



Rivar

REVISTA IBEROAMERICANA DE
VITICULTURA, AGROINDUSTRIA
Y RURALIDAD

Editada por el Instituto de Estudios Avanzados
Universidad de Santiago de Chile

GENERAL REVIEW OF THEORETICAL AND EMPIRICAL LITERATURE ON ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND ANCESTRAL KNOWLEDGE



*Revisión general de la literatura teórica y empírica sobre
emprendimiento y conocimientos ancestrales*
*Revisão geral da literatura teórica e empírica sobre
empreendedorismo e conhecimento ancestral*

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Volumen 13, número 39, 265-283, abril 2026

ISSN 0719-4994

Review

<https://doi.org/10.35588/823qyb35>

Recibido

13 de marzo de 2025

Aceptado

30 de julio de 2025

Publicado

30 de abril de 2026

Financiamiento

La presente investigación fue financiada por el Fondo Nacional de Financiamiento para la Ciencia, la Tecnología y la Innovación Francisco José de Caldas, código 109261, contrato 156-2024, con el beneficio del llamado 948-2024, Orquídeas, Mujeres en Ciencia.

Cómo citar

Calderón Díaz, M.A., Ortiz Tinoco, S. y Melgarejo Molina, Z.A. (2026). General review of theoretical and empirical literature on entrepreneurship and ancestral knowledge. *RIVAR*, 13(39), 265-283. <https://doi.org/10.35588/823qyb35>

ABSTRACT

This research presents a review of the theoretical and empirical literature on ancestral knowledge and entrepreneurship. Its objective is to analyze the contributions made in this field from 1997 to 2025, providing information on entrepreneurship based on ancestral knowledge in Europe, Asia, Africa, Oceania, and the Americas, and illustrating its positive global impact. The methodology used consists of a systematic literature review in high-impact databases such as Scopus, Web of Science, and ScienceDirect. The results highlight the growing academic interest in the relationship between ancestral knowledge and entrepreneurship, emphasizing key sectors such as agriculture, tourism, and handicrafts. Additionally, case studies are identified, allowing for a better understanding of the dynamics and economic value of these business models. Finally, the challenges and criticisms associated with the application of conventional business models in indigenous contexts are discussed, underscoring the need for strategies adapted to each cultural reality. This analysis contributes to the debate on the valorization of ancestral knowledge in entrepreneurship and its role in building more inclusive and sustainable economies.

KEYWORDS

Ancestral knowledge, entrepreneurship, indigenous economy, social innovation, community development.

RESUMEN

Esta investigación presenta una revisión de la literatura teórica y empírica sobre saberes ancestrales y emprendimiento. Su objetivo es analizar los aportes realizados en esta temática desde 1997 hasta 2025, proporcionando información sobre emprendimientos basados en conocimientos ancestrales en Europa, Asia, África, Oceanía y América, e ilustrando su impacto positivo a nivel global. La metodología utilizada consiste en una revisión sistemática de literatura en bases de datos de alto impacto, como Scopus, Web of Science y ScienceDirect. Los resultados evidencian el creciente interés en la relación entre conocimiento ancestral y emprendimiento, destacando sectores clave como la agricultura, el turismo y la artesanía. Asimismo, se identifican estudios de caso que permiten comprender las dinámicas y el valor económico de estos modelos empresariales. Finalmente, se discuten los desafíos y críticas asociados a la aplicación de modelos empresariales convencionales en contextos indígenas, resaltando la necesidad de estrategias adaptadas a cada realidad cultural. Este análisis contribuye al debate sobre la valorización del conocimiento ancestral en el emprendimiento y su papel en la construcción de economías más inclusivas y sostenibles.

PALABRAS CLAVE

Conocimiento ancestral, emprendimiento, economía indígena, innovación social, desarrollo comunitario.

