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Stakeholder Transformation Process: The Journey of an Indigenous Community

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Abstract

The vast majority of indigenous communities are among the world's poorest and are unlikely to be engaged in a thriving, mutually beneficial partnership with an MNC. While there are increasing studies on CSR initiatives in base of the pyramid communities, few—if any—feature the self-initiated stakeholder transition of an impoverished community. This paper examines the factors that motivated the stakeholder transformation process of an indigenous community, from its position as a non-stakeholder, one lacking in power and legitimacy, to the status of being a primary stakeholder of the firm. We applied a constructivist grounded theory approach to longitudinal data to arrive at the conceptual framework. The findings presented are drawn from an in-depth case study of the Maasai, an indigenous community from East Africa. The findings point to the existence of entrepreneurial alertness that is instrumental in propelling the indigenous community to evolve from one stakeholder category to the next. Our research aims to propose a possible foundation for how communities deep in poverty can coalesce themselves to make their social needs salient to multinational organizations.

Keywords Stakeholder status transition · Entrepreneurial alertness · Base of the pyramid · Indigenous community · CSR

Introduction

Research that addresses the social disparity observed at the base of the pyramid (BoP) has gained tremendous ground in recent years (Sharma and Jaiswal 2017; Kolk et al. 2014). The base of the pyramid refers to the majority of humanity—approximately two-thirds of the world's population, or four billion people—that is not benefitting from the global economy (Hammond et al. 2007). Ongoing research continues to address how organizations in the private sector as well as nonprofit and nongovernmental organizations have sought to lessen this economic disparity. Specifically, management research has explored BoP markets as a source of radical innovation (Prahalad 2012) and others have adopted a more socially embedded and community-centric BoP approach (Ansari et al. 2012). Nevertheless, researchers (Barney 2005; Mahoney and McGahan 2007) contend that little effort has been made to reconcile the findings of sociology and the strategic management literature—especially regarding corporate social responsibility (CSR)—to consider the needs and efforts made by both BoP communities and organizations, particularly for-profit organizations, to develop a sustainable model to cater to BoP communities' needs. Our study suggests that there is a need and benefit to integrating these perspectives.

Sen's (1983, 1985) groundbreaking work on poverty suggests that the *capabilities* of the poor can provide more insight into their economic well-being than more traditional economic metrics. Subsequently, sociology and development scholars have argued that social capital is essential for developing the community and may serve as an ideal bridge between the poor and available resources (Ansari et al. 2012). To this end, we observe an evolution of the

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BoP strategy literature, from viewing the BoP community as "consumers" or "producers" within the value chain to welcoming them as "partners" (London 2009). This approach argues that BoP initiatives should be driven by the needs of the marginalized *as perceived by them* (Ansari et al. 2012; Arora and Romijn 2012). Prior research also suggests that listening to the poor and understanding their challenges, choices, and constraints are essential for building partnerships (Narayan et al. 2000).

Alternatively, management research on CSR normally assumes the perspective of organizations. On the one hand, for-profit organizations are often observed to contribute to BoP communities' welfare through philanthropy (Austin 2000; Seitanidi and Ryan 2007). While researchers and practitioners laud such philanthropic activities, these activities do not, in most instances, clearly benefit the firms' financial goals (Friedman 1962; Henderson 2001), which undermine the firms' motivation for continuous engagement (Austin 2000; Seitanidi and Ryan 2007). On the other hand, other research (Mair et al. 2012) has argued that BoP communities consistently receive the short end of the bargain. The philanthropy literature, largely examined through the lens of businesses, suggests that the needs of indigenous communities may not be adequately addressed (Ansari et al. 2012; Arora and Romijn 2012). After BoP communities deplete the philanthropic resources, they revert to previous conditions, improve only marginally, or become socially disrupted (Ansari et al. 2012). Therefore, there is a need to reconcile the perspectives from both sides and explore a sustainable and mutually beneficial path for both MNCs and indigenous communities.

We consider stakeholder management research to examine this issue. The stakeholder lens is one of the dominant perspectives in studying cross-sector collaborations between indigenous communities and corporate entities (e.g., Murphy and Arenas 2010; Lertzman and Vredenburg 2005; Selsky and Parker 2005). Prior studies suggest that MNCs may be able to establish collaborations with non-stakeholders (poor, weak, and invisible, from a firm's perspective) who, at times, may possess something of value (again, from a firm's perspective) to them. For example, research on the Australian Aboriginal indigenous communities suggests that marginalized communities are able to negotiate development terms in partnerships with corporations and/or governments (O'Faircheallaigh 2008). Nevertheless, the greatest beneficiaries in most instances are the multinational companies (MNCs), who obtain natural resources and intellectual and biological knowledge at the expense of the indigenous community (Ostergard et al. 2001; Harvey 2003).

So far, stakeholder researchers have assumed that stakeholder status is given and static, omitting the possibility that stakeholder status can change upon the effort of the stakeholder, the company, or both. This gap in the literature motivates our research question: *How can an indigenous community become a primary stakeholder from the perspective of an MNC?* Investigating this research question bears particular practical importance for BoP communities, as our study suggests implications for being more participative in their collaborations with organizations.

Aiming to add to this stream of research, this paper presents an in-depth case study analysis of a partnership between an indigenous community based in East Africa and a Spanish-based MNC. We opine that critical qualitative inquiry is integral when examining BoP and MNC alliances, where concerns about power, inequality, and injustice are common. We collected longitudinal data from key members of the partnership over a four-year period through in-depth interviews, site visits, and participant observation. Using a constructivist grounded theory (CGT) approach (Charmaz 2008), we investigate the proactive and creative measures that an indigenous community adopts as it transitions from a non-stakeholder status to a primary stakeholder status (as related to the MNC).

Extant research supports the role of factors such as prosocial values (Schwartz 2010), empathy (Davis 1996), and altruism (Batson 2011) in advancing the community's needs and facilitating cross-sector partnerships. However, significant findings from our data analysis revealed the critical role that the entrepreneurial alertness of the Maasai community leader played in mobilizing the community to collaborate with the MNC and improve their livelihood, resulting in the phenomenon of their stakeholder transition. The collaboration began as a philanthropic, nonprofit-focused partnership. Nevertheless, within a few years, the indigenous community transitioned from being a non-stakeholder with minimal external interaction with the firm to ultimately being embedded within the firm's supply chain. As a departure from previous stakeholder research, our study investigates what a commonly marginalized stakeholder such as the indigenous community (Blaser et al. 2004) can do to integrate its needs into a firm's strategies and operations. In the next sections, we provide a brief overview of the relevant theoretical lenses we used in analyzing this unique case: stakeholder theory and entrepreneurial alertness.

Stakeholder Theory

The stakeholder theoretical perspective has been widely accepted as appropriately illuminating the CSR-related efforts of a firm (Agle et al. 1999; Frooman 1999; Mitchell et al. 1997). A *stakeholder* is "any group or individual who can affect or is affected by the achievement of the firm's objectives" (Freeman 1984, p. 25). Most CSR studies have differentiated between *primary stakeholders*, upon whom firms rely to survive, and *secondary stakeholders*, who are not engaged in contractual or legal transactions with firms

and, thus, are not essential for the firms' survival (Clarkson 1995). In this paper, we also incorporate the concept of a *non-stakeholder*, generally identified as a constituency group that is assumed to have no clear direct—or even indirect—relation with a specific company (Phillips et al. 2003).

Mitchell et al. (1997) asserted that these stakeholder classifications differed based on three distinct attributes: *power*, *legitimacy*, and *urgency*, with primary stakeholders being the strongest demonstrators of these attributes. Secondary stakeholders generally need to exert their impact on the condition that they can motivate primary stakeholders to alter their interactive dynamics with a firm (Frooman 1999; Raman 2004), or at least the firm assumes that this alteration can potentially happen (Tang and Tang 2013). Otherwise, the influence path from a secondary stakeholder to the firm is disconnected. For example, Tang and Tang (2013) have demonstrated that in China, the media's impact on firms' polluting behaviors exists through its connections with two primary stakeholders, governments, and the public.

Non-stakeholders, by default, lack any direct or indirect connection with the firm or the stakeholders who can potentially affect the firm (Phillips et al. 2003). It is, thus, not surprising that most strategic management CSR literature has yet to incorporate this category, into which indigenous communities, to many MNCs, fall. To the best of our knowledge, prior CSR studies have not observed that a stakeholder is able to *change* its status relative to an organization. What has been missing from extant CSR research is what the stakeholders, especially the non-primary ones, can do to enable a company to incorporate its needs into the company's business strategies and operations in a sustainable manner. This research seeks to conduct an in-depth analysis of the transformative process that non-stakeholders can employ to make their social needs salient to an MNC, and successfully transform to a position of power, legitimacy, and urgency from the MNC's viewpoint.

We further explore legitimacy by specifically considering the *social legitimacy* construct. Social legitimacy suggests that the strong ties that are evident within the MNC-Indigenous Community partnership will elevate the salience and contributions of the partnership's activities to other stakeholders and external entities (Daly and Cobb 1994), thus contributing to social acceptance. Daly and Cobb (1994) also explore the economic development of local communities and assert that "projects that improve the range and efficiency of the economic activities of local people do develop the local community" (p. 134). In our case study, what began as a partnership that initially focused on the contributions that an indigenous community can make to an MNC's product line ultimately expanded to include opportunities that developed the community's entrepreneurial skills, provided financial independence, and advanced educational goals.

Furthermore, the social transformation process brings the nature of work to the forefront, affirming that positive work values are indeed valuable to the community. In contrast to prior scholars (Marx 1975; Honneth and Ash 1982) that have explored "work" or "labor" as oppressive, Ezzy (1997) conceptualized the nature of work as "good," and acknowledged that cultural and social contexts influence the characterization of the task as worthwhile. Specifically, he suggests that "good work provides the worker with the opportunity to fulfill their commitments to other people and to society more generally" (p. 439). We observe this characterization of "good work"—from the indigenous community and the MNC—as they were both committed to the partnership and to each other, by providing high-quality craftsmanship while improving the livelihood and increasing opportunities for a marginalized society. Hence, this socially legitimate work, which was also viewed as necessary due to the challenges faced by the community (see upcoming Case Overview section), presents a case for the *urgency* stakeholder attribute and evolved in a way that gave the indigenous community greater influence (*power*) over the relationship.

