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## Social Entrepreneurship and Sustainability of Family-Owned Hotels in Rivers State

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**Abstract:** *This study examined the relationship between social entrepreneurship and sustainability among owner-managed hotels in Rivers State, Nigeria. Cross sectional research design was adopted. Our respondents were owner-managers constituting the population of the study. From the field survey, we retrieved and analyzed seventy-four copies of questionnaire from the participants; Spearman's rank order correlation coefficient statistical tool was used to determine the relationship existing between the variables while the p-value obtained was used to test hypotheses developed for the study. The findings demonstrated a favorable significant association between the social entrepreneurship dimension of social innovation and the sustainability indicators of economic and environmental sustainability. The researchers came to the conclusion that social entrepreneurship has a strong link to long-term sustainability. This gave rise to our recommendations: that social entrepreneurs to develop their capabilities in resource bricolage, the art of maximizing the outcomes derived from the available resources, in order to achieve their goals over the long term.*

**Keywords:** *Social Entrepreneurship, Sustainability, Social Innovation*

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### INTRODUCTION

Sustainability may be defined from different perspectives, Kuhlman and Farrington (2010) emphasized that the term is more than a slogan or expression but demonstrate an injunction to preserve and reproduce productivity capacity for the indefinite future. Hanson, Sawyer, Begle, and Hubel (2010) described it as managing the well-being of the environment, people, economy and/or society over a long period or indefinite period. To this end, it is reasonable to argue that sustainability programs can play a substantial role in addressing issues such as child labor, pollution, and poverty that plague many developing countries. From a business perspective, Deloitte describes sustainability as a comprehensive approach which is focused on creating and maximizing long-term economic, social and environmental value (Deloitte, 2018).

In their study on defining and evaluating corporate sustainability: Are we there yet?, Montiel and Delgado-Cebellos (2014) proposed social, economic, and environmental sustainability as measures of corporate sustainability. For the sake of convenience, this study used social and environmental sustainability. Environmental sustainability is the resource usage (energy and material efficiency, water consumption); environmental pollution (industrial “three wastes”

emissions: air emissions, water discharge volume and solid waste); environmental protection (environmental investment & expenses) (Jiang, Xie, Ye, Shen, & Chen, 2016).

On the other hand, social entrepreneurship is described as “individuals, organizations or initiatives engaged in entrepreneurial activities with a social goal (Bacq, Hartog & Hoogendoorn, 2013). It is defined by Sheldon, Pollock, and Daniele (2017) as a process that uses hospitality to develop innovative solutions to immediate social, environmental, and economic problems in destinations by mobilizing the ideas, capacities, resources, and social agreements required for the destination's long-term social transformation from within and outside the destination. The research field of social entrepreneurship is widely acknowledged to be cross-disciplinary by nature, implying ongoing discussion of the field as either a standalone field (Dacin, Dacin & Tracey, 2011; Wronka-Pospiech, 2016) or a sub-field within mainstream entrepreneurship theory (Dacin, Dacin & Tracey, 2011; Wronka-Pospiech, 2016). (Austin, Stevenson & Wei-Skillern, 2006; Lortie & Cox, 2018). The importance of social entrepreneurship in tackling social and economic challenges has grown in popularity around the world (OECD, 2013). Because of the occurrence of a huge separation between social development and economic discrimination in developing nations (particularly Nigeria), the practice of social entrepreneurship becomes all the more relevant (Chell, 2007; Seelos & Mair, 2005).

Adro, Fernandes, Veiga, and Kraus (2021) in their research on Social entrepreneurship orientation and performance in non-profit organizations proposed social innovation as dimensions of social entrepreneurship. Social innovation are practices or initiatives undertaken by the community that, based on the products, services or models that they manage, or through the processes developed to obtain their goals, produce solutions that provide a better response, in an alternative and creative manner, to the social problems or needs (Garcia-flores & Martos, 2019).

