shocks, such as pandemics or climate change, influence the continuity and adaptation of social entrepreneurship in tourism. Further research could also explore the development of social impact assessment tools tailored to tourism-based social enterprises. Such tools should integrate indicators of cultural value, trust, collaboration, and community well-being to better capture the multidimensional outcomes of social entrepreneurship. Combining qualitative and quantitative methods would strengthen empirical robustness and deepen theoretical understanding of how social entrepreneurship contributes to sustainable tourism development.

Conclusion

This study examined how individual, organizational, and institutional factors interact to drive social entrepreneurship within the Tung Yee Peng community, a model of responsible tourism in southern Thailand. The findings reveal that social entrepreneurship does not arise from any single determinant but from the continuous interaction among personal motivation, collective governance, and institutional context. At the individual level, ethical leadership and intrinsic motivation rooted in Islamic and environmental values inspired community members to pursue social goals. At the organizational level, participatory governance and transparent benefit-sharing transformed these individual commitments into collective action. At the institutional level, cultural norms and supportive policy frameworks legitimized and strengthened the enterprise. Together, these interconnected forces created a reinforcing system that enabled the community to achieve social, environmental, and economic balance through responsible tourism.

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