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Professor Dennis Foley

University of Newcastle

Dennis.Foley@newcastle.edu.au

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ABSTRACT

Māori Indigenous sustainable entrepreneurship within tourism: Is the determining sustainable factor economic or is it Indigenous cultural values?

Eight Māori businesses involved in tourism operations were studied with the aim of determining is sustainability based on profit maximisation or are Indigenous cultural values the determining factor of sustainability.

A qualitative case study analysis using a grounded theory approach was applied. The conclusions reached provide an insight into the growing Indigenous participation at the Small to Medium Enterprise (SME) level within Aotearoa relating to Māori cultural values. The choice between cultural values verses economic values can result in sacrificing income; the Māori entrepreneur has to make a conscious decision as to which value they adopt in their businesses.

This study provides a unique and personal insight into sustainable Indigenous entrepreneurship that is a foundation for future research.

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Introduction

This paper discusses the concept of sustainable entrepreneurship within the New-Zealand tourism industry. Case studies of eight Māori owned and managed businesses are used to illustrate and provide a sample determination from the Māori cultural context, if sustainability is based on profit maximisation or is it the Indigenous cultural values that determine sustainability. Can it be both ... or is it something else? All of the businesses examined are coincidentally SME's and family run enterprises.

The discussion begins by reviewing literature on Māori entrepreneurship and the concept of sustainable entrepreneurship followed by the research questions, a short analysis of the findings and concluding discussion as to the impact of this research.

Tikanga will be referred to throughout the paper, for those not aware of this concept; simply it is a general behaviour, a guideline for daily life and interaction in Māori culture, based on experience and the learning that has been handed down through generations with a Māori world view. In business it can be summarised as:

- Whanaungatanga – future benefits for the next generation
- Rangatiratanga & Mana – empower others
- Kaitiakitanga & Manaakitangi – incorporate Tikanga principles
- Utu & Wairua – most successful business possible (Tu Puni Kokiiri 2006).

Māori Entrepreneurship

The Global Enterprise Monitor Report (GEM) ranked Māori as world class in terms of entrepreneurial innovation engaging in commercial activity, just as entrepreneurial as their non-indigenous counterparts, proactively engaging in the economy facing the same challenges as all NZ enterprises (Frederick 2004; Frederick & Henry 2004; Reihana et.al. 2007). In the 2005 GEM report, Frederick & Chittock reinforced previous findings for Māori as they '... distinguish themselves in terms of opportunity entrepreneurs ... are top-rank in

business optimism ... are amongst the “least fearful” when it comes to launching a new business” (2005: 9-11).

In the early years of European contact Māori were allowed economic independence, in fact the survival of both the fledgling New Zealand colony and the Australian colony in Sydney was dependent on Māori commerce and agricultural skill (Petrie 2006). Māori were the innovators, the leaders in commerce adopting the plough, building flour mills, clearing pasture and tilling the soil, introducing new crops, building and owning ocean going vessels. They were conversant with international trade and intensive land use management practices (Petrie 2006). Economic decline commenced in the 1840's for a myriad of reasons. The overall loss of military power in the 1860's and the rapid loss of traditional lands by the gluttonous demands of the settler culture ensured that by the end of the 19th century Māori were facing an ever decreasing economic base (Maaka 1997) which has not been reversed until the 1980's and 1990's following a reversal of government policy (Barcham 1998). The establishment in 1985 of the now defunct Mana Enterprises programme to assist Māori into business was the beginning of several government and Māori initiatives to promote Māori economic development (Jones 2007). Māori ‘... are unique people with aspirations, needs and desires distinct from non- Māori’ (Reihana et.al. 2007: 643). This statement perhaps lays the foundation of the resurgence of Māori entrepreneurs during the last two decades. These unique aspirations and needs are significant in Māori involvement in tourism. New Zealand in general has benefited by a growth in tourism (Ryan 1997) with the ‘... Māori image ... used as a marketing tool’ by the New Zealand industry (Maori Tourism Task Force 1987: 25). The use of this imagery has been done without the consultation and with little commercial benefit for Māori, and this still occurs today by some New Zealand businesses. Māori were stereotyped into guides, carvers and entertainers (Barnett 1997). The resurgence in Māori economic independence in the 1980's following the establishment of economic initiatives such as Mana Enterprises resulted in Māori demanding autonomy, no longer ‘... the optional extra, ... the add on, tear off coupon side event. We do not want to provide ... tacky plastic Maori experience’ (Mahuta 1987: 1). Māori no longer wish to be the stereotype or have their

culture misrepresented; which is one driving force in their business activity. This has resulted in an increase in Māori entrepreneurial activity, especially within the Tourism industry however the economic returns from tourism are comparatively small (Ryan 1997). It is the contribution to cultural and social sustainability that the Māori entrepreneur seeks from tourism (Horn, 2007; Warren & Taylor 1999). So what distinguishes the Māori from the Pakeha (non- Māori) entrepreneur? Love and Love (2005) identify five common features of Māori business which are:

