

Social Construction of Entrepreneurial Success among SMEs

Abstract:

This paper treats entrepreneurship as a socially constructed concept. It aimed at investigating Entrepreneurial Orientation (EO) of Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) through the lenses of social construction perspective. For this purpose, the qualitative approach is suitable through employing interviews with SMEs' owners, founders, and managers. Throughout the interviews, both the social context including social ties, interactions, trust, and value systems, and also the leadership including firm ownership, leadership styles, top manager's personal values, and organizational culture are investigated in details.

Key words: Entrepreneurship; Entrepreneurial Orientation; SMEs; Social Construction Perspective.

Introduction

Entrepreneurship is an activity based on the interaction among different individuals, and it can be consequently meant as socially constructed concept (Anderson & Smith, 2007; Dodd, Jack, & Anderson, 2013; Jack & Anderson, 2002). While the literature is replete with valuable research about Entrepreneurial orientation (EO)- performance relationship (Casillas & Moreno, 2010; Grande, Madsen, & Borch, 2011; Anderson & Eshima, 2013; Cannavale & Nadali, 2019), it lacks the authentic view of the social construction perspective through which the social dynamism of the entrepreneurial process is thoroughly examined in specifically-defined contexts. Such perspective respects the idea that entrepreneurship means different things to different people (Anderson, Dodd, & Jack, 2012). Our study addresses the shortcoming by performing a qualitative research about the way EO brings about success in the social contexts of SMEs. Specifically-defined context in the entrepreneurship research helps avoiding probable misinterpretations based on the manipulations related to the institutional and contextual factors (Miller, 2011).

Also, the previous research lacks theory about the role of leadership in the EO-performance link (Cannavale, Nadali & Esemplio, In Review). We address the issue of leadership in this study through the social construction perspective, too. We do so, since the construction of business and entrepreneurial activities is affected by social ties and trust.

This paper's aim is at investigating leadership as well as the importance of the social context in creative SMEs trying to deepen the dynamics that underline this relation. Thus, the problems that we are addressing here are the following research questions:

RQ1- How does the social contexts affect Italian SMEs entrepreneurial success?

RQ2- What is the role of leadership in promoting success among SMEs?

The structure of this article is composed by a Theoretical background in which we explain the Social

Construction of Entrepreneurship and the development of a Bibliometric Literature review that helps us to deepen the analysis of a great amount of papers. The following Research framework explains the Analysis adding details about Method and Sample. This latter contains also information about firms that we collected through interviews and secondary data examinations. In conclusion, we describe Results - in order to clarify and answer to RQ1 and RQ2 - and Limitations and conclusions.

Theoretical Background

Social Construction of Entrepreneurship

According to the groundbreaking work by Berger & Luckmann (1991), *The social construction of Reality*, meaning is embedded in the society through reciprocal interaction among various players. Entrepreneurship is also considered by many scholars as a socially constructed concept: Lindgren & Packendorff (2009) claim indeed that “entrepreneurship is constructed in social interaction between individuals” (p. 24), while Anderson, Dodd, & Jack (2012) underline how that entrepreneurship has different meanings to different people, and Chell, (2000) considers that entrepreneurship is a specific concept in specific contexts. Dodd & Anderson (2007) state that it is the task of research to boost our knowledge of such constructionist view of the entrepreneurship through specific social contexts, and this study is dedicated to understanding the social construction of entrepreneurial orientation and the way it leads firms to success in a specific context.

EO, as a firm-level approach towards entrepreneurship (McGee & Peterson, 2019), is defined as strategy-making processes in the entrepreneurial decisions and new entry (Rauch, Wiklund, Lumpkin, & Frese, 2009; Lumpkin & Dess, 1996). Although EO caught the attention of many researchers in the last two decades, there are still unsolved issues about its definition (George & Marino, *The Epistemology of Entrepreneurial Orientation: Conceptual Formation, Modeling, and Operationalization*, 2011). Miller (1983) is probably the pioneer in defining EO through three

components of *Innovativeness*, *Risk-taking*, and *Proactiveness*. He believed all the three components must be present at a time so that a firm could be entrepreneurial. Another definition that is mostly cited throughout the literature considers five dimensions of EO including also *Competitive Aggressiveness*, and *Autonomy* by Lumpkin & Dess (1996). In this definition, the five dimensions are conceptualized in a way that might covary or vary independently. According to George (2011), the concept of EO is contextual and the complexity of the EO construct may result in various dimensionality in various contexts and countries. The history of the changes present in the various definitions and conceptualizations throughout the literature can help the audience get a better understanding about the problematic issues related to this concept. Also, the EO-performance link that is an interesting relationship in the literature (Lumpkin, Brigham, & Moss, 2010; Kantur, 2016; Karami & Tang, 2019), should also be in-depth analyzed so that the problematic issues could be detected. In so doing, we would need to perform a bibliometric analysis as follows.

A Bibliometric Literature Review

As the relationship between EO and performance is widely analyzed, we used a bibliometric analysis to explore the topic, addressing the large number of published papers in the best possible way.