Entrepreneurial Alertness as a Stakeholder Transition Catalyst

Due to higher occurrences of poverty, lower education levels, and poor health within indigenous communities (Mac-Kay 2001), researchers have lauded entrepreneurial activity as a critical catalyst for stimulating socioeconomic progress within indigenous communities (Anderson and Giberson 2004). Given the self-initiated nature of this stakeholder status transition that the indigenous community experienced, we explore entrepreneurial alertness theory to gain an understanding of how the Maasai community was able to achieve what most indigenous communities have not been able to accomplish. Specifically, we seek to investigate the strategies employed in facilitating the stakeholder transition.

Embedded within the opportunity identification literature (Ardichvili et al. 2003; Gaglio and Katz 2001), entrepreneurial alertness has been identified as "the distinctive set of perceptual and cognitive processing skills that direct the opportunity identification process" (2001, p. 96). Numerous contexts, including technology professionals (Corbett 2007) and small- and medium-size enterprises (SMEs), have explored this ability to identify entrepreneurial opportunities (Vaghely and Julien 2010). However, the opportunity identification literature does not capture the occurrence of entrepreneurial alertness being initiated by indigenous communities. While companies may feel moral obligations to attend to the needs of the BoP, we consider whether the opportunity identification perspective might address the gap in the literature that does not reflect how indigenous communities—who are normally at the base of the pyramid—can

proactively assume responsibility for making their needs salient to the companies. We now elaborate on the unique partnership featured in this case study.

Case Overview: The Indigenous Community/MNC Partnership

Savage et al. (2010) have identified social partnerships as organizational entities that assemble to solve "messy problems" that are not typically solved by a single organization acting independently. Social partnerships can span across sectors and can feature collaborations between public, private, and nonprofit sectors (Polonsky 1995; Stafford and Hartman 1996). Some researchers suggest that partnership entities will only seek external collaborations if the problem at hand is beyond their resolve and if they will benefit from the collaboration (Gray 1989). Others have highlighted the necessity of inter-organizational collaborations for survival (Stuart 2000). The social partnership in this study features a collaboration between a Maasai community and a Spanish MNC (Pikolinos) that benefits both entities.

The messy problem at hand that linked these two entities stemmed from the fact that the Maasai community was at crossroads in investigating strategies to supplement its nomadic way of life, which was no longer feasible due to encroachment on their ancestral land by the Kenyan government. Additionally, Pikolinos did not have any product line that was African-inspired or any CSR strategy within Africa, although it was not actively looking for one. Moreover, when this opportunity presented itself, the MNC welcomed it as the company felt that this partnership aligned with its overall strategy.

The Indigenous Community: The Maasai The Maasai is an indigenous tribe that is part of the BoP population. They live primarily in Southern Kenya and Northern Tanzania, mainly in the Mara region, with a population of approximately one million. They are a seminomadic, culturally distinct group of people that have maintained their unique traditional customs for many centuries and have been able to limit influences from the outside world. However, due to communal land fragmentation and conservation, the Maasai population has been forbidden from accessing land or water within the reserves and has been driven by necessity to find ways to preserve their heritage while earning a livelihood. Subsequently, they consistently face issues such as disease, hunger, poverty, and lack of education and clean water.

The Multinational Organization: Pikolinos Group Pikolinos, a family business founded in Spain in 1984, has expanded to over 60 countries worldwide. Pikolinos is engaged in a wide variety of activities ranging from tanning leather and manufacturing shoes to operating their own retail outlets across the globe. Pikolinos is involved in an inter-organizational collaborative partnership with the Maasai

community and ADCAM, the Spanish-based NGO from one of the Maasai leader's networks who introduced the Maasai community to the Pikolinos Group. Pikolinos must balance the duality of achieving firm goals and profitability with successfully managing a social partnership. Pikolinos's desire to create both social and economic value and be environmentally conscious drives its efforts and engagements.

The Maasai–Pikolinos partnership developed a project (The Maasai Project) that utilizes the beading expertise that the Maasai women have honed for many generations and involved the Maasai women doing the beading work for Pikolinos' export market. The social partnership that formed between Pikolinos and the Maasai indigenous community initially began with about 20 women artisans and has since grown to employ and enhance the living conditions of over 1600 women artisans.

Although unique, we believe that this case has broad implications for indigenous communities that are in similar situations and are striving to change their economic and social outcomes. Indigenous communities are found on all populated continents and range from traditional hunter-gatherers and subsistence farmers to expert professionals in industrialized societies (Peredo and Anderson 2006). There is a consensus that a vast majority of indigenous communities are socially and economically disadvantaged and vulnerable (MacKay 2001; Peredo et al. 2004; Berkes and Adhikari 2005). According to the UN (2016), there are approximately 370 million indigenous peoples in the world, comprising roughly 5% of the world's population, yet they constitute approximately 33% of the world's extremely poor population.

Figure 1 depicts a timeline of how the partnership between the indigenous community and the MNC (Pikolinos Group) evolved, unveiling key processes and stages that illustrate how the stakeholder transition process unfolded over time.

Methodology

Methodological Approach

This study adopted an inductive inferential approach using guidance from constructivist grounded theory (CGT) (Charmaz 2006, 2008, 2011, 2014; Charmaz and Belgrave 2012). The interpretive constructivist framework of the study will allow us to investigate existing theories, especially in an area that explores a complex and contextual, and yet understudied indigenous society. Charmaz (2006, 2008, 2014) emphasizes theory development derived from the co-construction process of the subject of the study and the researchers. This approach is distinct from Glaser and Strauss's (1967) classic grounded theory approach,
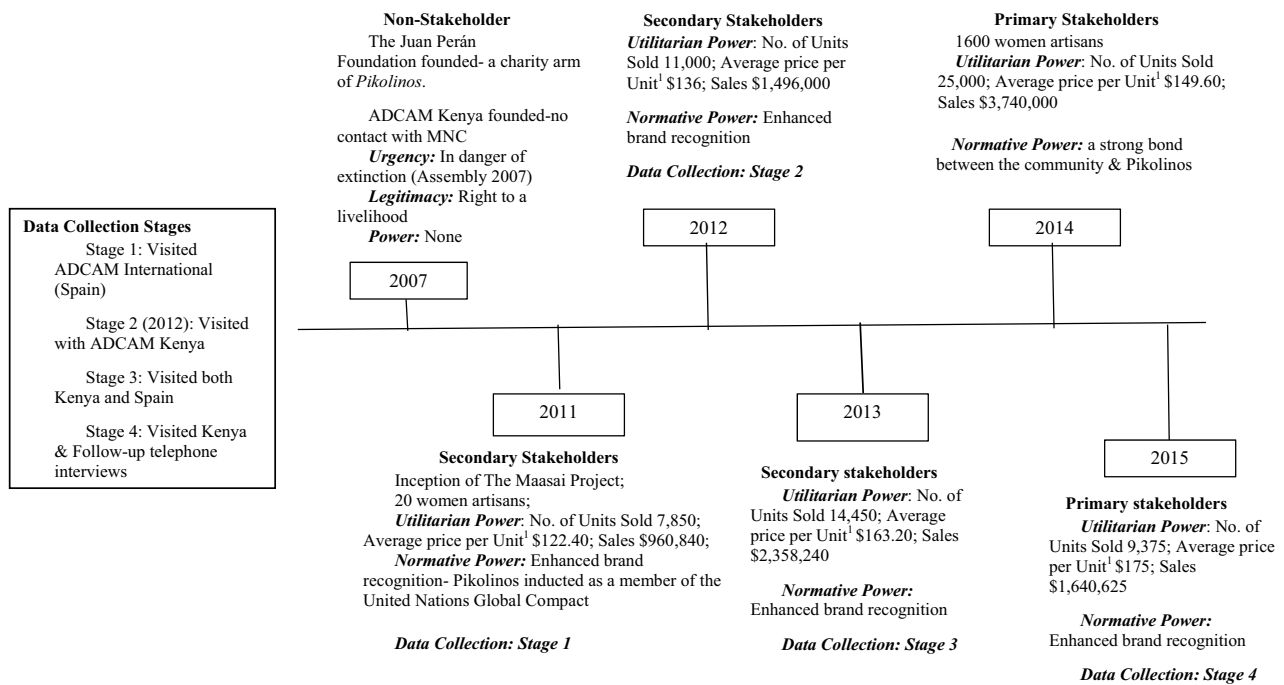
Non-Stakeholder
The Juan Perán Foundation founded- a charity arm of *Pikolinos*.

ADCAM Kenya founded-no contact with MNC
Urgency: In danger of extinction (Assembly 2007)
Legitimacy: Right to a livelihood
Power: None

Secondary Stakeholders
Utilitarian Power: No. of Units Sold 11,000; Average price per Unit[1] $136; Sales $1,496,000

Normative Power: Enhanced brand recognition

Data Collection: Stage 2

Primary Stakeholders
1600 women artisans
Utilitarian Power: No. of Units Sold 25,000; Average price per Unit[1] $149.60; Sales $3,740,000

Normative Power: a strong bond between the community & Pikolinos

Data Collection Stages
Stage 1: Visited ADCAM International (Spain)

Stage 2 (2012): Visited with ADCAM Kenya

Stage 3: Visited both Kenya and Spain

Stage 4: Visited Kenya & Follow-up telephone interviews

2012

2014

2007

2011

2013

2015

Secondary Stakeholders
Inception of The Maasai Project; 20 women artisans;
Utilitarian Power: No. of Units Sold 7,850; Average price per Unit[1] $122.40; Sales $960,840;
Normative Power: Enhanced brand recognition- Pikolinos inducted as a member of the United Nations Global Compact

Data Collection: Stage 1

Secondary stakeholders
Utilitarian Power: No. of Units Sold 14,450; Average price per Unit[1] $163.20; Sales $2,358,240

Normative Power: Enhanced brand recognition

Data Collection: Stage 3

Primary stakeholders
Utilitarian Power: No. of Units Sold 9,375; Average price per Unit[1] $175; Sales $1,640,625

Normative Power: Enhanced brand recognition

Data Collection: Stage 4

Fig. 1 Timeline of stakeholder characterization transition

which espouses an inductive and positivist form of theory development (Henwood and Pidgeon 1994). Constructivist grounded theory embraces the relativist epistemological assumptions and is included within the interpretive approach to qualitative research. However, it is important to note that both approaches are similar in key fundamental issues.

