Exploring Immigrant and Transnational Entrepreneurship in the Australia and China context

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Abstract

In the context of increasing trade links between China and Australia the thesis concentrates attention on the business activities and cross-cultural experiences of entrepreneurs that move competently and confidently within and between these quite different economic environments. In current literature these individuals are categorized as transnational entrepreneurs representing a subset of immigrant entrepreneurs, which indicates their migration or international experiences. This thesis takes a broad view about transnational entrepreneurship and intends to look for the essence of it beyond the limitation of immigrant identity. Upon this interests, this research addresses a number of core problems:

1. Why and how did first generation Chinese immigrants engage in entrepreneurship in Australia?

2. How and with what success did first generation Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs achieve social embeddedness in Australia?

3. What are the main characteristics of transnational entrepreneurship, with special reference to the Chinese and Australian contexts?

Forty of entrepreneurs were interviewed comprising 34 Chinese immigrant and 6 Australians transnational entrepreneurs focusing in depth on the life and business experiences in a transnational context spanning China and Australia. The 34 immigrant entrepreneurs were 1st generation Chinese to provide contemporary insights that differ to the post immigrant studies. On the other hand, the 6 Australian transnational entrepreneurs provided a contrasting sample of entrepreneurs doing business predominately in a single country being China in this case. Both samples were embedded in a context that stretched their capabilities to adapt to a rapidly changing environment together with the need to quickly adapt to different

regulations and ways and means of doing business. A thematic analysis method extracted 6 themes from interviews with Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs and 4 themes from interviews with Australian transnational entrepreneurs. These findings focused on a number of major challenges is the adaptive capabilities, such as knowledge accumulation about new market, connectivity to personal and social networks, cognitive change and capability to capture market needs and create market values. Meanwhile, findings from both groups appear some commonalities and differences based on these individuals' cross cultural and entrepreneurial experiences.

What emerged from the analysis and comprises the new knowledge contribution are: first, exploring the entrepreneurial journey of the first generation immigrant entrepreneurs and unveiling their intrinsic and cultural motive and impact of entrepreneurial human capital. The exploration of these immigrant entrepreneurs' life and business trajectory provides a compensate view to the existing theoretical perspectives in immigrant entrepreneurship study. In addition, it links immigrant entrepreneurship study to the central issues of entrepreneurship research by identifying that entrepreneurial human capital as the fundamental character of outstanding immigrant entrepreneurs. Second, this research identifies the essence of transnational entrepreneurship which has been neglected from previous study. The essence of transnational entrepreneurship is to obtain sufficient and applicable cross cultural knowledge, experiences, and resources, thus, develop a transnational synergy between two countries. Additionally, this contribution also suggests that transnational entrepreneurs could be any entrepreneur who has cross border experiences and business interests. This means that, entrepreneurs do not have to be immigrants to be transnational. Third, this research raises a point that the entrepreneurial human capital is critical for these individuals to achieve transnational synergy, which leads to a success for transnational entrepreneurship.

Declaration

I certify that this work contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in my name, in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text. In addition, I certify that no part of this work will, in the future, be used in a submission in my name, for any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution without the prior approval of the University of Adelaide and where applicable, any partner institution responsible for the joint-award of this degree.

I give permission for the digital version of my thesis to be made available on the web, via the University's digital research repository, the Library Search and also through web search engines, unless permission has been granted by the University to restrict access for a period of time.

I acknowledge the support I have received for my research through the provision of an Australian Government Research Training Program Scholarship.

Signed:_____

Date:_____

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Glossary List

ABS - Australian Bureau of Statistics

Co-ethnic - People who are recognized as belonging to the same ethnic group

EE - Ethnic entrepreneurship

Entry model - A strategy or method of delivering products or services to a new targeted market

GEM - Global Entrepreneurship Monitor

IE - International entrepreneurship

INV - International new venture

IOM - International Organization for Migration

MBA - Master of Business Administration

OECD - The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development

SMEs - The category of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises

TE - Transnational entrepreneurship