

An Investigation into the Effects of Corporate Social Entrepreneurship on Rural Revitalization within a Value Co-creation Framework

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ABSTRACT

Rural revitalization holds paramount importance in fostering integrated urban-rural development and facilitating coordinated regional progress. Within the context of evolving societal dynamics, the implementation of efficacious strategies to advance rural revitalization has emerged as a critical imperative for regional development. The limitations of the conventional unidirectional value creation model, in the face of contemporary socioeconomic advancements, necessitate the adoption of value co-creation theory. This paradigm shift underscores a fundamental value in societal evolution and offers novel avenues for social entrepreneurial endeavors. This study investigates, from a value co-creation perspective, the influence of corporate social entrepreneurship on rural revitalization.

KEYWORDS

value co-creation; corporate social entrepreneurship; rural revitalization; impact

1 Introduction

Social entrepreneurship, a form of entrepreneurial activity, concurrently integrates social and economic benefits. This high-value paradigm, predicated on the principle of value co-creation, holds substantial implications for rural development within the Chinese context. In the context of rural revitalization and advancement, a proactive conceptual shift is imperative. Formulating novel strategies from the vantage point of social entrepreneurship and thoroughly comprehending the inherent linkages between the two will furnish a crucial impetus for the high-quality development of rural areas.

2 The relationship between corporate social entrepreneurship and rural revitalization under value co-creation

2.1 Balancing development relationships through empowerment

A salient divergence exists between social and commercial entrepreneurship concerning their respective value orientations. Commercial entrepreneurs typically prioritize value appropriation, endeavoring to maximize economic returns through diverse business strategies to facilitate wealth accumulation for their organizations or individual stakeholders. Conversely, social entrepreneurs emphasize value creation, pursuing the holistic utility of the entire value creation system, encompassing the interests of all stakeholders, not solely their own organizations. Social entrepreneurship adheres to the logic of empowerment, wherein the central tenet involves empowering stakeholders beyond organizational boundaries^[1]. Through the provision of resources, knowledge, and skill development, social entrepreneurs augment the capabilities and competitiveness of stakeholders, thereby stimulating their engagement and initiative in value creation. This empowerment-based social entrepreneurship offers novel prospects for rural revitalization, and by harmonizing external assistance with endogenous development, it is anticipated to catalyze the transformation of rural communities from decline and marginalization to prosperity and sustainable development^[2].

2.2 Balancing economic, social and environmental relations

Rural social entrepreneurship, as a distinct form of entrepreneurial activity, is characterized by its explicit objectives and value orientation, thereby assuming a pivotal role in rural development. The social mission of rural social entrepreneurship is intrinsically linked to: firstly, the social character of its purpose and outcomes. The genesis of social ventures is not predicated on the generation of commercial profits, but rather on the resolution of salient rural social issues. Through diverse projects and activities, social entrepreneurship actively fosters rural health and welfare. Secondly, the social nature of the organizational structure. Rural social entrepreneurial organizations are distinguished by their non-proprietary status and their prioritization of social impact and public interest over profit maximization. This organizational paradigm positions them as novel civil society entities, enabling a heightened focus on social equity, environmental protection, and other critical dimensions of rural development, rather than a singular pursuit of economic gains^[3]. By

virtue of its unique social mission constraints, rural social entrepreneurship plays an indispensable role in mitigating rural decline and promoting rural revitalization, thereby providing robust support for the coordinated development of rural economic, social, and environmental spheres.

3 Pathways of impact of corporate social entrepreneurship on rural revitalization under value co-creation

3.1 Promoting the co-creation of rural values

Within the trajectory of rural development, the generation of rural value confronts significant impediments, primarily characterized by the dual limitations of inadequate endogenous drivers and fragile exogenous infrastructures. Social innovation, as enacted by social entrepreneurs, assumes a pivotal role in capacity empowerment, thereby catalyzing the endogenous momentum of rural areas. Concurrently, the social construction facilitated by social entrepreneurs serves as a crucial mechanism for structural empowerment, fortifying the external foundations essential for rural advancement. These two dimensions are mutually reinforcing, collectively propelling rural communities towards the objective of value co-creation.

