Entrepreneurial Narratives, Identity and Trust: The Case of Lebanese Small Firm Internationalisation

HENLEY BUSINESS SCHOOL

THE UNIVERSITY OF READING

DBA

International Business and Strategy

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March 2022

Declaration

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Acknowledgements

wife Sarah, a successful social entrepreneur, who have also inspired me to better understand the world of entrepreneurship and without whom I could not have succeeded in completing this research.

Dedication

I dedicate this work to my beautiful family:

To my wife **Sarah** who is a very successful social entrepreneur and who have supported and encouraged me throughout my studies,

To my son **Malek**, who suffers from severe autism who had totally reversed my priorities, taught me the real meaning of patience and, changed my outlook about life

and finally,

To my youngest son **Taymour,** who I am sure that someday, he will successfully carve his way in life.

Abstract

The literature of Entrepreneurship offers a wide array of explanations about the field itself, the traits and cultural capital of entrepreneurs, the concept of opportunities and the process of international entrepreneurship. However, this does not fully explain how entrepreneurs succeed in establishing trust and legitimacy, particularly when they initiate an expansion venture in foreign territory amid contextual and cultural differences. Research has shown that they engage in narratives and storytelling with their stakeholders aiming to constitute a new venture identity and manage uncertainty. Not only such narratives serve to mediate between extant stocks of entrepreneurial resources and the subsequent execution phase, but they are also recognised as a form of data and, act as a platform for learning or as a methodological research approach.

Following these concepts, this thesis therefore proposes investigating the process of the internationalisation of small firms from a narrative approach. By means of eight case studies of entrepreneurs who have managed to set initial footholds in new markets and grew their businesses in neighbouring countries, it is set to explore how they all leveraged their established cultural capital and used narratives with the aim of creating trust and legitimacy in their new venture thus, overcoming the pervasive liability of foreignness.

A qualitative case study approach is proposed to meet the research objectives and investigate a real-life phenomenon within an organisation and its environmental context. Semi-structured interviews are used as a method to collect empirical data with open-ended questions to allow entrepreneurs to engage in narratives reflecting about their nascent organisational life along with their personal interpretations of key events and major stories. The geographical location where the study is expected to take place will be Lebanon, a country that suffers greatly from poor institutional environment but rich in entrepreneurial

initiatives, and the main GCC countries such as Saudi Arabia and the UAE, who provide good infrastructure with governmental support for entrepreneurs.

Specifically, this research attempts to explore how Lebanese entrepreneurs leverage their social capital and cognitive skills and initiate new ventures in GCC countries. It is in a position to contribute to knowledge by highlighting how some entrepreneurs form, maintain, revise and negotiate their emergent identity in an internationalising context, inspired by the successful business model which was created in their home country. Additionally, it answers to calls to explicate the theoretical role of entrepreneurial narratives in establishing trust with their various stakeholders and, in attempting to gain legitimacy in the new market.

Finally, this research is also able to contribute to practice, mainly for the potential entrepreneurs who are interested in the process of international venture creation. It allows them to further realise the importance of 1) reassessing their market entry approach based on the expansion motives of whether it is necessity or opportunity-based, 2) actively exploring their international networks repertoire and approach contacts considering a win-win situation, 3) allowing for substantial changes in their business models as dictated by the new context, which in turn can facilitate the trial and error learning and ease the adaptation process, 4) leveraging their home market reputation or detaching from it, according on how the home country is regarded in the international markets for that specific industry sector, 5) directing their trusting actions and behavioural cues to ultimately achieve business mutuality with the stakeholders and, 6) encouraging them of making distinctiveness claims for optimal legitimacy. From policymaking perspectives, this study also encourages officials to introduce 1) sponsored governmental trade fairs to promote and enhance international networking, 2) better targeted programmes to entice international entrepreneurs and, 3) governmental support and stimuli programmes to possibly narrow any geographical variation gap of start-ups that may exist within a country.

