Editorial

Entrepreneurship, Competitiveness and Innovation

Mário Franco

CEFAGE-UBI Research Center, Department of Management and Economics, University of Beira Interior, Estrada do Sineiro, 6200-209 Covilhã, Portugal; mfranco@ubi.pt

Received: 7 August 2020; Accepted: 12 August 2020; Published: 14 August 2020

Abstract: This Special Issue, “Entrepreneurship, Competitiveness and Innovation”, comprises a selection of papers addressing approaches and tools to understand how entrepreneurship and innovation can be good vehicles for competitiveness. These studies address the multifaceted topics surrounding entrepreneurship, such as exploratory and exploitative innovation performance, inter-enterprise knowledge, clusters, entrepreneurial orientation, learning orientation, sustainable growth, etc. These topics include the definitions of the concepts of entrepreneurship, innovation, and competitiveness, as well as the identification of factors affecting these types of phenomena. Perspectives guiding the design of entrepreneurship and innovation are presented to be considered when implementing public policies for increasing economic growth and competitiveness. Papers use some support theories to explain the topics studied here, such as cluster theory, resources-based theory, social theory and institutional theory, among others. Thus, in general, this Special Issue is devoted to the study of the benefits of entrepreneurship, innovation practices, and competitiveness in various countries and regions worldwide, but mainly in China. Therefore, this Special Issue is of particular value for both academic research and the context of business.

Keywords: entrepreneurship; competitiveness; innovation; sustainability; clusters; inter-enterprise knowledge; entrepreneurial orientation

Introduction

Entrepreneurship has a crucial role in economic and social growth, competitiveness and innovation, and for society in general, and so countries have focused greatly on this phenomenon. This means that the entrepreneurship has aroused the interest of academics and policy-makers, and is increasingly a government priority [1]. However, entrepreneurship is a long process [2,3], full of uncertainties [4] and a process of concentrating various unique resources to create value [5]. In addition, various studies recognise the stimulating effect of entrepreneurship on economic development [6], innovation and competitiveness, reflected in the strong emergence of political measures to encourage entrepreneurial activity [7].

In this context, this Special Issue focuses on three topics (entrepreneurship, innovation and competitiveness) and has received many valuable papers/manuscripts which are meritorious for their focus on the better development of business and academic research in these related contexts. This Special Issue is composed of ten papers, of which some explore problems that urgently need to be addressed in social and sustainable entrepreneurship and other fields. The paper titled “Past themes and tracking research trends in entrepreneurship: A Co-Word, cites and usage count analysis”, written by Luis Javier Cabeza Ramírez, Sandra M. Sánchez-Cañizares and Fernando J. Fuentes-García, examined the evolution of research in entrepreneurship published in the Web of Science (WoS) database. A bibliometric content analysis was carried out as part of this investigation, allowing for a longitudinal study of the main research topics dealt with over time, ranging from classic topics such as its conception to more recent realities that include social and sustainable entrepreneurship. This paper located...
research trends by studying the evolution of citations and by incorporating use metrics. The results pointed to the existence of seven cognitive fronts that have marked the field’s growth and conceptual evolution. The evidence showed also how innovation has historically been the thread that links all the core themes. The topics and trends detected contribute specially to advancing the current discussion on entrepreneurship and coordinating future research efforts.

The paper titled “Inter-Enterprise Knowledge Heterogeneity on Exploratory and Exploitative Innovation Performance: The Moderating Role of Trust and Contract”, by Chen, Yiying Qu, Hao Ren and Zhuopin Guo, proposed a theoretical model to present the effect of inter-enterprise knowledge heterogeneity and alliance network governance mechanisms on enterprise innovation performance. The authors, with high-tech enterprises as the research object for empirical research, concluded that (1) inter-enterprise knowledge heterogeneity has a positive effect on exploratory and exploitative innovation performance, and (2) trust and contract have a moderating effect on the relationship between inter-enterprise knowledge heterogeneity and enterprise innovation performance.