3.1.1 Promoting social innovation

Social innovation, a practice characterized by its creative approach, is directed towards addressing societal challenges and fulfilling social needs through novel methodologies. This concept underscores the innovative ideas and techniques employed in resolving social issues, with its primary value residing in the capacity to generate substantial social benefits while optimizing resource allocation. This attribute renders it a crucial application within the realm of rural value creation, offering effective strategies for rural development. Within the framework of social entrepreneurship, social innovation manifests in various forms. Firstly, it involves the development of novel products and services, achieved through a comprehensive examination of rural resource characteristics and potential demand, thereby creating offerings that satisfy market needs and possess unique competitive advantages, thus invigorating the rural economy ^[4]. Secondly, it entails establishing innovative organizational models and implementing new practices, which involves dismantling traditional organizational structures and operational models, integrating innovative management concepts and operational methods, and enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of rural social entrepreneurship. Lastly, it encompasses the utilization of innovative thinking to redefine social problems, analyze rural development challenges from a fresh perspective, and provide new directions and methodologies for problem-solving. In this context, innovation objectives can be realized through public service models, BOP (Bottom of the Pyramid) strategies, and other innovative approaches, thereby constructing a new value creation model that departs from conventional management paradigms ^[5].

3.1.2 Social resource mobilization

Historically, rural development models have relied on conventional resource acquisition strategies, including resource appropriation and pooling. However, these traditional approaches encounter significant impediments within the specific context of the Chinese countryside, thereby limiting their efficacy. The Chinese countryside is generally characterized by resource scarcity, with both the quantity and diversity of physical resources being relatively constrained. Concurrently, the absence of a well-established factor market further impedes resource circulation and allocation. Traditional resource acquisition methods are predicated on the availability of existing physical resources. Given the context of limited resources and imperfect markets in rural areas, these methods are rendered less effective, failing to adequately address the resource demands of rural development. In stark contrast, social entrepreneurship presents distinct advantages. Social entrepreneurship represents a proactive and innovative approach, unconstrained by the prevailing resource limitations. Within the framework of social entrepreneurship, the paramount resource is not traditional physical resources, but rather social capital ^[6]. As an intangible asset, social capital is deeply embedded within social networks. Social entrepreneurs can leverage existing village social networks to identify potential resources and collaborative opportunities. Simultaneously, they actively cultivate new social networks through engagement and collaboration with external organizations, institutions, and individuals, thereby expanding resource access channels. This facilitates the effective mobilization of social resources, fostering innovative development and value creation within villages, even under conditions of resource scarcity.

3.2 Achieving a balance of rural values

Within the entrepreneurial domain, the efficacious actualization of opportunities typically correlates with value

capture. However, social entrepreneurship diverges substantially from its commercial counterpart concerning value distribution. Social entrepreneurship, distinguished by its unique philosophical underpinnings and value dissemination mechanisms, is dedicated to the equitable distribution and sharing of value within rural contexts. This is achieved through the implementation of a 'triple bottom line' framework, encompassing economic, social, and environmental dimensions. From a structural empowerment perspective, the establishment of this mechanism furnishes a novel structural paradigm and value orientation for rural development initiatives.

3.2.1 Upholding the interests of society

Since its inception, social entrepreneurship has prioritized social and ecological objectives, with the ultimate aim of effectively addressing ecological and social challenges while comprehensively satisfying societal and ecological needs. This fundamental characteristic distinguishes social entrepreneurship from commercial entrepreneurship, which is primarily driven by profit maximization. To ensure adherence to social and ecological imperatives, social impact evaluation and the social orientation of outputs are critical mechanisms. Social impact evaluation, which utilizes the quantity and quality of social or ecological value creation as a key metric, has become a primary method for assessing the performance of social entrepreneurial ventures. This evaluation facilitates a comprehensive and objective understanding of the tangible outcomes achieved by social entrepreneurship initiatives in enhancing social welfare and safeguarding the ecological environment^[7]. Furthermore, the social nature of social entrepreneurship outputs emphasizes the necessity for social entrepreneurs to establish equitable distribution mechanisms. These mechanisms necessitate that social entrepreneurs consider not only their own interests but also the rights and interests of all societal stakeholders following the generation of revenue.