First, both approaches require that the research question must determine the research methodology (Strauss and Corbin 1998; Corbin and Strauss 2008; Charmaz 2006). Second, both approaches require constant comparison between coding and theory development until enough information to fully develop (or saturate) the model is generated. Third, both use a cyclical method of data collection, coding, categorization, and theoretical sampling to generate a theory that responds to the initial research question (Glaser and Strauss 1967; Charmaz 2006).

However, our rationale for utilizing CGT is rooted in its pragmatism and relativist epistemology, which espouses that neither data nor theories are a new emergence or discovery, but are formed from the interactions of researchers with the object of interest (Charmaz 2000, 2006; Mills et al. 2006; Thornberg and Charmaz 2012). In this manner, unlike approach, there is less focus on the data as the object of discovery, since the researcher is aware that the data are a social construction involving themselves and the field. Furthermore, the CGT approach also includes the researcher's perspectives, biases, and privileges (Charmaz 2000). Finally, our position is that the constructivist

grounded theory takes a "middle of the road" approach because of this realistic and multiple-perspectives stance.

We employed a longitudinal single case study, which is justifiable when the phenomenon under investigation is unique and contrary to the norm (Siggelkow 2007). Siggelkow (2007) further opined that whereas a single case study cannot test a theory, it could sometimes suffice to falsify theories, as a single counterexample is enough (p. 21). Our data collection involved a triangulation of data sources, including recorded in-depth interviews, analysis of media content, annual reports, and notes taken during direct field observations. Our attempt at a holistic approach to this study does not reduce complex realities and interdependent relationships of discrete variables; rather, it seeks to understand the complexity of real-life phenomena in its non-controlled context. We acknowledge that subjectivity and interpretation involved in the qualitative analytical process will inevitably affect replicability and generalizability of the findings. However, we believe that the rich meanings emerging from the qualitative analysis of the text are critically significant in the context of the constructivist nature of discursive meaning negotiation. Krippendorff (1980) addresses the issues arising from the conflict between subjectivity and replicability of qualitative analysis in his assertion that it is not so much how objectively, but rather how compellingly, it is presented that makes a piece of research valuable to the scientific community (Krippendorff 1980).

Data Collection and Analysis

Step 1 To start, we identified our driving research question, which we stated earlier, to guide the data collection and analysis. We drew on two of the authors' cultural experiences with indigenous communities in East Africa. The two authors are originally from the region and are conversant with the customs and traditions of the concerned indigenous community. These authors were particularly instrumental in gaining access to the community, identifying network members of the indigenous community, and translating the interview transcripts.

Step 2 Next, we generated interview questions, which we designed to explore the evolutionary nature and process of the partnership (Charmaz 2006, 2008; Creswell and Poth 2017; Gioia et al. 2013). As the timeline (Fig. 1) illustrates, in 2011, we had our first encounter with the CEO of ADCAM International (NGO) in Spain, where we learned about the Maasai Project. At this stage, ADCAM International was formulating and fine-tuning logistics in preparation for the first production of Maasai shoes. We conducted informal exploratory interviews with the top executives at Pikolinos and ADCAM International. We used the data gathered in 2011 to develop our interview protocol for the next stage of our study.

In 2012, we had another round of interviews in Kenya, which occurred after a very successful first year of production of Maasai shoes. At this point, we requested a formal in-depth study of the partnership, which led to another study in 2014. Consequently, we used the data gathered from our interactions in 2011 and 2012 to refine our sampling framework and generate *open coding* using NVivo 10.0. Based on the knowledge gained from this data, we established the strategy that we used in the 2014 study. We used theoretical sampling, a non-probability sampling technique which involved selecting participants with specific characteristics and experiences (Öberseder et al. 2013; McKeever et al. 2015). The criteria to become part of the sample for this study are as follows: (1) possessing a leadership role in the indigenous community; (2) possessing a leadership role in the MNC; (3) being a member of the indigenous community; and (4) being a network member of the indigenous community ("Appendix A").

Open coding consisted of "broad-brush" queries such as running a word frequency query to determine the most frequently used words, displayed in a tag cloud. We also used cluster analysis to determine word similarity. First, we conducted the cluster analysis on exclusive sources, such as on interview transcripts alone followed by multiple sources (interview transcripts, annual reports, marketing literature, etc.). The intention was to reveal similar terminologies or related words across sources. Finally, we conducted text search queries to search for keywords and phrases, as informed by our research question and the emerging patterns based on the previously stated queries. We used this information to generate additional interview questions.

Step 3 After completing the open coding and attaining a better understanding of the partnership, in 2014 we conducted 17 semi-structured, face-to-face, in-depth interviews with leaders from the Maasai community, the Pikolinos Group, and ADCAM ("Appendix A"). We conducted the interviews in the participants' locales, and the interviews ranged from 10 min (interviews with community members who briefly recounted their perception of the partnership and its impact on the community) to 2 h (interviews with core partnership informants). We asked the interviewees similar questions ("Appendix B"), but we delved in deeper when respondents brought up interesting information pertaining to the discussion, particularly during the 2014 visit. We conducted all but a small percentage of the interviews in English. The remaining interviews were conducted in Kiswahili (the native language of much of southeastern Africa) and were translated to English by Kiswahili-speaking researchers. In 2015, we collected additional data from respondents in the community and the NGO (ADCAM). In addition, we also reviewed email correspondence to clarify and reconcile variations and any missing information ("Appendix A"). Finally, we recorded, transcribed, and coded all of the interviews.

We deployed *axial coding* using NVivo 10.0. The key coding paradigm is as follows: (1) What are the central underpinnings of the partnership (central categories of the partnership—the three categories of the stakeholder status)? (2) What influenced or caused this partnership to occur (causal conditions)? (3) What strategies were employed during the process (the actions or interactions that resulted from the partnership)? What effects occurred (consequences—primarily how did it impact the community, and secondarily, how did it impact the firm)? We also analyzed secondary data that included archival documents, annual reports, presentation kits, and promotional videos (obtained from both Pikolinos and ADCAM). These documents were vital in that they provided significant information about the partners and allowed for an in-depth inquiry and understanding of particular situations leading to emergence of new theoretical approaches (Eisenhardt and Graebner 2007).

Step 4 Finally, we utilized *selective coding*, which involved connecting all the categories and creating a coherent storyline that articulates our understanding of the nature and process of the transformation of the partnership. We also formulated propositions to predict probable relationships. In the next section, we present our findings, followed by the discussion and conclusion at the end. We have included a table in the Appendix ("Appendix C") that provides an overview of the category relationships that were generated through selective coding.

Findings

Our findings reveal themes that provide the framework for narrating how this indigenous community and an MNC negotiated a stakeholder transformation process and forged a mutually beneficial partnership. The interview process featured a set of linked questions that worked to clarify aspects of the existence of the stakeholder transition process, with regard to the framing of the construct from a literature perspective (Mitchell et al. 1997). By problematizing the discourse, the analysis ultimately revealed a stakeholder evolution and the presence of entrepreneurial alertness as a catalyst for the transition process. We captured the emergent themes and relationships of these revelations in two sets of propositions that we present in this section.

Unveiling the Indigenous Community's Stakeholder Transition Process

Our phenomenon of interest was the indigenous community's stakeholder transition. The study revealed that the Maasai indigenous community experienced a transition process through three distinct stakeholder classifications: non-stakeholder, secondary stakeholder, and primary stakeholder (Fig. 1). Before engaging with the MNC, the indigenous community did not possess any stakeholder attributes from the MNC's perspective. However, as the relationship evolved over time (Fig. 1), we observed that the community partnership increasingly possessed three key interdependent and interactive attributes: power, legitimacy, and urgency. We now discuss how each attribute contributes to stakeholder salience.

Initial Classification as a Non-Stakeholder

As initially stated, a non-stakeholder is a group that does not have any direct or indirect relationship as perceived by a specific firm (Phillips et al. 2003). Initially, Pikolinos did not know the Maasai, as explained by Juan Peran Bazan, vice president, Pikolinos Group:

> Prior to our collaboration, I did not know much about the Maasai. I knew that they are Africans and they live in Maasai Mara, Kenya, but that is about all. I have friends who had their honeymoon in Kenya, but that sounded too exotic to me.

The Maasai stakeholder attributes were essentially non-existent to Pikolinos until the two entities began to interact. We did not find any evidence, indicating that the Maasai community, as a non-stakeholder, had any *power* over Pikolinos. The community possessed *legitimacy* and *urgency*, although these were not directly related to Pikolinos. William, the community leader, recounts the community's legitimate and urgent status, as reflected by the changes due to communal land conservation:

> Our lives were self-sustaining without the outside world. Our diet consisted of meat, blood, milk, honey and herbs from the bush. You know one cannot farm in the Savannah because of the wild animals and the type of soil. When we got ill, we used the herbs. All that has changed. Our diet has changed. The illness people have today sometime requires modern medicine. We have moved from the blended life with the wild animals and we now live on the peripheral areas of the Mara. We have to buy our vegetables from the open market. We need money for medical care. We need money for clothing.

Moreover, although legitimacy and urgency are critical, they were not sufficient to gain stakeholder status from Pikolinos's perspective (Mitchell et al. 1997). The Maasai community had a pressing need to seek economic activities that could generate a viable livelihood, given the challenges to their traditional sources of sustenance.