The paper titled “Explanatory Factors of Entrepreneurship in Food and Beverage Clusters in Spain”, by Enrique Claver-Cortés, Bartolomé Marco-Lajara, Pedro Seva-Larrosa, Lorena Ruiz-Fernández and Eduardo Sánchez-García, showed how research into entrepreneurship has gradually changed its perspective over recent decades, from mainly being based on the psychological aspects of the entrepreneur to considering other elements relevant to the socioeconomic and institutional context. In the last few years, various lines of research have been developed to find new explanatory factors of entrepreneurial propensity in specific socioeconomic and institutional contexts, among which the authors highlighted local territorial agglomerations. This study links some of the most important aspects of company management and regional science, such as entrepreneurship, institutions and knowledge developed in the context of the industrial district/cluster. To reach this objective, analysis was conducted on a sample of how the degree of agglomeration, institutional thickness and knowledge affects new companies created in the last five years within the food and beverage clusters in Spain with data on 185 new companies located in them. The results show that company agglomeration and the presence of supporting institutions positively influence entrepreneurial capacity in these clusters. However, available knowledge has a negative influence on entrepreneurial capacity in these specialized environments.

The paper titled “A Study on the Effects of Entrepreneurial Orientation and Learning Orientation on Financial Performance: Focusing on Mediating Effects of Market Orientation”, by Yun Hee Cho and Joo-Heon Lee, aims to examine the mediating effects of market orientation on the relationship between entrepreneurial orientation and financial performance. The mediation effects of market orientation on the relationship between learning orientation and financial were also investigated. A total of 174 valid survey questionnaires were collected from Korean entrepreneurs, who were searching for angel investments or business consultants for growth. The most important research results were the following: (1) the innovative-proactiveness dimension of entrepreneurial orientation had a statistically significant effect on financial performance, but the risk-taking propensity dimension did not significantly affect financial performance; (2) the customer orientation dimension of market orientation fully mediates the relationships between innovative proactiveness and financial performance; (3) the competitor orientation dimension of market orientation showed a partial mediating effect on the relationship between innovative proactiveness and financial performance; and (4) learning orientation did not significantly affect financial performance. Thus, to increase financial performance, growth-seeking entrepreneurs need to improve customer orientation, competitor orientation, and innovative proactiveness.

The paper titled “Entrepreneurial Governance and Local Growth”, written by Amy Rader Olsson, Hans Westlund, and Johan P. Larsson, based on a survey completed by 15 municipal managers in all Swedish municipalities, showed the relationship between reported local development initiatives (entrepreneurial governance, EG) and growth of local employment. The authors found a weak but significant association between EG and employment growth on average and for urban municipalities
(but not for rural ones), all else equal. This can be interpreted as the notion that EG is more effective in bigger, growing municipalities than in smaller, declining ones. However, urban municipalities should on average have more resources for entrepreneurial governance than rural ones, as they have grown substantially faster for a long period of time. The result thus indicated that EG and growth are in a positive interplay of interaction. The study indicated several avenues through which entrepreneurial governance at a local level might be linked to local growth.

The paper titled “Achieving Success of Sustainability Development Projects Through Big Data Analytics and Artificial Intelligence Capability”, by Haili Zhang, Michael Song and Huanhuan He, studied how big data analytics capability (BDAC) and artificial intelligence capability (AIC) lead to sustainable innovation and performance. Based on Day and Wensley’s theoretical framework for diagnosing competitive superiority, the authors proposed a research model to investigate how sustainability design and commercialization mediate the relationships between two emerging capabilities and sustainable growth and performance. To test the proposed research model, empirical data from 905 sustainability development projects from China and the United States were collected. This study makes theoretical and managerial contributions to sustainable development theory. The findings revealed several interesting results. First, BDAC and AIC not only increase the proficiency of sustainability design and commercialization but also directly enhance sustainable growth and performance. Second, sustainability design and commercialization mediate the positive effects of BDAC and AIC on sustainable growth and performance. Finally, the empirical analyses uncover several cross-national differences. For sustainability design, BDAC is more important than AIC in the United States, while AIC is more important than BDAC in China.

