Women Ecopreneurship - A Case Study from Emerging Country

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: The purpose of this paper is to extend research into social and ecological entrepreneurship. It aims to examine how ecopreneurs can create an economically viable business whilst retaining their core environmental and social values. Market systems have adversely affected the environment by: (a) failing to deal with negative environmental externalities and (b) undervaluing natural resources, leading to their over-exploitation and depletion. Governments have sought to deal with the problem through a mix of command-and-control and market-based instruments, with limited success. One of the most potent alternatives for dealing with such market failures is ecopreneurship, which refers to a process by which entrepreneurs introduce eco-friendly (or relatively more eco-friendly) products and process into the marketplace. In this paper a theoretical framework to assess the emergence of ecopreneurship in a given society or industry is presented. Likewise nowadays women entrepreneurs are getting adopted to F Commerce which is actually based on Facebook. When in June this year, American rapper Snoop Dogg launched a fragrance on his FB shop. Shop snop now, he also offered a discount to 13 million followers. It all depended on the ‘likes’. For every 100 ‘likes’, Dogg slashed the perfume’s price down by 10%. A first -of -its-kind. It seems like international and Indian brands are adamant to turn 2012 into the year of Facebook Commerce or E-Commerce. Fashion labels Burberry, Chanel and Bulgari are using Facebook to reach their respective e-commerce sites.

Methodology: To do this study, the research was conducted through descriptive analysis and apart from that data was collected through telephonic interview with the women entrepreneurs. Findings: This paper has helped us to know how effectively information technologies are making everything green; even entrepreneurs are now also known as ecopreneurs. According to a recent WWD report which quoted Scott Galloway, New York University marketing professor and co-founder of NYU tank. Luxury Lab, “[Burberry] is getting more traffic from Facebook than Google. It’s the largest source of traffic to its site. Brands are now transitioning from spending money traditionally to facebook programmes; all of this traffic and investment is leading towards commerce”.

Keywords: entrepreneurship, women entrepreneurship, ecopreneurship, case study

INTRODUCTION

The word ‘entrepreneur’ immediately conjures up images of business tycoons like LN Mittal, Bill Gates, Shahnaz Hussain, and Kiran Shaw Majumdar. While these rich, famous and successful individuals can be inspired for some, others would find it difficult to associate their own lives, personalities or abilities with them. But the fact is that virtually everybody is an entrepreneur in one way or the other. Entrepreneurial in terms of self-development (an athlete constantly practicing to improve his/her performance and stamina), in terms of self decision making (a man deciding not to marry and devoting the rest of his life in service to God), in terms of creativity (a housewife using waste material for making a piece of art), a risk-taking (a teenage boy trying bungee jumping). Hence anyone who exhibits the characteristics of self-development, creativity, self-decision making and risk taking can be rightly called a person
worth entrepreneurial traits. When these traits are exhibited by a person running a business, he/she can rightly be called an entrepreneur.

For an individual, the role and type of career he/she chooses is of great importance because it lays down his patterns of living, determines his social status and controls his present and future life. Any individual can have three career options: 1) to work for someone else, 2) to be self-employed in a profession, 3) to be an entrepreneur. Of the three, entrepreneurship has gained lot of popularity – the reasons are many:

- It provides numerous opportunities for self-expression and realization of one's passion for doing something new and different.
- There are numerous opportunities for growth and self-development.
- Monetary rewards are greater.
- Entrepreneurs enjoy the power of decision-making.
- Reward of working on one’s own leads to immense satisfaction.

Entrepreneurs initiate and constitute change in the structure of business and society. This change is accompanied by growth and increased output which allows more wealth to be divided amongst the various participants. Thus entrepreneurship leads to the generation of income which further increase the national income of the country and enhances its economic development. In developing countries like India where educated unemployment and unemployment in general is a massive problem, entrepreneurship can be looked upon as a tool for income generation and employment. That’s why the Government of India has started designing policies and procedures to promote entrepreneurship.

Definition of an Entrepreneur

Despite its current prominence, entrepreneurship still remains a rather vague concept. According to (*** dictionary the word “Entrepreneur” can be defined as “one who organizes and manages only enterprise especially one involving high risk”. If taken literally, this definition seems fine, but it is incomplete.

