

Tourism Entrepreneurial Ecosystems and Sustainable Destination Development: An Integrative Review of Embeddedness, Alignment, and Relational Dynamics

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Abstract

Tourism entrepreneurship is increasingly understood as an embedded and ecosystem-based phenomenon in which entrepreneurial activities are shaped by institutional, relational, resource-based, and place-specific conditions. However, existing studies remain fragmented across different theoretical perspectives, with limited integration of how ecosystem conditions interact to produce sustainable or unsustainable destination development outcomes. This study aims to synthesize the theoretical perspectives and mechanisms linking tourism entrepreneurial ecosystems with sustainable destination development. A qualitative integrative literature review was conducted using a Scopus-based search strategy. From 90 retrieved records, 77 unique records were identified after deduplication, followed by relevance screening and focused theoretical extraction. Thirteen studies were selected as the core analytical corpus, while additional studies were retained as supporting literature. The synthesis identified six interconnected dimensions: institutional embeddedness, relational embeddedness, place-based embeddedness, governance coordination, resource and capability mobilisation, and sustainability-oriented value creation. The findings further suggest that ecosystem alignment represents a useful integrative mechanism through which these conditions may reinforce entrepreneurial processes and sustainable value creation. Conversely, low alignment, relational fragmentation, institutional conflict, and unequal resource access may contribute to contested and unsustainable outcomes. The study develops an integrative framework explaining alternative pathways from embeddedness and ecosystem configuration toward sustainable destination development.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Tourism destinations are increasingly characterized by complex interactions among entrepreneurs, communities, governments, institutions, support organizations, markets, and natural and cultural resources. Within such environments, tourism entrepreneurship cannot be adequately understood as an isolated firm-level activity concerned only with opportunity recognition and venture creation. Entrepreneurial activity is embedded within institutional, social, cultural, infrastructural, and market conditions that shape access to resources, strategic choices, and outcomes. A recent review

using the mixed embeddedness perspective shows that institutional, infrastructure, cultural, societal, and market environments frame the resources and strategies adopted by tourism entrepreneurs, reinforcing the need for a systems-oriented understanding of tourism entrepreneurship (Manalu et al., 2024).

The embedded nature of tourism entrepreneurship is especially important because destinations operate through relationships among heterogeneous actors. Entrepreneurs depend on government policy, infrastructure, communities, destination organizations, suppliers, financial resources, knowledge, and markets. Research on tourism entrepreneurial ecosystems similarly shows that social networks, governance, shared knowledge, learning, culture, and landscape can function as interconnected ecosystem characteristics (Bachinger et al., 2022). The destination therefore becomes more than a geographic setting: it becomes an institutional and relational environment in which entrepreneurial opportunities are produced, constrained, negotiated, and transformed.

The entrepreneurial ecosystem perspective provides a useful extension of embeddedness-based explanations. Entrepreneurial ecosystems consist of interdependent actors and contextual factors that enable or constrain entrepreneurship within a territory (Stam & van de Ven, 2021). In tourism, this perspective has been applied to destination contexts through models emphasizing stakeholder interaction and the integration of destination, regional, and living-space management (Philipp et al., 2022). It is particularly relevant because tourism entrepreneurship often depends on collective resources that no single firm controls.

However, the growing application of ecosystem thinking does not eliminate theoretical fragmentation. Tourism entrepreneurship research has developed through partially separated streams emphasizing institutional embeddedness, networks and social capital, local governance, rural and community entrepreneurship, sustainability-oriented entrepreneurship, and entrepreneurial ecosystem configuration. Costa et al. (2023), for example, demonstrate the importance of networks, stakeholders, and governance in sustainable tourism entrepreneurship, while Calisto et al. (2023) show that tourism entrepreneurial ecosystems vary according to destination context and development stage. These studies provide complementary insights, but they do not by themselves explain how the different ecosystem conditions interact.

This issue becomes more important when sustainability is considered. An entrepreneurial ecosystem should not automatically be interpreted as a positive institutional arrangement. Recent evidence indicates that tourism entrepreneurial ecosystems may contain overlapping configurations and that relational dynamics can produce fragmentation, contested interdependencies, and unsustainable outcomes (Saha et al., 2026). Thus, the critical question is not simply whether an entrepreneurial ecosystem exists, but whether its institutions, relationships, resources, governance mechanisms, and place-based interests are sufficiently aligned to support sustainable entrepreneurial activity.

