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AMCIS: Awareness and Possession of Digital Competencies for Digital Entrepreneurship

TREO Talk Paper

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Abstract

With the rapid development and expansion of digital technologies, we see the emergence of digital entrepreneurship which is the intersection of digital technology and entrepreneurship. As it gains prominence in the economic ecosystem, this topic is of interest to academics, practitioners and policymakers in general. The pre start-up phase in entrepreneurship, which is of particular interest to researchers and entrepreneurial enthusiasts, is still under-researched. Understanding what drives the incessant urge to start a new business in the minds of potential entrepreneurs is still in inchoate stages, given the high risks and uncertainties involved in start-up businesses. Extant literature in entrepreneurship has identified several determinants of persistence of thinking about start-up opportunities, which is essential for entrepreneurship. However, our literature review indicates that there is a paucity of similar research in digital start-ups (Hi-Tech Internet businesses). Our study is designed to fill this gap.

This study seeks to explore how digital technologies can drive and influence entrepreneurship. We apply the proposed Digital Entrepreneurship framework (Recker and von Briel 2019) for analysis. The framework suggests three dimensions of digital technologies which can influence entrepreneurship: digital enablers, digital outcomes and digital contexts of entrepreneurial processes. We explore the constructs of awareness of importance of digital capabilities (i.e. digital strategies which include both general and specialized business analytics capabilities), and possession of digital competencies (i.e. knowledge, skills and training). We test the effects of these constructs as drivers of persistence of thinking about opportunities for digital start-ups. We intend to explore which of the above two factors is a necessary and/or sufficient condition for success in entrepreneurship and which dimensions in the framework need to be emphasized.

The study has been funded by a research grant and data has been gathered in the state of Florida from approximately 1200 entrepreneurs intending to start a business. Criteria for selection of respondents included: "Intending to start business within next four years", "Resident of State of Florida", and "Have not started a business before". Qualtrics panels conducted the initial screening to select the pool of respondents to send the survey. Three phases of survey selection were conducted to gather the sample of 1200 completed questionnaires. The final research sample comprised of 600 women and 600 men intending to start a business in Florida.

Our results show that the awareness of importance of digital capabilities positively affect the persistence of thought about digital start-ups, whereas awareness of the importance of business analytics capabilities does not. More interestingly, the effect of the interaction between awareness and possession is significant and positive on persistence of thought. That is, greater the awareness of importance of digital capabilities, stronger is the relationship between possession of relevant digital competencies and the persistence of thought to start Hi-Tech (Internet) businesses. We expect that this study will contribute to the exciting and novel research stream in digital entrepreneurship, provide managerial implications and insights and offer opportunities related to digital enablers, digital outcomes and digital contexts of entrepreneurial processes.

References

Recker, J., and von Briel, F. 2019. "The Future of Digital Entrepreneurship Research: Existing and Emerging Opportunities" in *Fortieth International Conference on Information Systems, Munich 2019*.