But if we look at the definition given by different social scientists,

- An economist defines an entrepreneur as one who brings resources, labour, material and other assets into combination that make their value greater than before and also who introduces changes, innovations & a new orders.
- A Psychologist defines an entrepreneur as a person who is typically driven by some farces, which create a desire to obtain or attain something.
- A socialist defines entrepreneur as a person whose actions would determine his social status and who contributes to the development of the society.
- Management experts define entrepreneur as a person who has a vision and generates an action plan to achieve it.

But if we get into the origin of the word, the word itself is derived from the 17th century French verb ‘Entrprendre’ and the German word ‘Uternehmen’ both referring to individuals who are ‘undertakers’, i.e. those who ‘undertook’ the risk of new enterprise. They were contractors who bore the risks of profit or loss; they were soldiers of fortune, adventurers, builders or merchants.

Though many traits like creativity, risk taking, innovation have been associated with the term entrepreneur, which portrays an image as if entrepreneurs are only those individuals who take up the challenges of creating a business with new concept and ideas. But this is not true. Research scientists like Edward de Bono have pointed out that, the most important variable required for entrepreneurship is not innovation but value addition which means that it is not always important that an individual comes up with an entirely new idea to be called an entrepreneur. If he is adding incremental values to the current product or service he can rightly be called an entrepreneur.

Defining ecopreneurship

The word ecopreneur is a portmanteau of “ecological” and “entrepreneur.” An Ecopreneur is an entrepreneur who is as conscious about profit as he/she is about the planet, people and purpose.

It has been said that an ecopreneur is an entrepreneur who is focused on ecologically-friendly issues and causes, attempting to do business in a way which benefits the environment. Many people think an ecopreneur’s
products have to be green. Products like solar powered geysers, water conservation systems, compostable packaging are usually associated with ecopreneurs. However, the underlying product of an ecopreneur’s business may not be related with traditional “green” products at all. What's important though, is the manner in which the entrepreneur ranks the planet, people and purpose with profit. These are the ecopreneur’s 4 P’s of business and the ecopreneur is as conscious of profit as he is of the other 3 P’s. Many businesses are racing to reshape existing businesses along green lines, and directors of companies and small business entrepreneurs are aking the helm as ecopreneurs.

John Ivanko (co-author of ECOpreneuring and Rural Renaissance) in discussing the differences between ecopreneurs and entrepreneurs says “While many entrepreneurs may be motivated, at least in part, to the mantra of “greed is great” on their journey to becoming a millionaire, growing numbers of ecopreneurs are adopting a different course, focusing on solving the problems facing society through the businesses they create, greening their bottom line. Many are redefining their wealth, as we have, not by the size of their bank account or square footage of their home. Wealth is defined by life’s tangibles: health, wellness, meaningful work, vibrant community life and family.”

Being an Ecopreneur means you can be financially free and have the sense of achievement of creating a business that practically help preserving mother nature’s resource as well as the people living in it. Ecopreneur reaps both financial and social rewards.

Financially speaking, being an entrepreneur in such lucrative, niche, growing market means more sales and profit potential. Moreover, VCs and investors are laying their sight on budding entrepreneurs that go green – better funding opportunities = better business growth = more sales and profit.

Objectives of the research include spreading awareness about Ecopreneurship by Women entrepreneurs, studying the business model adopted by Divya Gopinathan- Owner De Cakery, and to study if the ecopreneurship has made the business model more competitive.

Literature Review

Traditionally, environmental business management has focused its attention on how and why existing firms can become greener. It has spent a substantial amount of time and effort examining the tools that can be use to make firms more sustainable and environmentally responsible; attempting to classify and categorize the responses of existing firms to the environmental and sustainability agendas; and in identifying the barriers and triggers that make firms ‘go green’. However, the field of green management has lately begun to broaden its research and teaching agenda. In recent years, Greener Management International has helped to lead this development, by examining such issues as the links between sustainability and innovation; the role of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs); the importance of sustainability in strategic procurement; environmental management in particular industries; and many other arenas. It is now also time to pay more attention to the role that entrepreneurs can play in the move to a more sustainable economic and commercial system. In this special edition, we examine the nature of green entrepreneurship and associated issues.

