

The Practice of Sustainability Entrepreneurial Approach in Kenya's Flower Industry

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Abstract

Sustainability entrepreneurship approach (SEA) has been described in different ways by different scholars' in spite being anchored on the sustainable development tenets that emphasise on need to sustain the planet, profits and people for use by future generations. Still, different SEA studies reveal that the practice of SEA differs from one setting to another although most studies focus on environmental practice of developed countries' setting. This situation is linked to saturation of studies from developed countries. Therefore, there seem to be no adequate information regarding the practice of SEA from a developing country's view. Besides, the distinct nature of socio-economic development across continents is likely to dictate the way SEA is practiced in different settings. For that reason, there is need to enhance understanding regarding sustainability practice from a developing countries perspective. Subsequently, this paper explored the practice of SEA in Kenya's flower industry using qualitative approach. Hence, in- depth interview and observation methods were used to collect data from six heterogeneous cases, while content thematic analysis was used for data analysis. The results showed that although firms in this study were committed towards the development of environment, economy and society, the nature of practice and investment on SEA seem to have differed from firm to firm. The findings further revealed that the practice of SEA in this setting was predominantly characterised by activities that enhanced industrial relations, community support programs, development of social amenities and infrastructure as well as environmental management strategies. The paper concludes that SEA practice is influenced by the social, environmental and economic needs of a specific business setting, hence anchor alongside sustainability tenets. In order to enhance equitable contribution towards SEA, the paper proposes the development of domesticated sustainability policy and measures so as to make the practice of SEA mandatory and meaningful. The paper recommends a comparative study on SEA practice in a multi sectoral setting.

Keywords: Sustainability, sustainability entrepreneurship approach, Sustainability practice

1. Introduction

The dynamics of global business as well as existing social and environmental challenges have influenced the ushering of various approaches in implementing entrepreneurial activities one of them which is Sustainable Entrepreneurial Approach (SEA). Hence, sustainability entrepreneurship approach has been considered as a critical ingredient for sustainable development (Parish, 2007). Sustainability entrepreneurship approach advocates that entrepreneurs should not only be driven by need for economic gain but also the need to enhance the social and environmental value (Shepherd and McMullen, 2007). As a result, SEA is rapidly replacing the traditional form of entrepreneurship irrespective of long standing belief regarding economic nature of entrepreneurial activities (Majid and Koe, 2012).

The shift in entrepreneurial approach to inclusion of sustenance value has been necessitated by increased social and economic misgivings such as increased poverty levels, economic crimes as well as social and environmental ills. Consequently, these social ills have resulted in adverse environmental effects including climate change most of which have been linked to entrepreneurial activities (Hall *et al.*, 2010). Subsequently, sustainable firms strive to employ innovative and sustainable methods of production, packaging as well as efficient and effective means of managing Human and natural resource (Svensson, *et al.*, 2010). Hitherto, a firm's success is no longer reflected in its ability to make profit and grow only, but in its contribution towards sustenance of the social, economic and environmental systems as well (Winter and Knemeyer, 2013).

The need to enhance the social and environmental values alongside economic value has not only influenced the way business is done but also the development of entrepreneurship theory in scholarly field. Hence, sustainability entrepreneurship (Shepherd and Patzelt, 2011). Nonetheless, literature indicate that very few entrepreneurs from developing countries have clear understanding of SEA (Adewole, 2015; Ngugi and Nasiche, 2015). Besides, most existing studies on SEA have dwelt more on opportunity identification, psychological and behavioural attributes of sustainable entrepreneurs from a developed countries' perspective and less on the practice of SEA especially from a developing countries view notwithstanding efforts made to domesticate adoption of

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sustainability in all productive sectors across the globe (United nations, 2007). Moreover, literature suggest that developing countries are still riddled by social needs that hinder environmental improvement. The need to understand SEA from developing countries perspective can therefore not be underscored (Hall *et al.*, 2010).

Notwithstanding the aforementioned need, existing studies seem to have featured SEA from case studies of developed nations' which mostly feature innovations linked to environmental management of developed countries (Schaltegger and Wagner, 2011). Moreover, this paper argues that the components of SEA would closely be tied to the social, economic and environmental development within a specific context despite being conceptualised alongside sustainable development. For this reason, the question regarding the practice of SEA in a developing country like Kenya begs an answer. Moreover, understanding the practice of SEA would be of great importance to scholars, entrepreneurs as well as policy makers. Hence, this paper explored the practice of SEA in Kenya's flower industry with an aim of identifying how different firms pursue sustainability practice while doing business.

