



Literature Review and Research Agenda for Artisan Entrepreneurs

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Abstract

With the development of science and technology and industrial revolution, the traditional artisans are changing to modern craftsmen. In the context of China's national strategy of mass entrepreneurship and innovation, people's entrepreneurial enthusiasm was greatly stimulated, and a large number of successful artisan entrepreneurs emerged. However, the research on artisan entrepreneurs in China is still in the exploratory stage. This paper will comprehensively clarify the origin and concepts of artisan entrepreneurs, and sort out the relevant research results, and propose the future research agenda for artisan entrepreneurs.

Keywords: Artisan entrepreneur; Craftsman Entrepreneurship; Literature Review

Introduction

As a way to promote the sustainable development of regional economy, entrepreneurship has been given new context and concern. In recent years, artisan entrepreneurship has gradually risen and made significant contributions to local development, which has attracted the intense attention from scholars, entrepreneurs and policy makers. Combining entrepreneurial thinking with professional skills and promoting regional economy through artisan entrepreneurship has become a hot research topic. Relevant research shows that artisan entrepreneurs, which represent high-quality technical and skilled talents, are playing an increasingly important role in China's industrial upgrading and economic growth. Nevertheless, the research on artisan entrepreneurs in China is still in the exploratory stage.

On the basis of reviewing relevant literature, this study focuses on answering four research questions: how to define the artisan entrepreneurs? What are the types of artisan entrepreneurs? What factors can promote artisan entrepreneurship? In what aspects the future research on artisan entrepreneurship can be carried out? In the following part, firstly, the concept of artisan entrepreneurs is discussed in depth, and relevant concepts are discussed and ana-

lyzed; Secondly, the existing relevant research results with regard to the types of artisan entrepreneurs are reviewed and argued; Finally, based on the literature research, this study explores the driving factors of artisan entrepreneurship. Based on these rationales, the potential directions and interesting issues are proposed to the future research.

Literature Review

The concept of artisan entrepreneurs

With the development of cultural industry and emerging of craftsmen economy, scholars are increasingly interested in artisan entrepreneurs. The earliest research on artisan entrepreneurs originated from the field of cultural entrepreneurship, especially in cultural tourism sector. Mcauley [1] explored how craftsmen use their handicrafts to find new markets in the cultural tourism industry. Ratten et al. [2] noted that artisan entrepreneurs usually have a unique skill that connects them to their environment, and they continue to learn and improve the skill to build their businesses for economic benefits and lifestyle goals. Popelka & Littrell [3] also discussed how artisan entrepreneurs create new markets in the tourism industry. Nowadays, the concept of artisan entrepreneurs

is widely used in various fields, most studies have mainly explored artisan entrepreneurs in the context of handicraft industry.

In terms of definition of artisan entrepreneurs, Tregear [4] noted that artisan entrepreneurs refer to individuals who produce and sell products or services that have unique artistic value due to high manual input. Hoyte [5] argued that the artisan entrepreneur is a skilled craftsman, whose high sense of responsibility enables him/her not only to learn a craft, but also to pass it on from generation to generation to cultivate social awareness and common social identity. Arias & Cruz [6] denoted that artisan entrepreneurs use tools to manually create tangible small batch products or unique products suitable for daily use. Ratten, et al. [2] noted artisan entrepreneurs are those who use their skills -- especially manual labor -- to discover or create, evaluate, and develop new goods, new materials, new ways of organizing, and new market opportunities. Recently, Smagina & Ludviga [7] demonstrated that artisan entrepreneurs refer to those who make a living partly by means of creating valuable things by hand.

At present, scholars have not formed a consistent view on the concept of artisan entrepreneurs. This study adopts the concept of artisan entrepreneurs proposed by Tregear [4], which is highly recognized. The above definition of artisan entrepreneur may be influenced by many factors such as cultural differences. Therefore, the follow-up research needs to put forward the concept of artisan entrepreneurs in terms of different cultural context.

Types of artisan entrepreneurs

Research on types of artisan entrepreneurs is conducive to deepening the understanding of artisan entrepreneurs. In this regard, the existing research on the types of artisan entrepreneurs is limited, and the main results involve in factors such as the entrepreneurial goals, value pursuit and business status. Fillis [8] divided artisan entrepreneurs into "lifestyle people", "idealists", "business-oriented entrepreneurs" and "late-developers" in terms of classification dimensions such as core concept, business development, risk bearing, quality of life, as well as export trade. Accordingly, each type of artisan entrepreneurs could exhibit different characteristics.

Getz & Petersen [9] identified two types of artisan entrepreneurs: first type, artisan entrepreneurs oriented by lifestyle and independent goals, who attach importance to quality of life and autonomy; second type, artisan entrepreneurs oriented by profit and growth will pay more attention to the economic interests and development opportunities of enterprises. Similarly, Tregear [4] divided artisan entrepreneurs into two categories according to their characteristics and entrepreneurial goals based on the study of artisan entrepreneurs in British food industry: one type is aimed at lifestyle and pursuing community participation; another is targeted at growth and business orientation.