Beck Ernest (2006) proposed that Green labels on products allow companies to charge a premium of up to 20 to 30 percent, which is one reason green companies have profitable returns. Green companies also have higher costs from socially responsible policies, such as paying a living wage.

Clemenz Gerhard (2010) investigates the impact of eco-labels on the abatement of emissions in a market with horizontal product differentiation. A distinction is made between an end-of-pipe abatement method and a clean technology approach.

- Aichlmayr Mary (2010) focuses on the legitimacy of sustainability labels, logos, and certifications in the global market. It states that only three among 500 labeling agencies conform to the standard for environmental labeling.
- Economy reaching ‘source and sink limits’
- Finite resources
- Growing population
- Natural resource degradation
- Biodiversity loss
- Gallastegui and Ibon Galarraga (2002) proposed that labelling programs seek first to encourage a move towards more environmentally friendly consumption patterns
- Ecopreneurship is measured in terms of:
  - Impact of Eco-labels on consumer behaviour
  - Convenience of using social network sites for promoting paper less transaction
  - analyzing the relative importance of green packaging

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The Nature of Entrepreneurship

Like a number of other management terms, entrepreneurship is easy to conceptualise but hard to explain. Developing a precise form of words that clearly states what entrepreneurship is has led to numerous semantic and philosophical arguments, although in a practical sense most people know entrepreneurship when they see it in action, even if they cannot define such behaviour.

In general, entrepreneurs are individuals who conceive new business opportunities and who take on the risks required to convert those ideas into reality. They are people who are able to identify new commercial ventures (which often involves a willingness to ‘look outside the box’ and examine issues in fundamentally different ways from more conventional approaches), incubate ideas and champion their adoption, assemble the resources needed to bring the idea to commercial reality (such as money, people and technologies) and, finally, to launch and grow the business venture. In other words, entrepreneurship arises when enterprising individuals identify an unsolved problem, or an unmet need or want, which they then proceed to satisfy. In the process, they transform the existing status quo into a future opportunity and turn ideas into a commercial reality.

Entrepreneurs seek to bring about change and new opportunities, both for themselves and for the communities they belong to. They are often agents of what one of the early researchers in the field, Schumpeter (1934), labelled as ‘creative destruction’: old ways of doing things are transformed, or overtaken, when enterprising individuals wreak change in business systems. In this way, entrepreneurs often play an important role as engines of change in market-based economies, because they are responsible for introducing innovation, adaptation and new ideas.

Entreprising individuals can be found in all sectors of society, and today there are three broad types of entrepreneur that can be recognised. Traditionally, the concept of entrepreneurship has been closely aligned to small-business management: the classic archetypal entrepreneur is often regarded as an individual who starts his or her own small business, which may eventually grow into a much larger and more successful corporation. But entrepreneurs can also be found within existing large corporations, where they help create new business divisions and products and bring about changes to internal operations; these people are known as corporate entrepreneurs or intrapreneurs (Pinchot, 1985). Last, there are also many social entrepreneurs, working within non-profit organisations, who attempt to innovate to resolve community problems (Ashoka Foundation, 2003). Whatever the niche, successful entrepreneurship requires more than merely energy and money. It does not arise out of blind faith, enthusiasm or luck, but requires individuals and organisations to embrace a cohesive process of planning and idea development, the marshalling of resources, finance sourcing, the adoption of creative and innovative techniques and the taking of calculated risks.

Entrepreneurship is not confined to any one particular industry, country or group of persons. Enterprising behavior can be found in all societies and in all types of economic circumstances. Indeed, although the term usually refers just to an individual, it is also possible to find whole organisations that can also be classified as entrepreneurial in the way they do business and seek to grow.

Sustainability, Greening and Entrepreneurship

The adoption of environmentally responsible business practices can, conceivably, open up an additional range of opportunities for entrepreneurs. The move to a sustainable business framework provides numerous niches that enterprising individuals and firms can successfully identify and service. These include, among other things, the development of new products and services, improvements to the efficiency of existing firms, new methods of marketing and the reconfiguration of existing business models and practices. However, green entrepreneurship is not only important because it provides new opportunities for the nimble first movers who identify and exploit such opportunities but also because it has the potential to be a major force in the overall transition to a more sustainable business paradigm. In a market-based economy, entrepreneurs play a critical role in the eventual adoption of green business practices by the wider business community through the lead role that they provide to other firms. By demonstrating the economic benefits that come from being greener, ecopreneurs act as a ‘pull’ factor that entices other firms to proactively go green, in contrast to the ‘push’ factors of government regulation and stakeholder or lobby-group pressure.

