

## Indigenous entrepreneurship: factor identification defining indigenous processes of the Wayúu in Colombia

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**Abstract:** Indigenous entrepreneurship has unique processes and organization factors. Dana (2015) identifies several factors that seem to be unique to indigenous entrepreneurship and that distinguish indigenous entrepreneurship from mainstream interpretations of entrepreneurship. This study of the Wayúu community in Colombia seeks to explore entrepreneurship processes within this specific community. In-depth interviews provide the data for content analysis and factor identification. Additionally, this study intends to point toward the internationalization of these entrepreneurship processes using efficient and beneficial means of public and private support.

**Keywords:** Indigenous entrepreneurship, Family, Community, Development, Culture.

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### INTRODUCTION

Despite general progress (less poverty and access to services) and implementation of policies, indigenous communities continue to be excluded from development. In Latin America, indigenous people represent 14% of the poor and 17% of the extremely poor, despite representing less than 8% of the population. Development is always related to the accomplishment of specific political, economic, and social goals. In indigenous communities, there is a different understanding of what development is and why it is important, this different understanding is “foreign” to us/mainstream culture. The only way to implement development processes within these communities is by including them into it, being part of the design, implementation, and monitoring (Freire et al., 2015) as their processes are more similar to other indigenous communities around the world than to processes within their own countries and need a close understanding of it.

One way to involve indigenous people in their development path is through the entrepreneurship process. Entrepreneurship increasingly becomes something fundamental for these communities as it allows them to integrate their culture and traditions into their economy. Indigenous peoples seek to rebuild their communities and their livelihoods based on their traditions and culture as the main axis of these processes. This is how indigenous entrepreneurship differs from conventionally and more formally developed entrepreneurship (Padilla & Ciruela, 2018).

Entrepreneurship has been viewed from an economic point of view, more specifically understanding it as part of economic growth to improve people’s quality of life. However, the social part of entrepreneurship, understood as the human interaction ruled by norms and values has also not been exploited as an aspect of development and growth (Wiguna & Manzilati, 2014) and even more in these processes of indigenous entrepreneurship where that social part is essential for them.

This different understanding of entrepreneurship and development indigenous people have seemed more likely to resemble the development path of other native tribes in other countries than the typical, Colombian, or any developing country development path. It is possible to identify a clear cultural distance in their dynamics. Cultural distance, understood as the difference between the cultures of the home and host countries, is an important consideration in internationalization strategies (Beugelsdijk, et al., 2018).

Nevertheless, it is important to take into consideration not only the cultural difference between two countries but those variations within the country, as the case here with indigenous communities, called intra country variation (ICV) to minimize distance. A higher ICV represents more opportunity for a company to minimize cultural distance by targeting the most proximate segment of the host-country population (Beugelsdijk et al., 2015). This could be used for attracting international support targeting these “different” cultures or for these indigenous entrepreneurs reach international markets more resemble them or interested in these indigenous products.

To understand the entrepreneurship process within an indigenous community, this paper studies the Wayúu community in Colombia. This community is located in the La Guajira region in the north of Colombia and north-west of Venezuela (ONIC, n.d.). According to the last census in 2018, they represent 20% of the indigenous population in the country becoming the largest indigenous community in Colombia (DANE, 2019b). Wayúu is an indigenous community characterized by developing entrepreneurial processes exploiting their culture and resources, specially recognized by their famous bags around the world, one of the most famous artisan products of Colombia (Klerk, 2019). As the biggest indigenous population of Colombia and with a product sold around the world, this community is the best example to take when talking about indigenous entrepreneurship penetrating international markets.

This research aims to analyze the process involved in indigenous entrepreneurship and identify key factors for its success comparing them with those on the literature and taking inspiration from the international literature about “management of distances” in international management recognize Wayúu will act more like other indigenous around the world than like their Colombian compatriots becoming an internationalization opportunity for them. In this sense, Dana (2015) proposed several factors that can define this type of entrepreneurship and explains how they perform their processes in relation to what they are and what they have. These factors are as follows: (1) heterogeneity, (2) incompatibility with mainstream theories, (3) resources, (4) sustainability, (5) kinship ties, (6) markets, and internal economic activity, (7) community and propensity for cooperation, (8) external forces, and (9) culturally influenced opportunity identification. Taking this work as a basis, this study explores other authors as well to establish a set of factors that become a general literature proposal to characterize indigenous entrepreneurship.

This paper exposes the study as follows. A literature review on indigenous entrepreneurship followed by analysis, compilation, and definition of the most representative factors. Then some details on Latin America and the Wayúu community are presented. After that, the method is explained and the qualitative analysis resulting in the findings. The discussion will

be focused on to what extent the Wayúu follows the patterns that are established in the literature by Dana and other authors. Then, practical implications centered on an internationalization opportunity with public and private support; and finally, conclusions are presented.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Indigenous entrepreneurs represent a growing sector in business and economics; however, when creating and developing companies, they face difficulties (Mika et al., 2017). Therefore, it is essential to have a clear idea of the processes that are carried out and determine key factors that can help establish a possible standard of analysis.