RESUMO

Esta pesquisa apresenta uma revisão da literatura teórica e empírica sobre conhecimentos ancestrais e empreendedorismo. Seu objetivo é analisar as contribuições feitas nessa temática de 1997 a 2025, fornecendo informações sobre empreendimentos baseados em conhecimentos ancestrais na Europa, Ásia, África, Oceania e América, e ilustrando seu impacto positivo em nível global. A metodologia utilizada consiste em uma revisão sistemática da literatura em bases de dados de alto impacto, como Scopus, Web of Science e ScienceDirect. Os resultados destacam o crescente interesse acadêmico na relação entre conhecimento ancestral e empreendedorismo, enfatizando setores-chave como a agricultura, o turismo e o artesanato. Além disso, são identificados estudos de caso que permitem uma melhor compreensão das dinâmicas e do valor econômico desses modelos empresariais. Por fim, discutem-se os desafios e críticas associados à aplicação de modelos empresariais convencionais em contextos indígenas, destacando a necessidade de estratégias adaptadas a cada realidade cultural. Essa análise contribui para o debate sobre a valorização do conhecimento ancestral no empreendedorismo e seu papel na construção de economias mais inclusivas e sustentáveis.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE

Conhecimento ancestral, empreendedorismo, economia indígena, inovação social, desenvolvimento comunitário.

Introduction

Traditional knowledge plays a crucial role in the modern economy by offering innovative and sustainable solutions to contemporary challenges. Rooted in generations of experience, ancestral knowledge encompasses agricultural techniques, conservation methods, and socio-economic structures that promote harmonious interactions with the environment (Capel, 2014). Beyond its intrinsic value, this knowledge has direct applications in entrepreneurship, particularly in the creation of sustainable business models that integrate cultural heritage with economic innovation.

Entrepreneurship based on traditional knowledge leverages indigenous knowledge to develop resource-efficient and community-driven business solutions. These ventures often align with principles of sustainability, resilience, and cultural preservation, providing economic opportunities while safeguarding heritage. In many cases, indigenous entrepreneurs use ancestral practices to create environmentally responsible businesses that contribute to both local economies and global sustainability goals (Cheteni and Umejesi, 2024). As a result, social cohesion is strengthened, and cultural appreciation is increased, further enhancing the resilience of communities.

Thus, the modern economy can greatly benefit from integrating valuable traditional knowledge with advanced technology, as the combination of ancestral knowledge with recent innovations can lead to more effective and adaptable solutions tailored to local needs (Capel, 2014). In this context, fostering dialogue and collaboration between different knowledge systems is essential for promoting sustainable development and equality.

However, traditional knowledge is often transmitted orally and through experiential learning, making it highly vulnerable to loss and misappropriation (Cheteni and Umejesi, 2024). This underscores the need for structured methods to safeguard and promote its proper use within entrepreneurship. To address this gap, this literature review explores entrepreneurship driven by ancestral knowledge, focusing on the intersection between traditional knowledge and business innovation. It examines key studies that highlight this relationship, analyzes theoretical and methodological frameworks commonly applied in the field, and investigates successful case studies from various regions to extract best practices and insights. Through a comprehensive review of existing literature, this study aims to underscore the potential of ancestral knowledge as a driving force for sustainable and culturally embedded entrepreneurial models.

Based on the literature reviewed and the objective of this study, we hypothesize that ancestral knowledge-based enterprises constitute a distinct and globally relevant model that challenges conventional business practices by integrating traditional cultural values and sustainability.

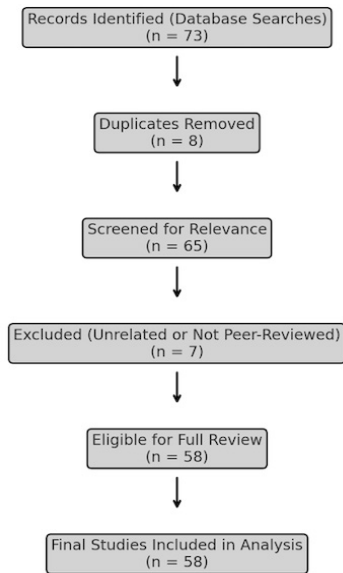
Methodology

The methodology employed for the comprehensive review of theoretical literature was based on a rigorous systematic approach to ensure the precise identification of significant studies published in various Q1, Q2, and Q3 journals. The reviewed articles primarily focus on the relationship between entrepreneurship and ancestral knowledge. To achieve this, a search was conducted in renowned academic databases known for their impact and multidisciplinary scope, including Scopus, Web of Science, and ScienceDirect. These platforms were selected for their capacity to register peer-reviewed scientific publications, thereby ensuring the integration of studies with solid theoretical and methodological foundations.