We followed a structured process to identify the paper to be considered and analyzed. As a first step, the research was developed on the Web of Science, a particularly useful platform on which we explored the published literature from 1990 to 2019. We selected the database “Web of Science Core Collection” in order to focus our research and collect all papers considered useful for our fields.

The choice of keywords is essential to correctly explore the relationship between EO and company performance. Therefore, we have used the words "entrepreneurial orientation" in Title or Topic AND "firm performance" OR "firm growth" OR "firm survival" in Title or Topic. This first

research gave us about 12,000 papers supporting the fact that this EO-performance relation was deeply analyzed.

To set our type of research in an optimal way, we limit it to 4 Web of Science Categories “Management”, “Business”, “Economics” and “Operations research Management Science” that are the most populated and the most coherent to our analysis. In addition, we excluded “Book Review”, “Review”, “Proceeding paper”, “Editorial Material” and "Correction" so that we can analyze only articles. Last but not least, we refine our analysis only to English language in order to understand also core elements of the whole number of papers. As a matter of facts, this is only possible if all papers are written in the same language so that the it is possible to group them using the different keyword chosen by the authors.

The whole research resulted in 11,008 again supporting what we have previously stated about the significant and increasing publications related to the study object mentioned above (Figure 1).

In our opinion, it is necessary to add details to our analysis about annual production. This great number of papers were published on journals, some of which were more relevant that other. This difference is shown in Table 1.

We decided to add the first 20 rows to underline the gap among the first ones and the following ones. As we can see, the paper resulted from our research are not only increasing in number but the articles also receive particular attention and appreciation from the scientific community. This is evident because the first paper of the above Table are A and Q1 of categories such as Management and Business.

The importance of the journals interested in publishing articles focused on these fields is a sign that the EO and its influence on firm’s performance, growth and survival is one of the most discussed topics in the last 30 years and this relation is the center of discussions among many authors belonging to different theories.

The importance of the subject can’t only be understood by the increasing number of publications, but -

in our opinion - it is also clear from the territorial distribution of the publications (Figure 2).

We reported the first twenty countries, since there were substantial differences between the following that allowed us to add elements and insights to the analysis itself. As can be easily seen, the spread and attention to the topic is particularly widespread in countries that are part of various continents and areas (from the most eastern to the westernmost). In our opinion, this shows once again the relevance of the topic under study.

However, the difference between the United States and other countries that hold a predominant position in terms of percentage of publications is clear and certainly does not relate only to the analysis of the relationship between EO and performance.

Another important information is the one linked to authors that in the period 1990-2019 are more involved in deepen the analysis about EO-performance relation (Figure 3).

Now, to improve the analysis emphasizing the role of CEO, we develop our research in order to limit the collection of paper only to those containing also the word “CEO” and the word “entrepreneur”. We chose to add “entrepreneur” to the CEO because in the firms’ reality we have interviewed there is no difference between the property and the management, so the person in charge to take decision and to direct firm’s strategies is at the same time owner and manager of his own firm. Using “entrepreneur” we can cover a bigger range of articles avoiding ignoring important contributions in this field.

The search including “CEO” as keyword gave us 1.156 articles that, compared to the previous 11.081 of the research on the relationship between EO and performance, makes us understand that the role of the CEO is not particularly studied.

To support our analysis, we develop the second research – form the 11,081 articles collected previously – using the keyword “entrepreneur” in order to – as previously stated - avoid mistakes derived from the fact that SMEs usually don’t have CEOs but entrepreneurs. We wanted, again, to be sure that also using this different perspective there is no great articles amount related to the role of Entrepreneur in order

to emphasize this gap and fill it. The search resulted in 156 articles that are very few compared to the first research. The resulted collection of papers and the different numbers of papers are shown in Figure 4. The importance of theory can't be excluded from our analysis. The Social construction perspective as a crucial role in our paper because we want to understand dynamics that affect firm's behavior but that are not included strictly to companies' reality. The search gives us important feedbacks because there is a gap in using this theory in order to explore the relation between CEO and performance. The final research – adding in Topic the words “social construction” - derived from the 11,081 previous papers resulted in 960 articles.

These multiple researches gave us the possibility to have evidence of: 1. The importance of the relation between EO and Performance, that is the background of our analysis; 2. The existence of a very small number of paper – compared to the first research - relating to the role of CEO or entrepreneur in this relation and 3. That the social construction theory is used only in few papers to explore the CEO-performance relation. From these points, it is evident that with this paper we want to fill the gap that we found in the literature.

Research framework

The contribution of the present study to the already rich literature over EO and performance is mostly related to the fact that here entrepreneurship is analyzed through the lens of social construction perspective (Dodd, Jack, & Anderson, 2013). The perspective approaches issues such as entrepreneurship as an emic, culturally specific, issue rather than an etic, culturally universal, one (Coviello & Jones, 2004). This approach helps us analyze entrepreneurial success from the specific viewpoints of entrepreneurs in a context, since various phenomenon might be associated with different cultural, historical, and ideological orientations and experiences (Ogbor, 2000). According to the bibliometric analysis, stated above, it is inferred that an absolute majority of the relevant literature employed an etic approach toward EO using quantitative measures, and thus failing to take the culturally specific characteristics of the concept into consideration.

