

# Nascent entrepreneurship: a critical perspective and research agenda in tourism and hospitality

Tourism and  
hospitality

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## Abstract

**Purpose** – This study aims to systematize the drivers of nascent entrepreneurship in tourism and to suggest avenues for future research. As a consequence of the pandemic, a reduction in early-stage entrepreneurial activity was reported worldwide. The countries that responded best to this situation were those that fostered entrepreneurship at this early stage, designated as nascent. Hence, research on nascent entrepreneurs requires particular attention.

**Design/methodology/approach** – To address this study's goal, the authors have examined the development of nascent entrepreneur literature in the last two decades and discussed how the literature on tourism nascent entrepreneurship relates to the mainstream literature in terms of theoretical frameworks. The authors explored specificities of the tourism industry to propose new research avenues to explore the theme of new venture creation in the hospitality and tourism sector.

**Findings** – The authors divided the implication of tourism specificities into main themes: motivations, human and social capital and government and incubators. Several research questions for future research are proposed.

**Practical implications** – By focusing on nascent entrepreneurship, researchers and policymakers can obtain important insights from projects that have not been implemented, going beyond those that have been successfully undertaken, as aimed at in entrepreneurship research.

**Originality/value** – This research contributes to the nascent tourism entrepreneurship literature by providing theoretical and empirical research questions to advance existing knowledge in tourism nascent entrepreneurship.

**Keywords** Human capital, Social capital, Entrepreneurial opportunity recognition, Incubators, Early-stage entrepreneurship

**Paper type** Research paper

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## 1. Introduction

The creation of new ventures constitutes a priority in political agendas, as it is a source of development of countries, be it economic, technological and social. Hence, entrepreneurship has been a relevant topic for political programs and for the scientific literature that has grown significantly and comprehensively (Fu *et al.*, 2019). The latest report from global entrepreneurship monitor [Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM), 2022] brought some concerning figures regarding total early-stage entrepreneurial activity (TEA), an indicator composed by nascent entrepreneurs and new business owners. The global level of TEA has generally fallen between 2019 and 2021, with few exceptions (e.g. Saudi Arabia and Netherlands) because of the availability of support packages for start-ups.

The business start-up process comprises four stages: conception, gestation, infancy and adolescence, with three transition points: conception, firm birth and persistence (Wagner, 2006). Individuals actively engaged in the conception stage of entrepreneurship are referred to as nascent entrepreneurs, defined as “those who have actively devoted resources to starting a business but who have not yet paid wages or salaries for three months (including to themselves)” [Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM), 2022, p. 26]. World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) has emphasized the role of entrepreneurship and business start-up as a catalyst for tourism recovery post COVID-19 (UNWTO, 2021). While prior studies on hospitality and tourism focus primarily on small and medium-sized enterprise (SMEs) and established firms, very little academic attention has been paid to nascent entrepreneurship.

The tourism industry provides a unique context for entrepreneurship because of low barriers to entry, low start-up costs and diverse (fragmented) business opportunities in sectors such as accommodation, tour operators, food and hospitality, travel and transport, attractions and experiences. The extant research on entrepreneurship in tourism has focused mainly on entrepreneurial motivations (Morrison, 2006), entrepreneurial self-efficacy (Hallak *et al.*, 2014), place identity and business' support for community (Hallak *et al.*, 2012), human capital (HC) (Kallmuenzer *et al.*, 2021), social capital (Zhao *et al.*, 2011) and sustainable business models (Dias *et al.*, 2020). However, research on nascent entrepreneurship in tourism remains under explored. For example, existing studies on early-stage entrepreneurship have focused on “entrepreneurial intentions”, collecting data from student samples (Esfandiari *et al.*, 2019; Figueroa-Domecq *et al.*, 2022). Thus, while previous studies have examined “intentions” (pre-nascent) and established business stages, the critical nascent period which is the catalyst for tourism entrepreneurship requires a stronger research agenda.

The following paper presents a critical review of the extant literature on tourism and hospitality entrepreneurship, with a deliberate focus on the conception and nascent stages. It brings to light the current gaps in the body of knowledge and draws on theories from the mainstream entrepreneurship field to put forth an agenda for future research and discovery.