Specific inclusion and exclusion criteria were established to guarantee that the examined studies were truly relevant and up to date. Only texts addressing entrepreneurship in indigenous or traditional communities, the use of ancestral knowledge in business models, and the socioeconomic dynamics related to these processes were considered. Likewise, priority was given to case studies, systematic reviews, and empirical analyses that contributed to identifying success factors as well as challenges in implementing entrepreneurial initiatives based on traditional knowledge. Similarly, non-peer-reviewed documents were entirely discarded, along with many ethnographic studies that lacked any connection to economic development.

For the bibliographic review, a single structured search equation was used to enhance the identification of relevant studies across all selected databases. The search was conducted by combining key terms in English and employing Boolean operators to refine the results. The equation used was: ("indigenous knowledge" OR "traditional knowledge" OR "ancestral knowledge") AND ("entrepreneurship" OR "business development" OR "economic empowerment") AND ("case study" OR "success case" OR "best practice") in each case. This search equation was designed to select studies that approach ancestral knowledge from an economic and social development perspective, ensuring the inclusion of relevant works on the relationship between innovation, entrepreneurship, and cultural heritage. This search strategy facilitated the retrieval of academic texts, forming an extensive and representative database for analysis.

Figure 1. PRIMA flow diagram for study selection process
Figura 1. Diagrama de flujo PRIMA para el proceso de selección de estudios



Source: own elaboration. Fuente: elaboración propia.

Figure 1 presents the results of the article selection process. The search yielded a total of 73 articles, from which 65 unique references were retained after removing duplicates. These 65 studies were used to generate the word cloud, the annual scientific production graph, and the author analysis. Subsequently, 58 articles were selected for in-depth content analysis and results synthesis. The screening process followed a systematic approach, ensuring that only studies aligned with the research scope were included.

The final distribution of selected studies is detailed in Table 1, and the search equations used in different databases are presented in Table 2.

Table 1. Distribution of articles on entrepreneurship and ancestral knowledge in Scopus, Web of Science, and ScienceDirect (1997-2025)

Tabla 1. Distribución de artículos sobre emprendimiento y conocimiento ancestral en Scopus, Web of Science y ScienceDirect (1997-2025)

General search on entrepreneurship and ancestral knowledge	Number of articles					Year of consultation	
	Scopus	Web of Science	Science-Direct	Total	Without duplicates	First year of publication	Last year of publication
	20	12	41	73	65	1997	2025

Source: own elaboration. Fuente: elaboración propia.

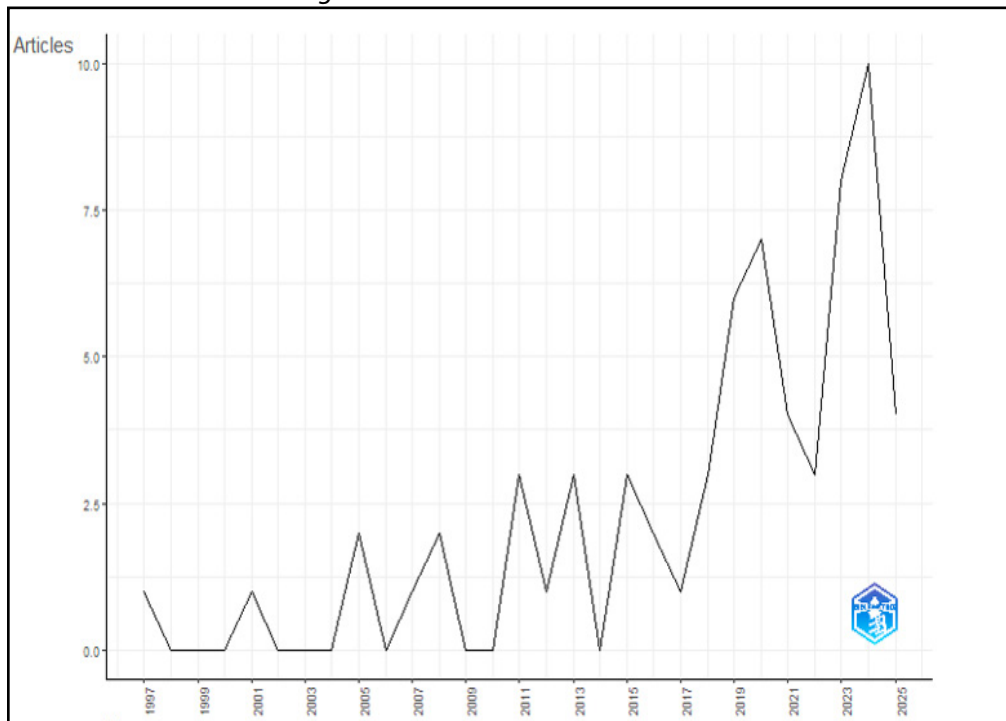
Table 2. Search equations used in Scopus, Web of Science, and ScienceDirect
Tabla 2. Ecuaciones de búsqueda utilizadas en Scopus, Web of Science y ScienceDirect

