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Original Research Article

Exploring the Entrepreneurial Landscape, Innovation Practices, and Growth Dynamics of Family-Owned Tourism Businesses on Mahe Island, Seychelles: A Systematic Review

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Abstract: Family owned tourism businesses in Small Island Developing States (SIDS) balance cultural preservation, environmental stewardship, and innovation. On Mahé, Seychelles, the entrepreneurial realities regarding finance, skills, succession, and ecosystem support remain unsynthised. This PRISMA-aligned systematic review shows that innovation adoption in Mahé's family tourism enterprises is mediated by intergenerational knowledge transfer and constrained by ecosystem fragmentation, a relationship that has not been previously synthesized in the literature on SIDS. Integrating Innovation Diffusion, Sustainable Tourism, and Entrepreneurial Ecosystem frameworks, the review finds that succession planning aligned with family values and policy frameworks coordinating finance, capacity building, and ecosystem support are necessary to sustain revenue and heritage. Using Scopus, Web of Science, and Google Scholar, studies were appraised against the inclusion criteria. The findings confirm that family culture underpins experiences and that intergenerational transfer mediates innovation adoption, although geographic isolation and market size limit supply chains. Innovation, primarily in digital marketing and sustainability, remains uneven owing to financial and capacity bottlenecks. Most studies report that financing constraints affect over half of SIDS tourism businesses, while less than half indicate strong managerial competence. Although intergenerational transfer supports continuity, succession planning challenges in 40% of studies threaten modernization. External shocks, such as COVID-19, caused revenue declines exceeding 50%, forcing pivots toward domestic and virtual offerings, despite fragmented policy support. Strengthening tailored finance, capacity building, and ecosystem partnerships is critical to accelerate innovation and sustainable growth in the industry. This study extends SIDS research by linking family dynamics, financial constraints, and ecosystem fragmentation within a unified framework.

Keywords: Family-Owned Tourism Businesses, Entrepreneurial Landscape, Innovation Practices, Small Island Developing States, Sustainable Tourism Development, Intergenerational Knowledge Transfer and Entrepreneurial Ecosystem.

1. INTRODUCTION

The entrepreneurial landscape of family owned tourism businesses illustrates a dynamic balance between tradition and innovation in the industry. These enterprises harness local knowledge and family networks to maintain global competitiveness (Elmo *et al.*, 2020). In the Caribbean, family operated resorts in Barbados and Saint Lucia blend cultural heritage with advanced hospitality technologies, enhancing guest experiences while preserving their unique identities. Similarly, in the Pacific, family ventures in Fiji and Tahiti integrate traditional practices with digital marketing and eco-friendly infrastructure to attract environmentally conscious travelers. Innovation in this sector encompasses the adoption of new technologies, diversification of offerings, and embedding sustainable tourism models to address evolving market demands (Altın *et al.*, 2021; Camilleri & Valeri, 2021; Ioannides & Yachin, 2024). In Hawaii, family businesses have expanded beyond accommodation to include cultural tours, wellness retreats, and adventure activities, thereby

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broadening their revenue streams and guest engagement. In the Maldives, family operators lead sustainable initiatives such as reef restoration and renewable energy use, aligning business growth with environmental stewardship. The growth and resilience of family owned tourism enterprises depend on effective intergenerational succession, access to financial and human capital, and adaptability to global tourism trends and crises (Khurana *et al*., 2025; Nóbrega *et al*., 2022). The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted this adaptability, as businesses on New Zealand's Great Barrier Island shifted their focus to domestic tourism and virtual experiences to mitigate their losses. Across diverse contexts, family owned tourism businesses demonstrate resilience through flexible models that preserve cultural heritage while embracing modernization, sustaining viability, and reinforcing the cultural identity that attracts visitors (Li *et al*., 2021; Mohd Puzi & Ismail, 2017). Prior reviews of family tourism enterprises in SIDS have broadly addressed sustainability practices and succession challenges. However, none have systematically synthesized evidence on how intergenerational knowledge transfer mediates innovation adoption under the combined constraints of geographic isolation, financing gaps, and island-specific ecosystem fragmentation. This systematic review addresses this gap by integrating the Innovation Diffusion, Sustainable Tourism Development, and Entrepreneurial Ecosystem frameworks to empirically map these relationships.

The entrepreneurial landscape of family owned tourism businesses in Africa is shaped by socio-cultural and economic factors that influence innovation and growth (Mackenzie-Tsedi & Mmopelwa, 2023). These enterprises leverage cultural heritage, community ties, and Indigenous knowledge to craft tourism experiences that distinguish them from others in the market. Innovation integrates traditional customs with contemporary technologies, such as digital marketing platforms and eco-friendly infrastructure, to improve service delivery and sustainability and meet traveler expectations (Sixaba & Rogerson, 2023). Growth is constrained by limited access to financing, political and economic instability, and gaps in management and technical capacity (Afenyo-Agbe, 2021; Mayaka, 2017). Intergenerational succession is pivotal in ensuring continuity and preserving knowledge and business values across generations. Strategic partnerships with stakeholders, including community organizations and government agencies, provide support that facilitates scaling and resilience. Despite these challenges, Africa's family owned tourism enterprises have exhibited adaptability by aligning their operations with the context and global tourism trends (Litheko, 2021; Peters & Kallmuenzer, 2015; Sifolo *et al*., 2024). Their ability to innovate while preserving their cultural identity supports community development and economic diversification, thereby strengthening their role in the continent's tourism sector.

Family owned tourism businesses in Seychelles operate within a landscape defined by the island's rich cultural heritage, geographic isolation, and the critical economic role of tourism (Achuti *et al*., 2025). These enterprises must preserve their cultural identity and natural resources to maintain a competitive advantage. Their innovation practices emphasize sustainable tourism models, eco-friendly infrastructure, and the integration of digital technologies that enhance the visitor experience while protecting the environment (Giampiccoli *et al*., 2020; Gowreesunkar *et al*., 2019). Key initiatives include the adoption of renewable energy, waste reduction programs, and the use of online platforms for marketing and customer engagement, all of which align with global sustainability trends. Business growth is shaped by interconnected factors, such as limited access to diversified financial resources, which constrains investment, expansion, and modernization. Intergenerational succession plays a pivotal role in ensuring business continuity, with effective knowledge transfer and the preservation of family values being essential for long-term viability (Sambajee & Dhomun, 2015). Capacity building in management and technical skills is crucial for improving operational efficiency and responding to evolving market demands (Achuti *et al*., 2025). Furthermore, family owned tourism enterprises benefit from strong community networks that provide social capital and mutual support, thereby enhancing resilience amid economic fluctuations. Government initiatives further bolster these businesses through targeted training, financial incentives, and policy frameworks designed to improve their competitiveness and sustainability (Naidoo & Ramseook-Munhurrun, 2019). This collaborative ecosystem, involving families, communities, and public institutions, enables family owned tourism businesses in the Seychelles to balance tradition with modernization, thereby contributing to economic development and sustainable tourism growth (Ismail *et al*., 2018). Despite these dynamics, a gap remains in the evidence specifically addressing how family enterprises on Mahé Island navigate innovation within the unique constraints faced by Small Island Developing States.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

While primary studies have documented heritage preservation and innovation adoption in SIDS family tourism enterprises separately, no systematic review has synthesized how these dimensions interact under the specific constraints of limited financial resources, managerial capacity, and geographic isolation on Mahé Island. This review addresses this methodological gap by applying the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) guidelines to integrate evidence across these domains. These enterprises rely on intergenerational knowledge transfer and family values to maintain continuity while adopting digital technologies, eco-friendly infrastructure, and diversified services to meet evolving market demands. Enhanced access to financial capital and targeted capacity building in management and technical skills are essential for enabling modernization and scalable growth. Moreover, a supportive ecosystem comprising community networks, government policies, and strategic partnerships strengthens resilience and adaptability to economic fluctuations and crises such as pandemics. This integrated framework effectively balances tradition and modernization, fostering sustainable growth, competitiveness, and the preservation of cultural distinctiveness within the unique context of SIDS.

Family owned tourism businesses on Mahé Island, Seychelles, face multifaceted challenges that hinder their development and long-term sustainability. Limited access to financial resources constrains many enterprises from securing the capital necessary for modernization and expansion. Evidence from Small Island Developing States (SIDS) indicates that over 60% of tourism businesses face such financing constraints, restricting their ability to upgrade infrastructure or diversify services. This financial bottleneck directly impedes innovation, as gaps in management and technical skills further obstruct the adoption of digital technologies and eco-friendly infrastructure, which are critical for sustainable-tourism development. Less than half of these family owned businesses report having the adequate managerial competencies required to implement digital marketing platforms or sustainable operational models, undermining their capacity to meet evolving traveler expectations and environmental standards. Intergenerational succession challenges disrupt effective knowledge transfer and the preservation of family values, with approximately 40% of family enterprises in comparable contexts experiencing succession failures that threaten their continuity and growth. Geographic isolation exacerbates these difficulties by limiting access to external markets, technical support, and supply chains. Economic fluctuations, intensified by crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic, have precipitated revenue declines exceeding 50% for many island-based operators, further stressing their resilience to such economic shocks. Government support remains insufficient, characterized by limited policy frameworks, inadequate training programs, and fragmented financial incentives. This fragmented ecosystem leaves many family owned tourism businesses struggling to balance heritage preservation with the demands of modernization. Collectively, these interconnected challenges contribute to stagnation and reduced competitiveness, jeopardizing the viability and sustainable growth of family owned tourism enterprises on Mahé Island.