Mitchell et al. (1997) argue that a legitimate claim gains rights through power (which was lacking in the case of the Maasai community with regard to Pikolinos) and voice through urgency. They further contend that urgency by itself is not sufficient to guarantee high salience in the stakeholder–manager relationship. Urgency, they assert, must be combined with at least one of the other two attributes in order to change the relationship and cause it to increase in salience to the firm's managers. As non-stakeholders, the Maasai community lacked the ability to influence Pikolinos's behavior or decisions (power), and although they had a legitimate and urgent claim, this claim had no direct bearing on Pikolinos. Thus, we note that prior to the collaboration, the Maasai community lacked the necessary attributes to be considered a stakeholder. However, the community was able to increase awareness and sensitivity to its plight and align both the community's and Pikolinos's perceptions of legitimacy.

Suchman (1995) broadly defines legitimacy as "a generalized perception or assumption that the actions of an entity are desirable, proper, or appropriate within some socially constructed system of norms, values, beliefs, and definitions" (p. 574). However, managers' perceptions of stakeholder legitimacy may differ from the stakeholder's own perception (Mitchell et al. 1997). Given that stakeholder attributes are socially constructed, and not objective, it is essential for a prospective stakeholder to find a firm that can empathize with its situation. The Maasai community possessed a time-sensitive and critical claim as

the United Nations Assembly (2007) declared the Maasai tribe in danger of extinction, thus establishing its urgency.

Transition to Secondary Stakeholder

As the partnership progressed, we began to observe a shift in and development of the previously identified stakeholder attributes (power, legitimacy, urgency). While in the prior non-stakeholder category, the Maasai community had no power in the context of the MNC; in this secondary stakeholder stage, we now see an emergence of this attribute. One of the MNC's senior representatives states:

> We later realized that there is a natural fit between the Maasai project and our company philosophy. We believe in using natural products. We are very colorful, and our logo ('naturally good') speaks to the kind of work environment and work ethic that surrounds our company. It is not just about our products. We felt we had these things in common with the Maasai people.

Even though the Maasai may not have a direct influence on the MNC, we see an acknowledgment of common philosophies and principles attributed to the Maasai by the MNC. The MNC's emphasis on doing "good" work also aligns with Daly and Cobb's (1994) emphasis on doing work that is worthy and useful to the community, highlighting the prosocial characteristics of the partnership. Notably, Pikolinos's partnership with the Maasai community confers on Pikolinos a strong sense of social purpose, integrity, and legitimacy, and contributes to Pikolinos socially acceptable reputation of doing "good" work in indigenous communities.

William, the Maasai community representative in the partnership with the MNC, travelled the world promoting the Maasai product line and telling the story of his community. This exposure earned accolades for Pikolinos. For instance, in 2011, Pikolinos was inducted as a member of the United Nations Global Compact. This also improved the legitimacy claim from the MNC's perspective. Pikolinos's vice president acknowledged, "when we came to Kenya and saw the impact of the sandals, we decided to push hard from our end." Accordingly, the community may have a socially legitimate claim; that is, it is socially desirable and appropriate to focus on education and other services that are able to provide a community with income. A young Maasai woman, Janet, expresses the value of the partnership: "Before Pikolinos came, the women were totally dependent on the men, but now they are independent and can pay school fees, buy food, etc." Table 1 provides additional evidence of the transition to the secondary stakeholder classification.

The Pikolinos Group was also able to see the synergetic benefits of the collaboration, and that gave the Maasai community not just normative power, but utilitarian power as well (Etzioni 1964, 1988). The Maasai community brought something tangible to the table: enhanced brand recognition (normative power) and an additional revenue stream (utilitarian power). The additional revenue stream created by the Maasai product line was critical to the Maasai community, but inconsequential to Pikolinos, thus limiting its utilitarian power. The volumes were relatively low and miniscule in comparison with Pikolinos's gross sales. In terms of their legitimacy, Pikolinos was able to see the gravity of the community's condition as well as the impact of the project.

The Maasai community's level of legitimacy gained currency from being a mere moral claim to an *"at-risk status"* or *exchange* claim. Upon espousal of the Maasai–Pikolinos Project, the Pikolinos Group travelled to Maasai Mara, Kenya once a year, and they were able to witness the urgency of the situation firsthand. Being cognizant of the fast-paced nature of their fashion industry, they partnered with an NGO to develop the entrepreneurial skills of the community (Table 1).

Mitchell et al. (1997) assert that stakeholder attributes should be dynamic, not static. As a non-stakeholder, the Maasai possessed a moral claim that lent it some legitimacy;

Table 1 Stakeholder development process—attributes as a secondary stakeholder

Stakeholder attributes	Evidence of secondary stakeholder classification
Power	"So the women worked with the designers and the Pikolinos accepted the samples. So, Rosa landed the contract. Thereafter, we got an order of about 700 sandals."—William Kikanae
	"Our initial thought was this was going to be a small social project… We featured our first 2010 Maasai collection in our company-owned stores…"—Juan Peran Bazan, vice president, Pikolinos Group
	"In this industry no product line lasts forever. That is why we are not only keen on our collaboration on the Maasai–Pikolinos Project but also on developing the entrepreneurial skills of the community…Five years from now my hope is that the Maasai community will not need me."—Juan Peran Bazan, vice president, Pikolinos Group
	OCTOBER 2011: Pikolinos Group Nomination for the Global Fashion Awards in New York, in the category of sustainable brand for the project with the Maasai community. These awards are organized by the prestigious agency WSGN, specializing in style and trend research, market analysis, and consumer behavior, for clothing industries, style, design and retail sale.—ADCAM Presentation
Legitimacy	This empowerment project allows women from this community to earn a fair wage for the first time ever, which is something that only men have been entitled to do in many places in Africa.—ADCAM Presentation
Urgency	The United Nations has declared the Maasai tribe in danger of extinction.—ADCAM Presentation

moreover, given the cultural and geographical distance between Pikolinos and the Maasai community, that position was, at best, tenuous. Nevertheless, upon adopting the Maasai–Pikolinos Project as a social project (and enhancing social legitimacy), the Pikolinos Group was able to bridge the distance between the parties. As stated earlier, the contribution of the legitimacy attribute to stakeholder salience depends upon interaction with the other two attributes: power and urgency (Mitchell et al. 1997). As a secondary stakeholder, the Maasai community possessed both normative power and some degree of utilitarian power, as well as urgency. The degree of all three attributes was stronger and more closely relatable to Pikolinos at this stage, in comparison with the non-stakeholder stage.

We also begin to identify William's conscientiousness and willingness to explore previously unidentified opportunities (i.e., entrepreneurial) that triggered a reciprocal acknowledgment and action between the Maasai community and Pikolinos. The information in Table 1 captures the extent to which the Maasai community possessed these stakeholder attributes (power, legitimacy, and urgency) when identified as a secondary stakeholder, with regard to Pikolinos.

Proposition 1a *An indigenous community can increase the level of its power, legitimacy, and urgency to a multinational corporation and transfer itself from a non-stakeholder to a secondary stakeholder, and this will be positively moderated by the entrepreneurial alertness of the indigenous community's leader.*

Transition to Primary Stakeholder

We now discuss our observations of the Maasai community's last transition to primary stakeholder status. A primary stakeholder is an entity who, by definition, significantly influences a firm's operations (Mitchell et al. 1997). Such stakeholders comprise employees, customers, suppliers, and governments, among others. Existing research suggests that primary stakeholders who possess great power, legitimacy, and urgency will influence the degree to which a firm is involved in CSR and other responsible behaviors (Agle et al. 1999). As depicted in the timeline (Fig. 1), a series of key events transitioned the Maasai community from secondary stakeholders to primary stakeholders (Table 2). We also observe William's catalytic role as he navigated this transition, which led to scaling up the Maasai–Pikolinos Project.

For instance, William, with the help of ADCAM, sourced the raw materials in the most cost-effective manner. To be considered a supplier rather than a social project, the Maasai community had to scale up its production and have its product lines marketed among all or most of Pikolinos's distribution channels, not just the Pikolinos company store. The enhanced volume of business increased the community's utilitarian power. After working with the community for

Table 2 Stakeholder development process—attributes as a primary stakeholder

Stakeholder attributes	Evidence of primary stakeholder classification
Power	"We had some challenges at the beginning. The beads come in various shades of any given color. So I told Rosa that we needed to supply all the material to the women in order to guarantee the quality and uniformity of the designs. Rosa said no problem…"—William Kikanae
	"ADCAM (Kenya) is registered as an NGO… So the treated leather is imported from Spain in the name of ADCAM, the beads are bought locally through ADCAM (Kenya) and then the women work on the leather and the semi-finished product is exported back to Spain. This process allows us to move raw materials into Kenya and out of Kenya without incurring excessive taxation and the benefits directly helps the women and the school project. As the director of ADCAM the leather comes in my name and we use my pin number at the Kenya Revenue Authority (KRA) to clear the imports and facilitate the exports. Pikolinos provide the treated leather and they receive the beaded leather. ADCAM handles everything else."—William Kikanae
	"In 2009, the first year of our collaboration, we had only three designs and worked with about twenty women artisans. We featured our first 2010 Maasai collection in our company-owned stores. We have since grown from three designs to twelve designs, and we are currently employing about 1600 women artisans."—Juan Peran Bazan, vice president, Pikolinos Group
	"I feel I can freely talk to the Pikolinos family. I meet them several times during the year. They treat me like family."—William Kikanae
	After achieving sustainable growth of production and the introduction of the Maasai sandal in the U.S. market, this year is expected to take another step in the diffusion of the project through various media events in Japan, to promote it in the Asian market.—ADCAM 2013 Annual Report
Legitimacy	The evolution level in the production has been very important, from 7850 pairs of sandals in 2011, to 11,000 pairs in the 2012 collection, and more than 25,000 pairs in 2013. For the fourth production already on its way since August for the Summer 2014 collection, the sandal is expected to maintain the same demand of the previous year, which is employing more than a thousand Maasai artisans.—ADCAM 2013 Annual Report
	This year also has greatly increased the complexity of the designs, with footwear models that require much more preparation by the artisans, both in complexity and in pieces. For the ADCAM team and the Maasai women, this is a sign of the confidence gained from the Pikolinos Group, through professionalism and demonstrated efficacy over the years.—ADCAM 2013 Annual Report
Urgency	More recently many "manyattas" have been closed down, including the one I grew up in. This forced ADCAM (Kenya) to purchase land and settle the displaced families since most of them are desperately poor and they had nowhere to go. If we did not offer them a place to live, many families would have been broken up. Now we have a permanent place for them since the title deed is in the name of ADCAM (Kenya).—Kikanae, Maasai Community Leader

several years, a strong bond developed between the community and Pikolinos. As the proximity between the Maasai community and Pikolinos increased, their normative power increased as well, giving them greater influence on the relationship. Juan, Pikolinos's vice president asserts,

> Earlier we had our designers come up with designs and the color combinations. This year you can imagine how big our trust is…we did not do even one color combination. We realized that our designers cannot come up with the kind of designs that the Maasai women can effortlessly put forth. The women did it perfectly because it is their eyes that are Africa.