Studies that focus on social entrepreneurship and sustainability in the hospitality and tourism context are scarce. Calls have been made for studies that aim to theorize social entrepreneurship through tourism and investigate how tourism social entrepreneurship can act as a community-centric form of social innovation (Aquino, Luck & Schanzel, 2018; Sheldon & Daniele, 2017). This research intends to study empirically the relationship between social entrepreneurship and sustainability among family-owned hotels in Rivers State.

### **STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

The hotel industry in Nigeria is rapidly growing; and is generating concerns on its consequence on the environment. Because Nigerian hotels face such environmental challenges as excessive use of available resources (water), trash disposal, noise, and energy issues, this attitude becomes an ecologically friendly issue for the sector (Adesina & Ngozi, 2013). Refuse disposal is a major environmental issue for hotels and the country as a whole; waste is generated without proper disposal facilities (Morakinyo, Iwuala, Nwoke & Ukomma, 2011). The expansion of hotels is causing an increasing degree of stress; multiple hotels built to cater to guests quickly depleted a valuable resource that many in the community relied on (Elkington, 1997). These hotels, ironically, require these resources as a necessary component for the conceptualization and consumption of services. This is a concern in many places where tourism activities push natural resources to their limits. Hotel operations are frequently accompanied by a variety of environmental concerns, including environmental deterioration and resource exploitation, such

as food, water, and energy (Bader, 2005; Bohdanowicz, 2005). Degradation and exhaustion of natural resources; water pollution such as wastewater discharge; energy and air emission are some of the environmental problems that typically accompany the expansion of hotels (Kuuder, Bagson, Prempeh, Mumuni, Adongo & Amoako, 2013). Because hotel operations consume so many resources, it's critical to find new ways to operate in order to reduce the negative influence on the environment (Kuuder et al., 2013).

### **Theory of Change**

The theory of change can best be defined as a process or method that can be applied for programming planning (Weiss, 1995). The theory of change uses theories or empirical findings to define how a program will work by providing evidence to support assumptions or presumptions in the intervention phase or program functions. The theory of change focuses on the desired preconditions that need to be achieved by relying on empirical evidence and identifying the interventions that are needed to be executed (Weiss 1997). Information about a target group is gathered systematically by compiling findings, studies, and observations to develop the interventions required to achieve the social mission.

According to Mook, Chan, and Kershaw (2015) to understand the theory of change, it uses a backward mapping process from the desired long-term goals and then identifying the preconditions and interventions that are required to achieve that goal. According to Jackson (2013), the theory of change provides a low-cost technique to frame an evaluation. It's a versatile instrument that encourages analytical precision and focus. It can be achieved by using a wide array of data collection and analysis methods. Subsequently, areas of responsibilities may be identified, assigned, and delegated to improve program development (Sullivan & Stewart 2006).

### **Resource-based View Theory**

The resource-based view of the firm posits that each organization is endowed with a finite amount of resources. Some of these resources are uncommon, valuable, and difficult to duplicate, providing the company with potential for long-term success (Barney, 1991; Hunt & Morgan, 1995; Peteraf, 1993).