## 2. Nascent entrepreneurship in tourism and hospitality

The body of knowledge on nascent entrepreneurship in tourism and hospitality remains at the infancy stage. This study conducted an elaborate search through Scopus database collections to collate and critically analyse relevant sources. The Scopus search was driven through keywords including “tourism”, “hospitality”, “travel”, and “nascent entrepreneur\*”, “new firm/new business/new venture”, “business/venture/tourism start-ups”, “nascent business” and “early-stage venture/business”. Articles published between 2000 and 2022 were included in the search frame, with subject areas, including tourism, business, management, entrepreneurship and social sciences. The search resulted in 29 relevant manuscripts, with further refinement conducted to select those articles that were focussed on the drivers of nascent entrepreneurship (i.e. motivation, HC, social

capital, opportunity recognition, local identity, government and incubators). Table 1 summarizes the key topics and theoretical approach in each study.

Research on tourism and hospitality focusing on the early stages of entrepreneurship predominantly explored “motivations” as the construct of interest. Research also adopted two main theoretic approaches “divergent” or “convergent”. Most of the studies on this field

Authors	Approach	Focus
Cetin <i>et al.</i> (2022)	Divergent	Motivation (contextual and individual) and perceived entrepreneurial success
Erkuş and Terhorst (2021)	Convergent	Fictional expectations as a motivational basis
Hornig <i>et al.</i> (2021)	Convergent	The importance of organizational learning under conditions of environmental uncertainty
Prezenza <i>et al.</i> (2020)	Convergent	The influence of personality traits on opportunity recognition and start-up organization
Power <i>et al.</i> (2020)	Convergent	Psychological characteristics, risk types in ethical tourism entrepreneurship and coping mechanism
Teixeira <i>et al.</i> (2019)	Convergent	Entrepreneurial social networks and the primary role of family and friends for venture support
Çakmak <i>et al.</i> (2019)	Convergent	Economic capital is the main motivation, and social capital is emphasized to accessing opportunities
Alsos <i>et al.</i> (2016)	Convergent	The influence of social identity on entrepreneurial behaviour
Banki and Ismail (2015)	Divergent	The contribution of family and local “community banks” for motivation and financing the new venture
Campopiano <i>et al.</i> (2016)	Convergent	Family bonding and bridging social capital and the pursuit of an environmental mission as key motivators for entrepreneurship
Chan and Quah (2012)	Convergent	Defines the motivational pull factors (family, resource availability, opportunities) and push factors (personal attitude, experience, and personal interests)
Tew and Barbieri (2012)	Divergent	Motivations are economic and quality of life
Zhao <i>et al.</i> (2011)	Convergent	Human capital plays an influential role on rural entrepreneurship
Alonso (2011)	Convergent	Main motivation are business opportunities and a chance of professional focus as post-retirement activity
Iorio and Corsale (2010)	Divergent	Lifestyle and economic motivations to start a tourism business. Relevant role of the government
Zhao and Getz (2008)	Divergent	In developing countries, the start-up motivation in rural family business is related equally to economic and lifestyle goals, whereas in developed countries, the lifestyle goal is the dominant motivation
McGehee <i>et al.</i> (2007)	Convergent	Gendered nature of motivations for starting agri-tourism entrepreneurship is confirmed
Karlsson (2005)	Divergent	Bridging social capital and sense of community appear to be influential in the creation of small business enterprises in tourism production
McGehee and Kim (2004)	Convergent	Motivations are economic and lifestyle motives
Jóhannesson <i>et al.</i> (2003)	Divergent	Social capital and local identity help people in rural and peripheral areas move from traditional resource-based livelihoods to entrepreneurship in tourism
Szivas (2001)	Divergent	Highlights the way of life motives and human capital (experience and ability to handle people) for tourism entrepreneurship
Getz and Carlsen (2000)	Divergent	Start-up tourism business are mostly driven by family-related goals and lifestyle motivations

**Table 1.**  
Key topics covered in  
H&T nascent or  
start-up  
entrepreneurship

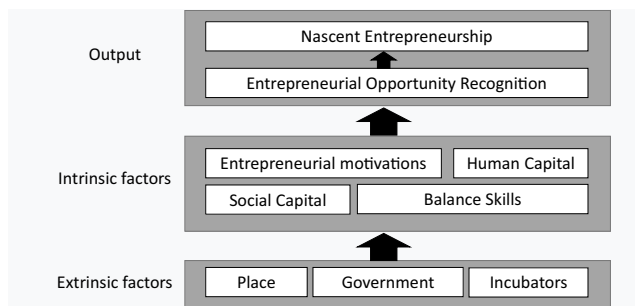
are convergent whereby “studies build on mainstream entrepreneurship theorizing to examine the context of tourism” (Solvoll *et al.*, 2015; p. 120). Earlier studies (Szivas, 2001; Getz and Carlsen, 2000) followed a “divergent approach” by exploring the unique characteristics of the tourism industry) while the most recent tend to be convergent. The depth and specificity of the topics addressed require recourse to mainstream literature to support the studies, revealing the lack of specific hospitality and tourism (H&T) literature. The critical review of past studies identifies that nascent entrepreneurship is predominantly influenced through internal (intrinsic) and external (extrinsic) factors (Figure 1). Intrinsic factors include entrepreneurial motivations, HC; social capital; entrepreneurial opportunity recognition. Extrinsic factors are much broader and relate the influence of the place or destination and to the government role and agencies supporting entrepreneurship, materialized through start-up incubators (Liñán-Alcalde *et al.*, 2002; Alhamawndi and Almahmoud, 2020; Busch and Barkema, 2022; Kadile and Biraglia, 2022; Bachinger *et al.*, 2022).