William's sensitivity to his community's situation, i.e., being alert to entrepreneurial opportunities, enabled him to effectively utilize his resources to identify problem-solving opportunities, which we elaborate on in the next section. For instance, William's knowledge of the Maasai culture and history was particularly helpful during marketing and promotion tours across the globe. He was able to speak knowledgeably on issues plaguing his community from a historical perspective, as well as demonstrate the impact of the Maasai–Pikolinos partnership. He recounts:

> I was in Spain late last year. I visited the USA in January this year and I am scheduled to do a tour in Europe, Japan, and China during the summer. I will be touring from April until late June. It is important for me to do this in order to be the voice for my people. Besides modeling the Maasai sandals, I do give lectures on the Maasai culture as well as the impact of "The Maasai Project" on our community. Many people find the story more credible when the Maasai can tell their own story. In fact, I gave a lecture at the United Nations Gala Dinner in New York earlier this year. Such conferences and promotions create visibility for my community.

The Pikolinos Group realized the value of working with the community and the visibility it brought to their brand. They also realized that this tribe with a unique culture brought a distinct style that their European designers and other competitors could not match. Furthermore, William used his social networks not only to facilitate the project's operations, but also to gain acceptance and support from the local leaders, politicians, bureaucrats, and other powerful holders of political capital and other resources.

Proposition 1b *An indigenous community can increase the level of its power, legitimacy, and urgency to a multinational corporation and transfer itself from a secondary stakeholder to a primary stakeholder, and this will be positively moderated by the entrepreneurial alertness of the indigenous community's leader.*

In analyzing our data, it became increasingly apparent that William's role was integral to the community's transition from a non-stakeholder to a full partner and primary stakeholder. Thus, we sought to theoretically and analytically explore William's facilitation of the community's partnership. The next section expands on the entrepreneurial alertness theoretical perspective that explicates this transition, followed by an analysis of our findings that support the development of testable propositions.

Entrepreneurial Alertness Theory

Initial data analysis suggested that we consider entrepreneurial alertness, a driver of entrepreneurial opportunity identification, as the mechanism through which this stakeholder transition occurs (Gaglio and Katz 2001). Kirzner (1973, 1979, 1985) introduced the theory of entrepreneurial alertness, which purports that entrepreneurs are more alert to new opportunities and thus use information differently than "non-entrepreneurs" would. Particularly, it illuminates the rationale that certain individuals have the ability to identify opportunities that are overlooked by others (Kirzner 1979). These individuals have an "antenna" that permits the recognition of opportunity gaps with limited clues, and they are constantly seeking new opportunities through their interaction with their surroundings.

Entrepreneurial alertness is a critical concept embedded within the growing literature on entrepreneurial opportunity identification. Prior research has observed that possessing such distinctive perceptual and information-processing skills cognitively drives the opportunity identification process (Gaglio and Katz 2001; Baron 2006). The entrepreneurial alertness theoretical perspective suggests that the ability to identify viable business opportunities is unique to certain individuals; moreover, it is an important characteristic of a successful entrepreneurial leader (Ardichvili et al. 2003; Short et al. 2010). Following previous studies, we define entrepreneurial alertness as "a propensity to notice and be sensitive to information about objects, incidents, and patterns of behavior in the environment, with special sensitivity to maker and user problems, unmet needs and interests, and novel combinations of resources" (Ardichvili et al. 2003, p. 113).

Entrepreneurial alertness enables individuals to scan and organize information from various domains of knowledge that is relevant to the progression of new opportunities (Gaglio and Katz 2001). This alertness focuses on the behaviors and characteristics of those who discover opportunities (Short et al. 2010). The factors that nurture entrepreneurial alertness are essential to our understanding of how William, the Maasai community leader, can identify opportunities that have long been overlooked by others. Prior research on entrepreneurial alertness theory highlights the importance

of personality traits (Tang et al. 2012), prior knowledge and experience (Shane 2000), and social networks (Hills et al. 1997) in increasing the likelihood of being alert to entrepreneurial opportunities. In considering the transition between stakeholder categories, our study analyzes these three key antecedents and the resultant entrepreneurial alertness (Ardichvili et al. 2003) that facilitate the stakeholder transition occurrence. We further discuss these antecedents.

Exploring the Antecedents of Entrepreneurial Alertness

Personality Traits

Although prior research (Shaver and Scott 1991) has not determined any distinct personality traits that differentiate entrepreneurs from other types of individuals, Tang et al. (2012) note that personality differences such as the individual's disposition can influence entrepreneurial alertness. Perhaps not surprisingly, much evidence highlights the role that optimism plays in entrepreneurs (Ucbasaran et al. 2010; Trevelyan 2008). Entrepreneurs tend to have a "glass-half-full" perspective, and they envision a successful outcome as being more possible than it probably realistically is. This is likely due to how the entrepreneurs perceive their abilities, or self-efficacy. Ardichvili et al. (2003) discuss the relationship between entrepreneurial optimism and self-efficacy, and Shane and Venkataraman (2000) contend that self-efficacy is a personality trait that influences the likelihood of engaging in entrepreneurial endeavors.

Ardichvili et al. (2003) also identify creativity as another important personality trait related to entrepreneurial alertness. The very essence of entrepreneurship deals with the discovery and exploitation of profitable opportunities. Thus, identifying and/or developing novel and useful ideas remains critical to successful entrepreneurial outcomes, and Ward (2004) acknowledges that researchers have been exploring the connections between creativity and entrepreneurship for some time.

Our data suggest that William's creativity and optimism are paramount as he navigates numerous obstacles over the years before the realization of the Maasai community's primary stakeholder status (Table 3). Creativity, which is associated with entrepreneurial alertness, is necessary for William to break out of the mold, considering the limited resources that were available to him (Ardichvili et al. 2003). He discussed one of his initial initiatives to support the women of this community:

> I started getting concerned about the women's lack of basic budgeting skills. There are months of low seasons when we do not sell any crafts. Often the women would use all their money before the low season. So, I decided to teach them about basic budgeting. So I asked the women to contribute 20% to invest in buying cows. Now you have to understand that 20% of KSH 200 or KSH 500 is very little money and that cannot buy a cow. So I negotiated with some traders to allow us to buy cows on installments.

William can also be described as an extremely optimistic individual who chooses to live life with a positive disposition. The case shows William's consistent optimism trail as he navigates numerous obstacles that enable him to foresee a successful outcome even when the odds were stacked against him. He recounts his thoughts after discussions for a potential collaboration that ultimately did not work out: "I was happy…because I met them and they were interested in my story. I got to share with them my dream. To me it was

Table 3 William Ole Pere Kikanae's personality traits. *Source*: William Kikanae, Maasai Community Leader

Optimism	Creativity and resourcefulness
Once I shared with a fellow warrior, a Moran, an age mate, about my dream. I told him that one day I will travel abroad and bring back great help to my community. My desire to go abroad was not driven by a need to go and see the beautiful buildings and the nice life but a deep desire to bring help to our community…	I also started working with women in our clan. There were about 31 women from my clan. I told them the first step to bettering our life is to build a school, but right now, I am too poor to do that. So, I said that what we will do is to take the small kids and train them under the tree. We called it the "Lesson Tree." I was more concerned about the little children because they were too young to trek across the Mara to a distant school because of the wildlife…
My dream was to make education possible for Maasai children irrespective of their background.…	I was also concerned about the low seasons when we received no visitors at the Mara
My friends asked me, "Are you crazy. You do not even know where abroad is. How are you going to get there?" But, I felt I needed to resign to pursue my dream. I did not have much but I had my dreams… they (speaking of the dreams) convinced me	I told a fellow warrior that one day I will travel abroad and bring back great help to my community. I knew going abroad was not for an immediate event but something in the future. So I went back to the "Manyatta" and helped my community to organize themselves
I never missed an opportunity to talk to them about my dream for a school and women empowerment	The guests would come and enjoy lessons on Maasai culture and cultural dance. They would also buy our crafts
I share my story but I did not succeed in getting somebody to fund our projects. Rosa told me not to lose hope, that she would help me for sure	At the same time at the *Manyatta* I started organizing the women to start a micro-credit system. So, we decided to give about 20% of all sales to the community account. The whole idea was that even if one family does make a sale they still received shares from the sales made by other community members

important to share my story and my dreams. It made me feel alive and happy." This resilient characteristic contributes to his entrepreneurial alertness development, as we see from the following quote:

> Seeing my mother's struggles caused me to think more about the plight of Maasai women. I felt that if my mother owned her own cows she could sell them and help me further my education. So from the very early age, I decided that I would one day make it possible for Maasai children from poor families to get an education.

William continues to nurture his dream despite setbacks, even enduring ridicule at times.