The Evolution of Environmental Entrepreneurship

As management disciplines, both entrepreneurship and environmental business management are comparatively new concepts. Although there is now a relatively large body of established research into the phenomenon of entrepreneurship, the field itself has been widely recognised as a meaningful discipline only just after the 1980s. Prior to this time, study of the topic was largely confined to a small number of institutions and researchers. Today,
however, most business schools and most members of the business community are familiar with the concept and accept the importance of fostering enterprising behavior within a commercial context. The greening of management is also a relatively new phenomenon. However, it is less well known, less researched and more poorly understood than entrepreneurship. To date, most written material in the field of greener management has dealt with the greening of existing business organisations. But there have been a number of authors who have argued that greening and sustainability could also provide the basis for substantial new business opportunities.

In the early 1970s, Harvard Business Review ran a pioneering article arguing that the 'ecology movement' could provide profitable new markets for business expansion rather than simply being a drain on economic activity (Quinn, 1971). By the late 1980s, this theme had begun to become more prominent. Elkington and Burke (1989), for example, argued that innovative business solutions could be used not only to improve the environment but also to provide the basis for new business prospects overlooked by mainstream firms. In the early 1990s a more explicit examination of environmental entrepreneurship began to emerge, with authors such as Bennett (1991), Berle (1991) and Blue (1990) beginning to employ the terms 'environmental entrepreneur', 'green entrepreneur,' 'ecoentrepreneur' and its derivation 'ecopreneur'.

After a hiatus during the mid-1990s, the concept has recently been examined again, by, among others, Anderson and Leal (1997), Andersen (1998), Hostager et al. (1998), Isaak (1998), Keogh and Polonsky (1998), Adeoti (2000), Larson (2000) and Kyrö (2001). As these papers—plus the current edition of GMI—indicates, there is now a small but growing body of written literature on the topic of ecopreneurship. This interest has also begun to spill over into the broader entrepreneurship discipline (Schaper, 2002), with even the role of environmental issues and sustainability slowly starting to become incorporated into some conventional texts on entrepreneurship (Kuratko and Hodgetts, 2001; Kao et al., 2002). Apart from written publications, there have also been a number of recent initiatives designed to foster and promote ecopreneurship. Within academia, a number of tertiary institutions have now introduced units in environmental entrepreneurship (such as Nyenrode University in the Netherlands), and at least one European university has endowed a chair in sustainable entrepreneurship (WRI, 2001).

Case study of Decakery

The barriers and triggers to ecopreneurship are examined in this case study. Hildegard Schick, Sandra Marxen and Jürgen Freimann, referring to their own research in Germany, discuss how new entrepreneurs, who are currently in the process of creating and launching new business ventures, can be encouraged to adopt a more sustainable perspective. Lassi Linnanen provides some personal reflections on environmental entrepreneurship in Finland, drawing on a combination of personal experience and research.

The authors examine the impact of policy frameworks in setting a climate that is conducive to green entrepreneurship. Robert Isaak discusses the micro-level and macro-level policy structures that might facilitate the growth of more environmental entrepreneurs in future, and Astad Pastakia suggests a means by which the preconditions for ecopreneurship in a developing country can be analysed and assessed. Both of these papers will be of particular interest to regulators and policy-makers seeking to promote greener, more entrepreneurial firms in different countries and regions.

Finally, the study concludes with a case study of environmental entrepreneurship in action. Thierry Volery examines an innovative business model launched onto the Australian stock exchange in 2000 by an entrepreneur seeking to place a dollar value on conservation.