### 3. Intrinsic drivers of nascent entrepreneurship

#### 3.1 Entrepreneurial motivations

Mainstream nascent entrepreneurship literature associates the motivation to start a business with autonomy, achievement, willingness to become an entrepreneur and wealth aspiration motivations (Zhou and Wu, 2021). For example, Zhou and Wu (2021) found that the need for achievement or for affiliation constitutes the main motives to become an entrepreneur. Furthermore, “need for achievement” motivations influence the types of business start-up decisions and a greater emphasis on financial success, whereas “need for affiliation” is attributed to business start-up for social and community-based objectives (Weerasinghe and Madurapperuma, 2020). Psychological factors including entrepreneurial self-efficacy – one’s belief in his/her capability to successfully entrepreneurial goals – can also shape motivations of nascent entrepreneurs and is related to entrepreneurial learning and perceived controllability (Hand *et al.*, 2020).

Motivations as wealth, independence or need for achievement play an important role on entrepreneurial behaviour. For example, Zhou and Wu (2021) found that the more nascent entrepreneurs wanted to be independent, the less intensive they search for an idea. In particular, the influence is reflected on their initial explorative (opportunity search, risk taking, innovation) and exploitative activities (refinement, efficiency, implementation and execution) (Luu, 2017). Motivations are also shaped by entrepreneurs’ previous experience and education (i.e. HC), recognized as important determinants of nascent entrepreneurship (Davidsson and Honig, 2003).



**Figure 1.**  
Drivers of nascent entrepreneurship

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The models described in the mainstream literature are associated with a focus on independence or wealth as the outcome variable. However, considering existing H&T literature other motivations share this place. Much of literature on tourism entrepreneurship has argued that tourism business owners are driven by lifestyle motivations, including living in a certain destination, building social networks or pursuing a passion/interest (Thomas *et al.*, 2011) or social goals (Sigala, 2016). Erkuş and Terhorst (2021) refer to fictional expectations as a motivational basis. These lifestyle and social goals are often more important than business growth (Dias and Patuleia, 2021). However, lifestyle and profitability should not be viewed as mutually exclusive considering tourism businesses need to be financially viable to remain sustainable (Hallak *et al.*, 2012; Sun *et al.*, 2020). Thus, mainstream models should be considered in light of these almost unique characteristics of entrepreneurs in H&T. Therefore, it is necessary to explore the differences when dealing with nascent entrepreneurs who are driven by non-financial objectives. At this level, research in H&T is very scarce. For example, Chan and Quah (2012) describes the start-up motives being classified into pull factors (external/situational attribution) and push factors (internal/dispositional attribution), but no link with business goals were considered. Dias *et al.* (2021) explored the determinants of innovation and self-efficacy in lifestyle entrepreneurs, but the study was not focused on nascent entrepreneurs.

The motivation for tourism business start-up is also related to personal circumstances, as suggested by Thomas *et al.* (2011) or, more specifically, from the intersection between personal interests and experience resulting from individual circumstances in what Yachin (2019) refers to “knowledge corridors”. Personal circumstances may limit the ability to identify entrepreneurial opportunities, as is the case of family influence in small tourism businesses (Lynch, 2005). Opportunity recognition and exploitation represent a key individual characteristic of new venture creation (Ye *et al.*, 2019). With the tourism business being a magnet for its low barriers and lifestyle benefits (Thomas *et al.*, 2011), lack of experience and knowledge of the industry can lead to gaps or heuristics in recognizing opportunities. In the context of nascent entrepreneurship in H&T, this issue is poorly researched. Ye *et al.* (2019) reports that the potential of many entrepreneurs in tourism to recognize opportunities is strongly conditioned by their personal characteristics. However, further research is needed regarding the consequences of this phenomenon, namely, how this will influence the willingness to create a business or how it may lead to unviable businesses.