Database	Search Equation
Scopus	TITLE-ABS-KEY (("indigenous knowledge" OR "traditional knowledge" OR "ancestral knowledge") AND ("entrepreneurship" OR "business development" OR "economic empowerment") AND ("case study" OR "success story" OR "best practice"))
Web Of Science	ALL = (("indigenous knowledge" OR "traditional knowledge" OR "ancestral knowledge") AND ("entrepreneurship" OR "business development" OR "economic empowerment") AND ("case study" OR "success story" OR "best practice"))
ScienceDirect	"traditional knowledge" AND "economic empowerment" AND "case study"

Source: own elaboration. Fuente: elaboración propia.

Subsequently, based on the obtained results, a comprehensive bibliometric analysis was conducted using the Bibliometrix tool, with the primary objective of examining the complete and detailed evolution of scientific production related to entrepreneurship and ancestral knowledge. Following the searches, the total annual production of scientific publications was thoroughly analyzed. This was done to identify key trends in knowledge creation within this field, clearly highlighting the growing academic interest in the subject and detecting periods of heightened research activity. Likewise, a word cloud was generated using the most frequently occurring terms in the carefully selected articles, which significantly helped in identifying relevant ideas and fundamental research topics.

Figure 2. Annual scientific production
Figura 2. Producción científica anual



Source: own elaboration with Bibliometrix. Fuente: elaboración propia mediante Bibliometrix.

This emerging pattern in the literature underscores the growing academic and policy interest in understanding how ancestral knowledge contributes to sustainability-driven entrepreneurship. The prominence of terms such as “forest management” suggests that many entrepreneurial initiatives leveraging traditional knowledge are deeply tied to ecological conservation and resource stewardship. This highlights a critical aspect of entrepreneurship in indigenous and rural communities, where business practices are often designed not only for economic profitability but also to ensure environmental sustainability and long-term ecosystem balance.

Moreover, the significant presence of “gender” in the literature points to an important social dimension of entrepreneurship based on ancestral knowledge. Women in indigenous and rural communities often play a central role in the transmission of traditional knowledge, particularly in areas such as agriculture, herbal medicine, and artisanal production. The high frequency of this term suggests that researchers are increasingly exploring how gender dynamics shape entrepreneurial activities, influence knowledge preservation, and affect economic empowerment. This reinforces the need for inclusive policies that support female-led businesses and initiatives that integrate gender-sensitive approaches in the development of sustainable entrepreneurship models.

These insights from the word cloud analysis not only confirm the importance of sustainability and gender in ancestral entrepreneurship research but also suggest potential future research directions, such as examining the role of ancestral knowledge in climate resilience, biodiversity conservation, and the promotion of social equity through entrepreneurship.

Among the limitations of this methodology is that this literature review leaves out academic literature published in books especially on the difficulties and opportunities faced by indigenous entrepreneurship centres in different regions of the world.

Results

Concept of ancestral knowledge

Ancestral knowledge encompasses the ways of producing, distributing, and structuring business models, as well as past market strategies. In this context, ancestral knowledge, understood as the collective body of knowledge, experiences, and practices accumulated over generations within a community, represents a form of knowledge that, despite not always being documented or formally recognized, holds significant economic and social value (Obiero et al., 2023). Additionally, since ancestral knowledge is based on lived experience and practice, it closely resembles empirical knowledge, making it essential for individuals with the right skills, aptitudes, and circumstances to transform this knowledge into economic opportunities (Acs et al., 2013).

Furthermore, ancestral knowledge serves as a major source of innovation and meaningful solutions to contemporary challenges, particularly in relation to biodiversity conservation and climate change adaptation (Onwuegbuzie, 2011). Compared to modern technological advancements, many ancestral methods tend to be more cost-effective, locally accessible, culturally appropriate, and often aligned with the preservation of natural systems. As a result, ancestral knowledge, carefully accumulated over numerous generations, significantly guides human societies in their fundamental interactions with each other and their environment (Obiero et al., 2023).