Another important shortcoming of the literature lies in the role of the decision-making people in

formation of entrepreneurial orientation and the expected success of the corresponding firms. Thus, our study is mainly focused on analysis of the role of CEOs in charge of entrepreneurial firms in promoting EO and therefore success in the specific social, cultural, and economic context.

Analysis

Method

In order to be able to analyze the social construction of entrepreneurial success, we employed a qualitative approach towards research to provide a thick description (Geertz, 1973) of the way SMEs act entrepreneurially in the social context of Italy. Then, we will reciprocally discuss the ‘as is’ findings of the cases under investigation with the ‘should be’ values of the corresponding society. Also, we will refer to the theory to explain better the practice of the entrepreneurial orientation at firm level in Italy and its effects on the firm success through the lens of decision makers.

Sample

According to the definition included in the Regulation (EU) No 1295/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 December 2013 establishing the Creative Europe Programme (2014 to 2020), we focus our analysis on creative firms. In the art 2.1 creative sectors are defined as *“all sectors whose activities are based on cultural values and/or artistic and other creative expressions, whether those activities are market- or non-market-oriented, whatever the type of structure that carries them out, and irrespective of how that structure is financed. Those activities include the development, the creation, the production, the dissemination and the preservation of goods and services which embody cultural, artistic or other creative expressions, as well as related functions such as education or management. The cultural and creative sectors include inter alia architecture, archives, libraries and museums, artistic crafts, audio-visual (including film, television, video games and multimedia), tangible and intangible cultural heritage, design, festivals, music, literature, performing arts, publishing, radio and visual arts”*.

To follow this definition, the industries in which the chosen firms compete are fashion, design and

jewelry. We analyze four case studies and all these companies are settled in the context of Campania Region, area in the South of Italy, particularly interesting because the Campania Region still lags behind Italy and Europe in terms of economic development according to Eurostat 2018. The information were collected from secondary sources (such as firms' websites and reports) and structured interviews that we submitted face-to-face to entrepreneurs who added also personal thoughts in answering. In this way, we can have a deeper analysis of the different firms thanks to the personal data given us by the interviewees adding value to the previously set questions.

For the purpose of clarity, we refer to these firms as "firm a", "firm b", "firm c" and "firm d" whose characteristics and dynamics are analyzed in details.

Chantecler

This is a very famous jewelry firm settled in Capri, a well-known island not far from Naples. This firm is emotionally linked to the place that inspires the creation of unique products since the designing process.

“Capri is where everything started for us. Everyday its energy, colours and scents give life to something extraordinary and unique, which we lovingly turn into jewels.” As a matter of facts, their jewels are recognizable giving to their production an immense value.

The interview with the entrepreneur highlighted the strong family character of the company, which, despite being very structured in the processes and organization of the value chain, retains a strong family imprint.

It is the family that takes the strategic decisions and maintains the leadership of the company, despite the fact that the management process has been started several years ago and has seen the hiring of highly qualified professionals with strong experience in the sector.

The entrepreneur has highlighted the criticality of integrating into the company people who have experience in prestigious, but different realities, characterized by a lesser family characterization and

significantly larger size of their company. Leading such figures, maintaining a leadership that guarantees brand protection and cultural identity is one of the most important challenges for family businesses and requires that even family members are given adequate hard and soft skills.

The strong presence of the family represents one of the main strengths of this company, which over the years has shown a high degree of flexibility, a fundamental resource for dealing with periods of economic crisis, which have had a major impact on the sector causing the closure of about 500 competitors. On the contrary, they have represented a moment of deep growth: rapid decision-making with a reduction in time to market and elasticity of production, a factor that has been critical, high innovation and creativity that is inspired by market trends and can ensure a perfect mix between brand identity and current output.

The company monitors the competition, creating products that are the result of reading the environment and the internal strengths. It has a proactive approach that guarantees it to compete successfully alongside multinationals in the sector and to be present also in foreign markets, even though Italy still accounts for 80% of turnover. The company is highly innovative, especially with regard to production, not only in terms of design, but also in terms of materials, and the management of logistics processes and the relationship between production and distribution. Technology plays a key role in the coordination and security assurance processes.

The cultural values of the context strongly influence the corporate culture. The structure of the company reflects the characteristics of the Italian family culture, although the company manages to combine tradition and innovation thanks to its strong orientation towards creativity. The family has worked to overcome the cultural obstacles to entrepreneurial development, overcoming the limits of external randomness that often affect the growth of SMEs in Campania and also taking a painful decision (transfer of the company to Northern Italy - precisely Milan - also because of the difficulty of working and recruiting valid resources in the Campania region).