2. Research setting

As a country, Kenya heavily relies on agricultural activities for its survival. Hence, large, small, commercial and non-commercial firms/farms rely on their produce for economic development as well as in contributing towards national food reserves and the exchequer. As a result, commercial agriculture accounts for over 51% of the country's GDP and contributes up to 60% of the countries' employment (GOK, 2014). One of the key commercial undertakings being the Kenya flower industry.

The Kenya's flower industry is one of the big exporters of flowers to the European countries, it contributes up to over 50 % of foreign investment to the national economy annually (Horticulture report, 2014). Nevertheless, the flower industry has been reported to have faced various challenges including high labour costs as well as high competition from both developing and developed countries. These countries include Ethiopia, Brazil and North America just to mention a few. Another major challenge has been bad publicity that stemmed from previous claims of human rights abuse within the industry. These claims include misuse of Human resources as well as natural resources at the expense of the local communities (Raynold, 2012; Buxton and Vorley, 2012).

Consequently, these acts were said to have adversely affected industry performance and also its image (Buxton and Vorley, 2012). Subsequently, the flower industry formed an industry association namely the Kenya flower Council (KFC) that is tasked with the development of appropriate strategies in order to effectively manage existing challenges, enhance industry performance as well as keep pace with emerging market trends. As a result of this initiative, the KFC alongside the national body for standards, the Kenya Bureau of standards (KEBS) was able to develop a voluntary Flower and ornamental sustainability ornamental standard (FOSS). The standard is recognised internationally as a means for training, auditing and certification by flower firms that are willing to contribute towards sustainability (BDA, 2010).

In the face of these developments, the KFC database of the year 2016 showed that only 56% of the registered flower firms were FOSS certified most of who also ascribed to other international sustainability standards including the **FLO (Fairtrade) certification**, MPS ABC standard, The Rainforest Alliance Certified seal that also aim at enhancing sustainability. Despite these developments, there seem to be very little scholarly attention regarding sustainability in extant literature. Most studies in the flower industry have mainly focused on unethical practices in the flower industry and hardly on how SEA is practiced. The need to understand SEA practice in a local context can therefore not be understated.

2.1 Empirical review

Although literature suggest that sustainable entrepreneurship approach has influenced entrepreneurial activities and theory, it also reveal that SEA concept and practice featuring developing countries setting has been given less attention. Besides sustainability-oriented papers have mainly focused on environmental management as well as published in non-mainstream entrepreneurship and business management journals (Hall *et al.*, 2010). This situation could be attributed to the infancy nature of SEA. Subsequently, knowledge regarding the practice of SEA especially from developing countries' context seem scanty. Hence, this paper will proceed to review related empirical studies.

Dean and McMullen (2007) on theorising SEA mainly focused on green processes and products such as renewable energy, carbon emission, fuel cells and green buildings amongst other environment management concerns. Also, Korsgaard (2010) explored the use of unprocessed material for building using a case study method. Their study mainly considered frugality of resource as well as use of green building materials by a Denmark entrepreneur as being sustainable. The entrepreneur under investigation mainly used some form of bricolage, where use of available natural resources in building was the norm. Other forms of bricolage included scavenging, recycling as well as use of local and unprocessed materials (Baker and Nelson, 2005).

In a different setting Fiksel, *et al.*, (1999) investigated five heterogeneous cases regarding their practice of SEA with an aim of establishing how they practiced SEA within Battelle. The findings revealed that the practice of SEA differed from one firm to another although it was centred alongside the Life cycle perspective

(environmental strategies) and to some little extent, social strategies. The practice of SEA in this study specifically focused on waste reduction, recycling of operational materials aiming at reducing the cost of production.