### Indigenous Entrepreneurship

Starting from the beginning, it is necessary to define entrepreneurship as the basis for understanding it in an indigenous context. Literature shows us that entrepreneurship is hard to define as it differs depending on the field and the context where this process is carried out (Hoppe, 2016). Nevertheless, it is possible to understand entrepreneurship in a general way as a business start-up, the creation of new firms or implementation of new product or strategy in existing firms, carried out by individuals or a group exploiting an opportunity to launch a new product or improve an existing one (Center for American Entrepreneurship, n.d.). Frederick et al. (2016), expose that entrepreneurship it is a process that leads to generate wealth, adding value for some product or service (new or existing one) and as a generator of wealth, it is possible to say that entrepreneurship becomes an important issue when talking about economy because it can shape society with new ways of social and economic levels implementation.

Therefore, entrepreneurship becomes a complex concept, that must be understood as an interdisciplinary issue, a combination of different fields and schools of thought because it is affecting society in different ways that trigger change and growth in the economies. Precisely, that is why the perception of the concept used, primarily, for small businesses is changing and it is being applied in the corporate sector too. For big companies, entrepreneurship can lead to innovation, wealth creation, and economic development. (Frederick et al., 2016) affecting, by consequence, a national, regional, or world development as well. Entrepreneurship has a social role, and that is why it is important to establish connections and networks for getting a social approach and reach all the actors involved (Hisrich et al., 2017) a more communal way of functioning.

After defining entrepreneurship, it will be necessary to understand the indigenous component. In that way, a company or enterprise qualifies as indigenous when an indigenous majority exists. Nevertheless, this concept does not consider other forms of organization where the indigenous component is not necessarily more than 51%. For example, when who is responsible for the administration and important decisions is an indigenous person, so the results are aligned with the indigenous component, too (Foley, 2013).

Thus, indigenous entrepreneurship can be understood as the conception, administration, and development of new business processes (start-ups or firms) lead by indigenous people seeking for their own benefit. These benefits can be perceived as an individual or social achievement, for the whole community. Also, the partnership is independent of its activity; it can be arranged with non-indigenous people or groups as well (Hindle & Lansdowne, 2005).

The objective of an indigenous entrepreneurship process is to satisfy the needs of the family as the basic goal so that its members are part of this process and therefore the family becomes that internal factor that influences entrepreneurship with their own culture (Collins et al., 2017). The business and economic models that are developed within the indigenous cosmovision differ from those that are managed from the “western” point of view. For example, the environment, mutual collaboration, preservation of culture, and equality are fundamental pillars for indigenous communities. Thus, for them, there are other alternatives to economic processes that align more adequately with their worldview (Curry et al., 2016).

Training, developing, and strengthening entrepreneurial processes in indigenous communities has allowed them to abandon dependence and seek well-being through effective economic development (Furieux & Brown, 2007).

Some examples of these processes are developed in many countries around the world. Indigenous entrepreneurship processes that help indigenous communities to have access to better life quality and common benefits. For example, a Samoan NGO, Women in Business Development Incorporated, implement fine mat weaving as an income-earning strategy for rural village women and their families, they ran workshops to teach the skill of weaving and seek buyers mainly urban-based or overseas Samoans. This activity provides a livelihood opportunity (entrepreneurial process) for rural Samoan women and their families and the earnings are used for housing, education, saving, and cultural ceremonies and events. (Cahn, 2008). Another example, in Australia, is the indigenous social enterprise Nuwul owned and run by the Rirratjingu clan. They focus on overcoming the needs regarding the local environment manage and its inhabitants by providing employment and training, improved literacy and numeracy skills, financial management, and restoring personal and community pride (Spencer et al., 2016).

### Universal Factors Defining Indigenous Entrepreneurship

Regarding the literature review, it has been possible to establish some key factors to understand, analyze, and evaluate indigenous entrepreneurship processes, factors that englobe the aspects involved from the indigenous perspective common amongst indigenous communities around the world.

Heterogeneity: it is an interesting factor found among indigenous people as a way of identifying different values, with emphasis on equality and personal autonomy, underlines the economy in these types of communities. Some people are Dionysian, emphasis on being,

and others Promethean, with emphasis on doing. Understanding and identifying the correct bias will help us to define how a specific community works and develop the whole entrepreneurship process to be aligned with its own system of values (Dana, 2015).

Resources: usually resources used for developing entrepreneurship processes, can be understood as those bought, in any way, for achieving the goal pursued. In indigenous communities, the resources they depend on are those found in nature, in their lands, in their reality and they are called the immediately available resources. An indigenous community centers its activities daily so they can provide for day-to-day living. Because of that, entrepreneurship processes within these communities do not follow a long-term understanding. Even a set agenda or plans are different as they depend on their context, their land, their animals, the weather, etc. Resources change entirely the way they develop their activities and the result as well (Dana, 2015).

Sustainability: if an indigenous community does not think on a long-term basis, sustainability is difficult to achieve. Furthermore, this can even affect the possible success of the entrepreneurship process, as a long-lasting process seeks for a better present and future as well. It is well perceived that within indigenous communities, environmental sustainability is a key factor in their activities. The understanding and respect of nature allow them to have practices to assure the correct exploitation of resources (Dana, 2015). This environmental sustainability must go alongside with sustainable processes as well. If an indigenous community can assure its resources and maintain a process that takes advantage of them, it will be easy to establish long-lasting entrepreneurship processes, whatever its type (tourism, industrial or productive), to maintain sustainable development.

Sense of community and family and cooperation: the market is not the reason why indigenous communities get organized and try to implement processes for better well-being. By contrast, in indigenous communities, being part of a family and a community is what creates a special boost to implement new ways of organization seeking to increase the living quality of the entire family and community. This inclusion of family and community in the way of doing business needs to be analyzed because it will demand another more complex point of view (Dana, 2015) and will define actors, resources, and results.