This knowledge integrates spiritual, environmental, technological, social, economic, and political aspects, reflecting the unique characteristics of each culture at the local level (Addison et al., 2019). Unlike Western scientific knowledge, which is secular, standardized, and theoretical, traditional knowledge is primarily transmitted orally through social relationships and within specific natural environments (Obiero et al., 2023). Therefore, it plays a crucial role in decision-making within many rural communities, including food security, health, education, and natural resource management.

Currently, intangible cultural heritage encompasses various uses, representations, symbols, knowledge, and skills that communities recognize as part of their cultural legacy (Maldonado-Erazo et al., 2022). In indigenous settings, intangible cultural heritage is closely linked to traditional knowledge, as cultural practices serve as a means of transmitting and preserving this knowledge across generations (Obiero et al., 2023). Consequently, safeguarding intangible cultural heritage significantly reinforces cultural identity and the vast diversity of indigenous communities while ensuring the continuity of ancestral knowledge and practices.

Additionally, ancestral knowledge embodies an indigenous worldview, which refers to how different indigenous groups perceive and understand their environment, including their connection with nature, the universe, and the divine (Maldonado-Erazo et al., 2022). This worldview incorporates a spiritual component that values nature as sacred and deserving of respect, influencing resource management and the relationship between indigenous communities and their environment, fostering a balanced and sustainable coexistence (Scheba and Mustalahti, 2015). Indigenous worldviews are deeply rooted in history and culture, highlighting the importance of recognizing and respecting diverse perspectives and knowledge systems.

Thus, ancestral knowledge is primarily taught and transmitted through intangible cultural heritage, which, in turn, is deeply grounded in indigenous worldviews (Wong et al., 2020). Understanding these concepts is essential for addressing challenges in biodiversity conservation, sustainable resource management, and inclusive social development, particularly in indigenous communities. The full integration of traditional knowledge into decision-making and planning processes could lead to innovative and efficient solutions that significantly promote sustainability and community well-being (Nakitare et al., 2024).

Concept of entrepreneurship

Building on the previous discussion, business initiatives based on ancestral knowledge can be understood as projects that utilize traditional knowledge and practices in the production of goods, services, or solutions, aiming for a positive social, cultural, environmental, and economic impact (H. Onwuegbuzie and Ugwuanyi, 2016). These initiatives are not solely focused on economic profitability but also emphasize sustainability, equity, and a deep reflection on culture and nature (von Sigsfeld, 2020).

First, many of these entrepreneurial projects stand out for leveraging knowledge accumulated over generations, transmitted orally or through practical experience within a community (Agwu and Me, 2018). This knowledge spans various fields, including agriculture, traditional medicine, craftsmanship, and social organization (Dawa and Marks, 2024). Entrepreneurs engaged in ancestral knowledge-based ventures often view themselves as guardians of this heritage, actively working to preserve and revive it through their businesses.

Second, these projects frequently emerge in resource-scarce environments, demonstrating remarkable adaptability by developing cost-effective solutions using locally available resources. This approach makes them viable and accessible options for underserved communities that often lack access to mainstream technologies and development models (Acs et al., 2013). Additionally, by utilizing local resources, these enterprises significantly promote community autonomy and resilience (Agwu and Me, 2018).

Third, ancestral knowledge-based enterprises are deeply connected to cultural identity and community values. Unlike individualistic business models, these initiatives often operate within collective or solidarity-based frameworks, where cooperation and reciprocity are fundamental (Tapsell and Woods, 2010). Many such ventures actively promote social justice and equality, striving to create opportunities for all community members, especially those traditionally marginalized (McInnis-Bowers et al., 2017).

Criticism of the concept of entrepreneurship

Despite its benefits, the concept of entrepreneurship has faced significant criticism in academic literature. A key concern is the tendency to impose Western business models without considering the cultural and economic circumstances of indigenous entrepreneurs (Solorzano Bajaña, 2024). Additionally, many public and private organizations fail to distinguish between indigenous and non-indigenous entrepreneurs, promoting standardized business practices that may conflict with traditional values (Solorzano Bajaña, 2024).

For instance, prioritizing income generation may contradict community-based sustainable initiatives that emphasize environmental stewardship and social well-being over economic performance (Solorzano Bajaña, 2024). Another critical issue is the evaluation of entrepreneurial success. Many organizations measure success based on business formalization, market expansion, and other

economic indicators aligned with Western standards (Solorzano Bajaña, 2024). However, indigenous entrepreneurs may place greater value on maintaining and integrating their cultural heritage and knowledge into their businesses (Solorzano Bajaña, 2024).

