

Research on the Construction Mechanism of Ambidexterous Entrepreneurship Capability of Chinese Private Enterprises from the Perspective of Social Entrepreneurship: A Literature Review

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Abstract: The dual value creation of social enterprises is the core to solving social problems and achieving their own sustainable development, and how to balance "commercial-social" values through ambidextrous entrepreneurial capabilities under resource constraints has become a current research focus. Based on the logical framework of "resource constraints - ambidextrous entrepreneurial capabilities - dual value creation", this paper systematically reviews relevant literature. Firstly, it defines the core connotations and research contexts of dual value creation, resource constraints, and ambidextrous entrepreneurial capabilities of social enterprises; secondly, it analyzes the interaction mechanism among the three, clarifying the mediating role of ambidextrous entrepreneurial capabilities between resource constraints and dual value creation; finally, it identifies research gaps in existing studies regarding the balance mechanism of dual values, the dynamic evolution of resource constraints, the uniqueness of ambidextrous entrepreneurial capabilities, and research methods and contexts, and prospects future research directions. This review integrates the theoretical achievements of social entrepreneurship and ambidexterity theory, clarifies the current research status and development trends in the field, and provides a systematic reference for subsequent theoretical research and corporate practice.

Keywords: Social Entrepreneurship; Ambidexterity Theory; Entrepreneurial Capabilities.

1. Introduction

In recent years, social entrepreneurial enterprises, whose core mission is to create social value and solve social problems, have become an important force to make up for the service failures of the government, market and public welfare sectors and promote the sustainable economic and social development [1]. Endowed with dual economic and social attributes, such enterprises need to generate economic value through commercial activities to sustain their operation, while continuously delivering social value to meet specific social needs. The practices of social entrepreneurship in fields such as elderly care, education and environmental protection have further highlighted their unique social functions [2].

However, the dual missions of social entrepreneurial enterprises have plunged them into a double predicament. On the one hand, compared with conventional entrepreneurial enterprises, social entrepreneurial enterprises are at a distinct disadvantage in acquiring key resources such as capital, talents, venues and brands, and thus generally suffer from severe resource constraints [3-5]. On the other hand, the conflict and balance between the dual "commercial-social" values have always been their core challenge. Improper handling of this issue may easily lead to mission drift and even force enterprises to withdraw from the market [6, 7]. Therefore, how to achieve the dynamic balance of dual values under resource-constrained circumstances has become a key proposition for the sustainable development of social entrepreneurial enterprises.

Existing studies have extensively explored the value creation models, characteristics, performance and influencing factors of social entrepreneurial enterprises [8-9]. Nevertheless, there is still a lack of systematic theoretical

interpretation and integration regarding the internal mechanism through which enterprises resolve the dual value conflicts by building effective capabilities under resource-constrained conditions [2, 7]. As a core capability that balances opportunity exploration and resource utilization, ambidextrous entrepreneurial capability is regarded as a critical pathway for social entrepreneurial enterprises to respond to environmental uncertainty, break through resource constraints and achieve dual value creation [11-13].

Based on the above analysis, this paper takes the logical thread of "resource constraints - ambidextrous entrepreneurial capability - dual value creation" to systematically sort out existing research findings, clarify the connotations, research contexts and interaction mechanisms of the three core constructs, identify current research gaps, and prospect future research directions, so as to provide useful references for the practical operation and theoretical research of social entrepreneurial enterprises.

2. Connotations and Research Contexts of Core Constructs

2.1. Social Entrepreneurial Enterprises and Dual Value Creation

The concept of social entrepreneurship was formally put forward in the 1980s [14]. Its core essence lies in using business methods to solve social problems, meeting social needs while enhancing corporate competitiveness and promoting regional development [15]. The academic circle generally holds that the rise of social entrepreneurship stems from the triple failure of the government, market and public welfare sectors. It targets social opportunities that are not covered by commercial enterprises and traditional public

welfare approaches [16]. This essential attribute determines that social entrepreneurial enterprises must shoulder the organizational mission of dual value creation—they need to not only generate economic value to ensure their sustainable operation, but also create social value to address specific social problems [17, 18].