Taking into consideration this particularity, the concept of cooperative economy or cooperative entrepreneurship has been developed as an alternative to the formal economy, typically oriented to capital as a fundamental axis, seeking cooperation for integral development (Padilla & Ciruela, 2018). In that sense, understanding the operation of this type of economy is essential to understand the processes of indigenous entrepreneurship.

Galindo et al. (2016) show that a local society basis leads to cooperatively structured development. Its members know their reality, live together, work together for the same goal, learn together, and therefore also when problems arise, they face them together. Precisely, cooperation is the factor that facilitates economic and social democracy to exist, and the principles of social cohesion and local development come up.

For this reason, defining community companies or social enterprises is important to understand them better. Thus, this type of process has a collective purpose, they seek the benefit of all and not of an individual. It is true that in their basic premise, they are business and economic systems, but they differ from conventional models because they pursue broader and more inclusive social, political, cultural, environmental, and economic objectives as a whole group. (Kerins & Jordan, 2010; Loban et al., 2013; Spencer et al., 2016).

Context and place: most of the entrepreneurship processes, business, and sales take place within the community. It is not necessary to be part of the conventional or formal marketplaces to consider economic transactions for indigenous people. Sometimes, this transaction even can be done with the absence of money but barter goods, animals, properties, etc. (Dana, 2015).

Considering that current economic development has an important component in the indigenous sphere regardless of where it takes place, it is interesting to think about how entrepreneurship is influenced by the surrounding context (Mika et al., 2017). This means, that the social, political, environmental, and cultural surroundings, in which indigenous communities develop, generate entrepreneurship seeking further benefits for integrated community development.

However, given that indigenous communities, including the Wayúu, continue to be underrepresented in national political and economic gains, this inward focus of conducting business within the community is increasingly coming into question. The communities see the internationalization of their business ventures as a means of improving their economic progress while remaining independent from their national economies and cultures.

Success: the success that results from this entrepreneurship process is very important because they rely on their identity as indigenous people to generate inspiration and innovation, contribute to the common welfare of the community and even in some cases they have become referents business models worldwide (Mika et al., 2017).

However, determining their success is a complex matter. It must be considered that economic results are not sufficient for this type of process and must be seen beyond, taking social and cultural factors for a real understanding of success in this context (Higgins-Desbiolles et al., 2010). For this reason, the indigenous enterprises must involve their culture within processes, operations, and the business itself to pursue and obtain results considered as successful for them. (Pearson et al., 2011; Russell-Mundine, 2007; Morley, 2014). Equally, for this reason, mainstream national economic policies rarely serve these communities adequately.

During the processes of indigenous entrepreneurship, actors feel that success implies greater wealth. The merely economic value as the result of the process goes against their cultural values of a common benefit. What is more, from the economic point of view, they think that the income must be reinvested in the business to grow and as a result, they cannot share the benefits with their family or the community (Gordon, 2003).

Partners: when developing entrepreneurship, involve a lot of actors into the chain of actions to implement and execute a well-organized project is necessary. In this sense, partners became an essential part, different links in the chain that will make possible the whole process. NGOs, government agencies, funding organizations, and non-indigenous individuals and corporations, different indigenous and non-indigenous actors that need to be identified and deserve close attention. These partners are important because they can become an essential factor for an effective entrepreneurship process implementation as a source of funding, training, and technical support (Peredo & Anderson, 2006).

Culture: when culture is involved or incorporated into these types of processes, it is possible to obtain a business and administrative structure that promulgates, protects and develops that culture (Morley, 2014.) However, having a product that implies an indigenous sense, implicit culture, and indigenous customs as the result of a process controlled by an indigenous community, is not enough to guarantee positive results (Leu et al., 2018).

Culture always will be a key factor to keep in mind. This concept will shape the behaviors and customs of a community and of course, will define ways of production and performing business. A specific culture produces products and services that have a market to sell. This relation between culture and entrepreneurship process can even become a competitive advantage, enterprises developing the manufacture of arts and crafts, cultural tourism services, cosmovision training, etc. The industries where these kinds of business may succeed is small but exists (Collins et al., 2017).

Research reached a consensus that entrepreneurial activities are culturally grounded (Hayton et al., 2002), shaped by values, norms, and practices as their basis (Bruton et al., 2017).

Precisely, culture defines and influences opportunity identification for doing business. Dana (2015) says that culture will determine what, in the end, is important to accomplish the objectives depending on the culture where the entrepreneurial process is developed. Needs, goals, and resources, for example, will be different from one culture to another and even more between indigenous communities and “western” society.

### **Latin America, Colombia and Wayúu**

Over the past decade, Latin America, with the implementation of important redistributive policies, has embarked upon economic growth and reduction of inequality. For example, the wage gap has been reduced, primary education has reached more people, and access to public services such as electricity and clean water has improved. A favorable socio-economic context with properly implemented policies has generated economic advantages and positive changes; over 70 million people have crossed the poverty line and have improved their living standards (Freire et al., 2015).

