DO FIRST IMPRESSIONS MATTER? EXAMINING INFORMATION VISUALIZATION IN EARLY STAGE ENTREPRENEURIAL VENTURE PRESENTATIONS (SUMMARY)

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Principal Topic
When starting a new venture, entrepreneurs make countless presentations to prospective stakeholders in order to secure the resources needed to launch and support their venture. These presentations promote information sharing with prospective stakeholders so they can then make informed decisions regarding future investment and involvement in the venture (Chen, Yao & Kotha, 2009). The nature, manner and efficacy with which entrepreneurs share or convey information is central to their ability to recruit financial support and successfully launch a new venture (Clark, 2008; Gregoire, de Konig & Oviatt, 2008). These presentations represent the entrepreneurial “first impression’. Our study asks, whether first impressions matter – we specifically examine the manner in which entrepreneurs organize information in a visual format to attract potential investors and collaborators.

Methods
First, we analyzed the posters of 40 entrepreneurs from a series of inventor showcase events to categorize the type of information presented and the visual design of the poster. We coded the content according to factors important to VC investment decision-making and to the precepts of information visualization theory. Second, we utilized post conference survey data to conduct a statistical analysis of the linkage between the nature of the data presented, and the establishment of investment relationships or other collaborations important to an early stage venture.

Results and Implications
Our study offers substantive guidance to early stage entrepreneurs in regard to the manner in which they visually represent their venture. We provide concrete suggestions regarding the design and content of visual materials meant to attract investors and collaborators. The findings might also assist the targets of these presentations (i.e. investors, policy makers, and partners) by alerting them to subconscious preference or bias dictated by visualization and design techniques. Finally, we provide a contextualization of the information visualization field within the domain of entrepreneurship. In general, information visualization theory studies rely on experimental design where the subjects are paid to participate. Our paper examines the application of information visualization tenets and theory in a real world context, where the implications can effect new venture development and success.

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