- 1) they have management control
- 2) responsibility and accountability exists to a broader range of beneficiaries and stakeholders
- 3) tikanga (cultural practices) is applied in the business environment
- 4) there are obligations to an extended family group as opposed to focusing solely on individual advancement
- 5) the organisation has an ethos that mirrors the broad goals, values and aspirations of the Māori world.

The difference between Māori and non-Māori is more in the business practice than in the perception (Jones 2007). Jones expands this in that Māori considers people as well as profits; often the Māori entrepreneur adopts a holistic view of their goals taking into account the wellbeing of others, often through their own networks applying distinctive cultural values at the governance and management level within the market place (Durie 2003; Jones 2007).

In closing this literature study of what are Māori entrepreneurs, research by Zapalska's, et. al. (2003) indicates that they are highly motivated to succeed, driven by a desire to improve living standards and secure a livelihood for their families. This motivation to succeed is based on cultural value systems within their tribal affiliations and family. Success in business is also valued as a means of acquiring social status, 'social eminence in the community' (Zapalska, et. al. 2003: 171). To achieve eminence within the community they must also practice tikanga, their cultural values which supports the work of Durie (2003) and Jones (2007). Māori businesses focus on achieving outcomes and practices that reflect Māori

values and concerns, they need to at least break even economically and they also focus on interconnections with family, community and culture; no matter what the product or service (Frederick & Henry 2004; Horn 2007; NZIER 2003; Warren & Taylor 1999; Zygadlo et. al. 2003; Zygadlo et. al. 2004).

‘... entrepreneurship is an complex and multifaceted phenomenon’ (Frederick in Frederick & Chittock 2005: 7), the reader can begin to understand the Māori entrepreneur’s complexity and multifaceted layers of business/stakeholder involvement. Considering the literature studied the Māori entrepreneur is indeed unique in many ways, this paper will hopefully add to literature that illustrates to interested parties Māori (tourism) entrepreneurs individuality.

We have discussed the entrepreneur; the following section will review what is sustainable entrepreneurship.

What is Sustainable Entrepreneurship?

This paper does not set out to define, refine or redefine a definition of what is ‘sustainable entrepreneurship’; rather it is a review, discussion and application that allow the research to provide a possible interpretation.

Based on the work of Dean and McMullen (2007) entrepreneurship is a process of exploiting market opportunities. To understand sustainable entrepreneurship it is obviously the opportunity recognition of and then the exploitation of these market opportunities but in a way that provides a product life span that integrates external factors that include (and are not limited to) the environment, renewal of product and continuance of demand. Harris and Lieper refer to it as a form of managed economic growth that occurs within the context of sound environmental stewardship (1995: xx). There are many different and confusing interpretations of sustainability when applied to entrepreneurial business development. As an illustration Pearce et. al. (1989) identified over 20 different definitions with several other authors concluding that sustainable development - entrepreneurship was an ambiguous concept, perhaps even an oxymoron (Brower 1992; Lele 1991; O’Riordan 1988; Suzuki 1993). The contradictory nature of the concept ensures that sustainable entrepreneurship

differs substantially from sustainable social entrepreneurship which is ‘mission-driven’ rather than profit-driven (Dees 2001; Mort et al. 2003).

Most people connect environmental issues with the concept of sustainability (Springett 2003). However economic sustainability is possibly uppermost on the minds of people wanting to build a sustainable business (Horn 2007). ‘Ecopreneurs’ on the other hand identify the environmental innovations and market opportunities that stem from them, successfully developing products and services accordingly, however they still have to break even financially (Lober 1998; Pastakia 1988; Petersen & Schaltegger 2002).

The bottom line in general is seen as the most important consideration for a business and in our discipline and training in full cost accounting we confirm that the most important concept to the survival of any business is: ‘the capacity to generate income to meet expenses and generate profit’ (Aotahi 2005: 14). The GEM Report of 2005 states that wealth creation for Māori is not the driving force in business (Frederick & Chittock 2005). Māori entrepreneurs also consider; ‘things that sustain us as human beings; our environment, our societies and the diverse cultures that make up the reality of what it is to be human’ (Aotahi 2005: 14). Māori strongly consider the contribution that business activity has to cultural, social sustainability and independence (Frederick & Chittock 2005; Warren and Taylor 1999).