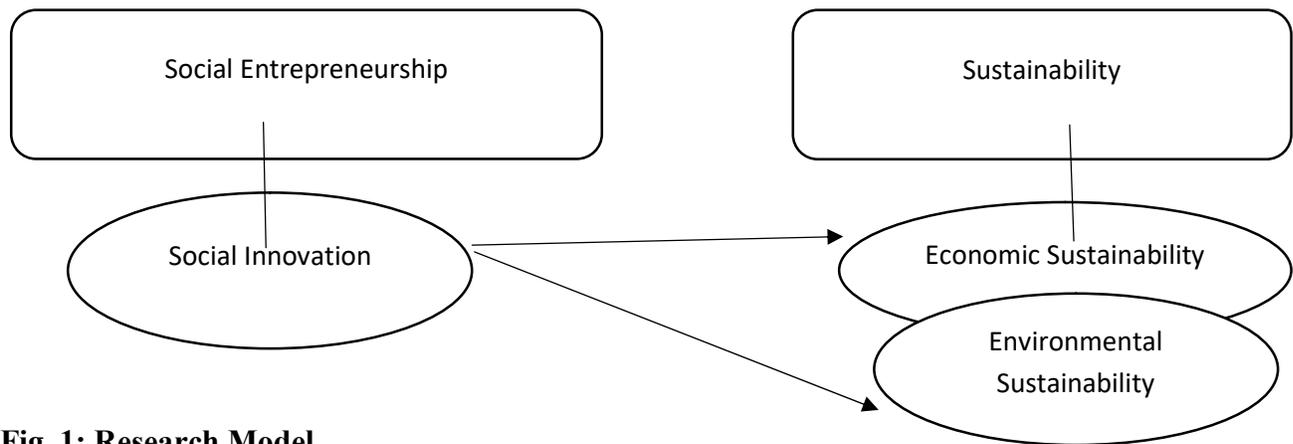
According to research, social entrepreneurs are particularly adept at combining their limited resources to achieve the desired goals (Desa 2012). Another distinguishing aspect of many social entrepreneurs is their commitment to their causes. This enthusiasm can also be a source of long-term competitive advantage (Dew, Velamuri, & Venkataraman 2004).

### **Social Entrepreneurship**

A social entrepreneur, according to Pangriya (2019), is a change agent who is motivated by a social mission to improve people's lives via innovation and accountability. "The process of social entrepreneurship involves three stages," according to Martin and Osberg (2007): "identifying a stable but inherently unjust equilibrium that causes the exclusion, marginalization, or suffering of a segment of humanity that lacks the financial means or political clout to achieve any transformative benefits on its own, identifying an opportunity in this unjust equilibrium,

developing a social value proposition, and bringing to bear inspiration, creativity, and bringing to bear inspiration. Thus, challenging the stable state's harmony and forging a new, stable equilibrium that releases trapped potential or alleviates the suffering of the targeted group, and ensuring a better future for the targeted group or even society at large, through imitation and the creation of a stable ecosystem around the new equilibrium." A social entrepreneur, according to Sivathanu and Bhise (2016), is someone who is ambitious, strategic, resourceful, goal-oriented, and mission-oriented.

Social entrepreneurship is process guided by social mission to serve the community using innovative ideas and combining resources to create social value and economic value (Mahfuz-Ashraf, Razzaque, Liaw, Ray & Hasan, 2018). SE has become a significant research field in the recent few decades (Choi & Majundar, 2014). SE, according to Mair and Marti (2006), has a long history of producing social and economic benefit around the world. It's referred to as "social economy organization" by Lee and Jung (2018). Governments have increasingly increased their support for social companies in order to create jobs and combat social concerns (Ferreira, Fernandes, Peres-Ortiz & Alves, 2017). True instances of social companies working in diverse parts of the world are the Ashoka Foundation, the Schweb Foundation, and the Skoll Foundation (Dacin, Dacin & Matear, 2010).



**Fig. 1: Research Model**

**Source:** Dimension of Social Entrepreneurship were adapted from Adro, Fernandes, Veiga, and Kraus (2021) while the Measures of Sustainability were adapted from Montiel and Delgado-Cebellos (2014)

This model led to two research objectives, research questions and hypotheses.

### Research Objectives

1. To examine the relationship between social innovation and economic sustainability of family-owned hotels in Rivers State.
2. To evaluate the relationship between social innovation and environmental sustainability of family-owned hotels in Rivers State.

## **Research Questions**

1. What is the relationship between social innovation and economic sustainability of family-owned hotels in Rivers State?
2. What is the relationship between social innovation and environmental sustainability of family-owned hotels in Rivers State?

## **Research Hypotheses**

H1: There is a significant relationship between social innovation and economic sustainability of family-owned hotels in Rivers State.