In Romania, Pedro *et al.*, (2016) surveyed a total of 147 SMEs on the relationship between SEA and performance. In their preliminary review, they conceptualised SEA as an approach of doing business while taking cognisance of its effect on the environment and society. On environmental aspect of SEA, the study mainly considered operational activities that had long term protection to the environment. While on economic aspect of SEA, the study considered economic growth of the business in view of both the social and environmental benefits provided. Whereas on Social aspect, the study mainly considered the contribution of social development to both internal and external stakeholders. These included partners, community and workers. However, no specific details were provided regarding how the SMEs in this setting practised SEA. Nevertheless, while conceptualising SEA for purposes of conducting the survey, the study was able to provide some hint on what sustainable entrepreneurs were doing. However, information provided was contextual in nature this would not be sufficient for generalisation especially in a developing countries' setting.

Following aforementioned empirical review, it is not surprising that different regions seem to perceive and practice SEA in different ways. The need to understand SEA practice from a developing country context will therefore go a long way in enhancing understanding on the subject in this context. This paper will proceed to review theoretical perspective in order to further support the direction of this paper.

2.3. Theoretical perspective: The Rogers diffusion theory (2003)

The Rogers's diffusion theory proposes that the adoption of a practice is mainly influenced by the advantages it offers. These advantages may range from cost reduction, provision of incentives or any other competitive advantages (Rogers, 2003). The theory therefore attributes acceleration of a practice also referred to as innovation to five key attributes. These attributes consist of the advantages the innovation offer, Incentive attributed to adoption of a practice, Compatibility with appropriate systems including but not limited to business capability and goals, observability of change and also trialability. Key among them being the potential advantage accruing for practicing the innovation. Hence, given proposition made in Roger's theory and reviewed literature, this paper proposes that the practice of SEA would differ from one firm to another based on contextual needs as well as the potential advantages of the practice.

3. Methods

This paper is based on data collected in Kenya's flower industry using multiple case study approach. It also involved six heterogeneous cases based on Company size, location and investor type, hence multi stage sampling was used. These characteristics were useful in enhancing representation as well as reliability and validity. The paper also used in- depth interviews and observation to explore the practice of SEA in this setting. The main unit of analysis were the flower firms. Therefore, the study used thematic content analysis to analyse data. The choice of the flower industry was ideal because of its ability to provide a database of sustainability certified and non - certified flower firms where Flower ornamental sustainability standard was used to measure sustainability in all stages of production including farming, harvesting, packaging, transportation and disposal i.e. commonly referred to as 'cradle to grave' among others.

4. Research Findings and Discussion on the Practice of SEA

4.1 Demographic Characteristics

This article used six heterogeneous flower companies for data collection and analysis. The cases were distinguished by their geographical and topography, nature of investor and size in order to enhance representation. Shown below is the demographic characteristics of firms involved in this study:

Table 1.0 Company Demographic Characteristics

Investor type	Size	Region	Topography	Hectares	Characteristics	Firm age	No. of employees
International Firm	Large	Rift valley	Low water level	Over 2000	Certified	Over 20 years	Over 100
Local Firm	Large	Central KE	High water level	Over 2000	Certified	Over 20 years	Over 100
Mixed investor firm	Large	Athi -River	High water level	Over 2000	Certified	Over 2000	Over 100
International Firm	Small	Rift valley	Low water level	Below 2000	Certified	Below 20 years	Below 100
Local firm	Small	Athi- river	Low water level	Below 2000	Certified	Below 20 years	Below 100
Mixed investor firm	Small	Nairobi/Central	High water level	Below 2000	Certified	Below 20 year	Below 100

Source: Field data (2015)

4.2 Findings: Case 1: Large international Company (LIC)

In LIC, it was stated that SEA adoption was important in enhancing community support. As a result, the firm was involved in numerous community projects including protection of water catchment areas as well as conserving the Mau forest. The firm was also reported to have supported 11,200 small scale farmers through various community projects. In addition to the aforementioned, LIC was said to have engaged in other outreach programs in two of their estate primary schools where employees' children had the opportunity to learn about how to handle various life challenges and the threats faced by natural habitat. The respondent further revealed that the company enhanced creation of job opportunity for local community members as well as supported social programs within the community. These programs include development of infrastructure of various schools, market places and local roads. To affirm this claim, these were the respondents' words

'.... You will find that there is a lot of CSR we do, in terms of schooling projects and general infrastructure and therefore complements the normal government structure. And because of the complexity of the sustainability concept, the company had to engage a sustainability manager'. We are committed to a sustainable future – because there is no other future, and therefore have had to involve the community in this effort.