Recent research reinforces the need for such an integrative explanation. Community-based tourism entrepreneurial ecosystems have been linked to accountable governance, bridging organizations, community benefit sharing, and local value capture (Jackson, 2026). Sustainable tourism entrepreneurship also depends on enterprise–community collaboration that can reduce resource barriers and interest conflicts (Zeng et al., 2024). At the same time, regenerative tourism research emphasizes entrepreneurial embeddedness, destination metagovernance, responsibility,

resilience, and reciprocal relationships with place (Ridanpää, 2025; Ridanpää & Amore, 2025). Together, these studies suggest that sustainability emerges from relationships among ecosystem elements rather than from entrepreneurship alone.

The remaining theoretical problem is therefore one of integration. Existing literature has established the importance of institutional, relational, governance, resource, and place-based conditions, but these insights remain distributed across different theoretical conversations. What remains insufficiently synthesized is how these conditions interact to generate ecosystem alignment or fragmentation and how such alternative configurations shape entrepreneurial processes and sustainable destination development.

Accordingly, this study addresses three research questions. RQ1: How has tourism entrepreneurship been theoretically conceptualized through embeddedness and entrepreneurial ecosystem perspectives? RQ2: What institutional, relational, resource-based, governance, and place-based mechanisms enable or constrain entrepreneurial processes within tourism destinations? RQ3: How can ecosystem alignment and relational dynamics be integrated to explain alternative pathways toward sustainable destination development?

This study contributes to tourism innovation and management literature by integrating embeddedness and entrepreneurial ecosystem perspectives into a multilevel conceptual framework. Rather than treating entrepreneurial ecosystems as inherently productive, the study distinguishes enabling and constraining pathways. The central synthesis proposes ecosystem alignment as an integrative mechanism linking contextual embeddedness and ecosystem configuration to entrepreneurial processes, sustainable value creation, and destination development.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Tourism Entrepreneurship as an Embedded Phenomenon

Tourism entrepreneurship is inherently contextual because entrepreneurial opportunities are shaped by the characteristics of the destinations in which entrepreneurial activities occur. Destinations combine economic, social, cultural, environmental, and institutional dimensions, meaning that entrepreneurial action is embedded in multiple layers of context. Manalu et al. (2024) synthesize tourism entrepreneurship through mixed embeddedness and show that institutional, infrastructure, cultural, societal, and market environments interact with resources and strategies. This perspective is important because it moves analysis beyond individual entrepreneurial characteristics toward the interaction between entrepreneurs and their environments.

Institutional embeddedness is particularly important. Lopez et al. (2025) distinguish regulative, normative, and cultural-cognitive dimensions and demonstrate that institutional dimensions influence different stages of tourism entrepreneurship. Their findings suggest that institutional effects are not uniform across entrepreneurial stages. This supports a view of institutions as dynamic conditions that shape opportunity recognition, entry, legitimacy, and continued entrepreneurial activity rather than as static background factors.

At the same time, embeddedness should not be treated as universally beneficial. Institutional environments can provide legitimacy and support, but they can also produce bureaucratic barriers and unequal access. Consequently, the relevant analytical question is how institutional embeddedness interacts with other ecosystem elements.

2.2 Relational Embeddedness, Networks, and Social Capital

Tourism entrepreneurship also depends heavily on relational resources. Entrepreneurs frequently obtain information, knowledge, trust, market access, and other resources through networks rather than through formal market transactions alone. Costa et al. (2023) show that networks and stakeholder relationships are central to sustainable development in sea tourism entrepreneurship. Similarly, Wang et al. (2024) demonstrate how social entrepreneurship in a rural tourism destination can strengthen legitimacy and community social capital, thereby supporting empowerment and collective efficacy.

Recent research moves this argument further by examining resource mobilisation within tourism social entrepreneurship ecosystems. Garzón et al. (2026) show that bonding and bridging forms of social capital perform different functions in resource mobilisation, with network access, alliance formation, and social-capital generation constituting distinct phases of the process. This suggests that relational embeddedness is not simply a stock of relationships; it is a mechanism through which ecosystem actors access and mobilize different types of resources.

Nevertheless, relational embeddedness can also produce exclusion and fragmentation. Dense networks may privilege insiders, while weak bridging ties may prevent resources from circulating across groups. Therefore, relationships have both enabling and constraining effects, depending on how networks connect actors across organizational, institutional, and community boundaries.