Similarly, there is often a lack of recognition of indigenous knowledge systems and ancestral land management practices (Urugo et al., 2025). These systems, deeply embedded in local traditions, contribute to sustainable land use and cultural preservation (Urugo et al., 2025). The effectiveness of formalizing artisanal mining, for example, is sometimes questioned, as it may not consider the environmental impacts, safety concerns, or the distinct economic benefits of different mining methods (Arthur-Holmes and Ofosu, 2024).

Case studies on ancestral entrepreneurship

Ancestral entrepreneurship in Europe

Academic analyses of case studies on businesses incorporating ancestral knowledge in Europe provide valuable insights into the revival of ancient traditions and their impact on sectoral development (Marques et al., 2019). Some studies examine how entrepreneurs integrate local knowledge into their business models, contributing to the economic and cultural sustainability of their communities (Mugambiwa, 2021).

One notable example is black pottery in northern Portugal, where young entrepreneurs have modernized design and production techniques while leveraging locally sourced materials and traditional knowledge (Marques et al., 2019). Their success is based on merging innovation with cultural preservation, creating high-value products that meet global market demands (Marques et al., 2019).

Similarly, in northwestern Italy, agricultural projects have been studied that rely on explicit and implicit farmer knowledge regarding their environment, traditional farming techniques, and complex family dynamics (Fontefrancesco, 2021). These farmers make informed decisions that consider technical, economic, emotional, and cultural factors deeply embedded in their territory (Fontefrancesco, 2021). Their deep connection to the land and strong sense of local identity demonstrate that agriculture is not just an economic activity but also a manifestation of cultural heritage (Fontefrancesco, 2021).

Ancestral entrepreneurship in Asia

In the current Asian context, many coastal communities have experienced significant transformations due to rapid industrialization and increasing urbanization, which have seriously threatened the sustainability of numerous traditional fishing villages (He et al., 2024). In response to this challenge, various renewal strategies have emerged, aiming to balance economic growth with the conservation of cultural identities and natural resources (He et al., 2024).

A clear example of this evolution is the village of Xunpu in Quanzhou, China, which has undergone significant industrial and spatial transformation. Previously, fishing and aquaculture were essential activities for the local population; however, the depletion of marine resources and coastal urban development policies prompted the exploration of alternative economic options (He et al., 2024). In this particular context, the community greatly benefited from its unique cultural heritage. One example is the tradition of “Zanhuawei,” a characteristic floral ornament worn by Xunpu women.

The rise of cultural tourism in Xunpu was largely driven by social media, where images of Chinese celebrities wearing the Zanhuawei were widely shared, attracting a significant number of visitors (He et al., 2024). This phenomenon spurred the creation of businesses offering various services related to this tradition, such as makeup, photography, and traditional costume rentals (He et al., 2024). As a result, substantial revenues were generated for local residents, and previously abandoned commercial and residential spaces were repurposed.

Other cases in Asia demonstrate various approaches to revitalizing fishing villages. In Japan, the village of Egan embraced fishing tourism, preserving local traditions while sustainably enhancing the natural environment to attract more visitors (He et al., 2024). In South Korea, many munxiang communities have focused on experiential tourism projects, supported by significant government policies and substantial infrastructure investments (He et al., 2024). In Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur actively promoted cooperation between government institutions, tourism enterprises, and local residents to strengthen coastal tourism and the marketing of seafood products (He et al., 2024).

These examples highlight the importance of tailoring revitalization strategies to the specific characteristics and resources of each community, as well as fostering local participation in the planning and management of tourism growth (Huang and Hsieh, 2013). The key to a sustainable future lies in finding the right balance between economic modernization, the preservation of cultural traditions, and respect for the environment (He et al., 2024).

Additionally, ancient agroforestry systems, such as large-scale cardamom cultivation in the Darjeeling and Sikkim Himalayas, represent a vital and necessary intersection between environmental conservation and economic livelihoods for many local communities (Vineeta et al., 2023). These systems, deeply rooted in ancestral practices, ensure food security, reduce poverty, and preserve biodiversity and traditional knowledge (Vineeta et al., 2023).