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List of abbreviations

IE   International Entrepreneurship

IB   International Business

IT   Information Technology

SME Small and Medium Enterprises

KSA Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

UAE United Arab Emirates

SA   Saudi Arabia

GCC Gulf Cooperation Council

MNC Multi-National Companies

GEM Global Entrepreneurship Monitor

ICT   Information and Communication Technology

B2B   Business to Business

VC   Venture Capital

OLI   Ownership, Localisation, Internalisation (Dunning OLI framework)

TCE   Transaction Cost Economies

INV   International New Ventures

BG   Born Global

PMI   Process Model of Internationalization

IPA   Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis

IPO   Initial Public Offering

EO   Entrepreneurial Orientation

ILO   International Labour Organisation

MENA   Middle East & North Africa

QFZA   Qatar Free Zone Authority

CAQDAS   Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software

1   Introduction

1.1 Personal Interest in the Research

It goes back to 1995 when I decided to start my own business in **Lebanon** in association with two long-time friends. Together, we have come up with a unique B2B enterprise that promotes, sells, and distributes various office supplies to end-users via a printed catalogue and website. We did overcome the barriers of entry to our local markets and managed to organically grow our company, using solely our own funds. We have managed to put together, mainly via trial and error, an efficient business model which relies on the systematic implementation of group best practices with a fully centralized Customer Service, IT systems and Warehousing and succeeded becoming an essential conduit between suppliers and end users. At the time, such a venture was considered unique as a marketing company in an import dominant economy such as Lebanon.

Still, we were quickly faced with growth issues. The Lebanese market was too small to establish economies of scale and capitalise on our inventory sourcing. Additionally, we considered our business environment to be quite hostile with never-ending political instability on one hand and, unreasonably high operating expenses on the other hand. But believing that our model as unique with no direct competitors of a similar make up in the region, we have decided to expand and duplicate it in neighbouring countries. In fact, we elected to venture into Saudi Arabia in 2003, being the largest Middle Eastern market.

However, the challenges of growing a business there differed from the ones we had witnessed in Lebanon. Establishing a new entrepreneurial identity, trust and legitimacy in what we do and what we represent became a major concern to us. Having no track record, our suppliers were pressuring us for either cash payments or banking guarantees against any credit, despite our steadily growing accounts with them. On the staffing front, we have encountered massive issues in attracting competent recruits as it turned out that they were very sceptical about the firm's survival. With our potential customers, we have faced legitimacy difficulties and we found ourselves engaged in various pitches and narratives about our business model in which we deeply believed in, and which would ease the burden of procuring office supplies. It was clear evidence that the liability of newness in a new venture is even more magnified in a foreign environment. Somehow, we have managed to grow the business from initial footholds in the Saudi market by applying our process system. Currently, we are a profitable Mid-Size company of 175 employees**,** operating it in two different countries and out of 4 locations.

Questions such as the following started developing in my mind: In an international expansion, how do new ventures earn needed trust from the various stakeholders and have believed in the firm's future through the tough growing years? With time, my interest grew bigger to better understand the nature and the characteristics of the difficulties at similar stages in the development of small businesses (Churchill and Lewis, 1984) and their internationalization process (Oviatt and McDougall, 1994). This is when the decision to undertake such research was taken to initiate the pillars

of a framework that can be applicable to Lebanese entrepreneurs when anticipating an overseas expansion in Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries.