However, on the margin of these improvements are the 42 million indigenous people in Latin America, representing almost 8% of the total population, from many different groups with very different languages, traditions, and ways of life (Freire et al., 2015). According to the

last census in 2018 in Colombia 1.9 million are indigenous people (DANE, 2019a). Such a number deserves close attention for understanding their specifics and trying to engage them into the predominant socio-economic system will be important. The inclusion of indigenous people is not only important for a more equitable, just, and prosperous society, it is necessary as a collective issue, too. Latin America will not be able to effectively overcome poverty and reach sustainable development without the involvement of all the actors into the equation (Freire et al., 2015).

In Colombia, the Political Constitution of 1991 establishes that the State recognizes and protects ethnic and cultural diversity; being forced to protect the natural and cultural wealth of the nation. Also, some institutions are responsible for ensuring development such as development corporations throughout the country responsible for the socio-economic, cultural, and environmental system formed by the set of organized social forces. Also, it is important to mention that the 169 Agreement of ILO mentions that indigenous people must have the right to decide their own development priorities as those are affecting their lives, beliefs, institutions, spiritual well-being and the lands they occupy and to control, as far as possible, their own economic, social and cultural development. (Rodríguez, 2006).

The Wayúu community is located in the La Guajira region, they occupy territories in both sides Colombia and Venezuela (“Wayúu,” n.d.) posing challenges as they must deal with 2 different political, economic, and social situations. According to the last census in 2018, they are about 340.000 indigenous people, the largest indigenous community in La Guajira, representing 94,1% of the total indigenous population in the region and 20% of the indigenous population in the country (DANE, 2019b).

This community is characterized by settlements based on “rancherías” or “Piichipala”. These “rancherías” are composed of several one-story ranchos (houses) inhabited by large families. This system of “rancherías” form a residential group with a collective corral, orchards, a cemetery, some have a mill to pump water; a close cooperation network and the right to access a local water source (“Wayúu,” n.d.).

La Guajira’s population is about 820.000 people. 53.7% live in poverty, a reduction compares to 69.9% in 2008. Nevertheless, if compare with the national data that is situated at 27% in 2018, there is an enormous difference showing us problems that need to be solved already. La Guajira region's GDP is USD 3.01 million representing 1,2% from the national GDP of USD 250,696,000 million in 2018 (DANE, 2020).

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **Data Collection**

This is an exploratory qualitative study applying as a source of information to the members of the Wayúu community in Colombia. For selecting the sample of the study, the key people in the entrepreneurial projects were identified. People who have been part of the



entrepreneurship processes from the beginning and in that sense, they understand and develop all the productive apparatus derived from these activities.

Based on the prior criteria and considering the characteristics of the community, 10 interviews were carried out with entrepreneurs from the Wayúu community in La Guajira Region. The data for the study were collected from semi-structured interviews (Roulston & Choi, 2018). The interview focused on the entrepreneurs and their families and their entrepreneurial processes. It is important to mention that this community develops different entrepreneurial activities, so it is possible to explore different processes shaped by the same culture.

In order to create a close relationship between the interviewer and the entrepreneur and create trust, each interview was conducted during a whole day, something essential in Indigenous cultural contexts (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999; Henry et al., 2017) providing important information for developing discussion and supporting the theory analyzed as it was possible to share with them in their own environment. Also, the interviews were addressed at the enterprises, in near locations to the community, or any place that is common for them as part of their activities. In that way, it was easier to get specific answers, real and sincere information about their culture, family, and enterprises from an Indigenous perspective (Henry et al., 2017).

## **Data Analysis**

For the analysis of the data, it started with the transcription of the interviews to have a clear representation of the information given. Then, the identification of the key factors or themes founded in the interviews and that were commonly emphasized by the entrepreneurs and compared these with the literature noted (Datta & Gailey, 2012). The focus, in a general view, was in 4 themes: (1) culture relation, (2) prior experience and studies, (3) public and private support, and (4) business sustainability of the entrepreneurial processes. Finally, practical implications derived from the data found focused mainly on internationalization with private and public support are exposed.

## **FINDINGS**

In this section, the results of the qualitative analysis are exposed. Presenting the findings according to the factors found among all the entrepreneurs interviewed trying to determine those that represent their entrepreneurial processes.

### Wayúu Entrepreneurship

According to the interviews carried out, it is possible to shape, in a general way, the process they held to develop their entrepreneurship path to become a real project (see Annex 1). Nevertheless, it is possible to identify 4 “steps” as follow:

## Wayúu Entrepreneurship Process



Source: Elaborated by the author

Alongside this general process carried out in each entrepreneurship, there are key factors that shape indigenous entrepreneurship in this Wayúu case. The factors are as follows:

### Culture Identity and Relation

Everyone involved in the entrepreneurship process is part of the Wayúu culture. There are differences between some of the actors depending on the background of the family and the possibilities they have in earlier ages. Most of them have a high school degree or even a bachelor's degree in specialized areas that allow them to develop an entrepreneurial activity on an academic basis.

Something interesting observed is that all of them when talking about the academic studies in the “western-style” said that all this knowledge need to be adapted to the culture so in one way they are learning styles and process carried out in non-indigenous societies but on the other side adapting and shaping all this new knowledge according to their culture and customs to develop effective processes for the benefit of the local community. They always talk about looking at the communal benefit, the benefit for the culture, the idea of developing these processes to preserve what they are and what they have.

### Entrepreneurship Type

Defining the type of entrepreneurship in this context can be difficult sometimes because a lot of the processes they develop intend to be complex processes integrating different activities from different areas. This is understandable in the sense they try to engage the activities to

the community and of course they face different people with different skills to offer and share with the entrepreneurial process.