As Table 3 illustrates, his leadership and proactive nature are reinforced by his optimism and creativity.

Proposition 2a *The personality traits, such as creativity and optimism, of an indigenous community leader are positively associated with the development of the leader's entrepreneurial alertness.*

Prior Knowledge and Experience

Narratives from multiple interviews in our case study suggest that two additional factors—(1) prior knowledge and experience as well as (2) social networks—were critical in helping William to discover opportunities. Shane (2000) asserts that the ability to discover entrepreneurial opportunities is dependent on the individual's prior knowledge. He notes that prior knowledge that resides within individuals influences their connection with and awareness of specific ideas; that is, not everyone identifies a potential entrepreneurial opportunity as such when the opportunity is first encountered (Kirzner 1997). Practical wisdom suggests that prior experience with entrepreneurial activities influences one's ability to detect and be receptive to future potential opportunities. Existing research on pattern recognition reinforces the notion that cognitive frameworks that reflect expertise and learning are developed through prior familiarity, and these frameworks enable individuals to make connections between events that appear to be independent. For example, Baron and Ensley (2006) compared business opportunity prototypes of first time and experienced entrepreneurs. In their study, the cognitive representation of the essential nature of opportunities from the experienced entrepreneurs was more clearly defined, richer in content, and more relevant to elements associated with operating a new venture than was the case for the first-time entrepreneurs.

William Kikanae had prior knowledge and experience that enabled him to make the necessary connections to establish the partnership with Pikolinos as well as sustain it. In broad terms, an opportunity may be the chance to meet a market need (or interest or want) through a creative combination of resources to deliver superior value (Schumpeter 1934; Kirzner 1973; Casson 1982). William was also seeking out experiences that enabled him to later identify entrepreneurial opportunities, which may appear as an "imprecisely defined market need, or underemployed resources or capabilities" (Ardichvili et al. 2003, p. 108). He notes,

> I got interested in learning more and more about our culture in order to share this with the tourists. So I talked to the elders in the Village in order to learn more and more about our culture. I was very successful. Soon after, we started receiving visitors at the "Manyatta" (Maasai home). Soon afterward, I got a job as a park ranger and I worked for just a couple of months, then I resigned. I then became a tour guide at Mara. I taught the tourists about the Maasai culture and our way of life. I also inquired of them where they came from. I never missed an opportunity to talk them about my dream for a school and women empowerment.

Prospective customers may or may not be able to articulate their needs, interests, or problems (Von Hippel 1994). In this regard, William taught himself English because he believed it was a skill he needed to know if he was going to help his community in any significant way in the future.

When William assumed a leadership role at a young age, he progressively built on his knowledge and experience as he constantly searched for and discovered new opportunities and potential partners for his dreams and aspirations for his community. As opportunities can be a range of phenomena that begins unformed and becomes more developed through time, William progressively developed his knowledge about the skills possessed by the women in his community that would benefit them.

> There were about 31 women from my clan. I told them the first step to bettering our life is to build a school. The whole community contributed a small percentage and we paid the teacher. After the success of the micro-finance system that we used to buy cows, I decided to start bringing people from other NGOs and other government organizations to help with training and other things.

Our data consistently revealed that William was able to acquire the relevant knowledge and exposure that helped to gain awareness of opportunities and propel his vision.

Proposition 2b *The prior experience and knowledge of an indigenous community leader are positively associated with the development of the leader's entrepreneurial alertness.*

Social Networks

Together with prior knowledge and experience, social networks are another critical element identified in the previous entrepreneurial alertness literature that can help an entrepreneurial leader to acquire relevant information to explore opportunities that are unseen by others. Granovetter's (1973) seminal work on social networks lends itself to better understanding how weak ties or open networks within relationship networks can serve as connectors or "bridges" to information that would have otherwise not been available. The weaker ties or the more open networks that an individual has, the more information one can access that he/she does not possess (Lin 1999). Specifically, Hills et al. (1997) noted that entrepreneurs with extended networks are able to identify significantly more opportunities than less-networked (or primarily closed networked) entrepreneurs. In a study on information technology entrepreneurs, Singh et al. (1999) found that network size and number of weak ties were significantly and positively related to the number of ideas and opportunities recognized by entrepreneurs.

Therefore, social networking activities play a significant role in opportunity recognition. De Koning and Muzyka (1999) identified three distinct events—information gathering, thinking through talking, and resource assessing—that occur through social networks that contribute to the opportunity recognition process. In addition, Ozgen and Baron (2007) found that social information sources such as mentors and professional forum engagements help expose entrepreneurs to new venture possibilities.

Our data revealed that both closed and open networks play an important role in enabling William to make relevant connections for entrepreneurial opportunity recognition (Granovetter 1973) (Table 4). The closed network associations that reside primarily in his community are integral to both affirming and providing him with the necessary experience to enable him to venture outside of his community. This first starts with the foresight of understanding his community well enough to know that he needs the blessing of his Maasai townspeople for any local venture to be successful. He notes:

> Among the Maasai we still have our custom that even if you become the head of state or a very important person in the government you must follow customary law. If you want to send a child to live with a relative in order to get a better education or take the child to boarding school you must seek the permission of the elders…I involved the community leaders (councils, chiefs, elders, etc.…) so that they can see what we are doing in their community. After seeing the benefits of these projects, now even the old men bless me. We now enjoy the support of the whole community.

William also finesses the dynamics within the community before he ventures outside. One can argue that he gains the confidence and know how to engage with external entities from having been successful within his community first.

There is adequate support from the network literature that the nature of social interactions that occur in open networks can aid in opportunity recognition (De Koning and Muzyka 1999). William sought connections outside his community. He participates in information gathering, thinking through talking, and resource assessing, which are important in open network associations (De Koning and Muzyka 1999).

> I spoke to the various hotels, tour operators and holiday resorts to bring their guests to the Maasai village after game drives. I became a public relation person for my community…even the politicians come here and bless our projects…they appreciate a lot. We have the

Table 4 William Ole Pere Kikanae's social networks. *Source*: William

Closed Networks	Open Networks
All members of the family help the women either directly with the beading or indirectly by taking the household chores off their hands. The children understand they need school fee, clothing, and food that the beading work provides. The men are also supportive because the women are very helpful in meeting the family budget…	It was a very unique opportunity. So when the tourists visited the village we sold our crafts to them, shared about our culture, and then took them to the "Lesson Tree." Many visitors got very interested in the "Lesson Tree." They taught the children English. They spoke in English and the children spoke in Maa (Maasai language). The children began to speak a little bit of English. Many visitors brought pencils, exercise books…one of the guests, a great friend of mine from Canada … I lost his contact. He bought us chairs and tables for the kids, a blackboard, chalk…we did not have these things…
So we contracted one teacher. The whole community contributed a small percentage and we paid the teacher. This worked well for us…	Rosa came and lived with our people for three years, long before we started the school and before we started working with Pikolinos. She touched our hearts. That is enough. We trust Rosa. If Rosa says that somebody is good, we trust that person…
We used the community money for emergencies. The money belonged to the whole community. So if people are sick we can take the person to hospital, if there is a very bright child and the parents are very poor we can help with a few things… like transport, buying basic things needed for school but not the entire school fee…we also help families with basic food items if they do not have anything to eat…	
When they finished the production and I went to pay them I involved the community leaders (councils, chiefs, elders, etc.…) so that they can see what we are doing in their community…	
After seeing the benefits of these projects, now even the old men bless me. We now enjoy the support of the whole community…	

support of our county governor and even the Member of Parliament. I have asked them to support women projects because the Maasai women are still relatively left behind in comparison to other women around the world.

As previously mentioned, open network associations, such as those involving mentoring, are important in connecting and exposing entrepreneurs to new opportunities (Ozgen and Baron 2007). ADCAM has been an instrumental mentor to William, and William had taken better advantage of the NGO's assistance than probably what most indigenous communities have. Table 4 shows that although William's closed networks were important and enabled the bonding that occurred within the Maasai community, it was his open networks that increased his entrepreneurial alertness and facilitated the stakeholder transition process.

Proposition 2c *The social networks of an indigenous community leader are positively associated with the development of the leader's entrepreneurial alertness.*

The propositions discussed above illustrate the entrepreneurial alertness development of William, the indigenous community leader, by exploring how he was able to utilize the antecedents of entrepreneurial alertness (personality traits, prior knowledge and experience, and social networks) to facilitate his awareness of—and response to—challenges plaguing his community, resulting in the stakeholder transition of the Maasai community. He recounted numerous occurrences that reflect his unique ability to absorb information that can later be utilized for business opportunity. In one example, he states:

> So I decided to involve the women of my clan and teach them about what I was learning from the radio. So I made them a schedule to help them plan their work. We met for two to three hours every Wednesday evening.

In particular, he spoke of the investment strategies that he learned and communicated to the community women:

> We also advise them to sell some of their cows before the dry seasons in order to reduce risk of losing the cows to drought. Buying calves and selling them upon maturity gives them better returns than banks.

Beyond his ability to absorb information, William was especially drawn to seeking opportunities that can address problems that plagued his community. He was especially drawn toward improving conditions for the children within the community, noting that:

> I was more concerned about the little children because they were too young to trek across the Mara to a distant

school because of the wildlife. If we waited until the children were older it becomes more difficult for them to learn.

We observe additional evidence of William's sensitivity to user problems in Table 5, which includes more observations of William's entrepreneurial alertness.

In summary, Propositions 1a and 1b captured the increasing emergence of the stakeholder attributes (power, legitimacy, and urgency) at each transition stage, and Propositions 2a, 2b, and 2c elaborated on the community leader's entrepreneurial alertness antecedents that ultimately led to the development of his entrepreneurial alertness. Figure 2 summarizes the strategies that William employed to develop entrepreneurial alertness in the first transition process—from non-stakeholder to secondary stakeholder categorization (antecedents of entrepreneurial alertness[1]) and those he used to develop entrepreneurial alertness during the transition from secondary stakeholder to primary stakeholder categorization (antecedents of entrepreneurial alertness[2]). The framework illustrates the antecedents of entrepreneurial alertness that collectively led to the development of entrepreneurial alertness, which facilitated the Maasai community stakeholder transition from non-stakeholder to secondary stakeholder and finally to primary stakeholder. In addition to the aforementioned intangible outcomes of the partnership as it progressed, we also observe the tangible outcomes of the partnership at each stakeholder classification.