Another characteristic of the tourist business is the influence of the destination in start-ups creation. New venture creation is dependent on the characteristics of destinations and other offerings (Solvoll *et al.*, 2015). The role of the place on the motivations and on opportunity recognition of nascent entrepreneurs has been studied by Wen *et al.* (2021) who found that community embeddedness influences the motivation to act responsibly towards the destination stakeholders. Furthermore, the place embeddedness allows the nascent entrepreneur to information and knowledge enabling its ability to recognize opportunities (Strobl and Kronenberg 2016). However, no studies on nascent entrepreneurs were developed regarding the processes associated with this knowledge transference or in which conditions community embeddedness favours specific entrepreneurial motivations and the chosen business model.

### *3.2 Human capital and balances skills*

HC theory posits that an individual's attributes/resources accumulated during his/her life trajectory such as experience, skills, qualifications, learning and knowledge can lead to higher performance outcomes (Davidsson and Honig, 2003). HC can be categorized as general HC – overall education, life experience, etc. – and specific HC – accumulated skills and activity- or task-related experience.

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From the mainstream nascent entrepreneurship literature, HC plays an important role in entrepreneurial behaviour, namely, opportunity recognition and confidence in opportunities (Dimov, 2010), entrepreneurial proactiveness (Zhao and Smallbone, 2019), entrepreneurial alertness (Kadile and Biraglia, 2022) and risk orientation (Markowska *et al.*, 2019) which encourage nascent entrepreneurs to successfully exploit a business opportunity and be co-creators of the environment in which they act and interact (Zhao and Smallbone, 2019).

Experience, as a dimension of HC can be categorized as entrepreneurial, managerial and industry related (Stuetzer *et al.*, 2013). Prior industry experience offers valuable insights, knowledge and skills on the current industry to guide nascent entrepreneur to launch a new venture. Nascent entrepreneurs with previous experience in the industry are more able to spot opportunities in the field and then, in the next steps, when developing opportunities, that experience assists them to be more aware about competitors and market tendencies and therefore to make accurate judgments about the feasibility of the opportunity (Davidsson and Honig, 2003; Wagner, 2006). Dimov (2010) found that entrepreneurial experience does not directly affect nascent entrepreneurship; however, it has an indirect effect, as it drives opportunity confidence, which consequently affect nascent entrepreneurship.

Specific education/training in “entrepreneurship” was found to be significantly and positively related to entrepreneurship related HC assets – including knowledge and skills pertinent to entrepreneurship, recognizing opportunities and dealing with uncertainty (Martin *et al.*, 2013). Zhao *et al.* (2011) recognized that HC plays an influential role on rural entrepreneurship, and Kallmuenzer *et al.* (2021) found that specific HC industry experience and managerial experience are important antecedents of start-up growth. While education provides general and explicit knowledge, work experience triggers the acquisition of tacit and context-specific knowledge (Zhao *et al.*, 2011). Horng *et al.* (2021) highlighted the importance for start-ups of organizational learning under environmental uncertainty.

These studies highlight the importance of HC for the development of nascent entrepreneurship and progression to full scale business operations. However, the tourism and hospitality industry is characterized by low barriers to entry, including low skill requirements or professional qualifications (Horng *et al.*, 2021; Cetin *et al.*, 2022). Thus, nascent entrepreneurs in tourism may fail to adequately develop their HC which is critical for the entrepreneurial process (Kallmuenzer *et al.*, 2021). Thus, businesses founded by owners with lifestyle (as opposed to entrepreneurial) goals are built on a weak asset base, face high operational risks and high probability of failure (Liu *et al.*, 2021). Although, the evidence is not definitive and tourism businesses with relatively low levels of HC assets may still establish and flourish, thus, further enquiry is needed on the different dimensions of HC required to support and nascent entrepreneurs (Solvoll *et al.*, 2015).

HC in nascent entrepreneurship is multifaceted and multidimensional; it is therefore the different combinations of the dimensions of HC (education, task specific experienced, industry knowledge, etc.) that affect discovery and exploitation of business opportunities (Davidsson and Honig, 2003). Previous research also argues that the intention to start a new venture is the result of a combination of skills that, in an optimal balance, represent a stronger predictor than HC itself (Lazear, 2004; Stuetzer *et al.*, 2013). The concept of balance skills is rooted in the “Jack of all trades” theory which argues that although entrepreneurs “need not be expert in any single skill, they must be sufficiently good at a wide variety to make sure that the business does not fail” (Lazear, 2004, p. 208). Balance skills are the result of an intricate set of factors such as managerial experience, personality or age (Stuetzer *et al.*, 2013). Considering the “Jack of all trades” theory, the balance skill set proves to be a stronger predictor of nascent entrepreneurship and is strongly influenced by social environments and networks (Lazear, 2004). Although relatively thorough research exists on combinations of personality traits (Prezenza *et al.*, 2020) and motivations (Chan and Quah, 2012) of nascent