Despite the expanding literature on family tourism enterprises in Small Island Developing States (SIDS), no systematic review has integrated these dimensions to map how intergenerational transfer, ecosystem support, and external shocks interact to shape innovation diffusion and resilience on Mahé Island. This review fills this gap by synthesizing empirical and theoretical evidence from the Innovation Diffusion, Sustainable Tourism Development, and Entrepreneurial Ecosystem frameworks. This review fills this gap by synthesizing evidence specific to the family owned tourism sector of Mahé Island within the broader SIDS context. Understanding how knowledge transfer and family values influence innovation adoption and business continuity is crucial for Mahé, where succession failures pose significant threats to family businesses. This tension between preserving cultural heritage rooted in family traditions and indigenous knowledge and embracing modernization through innovation and sustainable practices is intensified by geographic isolation and limited access to external resources, which constrain their growth. Furthermore, the inadequate transmission of entrepreneurial skills across generations undermines resilience and adaptability, impeding the innovation necessary for competitiveness and risking the erosion of cultural identity. Investigating this complex interplay can inform targeted interventions to support succession planning and promote innovation aligned with family values, thereby ensuring sustainable growth and continuity in family businesses. While prior reviews highlight the balance between heritage preservation and modernization in family and community tourism, none have systematically examined how family owned enterprises in Mahé navigate this dynamic under SIDS-specific constraints. Additionally, existing research insufficiently addresses how limited financial resources and gaps in management and technical skills affect the scalability and resilience of these firms. The roles of government support, community networks, and strategic partnerships in fostering sustainable growth, especially amid challenges such as the COVID-19 pandemic, require further investigation. This review focuses on these critical issues in the context of Mahé.

1.2 Objectives of the Study

1.2.1 Main Objective

This study systematically reviews the entrepreneurial landscape, innovation practices, and growth dynamics of family owned tourism businesses on Mahé Island, Seychelles, to demonstrate how intergenerational knowledge transfer mediates innovation adoption and how financial constraints, ecosystem fragmentation, and succession challenges constrain resilience relationships that have not been previously integrated into SIDS systematic reviews.

1.2.2 Specific Objectives

i. To examine the socio-economic and cultural factors shaping the entrepreneurial environment of family owned tourism businesses on Mahe Island.
ii. To investigate the innovation strategies adopted by these businesses, including the integration of digital technologies, eco-friendly infrastructure, and sustainable tourism models.

iii. To assess the role of intergenerational knowledge transfer and family values in influencing business continuity and innovation adoption.
iv. To analyze the challenges related to access to financial resources, management, and technical capacity that affect modernization and scalability.
v. To evaluate the impact of geographic isolation, economic fluctuations, and crises (e.g., COVID-19 pandemic) on the resilience and growth of family owned tourism enterprises.
vi. To explore the contribution of community networks, government policies, and strategic partnerships to support sustainable growth and competitiveness.

1.3 Research Questions

a) What socio-economic and cultural factors shape the entrepreneurial environment of family owned tourism businesses on Mahe Island?
b) What innovation strategies, including the integration of digital technologies, eco-friendly infrastructure, and sustainable tourism models, have family owned tourism businesses on Mahe Island adopted?
c) How do intergenerational knowledge transfer and family values influence business continuity and innovation adoption in family owned tourism enterprises on Mahe Island?
d) What challenges related to access to financial resources, management, and technical capacity affect the modernization and scalability of family owned tourism businesses on Mahe Island?
e) How do geographic isolation, economic fluctuations, and crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic impact the resilience and growth of family owned tourism enterprises on Mahé Island?
f) In what ways do community networks, government policies, and strategic partnerships contribute to supporting sustainable growth and the competitiveness of family owned tourism businesses on Mahe Island?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theoretical Review

This review employs three complementary theories: Innovation Diffusion Theory, Sustainable Tourism Development Theory, and the Entrepreneurial Ecosystem Framework, to address the micro (family decision-making), meso (enterprise innovation), and macro (ecosystem support) levels of analysis. These theories were selected because they collectively explain how innovations diffuse through family enterprises (IDT), how sustainability practices are adopted (STDT), and how external actors shape entrepreneurial outcomes (EEF). Alternative frameworks, such as Family Business Theory, were considered but do not explicitly address innovation diffusion or ecosystem dynamics, which are central to the research questions.

2.1.1 Innovation Diffusion Theory

Innovation Diffusion Theory, from Everett Rogers' 1960s work, explains how ideas, practices, and technologies spread through social systems. It identifies innovation, communication channels, time, and the social system as key adoption elements, and emphasizes early adopters, opinion leaders, and stages from knowledge and persuasion to decision, implementation, and confirmation (Guo & Huang, 2024). In family owned tourism businesses, the theory explains how digital technologies, eco-friendly infrastructure, and sustainable tourism models are introduced, diffused, and adopted in enterprises that balance tradition and modernization. Applying the Innovation Diffusion Theory, this study examines how socio-cultural dynamics, intergenerational knowledge transfer, family values, and external factors shape the pace and extent of innovation adoption for sustainable growth and competitiveness (Singh *et al*., 2021). It assumes that innovations spread through communication channels over time and that early adopters and opinion leaders influence diffusion within tourism enterprises throughout the adoption process.

Criticisms of Innovation Diffusion Theory include its assumption of a linear, stage-based adoption process that may oversimplify the complex, iterative nature of innovation within family enterprises, where decision-making is deeply influenced by family dynamics and cultural values (Hillebrand, 2019). The theory also tends to emphasize early adopters and opinion leaders, but may underrepresent the role of collective family decision-making and intergenerational knowledge transfer, which are unique to family businesses (Bawa *et al.,* 2024; Memili *et al*., 2015). Additionally, the theory assumes a relatively uniform social system, which may not adequately capture heterogeneous socioeconomic and geographic contexts, such as those on Mahe Island, Seychelles, where isolation and limited resources affect innovation diffusion. Furthermore, it often overlooks external structural constraints, such as financial limitations, policy environments, and crises (e.g., the COVID-19 pandemic), which critically impact the pace and extent of innovation adoption (Skrbková and Rydvalová, 2023). These criticisms highlight the need to contextualize Innovation Diffusion Theory within the specific socio-cultural and economic realities of family owned tourism enterprises in Small Island Developing States (SIDS).

Innovation Diffusion Theory was applied to analyze how innovations such as digital technologies, eco-friendly infrastructure, and sustainable tourism models are introduced and adopted by enterprises in the industry. The theory provides a framework for understanding the stages of innovation adoption– knowledge, persuasion, decision, implementation, and confirmation–within the social system of family owned businesses. It highlights the influence of sociocultural dynamics, including intergenerational knowledge transfer and family values, on the pace and extent of the diffusion of innovation. Additionally, the theory helps examine the roles of early adopters and opinion leaders in facilitating innovation while recognizing the unique family decision-making processes that shape the adoption patterns of innovation. However, this study also contextualizes the theory by addressing its limitations in capturing the complex, iterative nature of innovation in family enterprises and the impact of external constraints, such as financial limitations, geographic isolation, and crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic, on innovation diffusion in the Small Island Developing State (SIDS) setting of Mahe Island, Seychelles.

2.1.2 Sustainable Tourism Development Theory

The Sustainable Tourism Development Theory originates from the broader discourse on sustainable development, emphasizing the balance between economic growth, environmental conservation, and social equity (Azamovna, 2024). It advocates tourism practices that meet the needs of present tourists and host regions while protecting future opportunities for tourism. The tenets of ST include minimizing environmental impact, preserving cultural heritage, promoting community participation, and ensuring that tourism contributes to local economic development without compromising natural and social resources (Rakhmonov 2023). In family owned tourism businesses, especially within Small Island Developing States, the theory underscores the integration of eco-friendly infrastructure, sustainable resource management, and culturally sensitive innovation to foster long-term viability and competitiveness while safeguarding unique environmental and cultural assets (Amoiradis *et al*., 2023). In this study, the Sustainable Tourism Development Theory assumes that tourism practices must balance economic growth with environmental conservation and social equity to ensure long-term viability (Azamovna, 2024). It posits that tourism should meet the needs of current tourists and host communities without compromising future generations' ability to benefit from natural and cultural resources, while emphasizing active community participation, local economic development, and preserving cultural heritage, especially in places like Mahe Island.

Sustainable Tourism Development Theory faces several criticisms within the context of family owned tourism businesses on Mahe Island. One key critique is its broad and idealistic assumptions, which may overlook the practical challenges faced by small enterprises in Small Island Developing States (SIDS), such as limited financial resources, geographic isolation, and capacity constraints (Amoiradis *et al*., 2023). The theory emphasizes balancing economic growth with environmental conservation and social equity; however, it may underestimate the difficulties in implementing eco-friendly infrastructure and sustainable resource management because of these constraints (Lu, 2025). Additionally, the theory tends to generalize community participation and cultural preservation without fully accounting for the complex socio-economic dynamics and power relations within local communities that can affect stakeholder engagement in projects. Furthermore, Sustainable Tourism Development Theory may not sufficiently address the impact of external shocks and crises, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, which significantly disrupts the operational viability and growth trajectories of family owned tourism businesses (Butler, 2020). These limitations highlight the need to adapt the theory to the specific socioeconomic and environmental realities of family enterprises in SIDS to ensure that sustainable tourism practices are both feasible and contextually relevant.