In the context of climate change, these ancestral initiatives face several critical challenges, including rising temperatures and shifting precipitation patterns (Vineeta et al., 2023). These changes significantly impact agricultural production and the health of mountain ecosystems. However, the way local producers perceive and respond to these changes is crucial, as their mitigation strategies can inform effective policies and inspire climate resilience (Vineeta et al., 2023). Studies in the Himalayas have shown that communities recognize climate change through shrinking cultivable areas, altered biological cycles of animals and insects, and shifts in tree compositions.

Ancestral entrepreneurship in Oceania

In the case of Oceania, business projects that heavily rely on ancestral knowledge are rapidly becoming a model of economic development that prioritizes sustainability and community well-being (Cahn, 2008). These projects frequently combine traditional practices with contemporary management systems, creating a hybrid approach that may enhance their success and longevity (Morrison, 2008).

A significant portion of these initiatives is closely tied to cultural values and local social structures (Tapsell and Woods, 2010). In Samoa, for example, the local culture (fa'aSamoa) plays a significant role in shaping rural businesses, where social relationships and cultural commitments are integrated into economic objectives (Morrison, 2008). This interconnectedness often leads to the formation of businesses with a collective focus, where success is measured not only in terms of economic profit but through the fulfillment of social and cultural responsibilities (Cahn, 2008).

Additionally, these projects often operate in ancestrally owned territories, which underscores the importance of balancing business needs with sustainable resource management and cultural preservation (Vunibola et al., 2022). The success of these initiatives depends on business models that explicitly support sociocultural integration, self-determination, and the protection of ancestral lands for indigenous groups (Vunibola et al., 2022).

The distribution of profits is often based on indigenous kinship principles, challenging conventional shareholder ownership models and promoting a more relational indigenous economy (Tapsell and Woods, 2010).

Extensive community participation is essential for the success and sustainability of these enterprises. Likewise, the engagement of various stakeholders in governance structures helps address potential conflicts, foster community support, and ensure compliance with regulations (Techera, 2019). In this regard, Marine Protected Area (MPA) laws that enable community participation in decision-making processes, public consultation requirements, and community-based management approaches are fundamental (Techera, 2019).

Ancestral entrepreneurship in Africa

One of the identified cases of ancestral entrepreneurship in Africa occurred in Botswana following the unexpected establishment of a game reserve in 1963, which led to the forced and inevitable displacement of the residents of Khwai from their ancestral lands. This event severely impacted the Basarwa people, whose economy relied almost exclusively on hunting and gathering (Mbaiwa, 2005). The displacement triggered numerous conflicts between the Khwai community and wildlife authorities, fostering negative perceptions of conservation efforts. Despite the development of tourism-related activities in the region since the 1980s, the Khwai people benefited very little, further exacerbating resource conflicts (Mbaiwa, 2005).

In response to these challenges, the Botswana government launched the Community-Based Natural Resource Management (CBNRM) program in Khwai in 2000, aiming to promote local participation in resource management. Additionally, the program sought to encourage rural development through tourism, generating income, employment opportunities, and greater involvement in wildlife management (Mbaiwa, 2005). The benefits of this initiative positively shifted local perceptions of conservation and tourism, significantly reducing conflicts, fostering sustainable wildlife use, and protecting important ancestral customs within the community (Mbaiwa, 2005).

Another example in Africa demonstrating the integration of indigenous knowledge systems into business practices is found in Mutoko, Zimbabwe, where vegetable farmers have developed business models based on local cultures and natural environments (Mugambiwa, 2021). While many Western entrepreneurship strategies have been imposed on local communities—often feeling foreign and unsuitable—indigenous knowledge in entrepreneurship has proven to be a vital social asset, particularly for marginalized and impoverished sectors by fostering food security and livelihood sustainability (Carlisle et al., 2013).

Horticulture, as an important agricultural activity, contributes to soil productivity, job creation, and economic improvements for farmers. This practice integrates traditional agricultural knowledge, incorporating techniques such as crop rotation, intercropping, and indigenous irrigation systems to enhance productivity (Mugambiwa, 2021). These methods, passed down through generations, align with local cultural values and environmental conditions, ensuring that agricultural needs are met while preserving traditional practices (Hlengwa, 2019).

Ancestral entrepreneurship in the Americas

In the Americas, ancestral businesses represent an alternative to extractive industries and agricultural expansion, demonstrating that territories can be utilized through innovative and sustainable perspectives (Maldonado-Erazo et al., 2022). These initiatives, deeply rooted in ancestral knowledge, aim for comprehensive community development and contribute to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) from an Andean perspective (Maldonado-Erazo et al., 2022).