The core contradiction of dual value creation lies in the coordinated balance between social value and commercial value. Existing studies point out that the two are not opposing; instead, there is an inherent logic of symbiotic interaction between them: the realization of social value can help enterprises accumulate legitimacy resources and enhance brand reputation, laying a foundation for commercial value creation; the acquisition of commercial value, in turn, can provide continuous resource support for social value creation [19, 20]. However, in practice, the balance of dual values presents dynamic characteristics. The three-stage model proposed by Miao & Zhang (2018) indicates that enterprises need to adjust their value focus according to their development stages to ultimately achieve mutual promotion between the two [21]. Some enterprises achieve a win-win situation of dual values through strategic adjustments, while others fall into mission drift due to their failure to balance the two, or even transform into pure commercial enterprises or non-profit organizations, and in some cases withdraw from the market entirely [7]. Current research has confirmed that the balance of dual values needs to be dynamically adjusted in light of the characteristics of social problems and internal and external environments [16], yet the exploration of specific balance mechanisms and paths remains to be further deepened.

2.2. Resource Constraints and the Development of Social Entrepreneurial Enterprises

Resource constraints are a prevalent issue faced by social entrepreneurial enterprises, and such constraints are more severe for them compared with conventional entrepreneurial enterprises [5]. Existing studies have deconstructed the types of resource constraints on social entrepreneurial enterprises from multiple dimensions. At the social resource level, there are problems such as the lack of social cognitive legitimacy, insufficient public recognition, immature industry norms, and inconsistent service standards. At the commercial resource level, constraints including capital shortage, serious brain drain, high costs of venue acquisition, and backward technology application are particularly prominent [22]. At the institutional resource level, institutional barriers such as an incomplete regulatory system, limited coverage of government subsidies, and unclear division of powers and responsibilities in management and operation have further exacerbated the resource predicament of enterprises [23].

Resource constraints exert complex impacts on the dual value creation of social entrepreneurial enterprises. On the one hand, resource scarcity may restrict enterprises' service supply capacity and innovation space, hindering the effective realization of social value. On the other hand, excessive reliance on a single resource channel may lead enterprises to prioritize short-term commercial interests in value creation, resulting in mission drift [3]. However, existing studies have also found that resource constraints are not absolutely negative factors; moderate resource pressure may stimulate enterprises' creative behaviors. For instance, enterprises can break through constraints through resource bricolage and

integration, thereby forming unique value creation models [24, 25]. Current research mostly focuses on the identification of resource constraint types and their negative impacts, while the exploration of the dynamic evolution law of resource constraints and their contingency relationship with value creation remains insufficient.

2.3. Ambidexterity Theory and Ambidextrous Entrepreneurial Capability

The theory of organizational ambidexterity was put forward by Duncan in 1976. Its core idea refers to an organization's ability to meet the development needs of existing businesses while adapting to changes in the external environment [26]. Since then, this theory has gradually developed multiple research perspectives. Among them, the "exploration-exploitation" duality paradox proposed by March (1991) has become a core research theme, emphasizing that organizations need to balance exploratory activities (seeking new opportunities, new knowledge, and new technologies) and exploitative activities (optimizing existing resources, processes, and technologies) to achieve long-term sustainable development [25, 27-29]. In the field of entrepreneurship, the integration of the ambidexterity theory and entrepreneurial capability has given rise to the core concept of ambidextrous entrepreneurial capability.

Existing studies have gradually reached a consensus on the connotation of ambidextrous entrepreneurial capability, defining it as an enterprise's comprehensive ability to effectively manage internal and external resources, as well as to perceive, identify, shape and realize entrepreneurial opportunities [12, 13]. Its core components include two dimensions: opportunity ambidexterity capability and resource ambidexterity capability [30]. Opportunity ambidexterity capability is reflected in the identification, development and creation of entrepreneurial opportunities, which includes both the exploitation of existing market opportunities and the exploration and cultivation of potential market opportunities. Resource ambidexterity capability is manifested in the bricolage, integration and orchestration of resources, covering the optimal allocation of existing resources and the acquisition and integration of external resources [31]. Studies have confirmed that ambidextrous entrepreneurial capability can help enterprises respond to environmental uncertainty and achieve a balance between innovation and efficiency under resource-constrained conditions [32, 33]. However, there is still a lack of in-depth discussion on the uniqueness and formation mechanism of ambidextrous entrepreneurial capability in the context of social entrepreneurship, as well as its inherent correlation with dual value creation.

3. Research on the Relationships Between Core Constructs

3.1. Ambidextrous Entrepreneurial Capability and Dual Value Creation

Existing studies generally hold that ambidextrous entrepreneurial capability is a critical pathway for social entrepreneurial enterprises to achieve dual value creation. In terms of opportunity ambidexterity capability, through opportunity identification, enterprises can explore potential commercial opportunities from social problems and convert social needs into entry points for value creation [19, 34]. Through opportunity development and creation, they can

continuously expand service fields and models, while meeting diversified social needs and expanding the space for commercial value acquisition. In terms of resource ambidexterity capability, resource bricolage can help enterprises break through constraints by utilizing existing idle resources and achieve initial value creation at low costs [24]. Resource integration and orchestration can promote enterprises to establish cooperative relationships with stakeholders such as universities, social work organizations and government departments, enrich resource supply, and provide sustained support for dual value creation [35].