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entrepreneurs, to our best knowledge the implications of “Jack of all trades” theory has not been studied in the H&T literature. The tourism industry presents a very attractive field for experienced managers at various stages of their lifetime. For example, several groups present different managerial backgrounds as emigrants (Shaw *et al.*, 2004), retired people or people who just want to change their lives and who see tourism “as a way to enjoy nice destination while generating some income to sustain their lifestyle” (Peters *et al.*, 2009: p. 398). In addition, considering the industry context that has been described, namely, the plurality of motivations, the different academic and business backgrounds of nascent entrepreneurs in tourism, the acting logic (the causal/effectuation dichotomy described in the next section). This prompts the need to develop a configurational analysis to understand the different groups of nascent entrepreneurs and how each connects to the concretization and growth of new ventures.

Tourism businesses also build a knowledge base through social capital and their connection to the social and physical environment of a destination (i.e. place attachment/place identity). This place attachment represents a passive and informal channel of knowledge for tourism entrepreneurs where the start-up process is highly dynamic and develops through a process of constant adaptation to the market (Marchant and Mottiar, 2011; Rodriguez-Sanchez *et al.*, 2019). Despite this dynamic nature, research in tourism lacks empirical analysis to consolidate an understanding about knowledge acquisition mechanisms (Dias *et al.*, 2020). More specifically, there is need to further explore trigger moments, identifying when accumulated knowledge improves perception in means-end relationships and contributes to a better ability to identify entrepreneurial opportunities (Mitra *et al.*, 2011).

### 3.3 Social capital

According to social capital theory, an entrepreneurial action is formed on the basis of the benefits (resources and opportunities) gained from networks, bonds, membership and social structures (Zhao *et al.*, 2011; Ceci *et al.*, 2019). Bonding social capital refers to one’s close social environment such as family, friends and community-based with whom to share values and beliefs, whilst bridging social capital encompasses contacts with the external environment such as firms, business associations, community agencies, incubators and other social groups. Zhao *et al.* (2011) argue that “knowing other entrepreneurs or people with tourism/hospitality work experience could dramatically increase the probability of someone pursuing business opportunities in local tourism development” (p. 1588). Social bonds enable potential entrepreneurs to better recognize opportunities and exploit them with support and confidence (McKeever *et al.*, 2015). However, the extent to which different types of social capital influence entrepreneurship remains uncertain. Davidsson and Honig (2003) found that bridging social capital is more important than bonding social capital when the intention to create a new venture evolve to more advanced stages. In contexts of uncertainty, incubators play an important role by contributing to strengthen networking and collaboration (Busch and Barkema, 2022).

Studies on social capital of entrepreneurs in a tourism context remain limited (Zhao *et al.*, 2011; Lee and Hallak, 2020). The focus has been on the effects of social capital and the performance of established businesses (Lee and Hallak, 2020); however, the extent to which social capital can enhance the ability of potential entrepreneurs to recognize an emergent opportunity and assess its feasibility (Zhao *et al.*, 2011) remains underexplored. Teixeira *et al.* (2019) highlighted the importance of family in early stages of the venture by providing moral support and bonding and bridging social capital. Ye *et al.* (2019) also found that nascent entrepreneurs strongly rely on the family social network. However, the family influence on new tourism ventures needs a deeper approach, as suggested by Campopiano *et al.* (2016). They argue that, although family and friends are important, the high fragmentation of

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small businesses leads to a diminished perception of the destination product by the visitors, showing that other local stakeholders also play a crucial role in new venture development, and that the influence of this local network remains unexplored.

The premise behind the relevance of social capital is that networks improve the competitive position of nascent entrepreneurs because of the possibility of accessing knowledge and resources that cannot be reached otherwise (Koch and Windsperger, 2017). The effects of social capital on entrepreneurship are enhanced when combined with HC (Markowska *et al.*, 2019; Davidsson and Honig, 2003). Few studies in H&T combine these two dimensions in an integrative model for nascent entrepreneurship. Karlsson (2005) found that bridging social capital combined with sense of community contributes to new firm development. This alerts to several research streams not covered yet by existing literature. Firstly, a new layer in the “Jack of all trades” approach can be considered by including social skills to other personal and technical skills to identify the better combinations for opportunity recognition and new venture development. Secondly, following Karlsson (2005), the influence of local community and stakeholders on social capital and new venture creation are part of an equation to be explored. Thirdly, the timeline of events should also be taken into consideration. In other words, the literature suggests different influences of networking groups along the start-up process (Teixeira *et al.*, 2019), and the exploration of the influence of those destination-related groups in different moments of venture creation might bring very interesting findings.