When defining sustainable entrepreneurship the answer can be found within the balance between business development and environment demands/issues. The United Nations 1987 Brundtland Commission noted that sustainability must include the needs of the present are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. This ability to not compromise future generations is perhaps duplicated in other Indigenous research (Foley 2005). The Indigenous business motivator in providing for children (a future generation) is commensurate with the Brundtland report (1987).

Some would say that sustainable entrepreneurship ‘... has the potential to slow the degradation and even gradually improve the earths ecosystems’ (Cohen & Winn 2003: 30). Cohen & Winn have defined sustainable entrepreneurship by slightly altering (see italics) Venkataraman’s (1997) entrepreneurship definition as ‘... the examination of how

opportunities to bring into existence future goods and services discovered, created, and exploited, by whom, and with what economic, psychological, social and *environmental* consequences’ (2003: 35). Cohen and Winn’s definition fails to address an important concept that Indigenous entrepreneur’s value. Based on the authors previous research this definition fails to address the *cultural* applications of sustainability. Culture being ‘... regarded as the set of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features of society or a social group, and that it encompasses, in addition to art and literature, lifestyles ways of living together, value systems, traditions and beliefs’ (UNESCO 2002). Culture for both Indigenous (and some non-indigenous ethnic groups) can be an important sustainable concept. The term social is not encompassing enough by either Venkataraman (1997) or Cohen & Winn’s (2003) definition for the concept ‘social’ in ‘... its meaning is at times vague, suggesting that it is a fuzzy concept’ (Wikipedia 2008).

This may sound pedantic to some readers however when we combine cultural studies and entrepreneurship literature there is a massive amount of generalist rhetoric that can easily be adopted by the researcher. Well meaning non-indigenous scholars who have dabbled in the discipline of Indigenous entrepreneurship have created a foundation of poor definitions together with over-cited scholarly articles based on the exotic that tautologically enforce post-colonial interpretation of the ‘Indian: the *brave* [hearted]’ or the ‘modern noble savage: the Aboriginal’ (Foley 2008). It is of the utmost importance when we look at definitions that are applied to topics that concern Indigenous issues we critically, without bias consider the Indigenous standpoint otherwise if we adopt definitions over Indigenous people we are re-enforcing neo post-colonial constructs that continue to subjugate Indigenous people (Marchetti 2006; Smith 1999).

The reader can begin to understand that sustainable entrepreneurship for Indigenous peoples is indeed a more complex issue due to Indigenous value systems that are essential components of what is culture. The researcher must respect and have experience in this area. Sustainability for the Indigenous is more than ecological, it is also cultural. If we revisit the

views of Aotahi (2005); they consider four levels of understanding entrepreneurial sustainability;

- the economic level (the bottom line)
- the environmental level (the dual bottom line)
- the social level (the triple bottom line) and,
- the cultural level (the quadruple bottom line) (Aotahi 2005: 16).

Māori are considered at the forefront in developing a fourth bottom line that measures the impact of business on culture (Aotahi 2005). Management of the cultural bottom line ensures that valuable cultural patterns and heritage in Aotearoa survive and prosper within the dynamics of a changing commercial world. This is what this paper and field research critiques; for Maori entrepreneurs, do they consider one, two, three or four bottom lines in their business undertakings as entrepreneurs?

Methodology

This project is structured around a qualitative case study analysis using a grounded theory approach (Strauss & Corbin 1990: 1998) utilising an Indigenous standpoint theory *process* (Foley 2002, 2003a, 2003b) in accordance with *Kaupapa Māori* epistemology (Smith 1999). The author being an Indigenous Australian, this epistemological approach required independent third party academic and cultural guidance. The Māori academic support team of Puukenga, UNITEC and Aunty Ella Henry, from the Auckland University of Technology together with the academic support of Professor Howard Frederick from UNITEC provided the independent support network.

The framework of the study involves a cross-comparative case study approach (Yin, 2002: Eisenhardt, 1989). Cross comparative as each entrepreneur or entrepreneurs from distinct iwi's were treated as individual groups which is the foundation of additional work looking at the maintenance of distinct cultural heritage within entrepreneurial values. The primary source of data was one-on-one interviews and individual case study analysis of Indigenous entrepreneurs. These were then analysed, collated and compared as representative sets. A

semi-structured interview format applying substantive coding (open coding and constant comparative coding) was used for the analysis of interview data (Glaser 1992). The semi-structured format allows the individual case studies from across distinct cultural groups to have commonality in analysis of key data sets, strengthening validity, consistency and reliability (Weiss 1994). Snowball sampling was used to locate the participants adopting culturally accepted introductions from third parties. Participants were located in a geographic area that covered Auckland, Whakatane, the East Cape, down to Hastings, across to Rotorua and Taupo. This area has the largest concentration of Māori populace (Statistics NZ 2002), the deduction would be that it also would have the highest representation of Indigenous entrepreneurs.