In their experience there is a lack of proper interaction between the world of training and the world of

business and institutions should work to promote this meeting and to support the development, more than economic, cultural, of businesses in Campania, often penalized by the poor training of founders and successors. Little is still being done in terms of executive training, which could, however, represent an important key to overcoming the cognitive limits of Campania's SMEs and to help entrepreneurs to support the ongoing training of their employees. The Campania context, in the experience of the family, has great potential in terms of creativity, but lacks the structure and organization necessary to make them emerge and to ensure businesses.

Sharing with family members, concertation of decisions and continuous training are the key factors to ensure the overcoming of problems and creativity is certainly the key to the competitiveness of the company that is satisfied with the position achieved, although it continues to look ahead to opportunities for expansion both in the domestic market and on the foreign market.

Compared to internationalization, the main difficulties concern the management of agents and sample collections, which would require a considerable investment. Forms of partnership are difficult to practice also because of the limited margins that would not guarantee an adequate remuneration of the partner distributors. In conclusion, the company has a strong propensity for internationalization, but the exploration of new markets is limited by the need to support large investments and the desire to maintain strong control of the business.

It is a cultural enterprise, both because of its deep roots in the context of origin of which it expresses the culture, and because of the type of positioning that requires a strong protection of the identity and, for fifteen years, it has been in the forefront of the market.

Angela Puttini Jewelry

Puttini jewelry shop is located in Capri. The idea of the activity is to propose, in an international tourist and flourishing area, jewels that draw inspiration from the places and the cultural and popular traditions of the goldsmith's art of Capri and its surroundings, mostly craftsmen of the near areas of Naples. As a matter of facts, thanks to their art they give value to beautiful corals and cameos characterized by the

originality of the entrepreneur and enriched by new inspirations to the trend of contemporary jewelry.

The entrepreneur defines a conductor who has the task of keeping the control firm, even severely when necessary, but allow everyone to express their potential and contribute to the final result. It is a style of charismatic leadership based on empathy and the enhancement of human resources. A creative entrepreneur and strongly oriented towards innovation, she develops the ideas of the new lines of jewelry and objects that are then designed by professionals and created in laboratories that have been working in partnership with her for over twenty years.

It is a non-managerial company, even if a lot of work is done on the organization of roles, which are identified by analyzing in depth the attitudes, character and abilities of employees. Sharing is a fundamental value in the company and also the creative process is developed through the comparison with all employees, to whom the new idea is presented and who contribute with their ideas and insights to the realization of the final product.

Relationships are the key to the competitiveness of a company that prefers long relationships with its employees and that also with external stakeholders creates a system of strong interpersonal ties. The company is proactive and capable of adapting to and reacting to company changes. The creative process originates within the company, we do not look at competitors as far as production is concerned, but we look very much at the market, at the trend of economic and political phenomena, to be ready for any changes in the market even by varying the mix of materials used. The collections are the result of a deep research process that always tries to combine classicism, understood as the historic-cultural origins of the territory, and modernity in shapes, materials and colours.

From the market's point of view, innovation has not only involved the opening of sales points or the occupation of spaces in foreign concept stores, particularly in the United States, but also the creation of a track show formula, an itinerant itinerary that sees the entrepreneur meet Italian and foreign customers in different cities. In this case, too, relations are the basis for the development of such paths that could soon be transformed into co-branding paths with other creative entrepreneurs on the island

of Capri.

The entrepreneur defines her creative enterprise as a cultural enterprise. Culture, also understood as classical education, is at the base of the collections and the values of the culture of Campania such as a strong orientation towards relationships, the propensity to generate new ideas, the propensity to hospitality, dynamism and strong flexibility.

The propensity to risk is present, even if growth is weighted so as to always represent the style and culture of the company.

The relationship with the context is good, especially for the goldsmith's tradition and the possibility of collaborating with qualified and trustworthy craftsmen. In the past, security problems were greater, while now it seems that at least in the city it is easier to work without external pressure.

Nina Smith

Nina Smith is a company recently born in the world of fashion created by a young woman who takes inspiration from the Neapolitan territory. With her production of handmade sandals, created according to tradition, she brings out the colours and scents of the region with a particular emphasis on the characteristic nuances of the islands and Naples.

The entrepreneur calls herself a creative leader. She makes the decisions, but the company is seen as a "circle" or an "elastic" because she sees the employees not as posts on different levels, but as extensions. The decisional process is however centralized. The decisions are made by her formed and advised by members of her family, first of all her mother - who already has a great experience in management in the fashion industry at very high levels - working as a mentor even though she does not have a formalized role within the company itself. The value of the family is therefore underlined, as the entrepreneur, while centralizing decisions within herself, strongly emphasizes the bond with family members, defining them as "pillars" with which she also makes numerous trips abroad to explore markets other than the domestic environment. However, employees have a role in advising her about products or

questioning ideas in order to create products that are increasingly attractive on the fashion market.