H2: There is a significant relationship between social innovation and environmental sustainability of family-owned hotels in Rivers State.

## **Sustainability**

Sustainability entails making a genuine commitment to environmentally friendly activities and overhauling the entire business model from the ground up (Smith & Sharicz 2011). To some, being a long-term business implies little more than survival. According to Berns, Townend, Khayat, Balagopal, Reeves, Hopkins, and Kruschwitz (2009), 40% of senior managers who classified as sustainability novices defined sustainability as simply sustaining economic viability. 'Sustainable business for businesses implies not only offering products and services that please customers while not compromising the environment, but also operating in a socially responsible manner,' according to the International Standard Organization's ISO 26000 standard (Frost 2011).

Business sustainability has turned away from economic, social, and environmental efficiency and toward effectiveness (Dyllick & Hockerts 2002; Young & Tilley 2006). According to McDonough and Braungart (2002), being less awful is no longer enough; sustainable enterprises should be structured to improve society's well-being while also providing economic benefit. For instance, a long-term commercial endeavor in wind energy would not only solve power shortages and provide energy security, but it would also help to alleviate poverty (Mirza, Ahmad, Majeed & Harijan, 2007).

## **Social Innovation**

Any process, product, or technological innovation that is primarily focused on addressing a social need is referred to as social innovation (Mulgan, 2006). A unique and useful solution to a social problem that leads in the creation of social value is referred to as social innovation (Gawell, 2013). Social entrepreneurs establish synergistic combinations of products, capabilities, processes, and technology to acquire sustainable solutions to social challenges that have been missed by governments or commercial sectors (Brenneke & Elkington, 2007). (Auersweld, 2009). Moran and Ghoshal (1996) claim that a new technique of creating value is through combining resources in novel ways. In order to build a new and better service, social entrepreneurs must combine resources in a unique and superior method (Phills, Deiglmeier, & Miller, 2008). As a result, the process of combining unique resources and innovating serves to create social value and social innovation, which can act as a catalyst for social change. Innovation is the application of a novel idea to a social problem that has the potential to have a significant social impact while also providing a monetary and non-monetary return to the social

enterprise. In this way, social innovation aids entrepreneurs in the establishment of long-term businesses.

### **Economic Sustainability**

Economic sustainability refers to a company's ability to be profitable in order to continue operating on a day-to-day basis (Masocha & Fatoki, 2018). Sarango-Lalangui, lvarez-Garca, and del Ro-Rama (2018) define economic sustainability as a company's ability to be profitable and contribute to shareholder value. "The economic dimension of sustainability includes the organization's impacts on the economic situations of its stakeholders, as well as on economic systems at local, national, and global levels," according to the Global Reporting Index (GRI) (2019).

Economic sustainability is described as a company's ability to produce a profit in order to survive in the long run (Roberts & Tribe 2008). Economic sustainability is defined by Landrum and Edwards (2009) as internal financial stability and enterprise profitability. The economic health and viability of a business must be maintained. As a result, the enterprise's inbound flow of economic resources is critical (Doherty, Haugh, & Lyon, 2014). Economic sustainability, according to Hynes (2009), influences the destiny of businesses. Social companies frequently use a policy of "greater than cost recovery mechanism" to achieve economic sustainability (Neck, Brush, & Allen 2009). However, putting too much emphasis on establishing long-term economic viability might lead to a diversion from the true aim of creating social benefit (Doherty et al., 2014).

### **Environmental Sustainability**

Over the last few decades, the concept of environmental sustainability has evolved (Ong, Teh, & Ang, 2014). Environmental sustainability has been defined differently in existing literature (Ong et al., 2014; Amacha & Dastane, 2017). Environmental sustainability is described as a corporate system's ability to balance operations that benefit people with those that benefit the environment (McGinn, 2009). Environmental sustainability is defined by Goodland and Daly (1996) as "keeping waste emissions within the environment's assimilative capacity without degrading it." It also means keeping harvest rates of renewables to within regeneration rates."