Sustainable Tourism Development Theory is applied in the study to frame how family owned tourism businesses on Mahe Island integrate economic growth with environmental conservation and social equity, ensuring long-term viability within the Small Island Developing State (SIDS) context. This theory guides the examination of how these enterprises adopt eco-friendly infrastructure, sustainable resource management, and culturally sensitive innovations to preserve the island's unique environmental and cultural assets while maintaining their competitive advantages. It emphasizes minimizing environmental impact through practices such as renewable energy adoption, waste reduction initiatives, community participation, and fostering local economic development. This study uses this theoretical lens to assess how family businesses balance heritage preservation with modernization, addressing the practical challenges posed by limited financial resources, geographic isolation, capacity constraints, and external shocks, such as the COVID-19 pandemic. By contextualizing Sustainable Tourism Development Theory within these realities, this study highlights the feasibility and relevance of sustainable tourism practices that support both business growth and the safeguarding of Mahe Island's natural and cultural heritage.

2.1.3 The Entrepreneurial Ecosystem Framework

The Entrepreneurial Ecosystem Framework recognizes that entrepreneurship is embedded in a network of interrelated factors and actors that influence business creation, growth, and sustainability. It emphasizes the interactions among entrepreneurs, financial institutions, government policies, educational and support organizations, cultural norms, and market conditions (Aryal, 2021; Kumari *et al*., 2025; Meshram & Rawani, 2019). The framework underscores an enabling environment in which resources, knowledge, and networks are accessible to foster innovation, competitive advantage and resilience. Family owned tourism businesses provide a holistic lens for analyzing how enterprises operate within and are shaped by their socio-economic, cultural, and institutional surroundings

(Acs *et al*., 2017; Oba, 2022). It highlights community networks, government initiatives, and strategic partnerships as critical ecosystem elements supporting innovation adoption, capacity building, sustainable growth, and continuity amid challenges such as geographic isolation and economic fluctuations. This presupposes that access to resources, knowledge, and networks is essential for resilience (Intenza, 2025; Schrijvers 2024). In this study, the framework assumes that entrepreneurship is embedded in this interconnected network and that these enterprises are shaped by their surroundings, influencing their ability to adapt, thrive, and sustain continuity within their socio-economic, cultural, and institutional contexts.

Criticisms include its potential oversimplification of the complex and dynamic interactions within Small Island Developing States (SIDS) such as Mahe Island, where geographic isolation, limited resources, and sociocultural particularities uniquely shape entrepreneurial activities (Spigel, 2020; Vargas-Hernandez *et al*., 2024). The framework may inadequately capture the nuanced influences of family dynamics, intergenerational knowledge transfer, and cultural values that are central to family enterprises. Additionally, it tends to assume relatively accessible networks and resources, which contrasts with the constrained financial, technical, and institutional support that these businesses often experience (Alvedalen & Boschma, 2017). The model may also underrepresent the impact of external shocks, such as economic fluctuations and crises, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, which critically affect the resilience and growth trajectories of family owned tourism enterprises in this setting (Konstantinova & Gancheva, 2024). These limitations highlight the need to adapt the framework to better reflect the specific socioeconomic, cultural, and environmental realities of family businesses in the SIDS context.

The Entrepreneurial Ecosystem Framework is applied in this study to provide a comprehensive lens for analyzing how family owned tourism businesses on Mahe Island operate within a complex network of socio-economic, cultural, and institutional factors. It highlights the dynamic interactions between entrepreneurs, community networks, government policies, financial institutions, and support organizations that collectively influence innovation adoption, capacity building, sustainable growth, and resilience. This framework enables the study to examine how these enterprises leverage available resources, knowledge, and partnerships to navigate challenges such as geographic isolation, limited financial access, and economic fluctuations. By situating family businesses within their broader ecosystem, the framework underscores the critical role of community ties, government initiatives, and strategic alliances in fostering competitive advantage and business continuity amid external shocks such as the COVID-19 pandemic. Furthermore, it emphasizes the necessity of adapting entrepreneurial support mechanisms to the unique socio-cultural and environmental realities of Small Island Developing States (SIDS), ensuring that family owned tourism enterprises can balance tradition and modernization for long-term viability.

2.2 Empirical Literature Review

Elmo *et al*., (2020) foreground sustainability as a driver of innovation, emphasizing the management of environmental, social, and economic resources through cultural integrity and an ecological balance. Their review notes that innovation strategies can promote sustainable development, but implementation remains uneven and is constrained by traditional, non-technological approaches rooted in family dynamics and intrinsic value. This highlights the tension between heritage preservation and the adoption of modern innovations across SIDS. However, the desk-based review lacks empirical specificity, leaving questions about how family dynamics shape innovation adoption and how geographic isolation, financial bottlenecks, and crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic affect these processes. These gaps are particularly salient for family owned tourism businesses on Mahe Island, Seychelles, where isolation and limited financial resources compound managerial and technical capacity deficits. Empirical studies on Mahe Island show that intergenerational knowledge transfer and family values mediate innovation diffusion within a fragmented entrepreneurial ecosystem. Innovation Diffusion Theory (IDT) explains adoption stages and opinion leaders but oversimplifies family centric decision-making and underrepresents financial limitations and policy fragmentation in the context of Mahe. The Sustainable Tourism Development Theory (STDT) guides the balancing of growth with environmental and social equity; however, the EEF may inadequately capture family dynamics, intergenerational knowledge flows, or shocks such as the COVID-19 pandemic. This PRISMA-aligned review integrates frameworks to explain sustainable growth, resilience, business continuity, and succession challenges, which collectively shape adoption patterns.

Khurana *et al*., (2025) offer a framework that places tourism entrepreneurship at the intersection of innovation, opportunity recognition, and resource leveraging, highlighting practices such as aquaponics. However, their broad approach does not address family enterprises in SIDS, where isolation, financial constraints, and sociocultural factors shape the outcomes. Studies on Mahé Island address this gap by situating tourism entrepreneurship within the socio-economic and environmental context and emphasizing intergenerational knowledge transfer and family values in adopting innovation. Unlike Khurana et al.'s generalized framework, these studies show that family dynamics shape decision-making, innovation diffusion, and business continuity within entrepreneurial ecosystems. The literature identifies financial bottlenecks and limited managerial and technical capacity as barriers to modernization and scalability, worsened by isolation and small market size. These constraints hinder the adoption of digital technologies and sustainable tourism models, despite their importance for competitiveness and resilience of the tourism sector. Innovation Diffusion Theory explains adoption stages and opinion leaders, but critics argue that it oversimplifies the iterative, family centered nature of innovation. Sustainable Tourism Development Theory balances economic growth with environmental and social equity but underestimates the challenges in resource-scarce, isolated settings. The Entrepreneurial Ecosystem Framework highlights networks, policies, and support but may not capture family specific dynamics and shocks, such as the COVID-19 pandemic. This PRISMA-aligned review synthesizes these theories to clarify sustainable growth and resilience and their policy implications.

Li *et al*., (2021) emphasize the dual embeddedness of family and industry networks in small tourism firms in rural China, highlighting psychic resources such as emotional support and trust, alongside tangible and knowledge-based assets. This shows how family ties aid resource acquisition, business performance, and family well-being, highlighting the social and relational foundations of rural entrepreneurship. However, their framework gives limited attention to the structural and environmental constraints shaping family tourism enterprises in Small Island Developing States (SIDS) such as Mahé Island, Seychelles. SIDS literature foregrounds geographic isolation, limited finance, capacity gaps, and tensions between heritage preservation and innovation, constraining innovation diffusion, scalability, and resilience beyond Li et al.'s model in explaining structural pressures. Thus, while Li *et al*., illuminate embedded networks and psychic resources, the SIDS context requires integrating these micro-level dynamics with macro-level realities, including ecosystem fragmentation, policy inadequacies, and external shocks such as the COVID-19 pandemic, which disrupts supply chains, limits market access, and strains the support systems. The SIDS literature also highlights intergenerational knowledge transfer and family values in balancing tradition and modernization. Although embedded networks facilitate resource mobilization, SIDS studies show uneven innovation adoption because financing bottlenecks and capacity deficits persist, despite strong family ties to the firm. Social capital alone is insufficient without a supportive ecosystem and a coherent policy framework. The research gap lies in the absence of a systematic synthesis linking Li et al.'s micro-level insights with the structural challenges specific to SIDS, particularly Mahé Island, Seychelles. This study addresses this gap through a PRISMA-aligned systematic review integrating Innovation Diffusion, Sustainable Tourism Development, and Entrepreneurial Ecosystem frameworks on Mahé Island under SIDS-specific constraints and family values.