It is a company with a strong innovative character as the entrepreneur decides not to set up ad hoc shops, but create windows (one of which is now very important in the Amalfi Coast) in order to make its product unique and can always change place. For her, in fact, the windows are something different that allow the brand to "travel the world" making the product not so recognizable because "it is in a certain place", but because its design and its colors are key features.

Another innovation concerns the turnover of the products and therefore every 3-4 months proposes new products because "in fashion there is no more seasonality".

For her, luxury is not a super expensive product, but a particular product. As far as the context is concerned, for her the territory is very important as it is the inspiration for many of her models. Many of her creations are "unique" and refer to the traditional elements that characterize the Campania Region and in particular Naples. The product must give many sensations that must touch almost all the senses, so the entrepreneur emphasizes the extreme care for the choice of materials. She is an entrepreneur who "looks to internationalization". In fact, she already has several showrooms in Dubai and other parts of the world (she sold in Japan), so she is not very affected by the dynamics typical of the Campania Region and Southern Italy.

She is satisfied with her positioning as a young company and is already well placed on the market. Despite her "overseas" ideas, she is still tied to the territory as she is inspired by it in the creation of her products. According to her, Italy - especially the Campania Region - being rich in works of art encourages creativity, which she defines as something innate in the Neapolitan people.

Firm d

This firm prefers to stay anonymous. It is very young and it is born by the entrepreneur's absorptive capacity while she was working in a firm that created work clothing. She produces this type of outfits following the tradition and using the materials that are mostly produced in the Campania Region.

On the basis of the different requests, the production can be created either through standardized

methods - in the case in which the customer requests a high number of homogeneous garments - or it can follow a different procedure based on the personalized production of the product, which is always designed in a new way and sewn by hand.

Again, decisions are taken by the entrepreneur entirely (also the financial level), only model and price are two elements discussed with employees specialized in these fields. It can be argued therefore that the decision-making power is strongly centralized.

The company is quite traditional and does not differ much from other companies operating in the same sector. It is innovative only for a part of the production that is the sewing of some fabrics that - if made individually - are sewn by hand. This gives an added value that makes the product in these cases unique compared to others.

Being a traditional family firm operating in the Southern part of Italy, it has a low propensity to risk. The capital is made available by the entrepreneur and has not benefited from loans or other financial instruments.

As far as production is concerned, the company seizes opportunities on the basis of requests from previous years so it can be argued that this company is not proactive, but chooses to rely instead on data as secure as possible so as to change its production quantity according to customer requirements. The entrepreneur is not oriented towards internationalization, but only towards cooperation with neighboring regions. This *modus operandi* is typical of many small businesses in Campania, which consider expansion to markets other than domestic only as a last step after having reached a good position at regional and then national level.

Working in the context of the Region, the businesswoman emphasizes the "typical tailoring production of the Campania Region", giving value to the type of traditional sewing. However, the company is affected by the culture at the time of the decision of the sale price because - knowing the typical attitude of some companies operating in the same environment - chooses to define the highest price in such a way that it can then make it more flexible at the time of bargaining.

Results

The case studies analyzed allowed us to explore our research questions and to understand some of the dynamics behind them. The results obtained provide us with a lot of information regarding the context and the leadership (the two key elements on which we focused our analysis) that we are trying to explain here.

With regard to our **RQ1**- How does the social contexts affect Italian SMEs entrepreneurial success? -, all the four firms are strongly linked to the social context they belong to, specifically Campania Region in Italy, but there are some differences between them. Among the women entrepreneurs we can differentiate between those with a more domestic vision (b and d) and those with a more international focus (a and c). This degree of openness moderates the influence that the context has for the company. In other words, if a company has the objective of becoming international from the very beginning, the dynamics of southern Italy are attenuated by a strong propensity to expand in markets other than the domestic one. Despite this first difference, as already mentioned, all companies are influenced by the territory. While the former are totally incardinated in this under various aspects, the latter are linked to the Region from the point of view of "creativity".

It can therefore be concluded that all the companies are creatively connected in a very strong way to the context, but their degree of interdependence with this varies according to the aspirations of international expansion, and also to the kind of expertise and services they look for.

With regard to our **RQ2**- What is the role of leadership in promoting success among SMEs?-, leadership is confirmed to be a crucial element for the success, also in the specific context of our four firms. As common in this region, the four firms do have strong family values, reinforced by the fact that managerial positions – specifically top managerial and executive positions, are in the hands of the entrepreneurs (first or second generation), who manage all the strategic activities, and take all the relevant decisions. The style of charismatic leadership characterizes these realities because - particularly in the regions of Southern Italy - the charisma of the leader is fundamental for the correct achievement of a satisfactory

business performance.

Companies differ in the degree to which employees are involved in the decision-making process, but - being creative companies in any case - they are usually involved in the approval phase of the models, being considered experts and professionals in the sector. The sectors indicated as "creative", in fact, are characterized by entrepreneurs and employees highly qualified in their field, therefore having particular knowledge and skills in relation to design and material.