Common activities observed are tourism and handicrafts. Restaurants and hotels developed to attend all the foreigners coming to the communities trying to offer comfortable options (as traditional as possible) and in connection with the local culture. Of course, linked to these projects, they offer guided walks and cultural immersion with especial activities performed by the locals. Handicrafts are another big entrepreneurial activity in the community. This activity developed as a cultural heritage as it learned from childhood and continues during the time. They carry out this activity because, as part of their lives, they are experts and have all the knowledge to develop a quality product that is appreciated in the local and international markets.

Nevertheless, it is interesting to see some specific projects developing something according to the previous academic studies of the entrepreneur. For example, projects in birds watching or a communicational network to generate awareness of the community activities or a community school, and so on. Activities tied to the academic training they have and how they see an opportunity to adapt this to the community's needs and develop effective projects.

#### Family and Community

Considering that the entrepreneurs are from indigenous communities and the activities they are developing seek a common benefit, family and community are probably one of the most important issues shaping this entrepreneurial process. In all the cases analyzed, the family is the basis for the project, everything started with the family, with the mother or the father teaching them some skills or giving some advice while developing their own activities. In most of the cases, it is actually a family enterprise; the family is involved, and they are a close team working hard to get the expected results.

In the cases where the project is developed by a single person, the family is the support behind everything as they were the first source of money or infrastructure; but when the idea is getting bigger, the community becomes part of it. These entrepreneurs involve people from the community as they want to develop all the processes among locals. This support from the community is essential as they become part of the process and the beneficiaries of it. Working with them will assure an effective way of getting the expected results.

#### Entrepreneurship within the community

There is a lot of issues unresolved in the community, income, access to public services, malnutrition, etc. This is the reason why a lot of people think and design entrepreneurial projects to get better conditions, but most of these projects remain as a simple idea. Many people in the community think about new ways of generating income and exploit available resources while conserving their culture on the process.

Despite tourism and handicrafts having a good development among locals and generating jobs, the lack of support, the fear of launching the ideas, and the geographic location are obstacles to overcome. The energy, desire, and capacity are common characteristics of the

community that with the right training and support could become very interesting entrepreneurial processes improving their life quality.

### Indigenous entrepreneurship vs Predominant Entrepreneurship system

The data shows that 90% of the indigenous entrepreneurs' in this study think that there is a big difference between the way indigenous people do business and the way "western" entrepreneurs do it. The main issues they point are the following:

- Need: indigenous communities' entrepreneurial processes are born because is needed. The lack of good income and poor-quality life creates that need of getting better conditions and this entrepreneurial process became an effective option to do so.
- Resources: in indigenous communities, there is a lack of resources to operate or even to start a business. Apart from money, they face a lack of infrastructure, transportation, basic services.
- Geographic situation: The location of the communities is a crucial issue to take into consideration. Some communities are far from big-medium cities and most of the resources mention before are not able for them.
- Cultural awareness: indigenous communities develop entrepreneurial processes keeping in mind always their culture. They tend to conserve and even create cultural awareness through these projects. Creating unique products and services that reflect the culture.
- Benefit: they think in a common purpose, benefits must be for the whole community. Even from the beginning and the whole process, the community is usually involved. The whole is important not the individual

### Business Sustainability

It is interesting to find that in all the cases business sustainability is very important and something they are trying to achieve. Thinking about the future becomes something important; being bigger, being more productive, being more organized, reaching more people, and being self-sufficient are common desires among indigenous entrepreneurs. All of them want to improve to share it with the community, to get better conditions for all, even give the opportunity of jobs for some people, of course, always keeping in mind, the preservation of the resources, the culture, and the environment.

### Governmental and private support

In all the cases, the entrepreneurs feel that the support from the government is little or nothing at all. They are facing a lot of problems that need to be solved by the government. Basic public services, for example, are the most common issue representing a big problem. If they do not have public services, it is very difficult to develop projects that demand at least water. They feel the government does not even know them, where they are, what they need; and, in that way, it is difficult to obtain effective help and support. Sometimes SENA and ProColombia care a little, helping with projects or training but no more than that. In some

cases, they must apply for funds to get money but a lot of requirements and paperwork to do that almost no one applies for it.

The support that some people have received comes from the private sector or NGOs. This sector has become an important ally for developing some projects. Money, infrastructure, or training are some of the contributions that help to start or enhance some of the projects of the community.

It is necessary to find an effective support to help these communities to start, develop, and maintain entrepreneurial processes. They think support is needed to have better and bigger projects, benefit more people, increase outreach to all the region, and as a consequence improve living conditions for all. This support has not only to be with money (that is the main problem) but with training, entrepreneurial capabilities, organization. Key elements that will help them to get strong entrepreneurship processes.

Finally, and perhaps the most interesting thing about this topic is that they want and try to get support every way and every time they can. Nevertheless, they recognize that the support from the government is important, they think it is not good for them, due to the political implications it has. They do not want to be part of a political campaign or be related to some politicians. They feel private and NGOs support is more important, effective, and selfless. Working with them seems to be more attractive to indigenous people.

## **DISCUSSION**

From the beginning, and defining indigenous entrepreneurship is essential to understand it in the complex way it is. As seen in the literature, this type of entrepreneurship is understood as the conception, administration, and development of new processes lead by indigenous people seeking for a benefit perceived as an individual or social achievement, for the whole community (Hindle & Landsdowne, 2005). Analyzing the cases exposed, effectively, this type of entrepreneurship characterizes for its primary indigenous representation; all the founders of the business projects are indigenous and the conception they have is aligned with the idea of collective benefit. Apart from the initial notions of getting benefits for family and close people, the result is always seeking benefits for the whole community.