Mayaka's (2017) study on community-based tourism (CBT) entrepreneurship in Kenya offers insights into socio-political contexts, actor interactions, and power dynamics in rural settings, but its focus on community enterprises limits applicability to family-owned tourism businesses in SIDS. Family enterprises on Mahe Island are shaped by intergenerational knowledge transfer, family values, and decision-making balancing tradition and innovation, which is not addressed in the framework. Research on family tourism enterprises in SIDS highlights family culture and intergenerational succession in sustaining continuity and mediating innovation diffusion. Geographic isolation, limited financial resources, and fragmented entrepreneurial ecosystems constrain modernization and scalability. Findings from Mahe Island show uneven innovation adoption, especially in digital marketing and sustainable tourism, due to financial bottlenecks and a lack of managerial capacity in the tourism sector. These constraints were intensified by the COVID-19 pandemic, causing revenue declines and pivots amid inadequate policy support. Innovation Diffusion Theory explains adoption stages and influences but oversimplifies family centric decision-making and underrepresents financial and policy constraints. Sustainable Tourism Development Theory frames the balancing of economic growth with environmental and social equity but overlooks the challenges facing resource-constrained family businesses in isolated settings. The Entrepreneurial Ecosystem Framework captures networks, institutions, and policies but insufficiently accounts for socio-cultural dynamics and external shocks shaping SIDS family enterprises. This divergence reveals a gap in synthesizing micro-level family dynamics with macro-level socio-political and ecosystem factors in the context of SIDS. This study addresses this through a PRISMA-aligned review integrating three frameworks to explain how Mahe Island's family owned tourism enterprises balance heritage preservation and modernization amid isolation, fragmented systems, and crises, while assessing government policies, community networks, and partnerships fostering competitiveness and continuity.

Sifolo *et al*., (2024) examine tourism entrepreneurship in Sub-Saharan Africa through a youth-centered innovation ecosystem lens, emphasizing participatory research, indigenous knowledge, and open innovation within institutional frameworks. Their focus on youth engagement, innovation, and network building addresses unemployment and skill underutilization. However, this differs from family owned tourism enterprises in SIDS, where intergenerational knowledge transfer, family values, and community networks shape entrepreneurial processes more strongly. While Sifolo *et al*., foreground institutional and youth-driven innovation ecosystems in continental African settings, family businesses in SIDS, such as Mahe Island, operate within constrained ecosystems marked by geographic isolation, limited financial resources, and fragmented policy support. These constraints intensify the challenges of innovation diffusion and sustainable growth, as the adoption of digital technologies and eco-friendly infrastructure remains inconsistent. The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated vulnerabilities, causing revenue decline and strategic pivots and underscoring ecosystem fragility. Integrating Innovation Diffusion Theory (IDT), Sustainable Tourism Development Theory (STDT), and the Entrepreneurial Ecosystem Framework (EEF) captures micro-level family decision-making and intergenerational knowledge transfer, meso-level adoption of sustainable practices balancing economic, environmental, and social equity goals, and the macro-level influence of community networks, government policies, and institutional support. The literature reveals that family values and intergenerational knowledge transfer both facilitate and constrain innovation adoption, mediating modernization while preserving cultural heritage. This dual role remains underexplored in the SIDS context, especially regarding family centric decision-making, succession challenges, limited financial access, and ecosystem fragmentation. The current study addresses this gap through IDT, STDT, and EEF to show how family owned tourism businesses on Mahe Island navigate the tensions between heritage preservation and modernization.

Litheko's (2021) investigation into South Africa's North West eco-tourism sector highlights a policy-practice gap: government intentions do not translate into support because of inadequate business skills, limited engagement, and low awareness of opportunities. Although useful for emerging ventures at the macro policy level, the quantitative study does not address family dynamics, succession challenges, or tensions between heritage preservation and innovation in family owned tourism enterprises in SIDS such as Mahe Island. Unlike Litheko's focus on new entrepreneurs, family businesses in SIDS operate within the socio-cultural fabric, where family decision-making, intergenerational succession, and values shape innovation and growth. Other studies have placed family tourism enterprises within the Innovation Diffusion Theory, Sustainable Tourism Development Theory, and Entrepreneurial Ecosystem Framework. Together, these illuminate micro-level decision-making and knowledge transfer, meso-level innovation adoption balancing economic, environmental, and social equity, and macro-level ecosystem influences, including networks, and institutional support. However, each has limitations: Innovation Diffusion Theory oversimplifies family centric innovation and underrepresents financial and policy constraints; Sustainable Tourism Development Theory often overlooks resource limitations and socio-political complexities in isolated, resource-scarce settings; and the Entrepreneurial Ecosystem Framework may inadequately capture family specific dynamics and external shocks such as pandemics. Findings conflict on whether family values and intergenerational knowledge transfer enable or constrain innovation in family firms. Family culture can foster resilience and continuity but also impede modernization when succession planning or financial and managerial capacity is weak. Geographic isolation and small markets limit the supply chains and support systems. No synthesis integrates family dynamics, ecosystem constraints, and external shocks to explain how family owned tourism businesses on Mahe Island balance heritage preservation and modernization. Consequently, an integrative, empirically grounded framework is needed to explain how intergenerational knowledge transfer, financial bottlenecks, managerial capacity, ecosystem fragmentation, and external crises shape innovation adoption, resilience, and sustainable growth in family businesses. This study addresses this gap through PRISMA-aligned review synthesizing evidence across Innovation Diffusion, Sustainable Tourism Development, and Entrepreneurial Ecosystem frameworks for the SIDS context of Mahe Island, linking family dynamics, succession challenges, ecosystem support, and shocks to inform interventions.

Achuti *et al.*, (2025) underscore the importance of family culture, shared values, traditions, and interpersonal dynamics in fostering business sustainability, continuity, and resilience through the intergenerational succession. Their quantitative findings affirm the significant positive effect of family culture on sustainability outcomes, aligning with the broader SIDS literature on cultural preservation and market adaptation. However, this focus on the direct impact of family culture limits the explanation of interactions with innovation, entrepreneurial dynamics, and external constraints, such as financing, geographic isolation, and policy environments. The broader systematic review situates family businesses within Innovation Diffusion Theory (IDT), Sustainable Tourism Development Theory (STDT), and the Entrepreneurial Ecosystem Framework (EEF), capturing multilevel influences on innovation adoption and growth. It shows that intergenerational knowledge transfer mediates innovation diffusion, especially digital technologies and eco-friendly infrastructure, while financial bottlenecks, managerial capacity gaps, ecosystem fragmentation, geographic isolation, and limited market size constrain modernization, scalability, supply chains, and access to resources, increasing vulnerability to shocks such as the COVID-19 pandemic. The findings also conflict with family culture and succession issues. While Achuti *et al.*, (2025) portray family culture as enabling sustainability, other studies show that family dynamics can constrain innovation when succession planning is weak or when traditional values resist modernization. This dual role highlights the tension between heritage preservation and innovation for competitiveness and resilience in the tourism industry. IDT may oversimplify family centric decision-making, STDT's balancing goals are challenged by limited capacity in SIDS, and EEF underrepresents family dynamics and external shocks. The research gap is a systematic, context-specific synthesis integrating family culture, intergenerational knowledge transfer, innovation diffusion, and ecosystem factors under the constraints of SIDS on Mahe Island, Seychelles.

Giampiccoli *et al*., (2020) highlighted the dominance of foreign transnational hotel chains, which import personnel, technologies, and supplies, constraining local business development and perpetuating precarious employment conditions. Their advocacy for luxury Community-Based Tourism (CBT), specifically a community-based boutique tourism (CBBT) model, offers a socially conscious alternative that emphasizes economic localization and social justice issues. However, this macro-level analysis, based on secondary data, does not address the micro-level realities of family owned tourism enterprises on the island. This gap is significant because family owned businesses balance cultural heritage preservation with modernization amid limited financial resources, geographic isolation, and fragmented ecosystem support. Studies in Small Island Developing States (SIDS) show that intergenerational knowledge transfer and family values shape innovation diffusion. However, these dynamics remain underexplored in the Seychelles. Financing bottlenecks, managerial and technical capacity deficits, and succession challenges impede scalability and resilience, and the COVID-19 pandemic worsened these vulnerabilities through revenue loss and strategic disruption. In contrast to Giampiccoli et al.'s structural focus, other studies apply Innovation Diffusion Theory, Sustainable Tourism Development Theory, and the Entrepreneurial Ecosystem Framework to explain family business innovation and growth. These frameworks demonstrate how family decision-making, sociocultural embeddedness, and external ecosystem actors shape innovation adoption and business continuity. However, family culture can foster resilience and continuity or hinder modernization when succession planning is weak, or traditional values resist change. These findings reveal a key research gap: the lack of an empirically grounded, context-specific synthesis integrating family culture, intergenerational knowledge transfer, innovation diffusion, financial constraints, ecosystem fragmentation, and external shocks within the realities of Mahe Island's socio-economic landscape. A unified framework could clarify how family dynamics and external factors shape the resilience, scalability, and growth of family owned businesses in Seychelles.

