Entrepreneurial Orientation:
Reflections from a contingency perspective

av

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Abstract


Entrepreneurship has been argued to be a key driver of the economy by creating jobs, turning inventions to innovations, and also improving the overall standard of life. A firm’s entrepreneurial orientation (EO) indicates the degree to which a firm is entrepreneurial. However, there are several different approaches to conceptualizing the EO concept and its sub-dimensions, frequently described as innovativeness, risk taking, and proactiveness. The role of the sub-dimensions is not quite clear in the EO literature. Furthermore, many studies claim that firms can increase their performance simply by increasing their EO, while this thesis draws upon contingency theory to argue that EO needs to be aligned with—‘fit’ the internal and external context, if the firm is to perform well. Thus, this thesis aims to advance the conceptualization of EO by problematizing the core construct and also discussing how EO can fit with context. The thesis consists of four papers in which the EO concept is elaborated on and contingency theory is applied to construct conceptual models of the interaction between EO and different contexts, which are also empirically investigated. Furthermore, the sub-dimensions of EO are discussed in terms of their meanings and measurement to point out their individual impact on the EO.

The overall findings indicate that EO is not as simple a concept as often portrayed in the EO literature. Rather, EO is more complex in the ways that it can fit with internal and external context and, on these bases, it is suggested that ideal types of EO and context is a way forward for research in the area. Additionally, it is argued that EO as a theoretical construct may not only be conceptualized as an overall entrepreneurial attribute (which is common in the extant literature), but also as a complex and granular attribute.

Keywords: Entrepreneurial orientation, contingency theory, configuration theory, firm-level entrepreneurship

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