Some studies have also explored the contingency factors influencing the relationship between ambidextrous entrepreneurial capability and dual value creation, arguing that external factors such as the institutional environment, industry life cycle and technological development level in which enterprises operate, as well as internal factors such as enterprise scale, development stage and governance structure, can moderate the relationship between the two [36, 37]. For example, in the early stage of industry development, exploratory opportunity capability and resource bricolage capability exert a more significant impact on value creation; whereas in the mature stage of the industry, exploitative opportunity capability and resource integration capability play a more prominent role. However, existing studies still lack systematic empirical tests on the relationship between the two, and the exploration of the internal mechanism through which different dimensions of ambidextrous entrepreneurial capability synergistically affect dual value creation remains insufficient.

3.2. Interactive Relationship Between Resource Constraints and Ambidextrous Entrepreneurial Capability

There exists a complex interactive mechanism between resource constraints and ambidextrous entrepreneurial capability. On the one hand, resource constraints are an important inducement for the formation of ambidextrous entrepreneurial capability. In the context of resource scarcity, to break through development dilemmas, enterprises must take the initiative to cultivate opportunity identification and resource integration capabilities, and explore potential opportunities and optimize resource allocation through creative approaches [24, 25]. For instance, when confronted with constraints such as capital shortage and talent scarcity, social entrepreneurial enterprises can address talent issues through industry-education integration and part-time employment, and alleviate financial pressure by cooperating with the government and securing policy support. This process drives the formation and improvement of ambidextrous entrepreneurial capability.

On the other hand, ambidextrous entrepreneurial capability can effectively mitigate the negative impacts of resource constraints. Opportunity ambidexterity capability helps enterprises discover new channels for resource acquisition, such as obtaining government subsidies and social resources by developing emerging markets. Resource ambidexterity capability can improve resource utilization efficiency, and achieve "accomplishing more with less" through resource bricolage and integration, thus breaking through the limitations of resource constraints [2, 12]. Existing studies have confirmed that ambidextrous entrepreneurial capability plays a mediating role between resource constraints and dual value creation. Nevertheless, in-depth analysis is still lacking

regarding the boundary conditions of this mediating process, such as the moderating effects of factors like institutional.

3.3. Integrated Research on Resource Constraints, Ambidextrous Entrepreneurial Capability and Dual Value Creation

In recent years, some studies have begun to focus on the integrated relationship among the three variables, forming a basic analytical framework of "resource constraints - ambidextrous entrepreneurial capability - dual value creation". This framework holds that resource constraints are the external context faced by social entrepreneurial enterprises, and ambidextrous entrepreneurial capability is the core mechanism for enterprises to address constraints and achieve value creation. The three components constitute a dynamic evolutionary process:

First, In the initial stage of entrepreneurship, enterprises are confronted with multiple resource constraints, and initially achieve dual value creation by cultivating opportunity identification and resource bricolage capabilities.

Second, With the development of enterprises, the types of resource constraints change, and ambidextrous entrepreneurial capability is further upgraded to opportunity development and resource integration capabilities, driving the coordinated development of dual values.

Third, In the mature stage, enterprises proactively optimize the external environment through opportunity creation and resource orchestration capabilities, realizing the sustainable growth of dual values.

However, existing integrated research still has obvious shortcomings. First, the research methods are dominated by case studies, lacking large-sample empirical tests, and the generalizability of the conclusions remains to be verified. Second, there is insufficient research on the dynamic evolution of resource constraints and the adaptability of ambidextrous entrepreneurial capability, failing to clarify how enterprises should adjust the structure of ambidextrous entrepreneurial capability at different development stages. Third, there is no unified standard for the measurement indicators of dual value creation, making it difficult to accurately evaluate the effect of ambidextrous entrepreneurial capability.

4. Research Gaps and Prospects

4.1. Research Gaps

First, The balance mechanism of dual value creation remains unclear: Existing studies mostly emphasize the symbiotic relationship between dual values, but lack in-depth discussion on the specific mechanisms through which enterprises dynamically adjust their value focus and avoid mission drift in different contexts. Moreover, a unified framework for the measurement dimensions and evaluation methods of dual value co-creation has not yet been formed.

Second, There is insufficient research on the dynamics and contingency effects of resource constraints: Most existing studies focus on the static classification of resource constraints, ignoring their dynamic evolution law with changes in enterprise development stages and external environments. In addition, discussions on contingency factors between resource constraints, ambidextrous entrepreneurial capability, and dual value creation—such as institutional

environment, industry characteristics, and corporate governance structure—are relatively fragmented.