On the other side, Curry et al (2016) posted that the business and economic model of an indigenous entrepreneurship differs from those in the “western” system. Nevertheless, in most of the cases, the indigenous entrepreneur pointed that actually is important to have this “western” model clear to develop business because these models, as an entrepreneurial model, come from western societies, and of course indigenous people need to learn and understand it. Of course, in the end, these models need and must be adapted to the indigenous culture, cosmovision, and resources but the model itself is the same.

## Indigenous Entrepreneurship Factors

Factors in literature	Factors in the Wayúu case
Heterogeneity	Culture Identity and Relation
Resources	Entrepreneurship Type
Sustainability	Family and Community
Sense of Community and Family Cooperation	Entrepreneurship within the community
Context and Place	Indigenous entrepreneurship vs Predominant Entrepreneurship system
Success	Business Sustainability
Partners	Governmental and Private Support
Culture	

Source: Elaborated by the author

Literature is quite close to shape indigenous entrepreneurship defining factors that can be understood as common between indigenous communities. Nevertheless, it is important to go into detail remarking particularities founded in the case studied and need to be exposed to understand similarities and differences.

Heterogeneity: despite literature define it pretty well, in the cases observed they do not mention it per se because this characteristic is something direct from heritage. The entrepreneurs exposed that when doing entrepreneurial processes, they are Dionysian and Promethean as well (Dana, 2015). The whole processes carried out by them focus on being and on doing at the same time. They develop business projects but never forget what they are and this, in the end, is the primary characteristic of this type of entrepreneurship.

Resources: literature tells us that in indigenous entrepreneurship the resources become something important when developing projects. Those found in nature, in their reality, those called immediately available resources (Dana, 2015). Nevertheless, the cases studied demonstrate the opposite because if it is true that of course, they have to start the business projects with the available resources they have, they are always trying to get resources like infrastructure, money (funding), training, and so on. Resources that necessarily need to come from outside the community. Also, apart from what Dana (2015) proposed as a short-term understanding of these communities due to the immediately available resources, these entrepreneurs actually follow a long-term understanding because they think their processes as something that needs to be better and better over the time.

Sustainability: Dana (2015) said that as indigenous communities have a short-term understanding thus sustainability is difficult affecting the success these processes can have. But the reality, at least, in this case, is different. All the cases show real concern about the future, all the entrepreneurs think in a bigger, more organized, more economically sustainable business in the future. They want to do as much as they can to have strong entrepreneurial processes over the years to come. Indigenous communities align with what Foley (2008) considers to be important to understand an entrepreneurial process and that is the

consideration of four levels of sustainability: environmental, social, economic, and cultural. Indigenous entrepreneurs think these four levels need to be taken into consideration. Environment, as they respect and preserve the nature of their surroundings. Social, as they want to have a social benefit, business processes that result in something better for the community. Economical, as they need money to get bigger, and need to generate money to enhance locals 'quality of life. Culture, as the main important thing, when developing these processes is to preserve, rescue, and aware of their culture, culture is essential for them.

Sense of community, family, and cooperation: in this aspect, literature matches the case. Family and community represent everything for these entrepreneurs as they are trying to get better conditions for them as the primary goal of the business process. Of course, a process where family and community are involved in, cooperation is essential to carry these projects out. Cooperation becomes important to facilitate economic and social development (Galindo et al., 2016). As Dana (2015) says, the inclusion of family and community into the process of doing business demands a more complex study as this faces another kind of dynamic that will change actors, resources, and results.

Context and Place: most of the entrepreneurial cases develop their activities in the communities or near locations. Some cases as the handicrafts, for example, develop its activity in fairs or markets in big cities as they are trying to sell good quality indigenous products to "strangers" to promote their culture. The context and place where each business develops its activity will determine some particularities, like price, service, and presentation, totally influenced by the surrounding context (Mika et al., 2017). Dana (2015) said that as the context is not the same and most of the time it is developed in a non-formal marketplace, the transaction is different too. For example, in some of the cases, they exchange knowledge for the service they want.

Success: despite the interviewees never mention success per se or how they consider their entrepreneurial processes are or not successful. It is true that for all of them, giving something to the community, having better services, getting a better education for children, creating jobs, and so on is the real objective of their business projects. When they see they are having a positive impact on the community and as a result in society, they consider the work done.

Partners: support in a process of entrepreneurship is essential, more in indigenous processes where sometimes this support becomes the difference between running or not a business project. In all the cases studied, they agree that support is essential for getting better conditions and go to the next level, they become an essential factor for an effective entrepreneurship process implementation as a source of money (investment), training, and technical support (Peredo & Anderson, 2006).

Culture: literature aligns with all these cases involves their culture into the entrepreneurial processes and of course it shapes the way they do business. In the end, preserve, maintain, and aware of their culture is probably the most important thing to do. Despite "western" influence, the Wayúu culture is always present and defines what they are, what they do, and what they want as a result of these processes. Dana (2015) said that culture creates opportunity identification for doing business and in this case, it is clear, they are doing so.

