

International Entrepreneurship: A Literature Review

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Abstract

This paper reviews 51 international entrepreneurship articles gleaned from the ABI / Inform database of business citations. It divides the articles into four categories: (a) individual entrepreneurs and their traits, (b) entrepreneurial processes, (c) environmental factors, and (d) small and entrepreneurial ventures. It suggests that there is much room for further research, particularly in cross-national comparisons of individual entrepreneurs, and entrepreneurial processes.

Introduction

In response to an Academy of Management mandate to internationalize all of its divisions, Giamartino, McDougall, and Bird (20) assessed the current state of the field of entrepreneurship by surveying one hundred forty-seven Entrepreneurship Division members. Responses were used to (a) better define the concept of “international entrepreneurship”, (b) identify opportunities and hindrances to the internationalization of entrepreneurship, and (c) examine the appropriate role of the Entrepreneurship Division as well as the Academy of Management in internationalizing this field. The authors concluded that the next step should be a thorough review of journal outlets for international entrepreneurship research.

In a more recent article, Wright and Ricks (53) asserted that international entrepreneurship is a new and somewhat surprising thrust of international business research activity. They noted that, given the emerging global environment, entrepreneurs and small businesses are no longer limited to domestic markets, and even locally oriented entrepreneurs must be attentive to competition from international players. They observed that research on small business “is evolving to reflect these new realities” (53, p. 699). However, they did not offer any evidence regarding the extent or direction of this research.

This paper reports the findings of a much-needed literature review on the topic of international entrepreneurship. A search was conducted using the ABI/Inform Periodicals Index which lists business articles from over 1,400 international journals, and which is widely held to be one of the most comprehensive sources for business-related citations. Keyword searches using

the terms “international entrepreneurship” and “international new venture creation” resulted in an initial list of 219 articles (from 121 journals) which were published from 1986 to 1995. Items were then eliminated from the list because they came from either the popular press, trade journals, or government reports. What remained was a database of 99 citations.

Next, each article was acquired from the library for closer scrutiny. Only those items which were considered by the author to be both “entrepreneurial” *and* “international” were retained for further analysis. To qualify as “entrepreneurial” an article had to conform to the framework suggested by Gartner () and discuss: (a) individual entrepreneurs (i.e., their characteristics and how they differ from other individuals), (b) processes involved in new venture creation (e.g., start-up, marketing, or marshaling resources), (c) environmental factors effecting the level entrepreneurship (e.g., development programs, venture capital structures, or socio-economic conditions), (d) small or entrepreneurial organizations (e.g., small exporting firms), or (e) special topics within the field of entrepreneurship (e.g., franchising, or intrapreneurship). To qualify as “international” an article had to: (a) make comparisons between two or more countries, (b) discuss a non-U.S. phenomenon, or (c) address a topic considered to be in the domain of international business (e.g., exporting). This more rigorous round of review reduced the database to 51 articles. A summary of the number of articles in each of the above categories is found in Table 1.

Insert Table 1 about here

Review of the Literature

Individual Entrepreneurs

There was great variety between the eight articles included in this category. Two sets of authors addressed issues surrounding female entrepreneurs in specific country contexts. Erwee (18) cited archived data to assert that entrepreneurship amongst black South African women is on the rise. Siu and Chu (45) conducted eighteen in-depth interviews with female entrepreneurs in Hong Kong and found that the personal problems associated with starting a venture outranked financial difficulties for these women. They concluded that the Chinese socio-cultural environment is problematic for aspiring female entrepreneurs. Two other papers highlighted differences in developing economies. Quddus (39) reported on the phenomenal growth of the ready-made garment export industry in Bangladesh -- the only billion dollar manufacturing and export industry in the country -- and surveyed 36 entrepreneurs to probe the nature of this success story. Kolvereid and Obloj (26) compared the attitudes of entrepreneurs from the United Kingdom, Norway, and Poland. and discovered that Polish entrepreneurs functioning in a post-communist context do not perceive their environment to be any more hostile than do British entrepreneurs, but receive support services only from the private sector.