Discussion

Research exists on the CSR initiatives by corporations on BoP communities. While many initiatives have been suggested and implemented, few have journeyed the process from the other side, whereby an indigenous community deep in poverty coalesces itself to a position of sustainability by its own initiative. The analyzing of the data through constructivist grounded theory led us to two theoretical perspectives: stakeholder theory and entrepreneurial alertness theory. In the traditional stakeholder management research stream, the focus has almost solely concentrated on the firm's perspectives and the static status of a stakeholder (e.g., Agle et al. 1999; Eesley and Lenox 2006; Sawyer and Gomez 2008). In this study, we observed how a community integrates its social needs with the business interests of a firm. The case study represents the symbiotic partnership that can occur between an indigenous community and an MNC with findings that can have significant contributions to stakeholder management theory, BoP, and the CSR literature.

The aforementioned symbiotic partnership evolved in four data collection stages according to our observations, which

Table 5 William Ole Pere Kikanae's entrepreneurial alertness. *Source*: William Kikanae, Maasai Community Leader (unless stated otherwise)

Propensity to notice and be sensitive to information	Special sensitivity to maker and user problems
From this radio program we learned about a women's group in Western Kenya who were engaged in small businesses,… They had what is called "Merry-Go-Around". That was the first time I heard of such a concept	William is a leader…but that was not enough for me. When he told me the story of how his mother fell sick and he had to drop out of school to hawk Maasai artifacts in order to take care of her medical expenses and provide for the family…that story touched my heart. He has a deep commitment for the plight of Maasai women and children…He wanted to build a school for the children and empower the Maasai women through trade and commerce.—Rosa Escandell, president & founder of ADCAM, International
I had a small radio and I learnt a lot from different programs. I particularly like one development program that featured on Wednesday evenings, *"maendeleo ya wanawake" (Development for Women)*. So I decided to involve the women of my clan and teach them about what I was learning from the radio	William is a very special Maasai. He understands the worth of the women. The project was never about making the women rich and corrupting their lifestyle or traditional values. It was about giving the women some financial independence so that they can provide a better for the children and give them more opportunities. Growing up poor, it was William's mother who ensured that he got an education. When she felt sick he realized that if his mother had more resources he would go far with his education. So he worked hard to empower the women.—Juan Peran Bazan, vice president, Pikolinos Group
So I decided to involve the women of my clan and teach them about what I was learning from the radio. So I made them a schedule to help them plan their work. We met for two–three hours every Wednesday evening	So I went back to the "Manyatta" and helped my community to organize themselves. I spoke to the various hotels, tour operators and holiday resorts to bring their guests to the Maasai village after game drives. I became a public relation person for my community
I followed this group for several years. Within a few years every member had a decent home, reasonably furnished and the group owned a bus that they used as a taxi from Western Kenya to Nairobi. All these from a group of women who earned very little may be about KSH. 100–200 a day (US $ 1.00–2.00 per day)… That is where we got the idea for buying the cows as a community	I was more concerned about the little children because they were too young to trek across the Mara to a distant school because of the wildlife. If we waited until the children were older it becomes more difficult for them to learn
The Maasai people say that the eyes that travel is more intelligent. So I learn a lot about other cultures when I travel abroad	For instance, I got the district government (the district commissioner) to construct a semipermanent structure, a kiosk, for our Maasai women to sell their crafts
Our women know how to do very good beadwork but they are not good with fine finishing. Finishing is very important in the fashion world	When Rosa and Cristina came back they asked if I could write and tell about my story. I said…of course I can write… The first thing I asked for is a school since I know that education is the key to a better life. Secondly, I said that I would like to help the women
We also advise them to sell some of their cows before the dry seasons in order to reduce risk of losing the cows to drought. Buying calves and selling them upon maturity gives them better returns than banks	

we captured in the timeline (Fig. 1) illustrated in the Case Overview. The initial encounter between the firm and the Maasai community would not have occurred without the community leadership's sensitivity and foresight to make sense of events that created opportunities. Entrepreneurial alertness, in this regard, is a necessary condition for the success of the opportunity identification triad: recognition, evaluation, and development. The community was able to quickly marshal itself and respond when given an opportunity. The community was able to produce high-quality shoes, albeit limited in collection, which caught the attention of the MNC, and made them realize that the indigenous community had a valuable skill set. The success of this limited shoe collection further cemented the Maasai community's value from the perspective of the MNC, which evolved after its fulfillment of the first limited order of shoes. We deduced this to be the first step in the stakeholder transformation process.

In the second stage, after the Maasai community had established a secondary stakeholder status with Pikolinos, we observed that entrepreneurial alertness was further utilized to propel the Maasai community to primary stakeholder status. As mentioned, an opportunity can be the mechanism through which a market need (or interest or want) is met, through a creative combination of resources, to deliver superior value (Schumpeter 1934; Kirzner 1973; Casson 1982). When a community has possessed the ability to recognize and evaluate potential opportunities, it will be more likely to find relevant skills to develop such opportunities, which may eventually enhance the salience of its status to a focal firm. The community members realized and grew confident that they had skills that could enhance their salience to the focal firm. The community's representative started to actively travel overseas to promote the outcomes of the partnership with the MNC and also sought to create a supply chain for the production process within the Maasai community, including establishing a local entity for customs purposes, and forging relationships with politicians. At the same time, the community's *power*, *legitimacy*, and *urgency* increased as the MNC was awarded a prestigious award for working with a UN-recognized indigenous tribe.

In the third stage, the community has attained primary stakeholder status, as evidenced by the MNC's expansion of the product line and the total autonomy given to the community in crafting the final product. The community representative is also actively involved in making critical decisions regarding the future of the collaboration, and he becomes the brand ambassador for the collaboration, representing both his community and the MNC in the fashion world. The MNC and its intermediary (ADCAM) are also deeply entrenched in the community as they find ways to further ensure that the community has a sustainable future if the current fashion idea runs its course. At this stage, the *power*, *legitimacy*, and *urgency* of the Maasai community were now considered salient to Pikolinos, which was indicative of their primary stakeholder status.
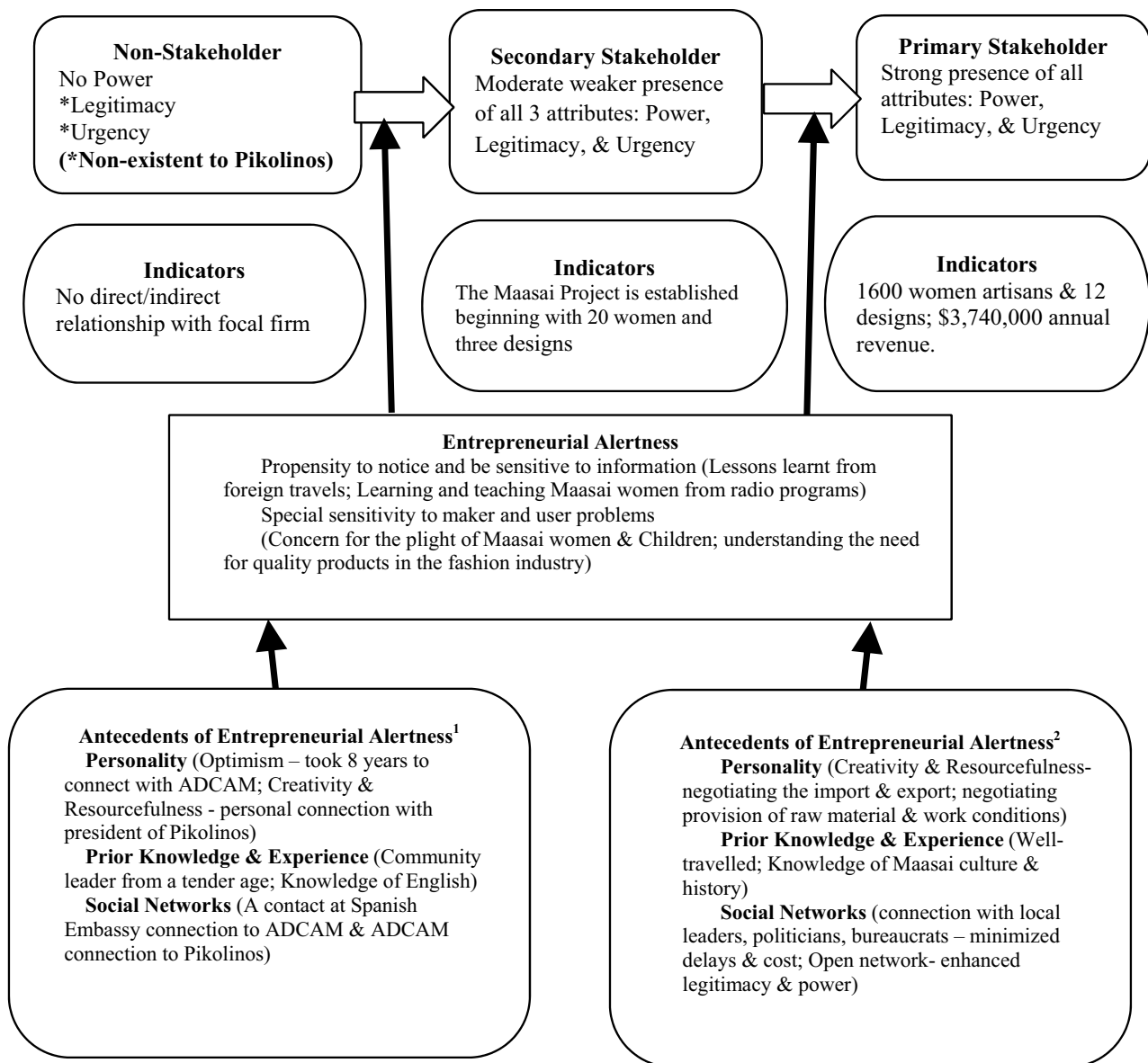
Fig. 2 Transition of stakeholder characterization influenced by entrepreneurial alertness

As the partnership revealed an increasing demonstration of the stakeholder attributes, we also observed how partnering with an indigenous community can also result in a win–win outcome that is beneficial to the partnership entities, and the common good. In addition to the financial independence, improved living conditions, and increased opportunities that the indigenous community experienced, Pikolinos also acknowledged both tangible and intangible benefits that underscored the social legitimacy of the partnership. Specifically, the partnership enhanced the reputational status, brand image, and revenue streams of the MNC.