#### *3.4 Entrepreneurial opportunity recognition*

The starting point for entrepreneurship is recognition and pursuit of market-based opportunities (Zhou and Wu, 2021). Two distinct approaches may be considered in relation to entrepreneurial opportunity recognition. The first is related to the analytical and systematic processes leading to the interpretation of the environment, through which opportunities may be identified. This process is called categorization (Honig and Samuelsson, 2012) or prediction orientation (Markowska *et al.*, 2019). Previous research argues that this approach is related to planning, which allows the nascent entrepreneur to have greater confidence in the identified opportunities (Dimov, 2010). The use of this systematic search process is associated with less experienced nascent entrepreneurs (Markowska *et al.*, 2019) and novice (Zhao and Smallbone, 2019). These seek to build on the development of future ventures by defining goals and planning resources and activities to achieve them, in what is called a causal logic (as opposed to an effectuation logic, as described below) (Zhao and Smallbone, 2019).

The second approach relates to a proactive attitude by the nascent entrepreneur (Zhao and Smallbone, 2019) in which opportunity identification derives from a risk orientation (as opposed to a prediction orientation) (Markowska *et al.*, 2019), associated with more experienced nascent entrepreneurs (Zhao and Smallbone, 2019). In this case, planning, through systematic search, has a negative effect on nascent proactivity (Zhao and Smallbone, 2019). The process of opportunity identification is distinct and relies on the recognition of possible disruptions which is referred to as alertness rather than on categorization processes (Honig and Samuelsson, 2012). Thus, nascent entrepreneurs follow a process of effectuation, which is based on their nascent ability to transform a particular knowledge or competence in a future venture (Roundy *et al.*, 2018).

Considering existing H&T literature, we acknowledge Fu *et al.*'s (2019) perspective on opportunity exploitation where the destination environment provides (or not) incentives for and support entrepreneurial activities. More specifically, they point economic, socio-cultural, policy and technological factors influencing entrepreneurial activities. Their theoretical framework point to further empirical testing regarding the influence of these antecedents on



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entrepreneurship. The contribution of these factors on nascent entrepreneurship needs also to be understood in context of H&T.

Considering the exploitation perspective, it is important to address another important characteristic of the H&T context. We refer to the fact that it is a business generally associated with low entry barriers, namely, at the level of training and previous experience (Ioannides and Petersen, 2003; Sun *et al.*, 2020), which, in addition to the inherent management capabilities problems, also results in a strong tendency for imitation, especially in geographic agglomeration contexts (Zhang *et al.*, 2015), which negatively influences the ability to identify and assess entrepreneurial opportunities. To our best knowledge, the implications of low entry barriers, namely, limited experience and tourism business knowledge and weak business models on opportunity recognition is not yet researched.

Considering the theory of social embeddedness, the role and importance of social networks can provide a deeper understanding of how group membership can stimulate entrepreneurial actions (Busch and Barkema, 2022), from several perspectives. At an early stage, the role of community embeddedness is essential in detecting knowledge and opportunities for the creation of new ventures (Dias *et al.*, 2020). However, the processes of acquisition, absorption and transformation of local tacit knowledge are far from consolidated in tourism research (Hoarau, 2014). Dias *et al.* (2020) suggests that these processes are mainly associated with informal practices like local gatherings, deliberate community centered strategies (e.g. events, museums) or simply by living there. In the construction of the tourism product, cooperation between entrepreneurs is of crucial importance to create a network of businesses that can offer unique and immersive experiences and capitalize on the detected opportunities (Binkhorst and Den Dekker, 2009). However, as depicted by Czernek (2017) cooperation between tourism entrepreneurs is often weak and influenced by free riders with a high distrust in relation to other entrepreneurs. The combination of a reduced level of cooperation and the necessity to build partnerships to shape competitive products is an apparent contradiction that should be explored.

The role of the place and the community in entrepreneurship is another field for future research. This interdependent process needs to be further explored, especially through the identification of the processes between the location specific advantages and entrepreneurial opportunity recognition at the nascent stage.

## 4. External drivers of nascent entrepreneurship

### 4.1 Place-based drivers of nascent entrepreneurship

Individuals who are deeply involved in their communities and motivated by social and economic goals are more likely to launch a new business venture, especially as first-time entrepreneurs (Edelman *et al.*, 2010). Tourism businesses are rooted in a destination and the entrepreneur's connection with "place" has considerable influence on the:

- the decision to start a business;
- the goals and objectives of the business; and
- operations and strategies (Hallak *et al.*, 2012).