2.3 Tourism Entrepreneurial Ecosystems

Entrepreneurial ecosystem theory emphasizes interdependence among actors and contextual factors. Stam and van de Ven (2021) conceptualize ecosystems as configurations of interdependent actors and factors that enable and constrain entrepreneurship within a territory. Spigel's (2017) relational perspective further emphasizes that ecosystem attributes derive their effects from relationships among cultural, social, and material elements. These ideas are particularly relevant to tourism because destination development depends on the interaction of businesses, public institutions, communities, intermediaries, and place-based resources.

Bachinger et al. (2022) provide direct evidence for the tourism context by identifying social networks, governance, shared knowledge, learning, culture, and landscape as important elements of tourism entrepreneurial ecosystems. Their findings also suggest that tourism ecosystems may differ from generic entrepreneurial ecosystems because culture and landscape can directly provide entrepreneurial resources. Philipp et al. (2022) similarly argue for an ecosystem-of-hospitality approach that integrates destination management with broader regional and living-space development.

Recent studies indicate that ecosystem components also influence tourism competitiveness and innovation. Altin (2026) identifies policy, finance, culture, support, human capital, and market dynamics as important ecosystem components across different economic contexts, while Köseoglu (2026) demonstrates relationships between entrepreneurship ecosystem components and tourism competitiveness. Coelho de Souza Filho et al. (2025) further integrate innovation, technology, and sustainability within tourism innovation ecosystems. These developments suggest that tourism ecosystems are multidimensional and that their outcomes depend on the interaction of several conditions.

2.4 Governance Coordination and Place-Based Embeddedness

Governance is a central mechanism because tourism destinations contain actors with different interests and levels of power. Calisto et al. (2023) demonstrate that tourism entrepreneurial ecosystems differ between destinations and caution against one-size-fits-all governance approaches. Governance should therefore be understood as an adaptive coordination mechanism rather than simply as government intervention.

Place-based embeddedness is equally important. Rural tourism entrepreneurship is strongly dependent on local resources, community relationships, and the capacity to transform place-specific assets into economic, social, and environmental value. Utami et al. (2023) identify income management, business development, mutual cooperation, collaboration, innovation, creativity, environmental awareness, resource management, and visitor management as factors associated with sustainable tourism villages in Indonesia.

Ridanpää (2025) extends the place-based perspective by emphasizing reciprocal relationships between enterprises and place in regenerative tourism entrepreneurship. Ridanpää and Amore (2025) further identify entrepreneurial embeddedness, environmental vulnerability, and destination metagovernance as destination-level drivers of regenerative transformation. These studies imply that place should not be treated merely as a resource base but as a relational environment in which entrepreneurial activities have reciprocal effects.

2.5 Sustainable Value Creation and Ecosystem Outcomes

Sustainable tourism entrepreneurship requires more than economic performance. It requires mechanisms through which economic activity contributes to social and environmental value. Zeng et al. (2024) show that stable enterprise–community partnerships can support the co-construction of sustainable entrepreneurship opportunities by reducing resource barriers and interest conflicts. Teruel-Sanchez et al. (2025) similarly demonstrate that sustainability alone does not guarantee entrepreneurial outcomes; entrepreneur values and the tourism environment play an important mediating role.

Jackson (2026) provides a destination-level ecosystem perspective by emphasizing community rights and benefit sharing, bridging organizations, accountable governance, and value capture and reinvestment. These mechanisms are important because tourism value may otherwise leak to external firms while local communities bear social and environmental costs. Sustainable value creation therefore depends on the governance of value distribution as much as on the generation of economic activity.

The literature consequently points toward a relational and systemic understanding of sustainability. Sustainable destination development is more plausible when entrepreneurial activities, institutions, community interests, resources, and governance arrangements mutually reinforce one another.

3. METHOD

3.1 Research Design

This study employed a qualitative integrative literature review. The objective was to synthesize theoretical perspectives, mechanisms, relationships, and contradictions across tourism entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial ecosystem research rather than to estimate statistical relationships or collect primary data. No questionnaires, interviews, experiments, or human respondents were used.

An integrative review was selected because the literature relevant to the research questions is theoretically heterogeneous. Studies address institutional embeddedness, social capital, governance, entrepreneurial ecosystems, sustainable entrepreneurship, rural tourism, community-based tourism, regenerative tourism, and destination competitiveness. A purely quantitative synthesis would therefore be inappropriate for the conceptual objective of the study.

3.2 Search Strategy and Data Source

Scopus was used as the primary bibliographic database. Three Scopus exports were combined, producing 90 raw records. Duplicate records were removed using DOI matching and title normalization. After deduplication, 77 unique records remained as the search universe.