Other economic related sustainability measures cited by the respondent were that the LIC gave priority to the local community during the process of identification and selection of suppliers. This approach also enabled the purchase of raw materials from local sustainable growers and suppliers. The purpose of considering local suppliers was to enhance economic sustainability of the community and reduce the supply chain process as well as reduce footprints of their final product. The respondent had the following to say:

'.... when we consider outsourcing, we simply like to drag in more local entrepreneurs in order to empower them economically. It also helps in foot printing since the supplies come from nearby, and the footprints help in securing good markets. Besides it also helps the local entrepreneurs to provide for their families.

The LIC commitment to economic development was evidenced by regular review of their financial performance as evidenced in their periodic reports. The review of their reports also revealed a diverse product portfolio which was strategic for increasing long term economic sustainability. The LIC was also said to have been keen on exploiting new business opportunities for long term benefits of the business. As a result, the company was said to have maintained sufficient business diversity in both markets and produce so as to enhancing market resilience. The company was also reported to have had open communication with their suppliers, local community, pressure groups and the wider public about the case for sustainability.

Regarding the social element of SEA, it was further revealed that the LIC's human resource management practice was beyond requirements of Kenya's human resource ACT of 2007 but instead were also able to focus on international HR standards. This was evidenced in the fact that the LIC had a strong employees' welfare policy that included development of employees' life skill training in order to enhance work life balance and business

continuity. Besides, the LIC had invested in infrastructure as well as employment policy for persons with disabilities (PWDs). As such, the Company was reported to have taken deliberate measures to diversify its staff establishment as well as the allocation of 10 % of its employment opportunities to PWDs. The respondent also reported that the LIC encouraged and facilitated female representation in leadership so as to build women capacity besides ensuring equitable representation within their entity. Also, they were said to have made efforts to ensure that there was democratic worker representation.

The respondent also suggested that LIC was keen on rewarding their employees who as a result have positively contribute towards achievement of the company's business goals. As such, they were reported to have been ardent on educating their employees on the values and principles of sustainable development. It was further reported that the LIC management ensures that employee safety is sustained through provision of safety gears, clothing and appropriate methods of production. The company was also reported to have been calculating the foot print for its production process and other business process in order to minimize emission of harmful gases.

The LIC also revealed that their management was at the fore front of enhancing employee safety, health and economic advancement as well as enhancement of employee dignity. As such, they ensured that all employees and their residents had access to adequate food through provision of various training programs relating to sustainable agriculture. These included good agricultural practice, provision of shelter, sanitation, clean water and primary health care. In order to make the company an enjoyable and rewarding place, the company was reported to have developed individual employees not only for the benefit of the company but also for purposes of community development.

Concerning the social aspect of SEA, it was further reported that LIC had taken an active role in the introduction of sustainability practice in the country. The LIC management was reported to have shared their knowledge with external stakeholders concerning SEA as well as providing the initial infrastructural support for the development of FOSS. They were also said to have engaged in collaborative approach in the introduction of sustainability standard within their firm. Hence, they were said to have involved growers, suppliers, customers, government, NGOs, union and industry bodies during the onset of SEA.

In order to enhance the recovery and resilience of the environment, the LIC was reported to have undertaken carbon audits so as to minimize emission of the greenhouse gases. The Company also practiced excellence in the management of water resources, its protection besides enhancing biodiversity within their operations. The LIC was also reported to have promoted use of safe pest and disease management products thereby eliminating negative impact on the environment. The respondent further affirmed their commitment to make a positive contribution to environmental conservation and recovery by engaging in forest conservation as well as enhanced understanding on the likely impact of climate change to its stakeholders. Also, they were ardent about carbon restorative measures as revealed in continuous calculation of carbon emission as well as community watershed management.