Studies on female entrepreneurs were done in order to identify obstacles that women face in business and to explore means of improvement. Though the number of self-employed women has been increasing dramatically from 1.7 million in 1977 to 2.3 million in 1982, the vast majority of studies of entrepreneurs are still narrowly focused on non-minority men. In an effort to expand the research on entrepreneurial women, this study questions 468 self-employed women in 18 states, assessing demographics, the nature of their business ventures, and the problems they encounter. According to this research, the "typical" female entrepreneur is married with children, herself being the first-born child of middle class parents. Her business is most likely to be service-oriented, and she tends to start it around the age of 40. Obstacles include problems with finance and credit, as well as lack of business and financial planning training. Consequently, most of the businesses are small with low growth rates and revenues. According to the business owners themselves, in order to further develop women's role in business, stereotypes need to be eliminated concerning women as entrepreneurs, and more visible role models and mentors for younger women are needed. The analysis concludes with specific recommendations for improvement:

1. Women should be encouraged to study in fields other than liberal arts.
2. Women should have access to seminars on finance, management, marketing, etc.
3. Women should seek assistance from experts, colleagues, and friends to establish formal and informal networks.
I always maintain that an educated consumer is a green consumer. Once you are aware of the issues, you are compelled to make the environmental choice. So at Grassroots I have always focused on training my staff, not just about the products, but about the issues behind the products. I’ve always maintained that there is a story behind every product in a Grassroots store. That story could be about unsustainable logging practices, chemicals in the environment, air pollution or water pollution. With each of our products there is an environmental issue that we can be talk about which makes Grassroots a very interesting shop. The level of conversation is very high – it gets very political, sometimes controversial, but mostly it is educational. This isn’t the Gap.

As I mentioned in earlier interview, the social and political climate of the late 1980’s and early 1990’s very closely mirrors what is happening today – except I believe we are in a much deeper crisis. In 2007, the environment is again the number one political issue. The consequences of human-accelerated climate change are on everyone’s mind. Every publication out there has a Green issue. “An Inconvenient Truth” won an Oscar. Hollywood’s car of choice is hybrid-powered. Oprah is flogging compact fluorescent light bulbs. This Green Living Show is a phenomenal success. All politicians are running around trying to paint themselves green, and, once again, corporate Canada is putting a green spin on their business.

I have never seen as much corporate green washing as I have in the past year. Companies making outrageous claims about their products, products being re-branded as green, misleading advertising, and outright lies. I honestly feel that there has never been a greater need for a business like Grassroots. Grassroots is more relevant today than we ever have been. Grassroots has always acted as a filter for its customers, weeding out the posers and promoting the companies and products that are legitimate.

After almost 15 years of looking at products for our stores, I have become pretty wise to many of the claims and much of the hype surrounding environmental products. I will do my best to be diplomatic and not name names and hopefully by the end of this blog you will walk away with a better sense of what is the real deal and what is misleading.

As consumers, I am totally sympathetic. We are being bombarded with advertising every waking minute by companies that have ad budgets larger than the GDP of most small countries. We are constantly multi-tasking, we are busy at work, we don’t have time to investigate every product, every claim, and every company.

Model of Ecopreneurship

For practising entrepreneurs in business, a number of micro-finance and business funding schemes have been introduced to provide start-up and growth capital for green enterprises. There are now also specialist business incubator centres for new firms with a sustainability orientation and schemes to make entrepreneur advisory services greener. One of the more advanced programmes that incorporates several of these elements together into an ‘environmental enterprise’ package is that established by the non-profit World Resources Institute. However, there is still much more that needs to be understood about ecopreneurship, both from a research perspective and from a practical perspective. Some of the important issues that need to be dealt with can be broadly grouped into four categories:

**Defining what constitutes a green entrepreneur.** Attempts to profile ‘green’ or environmentally responsible entrepreneurs is a relatively under researched field. How does one define a ‘green entrepreneur’? Do such ecopreneurs differ in any significant way from more conventional entrepreneurs? How can these differences be measured (i.e. demographically, regarding industry concentration and so on)? How successful are green entrepreneurs compared with conventional entrepreneurs? Is there a ‘typical’ profile of a green entrepreneur? What are the difficulties in researching this concept?