Tourism enterprises revolve around a holistic network of stakeholders (Binkhorst and Den Dekker, 2009), where the tourism product is the result of experiences with a particular place (Andersson Cederholm and Hultman, 2010) and a blurring between production and consumption (Fu *et al.*, 2019). Thus, unlike other businesses, where the traditional value chain concept is dominant to explain value creation, the tourism product is best explained by the existence of an intricate network of tourism and non-tourism businesses that

contribute to the whole experience that is offered to tourists (Richards, 2011). Social and business networks on which the tourism business is grounded are associated with the place/destination and the community, being an important factor for the nascent entrepreneurial development (Jack and Anderson, 2002). These networks enable nascent entrepreneurs to access local tacit knowledge (Yachin, 2019; Dias *et al.*, 2020) and the identification and exploitation of opportunities (Fu *et al.*, 2019; Korsgaard *et al.*, 2015b).

Destinations that provide a supportive entrepreneurial environment supports the conception of entrepreneurial ideas and opportunities (Mueller, 2006). Place becomes the stimulus factor for nascent entrepreneurship offering information and resources, minimizing uncertainty and ambiguity and increasing individuals' self-confidence to pursue a business idea (Kadile and Biraglia, 2022).

Thus, "place" can affect entrepreneurial behaviour through three main mechanisms:

- (1) The unique characteristics of the destinations (e.g. environment or cultural assets) provides opportunities for innovation and developing tourism products and service that attract visitors.
- (2) An entrepreneurial culture and eco-system within the place can support idea generation and business start-up.
- (3) Individuals attachment and identity to place, including its physical and social dimensions, supports nascent entrepreneurs' capabilities and social networks.

Therefore, while an individual's place identity acts as an intrinsic driver of entrepreneurship, governments play a key role in supporting an entrepreneurial ecosystem and enabling business ideas to metamorphosise into full scale business operations.

#### *4.2 Government and incubators as leveraging elements*

The critical review of the literature has synthesized the many drivers of entrepreneurial activity in tourism, including the interdependencies among a destination, opportunities, social capital and entrepreneurs. Entrepreneurship activity, as a major source of employment, innovation and competitiveness in an economy, constitutes an important goal in government agendas (Luu, 2017; Ribeiro-Soriano and Galindo-Martin, 2012). To achieve this goal, governments can implement policies, incentives and support programs that influence nascent entrepreneurship and minimising barriers to business start-up in terms of, time, cost and resources. Governments can also lower barriers to expansion and growth, in terms of reducing burdens related to the access to credit, red tape and labour laws. Government also plays an important role in developing entrepreneurial HC through training resources, business advice and public funding. Such initiatives can lower nascent entrepreneurs risk perceptions fear of failure (Zhao *et al.*, 2011.)

Entrepreneurial incubators also play an essential role in gestation activities. Firstly, their role in terms of knowledge and learning enable nascent entrepreneurs to acquire entrepreneurial competencies by sharing the accumulated experience of other start-ups (Miles *et al.*, 2017). This learning contributes to the nascent entrepreneur developing greater confidence in opportunities, which in turn acts as a trigger for new ventures (Dimov, 2010). Incubators also provide a space where nascent entrepreneurs develop important cognitive processes for the recognition of entrepreneurial opportunities, such as self-awareness or self-reflection (Miles *et al.*, 2017). Furthermore, incubators function as a driver of social capital by facilitating business networks (Davidsson and Honig, 2003), whose effects are particularly effective in the context of uncertainty (Busch and Barkema, 2022).

In tourism industry, business incubators constitute a useful tool for establishing new tourism ventures in rural, peripheral and urban areas. Because of the unique characteristics

of the tourism industry, incubators can adopt a clearer scope and focus on nature-based tourism, ecotourism, experiential design, etc. (Schiopu *et al.*, 2015). Incubators not only provide knowledge and skills but also emotional support to its members, being this one of their main goals (Busch and Barkema, 2022). Emotion can influence creativity, awareness, confidence, judgement, persuasion and decision-making. The theory of social embeddedness recognizes entrepreneurs benefit from access the network structure in an environment, community or society, from which they obtain tangible resources, emotional support and enhance status and legitimacy (McKeever *et al.*, 2015). As such, by being embedded in local community, entrepreneurs are better positioned to understand social structures and local environment, allowing them to credibly link and perform locally oriented actions (McKeever *et al.*, 2015).

However, research in tourism on how the roles and types of different incubators act as support mechanisms for tourism entrepreneurship development requires greater attention. Further understanding of how to best structure and resource tourism incubators as a fertile environment for start-up development and nascent entrepreneurial growth is required.