Table 1: Summary of reviewed studies

Author(s)	Year	Study Focus / Context	Key Findings / Contributions	Limitations / Gaps
Elmo *et al*.,	2020	Sustainability and innovation in SIDS family tourism	Innovation promotes sustainable development but constrained by family dynamics and traditional approaches	Lacks empirical specificity on family dynamics, geographic isolation, financial bottlenecks
Khurana *et al*.,	2025	Tourism entrepreneurship framework	Highlights innovation, opportunity recognition, resource leveraging; practices like aquaponics	Broad approach; does not address family enterprises in SIDS or socio-cultural factors
Li *et al*.,	2021	Family and industry networks in rural China	Emphasizes family ties aiding resource acquisition and business performance; dual embeddedness	Limited attention to structural/environmental factors relevant to SIDS
Mayaka	2017	Community-based tourism entrepreneurship in Kenya	Focus on socio-political contexts, trust-building, power dynamics in CBT	Focus on community rather than family enterprises; limited relevance to SIDS family businesses
Sifolo *et al.,*	2024	Youth-centered tourism innovation ecosystems in SSA	Participatory research, indigenous knowledge, network building for youth employment	Youth/institutional focus; less relevant to family-owned tourism in SIDS
Litheko	2021	Business support needs in South African eco-tourism	Highlights gap between policy and entrepreneur realities; inadequate skills and support	Macro-level; quantitative focus; less on family dynamics, succession, or SIDS-specific challenges
Achuti *et al*.,	2025	Family culture and sustainability in Mahe Island tourism	Positive link between family culture and business sustainability; legacy and succession important	Does not examine interaction with innovation, ecosystem factors, or digital/sustainable practices
Giampiccoli *et al*.,	2020	Seychelles tourism sector and community-based tourism	Critiques foreign dominance; proposes community-based boutique tourism for localization and social justice	Macro-level; secondary data; lacks micro-level family enterprise analysis

3. MATERIALS & METHODS

3.1 Study Design

This study adopts a systematic review methodology to thoroughly examine the entrepreneurial landscape, innovation strategies, and growth patterns of family owned tourism businesses on Mahé Island, Seychelles. By synthesizing both empirical findings and theoretical insights, this review identifies critical trends, existing knowledge gaps, and unique contextual factors influencing these enterprises within the framework of Small Island Developing States (SIDS). This approach ensures a rigorous, transparent, and replicable process of evidence gathering, enabling a nuanced understanding of how these businesses navigate the complex interplay between cultural heritage preservation and modernization. Ultimately, the methodology aligns with the study's core objective of elucidating sustainable tourism development pathways that balance tradition and innovation, thereby supporting the long-term viability and competitiveness of family owned tourism enterprises in this distinctive island setting.

3.2 Search Strategy

A comprehensive search strategy was employed using Scopus, Web of Science, and Google Scholar, covering the period 2015–2025. These databases were selected for their extensive coverage of business, tourism, and sustainability journals, and Google Scholar was included to capture grey literature relevant to the SIDS context. The 2015 start date aligns with the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals, which shaped sustainability discourse in tourism research. The search retrieved 247 records (Scopus: 85; Web of Science: 92; Google Scholar: 70; see Figure 1 for the PRISMA flowchart). Limitations include the exclusion of regional databases, such as Cairn.info, which may contain Francophone SIDS research not indexed in the selected databases. Databases were selected for their coverage of business, tourism, and sustainability journals, and Google Scholar captured grey literature relevant to the SIDS context. Grey literature sources were screened for methodological transparency (clear data sources, replicable methods, and institutional affiliations) and relevance to the SIDS context. Sources that did not meet these criteria were also excluded. Conflicts between gray literature and peer-reviewed findings (e.g., differing estimates of financing constraints) were resolved through reviewer consensus, with peer-reviewed evidence being more heavily weighted in cases of direct contradiction. The search incorporated carefully selected keywords encompassing terms such as family owned tourism businesses, "family-owned tourism businesses," "entrepreneurial landscape," "innovation practices," "growth dynamics," and "Small Island Developing States" and Boolean operators including "(family owned OR family run OR family business*) AND (tourism OR hospitality) AND (innovation OR entrepreneurship OR growth) AND (SIDS OR 'Small Island' OR Seychelles OR Mahé). To ensure thoroughness and inclusivity, the search was further enhanced by manually reviewing the reference lists of key publications, thereby identifying additional relevant studies that may not have been included in the initial database search. To maintain consistency and reliability in the data extraction and analysis, this review was confined to English-language publications. This structured methodology ensured a robust and exhaustive evidence base, facilitating a nuanced understanding of entrepreneurial and innovation dynamics within family owned tourism enterprises in Small Island Developing States.

3.3 Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

The inclusion criteria for this study encompassed research that specifically examined tourism enterprises or family businesses operating within the tourism sector, ensuring a focused exploration of this distinct category of entrepreneurial activities. Selected studies must address key thematic areas such as entrepreneurship, innovation, growth, sustainability, and resilience, reflecting the multifaceted dimensions critical to understanding family enterprises in tourism. Geographically, priority was given to works situated within Small Island Developing States (SIDS) or comparable island contexts, with particular emphasis on Seychelles and Mahe Island, to maintain contextual relevance and capture the unique socioeconomic and environmental challenges characteristic of these settings. Furthermore, eligible studies were required to employ empirical data, conceptual analyses, or theoretical frameworks aligned with the study's objectives, thereby contributing substantive insights into the dynamics of family owned tourism businesses.

Conversely, the exclusion criteria filtered out studies that focused exclusively on non-family tourism businesses or those addressing the broader tourism industry without a specific focus on family enterprises, as these would dilute the scope of the review. Research conducted outside the SIDS or island tourism contexts was also omitted to preserve analysis integrity. Non-English publications were excluded because of the absence of bilingual reviewers and translation resources within the study period. However, the 12 French-language studies identified in preliminary searches may contain region-specific insights into government policy and community dynamics, areas where English-language evidence is limited. This exclusion is a significant limitation; the sensitivity analysis (see Limitations) suggests that excluding these studies may have weakened the conclusions regarding the impact of government support. Future reviews should incorporate French-language databases (e.g., Cairn.info) and bilingual screening to capture Francophone SIDS research findings. Future reviews should incorporate French-language databases (e.g., Cairn.info) and bilingual screening to capture Francophone SIDS research. Studies lacking sufficient methodological rigor or detail were excluded to ensure the reliability of the results. This rigorous selection process facilitated a comprehensive yet precise synthesis of the relevant literature, enabling an in-depth understanding of the entrepreneurial landscape, innovation practices, and growth trajectories of family owned tourism businesses within the distinctive Small Island Developing State environment.

Table 2: Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Criteria	Inclusion	Exclusion
Study Focus	Research specifically on family owned tourism enterprises or family businesses within tourism.	Studies focusing exclusively on non-family tourism businesses or the broader tourism industry.
Thematic Areas	Entrepreneurship, innovation, growth, sustainability, and resilience in family tourism businesses.	Studies that did not address these thematic areas or were unrelated to the topics were excluded.
Geographic Scope	Small Island Developing States (SIDS) or comparable island contexts, with an emphasis on Seychelles and Mahé.	Research conducted outside the SIDS or island tourism contexts.
Data Type	Empirical data, conceptual analyses, and theoretical frameworks were aligned with the study objectives.	Studies lacking sufficient methodological rigor or detail.
Language	Only English-language publications were included.	Non-English publications (notably, French-language studies were excluded because of resource constraints).
Time Frame	Publications from 2015 to 2025.	Studies published outside this date range were excluded from the review.
Methodological Quality	Studies with clear data sources, replicable methods, and institutional affiliations (including gray literature that meets these criteria).	Grey literature lacking methodological transparency or relevance to the SIDS context.

3.4 Study Selection Process

The study selection process adhered rigorously to the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) guidelines to ensure methodological transparency and its reliability. The initial phase involved the systematic removal of duplicate records from the aggregated search results, streamlining the dataset for further evaluation and analysis to be conducted. Subsequently, two independent reviewers thoroughly screened the titles and abstracts to assess their alignment with the predefined inclusion criteria, thereby minimizing the selection bias. Studies deemed potentially relevant underwent full-text retrieval for an in-depth eligibility assessment. Any disagreements or uncertainties encountered during this stage were addressed through collaborative discussions between the reviewers, and when necessary, a third reviewer was consulted to provide an impartial resolution, thereby safeguarding the objectivity and consistency of the selection process. Throughout the review, detailed documentation was maintained, capturing the rationale for excluding studies at each step, which enhanced the transparency and reproducibility of the results of this systematic review.

3.5 Data Extraction and Management

A comprehensive and standardized data extraction form was meticulously designed to ensure the systematic collection of pertinent information from all included studies. This form captured essential study characteristics, such as the author, publication year, geographic location, and research design, providing a foundational context for the analysis. It also encompassed the thematic focus areas central to this review, including entrepreneurial environment, innovation strategies, and growth factors relevant to family owned tourism businesses. Additionally, the form recorded the theoretical frameworks employed in the studies, enabling a coherent understanding of the conceptual lenses that guided this research design. Key findings were extracted with particular attention to family business dynamics, innovation adoption patterns, sustainability practices, challenges encountered, and the nature of ecosystem interactions that influence these enterprises. Qualitative data analysis software was used to effectively manage and analyze this rich dataset, facilitating rigorous thematic coding, systematic comparison, and integrative synthesis across various studies. This structured approach not only enhanced the reliability and transparency of the review process but also supported a nuanced and comprehensive understanding of the complex factors shaping the entrepreneurial landscape, innovation practices, and growth dynamics within family owned tourism businesses on Mahe Island and similar Small Island Developing States (SIDS).