1.2 Field and Focus of the Study

1.2.1 Entrepreneurship Concepts

1.2.1.1 Entrepreneurship Characterisation

The academic field of entrepreneurship is very complex in terms of the many approaches and methodologies it encompasses or even in just trying to understand its constituents (Audretsch, 2012). In fact, many theories have been put forward by scholars to explain the field ranging from economic (Schumpeter, 1934, Kirzner, 1973) to psychological with a shifting emphasis on the individual's need of achievement (McClelland, 1965) or locus of control (Rotter, 1966), to sociological focusing on the social context (Reynolds, 1991), to anthropological with the cultural environments affecting behaviours (North, 1990a), to opportunity-based (Drucker, 1985); (Shane and Venkataraman, 2000) and to resource-based (Barney, 1991, Aldrich, 1999). Some scholars believe that the lack of a singular view and the diversity of methodological approaches weaken the field. But for many others, it is believed that such heterogeneity can also be a source of richness and diversity; making the field very dynamic (Audretsch, 2012). The researcher may therefore approach his case from a variety of angles that is inherent to their specific context.

This thesis is based on Shane's (2003) views on entrepreneurship as an activity that involves the discovery, evaluation and exploitation of opportunities with the aim of

introducing new goods and services, ways of organizing, markets, processes, and raw materials through organising efforts that previously had not existed (Shane, 2003a). Using this perspective, the phenomenon would therefore be immensely linked to entrepreneurial opportunities as artefacts, which Casson (1982) defined as situations in which goods, services, raw materials and organizing methods can be introduced and sold at greater than their cost of production (Casson, 1982). Its positioning is thus located at the intersection of the constructs of individuals, opportunities, modes of organizing and the environment (Busenitz et al., 2003).

As for the discovery of said entrepreneurial opportunities, Shane and Venkataraman (2000) posited that it occurs in one of the following two cases: when entrepreneurs have better information than others as a result of a previous life experience or a social network structure, or when they are better able to recognise them given the same amount of information (Shane and Venkataraman, 2000). It is the entrepreneur's absorptive ability, which is prior market knowledge and his overall cognitive processes such as intelligence, creativity and perceptive ability that are typically the basic factors in the discovery process (Shane, 2003a).

We will start from this general view of entrepreneurs to embark on further topics.

1.2.1.2 The Entrepreneurial Individual-Opportunity Concept

It is argued that the above entrepreneurship definition holds true only when an individual acts upon an opportunity, that it even requires differences between people, that such an individual should be a risk bearer and capable of dealing with a great deal of uncertainty (Shane, 2003a). In fact, researchers have widely investigated the

psychological traits of individuals who exploit opportunities (Bird and Jelinek, 1988); (Gartner, 1985) and there seems to be consensus that it is due to the entrepreneur's cognitive characteristics, personality traits, core self-evaluations (Shane, 2003a), entrepreneurial orientation (Covin and Slevin, 1989); (Lumpkin and Dess, 1996) and social skills (Baron and Markman, 2000) are among the factors which explain which explain why some are more successful than others in establishing new ventures.

However, there has been recently acknowledgement about the entrepreneurial intention out of necessity (Sahasranamam and Sud, 2016); (Fairlie and Fossen, 2018). This concept classifies the entrepreneurs' start-up initiatives because of "lack of any other choice" (Sahasranamam and Sud, 2016) and many of them operate in what is referred to as 'informal' economy, with higher rates in emerging countries (Schneider and Enste, 2002), as entrepreneurs find more autonomy, flexibility, and freedom than in the formal one (Sahasranamam and Sud, 2016).

Opportunity and necessity-based motives have also been referred to as 'pull' or 'push' entrepreneurship (Reynolds et al., 2005). The 'pull' factor is often associated to attractive and profitable business opportunities in contrast to the 'push' factor that is related to dissatisfaction with current situation (Amit and Muller, 1996). This theory gained prominence with studies attributing the presence of high entrepreneurship levels to the pull-push paradigm in both low-income and high-income countries (Reynolds et al., 2005); (Audretsch, 2012) and at the individual-level antecedents (Sahasranamam and Sud, 2016).

1.2.1.3 The Entrepreneurial Process Model

From the concept of the opportunity existence and its discovery, attention is now turned to the entrepreneurial process which begins with the perception of opportunities' existence, in which resources can be recombined at a potential profit. It involves the identification and evaluation of opportunity, the difficult decision of whether or not to exploit it, the efforts to obtain resources, organising these resources into a new combination and, the development of a strategy for the new venture (Shane, 2003a).