In conclusion, however, it can be argued that these firms prefer a style of centralized leadership that allows to spread within the company the vision of the leader in such a way as to pervade the company of unique values that can create a strong difference in management and product compared to other competitors.

Limitation and conclusions

This paper is a first attempt to investigate leadership as well as the importance of the social construct in creative SMEs. Until now, the analysis has focused on Italy, and specifically on the Southern Region Campania. We collected four interviews, which allowed us to get some first insights into the topic. The role of the family and the strong leadership of the entrepreneurs, with a limited involvement of managers in top strategic position is a common trait of these firms, even of those which are more oriented to international markets. The leadership style is mostly charismatic, but also team working seems to be very important. Entrepreneurs try to overcome the lack of professional competences relying on the strong involvement of human resources, which stay long in the firm.

In all the four companies creativity is a key of the competitive advantage, and the innovation process is slim, although different. In the more structured firms, innovation is an in-out process, which involves trend watching as well as creative ideas of the designer, mostly family members. In the less structured firms, innovation is mostly internal, the entrepreneur relies on her ideas while involving employees for the improvement and implementation of the innovative products. In all the firms, tradition is another key of the competitive advantage, so we have four examples of creative tradition-lead companies.

The context does not represent a limit in the early stages of development, and it's for all a source of creativity, ideas, and networking. But when the firm becomes more structured, the lack of services, the low transparency and the weak cooperation with universities and schools becomes a strong limitation to firms' growth, and one of them has finally decided to move to find a more firm-friendly environment, which could sustain its growth.

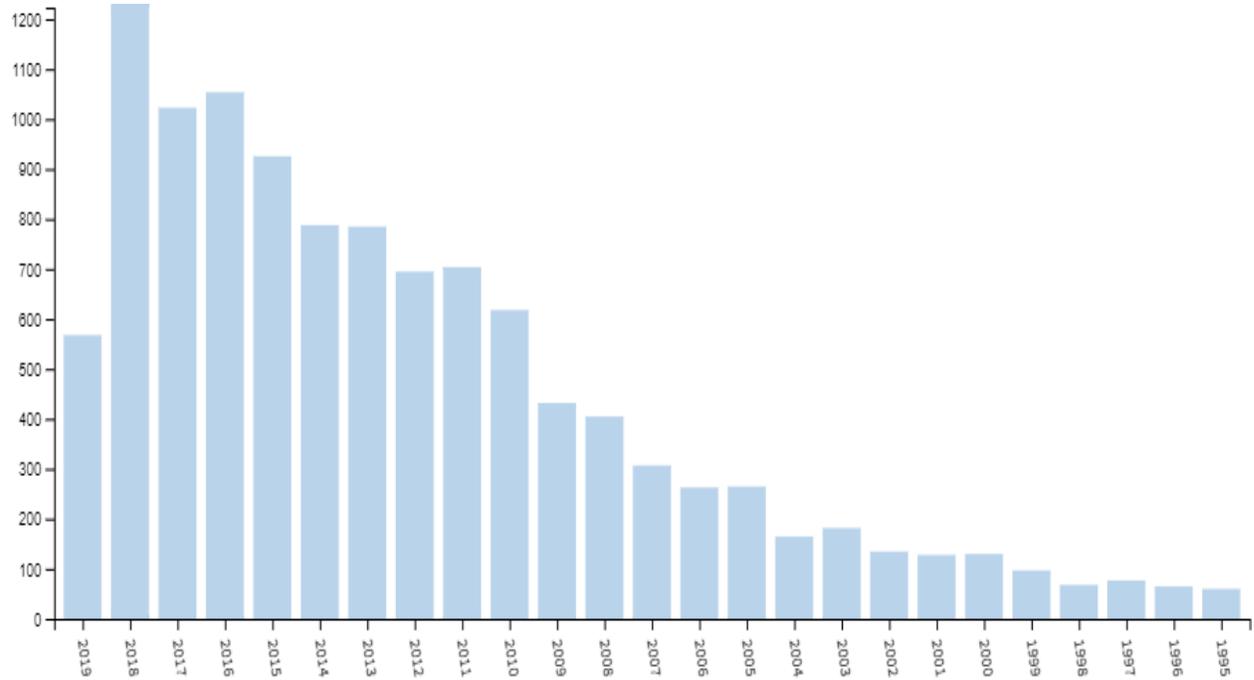
Although interesting, our analysis suffers some important limitation. The analysis is still very limited, and we are collecting new case studies and interviews to obtain generalizable knowledge. In addition, the literature review should be reinforced by a thematic analysis, and in the future we'll limit the review to the last ten years, and apply biblioshiny to improve the knowledge we can get from the bibliometric analysis.