One major example is community-based tourism, which has been solidified as a management model that considers local cultural dynamics, offering an alternative to modernity's challenges (Maldonado-Erazo et al., 2022). In Ecuador, the Plurinational Federation of Community Tourism of Ecuador (FEPTCE) has led efforts to integrate community tourism into national tourism policies, advocating for the development of communities as tourism managers rather than mere attractions (Maldonado-Erazo et al., 2022).

Additionally, the Corporation for the Development of Community Tourism in Chimborazo (CORDTUCH) demonstrates how indigenous and rural communi-

ties have radically transformed their economic structures through tourism, efficiently managing land use, fair profit distribution, cultural and natural heritage preservation, and organizational strengthening (Maldonado-Erazo et al., 2022).

Meanwhile, in Canada, indigenous businesses are deeply tied to cultural preservation and economic development for indigenous populations (Joppe et al., 2020). These businesses serve as a significant source of income, a means of defending cultural identity, and a form of resistance against colonial and assimilation policies (Joppe et al., 2020).

Moreover, the integration of indigenous knowledge into tourism and business curricula has proven essential in fostering intercultural respect and understanding (Joppe et al., 2020). The primary objective is to equip students with cultural competence, enabling them to build respectful relationships with indigenous groups, regardless of their professional careers (Joppe et al., 2020). In addition, the concept of interculturality is fundamental for analyzing indigenous entrepreneurship because of the intersection between traditional knowledge systems and capitalist logics. Interculturality seeks to challenge power and foster dialogue between diverse epistemologies (Walsh, 2009; Mignolo and Walsh, 2018).

Numerous studies have also highlighted the role of ecotourism as a key strategy for the sustainable development of indigenous communities, significantly contributing to biodiversity conservation (Das and Chatterjee, 2015). However, it is crucial that these ecotourism initiatives be managed in a way that directly benefits local communities, preventing income leakage and the marginalization of indigenous groups (Das and Chatterjee, 2015). In this regard, training local guides and promoting community participation in decision-making are essential to ensuring that ecotourism contributes to the holistic well-being of indigenous populations.

Finally, it is important to recognize that ancestral businesses in the Americas are not only centered on income generation but also play a crucial role in enhancing community resilience and cultural identity (McInnis-Bowers et al., 2017). In this context, resilience is defined as the ability of indigenous communities to withstand marginalization and inequality, reaffirming their cultural identity while building new economic structures that allow them to thrive in a globalized world (McInnis-Bowers et al., 2017).

Conclusions

The findings of this literature review highlight the critical role of ancestral knowledge in fostering sustainable and socially responsible entrepreneurship. Traditional knowledge not only serves as a catalyst for innovation in economic sectors such as agriculture, tourism, and craftsmanship, but also enhances cultural identity and social cohesion within indigenous and rural communities. By integrating traditional ecological practices and locally embedded wisdom, ancestral knowledge contributes to the resilience and long-term viability of these

economic activities, making them more adaptable to environmental and social changes.

Furthermore, academic interest in the intersection between entrepreneurship and ancestral knowledge has surged in recent years, as evidenced by a notable increase in scholarly publications, particularly in regions with strong indigenous and rural economies such as Latin America, Southeast Asia, and sub-Saharan Africa. However, significant challenges remain, including the adaptation of business models to specific cultural contexts, the prevention of traditional knowledge misappropriation, and the establishment of legal mechanisms that ensure fair benefit-sharing for communities.

In conclusion, entrepreneurship rooted in ancestral knowledge holds great promise for fostering more inclusive and sustainable economies. However, realizing its full potential requires targeted actions and interdisciplinary collaboration. Future research should explore specific financial mechanisms to support these enterprises, the impact on community well-being, and comparative analyses across different cultural and geographical contexts. Further research could explore the integration of ancestral knowledge into modern business management systems. Additionally, the development of robust regulatory frameworks is essential, with leadership from governments, international organizations, entrepreneurship models and indigenous advocacy groups to ensure both the protection and equitable commercialization of ancestral knowledge.

Financiamiento

La presente investigación fue financiada por el Fondo Nacional de Financiamiento para la Ciencia, la Tecnología y la Innovación Francisco José de Caldas, código 109261, contrato 156-2024, con el beneficio del llamado 948-2024, Orquídeas, Mujeres en Ciencia.

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