Theoretical and Practical Implications

Our research has theoretical and practical implications. First, as mentioned, a major theoretical contribution of this study is that we illustrated in the stakeholder theory that it is possible for a less significant stakeholder to transition itself to a salient stakeholder for an MNC. Previously, stakeholder research had only studied how a stakeholder can directly or indirectly impact a firm's strategy or performance, while the underlying assumption is that the stakeholder's status is static. However, our study demonstrates that a more dynamic view of the stakeholder approach is warranted, since at

different times or in different contexts, the role or salience of a stakeholder to a firm can be changed if sufficient initiatives were made by the stakeholder. Such a dynamic view of stakeholders indicates a new venue for advancing this research stream. Specifically, with regard to CSR studies, it signals a new approach that can be adopted by non- or secondary stakeholders, such as NGOs or other indigenous communities, on how to raise the level of its power and legitimacy in order to advance social or environmental agendas.

In this study, we aim to link the stakeholder and entrepreneurial alertness theoretical perspectives. Specifically, we investigate the antecedents of entrepreneurial alertness as well as the resultant entrepreneurial alertness demonstrated by an indigenous community's leader. We present a unique case of how a non-stakeholder can transition to a primary stakeholder through the leader's entrepreneurial alertness, which facilitated opportunity identification. We study this phenomenon to develop our understanding of how marginalized societies can strengthen their links to organizations through partnership collaborations. Integrating this perspective in the stakeholder framework, we have demonstrated that indigenous communities can effectively initiate potential ventures and/or partnerships by leveraging existing knowledge and social networks and mobilizing marketable skills within the community.

In essence, this research presents an exemplar illustration of how base of the pyramid communities can become essential stakeholders of international businesses. Specifically, the case depicts the process through which a non-stakeholder (the Maasai community) transitioned from being unknown and irrelevant to an MNC to being a key contributor of the MNC's value creation process, incorporating the Maasai community's capabilities. The entrepreneurial efforts of the indigenous community's leader facilitated this transition and resulted in the indigenous community engaging a powerful MNC in a mutually beneficial partnership.

Conclusion and Future Directions

In recent years, both researchers and practitioners have lauded the increased utilization of cross-sector collaborations (e.g., between businesses and indigenous communities) as a means of employing CSR to address societal challenges. Although such partnerships are ideally positioned as mutually beneficial collaborations, the outcomes of these engagements usually result in the firm imposing their desired operations, with minimal consideration of the non-stakeholder's inputs and knowledge (Murphy and Arenas 2010). Prior research asserts that indigenous communities need to be perceived as a legitimate stakeholder, possessing power, legitimacy, and urgency in order to firmly represent their interests within partnerships

involving powerful external entities (Austin 2000). In this regard, scholars have long been arguing for an integrative approach that combines a company's business mission with the genuine interest of specific stakeholders and emphasizes their mutual obligations and benefits (Banerjee 2008; Garriga and Mele 2004). Our study sought to fill this gap by studying an indigenous community's partnership with an international MNC.

Stakeholders are considered the pulse of organizations, especially primary stakeholders who help shape policy and hold leadership accountable. Rarely investigated is the process of how stakeholders with no power can transform and evolve to a level of prominence, particularly when the stakeholder is an indigenous tribe without any power or legitimate claim on the organization. Based on our observations from the data (interviews with the community, Pikolinos, and archival reports), there was an evolving pattern of the community negotiating the stakeholder process, as evidenced by the social legitimacy, urgency, and power that grew in its partnership with the MNC.

The stakeholder transformation process was ignited by the entrepreneurship alertness of the community representative (Fig. 2). The ability to utilize opportunities and coordinate the community to meet the expectations of the MNC was integral in the transition from non-stakeholder to secondary stakeholder and from secondary stakeholder to primary stakeholder. Future research could explore how entrepreneurial alertness might change over the course of a partnership, especially one that reveals a stakeholder transition. Would the antecedents leading to entrepreneurial alertness be dependent on time or other dynamic factors? Could the factors themselves be interdependent? The literature would benefit from further explorations of how entrepreneurship may facilitate the stakeholder transition process.

This paper offers a window into the behavior that underprivileged BoP communities can engage into navigate their way out of poverty as well as make their voices heard in a complex global world. We see a great opportunity here for other researchers interested in investigating entrepreneurial alertness and its transformative effects at the base of the pyramid. It also provides an opportunity to further understand CSR partnerships between MNCs and BoP communities. We believe this kind of research can inform BoP studies and provide useful information to the target communities that need strategies to climb out of poverty.

Appendix A

See Table 6.

Table 6 Interview and participant observation data

Data source	Data format	Duration
Data collection—Stage 1 (2011, Spain)		
Rosa Escandell, president and founder of ADCAM, International (NGO)	Interview	20 min
Data collection—Stage 2 (2012, Kenya)		
Rosa Escandell, president and founder of ADCAM, International (NGO)	Interview	30 min
Kikanae, Maasai community leader	Interview	30 min
Data collection—Stage 3 (2014, Kenya and Spain)		
Juan Peran Bazan, vice president of Pikolinos Group	Interview Marketing Presentation Kit	43 min
Rosa Escandell, president and founder of ADCAM, International (NGO)	Interview Annual Report for ADCAM (International)	1 h 39 min
Cristina Pérez Fortes, program coordinator of ADCAM, International (NGO)	Interview Interacted for 5 days at the Mara	1 h 40 min
Kikanae, Maasai community leader	Interviews (2)	3 h, 16 min
Pere, Maasai community member (male)	Interview	31 min
Maasai community elder	Interview	15 min
Janet, Maasai community member (female)	Interview	10 min
Maasai community members (group of Maasai women)	Interview	43 min
Liloe, Kikanae's wife	Interviews (2)	52 min, 11 min
Other types of participant observation		
Interaction with several Maasai women, community members–warriors, elders, youth & school children	Maasai Mara, Kenya	5 days
Interaction with Pikolinos and ADCAM	Alicante, Spain	5 days
Data collection—Stage 4 (2015, Kenya)		
Liloe, Kikanae's wife	Interview (2)	25 min; 10 min
Cristina Pérez Fortes, program coordinator of ADCAM, International (NGO)	Interview (2) interacted for 3 days at the Mara	11 min; 58 min
Cristina Pérez Fortes, program coordinator of ADCAM, International (NGO)	Telephone interview	40 min
Secondary data		
ADCAM International Annual Reports (2011–2015)	PDF files of annual reports	2 h
Pikolinos Group (presentation kits and promotional videos, Press coverage of events)	Videos, newspaper clips, audio clips, powerpoint presentation disk	2 h 45 min

Appendix B

See Table 7.

Table 7 Sample interview questions

Questions to William Ole Pere Kikanae

1. You helped to spearhead "The Maasai Project" and you have been a champion for the women in your community. Could you please share with us how you came about that role and how you came up with "The Maasai Project" idea?

2. What prepared you for your role as a community leader among your people and the voice and face of the Maasai community in the Pikolinos-Maasai Project?

3. Can you tell us how your relationship/experience has evolved in the past 7 years of the Maasai–Pikolinos Project?

4. How has the Maasai–Pikolinos Project impacted your life and that of the wider community and the Maasai culture? Can you give specific examples of the impact of Maasai–Pikolinos Project?

5. Can you tell us how your relationship/experience has evolved in the past 7 years of the Maasai–Pikolinos Project?

Questions to the Maasai Community

1. What role does William Ole Pere Kikanae play in your collaboration with Pikolinos? Do you feel he represents your community?

2. Do you think William Ole Pere Kikanae is a good leader? If yes, what qualities make him a good leader?

3. How has the Maasai–Pikolinos Project impacted your life and that of the wider community and the Maasai culture?

4. Can you tell us how your relationship/experience has evolved in the past 7 years of the Maasai–Pikolinos Project?

5. How has the Maasai–Pikolinos Project impacted your culture in any way?

Table 7 continued

Questions to Pikolinos (MNC) and ADCAM (International)

1. When and how did you meet the Maasai community?

2. What is your role in this partnership?

3. Why did you decide to be part of this partnership? What is the connection between a Spanish firm/NGO and a tribal community in Kenya?

4. What role does William Ole Pere Kikanae play in your collaboration with the Maasai tribe?

5. William Ole Pere Kikanae is the voice and face of the Maasai community in the Maasai–Pikolinos Project? What qualities qualify him to play this role?

Appendix C

See Table 8.

Table 8 Category relationships generated through selective coding

Stakeholder attributes	Parent nodes	Child nodes
Attribute: stakeholder relationship (repeated for non-stakeholder, secondary stakeholder, and primary stakeholder stages)	Power	Utilitarian power: Material means (goods, services or financial resources) for control purposes, e.g., women artisans and revenue stream
		Symbols of prestige and esteem or social symbols of love and acceptance, e.g., Pikolinos' induction as a member of the United Nations Global Compact
	Legitimacy	
	Urgency	
Entrepreneurial alertness attributes	Parent nodes	Child nodes
Entrepreneurial alertness	Propensity to notice and be sensitive to information	
	Special sensitivity to maker and user problems	
	Prior knowledge and experience	
	Social networks	Closed network
		Open network
	Personality traits	Optimism
		Creativity

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