The search universe was developed around combinations of terms relating to tourism entrepreneurship, tourism entrepreneurial ecosystems, entrepreneurial ecosystems, sustainable tourism entrepreneurship, tourism networks, social capital, tourism governance, and sustainable destination development. The search was intentionally broad enough to capture adjacent theoretical streams that could contribute to the integrative synthesis.

3.3 Screening and Selection

Screening proceeded through three stages. First, all records were merged and deduplicated. Second, titles and abstracts were assessed for relevance to tourism entrepreneurship, entrepreneurial ecosystem perspectives, institutional or relational embeddedness, governance, sustainability-oriented entrepreneurship, and destination development. Third, theoretically relevant studies were subjected to structured extraction. Thirteen studies were selected as the core analytical corpus, while additional studies were retained as supporting literature where they contributed specific mechanisms or contextual evidence.

The final corpus was not treated as a simple count of equally weighted studies. Instead, studies were classified according to their analytical contribution. Core studies were those most directly relevant to the conceptual pathway linking embeddedness, ecosystem configuration, entrepreneurial processes, and sustainable destination outcomes. Supporting studies were used to strengthen particular mechanisms or contextual interpretations.

3.4 Data Extraction and Analytical Synthesis

A structured extraction matrix was used to code theoretical perspective, context, ecosystem elements, institutional conditions, relational mechanisms, governance mechanisms, resource mechanisms, entrepreneurial processes, sustainability outcomes, enabling mechanisms, constraining mechanisms, and theoretical contributions. The analysis followed four stages: initial coding, thematic categorization, mechanism comparison, and conceptual integration.

A key analytical distinction was made between enabling and constraining mechanisms. Enabling mechanisms refer to conditions that facilitate entrepreneurial action and sustainable value creation, whereas constraining mechanisms refer to conditions that restrict entrepreneurship or produce contested and unsustainable outcomes. This distinction was necessary because recent tourism entrepreneurial ecosystem research demonstrates that ecosystems may generate both productive and unproductive trajectories (Saha et al., 2026).

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Corpus Structure and Theoretical Streams

The synthesis identified six interconnected dimensions: institutional embeddedness, relational embeddedness, place-based embeddedness, governance coordination, resource and capability mobilisation, and sustainability-oriented value creation. These dimensions appeared across different theoretical streams rather than as a single established model. The literature therefore supports an integrative interpretation rather than a claim that one dominant framework already explains the phenomenon.

The findings are consistent with Manalu et al. (2024), who argue that tourism entrepreneurship is characterized by dynamic interactions among multiple environmental levels, resources, and strategies. They also extend Bachinger et al. (2022), who identify social networks, governance, knowledge, culture, and landscape as components of tourism entrepreneurial ecosystems. The present synthesis connects these elements through their mechanisms and directional effects.

Table 1. Mechanism synthesis of tourism entrepreneurial ecosystems

Mechanism	Core elements	Enabling function	Constraining function
Institutional embeddedness	Rules, norms, policy, legitimacy	Creates legitimacy and opportunity access	Bureaucracy, exclusion, institutional conflict
Relational embeddedness	Networks, trust, social capital	Resource and knowledge mobilisation	Closed networks, weak bridging, fragmentation
Place-based embeddedness	Community, culture, landscape	Local integration and stewardship	Extraction, value leakage, local conflict
Governance coordination	Government, community, firms, intermediaries	Coordination, participation, accountability	One-size-fits-all governance, weak coordination
Resource mobilisation	Finance, skills, knowledge, infrastructure	Converts ecosystem potential into action	Unequal access and resource bottlenecks

Ecosystem alignment	Coherence among institutions, actors, resources	Reinforcing interdependencies	Contested interdependencies and fragmentation
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4.2 Institutional Embeddedness as an Initial Condition

Institutional embeddedness emerged as a foundational condition. Lopez et al. (2025) show that regulative, normative, and cultural-cognitive dimensions influence different stages of tourism entrepreneurship. This suggests that institutions affect entrepreneurial processes through multiple mechanisms, including legitimacy, regulatory access, social acceptance, and the perceived feasibility of entrepreneurial action.

The implication is not that supportive institutions always produce entrepreneurship, but that institutional conditions structure the opportunity environment. Where regulations are predictable and support mechanisms are accessible, institutions can facilitate entrepreneurial activity. Where bureaucracy, exclusion, or conflicting rules dominate, the same institutional embeddedness may constrain entrepreneurial processes. This dual role is consistent with the ecosystem view in which contextual elements can both enable and constrain entrepreneurship (Stam & van de Ven, 2021).