## CONCLUSIONS

Indigenous communities develop entrepreneurial processes combining to worlds: “western” and their own culture. Processes organized in a more predominant “western” way, in how to implement a business and steps to develop an idea but everything adapted and centered in its culture. Culture becomes the most important issue for indigenous people, preserve and aware of their culture remains as the core of all the entrepreneurial process. Of course, if culture is driving this business projects, family and community become the primary support for them. Keeping business, family, community, and culture as a whole package as the basis of everything.

Dana (2015), as the basis, and other authors defined or identified key factors as inherent to indigenous communities and their entrepreneurial processes, trying to shape a common understanding of indigenous entrepreneurship. Based on the study done to the Wayúu community and the processes carried out by some indigenous entrepreneurs, in a general way, literature and the real case match when talking about culture, family, community, cooperation, resources, partners, and perception of success. However, when analyzing sustainability and resources there are some differences to remark. In literature, Dana (2015) talked about a short-term understanding of indigenous people when the cases analyzed have a long-term point of view. Despite the whole process is based on immediately available resources the processes per se are being developed thinking about the future and getting better opportunities to impact more and more. The future of the entrepreneurial processes is important for indigenous people as they represent better conditions and more important more beneficiaries of these processes in the years to come.

The present study presents some limitations regarding data collection and case specification. About data collection, the study is limited because the information collected is from interviews and not from direct observation. For example, it will be interesting a field accompaniment of the entrepreneurial processes for a deeper analysis of all the steps, resources, actors, and outcomes. A close relationship with the indigenous community during the development of these processes will be key for determining exact data for the analysis. The time and resources needed to do this in field experience could represent a challenge, but this will provide important and more accurate insights about indigenous entrepreneurship.

About the case, the intrinsic limitation of the community. The study is about the Wayúu community and despite it can give a view of indigenous entrepreneurial processes, it is limited to this specific community, location, and cultural context. It will be interesting to do this study, for example, with other communities in Colombia to have a national overview, with other communities in Latin America to have a regional comparison and determine differences or similarities and with other communities in different continents to have a real scheme of how indigenous entrepreneurs behave depending on the context they are.



## **PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS**

### Internationalization opportunity with Private and Public support

Much of international management is the “management of distance”, distance has been an important issue as a possible direct impact on international management activities and as a control variable during its process (Ambos & Håkanson, 2014). One of the distances that International Business and Management studies is cultural distance. Especially, when exists an internationalization intention of a firm, cultural distance becomes one of the important issues to take into consideration.

It is common to associate culture with “national culture” as a shared and unique culture within the country’s territory but International Management is management across national cultures, it has a different approach. Since indigenous populations have a culture which is unique to their community and different from the “national culture”, a culture variation in the same country or ICV (Beugelsdijk et al., 2015), there are aspects of International Management in their study and practice. Yes, of course, they are within the national geographic boundaries, but their cultural characteristics are more similar to “foreigners” (especially to other indigenous populations in other parts of the world) than to their own compatriots (Tretiakov et al., 2020). Their development path is more likely to resemble the development path of other native tribes in other countries than the typical, Colombian, or any developing country development path. A development path targeting indigenous needs and reality.

Likewise, much of the products of the indigenous entrepreneurs are specialty products and are culturally derived and the only way for the business to be successful and grow is to reach international markets. The native/national market is just too small to sustain a specialty product. As seen before, the options they take are big cities for trying to sell their products due to the high prices and quality. In that sense, all indigenous enterprises should have the intent of forming nation-spanning (private or public) alliances to reach foreign markets. So, getting the right and effective support will be determinant to reach this objective.

In this regard, support represents one of the most important issues to change, improve, and get. All the entrepreneurs agree that without support the sustainability and improvement of the projects are difficult. They feel a lack of governmental support, as the general sense, with none or little basic services, infrastructure (transportation), financing channels, and so on.

An interesting and worrying aspect is that in some cases the entrepreneurs feel that the government does not even know them; who they are, where they are and obviously without information about them Governmental support is non-viable. Indeed, SENA and ProColombia with basic training and some applications for funds have done something, but it is not enough. Even in these cases, paperwork and requirements represent a barrier for indigenous people to access to these possible financing channels. In this sense, it is necessary to implement from the Government a special program towards this population. A program specialized in indigenous communities and their development as a fundamental issue to overcome the lack of opportunities and give them the empowerment to act and do important changes in their lives. Access to basic services and transportation infrastructure needs to be

the basis of this new change and after that, financing channels with special conditions regarding indigenous reality and training. Those are the main problems the government needs to work on and be an effective partner to these communities. Finally, change the paradigm of political implications in this support will be essential as indigenous relate government support with political ties and this is a real barrier to seek, to wait, and apply for governmental support.

On the private side, NGOs represent the main source of support for these communities and precisely they are who have been, in a certain way, partners of these entrepreneurial processes. Entrepreneurs must indeed apply most of the time for support and help but it is not as much complicated as with the government. Also, some NGOs through their programs reach these communities and look for needs and shortcomings that can be solved by their help. It is clear too that this type of support is more appreciate by indigenous people because they do not feel an obligation in the future towards this aid and received it with a different attitude and as a result willing to closely work with them for the benefit of their families and community.

Vining and Richards (2016) explain that if a congruence of common objectives can be articulated between the private sector and the indigenous community, this will allow profit maximization for all. Of course, this can be applied to the public sector too and the benefits can be even bigger as this can affect an entire country with an implementation of a national program or law.

