

6-13-2015

ENTREPRENEURIAL MOTIVATION IN SUSTAINABLE ENTREPRENEURSHIP: HOW MOTIVATION FACTORS IMPACT THE ENTREPRENEURIAL PROCESS (SUMMARY)

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Recommended Citation

Fischer, Denise and Mauer, René (2015) "ENTREPRENEURIAL MOTIVATION IN SUSTAINABLE ENTREPRENEURSHIP: HOW MOTIVATION FACTORS IMPACT THE ENTREPRENEURIAL PROCESS (SUMMARY)," *Frontiers of Entrepreneurship Research*: Vol. 35 : Iss. 5 , Article 6.

Available at: <https://digitalknowledge.babson.edu/fer/vol35/iss5/6>

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≈ SUMMARY ≈

**ENTREPRENEURIAL MOTIVATION IN SUSTAINABLE
ENTREPRENEURSHIP: HOW MOTIVATION FACTORS
IMPACT THE ENTREPRENEURIAL PROCESS**

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Principal Topic

There has been growing recognition that a transition towards a more sustainable future is needed. Entrepreneurs are seen as key agents for that transition by launching sustainable products, services, and processes (Hall et al., 2010). Currently, we know little about the motivations of sustainable entrepreneurs in the early-stage venturing process, even though interest in this topic is steadily increasing (Hall et al., 2010). Entrepreneurial motivation plays a fundamental role for the understanding of new venture creation processes (Herron & Sapienza, 1992; Cohen et al., 2008; DeTienne et al., forthcoming). Motivation can be seen as an important variable to explain why some individuals recognize sustainable development opportunities and others do not (Patzelt & Shepherd, 2011). However, we lack knowledge on how motivation affects the new venture creation process.

Method

We conducted longitudinal case study research (Langley, 1999; Van de Ven, 2007) between fall 2014 and spring 2015 on a selected sample of eight sustainable ventures in Germany. Our data collection consists of transcriptions of interviews with venture founders, as well as of written archival data from internal and external sources. Interview data was coded and interpreted independently by at least two researchers in order to ensure reliable and valid interpretation. We used single case and cross-case analysis to analyze the digitally recorded and transcribed interviews.

Results and Implications

Our research shows that sustainable entrepreneurs are highly intrinsically motivated and that trade-offs between monetary gains and sustainable values exist. Further, we find two different mindsets of sustainability-oriented entrepreneurs whereby regulatory focus theory (Higgins, 1998) helps to explain the two encountered self-regulatory systems. Whereas some entrepreneurs see sustainability as part of their ideal self-state, others understand it as part of their ought self. We also discovered effects of motivation on specific steps over time, e.g. on the acquisition of funding, as prevention-focused entrepreneurs tend to take funding from investors that share their sustainable values while promotion focused entrepreneurs acquire financial resources in alignment with venture growth. Our insights help in understanding what motivates nascent sustainable entrepreneurs what could be applied in entrepreneurship education and venture coaching to equip a larger number of sustainable entrepreneurs who target ecological and social well-being.

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