## 5. Conclusions

The gestation stage of new tourism ventures is a complex and dynamic process that deserves a dedicated research focus. The general entrepreneurship literature has advanced the body of knowledge on the personal and behavioural characteristics of nascent entrepreneurs, with some topics and theories translated and adapted to the hospitality and tourism context. This critical reflection paper synthesizes the extant literature on tourism and hospitality entrepreneurship, with a deliberate focus on the conception and nascent stages. A compendious review of papers published Scopus database collection between 2000 and 2022, targeting “tourism”, “hospitality” and “nascent entrepreneur\*”, “new firm/new business/new venture”, “business/venture/tourism start-ups” revealed that studies have only begun to scratch the surface. While the current literature presents foundational and helpful signposts on the internal and external factors that support nascent entrepreneurial development, there is need for more robust enquiry among the tourism research community.

For example, grounded in HC theory and Jack of all trade’s theory, the balance skills for tourism nascent entrepreneurs as antecedents of successful nascent entrepreneurs illuminates several gaps and potential for enquiry:

What are the balance skills combinations, and which specific skillsets, have the strongest influence on the earliest stages of the venture creation (opportunity ‘alertness and exploitation)?

Are there different typologies of nascent entrepreneurs that can be identified considering different combination of skills?

How can Government support entrepreneurial opportunity recognition in tourism industry through development of human capital among its citizens?

Where does balanced skill set relevant for nascent entrepreneurship in the H&T industry come from?

Because of the inherent complexity of the entrepreneurial patterns at the different stages of the entrepreneurship process, methodological approaches such as configurational approaches are recommended for analysing the set of balance skills as antecedents of the venture creation outcomes. The rationale is that different combinations of factors might lead to high entrepreneurial intention (e.g. entrepreneurial alertness, proactiveness, opportunity

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confidence, risk orientation), whilst a symmetrical approach, as the offered by casual relations is only able to display the net effect of a specific antecedent on the outcome (Kadile and Biraglia, 2022).

Further work is required to uncover how nascent entrepreneur's internal drivers (HC, motivations, etc.) may lead towards successful nascent entrepreneurship outcomes. Furthermore, a holistic perspective when considering the interactions of both internal and external (environmental) factors is also needed for a better comprehension of the mechanisms leading to entrepreneurial behaviours and venture creation. The consideration of environmental characteristics (i.e. family traditions, social networks, institutional environment) in conjunction with personal factors to explain the involvement in entrepreneurial behaviours is particularly relevant in certain environments as that of the tourism industry, as already recognized in the literature (Biraglia and Kadile, 2017). Against this background several research questions can be explored in future research:

How can we foster networking opportunities (both online and face to face) to develop and strengthen nascent entrepreneurs' social capital?

How do extrinsic factors (incubators, government regulations, local community) and the social embeddedness, facilitate serendipity in nascent entrepreneurs?

What are the interactions between the internal (cognitive/psychological) and external (environment) factors reinforcing entrepreneurial alertness that move towards the start-up process (and proactiveness)?

How do we structure a social environment the strengthens an individual's community embeddedness, and the associated influence on entrepreneurial intentions and behaviours?

What is the relationship between the social identity of nascent entrepreneur and their perceived self-efficacy to act upon a particular opportunity?

How does local belongingness interact with the balanced skills set leading to opportunity recognition and exploitation?

Review of the mainstream entrepreneurship literature suggests business incubators can play an important role in supporting opportunity recognition and new business development. Incubators in a tourism context encourage people to be involved in specific activities of the community where they are embedded, developing networks and providing training programs to acquire knowledge and improve skills to meet the community needs. Further research is needed to explore the role and best use of incubators in supporting tourism entrepreneurship and destination development. For example:

How can incubators be structured to effectively support entrepreneurship in tourism and help to drive opportunity recognition and exploitation?

What is the role of incubator network as enabler for nascent entrepreneur to operate in the context of local community?

To what extent do psychological factors as entrepreneurial self-efficacy shape motivation for a business start-up for social and community-based objectives?

In conclusion, this manuscript highlights a variety of themes for future research with strong academic and practical impact. In essence, it is to alert to the study of the earliest

entrepreneurial phases where new knowledge will enable an understanding of the dynamics associated with entrepreneurial endeavours. While a focus on established tourism enterprises, their activities and behaviours remain valid, the focal point should shift towards an understanding of the embryonic stage of new enterprise development as the driving point for the growth and success of future tourism business and for the sustainability of the industry and destinations.

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**Further reading**

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