Environmental sustainability is defined by Kandaurova, Ashmarina, Khasaev, and Zotova (2016) as the protection of the natural environment from which an organization obtains its inputs and delivers its product. Organizations are inextricably linked to the natural world (Sharma & Ruud, 2003). Business operations, on the other hand, have certain detrimental effects on the natural environment, such as pollution and resource exploitation (Winn, Kirchgeorg, Griffiths, Linnenluecke & Günther, 2011). Simultaneously, as the world's population grows exponentially, the natural environment deteriorates irreversibly, raising the issue of environmental sustainability (Chen, Boudreau & Watson, 2008). Environmental sustainability, according to Goodland (1995), is a prerequisite for social and economic sustainability. Environmental sustainability, according to Dyllick and Hockerts (2002), has three footprints: eco-efficiency, eco-equity, and eco-effectiveness. According to Chen et al. (2008), eco-efficiency refers to environmental destruction that is minimal or non-existent, whereas eco-equity refers to the equitable distribution of natural resources among current and future generations, and eco-effectiveness refers to adherence to environmental standards (Meyer & Rowan, 1977).

### METHODOLOGY

The study used a cross-sectional survey method with a standardized questionnaire to gauge public opinion on social entrepreneurship and sustainability. An in-depth study of eighty-three (83) family-owned hotels were conveniently selected in Rivers State. The research used social innovation to measure social entrepreneurship. Sustainability was measured using economic and environmental sustainability. Data was analyzed using descriptive statistics and Spearman's Rank Correlation Coefficient. The reliability test was conducted using Cronbach's alpha. The Cronbach's alpha results on all constructs were above the recommended 0.7 threshold indicating that the data collection instrument was reliable of SPSS version 21.0.

### RESULTS

A total of eighty-three (83) copies of questionnaire were distributed to family-owned firms; out of this lot, seventy-four (74) copies were filled properly which represents 89.15% of the population, thus all analysis will be based on these copies.

**Table 1: Demographic information of respondents (n = 74)**

Quantitative		Survey Results	
Demographic Variable	Type	F	Percentage
Gender	Male	57	77.0
	Female	17	23.0
Age	31-40 Years	10	13.5
	41-50 Years	52	70.3
	51-60 Years	12	16.2
Job Experience	2-5 Years	64	86.5
	More than 5 Years	10	13.5

According to the demographic profile of respondents to this survey, there were 57 (77.0%) males and 17 (23.1%) females. The bulk of respondents were between the ages of 41 and 50, accounting for 70.3 percent (52) of the total respondents. The age group of 51 to 60 years old accounted for 16.2 percent (12) of the total, followed by the age group of 31 to 40 years old, which accounted for 13.5 percent (10) of the total. The majority of the respondents (owner-managers) had 2 to 5 years of work experience. Fewer people said they had been married for more than 5 years.

**Inferential Analyses**

**Hypothesis One**

**H1:** There is a significant relationship between social innovation and economic sustainability of family-owned hotels in Rivers State.

**Table 2: Analysis of the effect of social innovation on economic sustainability**

			SI	ESY
Spearman's rho	SI	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.879
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
		N	74	168
	ESY	Correlation Coefficient	.879	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
		N	74	74

**Source:** SPSS 21.0 output on research data

**Table 2** reveals that the Spearman's Rank Order Correlation coefficient is 0.879 which reflect a strong positive linear relationship between social innovation and economic sustainability. And the Correlation test is highly significance at ( $p < 0.005$ ). Positive relationship means that as social innovation increases economic sustainability also increases.

The study finds that there is a link between social innovation and economic sustainability as a result of this discovery. Therefore, hypothesis one was supported.

**H2:** There is a significant relationship between social innovation and environmental sustainability of family-owned hotels in Rivers State.