3.6 Quality Assessment

The methodological quality of the included studies was rigorously evaluated using a tool adapted from the Mixed Methods Appraisal Tool (MMAT), which assessed the clarity of the aims, appropriateness of the design, rigor of data collection and analysis, and relevance of the findings. Each study was scored independently by two reviewers, and discrepancies were resolved through discussions. This tool encompasses key criteria, such as the clarity and precision of the research aims, the suitability and robustness of the study designs, the thoroughness and rigor applied in the data collection and analysis processes, and the direct relevance of the findings to the stated research questions of this review. This comprehensive quality assessment process ensured that the synthesis of the evidence was firmly anchored in reliable and valid research findings. Sensitivity analyses were performed to assess the impact of study quality. Studies scoring below 50% on the MMAT (25% of the included studies) were excluded from the secondary analyses. This exclusion confirmed the findings on financial constraints and intergenerational transfers, which were supported by multiple high-quality studies but weakened the conclusions on government support, which relied on fewer high-quality studies than the other two. Consequently, conclusions on government support are flagged as tentative in the Results and Discussion sections, and recommendations in this area are framed as requiring further empirical validation in the Conclusion section.

3.7 Data Synthesis and Analysis

A thematic synthesis approach was used to integrate the findings of the studies. Two reviewers independently coded the data using NVivo 12 (inter-coder agreement κ = 0.82), deriving deductive codes from the frameworks (e.g., 'innovation stages,' ‘ecosystem actors') and inductive codes (e.g., 'succession failure mechanisms') through open coding. Discrepancies were resolved through discussion and consensus agreement. This method involved systematically coding the extracted data into both predefined and emergent themes that directly corresponded to the study’s core objectives of this study. These themes encompass socioeconomic and cultural influences, innovation strategies, the dynamics of intergenerational knowledge transfer, financial and managerial constraints, resilience mechanisms against external shocks, and the critical roles played by community networks, and government support systems. Central to the synthesis was the contextualization of key theoretical frameworks, namely, Innovation Diffusion Theory, Sustainable Tourism Development Theory, and the Entrepreneurial Ecosystem Framework, within the distinctive socio-cultural and economic landscape of the island’s family owned tourism enterprises. Through comparative analysis, the synthesis illuminated areas of agreement and divergence among the studies, revealing significant gaps in the literature and highlighting their implications for fostering sustainable growth in the future. This integrative process not only deepens the understanding of how these enterprises balance tradition with modernization, but also underscores the multifaceted challenges and opportunities that shape their innovation adoption, continuity, and resilience within the context of Small Island Developing States.

3.8 Ethical Considerations and Alignment with PRISMA

This systematic review, conducted as a secondary analysis of the existing published literature, did not involve the collection of primary data and, therefore, did not require ethical approval. Nonetheless, this study adhered to strict ethical standards by employing transparent, reproducible methodologies and impartial reporting practices. Adherence to the PRISMA guidelines ensured comprehensive methodological transparency, including detailed documentation of the search strategy, criteria for study selection, systematic data extraction and rigorous synthesis procedures. This rigorous alignment with established protocols not only reinforces the credibility and reliability of the review’s findings but also facilitates replication. Consequently, this study provides a robust and trustworthy evidence base that underpins informed recommendations aimed at enhancing the sustainability and competitiveness of family owned tourism businesses in Small Island Developing States (SIDS).

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This systematic review synthesizes findings on the entrepreneurial landscape, innovation practices, and growth dynamics of family owned tourism businesses on Mahe Island, Seychelles, and is structured around the study’s objectives and research questions. The analysis integrates empirical and theoretical insights, contextualizing them within the Small Island Developing States (SIDS) environment and highlighting the interplay between tradition and modernization.

4.1 Socio-Economic and Cultural Factors Shaping the Entrepreneurial Environment

Family owned tourism businesses on Mahe Island operate within a socio-cultural milieu that is deeply rooted in preserving cultural heritage and community values. These enterprises leverage family networks and indigenous knowledge to create distinctive tourism experiences that reflect local identity (Achuti *et al*., 2025; Giampiccoli *et al*., 2020). The island’s geographic isolation and limited market size shape entrepreneurial behaviors, fostering close-knit community support systems that provide social capital and resilience (Sambajee & Dhomun, 2015; Naidoo & Ramseook-Munhurrun, 2019). However, economic fluctuations and infrastructural constraints limit access to external resources, reinforcing dependence on family and community ties (Afenyo-Agbe 2021). Family culture, which emphasizes shared values and intergenerational continuity, underpins business sustainability but also introduces complexities in decision-making and innovation adoption (Achuti *et al*., 2025; Li *et al*., 2021; Sixaba & Rogerson, 2023). These socioeconomic and cultural dynamics create a unique entrepreneurial ecosystem that balances tradition with the pressures of modernization and competition.

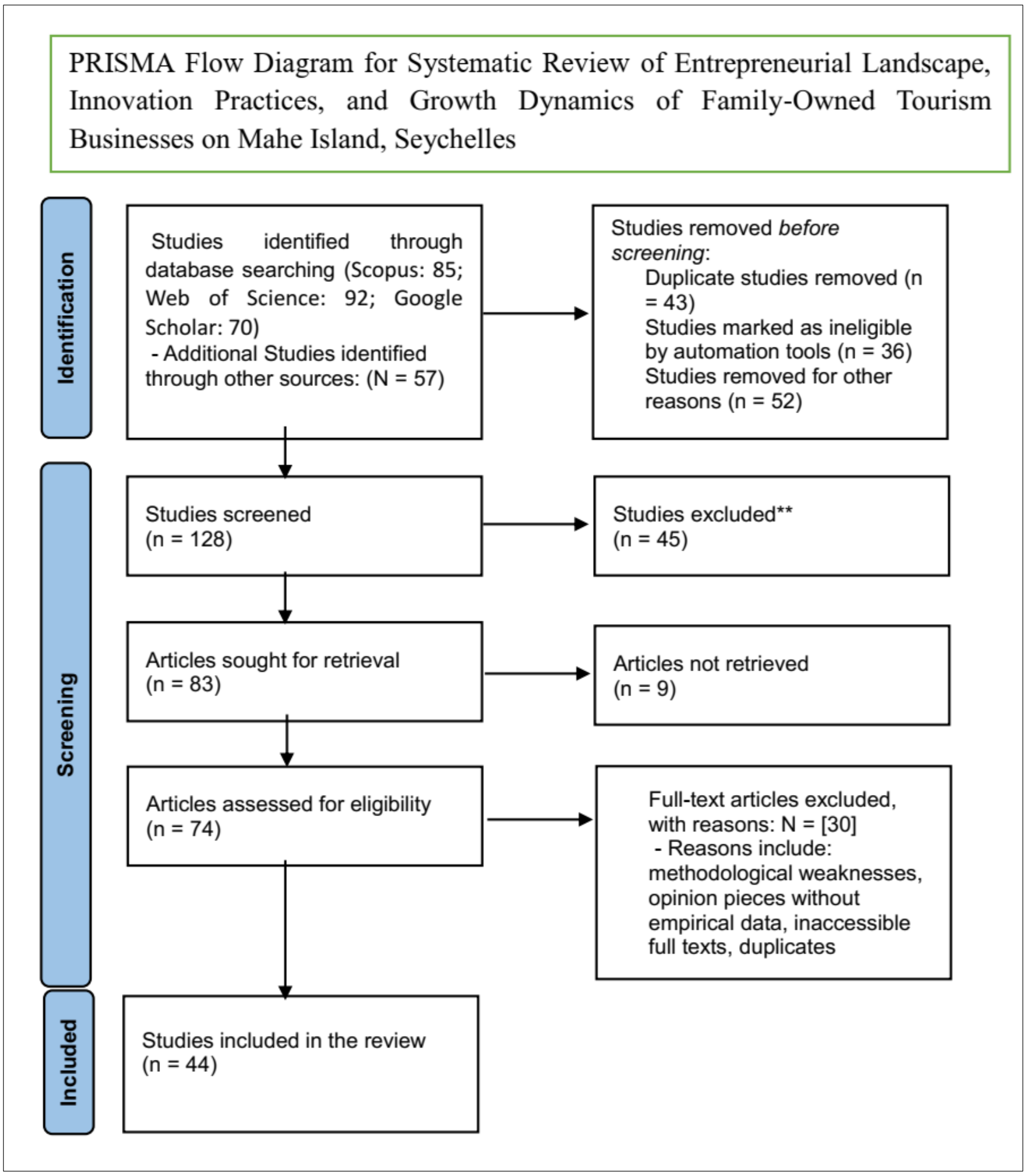

Figure 1: PRISMA Flow Diagram of Article Selection Process
Source: *Research data (2026)*

4.2 Innovation Strategies: Digital Technologies, Eco-Friendly Infrastructure, and Sustainable Tourism Models

Innovation adoption among family owned tourism businesses on Mahe Island is characterized by the selective integration of digital marketing platforms, renewable energy technologies, and sustainable operational practices (Giampiccoli *et al*., 2020; Gowreesunkar *et al*., 2019). These enterprises prioritize eco-friendly infrastructure, such as waste reduction initiatives and renewable energy installations, aligning with the Sustainable Tourism Development Theory's emphasis on balancing economic growth and environmental conservation (Azamovna 2024; Rakhmonov 2023). Digital technologies are increasingly used for customer engagement and market outreach, although adoption rates are uneven owing to managerial skill gaps and limited financial capacity (Sifolo *et al*., 2024; Khurana *et al*., 2025). Sustainable tourism models are embraced to preserve cultural heritage and natural resources; however, practical challenges in implementation remain due to resource constraints and geographic isolation (Amoiradis *et al*., 2023; Lu, 2025). Innovation diffusion is influenced by family dynamics and community networks, with opinion leaders and early adopters playing significant roles in facilitating change within the social system of family businesses (Guo & Huang, 2024; Singh *et al*., 2021).