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Figures and Tables**Figure 1: Annual production**

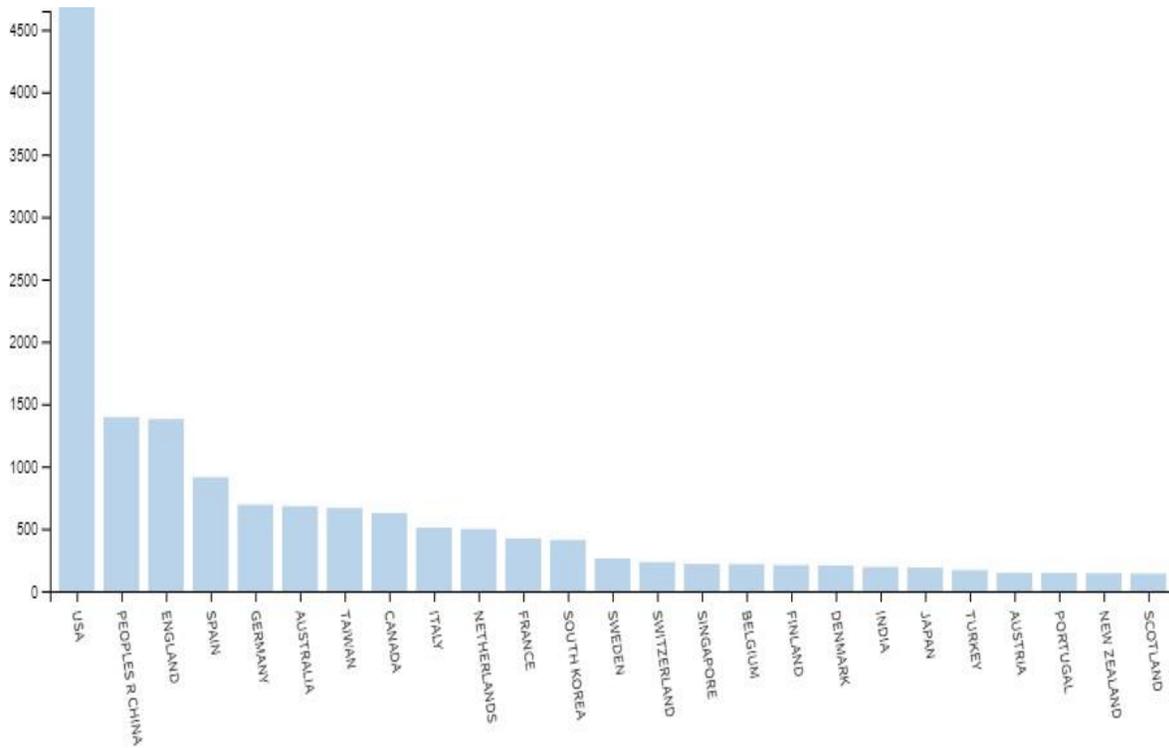
Source: our elaboration

Table 1: Most relevant sources

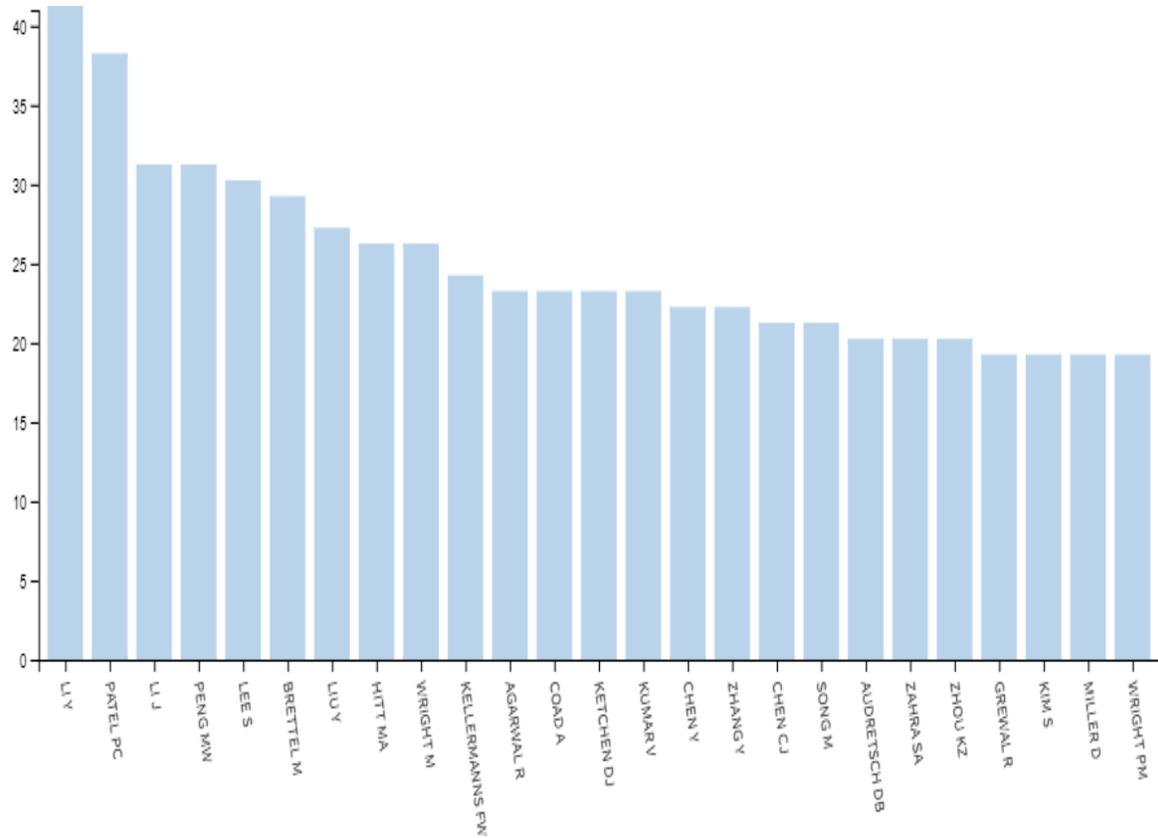
Journal	% of 11,081	Bar Chart
STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT JOURNAL	472	4.260 %
JOURNAL OF BUSINESS RESEARCH	410	3.700 %
INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT	275	2.482 %
SMALL BUSINESS ECONOMICS	232	2.094 %
MANAGEMENT DECISION	204	1.841 %
INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF PRODUCTION ECONOMICS	185	1.670 %
ACADEMY OF MANAGEMENT JOURNAL	184	1.660 %
JOURNAL OF BUSINESS ETHICS	184	1.660 %
JOURNAL OF MANAGEMENT	179	1.615 %
CORPORATE GOVERNANCE AN INTERNATIONAL REVIEW	157	1.417 %
INDUSTRIAL MARKETING MANAGEMENT	150	1.354 %
HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT	140	1.263 %
JOURNAL OF MANAGEMENT STUDIES	125	1.128 %