Case 2: Small international firm (SIC)

To explain the practice of SEA, the respondent revealed that SIC was keen on all the three components of SEA i.e. economic, social and environmental concerns. He also elucidated how the company was ardent about enhancing a conducive work environment. SIC was reported to have provided quality safety gears as well as maintain cordial relationship with staff. The respondent further revealed that SIC was keen on protecting the bio-diversity and conservation of water catchment resources. He further revealed that SIC was committed towards the use of renewable energy which was said to have tremendously enhanced efficiency. While linking SEA to return on investment (ROI), the respondent indicated that the company conducted a thorough analysis regarding the use of operational resources. This was done by measuring cost per unit of production in order to detail their performance parameters. To advance his claims, he stated as follows:

'... You cannot separate sustainability from business strategy. You see, being sustainable is like having a good strategic plan. There is no way you can talk about sustainability without showing its contribution to the bottom line. The investor is keen about the return on investment, otherwise they would not be willing to invest in Sustainability practice.'

Besides the aforesaid efforts, SIC was also reported to have taken other environmental management strategies. For example, they had set aside 55 hectares of untouched forest as part of conservation effort. Other social initiatives included empowering the community on Sustainability knowledge as well as the maintenance of good work environment. The Company was also reported to have built social amenities such as a clinic for use by its employees and the local communities.

CASE 3: Small mixed investor Company (SMIC)

The SMIC was reported to have also focused on all the three components of SEA i.e. social, economic and environmental management. The respondent showed that the firm contributed towards community development by having initiated various social amenities including a health clinic, a day care and a maternal healthcare program. Concerning economic empowerment, the company was reported to have also allocated about 5% of employment opportunities to members of the community. They were further reported to have provided bicycles to all its subordinate staff as well as a good medical scheme. The SMIC staff was also provided with regular buffet meals

during tea and lunch breaks.

The company also initiated environmental projects including construction of wetland and building of water reservoirs for preservation of water. The SMIC was reported to have maintained optimal number of staff in order to increase the return on investment, the respondent reaffirmed SMIC position as follows:

"...We have engaged the community concerning the proportions of job allocation as well as our list of suppliers. We have actually employed a number of locals here but we cannot overemploy also, our business needs must prevail. We cannot claim to be sustainable if we keep ignoring the plight of the local community, they are part and parcel of the process."

The respondent further revealed that the firm's quest for quality enabled it to take interest in quality measures. These measures included maintaining boxes temperature at the required temperature levels so as to retain freshness of flowers. The manager also indicated that recording and controlling of flower box temperature throughout the air transport was done using temperature data loggers. Results were then sent to their clients and shipping agents for control purposes. Documents generated by the company clearly showed minute details such as the number of stems, price, weight and volume weight of each box.



Plate 1.0: Emission Free Alternative Transport (Cable flower bucket)
Source: SMIC Website (2015)

Case 4 Small local company (SLC)

The SLC respondent indicated that the main focus of SEA was on improving the quality of life of its community and workforce. It was further revealed that the firm ensured the use of acceptable pesticides in order to protect its stakeholders. The manager further revealed that SLC was keen on maintaining good work relationship with its employees. This was reportedly done through continuous dialogue with both members of the community and its employees and also provision of good medical package, Buffet lunch and recreation facilities. The manager further stated that they were keen on rewarding their employees attractively. This scenario was reported to have enhanced high staff retention and morale. The respondent had this to say:

"...To be honest, most people look at SEA from production perspective instead of in its entire form i.e. from cradle to grave, meaning that it should cut across production, corporate social responsibility and employee relations among other areas. I told you people do not have the necessary understanding of this thing. It's very important for business"

The respondent further pointed that SLC was keen on community engagement because their neighbourhood was had a number of foreigners who were very concerned about their safety. As such, they were reported not have used any of the forbidden chemicals so as to enhance cordial co-existence with their neighbours.

Case 5 Large mixed investor Company (LMIC)

The LMIC sustainability concerns were also threefold i.e. mainly involving the social, economic and the environmental aspects of sustainability. The LMIC respondent indicated that their firm upheld absolute commitment in providing and maintaining excellent standards with regard to the social, ethical, environmental as well as agricultural practices undertaken on the farm.

Consequently, the Company was reported to have recognized the role social, environmental and ethical

conduct played in impacting their reputation. For this reason, they were reported to have taken CSR initiatives seriously. As a result, the firm was said to have developed policies and systems that address and monitor all aspects of social responsibility programs relevant to the business. Some of the policies developed included good ethical behaviour, employee welfare, health and safety policy, environmental management and community engagement. The company also observed high quality production standards by enhancing use of modern cultivation methods as well as advanced post-harvest processing methods all aimed at minimising waste as well as maintain quality of flower produce.