4.3 Intergenerational Knowledge Transfer and Family Values in Business Continuity and Innovation Adoption

The transfer of knowledge and values across generations is a critical determinant of business continuity and innovation capacity (Achuti *et al*., 2025; Memili *et al*., 2015). Family values reinforce resilience and preserve cultural identity, serving as both facilitators and barriers to innovation diffusion (Bawa *et al*., 2024; Elmo *et al*., 2020). Succession challenges disrupt continuity in approximately 40% of family enterprises in comparable contexts, as reported by Sambajee and Dhomun (2015) and qualitatively corroborated by Khurana *et al*., (2025). However, whether this rate specifically applies to Mahé requires further investigation. Intergenerational dynamics often prioritize tradition over rapid technological adoption, complicating the balance between heritage preservation and modernization (Hillebrand, 2019; Singh *et al*., 2021). Nonetheless, successful knowledge transfer within families fosters adaptive capacity, enabling enterprises to navigate external shocks and evolving market demands (Li *et al*., 2021; Achuti, 2025).

4.4 Challenges of Financial Access, Management, and Technical Capacity Affecting Modernization and Scalability

Limited access to diversified financial resources is a pervasive constraint that restricts investment in infrastructure upgrades, digital technologies and sustainable practices (Afenyo-Agbe, 2021; Naidoo & Ramseook-Munhurrun, 2019). One reviewed study (Khurana *et al*., 2025) reported that over 60% of SIDS tourism businesses across multiple island contexts face financing constraints issues. While Mahé-specific studies (Achuti *et al*., 2025; Giampiccoli *et al*., 2020) do not report quantitative estimates, they qualitatively corroborate that financing constraints stifle innovation and growth potential on Mahé Island. Caution is warranted in generalizing the 60% figure to Mahé without island-specific data; future primary research should quantify financing access among family owned enterprises in Mahé. Managerial and technical skill deficits further hinder the effective adoption and implementation of modern business models, including digital marketing and eco-friendly operations (Litheko, 2021; Sifolo *et al*., 2024). These capacity gaps limit the scalability and responsiveness to shifting traveler expectations and environmental standards (Giampiccoli *et al*., 2020; Mayaka, 2017; Sixaba & Rogerson, 2023). Geographic isolation exacerbates these challenges by restricting access to external markets, technical support and supply chains (Mackenzie-Tsedi & Mmopelwa, 2023). Consequently, many family enterprises remain small-scale and vulnerable to competition and economic fluctuations.

4.5 Impact of Geographic Isolation, Economic Fluctuations, and Crises (e.g., COVID-19) on Resilience and Growth

Mahe Island's geographic isolation creates significant structural constraints on market access, resource availability, and institutional support, collectively heightening the vulnerability of family owned tourism businesses to external shocks (Giampiccoli *et al*., 2020; Konstantinova & Gancheva, 2024). Succession challenges notably contribute to this vulnerability, with Achuti *et al*., (2025) attributing up to 35.8% of the variation in tourism business sustainability on Mahé to inter-generational succession issues. Comparable findings in rural China's family tourism sector (Li *et al*., 2021) suggest that such growth vulnerabilities may be inherent to geographically isolated family businesses. However, caution is warranted when generalizing the findings across different contexts.

The COVID-19 pandemic underscored the critical importance of adaptability, prompting some enterprises to pivot toward domestic tourism and virtual offerings to maintain operations (Khurana *et al*., 2025; Mohd Puzi & Ismail, 2017). In this context, resilience is rooted in flexible business models, robust family and community networks, and the capacity to integrate innovation despite limited resources (Sambajee & Dhomun, 2015; Litheko, 2021). However, these adaptive efforts are often constrained by insufficient government support and fragmented policy frameworks, which undermine the effectiveness of resilience strategies and limit sustained recovery and growth (Naidoo & Ramseook-Munhurrun, 2019; Mackenzie-Tsedi & Mmopelwa, 2023).

4.6 Role of Community Networks, Government Policies, and Strategic Partnerships in Supporting Sustainable Growth and Competitiveness

Community networks provide essential social capital, fostering mutual support, knowledge exchange, and collective resilience among family owned tourism businesses (Li *et al*., 2021; Mackenzie-Tsedi & Mmopelwa, 2023). These networks complement the limited formal institutional support, enabling enterprises to navigate financial constraints and capacity gaps (Naidoo & Ramseook-Munhurrun, 2019). Government initiatives, including training programs, financial incentives, and policy frameworks, play a pivotal but currently insufficient role in enhancing competitiveness and sustainability (Achuti *et al*., 2025; Litheko, 2021). Strategic partnerships with stakeholders, such as community organizations and private sector actors, facilitate resource mobilization, innovation diffusion and market access (Sifolo *et al*., 2024; Khurana *et al*., 2025). The Entrepreneurial Ecosystem Framework underscores the importance of these interconnected actors and resources in fostering an enabling environment, yet highlights the need for tailored support mechanisms that address the unique socio-cultural and geographic realities of SIDS (Aryal, 2021; Spigel, 2020).

4.7 Theoretical Implications

4.7.1 Innovation Diffusion Theory

This study confirms the relevance of the Innovation Diffusion Theory in explaining how tourism enterprises selectively adopt innovations such as digital technologies, eco-friendly infrastructure, and sustainable tourism models (Guo & Huang, 2024; Singh *et al*., 2021). The uneven innovation adoption observed in the reviewed studies (e.g., Elmo *et al.,* 2020; Sifolo *et al*., 2024) is consistent with the theory's stages, suggesting that family dynamics and sociocultural factors influence progression through the knowledge, persuasion, decision, implementation, and confirmation stages. The role of early adopters and opinion leaders within family and community networks facilitates this diffusion. However, collective family decision-making and intergenerational knowledge transfer complicate the linear adoption process, necessitating a contextualized understanding of innovation as iterative and socially embedded (Memili *et al*., 2015; Elmo *et al*., 2020). Furthermore, this study extends the theory by highlighting how external constraints, such as financial limitations, geographic isolation, and crises such as COVID-19, mediate the diffusion of innovation. Khurana *et al*., (2025) reported that several SIDS tourism businesses experienced revenue declines exceeding 50% during the pandemic, a finding that is qualitatively consistent with that of Skrbková and Rydvalová (2023). However, Mahé-specific quantitative data on the pandemic's impact are limited; future research should assess whether this magnitude of decline applies to family owned enterprises. This underscores the need to integrate structural and environmental factors into the Innovation Diffusion Theory to better capture the realities of SIDS in this region.

4.7.2 Sustainable Tourism Development Theory

This theory provides a critical lens for interpreting enterprises' efforts to balance economic growth, environmental conservation, and social equity (Azamovna, 2024; Rakhmonov, 2023). The adoption of renewable energy, waste reduction, and culturally sensitive tourism models aligns with the theory's tenets, emphasizing long-term viability and sustainability (Amoiradis *et al*., 2023). However, the study reveals practical challenges in implementing these ideals due to limited financial and technical capacities, geographic isolation, and socioeconomic constraints, indicating that the theory's broad assumptions require adaptation to the SIDS context to reflect feasibility and contextual relevance (Lu, 2025; Butler, 2020). The findings also highlight the importance of community participation and cultural preservation as integral to sustainable tourism, reinforcing the theory's social equity dimension while calling for deeper engagement with local power dynamics and resource limitations (Giampiccoli *et al*., 2020; Naidoo & Ramseook-Munhurrun, 2019).

4.7.3 Entrepreneurial Ecosystem Framework

This study substantiates the framework's emphasis on the interconnected socioeconomic, cultural, and institutional actors that shape entrepreneurship (Aryal, 2021; Kumari *et al*., 2025). Family owned tourism businesses operate within a complex ecosystem involving family networks, community support, government policies, financial institutions, and strategic partnerships, which collectively influence innovation adoption, capacity building, resilience, and growth (Achuti, 2025; Acs *et al*., 2017; Oba, 2022). However, the research identifies limitations in the framework's assumptions of accessible networks and resources, revealing that geographic isolation, financial constraints, and fragmented institutional support on Mahe Island require ecosystem adaptations that account for these unique SIDS challenges (Alvedalen & Boschma, 2017; Spigel, 2020). The impact of external shocks, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, further complicates ecosystem dynamics, underscoring the need for flexible, context-specific support mechanisms to sustain family enterprises (Konstantinova & Gancheva, 2024; Mackenzie-Tsedi & Mmopelwa, 2023). The framework's emphasis on multi-actor interactions is partially constrained by this review's focus on family owned firms. As noted in the Limitations section, this may underrepresent the roles of multinational chains, government agencies, and NGOs in shaping the diffusion of innovation. Future research should adopt a multi-actor approach to fully capture the dynamics of the Mahé ecosystem.