RESEARCH POLICY	125	1.128 %
JOURNAL OF SMALL BUSINESS MANAGEMENT	124	1.119 %
ORGANIZATION SCIENCE	119	1.074 %
INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS REVIEW	118	1.065 %
JOURNAL OF BUSINESS VENTURING	118	1.065 %
JOURNAL OF FINANCIAL ECONOMICS	114	1.029 %
ASIA PACIFIC JOURNAL OF MANAGEMENT	108	0.975 %

Source: our research on Web of Science

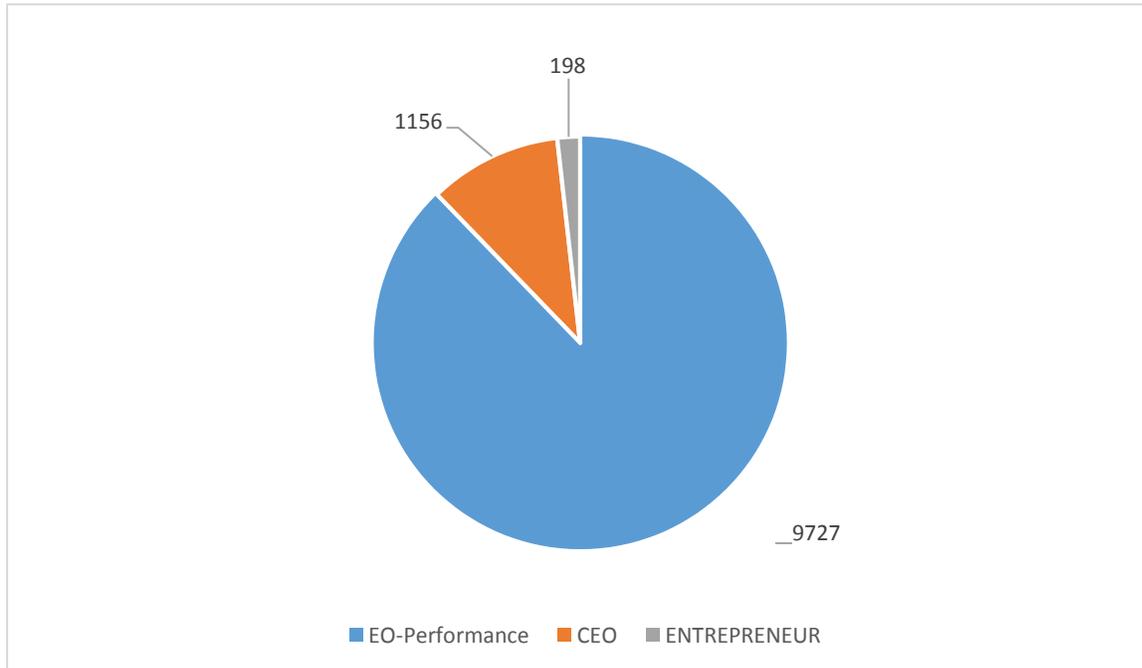
Figure 2: Country production

Source: our research on biblioshiny

Figure 3: Most relevant authors

Source: Web of Science elaboration

Figure 4: Papers' division



Source: our elaboration