Recently, Bouette & Magee [10] divided the artisan entrepreneurs into three categories in terms of their values: "amateur", "craftsman" and "entrepreneur". Samples of measuring values of artisan entrepreneurs are "doing what you are good at and love do-

ing", "being your own boss/being autonomous", "controlling every aspect of the making and the business", and "creating a successful business that makes a profit". "Amateurs" usually do not register enterprises, and actively produce and sell handicrafts based on their interest and passion for handicrafts per se; "Craftsmen" obtain their favorite way of life through establishing enterprises, emphasizing independence and freedom; "Entrepreneur" attach the most importance to commercialization and try to expand to increase profits.

Driving factors of artisan entrepreneurship

As far as concerning driver factors for artisan entrepreneurship, on the one hand, from the perspective of individual factors, the first key factor is personality traits. Personality traits originate from relevant psychological research. Psychologists believe that traits are the basic unit of personality and the internal psychological characteristics formed on the basis of individual physiological system [11]. In this sense, the personality traits of artisan entrepreneurs are independent relative to the external environment, and thus personality traits are the internal driving force for artisan entrepreneurs to choose entrepreneurship and succeed in entrepreneurship. Secondly, entrepreneurial creativity is another pivotal factor. Halim & Mat [12] noted that a good artisan entrepreneur can apply an idea created in the business and further develop creative products associated with this idea to meet the niche market. In this vein, entrepreneurial creativity of artisan entrepreneurs should be cultivated, which not only affects the success rate of entrepreneurship, but also impacts the management efficacy, marketing strategies, financial planning and competitive advantages. Finally, entrepreneurship learning should also be paid attention. Artisan entrepreneurs will carry out entrepreneurship learning before entrepreneurship, which includes basic knowledge required for entrepreneurship and professional knowledge for expanding business activities.

On the other hand, from the perspective of social factors, the first factor is the family context, which has an important impact on artisan entrepreneurs. Artisan entrepreneurs with better family environment could receive high quality education and have more entrepreneurial resources and opportunities. Second, from the perspective of regional culture, in the process of entrepreneurship, personal values, ideology and other cultural attributes will affect the behavior of entrepreneurs, and encourage entrepreneurs to identify opportunities, take advantage of opportunities, and thus succeed in entrepreneurship. The environment in which artisan entrepreneurs live has a strong cultural climate. Relevant research shows that local culture, history, policy and landscape play an important role in shaping the entrepreneurial attitudes and passions of artisan entrepreneurs [13]. Finally, from the perspective of entrepreneurial resources, it is very important for artisan entrepreneurs to obtain resources locally at the start-up stage of the establishment and growth of enterprises [14]. Considering that artisan entrepreneurs lack access to business resources, thus they need the help from trade unions, social organizations, or the government agencies. Otherwise, it is likely to inhibit the generation of artisan entrepreneurship.

Future Research Agenda of Artisan Entrepreneurs

Artisan entrepreneurs are special talents in the entrepreneurial group, and research issues related to artisan entrepreneurship are also gradually coming into the view of scholars. This study attempts to provide some interesting research topics and directions based on the current research results.

Research on identity of artisan entrepreneurs

Compared with other types of entrepreneurs, artisan entrepreneurs have unique dual identities. In this sense, it is of great significance to carry out in-depth research on identity transformation of artisan entrepreneurs. There are significant differences in the characteristics of artisan entrepreneurs in different cultural contexts. Firstly, future studies should focus on the classification of craftsman entrepreneurs in different cultural contexts. Secondly, the core qualities of artisan entrepreneurs including personal and social characteristics, should be explored further which could benefit for better identifying and understanding artisan entrepreneurs.

Research on the environment of artisan entrepreneurship

As a unique group with skilled talents in society, artisan entrepreneurs should follow the market rules in the economic environment and integrate resources to promote the sustainable development of enterprises. First, future research should be encouraged to examine the impacts of natural environment, social environment, economic environment and policy environment on artisan entrepreneurship. Secondly, study focused on the impacts of entrepreneurial environments on the artisan entrepreneur identity, entrepreneurial process and performance is conducive to foster a favorable entrepreneurship environment.

Research on the process of artisan entrepreneurship

Given that artisan entrepreneurs are not only craftsmen, but also entrepreneurs, future research should apply qualitative research methods to clarify the process of craftsman entrepreneurs to generate entrepreneurial intention, implement entrepreneurial behavior and improve entrepreneurial performance under different entrepreneurial situations. First of all, based on the research findings regarding artisan entrepreneurship environment and resources, in-depth research related to artisan entrepreneurship opportunities will be carried out to aid artisan entrepreneurs in identifying entrepreneurship opportunities. Secondly, field practical research on artisan entrepreneurship should be implemented, such as how to integrate resources, establish new enterprises or develop new products in the market, which could provide guidance for artisan entrepreneurs to engage in entrepreneurial actions. Finally, how the process of artisan entrepreneurship exerts the impacts on entrepreneurial performance should also be paid more attention, which helps to cultivate artisan entrepreneurs.

Research on the performance of artisan entrepreneurship

Considering that the group of artisan entrepreneurs are still scattered, majority of them use their own skills to start businesses

to meet the needs of life, improve their living conditions and living environment. In this sense, firstly, the performance evaluation methods of artisan entrepreneurship should be on the future agenda, such as taking profit, social benefit and personal satisfaction as evaluation indicators affecting artisans' entrepreneurial performance. Secondly, more in-depth research is needed on the impact of entrepreneur characteristics, entrepreneurial environment and entrepreneurial process on entrepreneurial performance.

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