Three studies examined “types” of entrepreneurs in various cultural contexts. Birley and

Westhead (7) looked at the differences between “novice” and “habitual” business founders in Great Britain and found that the latter are younger at founding, more likely to use personal finances, and have divergent reasons for starting their venture than the former. McGrath, MacMillan, and Scheinberg (33) contrasted entrepreneurs and non-entrepreneurs in eight countries. Their findings indicated that there is an underlying pattern of values shared by entrepreneurs despite the cultural diversity of their origins. Befus, Mescon, Mescon, and Vozikis (5) examined the nature of small expatriate companies operating in developing countries by interviewing 43 business persons in Honduras. Evaluation of the motivation for investment, types of enterprises, and traits of the entrepreneurs revealed that expatriate small businesses are a unique phenomenon. The final article in this category (42) compared 436 undergraduates from the United Kingdom, the United States, and Ireland and found support for the hypothesis that “predisposing” factors (e.g., background, personality, and perception), situational factors, and “having a business idea” act independently and in conjunction to direct students into entrepreneurial careers.

Entrepreneurial Processes

Almost all of the articles in this category are the work of McDougall and Oviatt who have mapped out the theoretical underpinnings of this phenomenon (35). These researchers have pioneered the study of enterprises which are international from inception -- firms which choose not to internationalize after a period of domestic maturation, but which “derive significant competitive advantage from the use of resources and sale of outputs in multiple countries” (32, p. 1) *from birth*. In the very first empirical investigation of this phenomena, McDougall (30) surveyed 188 new firms in the computer and communications equipment manufacturing industries. She showed that global start-ups significantly differ from their domestic counterparts in terms of strategy and industry structure. Internationals pursue broader market-based strategies, control numerous distribution channels, serve diverse market segments, and develop high visibility. In addition, they emphasize a more aggressive entry strategy, utilizing outside financial and production resources to penetrate numerous geographical locations. A follow-up study of the same firms two years later (31) demonstrated that early international sales are positively associated with relative market share but not ROI.

Two later articles, McDougall, Shane, and Oviatt (32), and Oviatt and McDougall (36), were based on a multiple case study of global start-ups. The former verified that: (a) founders possess special competencies for combining resources across national boundaries, (b) early internationalization is necessary to avoid path-dependency, and (c) founders prefer hybrid organizational structures, such as strategic alliances and networks. The latter added a description of several forces which seem to drive the creation of global start-ups, and a list of characteristics of successful firms. In critiquing Oviatt and McDougall (36), Hordes, Clancy, and Baddaley (23) pointed to the MCI / British Telecom formation of Syncordia to suggest three further requirements for global start-ups: (a) instant critical mass, (b) development and leverage of knowledge workers, and (c) global coordination.

The final article in this category was a comparison of the planning characteristics of U.S. and Japanese entrepreneurs (10). The researchers examined eleven medical products firms and

nine electronics firms in Japan and the U.S. and concluded that they were similar in several ways. For example, they were all sophisticated planners and adaptive to environmental shocks, with abilities to perceive market niches and compete against large firms. On the other hand, there were key differences in the source of venture funds, the formality of the planning process, the role of government and large business, and the long term orientation of the firms.

Environmental Factors

These articles investigated the environmental factors surrounding entrepreneurship. They comprise the largest group in the literature review and are summarized in Table 2. As suggested by Gnyawali and Fogel (22), they were further grouped into three subcategories -- (a) publications which addressed general environmental conditions for entrepreneurship, (b) studies which described the environmental conditions of a particular country or region, and (c) articles which delineated the role which public policy plays in shaping the entrepreneurial environment. Since most of the thirty-two items in this category make political policy prescriptions, it was often a difficult distinction to make. However, the subcategory decision was based on whether or not an article *primarily* spoke to the connection between the general environment and entrepreneurial performance (“a” above), or the indirect effect of public policy on other environmental factors. In addition, each article was evaluated to determine which of the five environmental dimensions posited by Gnyawali and Fogel (22) were discussed: (a) government policies and procedures, (b) socioeconomic conditions, (c) entrepreneurial and business skills, (d) financial support, and (e) non-financial support to businesses.

Insert Table 2 about here

Small or Entrepreneurial Ventures

Three of the articles in this category dealt with the nature of small exporting firms. Yeoh (54) developed a conceptual model for understanding the interaction of entrepreneurship, government promotions and export performance. Walters and Samlee (51) compared large and small exporters and found that differences between the two groups was not as great as expected. Small firms were just as committed to exporting as large firms, however, managerial support of export activities was more prominent in the larger firms. Erramilli and D’Souza (17) examined the foreign market entry behavior of 141 small and large service firms. Results from their research suggested that in industries characterized by low levels of capital intensity, small firms are just as likely as large firms to choose foreign direct investment as the mode of entry.