3.2.2 Controlling the economic bottom line

Social entrepreneurship, characterized by its distinct operational paradigm, necessitates the generation of economic returns to ensure its viability. Consequently, several strategies are employed to fortify its economic foundation. A primary mechanism involves for-profit ventures. In this respect, social entrepreneurs mirror their commercial counterparts, leveraging innovation and operational acumen to generate financial gains through active market participation. This approach facilitates the establishment of a sustainable development model, fostering the growth and prosperity of projects within a market-driven context. Furthermore, the allocation of revenue generated by social entrepreneurs extends beyond the mere attainment of social and ecological objectives; it must also guarantee the financial sustainability of the undertaking. Specifically, income should adequately cover operational expenses, personnel costs, and future capital investments, thereby mitigating the risk of project disruption due to financial constraints. Concurrently, sustained philanthropic contributions constitute a critical element in safeguarding the economic stability of social entrepreneurship. Activities that benefit from consistent donor support from diverse organizations or individuals benefit from a stable funding source. These sustained donations provide a continuous impetus for the project, thereby preventing potential setbacks arising from abrupt funding interruptions^[8].

3.3 Guiding the discovery of rural values

The identification and structuring of opportunities are pivotal in entrepreneurial endeavors, encompassing both commercial and social domains. Commercial entrepreneurship necessitates the precise identification and effective exploitation of market opportunities, while social entrepreneurship initiates with the identification or construction of social opportunities. Within the context of rural development, overcoming existing constraints is paramount for the realization of rural value discovery. Through the psychological empowerment of social entrepreneurs, rural communities can gradually transcend established practices and foster conceptual renewal and cognitive shifts, thereby establishing a robust foundation for the discovery and creation of rural value.

3.3.1 Take the lead in breaking with convention

Within the trajectory of rural development, the disruption of established paradigms is paramount for fostering innovation and advancement within the countryside, with social entrepreneurs assuming a pivotal role in spearheading this transformation. The dismantling of conventional practices frequently necessitates the agency of specific actors, a dimension historically deficient within the rural milieu. From the vantage point of conventional commercial enterprises, the perceived paucity of developmental prospects in rural areas has engendered a degree of neglect. However, it is crucial to recognize that the primary deficit in the countryside pertains to commercial opportunities, which does not preclude the existence of latent social opportunities. Social entrepreneurs are distinguished by their unique value propositions and

motivational drivers. They are inherently mission-driven, concentrating on social opportunities that remain unexplored by commercial entities and inadequately addressed through conventional governmental and philanthropic mechanisms. Possessing a keen understanding of social issues and a robust commitment to problem-solving, social entrepreneurs immerse themselves in rural contexts to unearth potential and devise innovative solutions. They not only introduce novel concepts and perspectives but also facilitate the integration of diverse resources, thereby stimulating the endogenous dynamism of the countryside. It is precisely these distinctive missions and capabilities that empower social entrepreneurs to guide the countryside towards a new phase of development, effectuating the reshaping and enhancement of rural values^[9].

3.3.2 Introducing cultural thinking

Social entrepreneurs, in their endeavors to address intricate social challenges, frequently encounter limitations in their individual capacity to effect comprehensive solutions. The multifaceted nature of these issues necessitates the strategic engagement of stakeholders and potential beneficiaries, thereby fostering a collaborative problem-solving environment. This approach often entails broad-based social mobilization, predicated on the capacity of social entrepreneurs to elucidate the value proposition inherent in social opportunities. Through targeted communication and advocacy, they can effectively demonstrate the tangible benefits of participation, encompassing personal betterment and community advancement, thereby incentivizing engagement. This process necessitates a paradigm shift, challenging pre-existing cultural norms and cognitive frameworks within the community^[10]. By leveraging extensive social mobilization and psychological empowerment strategies, social entrepreneurs facilitate the joint participation of beneficiaries and stakeholders in addressing social problems. This collaborative approach disrupts established practices, injecting dynamism and momentum into rural development initiatives, and ultimately steering villages towards sustainable progress.

4 Conclusion

In the context of the new era, rural revitalization is an important strategic initiative for national development. In the face of the new working situation and requirements, social entrepreneurship has become a key means to promote the development of rural revitalization. In the development of rural revitalization, we need to fully understand the relationship between our own development and social entrepreneurship, optimize the entrepreneurial path from the perspective of co-creation, build new entrepreneurial modes, and focus on fostering a diversified entrepreneurial group of companies, so as to jointly promote the revitalization and development of the countryside.

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