



Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

Journal of Business Research

journal homepage: [www.elsevier.com/locate/jbusres](http://www.elsevier.com/locate/jbusres)

## A business network perspective on unconventional entrepreneurship: A case from the cultural sector

Alessandro Pagano\*, Francesco Petrucci, Roberta Bocconcelli

Department of Economics, Society, Politics, University of Urbino, Via Saffi 42, 61029 Urbino, Italy

## ARTICLE INFO

## Keywords:

Unconventional entrepreneurship  
 Entrepreneurial process  
 Community  
 Business network

## ABSTRACT

Entrepreneurship is perceived as a key process to be promoted in the current economic and social context. Academic researchers, policy makers and practitioners acknowledge that a “traditional” view on entrepreneurship is no longer sufficient to encompass all possible forms of entrepreneurship. In this line of thought there is a growing interest to gain a deeper understanding of ‘unconventional’ entrepreneurial initiatives. This paper aims to provide a contribution on the development process of unconventional entrepreneurial processes, placing emphasis on their networked nature. The paper adopts the IMP approach as the guiding conceptual framework and examines a single longitudinal case study of RATATA Festival concerning figurative arts. This research contributes to the emerging literature on unconventional entrepreneurship emphasizing the key role of the interplay between the community of passionate people promoting the initiative and the wider business network progressively enacted along the different editions of the Festival.

### 1. Introduction

Entrepreneurship is perceived as a key process to be promoted in the current economic and social context. The European Commission aims at “reigniting the entrepreneurial spirit in Europe” (European Commission, 2013) and adopts a broad definition of entrepreneurship as “a dynamic and social process where individuals, alone or in collaboration, identify opportunities for innovation and act upon these by transforming ideas into practical and targeted activities, whether in a social, cultural or economic context” (European Commission, 2006).

Within the economics and management literature an effort has been made to catch the changing nature of entrepreneurship taking into account insights from emerging practices of entrepreneurs acting in the current complex market context, as well as by adopting an interdisciplinary perspective. As a result, phenomena such as social entrepreneurship and cultural entrepreneurship received increasing attention based on the assumption that a “traditional” view on entrepreneurship is no longer sufficient to encompass all possible forms of entrepreneurial processes (Gehman & Soublière, 2017; Grimes, McMullen, Vogus, & Miller, 2013).

More recently, there has been a growing interest to gain a deeper understanding of “unconventional” entrepreneurial phenomena (Cova & Guercini, 2016). Authors in this stream of thought highlight various emerging features: different - not only profit - as well as mixed

motivations (Marcketti, Niehm, & Fuloria, 2006); the key role of the “user” nature of the entrepreneur, along with the surrounding “community” in a wide range of leisure or hobby activities (Haefliger, Jäger, & Von Krogh, 2010; Hargadon & Bechky, 2006; Shah & Tripsas, 2007); the nonlinear path when compared to more traditional entrepreneurial processes (Kim, Longest, & Lippmann, 2015; Shah & Tripsas, 2007); the development through a variety of forms - different from the more traditional shape of the “business firm” - such as temporary organizations, associations or events (Lindkvist & Hjorth, 2015; Steyaert & Hjorth, 2003).

We believe that the process of unconventional entrepreneurship - supposed as non-linear and influenced by a “collective” dimension - deserves to be further investigated. In particular, while the literature acknowledges the role of social relationships and social network in such initiatives (McKeever, Jack, & Anderson, 2015; Pohja, 2009), less attention has been addressed to the interplay between social and business relationships (Guercini & Ranfagni, 2016). In this respect we consider the IMP (Industrial Marketing and Purchasing) approach as a useful tool to enrich our understanding of the unconventional entrepreneurial processes in the light of its emphasis on the relevance of interaction at the actors, activities and resource layers, combining social and business network perspectives (Aaboen, La Rocca, Lind, Perna, & Shih, 2017; Havenvid Ingemansson & La Rocca, 2017; Snehota, 2011).

Relying on this line of thought the purpose of this paper is to

\* Corresponding author.

E-mail addresses: [alessandro.pagano@uniurb.it](mailto:alessandro.pagano@uniurb.it) (A. Pagano), [francesco.petrucci@uniurb.it](mailto:francesco.petrucci@uniurb.it) (F. Petrucci), [roberta.bocconcelli@uniurb.it](mailto:roberta.bocconcelli@uniurb.it) (R. Bocconcelli).

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2018.07.012>

Received 14 January 2017; Received in revised form 3 July 2018; Accepted 9 July 2018

0148-2963/ © 2018 Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

provide a contribution on unconventional entrepreneurial processes using the IMP approach (Håkansson, Ford, Gadde, Snehota, & Waluszewski, 2009; Håkansson & Snehota, 2017) as the guiding conceptual framework emphasizing the networked evolutionary nature in terms of the overall actors, resources and activities (i.e. business network) involved. We argue that there is need for empirically based studies that could shed light over the features of unconventional entrepreneurship as called upon by different authors (Cova & Guercini, 2016; Shepherd, 2015; Steyaert & Hjorth, 2003).

Therefore the research question to be addressed is the following:

- how does an unconventional entrepreneurial process develop in a community/business network context?

In order to pursue this goal this paper investigates unconventional entrepreneurship in the cultural sector. Specifically this paper presents a single longitudinal case study of an event (RATATA' Festival) that, born in a community of passionate people of a variety of contemporary figurative arts (art books, graphics, illustration, comics) mainly with the aim of being self-consumed, progressively is transformed in a more complex entrepreneurial initiative with an increasing degree of business orientation, different types of resources and activities involved, changing roles played by different actors in different phases of development.