The final article in this category identified critical success factors in the use of joint ventures in Third World countries. It contended that further research is necessary regarding the link between international and local operations -- especially for smaller firms. It proposed a framework for assessing the fit between small firms in developed nations, and the Third World firms that join them in joint ventures.

Discussion

There are some clear limitations to this study. The ABI / Inform Index does not contain any references from a few more recent international entrepreneurship journals -- notably, *Entrepreneurship, Innovation, and Change*, *Entrepreneurship and Regional Development*, and *Journal of Enterprising Culture*. It is certainly to be expected that these newer journals contain articles not included in this review. In addition, it is possible that articles centering around specific non-U.S. countries would not be located by the keyword searches invoked in this research. Future research might include searching by non-U.S. country name.

However, this review provides interesting food for thought, and suggests directions for future research efforts:

1. More studies need to compare the characteristics and behaviors of individual entrepreneurs across cultural and national boundaries. Only three studies were found which made such comparisons. Some evidence was found for a set of shared values, but more confirmatory and expansive research is called for.
2. McDougall, Oviatt and a few others have laid the groundwork for the study of global entrepreneurship, but more studies are needed to “fill in the gaps”. What are the contexts in which global entrepreneurship is mandated? How can global start-ups be assisted?
3. Other entrepreneurial processes have not been addressed in the international realm. No studies were located which examined international funding, marketing, or human resources from an entrepreneurial perspective.
4. The majority of environmental factor articles were descriptive in nature. More studies are called for which develop and test hypotheses regarding the role of the environment in shaping international start-ups and new ventures.
5. Finally, much more could be done in comparing large and small firms in the international business arena. How do entry strategies differ? How are they differentially affected by public policies? Where might smaller firms have a strategic advantage?

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TABLE 1
Number of Articles by Category

“Entrepreneurial” Criteria	“International” Criteria		
	Multi-Country	Non-U.S.	International Business Activity
Individual Entrepreneurs	3	5	0
Entrepreneurial Processes	2	0	5
Environmental Factors	16	14	2
Small or Entrepreneurial Ventures	0	0	4

TABLE 2
Summary of Articles Related to Environmental Factors

Research Stream	Citation	Environmental Dimensions Addressed ¹					Summary of Findings
		a	b	c	d	e	
General Environmental Conditions for Entrepreneurship	Tyebjee & Vickery (1988)	X	X		X		Venture capital activity in Western Europe is related to the presence of a secondary stock market geared to the needs of a small ventures contemplating initial public offerings.
	Dana (1990a)	X	X				Differences in entrepreneurial activity and economic development between two nations which coexist on the island of St. Martin are explained by cultural and political disparities.
	Tervo & Nittykangas (1994)		X	X			A study of the Finnish economy reveals that unemployment is associated with business formation especially in regions where both the opportunities for entrepreneurship and the entrepreneurial qualifications of the population are strong.
	Bagnasco & Trigilia (1990)	X	X		X	X	A study of the social characteristics surrounding the development of small firms in a communist-based area highlights the importance of local political systems and the difficulties of effectively adapting to new economic constraints.
	Boyle (1994)		X				A case study of the British dairy industry illustrates the fact that the de-integration of large firms contributes to an increase in the level of self-employment.

	Peterson (1988)	X	X				A cross-cultural look at entrepreneurship reveals that it is culture-bound. Access to resources and sustenance through culture are key to entrepreneurship development.
	Huisman (1985)	X	X				A survey of entrepreneurs in 12 different countries found that not only is the entrepreneurial climate important, but the structure of the economy is also key. Therefore, government policy must be shaped according to the economic stage of the country.
	Bouchikhi (1993)		X	X			A framework is presented which offers a more realistic view of entrepreneurial processes by combining entrepreneurs, environment, chance, and outcome in a more complex and interrelated model.
	Shapero (1985)	X	X				Interest in entrepreneurship is proliferating worldwide. According to the author, it benefits the economy, the individual, and the organization and should be encouraged.
	Morrow (1988)			X			With current technological advances and threatened by global competition, American entrepreneurs are challenged to penetrate foreign markets and become more international in their orientation.
Descriptive Studies of the Environmental Conditions of a Specific Country	Tang & Yeo (1995)	X	X	X		X	Singapore's recent techno-economic development is described, and a model is developed emphasizing the importance of foreign multinationals in driving technological progress.
	Kurtulus (1987)	X	X	X			Turkey is a rapidly industrializing nation but has lacked a comprehensive government policy toward small businesses. It is suggested that business education place more emphasis on entrepreneurship.

