RELATIONSHIP STRATEGIES; EXPLAINING IDIOSYNCRASIES IN ENTREPRENEURS’ INTERNATIONALISATION; (NOT TRAITS, NOT RATES, BUT ‘MATES’) (SUMMARY)

Ted Fuller
University of Teesside, United Kingdom, ted.fuller@tees.ac.uk

Telma Barbosa
University of Viçosa, Brazil

Recommended Citation
Fuller, Ted and Barbosa, Telma (2007) "RELATIONSHIP STRATEGIES; EXPLAINING IDIOSYNCRASIES IN ENTREPRENEURS’ INTERNATIONALISATION; (NOT TRAITS, NOT RATES, BUT ‘MATES’) (SUMMARY)," Frontiers of Entrepreneurship Research: Vol. 27: Iss. 20, Article 2.
Available at: http://digitalknowledge.babson.edu/fer/vol27/iss20/2

This Summary is brought to you for free and open access by the Entrepreneurship at Babson at Digital Knowledge at Babson. It has been accepted for inclusion in Frontiers of Entrepreneurship Research by an authorized administrator of Digital Knowledge at Babson. For more information, please contact digitalknowledge@babson.edu.
SUMMARY

RELATIONSHIP STRATEGIES; EXPLAINING IDIOSYNCRASIES IN ENTREPRENEURS’ INTERNATIONALISATION; (NOT TRAITS, NOT RATES, BUT ‘MATES’)

Ted Fuller, University of Teesside, United Kingdom
Telma Barbosa, University of Viçosa, Brazil

Principal Topic

Entrepreneurs’ selection of international markets appears diverse and idiosyncratic. The diversity produced by individualistic agency of the entrepreneur and contextual conditions, defeats attempts to produce normative theory of internationalisation in entrepreneurial firms. Recent attempts to theorise this idiosyncrasy include mediation (Oviatt and McDougall 2005), serendipity (Crick and Spence 2005; Harris and Wheeler 2005) and cognition (Zahra, Korri et al. 2005), all of which imply individualised explanation for deviations from rational choice.

Our analytical perspective considers the social power inherent in entrepreneurial activities and its influence on internationalisation. This acknowledges social capital, for example network relationships, as a powerful medium for entrepreneurs. Also it acknowledges a constructionist explanation of particular performances, i.e. it considers the way entrepreneurs construct the meaning of relationships, in the context of doing business with others.

Method

In depth interviews with the owners of five small businesses provided substantial longitudinal (historic) data of their internationalisation activities. The data provide evidence of 24 market entries by entrepreneur-owned small businesses. Further analysis of this evidence from a constructionist perspective is used to identify reasons and strategies for making these choices.

Results and Implications

As at least 22 of the 24 market entries were explained by network activities, the results are consistent with the network theory of internationalisation, i.e. foreign market entry is a function of the ongoing inter-organisational interactions between the focal firm and its network (Johanson and Vahlne 1990; Johanson and Mattsson 1988). The generalised concept of interactions is elaborated by further analysis. We develop the argument that internationalisation is constructed through relationship strategies and that as entrepreneurs exhibit a variety of relationship strategies; their construction of the opportunity arising from relationships can be at least partly explained in this way.

The cases illuminate the concept of relationships strategy, i.e. the purposeful approach to personal and business relationships through which internationalisation is manifest. This we suggest is a contribution to normative theory with regards the everyday practices of entrepreneurs and the policies designed to support international development by entrepreneurs, and in particular those in small enterprises.

CONTACT: Ted Fuller; ted.fuller@tees.ac.uk; (T): +44 1642 342905; (F): +44 1642 342 867; Teesside Business School, University of Teesside, Middlesbrough, TS1 3BA, UK.