**Table 3: Analysis of the effect of social innovation on environmental sustainability**

		SI	ENS
Spearman's rho	SI	Correlation Coefficient	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.
		N	74
	ENS	Correlation Coefficient	.838
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
		N	74

Source: SPSS 21.0 output on research data

**Table 3** reveals that the Spearman's Rank Order Correlation coefficient is 0.838 which reflect a strong positive linear relationship between social innovation and environmental sustainability. And the Correlation test is highly significance at ( $p < 0.005$ ). Positive relationship means that as social innovation increases environmental sustainability also increases. The study finds that there is a link between social innovation and environmental sustainability as a result of this discovery. Therefore, hypothesis one was supported.

**Discussions**

Hypothesis one was supported as it states that social innovation significantly relates with sustainability of family-owned hotels in Rivers State. This is in line with previous studies by Oliveira (2021) who observed that social innovation is a just tool for sustainability in integrating the wellbeing of future people and is being more than ever recognized by individuals and businesses. The author posited that for social innovation to facilitate sustainability, it would have to translate in an idea (e.g., 'new' value), process, action or outcome that promotes and/or facilitates the transitional developmental path towards, at least one of the sustainability measures (environmental, social or economic). Citizen reporting platforms (environment) or microfinancing (economics) illustrate the significant and lasting impact of social innovation in promoting sustainability, in these cases, in urban settings (Angelidou & Psaltoglou, 2017).

The results backed up premise two, which claims that social innovation and environmental sustainability are inextricably linked. The United Nations also recognizes the importance of social innovation initiatives as mainstream tools for achieving sustainability. The United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals emphasized the need of social innovation in achieving its objectives (Eichler & Schwarz, 2019). The function of social innovation is mostly associated with bottom-up phenomena related to creating and delivering public services to the poorest people, usually in industrialized countries, for this international organization. Nonetheless, this acknowledgment overlooks the crucial concepts, processes, and activities that are taking place to

solve global issues such as climate change. Despite the growing number of efforts (Manzini & Meroni, 2017; Vasin, Gamidullaeva & Rostovskaya, 2017; Rogelja, Ludvig, Weiss & Secco, 2018) and institutional recognition (Matschoss & Repo, 2018), it is commonly acknowledged that social innovation for sustainability is still insufficient. This is true for both broad (Diepenmaat, Kemp, & Velter, 2020) and specific sustainability concerns, such as how to reduce carbon emissions quickly or build climate-resilient cities (Schartinger, Wepner, Andersson, Abbas, Asenova, Damianova, Dimova, Ariton, Hannum & Eker, 2017).

### **CONCLUSION**

The authors of this study looked at a variety of internal and external variables that could influence social entrepreneurship activity. More precisely, it is claimed that when governments provide supportive regulatory assistance, social entrepreneurship can thrive in weak social and economic contexts. This research concludes that social entrepreneurship significantly relates with sustainability of family-owned hotels in Rivers State.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Considering the implications arising from our study outcomes, we therefore put forward the following recommendations

- i. It is acknowledged and proposed even by the WHO that sustainable business practices are the scope for better human life in future. This effort includes government-approved CSR practices. As a result, social entrepreneurs should be proactive in grasping such possibilities, tapping and developing new markets in order to make a fortune by employing sustainable business processes and products.
- ii. Social entrepreneurs should recognize that social value creation occurs as a side effect or by-product of the social entrepreneurship business process. As a result, they should teach new ways and strategies for adapting and implementing commercial skills and methods in order to generate products or services that create social value.
- iii. Social entrepreneurs also believe that exploiting this entrepreneurship opportunity to acquire social position in society is unethical. On the plus side, social entrepreneurs can use it to promote their products or services and to encourage more people to follow their ideals and lofty beliefs in order to participate in the social dimension of social entrepreneurship. It is simply a high-quality method of enhancing community participation with the social enterprise, which will benefit both parties in a variety of ways.

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