	Wang (1986)		X	X			The management style of Chinese managers is increasingly becoming “Americanized” through a process of educational exchange. As a result, Chinese managers are expected to become more entrepreneurial.
	Maschmeyer, Yen, & Yang (1993)	X					Despite the introduction of three major reforms designed to improve the economic health of China’s state enterprises (the State Enterprise Law, the Bankruptcy Law, and the Contract Responsibility System), most state enterprises are not performing well.
	Iasin (1995)	X	X				The Russian economy is at a critical juncture and the author suggests eleven steps to make the transition to stabilization.
	Szegedi (1989)	X	X	X	X		Due to its head start on the road to economic and political reform, Hungary offers foreign investors many beneficial possibilities.
	Simoës (1988)				X		A multi-criteria ranking of 26 industries in Portugal resulted in the identification of five sectors with varying attractiveness for the inflow of foreign direct investment.
	Scheela (1994)				X		Four Singaporean venture capital companies with varying investment strategies were studied. Results showed that partnerships tend to follow the U.S. model, while corporations have characteristics of both the U.S. and Japan.
	Schmitz, et al. (1990)	X					New rules and treaties produce investment opportunities in Germany, Czechoslovakia, and Hungary.

The Role of Public Policy in Shaping the Entrepreneurial Environment	Patricof (1989)	X			X		International venture capital will continue to expand as countries other than the U.S. create a favorable atmosphere.
	Dana (1990b)	X					The Canada-United States Free Trade Agreement is summarized and implications for small businesses discussed. It concludes that this agreement will create jobs for both countries primarily in the small business sector.
	Abetti (1992)	X		X		X	The authors present a cost-effective, low-risk strategy for technology-based regional economic development involving increased infrastructure and environmental audits.
	Fath (1994)	X	X	X	X	X	Alternative industrial strategies are discussed for the East-Central European countries in transition.
	El-Namaki (1990)	X	X	X		X	Small enterprise development efforts are often unproductive due to commonly held misconceptions regarding small businesses and entrepreneurs. It is suggested that policies play to entrepreneurial strengths, seek to lower entry and survival barriers, and encourage the development of business incubators.
	El-Namaki (1988)	X	X	X		X	The supply and lifetime of entrepreneurs is constrained by entry, survival and exit barriers. Public policy to encourage entrepreneurship in developing countries should take these barriers into account.
	Chorda (1995)	X	X	X		X	Strategies are proffered for advancing technopolitan development strategies. It is suggested that interactions be fostered between the scientific, technological and productive infrastructure.

	Bianchi (1994)	X	X	X		X	The new industrial policy of the European Community stresses that adjustments must be supported by the development of a favorable environment for entrepreneurship and innovation.
	Alvarez (1993)	X	X				Entrepreneurship has become immensely popular in management education. The author state that its rise was due to the failure of previous economic ideas and the centrality of U.S. business knowledge. Despite this, however, the entrepreneurial movement presents very different profiles in each country.
	Baumol (1986)	X	X				Entrepreneurship is inferred to be a key to economic growth. Also, the central direction of an economy is less of an impediment to the exercise of imitative entrepreneurship than to initiative entrepreneurship. Therefore, LDCs might consider encouraging imitators rather than attempting to support initiators.
	Stanworth & Gray (1992)			X		X	Most small business owners in Britain have no professional training in business management and avoid business education even though they perceive a need in this area. Their reticence may be overcome by developing stronger personal relationships with potential trainees.
	McBrierty & O'Neill (1991)					X	The recent experiences of Trinity College in Dublin, Ireland illustrate the potential contribution of educational institutions to economic growth, and the worth of entrepreneurial enterprise to higher education.
	Gibb (1993)			X		X	The author examines entrepreneurship education within the education system, defining its goals, developing a model, and connecting it to broader educational outcomes.

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- a = government policies and procedures
 - b = socioeconomic conditions
 - c = entrepreneurial and business skills
 - d = financial support to businesses
 - e = non-financial support to businesses