**Determination of the barriers and triggers to environmental entrepreneurship.** What are the survival and failure rates of such entrepreneurs? How do these compare with other firms? What is the best way to measure ‘success’ in an eco-friendly entrepreneurial venture (through monetary or environmental outcomes)? What factors serve as either a barrier or a trigger to their activities? What are the forces and process that give rise to green entrepreneurship? What are the practical steps that can be taken to foster eco-entrepreneurship in new and existing firms?
Policies to foster ecopreneurship. What policy frameworks can promote a greener perspective in existing and nascent entrepreneurs? Legislation, government regulation and industry support agencies all have a role to play in shaping the way that business conducts its activities. Other stakeholders, such as lobby groups, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), venture capitalists, industry associations and local communities can also influence the context in which ecopreneurs operate. How can the activities of these bodies be encouraged to foster environmental entrepreneurs?

Learning from examples. Entrepreneurs often like learning by hearing the stories of other successful businesspeople. What are the stories and experiences of past and present ecopreneurs? What lessons can be learned from them, and how can this information be effectively disseminated to other current and would-be ecopreneurs? In this issue of GMI a number of writers and researchers from around the world have attempted to answer some of the questions above. In the first two papers, Liz Walley and David Taylor, and Stefan Schaltegger examine green entrepreneurship on a broad level, suggesting models that can be used to help define, categorise and explain the notion of ecopreneurship in a generic sense. It is hoped that this work will help pave the way for future development of conceptual models that can be used to describe, understand and analyse the behaviour of green entrepreneurs.

Consume less: Well my first recommendation, and this may be a bit of a surprise coming from a retailer, but we have to start consuming less. Most companies cringe when they hear this, but we must start buying into quality of life not quantity of products. We must reduce our consumption and increase our happiness.

1. Follow the 3r's: 1-Reduce, 2-Reuse, then 3-recycle. We have all become very adept at recycling. When I am introduced to people, 9 times out of 10 they tell me about how they are really into recycling, they bring their blue box out to the curb every week, which is great, but we have to remember that recycling is the last of the 3R's. Recycling doesn’t address consumption at all – it can actually be argued that it perpetuates consumption because we feel like good responsible citizens throwing packaging into the blue box. Let’s all begin to look at recycling as our last resort and start focusing on reducing and reusing.

2. Vote with your dollar: If you’re going to spend money, spend it on companies and products that support your values – every dollar you spend is a vote – every time you choose to spend money on a product or service, you are essentially telling that company that you agree with what they are doing and you want to support them. If products aren’t selling, companies discontinue them. If products sell well, companies will make more of them. So be mindful of what, and who, you are supporting with your voting dollars.

3. Avoid excessive packaging: Over packaging is out of control and we have to start making manufacturers aware that we will not stand for unnecessary packaging. I was recently given a box of organic cookies from one of our country’s largest grocery stores. Yes, the cookies were labeled organic but the cookies were packed in a plastic tray which was inside a plastic bag which was inside a cardboard box – all this for cookies! We aren’t transporting nuclear waste guys! There is absolutely no producer responsibility in this country and that must change. If manufacturers were responsible for the packaging they produced, we would see an incredible reduction in the amount of packaging waste. This would also bring down the cost of the actual product. One industry that has made great strides toward reducing packaging is the music industry. Rarely do you see excessive packaging of a CD. Many of today’s CD’s are packaged in recycled paper or hemp paper and wrapped in plastic – they just have to replace the plastic wrap with biodegradable starch-based wrap and we’ll be even further ahead. But take a look around at the products you see and keep in mind how much packaging is used. With more thoughtful design, consumer support, and innovative packaging material we can significantly reduce the amount of garbage going to landfill.

4. Support innovators: Support the innovators, not the imitators. Once again, we are seeing so many companies desperately trying to paint themselves green to win over the consumer. Be wary of their claims, make them earn your trust; ensure they are walking the talk. There are so many companies out there that talk a great game, they talk about making a difference, but hold their feet to the fire and make them prove that they are sincere. Take a look at the past records or history of some of the companies out there. Have they shown ongoing commitment to their environmental programs, or do they abandon them when the
environment is no longer the number 1 issue? One of Canada's largest grocers is a great example of a company that abandon their “green” program in the early 1990’s as the environment fell as the number 1 political issue. Now that the environment is the number (1) political issue in 2007, guess who just re-launched their “green” program? Are they committed to the environment and worthy of your support? Not according to past history.

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