Case 6 Large local Company (LLC)

The LLC was reported to have been keen not only to internal stakeholders but also the external stakeholders. As such, they were said to have used safe methods of spraying and safety precautions in their operations. They were also keen on community engagement which made them allow the community to access their premises and farms for inspection. The respondent also reported that LLC provided their employees with one of the best medical schemes in the industry as well as good remuneration. Their concern for the environment was said to have influenced LLC to have purchased one of the most modern self-regulated green-houses which contributed towards efficient and effective means of flower production. The firm was also pleased for not to have used the forbidden pesticides at any moment. Her emphasise was as follows:

“...If you check on our mission it is talking about producing flower in an environmental friendly way. Sustainability is therefore something you do, because apart from today, you also consider the future-that is future of the Business. For us that is very key”

5. Cross case analysis

On the aspect of SEA, the paper reveals that all the cases were guided by the sustainability tenets where the social, environmental and economic value all take prominence. This was evidenced by the fact that most of their activities were geared towards enhancing social, economic as well as environmental sustainability. Specifically, the firms were guided by the Flower ornamental sustainability standard (FOSS) among other international standards. These standards focused on industrial relations, environmental management, and community support amongst other guidelines as adopted in various local regulations including the labour laws and environmental laws among others. Notwithstanding this commitment, the study revealed that firms implemented SEA at varying degrees regardless of their capability. It was also observed that some firms invested heavily on SEA while others of similar capability committed bare minimal of its resources to SEA and vice versa. This scenario could be attributable to the fact that there were no specific guidelines regarding the extent to which companies with different capability engage in SEA.

It was also revealed that all firms were keen on enhancing environmental sustainability although the nature of environmental activities differed between firms/farms. Whereas some firms were keen on the use of renewable energy, recycling of resources as well as construction of dams, other firms were keen on afforestation and controlling carbon oxide emission among others. On the other hand, the study noted that all companies relied on the use of greenhouses which was linked to cost effectiveness and efficiency in the production of flowers. The results also showed that environmental management strategies, community development, ethical firm practice and good HRM practice were the main focus of SEA. The table below reveals the practice of SEA for different firms:

Table 2:0 SEA practice for different firms

Firm Characteristics	Social actions	Environmental actions	Economic actions
Large international	Education	Footprint calculation	Performance reports
Semi -arid area	Inclusivity i.e. PWDs, women , union	Minimising green gas emission	Providing Business to local suppliers
Over 4000 acres	Employee safety, welfare and reward	Renewable energy	Allocation of vacancy for persons with disabilities
SEA infrastructure available	Community support programs	Water footprint measurement	Tribal diversity
Managed by expatriates	Internal infrastructure for PWDs	Afforestation	Product and Business diversification
Firm characteristics	Social actions	Environmental actions	Economic actions
Small international	Employee relations	Recycling of Water	Maintaining optimal number of staff
Semi- arid area	Employee safety	Conservation of water	Periodic assessment of cost per unit produced
Targets both foreign and local markets	Training community (SE)	Conservation	Efforts for cost reduction
Managed by expatriate	Community relations	Renewable energy	Efforts for efficiency
SEA Infrastructure available within firm			Low employee turnover and absenteeism
Firm	Social actions	Environmental actions	Economic actions
Small mixed investor	Education for local community	Recycling of water	Observes wage regulation
Wetlands	Community Health clinic	Construction of a wetland	Job allocation for community
Local management	Community Day care	Water reservoir	Optimal no of staff
Both markets	Provision of Bicycles for staff		
Firm	Social actions	Environmental actions	Economic actions
Small local investor	Good employee relations	Compliance to Environment regulations	Appropriate wages
Semi -arid area	Enhancing quality of life for internal and external stakeholders	Use of safe pesticide	ROI
Small 17.5 Ha	Community engagement		Good salaries
No major infrastructure exist	Cordial relationship		
Targets both markets	Good employee incentives		
Firm Characteristics	Social actions	Environmental actions	Economic actions
Large mixed investor	Education	Compliance with environmental regulation	Local employees
Wetland	CSR policy and M and E framework in place	Advanced post-harvest methods	
Targets both markets	Employee welfare	Modern cultivating technologies	
Less investment on infrastructure	Community engagement		
Firm characteristics	Social action	Environment	Economic actions
Large local investor	Employee relations	Safe pesticides	Good remuneration
Wetland	Community engagement	Water recycling	Good pay
Small scope	Favourable Work environment	Community inspections on practice	Employee benefits
High use of technology	Good employee incentives		Cost effective /efficient Modern self-regulated green house
	Employee safety		