On the other hand, the paper titled “How Knowledge Acquisition Diversity Affects Innovation Performance During the Technological Catch-up in Emerging Economies: A Moderated Inverse U-Shaped Relationship”, by Qiang Li, Jing-Jing Guo, Wei Liu, Xiao-Guang Yue, Nelson Duarte and Carla Pereira, explored the impacts of knowledge acquisition diversity (KAD) on innovation performance of domestic enterprises in China, and the technological contexts (in terms of a technology gap and technology development speed) under which KAD is most likely to contribute. Using panel data of the manufacturing industry in China over the 2001–2009 period, the results show that KAD has an inverse U-shaped relationship with innovation performance in terms of both product-related innovation performance (NPS) and knowledge-related innovation performance (PAT). Specifically, it reveals that the capability to generate technological innovation over time is dependent on how domestic enterprises manage their portfolio of knowledge-sourcing channels to learn from foreign enterprises. Moreover, it is shown that the technology gap significantly moderates the inverted U-shaped relationship between KA and both NPS and PAT. Technology development speed has a moderating effect on the inverted U-shaped relationship between KAD and innovation only in terms of NPS. The results of this study can help us to understand the relationships among technological contexts, KAD and innovation performance of domestic enterprises in emerging countries.

The paper titled “Entrepreneurial Business Tie and Product Innovation: A moderated mediation Model”, by Gang Wang, Linwei Li and Gang Ma, showed how radical innovation has attracted increasing attention in corporate sustainability research. Employing a social capital perspective, the authors explored how and when entrepreneurial business tie (EBT) enhances radical innovation by considering risk-taking as a critical mediator and environmental turbulence as a conditional factor of the mediation effect. Data were collected from 322 Chinese new ventures. The study revealed empirical support for the moderated mediation model. Specifically, EBT is positively related to risk-taking, while risk-taking is positively related to radical innovation. Risk-taking further serves as a mediator in the EBT–radical innovation relationship, and this indirect effect is stronger at a high level of technological turbulence.

The paper titled “Does Social Capital Increase Innovation Speed? Empirical evidence from China”, by Xiaotang Zhang, Haili Zhang and Michael Song, developed a “social capital–innovation speed performance” framework to investigate the mechanism of social capital influencing innovation speed,
which in turn affects sustainable organizational growth and performance. Based on data collected from 125 Chinese firms, hierarchical moderated regression analyses indicated that structural social capital positively affects sustainable organizational performance but has no significant impact on sustainable innovation speed; relational social capital has no significant impact on sustainable organizational performance and is negatively correlated with innovation speed; cognitive social capital positively correlates with sustainable organizational performance and affects innovation speed; and government ties affect sustainable organizational performance and positively impact innovation speed. The study’s findings suggest that in China, increasing government ties is the most important social capital to creating sustainable organizational growth and performance. Both cognitive social capital and government ties are conducive to accelerating innovation speed, which gives firms a sustainable competitive advantage to achieve sustainable organizational performance.

The last paper, “Study on the Relationship Between Political Connections and Corporate Re-entrepreneurial Performance”, by Zhao Wang, Xiaobing Liu and Qinhua Liu, based on both resource-based theory and institution-based theory, studied political connections, acquisition of entrepreneurial resources, institutional environment and corporate re-entrepreneurial performance in the same research framework. Using data from 223 real estate companies in China as a sample and with the help of the statistical tools SPSS22.0 and Mplus7.0, the study examined the internal influence mechanism of political connections on corporate re-entrepreneurial performance as well as the mediating effect of acquisition of entrepreneurial resources and the moderating effect of institutional environments. The empirical results showed that both explicit political connections and implicit ones have positive impacts on corporate re-entrepreneurial performance through the mediating effect of acquisition of entrepreneurial knowledge resources and entrepreneurial asset resources. Meanwhile, the institutional environment positively regulates the relationship between political connections and corporate re-entrepreneurial performance. The results of the study suggested that political connections have positive impacts on corporate re-entrepreneurial performance under the circumstances of China’s transitional economy, but the impacts are restricted by institutional environment to a large extent.

Finally, the studies included in this Special Issue regarding the three topics—entrepreneurship, competitiveness and innovation—are particularly illuminating, which is valuable to both management theory and sustainable development. We are delighted to share this Special Issue with readers interested in sustainable entrepreneurship as well as other fields.

Acknowledgments: The guest editor thanks the authors for their very helpful papers that contributed to the development of this Special Issue in Sustainability.

Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflict of interest.

References
1. Malchow-Møller, N.; Schjerning, B.; Sørensen, A. Entrepreneurship, job creation and wage growth. Small Bus. Econ. 2011, 36, 15–32. [CrossRef]


© 2020 by the author. Licensee MDPI, Basel, Switzerland. This article is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).