The paper is structured as follows. In section two the background literature of the study is presented. We first introduce the concept of “unconventional” entrepreneurship. Then we explore more in depth contributions on the entrepreneurial process with emphasis on unconventional venture development. Finally, the IMP approach and IMP entrepreneurship-related studies are introduced and discussed, in order to outline the theoretical framework of the study. The research methodology is presented in section three. The fourth section concerns the case study description, while section five addresses the main findings and discusses the results of the analysis. The last section draws final remarks with particular emphasis on the contribution of the study and on further research developments.

## 2. Background

### 2.1. Unconventional entrepreneurship

An increasing number of contributions in the entrepreneurship literature cope with the changing nature of entrepreneurial ventures. The traditional - or conventional (Kim et al., 2015) - view of entrepreneurship might not be adequate to represent all possible forms of entrepreneurship as shown in the current evolving and changing market practice. Various studies highlight new emerging features leading to forms of “unconventional” entrepreneurship as proposed by Cova and Guercini (2016), which could be conceived as an “umbrella concept” - rather than a specific analytical framework - aimed at encompassing a number of novel typologies and insights stemming from studies on contexts of entrepreneurship, such as the “lifestyle entrepreneur” (Marcketti et al., 2006), the “user entrepreneur” (Shah & Tripsas, 2007), the “accidental entrepreneur” (Aldrich & Kenworthy, 1999), and the “tribal entrepreneur” (Cova & Dalli, 2007).

These studies point out specific emerging features which have spurred recent research in the entrepreneurship field: the mixed nature of motivations, the “user” nature of the entrepreneur, the role of the community surrounding the entrepreneur, the degree of availability of resources, the non-linear entrepreneurial process.

Various scholars highlight the role of non-profit motivations which are often combined with emerging profit/business orientation. The lifestyle entrepreneur (Marcketti et al., 2006) is a person that establishes its own business to improve his/her life-style, placing less emphasis on profit or economic motivations in general, while instead safeguarding and cultivating stronger family/personal relationships.

Other contributions highlight that cultural entrepreneurs are shaped by a complex - and often at odds (Eikhof & Haunschild, 2006) - mix of financial/economic and art/culture-related goals, where the balance is often oriented toward the latter, given that cultural entrepreneurs “are geared to toward the realization of cultural values” (Klamer, 2011: 154) and therefore the market is a tool to achieve that goal.

A number of studies underline the role of individuals as experienced and skilled users being aware of new or emerging personal needs, who then directly set up companies to realize products and/or services to satisfy them (Shah & Tripsas, 2007), instead of involving existing firms or organizations as in the “lead user” context (Urban & Von Hippel, 1988).

Various contributions point out the role of communities in the entrepreneurial process. The passion held by the entrepreneur is often shared and promoted within a community of people, based on a mix of physical and virtual interaction. The “tribal entrepreneur” (Cova & Guercini, 2016) develops jointly or shares the idea and the prototype with his/her community or “tribe”, as in the sports context. The role of the community is conceived in different ways: as contingent counterpart where the entrepreneur acquires values, meanings, symbols and goals shaping his/her action (Hargadon & Bechky, 2006); as functional support network able to provide economic and socially-related resources (Shah & Tripsas, 2007); as a potential market niche for the purchase of the first product/service realized by the new firm (Cova, Kozinets, & Shankar, 2007).

A further feature is the lack of resources - financial, organizational, technological - affecting these new forms of entrepreneurship. For example, cultural entrepreneurship is often characterized by limited financial and organizational resources, thus labelled as “sans capital” (Ellmeier, 2003), thus showing a strong “independent” and “do-it-yourself” attitude (Scott, 2012). Alternative sources might be represented by family linkages, personal savings or by established relationships with government institutions (Klamer, 2011; Scott, 2012).

Various studies point out that unconventional entrepreneurial ventures might not follow a linear process as in the case of accidental entrepreneur (Aldrich & Kenworthy, 1999). In this respect, it has been argued that such non-conventional entrepreneurs undertake a slower development of the entrepreneurial venture when compared with more “traditional” founders (Kim et al., 2015).

### 2.2. The entrepreneurial process

Entrepreneurship literature places great emphasis on understanding the features of the “entrepreneurial process” (Gartner, 1985; Shane & Venkataraman, 2000; Steyaert, 2007). The traditional view of entrepreneurship includes a clear set of elements and processes. The opportunity discovery is the first stage of the process and is conceptualized as a novel combination of resources, such as new products, services, organizing methods, or raw materials (Shane & Venkataraman, 2000). In the second stage, the potential entrepreneur assesses the commercial potential of the opportunity and might set up a new venture. In the third stage, the entrepreneur needs to interface his/her activities with the market in order to pursue a profit and develop the new venture (Shane & Venkataraman, 2000). The traditional model deals mainly with entrepreneur's traits and characteristics in terms of expertise, motivations, cognitive processes and emotional states (Baron, 2008; Eckhardt & Shane, 2003; Gartner, 1988; Zapkau, Schwens, & Kabst, 2017). Within this stream of studies various scholars have started to highlight the complex context where the entrepreneurial process is embedded. The environment and its main players are taken into consideration in various models (Bhidé, 2003; Bygrave, 2010; Eisenhardt, 1989; Gartner, 1985). Recent contributions highlight the need to explore entrepreneurship processes through a more fine-grained empirical analysis based on activities implemented within the process, combining both the individual and collective dimensions (Shepherd, 2015).

The entrepreneurial process has been examined also in

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/11005107>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/11005107>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)