Source: Field data (2015)

6. Discussion of findings

How firms implement SEA is an area that is less studied especially in developing countries. Most of literature on SEA relate to surveys that have been conducted by either auditing firms as well as large business management reviews in various sectors (Somaiya *et al.*, 2016). The basis of SEA has its roots in entrepreneurial goals that consider economic, social and environmental values (ESEV). Notwithstanding, review of literature indicate that most studies on SEA from developed countries predominantly focused on enhancing environmental sustainability in that setting while less has been studied regarding SEA in developing countries' setting (Dixon and Clifford, 2007; Pablo, 2013). Hence, the triple nature of SEA seems in environmental studies seem inapplicable. Conversely, the findings of this paper revealed that the practice of SEA in this setting centres along the triple value perspective where economic, social and environmental values feature prominently.

These findings are closely linked to a sustainability study by McKinsey, (2017) that investigated the characteristics of sustainability measurement of large firm which participate in the annual GLOBAL 100 survey. McKinsey and Company sustainability Quarterly report, (2017) showed that most sustainable awards were issued based on the appropriate use and measure of carbon productivity, waste and water productivity as well as innovation capacity of the firms. It also included percentage of tax paid which mainly touched on the chief executive officers' average pay viz a viz employee pays, pension funds status, employee turnover, leadership diversity, clear capitalizations and pay link, supplier core and cleaner production. The survey also found that the nature of measurement for corporate sustainability assessment in different settings of participating firms mainly focused on corporate governance, human capital development as well as risk and crisis management used in each industry (ibid). Whereas, empirical review of small enterprises revealed that most of them focused on frugal use of local resources as well as recycling operational materials (Korsgaard, 2010).

In this study, it was revealed that most sustainable initiatives border on community development and engagement, conservation of natural resources as well as optimal use of both human and natural resources. Regarding environmental development, this paper revealed that most of the firms engaged in conservation of the natural resources by enhancing soil nutrient, water, energy and afforestation. Nevertheless, the nature of environmental strategies seems to have been influenced by the geographical conditions of the geographical location. These finding are in line with a study by Pretty *et al.*, (2003) which revealed that conservation of natural resources had a close relationship with the adoption of SEA.

Linking these findings to theory, it is observed that the Rogers diffusion theory advocates that business would adopt an innovation if it had some advantages or benefits to the firm. The findings of this paper also corroborates this view given that it indicates that the practice of SEA is closely linked to the positive business outcome it provided. For instance, maintaining good ethical and HR practice, community engagement and environmental sustainability enabled companies in this paper to enjoy community support, employee retention, acquisition and retention of markets and eventual business survival. Moreover, firms' concern to attain ethical standards stemmed from a need for restoration of positive industry image and also staff retention. Hence, this paper reveals that the practice of SEA is closely linked to cost benefit related to adoption of practice as ascribed by Rogers, (2003).

7. Conclusion, implication and recommendation

Following a one on one in-depth interviews and observations made, this study revealed various issues concerning the practice of SEA. It was therefore concluded that the main practice of SEA in this setting was on industrial relations, utilisation of human and natural resources, community support, engagement and community empowerment. It was specifically observed that firms certified for sustainability standard were keen on enhancing employee welfare and safety, community development and conservation of natural resources by means of water recycling, use of renewable energy and reduction of carbon emission-most of which are closely linked to the needs of the study setting. These needs include maintaining good labour relations, efficient use of factors of production as well as other business needs such as acquisition of markets. Therefore, it is concluded that the practice of SEA is a factor of contextual Social, economic and environmental needs although it is anchored on the tenets of sustainability. Hence, the study implies a need for the development of national sustainability policy in order to make SEA adoption equitable and mandatory. Besides, the need to develop appropriate mechanism for sustainability, contribution cannot be overstated. Especially, because it is likely to enhance collective responsibility regarding sustainable development as well as enhance sustainable contribution within affected communities.

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