4.3 Relational Embeddedness as a Resource-Mobilisation Mechanism

The second major finding concerns relational embeddedness. Costa et al. (2023) demonstrate the importance of networks and stakeholders in sustainable tourism entrepreneurship, while Wang et al. (2024) show how social capital and legitimacy can support collective efficacy in rural tourism. Garzón et al. (2026) add a more processual explanation by showing that network resource mobilisation involves access to networks, alliance formation, and social-capital generation.

These findings support the interpretation that networks function as mechanisms for converting dispersed ecosystem resources into accessible entrepreneurial resources. However, relational resources can also become exclusionary. When resource access depends on closed networks, actors outside those networks may be systematically disadvantaged. Ecosystem quality therefore depends not only on network density but also on bridging capacity and the ability to connect otherwise separated groups.

4.4 Governance Coordination and Place-Based Embeddedness

Governance emerged as the mechanism through which heterogeneous ecosystem actors coordinate. Calisto et al. (2023) show that governance arrangements vary between destinations and that a one-size-fits-all model is inappropriate. Yachin (2025) similarly demonstrates that rural tourism projects operate at the meso level, where stakeholder interactions can generate value but also require adaptive roles, ownership, and participation.

Place-based embeddedness complements governance by explaining why ecosystem configurations differ across destinations. Utami et al. (2023) identify collaboration, resource management, environmental awareness, and visitor management among the factors associated with sustainable tourism villages. Ridanpää (2025) emphasizes reciprocal enterprise–place relationships,

while Ridanpää and Amore (2025) identify entrepreneurial embeddedness and destination metagovernance as drivers of regenerative transformation.

Taken together, these findings suggest that destination entrepreneurship is not simply located in a place; it is relationally constituted by that place. Local institutions, communities, culture, landscape, and governance arrangements influence how entrepreneurial value is created and distributed.

4.5 Ecosystem Alignment as an Integrative Mechanism

The central synthesis of this review is the concept of ecosystem alignment. The term is used here as a conceptual mechanism derived from the integration of existing findings, not as an already validated measurement construct. Ecosystem alignment refers to the degree to which institutional arrangements, actor relationships, resource flows, governance mechanisms, and place-based interests are mutually supportive in enabling sustainable entrepreneurial value creation.

High alignment occurs when institutional support, relational trust, resource access, governance coordination, and place-based interests reinforce one another. Under such conditions, ecosystem interdependencies can facilitate collaboration, resource mobilisation, innovation, community participation, and sustainable value capture. This interpretation is consistent with Jackson (2026), who identifies accountable governance, bridging organizations, community benefit sharing, and value capture/reinvestment as important ecosystem functions.

Low alignment occurs when ecosystem elements pull in different directions. Institutional fragmentation may coexist with strong entrepreneurial networks; community interests may conflict with external investment; resources may be available but inaccessible to local entrepreneurs; or governance may fail to coordinate competing actors. Saha et al. (2026) provide direct evidence that relational fragmentation and contested interdependencies can produce unsustainable outcomes. Ecosystem alignment therefore provides a way to explain why the mere presence of ecosystem components does not guarantee sustainable development.

4.6 Alternative Pathways Toward Sustainable Destination Development

The synthesis identifies two alternative pathways. The first is an enabling pathway in which embeddedness and ecosystem configuration generate high alignment. Institutional support facilitates legitimacy and opportunity access; relational networks mobilise resources; governance coordinates actors; place-based relationships encourage stewardship; and value-capture mechanisms retain benefits locally. The result is more likely to be sustainable entrepreneurship and destination-level value creation.

The second is a constraining pathway in which ecosystem components are misaligned. Institutional conflict, weak bridging relationships, unequal resources, power asymmetries, or value leakage can generate fragmentation. Entrepreneurial activity may still occur, but its benefits may be unevenly distributed and its social or environmental costs may increase. This interpretation is consistent with the critical relational perspective of Saha et al. (2026) and with Jackson's (2026) emphasis on boundary conditions such as elite capture and value leakage.

The distinction between these pathways also helps reconcile apparently inconsistent findings in tourism entrepreneurship. Some studies associate entrepreneurial activity with sustainable

destination development, whereas others identify tensions, exclusion, or environmental costs. The difference may lie not in entrepreneurship itself but in the configuration and alignment of the ecosystem in which entrepreneurship occurs.