Research was undertaken from July 2007 to February 2008, participants were sole traders, partnerships, and trading - registered corporations. No trusts, Indigenous ‘community’ type groups or Indigenous groups established on a communal basis were studied. Participants were stand-alone commercial operators.

The studies involved emersion into the family operations over several months enabling the researcher to apply not only a semi-structured interview process of recording data, this also allowed active participation and extensive observation to determine the participant’s application of cultural ethics verses economic needs. In accordance with ethical standards the names, geographic location and type of business remain anonymous.

The Research Question

For the purposes of this paper the specific research questions are;

- 1) Do you value the economic bottom line and concentrate your efforts on profit maximisation? Or,
- 2) Do you practice business sustainability? If so how do you define and measure it?

Results

Many of the SME’s did not undertake one business activity, rather they managed integrated activities. As examples; two accommodation businesses (B&B and backpacker style) also ran fishing charters and cultural tours, another included a road contract service for the local

council, another involved a B&B/Backpacker with a take-away food service and catering business, another a general freight and bus business, another is an up-market charter business exclusive for the international market together with a small weaving company. All eight business studied did not rely on one type of business, in five examples they incorporated accommodation services with other supportive business integrated within the tourist experience. This complicated the study to determine if there was a sustainable business.

To simplify and separate the participant's core business activity from secondary business activities the following table has been used. If the participants identify a component of their business activity as a 'sustained' activity this is highlighted in the right hand column with the type of sustainability. The core business activity was determined by several characteristics which included capital investment, time spent involved in the business, and did the other businesses operations radiate off any one business.

To illustrate table 1, Case study 1 is explained in detail. The immediate question to the participants is are they an accommodation provider, a tour guide operator, a fishing charter business or a road maintenance contractor? By self analysis they determined that they were an accommodation provider 365 days a year, a fishing charter company only in the summer months, tour operations also tended to be seasonal (summer) and they stated emphatically that the road maintenance contract was their 'bread and butter' business in the 'slack times', mostly undertaken in winter. It was their dependable financial resource, it was not however why they were in business rather it was a supplementary income. When the concept of sustainability was included into the discussion the fishing charter business was sustainable ecologically. This was based on ancient tribal harvesting formulae. The fishery was protected under tribal law and the entrepreneur respected and acted within that law. The accommodation which coincidentally was built on a tribal area also had to be environmentally sustainable in management of limited water supplies, waste management, propagation of foodstuffs from waste to ensure fresh produce, conservation of energy and energy generation by solar and wind, and above all a cultural sustainability in that way guests are treated as family, rather than a means to earn income. The business is an extension of family hospitality,

displaying Māori cultural values in sharing that allows the consumer, the customer to experience far more than just accommodation. The consumer experiences (subject to their willingness) cultural immersion – an escape from their non-Māori daily existence (Hipwell 2007; Ryan & Huyton 2002). In cultural tourism, Māori are often uncomfortable putting a price on something they have produced or a traditional practice – giving not selling. This presents a barrier to business development (Frederick & Henry 2004; Horn 2007; Warren and Taylor 1999). In the comfort of an accommodation business, participant 1 can manage Mātauranga (knowledge) for the tourist without ‘selling’ their culture short (Horn 2007). The accommodation business is an example of cultural sustainability.

[Insert Table 1 here]

Space does not permit for full explanations of the other 7 case studies suffice to say their core businesses are listed and the basis of any sustainability listed in the right hand column. Case study 4 and 7 did not feel that any of their activities were subject to any form of sustainability for the products they offered were in a commercial competitive market and was not dependent on Indigenous goodwill or longevity of Indigenous elements. Their operations needed to produce a financial profit however, the financial bottom line was not their driving force, rather it was the third bottom line, a lifestyle, a social level (Aotahi 2005). All Cases admitted that achieving a breakeven point or small profit was important otherwise they would soon lose their small resource and asset base, which supports the 2005 GEM study on Māori (Frederick & Chittock 2005) that financial accomplishment was not a driving force in business. Case study 1, 2, 3, 6 and 8, five of the studies listed their core businesses as culturally sustainable businesses. Their accommodation and tour facilities practice values similar to that previously explained in Case 1. Refer to literature previously referenced (Frederick & Henry 2004; Hipwell 2007; Horn 2007; Ryan & Huyton 2002; Warren and Taylor 1999; Zeppel 2002). The consumer experiences an escape from their non-Māori daily existence. Mātauranga (knowledge) is given as a process of the business in three of five of these businesses, the remaining two provide it as a part of the tourism experience built within activities to ensure they do not sell their culture (Horne 2007). As the tour operator they are