Third, The uniqueness and formation path of ambidextrous entrepreneurial capability in the social entrepreneurship context are ambiguous: Existing research on ambidextrous entrepreneurial capability mostly draws on findings from general entrepreneurial enterprises, failing to fully consider the impact of the dual mission attribute of social entrepreneurial enterprises on the composition and formation mechanism of ambidextrous entrepreneurial capability. Furthermore, the research on the synergistic effects among various dimensions of ambidextrous entrepreneurial capability, as well as its interactive relationship with external resources, is not in-depth enough.

Finally, The singularity of research methods and contexts: Existing studies are dominated by case studies and qualitative analysis, with a lack of large-sample empirical research, making it difficult to verify the generalizability of theoretical models. Research contexts are mostly concentrated in fields such as urban elderly care and education, with insufficient research on social entrepreneurial enterprises in rural and underdeveloped areas, and a lack of comparative analysis of research conclusions in different contexts.

4.2. Prospects

First, Deepen the research on the balance mechanism of dual-value creation: Combined with the dynamic capability theory, explore the adjustment paths of the dual-value focus of enterprises at different development stages and under different external environments; construct a multi-dimensional measurement index system for dual-value creation, including both quantitative indicators (such as social service coverage rate and profit growth rate) and qualitative indicators (such as brand reputation and social recognition); reveal the specific realization paths of the synergistic creation of dual value through a combination of case studies and empirical research.

Second, Strengthen the research on the dynamic evolution and contingency effects of resource constraints: Adopt a longitudinal research design to track the dynamic change process of resource constraints of social entrepreneurial enterprises and analyze the evolution laws of different types of resource constraints; introduce contingency variables such as institutional support, market competition intensity and enterprise life cycle, construct a contingency model of "resource constraints - ambidextrous entrepreneurial capability - dual-value creation", and empirically test the moderating effects of contingency factors; explore the differentiated impacts of different types of resource constraints on different dimensions of ambidextrous entrepreneurial capability.

Third, Explore the uniqueness and formation paths of ambidextrous entrepreneurial capability in the context of social entrepreneurship: Combined with the dual-mission attribute of social entrepreneurial enterprises, re-examine the constituent dimensions of ambidextrous entrepreneurial capability and analyze its differences from that of general entrepreneurial enterprises; explore the formation mechanism of ambidextrous entrepreneurial capability from the perspectives of institutional logic and stakeholder interaction, with a focus on the role of external subjects such as the government, universities and social work organizations in capability cultivation; study the synergy and conflict among various dimensions of ambidextrous entrepreneurial

capability, as well as how to achieve capability synergy through organizational design and strategic management.

Finally, Expand research methods and research contexts: Adopt empirical research methods such as large-sample questionnaire surveys and panel data analysis to verify the universality of existing theoretical models; expand the scope of research contexts, strengthen the research on social entrepreneurial enterprises in rural areas and underdeveloped regions, and compare the value creation models and capability construction paths of enterprises in different contexts; introduce cross-cultural comparative studies to explore the impacts of institutional environments in different countries or regions on the dual-value creation and ambidextrous entrepreneurial capability of social entrepreneurial enterprises.

5. Summary

As an important force for addressing social issues and promoting sustainable development, the issue of dual-value creation of social entrepreneurial enterprises under resource-constrained contexts has become a focal point of attention in both academic and practical circles. Existing studies have achieved certain research outcomes around the three core constructs of resource constraints, ambidextrous entrepreneurial capability, and dual-value creation. They have clarified the multi-dimensional characteristics of resource constraints, the core components of ambidextrous entrepreneurial capability, as well as the significant impacts of these two factors on dual-value creation, and established a preliminary theoretical analytical framework. However, current research still has such limitations as unclear balance mechanisms of dual-value creation, insufficient studies on the dynamic nature of resource constraints, lack of in-depth exploration into the uniqueness of ambidextrous entrepreneurial capability, and the singularity of research methods and contexts.

Future research should focus on the aforementioned research gaps, deepen the discussion on the balance mechanism of dual-value creation, the dynamic evolution of resource constraints, and the uniqueness and formation paths of ambidextrous entrepreneurial capability, expand research methods and contexts, and further improve the theoretical system of dual-value creation for social entrepreneurial enterprises. This will not only enrich the connotations of social entrepreneurship theory and ambidexterity theory, but also provide more targeted theoretical guidance and practical implications for the sustainable development of social entrepreneurial enterprises in resource-constrained contexts.

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