Training and developing and strengthening entrepreneurial processes in indigenous communities has allowed them to abandon dependence and seek well-being through effective economic development (Furneau & Brown, 2007) and that is why it will be necessary to have a more complete economic system including the state, private sectors, and indigenous communities.

A complex system that, in the end, could be applied in any country or region where indigenous communities are present. A complex system that becomes that efficient and effective impulse for indigenous entrepreneurs to reach international markets where their products are more accepted and wanted and to get that support needed to accomplish these objectives.

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## Annex 1

Projects	Culture Recognition	Own academic and experiential skills (area of entrepreneurship)	Local Support	5 years business plan
1	He and his family are 100% Wayúu	Working with land and animals. Developing agriculture (crops in general) and pig, goats and sheep farming	Family business	Be able to produce more goat milk, try to be self-sustaining. They think even to train other people about their activities.
2	She and her family are 100% Wayúu. They belong to the Ituana clan.	<p>She is a Social Communicator and with some other colleagues, they founded the Wayúu Communications Network. The creation of the Wayúu Communications School (non-formal education). They try to generate leadership among young people in the community. Radio, press, and tv training by social media channels mainly.</p> <p>Also, she with her mother and brothers have developed a touristic project called RANCHERIA UTTA. Accommodation and restaurant service to generate interest in the Wayúu culture. Also, they developed the Project ENRAMADA CULTURAL, it is about the projection of audio-visual pieces from the students in the Communications School.</p>	Family and community business	<p>To have a strong touristic business developed, more organized, and reach that point when she does not need to be 100% of the time present and be able to do some other things.</p> <p>She hopes that the Project does not impact the environment and community. A business Project but respecting nature and culture (really important for them)</p> <p>She does not want to be a really big business. The important thing is that everybody can develop different activities. She does not hope to be a millionaire but live in peace.</p> <p>Be able to make visible the culture, conservation and show the good and bad things about it, try to be a referent for other communities. A stronger communication network with young people.</p>
3	She is 100% Wayúu	<p>She has a textile showroom. She is a textile artisan, ethnic art. It is a tradition in her family. The textiles are no longer something you buy for functional reasons. Today traditional textiles are more like art.</p> <p>She wants to create a Wayúu textile school, as she won a Price in a contest, she will use that to start everything.</p> <p>Also, she is preparing a book with all the Wayúu designs. Share more textile techniques apart from crochet used in the famous Wayúu bags.</p>	Family business	She sees the Textile school 100% implemented. The community owning this project.
4	She and her family are 100% Wayúu	<p>She and her family created a Wayúu handicraft small company 3 years ago</p> <p>Quality is important, they want to sell because of it and not for being cheap.</p> <p>They must sell in big cities because of the price. Make some exportations to Spain and France.</p>	Family business but helping the whole community	<p>She wants the business benefits even more families. Right now, only 200 families are beneficiaries of the project, but she wants to have 500 or 600.</p> <p>Get more contact, more commercial partners, be bigger to be good for more people.</p>
5	She and her family are 100% Wayúu	<p>She and her family have a Wayúu handicraft small company. They learn how to do it since they are children and as a way to share their culture. She has a store called Manaure</p> <p>They have exported to Australia, China, the United States of America, Spain, Germany, and England. They and their store Manaure are well known here, especially their bags.</p>	Family business but with benefits for all involved in the project.	Right now, they have some commercial points in Bogotá, Medellín y Cali. In the future, they want to be in other cities with their stores.

<b>6</b>	She and her family 100% Wayúu	She organizes cultural visits with her family. Cultural activities to share her culture and the meaning of being a Wayúu with others. For example, a presentation about the cultural context of the places where the tourists go. She gives cultural speaks to the children of the community, trying to engage them with it and encourage them to strengthen the culture, the importance of the territory, and so on. The main goal is the children, tourists are something extra.	Family business	Become like a big cultural school, teach more children. Learn from the Western culture without losing what they are, the Wayúu essence. Apply what they learn based on their culture and local society.
<b>7</b>	He and his family are 100% Wayúu	He developed a Community Organization 5 years ago. It is becoming a small company called Guajira Birding.  They are specialized in bird watching tourism and ecotourism They are 15 young people trained in birds, conservation, and English.	Community and family business	In the next 5 years, they want to be a leader company in Bird Watching tourism for the north region of Colombia mainly, after that they consider reaching more places around the country
<b>8</b>	She is 100% Wayúu. She belongs to the Usayu house.	She is a rural teacher. She wants to teach her students everything she can but also teaches them how to appreciate their roots. 2 years ago, the Majaytpana school was born. The one she runs with the same community name as the result of a common effort.	Family and Friends business	Her next step is getting all the children in primary school access to secondary education. In that way, they will be able to go anywhere they want. Also, to have the right infrastructure for the project.
<b>9</b>	She is 100% Wayúu.	She is an artisan, she makes Chinchorros (hammocks) and sell in Uribia and Rioacha. She has been involved in the business for years. Also, she has a 12 years child, she knows how to make Chinchorros and how to knit.	Family business	She wants to move forward, be motivated enough to get a bigger business. Self-financing or to have a place where to sell by herself. Because right now she is making the products, but others sell it. She wants to be able to export by herself and make more money.
<b>10</b>	She and her family are 100% Wayúu.	They have a lodging house and sell of handicrafts	Family business	In five years, she pictures a bigger lodging house. Independent cabins, bigger diner, and facilities improvement. Give better service.

Source: Elaborated by the author