not the tacky add on (Mahuta 1987) rather they are the modern Māori controlling (owning) not only the tour company and accommodation, they also own the cultural content. Traditional beliefs are maintained within 21st century discourse (Zeppel 2002), Māori are in control of the sustainability of their local knowledge. Other business enterprises such as bus/freight service, hunting tours, fishing, weaving business, video store as examples are niche entrepreneurship opportunities that have elevated these entrepreneurs and their families acquiring them social eminence within their communities; all the time practicing tikanga - cultural values (Durie 2003; Frederick & Henry 2004; Horn 2007; Jones 2007; NZIER 2003; Warren & Taylor 1999; Zapalska, et. al. 2003; Zygadlo et. al. 2003; Zygadlo et. al. 2004).

Conclusion

The conclusions reached provide an insight into the growing Indigenous participation at the SME level within Aotearoa relating to Māori cultural values. The concept that is Kaupapa Tikanga was revealed by the participants and researched by the author as it applies within both the realm of the individual's entrepreneurial activity and within the tourism industry. Often the choice between cultural values verses economic values result in short-term financial losses, the Māori entrepreneur has to decide which path they should choose.

Of the eight case studies all practiced various levels of Tikanga looking at lifestyle as a key business pursuit.

Only one had a core business they valued as an ecologically sustainable business pursuit. Two held non-core fishing operations as ecological however their core operations were accommodation which they considered to be a culturally sustainable business. Overall six business operations hold the cultural level of business sustainability as the 'quadruple bottom line' (Aotahi 2005: 16). Supporting the concept that Māori are at the forefront in developing a fourth bottom line that measures the impact of business on culture (Aotahi 2005). Management of the cultural bottom line ensures that valuable cultural patterns and heritage in Aotearoa survives and indeed should prosper within the dynamics of a changing commercial world. Reiterating all eight case studies practiced Tikanga, their Māori value systems within their business operations (Tu Puni Kokiiri 2006).

To answer the research questions, all valued the economic bottom line yet none concentrated their efforts on profit maximisation, rather in the two cases that did not have sustainable cultural or ecological businesses as their core business they held lifestyle as the crucial determining factor. The remaining six valued cultural sustainability in business and they measured it by their continuation of success, without commercialising their culture, by maintaining their position within their iwi building prosperity for their families.

Tourism literature advises us that; ‘... the interaction between tourist and indigenous person might be construed as a liminoid phenomenon because it is individualised and contractual’ (Turner 1982: 54), it is a ritual activity (Ryan 2002), a staging of culture for an authentic cultural experience that over-signifies the identity of difference as a repetitious inscription of essential Maori-ness (Taylor 2001). Hipwell (2007) provides an insight into how the modern Māori culture can exist alongside the traditional which negates to a large degree the previous stereotypical images of Māori. This paper supports Hipwell in that Māori entrepreneurs within the tourism industry are indeed modern yet maintaining cultural sustainability, complex and a multifaceted phenomenon (Frederick & Chittock 2005) not a static contractual liminoid phenomena. Maori entrepreneurs value the cultural level of their business pursuit, the fourth bottom line.

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Table 1: Comparative Analysis of the Cases

	Core business	Secondary business's	Emphasis on sustainability
Case 1	Accommodation (B&B, backpacker)	- fishing charter - tour guide - road maintenance contract	1. fishing charter – ecological & cultural 2. accommodation - cultural
Case 2	Accommodation (Backpacker)	- take away food - catering company	1. accommodation - cultural
Case 3	Accommodation (B&B, backpacker, camping ground)	- fishing charter - tour guide - hunting tours - freight service	1. hunting & fishing – ecological 2. accommodation - cultural
Case 4	Accommodation (backpacker)	- tour guide - transport service	none
Case 5	Fishing Charter	- accommodation - tour guide - weaving	1. fishing charter – ecological
Case 6	Tour company	- transport shuttle - arts & crafts	1. tours - cultural
Case 7	Building Industry	- education provider - food industry - media	none
Case 8	Cultural tours	- catering - transport - video hire	1. tours - cultural