Table 2. Integrative framework of tourism entrepreneurial ecosystem alignment

Stage	Sustainable trajectory	Contested / unsustainable trajectory
1. Context	Institutional + relational + place-based embeddedness	Institutional + relational + place-based embeddedness
2. Configuration	Governance and resources are mutually supportive	Governance and resources are fragmented or unequal
3. Alignment	High ecosystem alignment	Low ecosystem alignment
4. Process	Collaboration, participation, resource mobilisation	Fragmentation, conflict, power asymmetry, weak access
5. Value	Sustainable entrepreneurship and local value capture	Contested entrepreneurship and value leakage
6. Outcome	Economic, social and environmental value	Unequal, contested, or unsustainable outcomes

4.7 Theoretical Contribution

The first theoretical contribution is the integration of embeddedness and entrepreneurial ecosystem perspectives. Existing tourism entrepreneurship research already demonstrates the importance of institutional, infrastructure, cultural, societal, and market environments (Manalu et al., 2024), while ecosystem research identifies interdependent actors and factors (Stam & van de Ven, 2021). The present synthesis connects these perspectives through a common mechanism-oriented framework.

The second contribution is the proposition of ecosystem alignment as an integrative mechanism. The concept does not replace existing theories; instead, it synthesizes their interaction. Institutional embeddedness explains contextual opportunity structures, relational embeddedness explains resource and knowledge flows, governance explains coordination, place-based embeddedness explains local specificity, and ecosystem alignment explains whether these dimensions reinforce or undermine one another.

The third contribution is the recognition of alternative sustainability trajectories. The literature does not support a simple assumption that entrepreneurial ecosystems automatically create sustainable destinations. Recent evidence on fragmentation, contested interdependencies, community value capture, regenerative entrepreneurship, and enterprise–community partnerships instead suggests that sustainability is conditional on how ecosystem relationships are configured and governed (Jackson, 2026; Ridanpää, 2025; Saha et al., 2026).

The fourth contribution concerns tourism innovation. Tourism innovation ecosystems increasingly integrate innovation, technology, and sustainability dimensions (Coelho de Souza Filho et al., 2025). The present framework extends this discussion by arguing that innovation outcomes also depend on institutional and relational alignment. Innovation can contribute to destination sustainability when it is supported by ecosystem relationships and local value-capture mechanisms, but innovation without alignment may reproduce inequalities or external value leakage.

5. CONCLUSION

This study synthesized tourism entrepreneurship literature through the combined perspectives of embeddedness, entrepreneurial ecosystems, relational dynamics, governance, and sustainable destination development. The review demonstrates that tourism entrepreneurship is not an isolated firm-level phenomenon but a multilevel process embedded in institutional, relational, resource-based, and place-specific environments.

Six interconnected dimensions were identified: institutional embeddedness, relational embeddedness, place-based embeddedness, governance coordination, resource and capability mobilisation, and sustainability-oriented value creation. These dimensions should not be treated as independent determinants because their effects are mediated by interactions among ecosystem actors and institutions.

The central conceptual contribution is ecosystem alignment. The concept describes the extent to which institutional arrangements, actor relationships, resource flows, governance mechanisms, and place-based interests reinforce one another in supporting sustainable entrepreneurial value creation. High alignment provides a pathway toward collaboration, resource mobilisation, sustainable entrepreneurship, and local value capture. Low alignment can produce fragmentation, contested interdependencies, power asymmetry, and unsustainable outcomes.

For destination policymakers and managers, the implication is that entrepreneurship support should move beyond firm-level incentives. Policies should strengthen bridging relationships, improve institutional accessibility, promote accountable governance, facilitate equitable resource access, and establish mechanisms for community benefit sharing and local reinvestment. Destination development should therefore be approached as ecosystem design and coordination rather than as the aggregation of individual businesses.

The study has limitations. First, it relies on published literature and a Scopus-based search universe, meaning that relevant studies outside the database or outside the selected search terminology may have been missed. Second, ecosystem alignment is a conceptual synthesis rather than a validated empirical construct. Future studies should therefore examine the framework through comparative destination case studies, longitudinal research, qualitative fieldwork, and quantitative operationalization. Such studies could test whether ecosystem alignment predicts sustainable entrepreneurship and destination-level outcomes under different institutional and cultural conditions.

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7. DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The bibliographic dataset was derived from Scopus search exports. The processed screening and theoretical extraction matrices are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request, subject to database licensing and access restrictions.

8. CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declares no conflict of interest.

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