

A review of entrepreneurship research published in the hospitality and tourism management journals

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Abstract

This research evaluates the entrepreneurship research in field of the Hospitality and Tourism Management to obtain a better understanding of its progress and potential. The study examines entrepreneurship articles published in seven leading hospitality and tourism management journals from 1986 to 2006. Findings indicate that *Tourism Management*, *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, and *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management* are the top three journals that publish entrepreneurship research. However, the amount of entrepreneurship research in the leading hospitality and tourism management journals appears less than expected. Publication of empirical work has not increased over time over the past 21 years, and theoretical work remains at a consistently low level. Even for empirical studies, there is a lack of methodological sophistication of analytical and statistical tools. The results suggest a concern that entrepreneurship research remains under studied; therefore, more theoretical work is needed to map a course of study and to develop a framework unique to the entrepreneurship domain of hospitality and tourism research. The good news is that there are abundant opportunities for scholars in hospitality and tourism management to explore the field of entrepreneurship as a viable research paradigm.

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1. Introduction

The hospitality and tourism industry has been a fertile field for entrepreneurial business. Thomas Cook's tour packages, Ray Kroc's McDonald's, Walt Disney's theme parks, J.W. Marriott's and Conrad Hilton's hotels are just a few classic entrepreneurial brands in the world of hospitality and travel enterprises. Driven by an inner need to succeed and to make a difference in some way, these truly successful entrepreneurs focused on their opportunities and pursued them with great dedication and courage in the face of opposition and setbacks. All of these entrepreneurial leaders have left their names and businesses in the history of the hospitality and travel industry.

Rapid changes in the world economy have made the pursuit of entrepreneurial opportunity increasingly important to wealth creation in most societies. Entrepreneurship

research is a relatively young field. Some argue that it is in its adolescence (Low & MacMillan, 1988), others that it is still emerging (Busenitz, West, Shepherd, Nelson, & Zacharakis, 2003). Supporting these positions are arguments suggesting that entrepreneurship is a field (1) in which the search for a distinct theory of entrepreneurship continues, (2) that is characterized by low paradigmatic development (Ireland, Reutzel, & Webb, 2005), and (3) that scholars have frequently evaluated its progress and status as an independent field of study (Davidsson, 2003; Sarasvathy, 2004; Smith, Gannon, & Sapienza, 1989).

Entrepreneurship study in the field of hospitality and tourism has begun to gather some momentum in recent years. Student texts such as those produced by Thomas (1998) and Morrison, Rimmington and Williams (1999) have aided the growth of courses on entrepreneurship and small business management within hospitality and tourism degree programs. The status of entrepreneurship scholarship has not been evaluated systematically, which prompts us to ask the questions: How much entrepreneurship

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research has been published? What are some of the characteristics of the entrepreneurship research? What is the research progress and potential for scholars? To explore these issues, we analyzed entrepreneurship research published in major hospitality and tourism management journals from 1986 to 2006. We are fundamentally interested in the status of entrepreneurship scholarship in terms of volume of publications, research method, and research focal areas, which may indicate importance, sophistication, and expectation.

2. Literature review

Several studies in the management discipline have referenced and discussed entrepreneurship in terms of its development. Harrison and Leitch (1996) found that entrepreneurship research published in management journals from 1987 to 1993 represented a very small percentage of all published entrepreneurship research. Aldrich and Baker (1997) compared management and entrepreneurship research published from 1990 to 1995 and concluded that progress toward coherence in paradigm development in entrepreneurship research has been limited. No powerful unifying paradigm exists, nor are there multiple coherent points of view. Entrepreneurship studies tend to be less sophisticated in sampling frame; hypothesis development, statistical analysis, and dynamic longitudinal analysis than are organizational studies in the more established disciplines (Aldrich & Baker, 1997).

Several scholars have discussed the legitimacy issue of entrepreneurship research, referring to the extent to which research in entrepreneurship advances useful knowledge (Busenitz et al., 2003). Harrison and Leitch (1996) indicated that entrepreneurship research had to create a distinct position in the context of existing structures to achieve academic legitimacy. Entrepreneurship becomes a more distinct field of research when new theory is articulated, which is then recognized by scholars in other fields of research (Busenitz et al., 2003). Distinctiveness is better established when questions, concepts, and relationships are identified that are different from those proposed by scholars in other disciplines and are unanswerable by them using their research lenses. Such theoretical contributions serve to identify and bracket new concepts and relationships. Once a solid theoretical base is developed, the focus of scholarship should begin to shift to more empirical work. Empirical studies test and validate important questions about the theoretical-defined concepts and relationships. Empirical studies also serve to develop a finer-grained view of various aspects of the phenomenon (Busenitz et al., 2003).

Based on the above propositions, Busenitz et al. (2003) examined a set of entrepreneurship articles published in management journals between 1985 and 1999. Of the total 5291 articles published in seven management journals during the time frame of their study, 97 addressed entrepreneurship (1.8%). Statistically, a regression analysis

demonstrated a positive trend for entrepreneurship publication in management journals over time. However, the results did not indicate a significant positive trend in the number of empirical entrepreneurship articles published in major management journals over time or the number of theoretical entrepreneurship articles published in major management journals over time. The findings indicated that theory development in entrepreneurship is not well represented in mainstream management journals. Without defining knowledge, the field remains permeable to other disciplines. The authors suggested that until clear theories are established, the field may never gain the consensus and legitimacy academics seek and may only be viewed as a venue in which other disciplinary perspectives may be tested. Authors also provided many examples of research questions that hold promise for addressing important questions within the domain of entrepreneurship. Therefore, much more theoretical work is needed and encouraged.

Chandler and Lyon (2001) reviewed the methodologies employed in nine mainstream entrepreneurship journals between 1989 and 1999. In their analysis, 416 articles were empirical work, which represented 70% of the total papers reviewed over a decade. A more recent study by Ireland et al. (2005), editors of the *Academy of Management Journal* (*AMJ*), reviewed the entrepreneurship research published in *AMJ* from 1963 to 2005. The results concluded there is a continuing increase in the number of entrepreneurship publications in *AMJ*, that *AMJ* published more entrepreneurship research from 2000 to the present than in all previous time periods combined and the research's sophistication increased over time (for instance, use of structural equations modeling is growing). These editors encourage that more empirical entrepreneurship research should be published in *AMJ*.

To better understand the progress and potential of entrepreneurship research in the hospitality and tourism context, this study intends to review the visibility of entrepreneurship research in major hospitality and tourism research journals. The study proceeds as follows. First, we will evaluate how many entrepreneurship articles have been published in the past. Adhering to the pattern of theory development followed by empirical testing, the following three hypotheses are tested in the study.

Hypothesis 1. The number of entrepreneurship research articles published in major hospitality and tourism journals will increase over time.

Hypothesis 2. The number of theoretical research articles will increase over time in the allocation of entrepreneurship articles in the major hospitality and tourism journals.

Hypothesis 3. The number of empirical research articles will increase over time in the allocation of entrepreneurship articles in the major hospitality and tourism journals.

Second, we will examine the sophistication of research methods, including data collection and analytical tools, in

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