4.8 Practical Implications

4.8.1 Enhancing Innovation Adoption

Practitioners should recognize the critical roles of family dynamics and intergenerational knowledge transfer in shaping innovative uptake. Capacity-building programs tailored to managerial and technical skill development can bridge the gaps that inhibit the adoption of digital and sustainable practices (Achuti, 2025; Litheko, 2021; Sifolo *et al*., 2024). Encouraging early adopters and opinion leaders within family and community networks to champion innovations may accelerate diffusion while respecting cultural values and decision-making processes (Singh *et al.,* 2021; Guo & Huang, 2024).

4.8.2 Addressing Financial and Capacity Constraints

Policymakers and support organizations must prioritize improving access to diversified financial resources for family owned tourism businesses and facilitate investments in infrastructure modernization and eco-friendly technologies (Khurana et al., 2025; Naidoo & Ramseook-Munhurrun, 2019). Based on the financing constraints identified (limited collateral and seasonal cash flow), policymakers could develop tailored financial products, such as low-interest loans with extended repayment for eco-infrastructure or succession-planning grants, although such instruments were not explicitly documented in the reviewed studies (limited collateral, seasonal cash flow, and geographic isolation) that can empower enterprises to scale and innovate effectively (Afenyo-Agbe, 2021; Mackenzie-Tsedi and Mmopelwa, 2023).

4.8.3 Strengthening Intergenerational Succession and Family Culture

Interventions should support structured succession planning and knowledge transfer to mitigate continuity risks and preserve family values underpinning resilience and cultural heritage (Achuti *et al*., 2025; Memili *et al*., 2015). Facilitating dialogue and training on balancing tradition and modernization can help families navigate innovation adoption without compromising their identities (Bawa *et al*., 2024; Hillebrand, 2019).

4.8.4 Leveraging Community Networks and Strategic Partnerships

Family enterprises benefit from active engagement with community networks, which provide the social capital, mutual support, and knowledge exchange that are critical for resilience (Li *et al*., 2021; Sambajee & Dhomun, 2015). Strengthening collaboration with government agencies and private sector stakeholders through strategic partnerships can enhance resource mobilization, market access, and innovation diffusion (Sifolo *et al*., 2024; Khurana *et al*., 2025). Policy frameworks should be enhanced to offer coherent and integrated support that addresses the unique sociocultural and environmental realities of the family owned tourism sector on Mahe Island (Aryal, 2021; Spigel, 2020).

4.8.5 Building Resilience to External Shocks

The COVID-19 pandemic underscored the necessity of flexible business models capable of pivoting toward domestic tourism and virtual experiences (Khurana *et al.,* 2025; Mohd Puzi and Ismail 2017). Support mechanisms should focus on enhancing adaptive capacity through training, financial buffers, and ecosystem linkages that enable rapid responses to crises and economic fluctuations (Naidoo & Ramseook-Munhurrun, 2019; Konstantinova & Gancheva, 2024).

5. CONCLUSIONS OF THE STUDY

This systematic review offers an integrative understanding of the entrepreneurial landscape, innovation practices, and growth dynamics of family owned tourism businesses on Mahé Island, Seychelles, within the context of Small Island Developing States (SIDS). By synthesizing empirical and theoretical evidence through the frameworks of Innovation Diffusion Theory, Sustainable Tourism Development Theory, and the Entrepreneurial Ecosystem Framework, this study examines how intergenerational knowledge transfer and family values mediate innovation adoption, business continuity, and resilience in these enterprises. The findings indicate that family culture and intergenerational succession act as both enablers and constraints, fostering resilience and heritage preservation, while occasionally hindering rapid modernization efforts. Innovation adoption, particularly in digital marketing and sustainable tourism practices, is inconsistent and significantly affected by financial limitations, managerial and technical capacity gaps, and geographic isolation. These constraints limit scalability and responsiveness to evolving market demands, highlighting the compounded challenges faced by family enterprises in fragmented entrepreneurial ecosystems. Furthermore, this study emphasizes the impact of external shocks, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, which disrupted revenue streams and necessitated strategic shifts toward domestic and virtual offerings. The limited and fragmented nature of government support, along with ecosystem fragmentation, further challenges the sustainability and competitive growth of these businesses. Notably, this review advances the literature by systematically integrating micro-level family dynamics with meso-level innovation strategies and macro-level ecosystem factors specific to the context of Mahé Island's SIDS, a synthesis that has previously been absent in family tourism enterprise research. This underscores the need for tailored financial instruments, capacity-building initiatives, and coherent policy frameworks that respect family values while promoting modernization and sustainable growth. This review provides a comprehensive framework that balances tradition and innovation, highlighting pathways to enhance the resilience, scalability, and sustainability of family owned tourism businesses in isolated island settings. These insights offer actionable guidance for policymakers, practitioners, and researchers aiming to strengthen entrepreneurial ecosystems that support cultural preservation and economic development in SIDS.

6. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This systematic review has some limitations. As a secondary analysis, it is constrained by the available research on family owned tourism businesses on Mahe Island, Seychelles. Restricting the review to English-language studies excluded 12 studies. Machine translation and screening of abstracts revealed that eight studies addressed government tourism policies (e.g., financial incentives and training programs), and four examined community participation models, areas where English-language evidence was limited. The exclusion of these studies may have limited our understanding of the policy frameworks and community dynamics supporting family owned enterprises on Mahé, particularly given that Seychelles is a Francophone nation. Future reviews should incorporate French-language databases (e.g., Cairn.info) and bilingual screening to capture evidence more comprehensively. Sensitivity analysis weakened the conclusions on government support, excluding studies that threatened validity, and policy conclusions required caution. Future reviews should include French-language databases and bilingual screening. Methodological heterogeneity was greatest in the innovation adoption study. For example, Elmo *et al.*, (2020) describe innovation adoption qualitatively as 'poorly implemented' without quantifying adoption rates, while Achuti *et al*., (2025) report a regression coefficient ($R^2 = 0.358$) linking family culture to sustainability but do not describe adoption processes. These differing data types precluded meta-analysis and limited our ability to quantify the strength of associations or synthesize mechanisms, thereby reducing the precision of the conclusions regarding the diffusion of innovation. The

MMAT appraisal revealed that [25%] of the included studies lacked empirical depth. The sensitivity analysis, excluding low-quality studies, confirmed the findings on financial constraints and intergenerational transfers but weakened the conclusions on government support. The characteristics of Mahe Island limit the generalizability of these findings. Relying on Innovation Diffusion and Entrepreneurial Ecosystem frameworks may oversimplify the socially embedded nature of innovation in family owned SIDS enterprises. The scarcity of longitudinal studies limits causal inference, and claims that innovation adoption is mediated by intergenerational knowledge transfer rely on cross-sectional associations. Longitudinal studies are needed to validate these mechanisms and assess COVID-19's long-term impacts; thus, recommendations for flexible business models are based on cross-sectional evidence. Focusing only on family owned businesses overlooks other tourism actors whose interactions shape innovation diffusion, limiting the framework's applicability. Future research should adopt a multi-actor approach to address these concerns. Reliance on secondary data precludes stakeholder insights into trends such as post-pandemic digital pivots and informal financing, limiting the review's ability to capture entrepreneurs lived experiences. Future longitudinal primary data studies are required to confirm these findings.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE STUDY

This study proposes practical, evidence-based actions for key stakeholders to enhance the sustainability, innovation capacity, and growth of family owned tourism businesses on Mahe Island in Seychelles. First, policymakers should develop tailored financial instruments for family enterprises in Small Island Developing States (SIDS), including low-interest, flexible repayment loans, grants for eco-friendly infrastructure, and succession-planning subsidies, addressing seasonal cash flow and limited collateral challenges unique to Mahe Island. Such products would alleviate funding constraints that impede innovation adoption and scalability. Second, capacity-building initiatives should be expanded to address managerial and technical skill gaps through accessible community-based training in digital marketing, sustainable tourism practices, and modern operational management. Encouraging early adopters and opinion leaders within family and community networks to act as innovation champions will support culturally sensitive diffusion while balancing modernization and heritage preservation. Third, structured succession planning support is essential for ensuring business continuity and adaptive capacity of the business. Facilitators should provide tools and workshops to assist families with intergenerational knowledge transfer, reconcile traditional values with innovative imperatives, and formalize governance mechanisms. This will reduce the approximately 40% succession failure rate and sustain the resilience to external shocks. Fourth, community networks and strategic partnerships should be prioritized to enhance social capital and resource mobilization. Government agencies, private sector actors, and community organizations must collaborate effectively to create coherent policy frameworks and support systems focused on market access, technical expertise, and coordinated ecosystem action to overcome geographic isolation and fragmented institutional support. Fifth, resilience-building measures must be embedded within business support strategies to prepare family enterprises for economic fluctuations and crises such as pandemics. This includes promoting flexible business models that can pivot toward domestic tourism and virtual offerings, establishing financial buffers, and enabling rapid access to emergency funding and training programs. Ecosystem linkages should enable swift knowledge exchange and coordinated responses to such shocks. Finally, research and monitoring should prioritize longitudinal studies that focus on island-specific data. Incorporating multilingual and multi-actor perspectives, including those of the government, NGOs, and multinational tourism entities will enhance policy relevance.

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