However, scholars recognise the effects of both the industry context and the macro-environment on the discovery and exploitation of the opportunity as well on the execution part. From another view point, it is also posited that these different activities are affected by the entrepreneur's individual attributes such as psychological and demographics factors (Lounsbury and Glynn, 2001); (Shane, 2003a).

1.2.2 International Entrepreneurship Concepts

The above-mentioned entrepreneurial process model and direction as posited by Shane (2003) may very well explain the phenomenon but hardly touches on the internationalization process and how new start-ups exploit their opportunities in international markets. According to Coombs et al (2009), the field of international entrepreneurship can be viewed as a subset of the entrepreneurship literature (Coombs et al., 2009). By relying on Oviatt & McDougall's definition as being businesses organized across national borders and involved in new and innovative

activities with the goals of growth and value creation (Oviatt and McDougall, 1994) and by associating it with Shane & Venkataraman's (2000) ION (Individual Opportunity Nexus) concept, it can therefore be defined as the process by which international markets are used in the discovery, creation and exploitation of future goods or services (Coombs et al., 2009)

Consequently, the international entrepreneurial process can be compared to the entrepreneurial process as posited by Shane (2003) and that its direction can also be considered linear.

1.2.3 Cultural Adaptation in the International Context

For Baron & Markman (2000), it is the entrepreneur's social attributes such as favourable reputation, high status, and high referrals (social capital) coupled with good first impression and an inherent ability to interact with others (social skills), that play a crucial role in their subsequent success (Baron and Markman, 2000). Within the framework that they have developed, the authors detailed how high levels of social skill may enhance their reputation and broaden the entrepreneurs' social network. The outcome of high social capital is often associated with an enhanced access to information and increased trust from others, and is linked to higher financial outcomes or to the likelihood of receiving funds from potential venture capitalists (Baron and Markman, 2000). The entrepreneurs' social skills and their ability to interact face-to face with stakeholders are equally significant (Baron and Markman, 2000)

Within the internationalization process, entrepreneurs are also generally known to leverage their individual experiences to navigate across multiple institutional environments (Terjesen and Elam, 2009). They often heavily rely on their cultural repertoires, drawn from the larger field of cultural artefacts, to carry them through unfamiliar settings and count on their already established social and professional networks (Terjesen and Elam, 2009) allowing them access to valuable information about markets, investors and capital (Low and MacMillan, 1988); (McDougall et al., 1994).

1.2.4 Narratives and Organizational Storytelling

International entrepreneurship scholars such as McDougall (1989), Oviatt & McDougall (1994; 1995) and the later works of Coombs et al (2009) may shed the light on the internationalization course but it generally does not explain the process of cultural adaptation nor does it fully explain the extant stocks of cultural capital (Baron and Markman, 2000) that is needed to initiate a business across national borders, particularly when it comes to the crafting of a new venture identity (Lounsbury and Glynn, 2001, Navis and Glynn, 2011). As entrepreneurs often lack a proven track record and clear asset value, they tend to engage in various forms of narratives and storytelling aspects about a past that they evoke and a future that they conceptualize with the aim of establishing trust and legitimacy with various stakeholders and destined to open up access to capital and create a competitive edge (Lounsbury and Glynn, 2001); (Downing, 2005, Martens et al., 2007, Terjesen and Elam, 2009) (Garud and Giuliani, 2013).

Generally, organizational narratives are used to explore how individuals try to make sense of events, introduce change and gain political advantage in their conversations (Boje, 1991) and entrepreneurial stories can provide such needed accounts to explain, rationalize or promote a new venture to reduce the uncertainty, typically associated with entrepreneurship (Aldrich and Fiol, 1994); (Lounsbury and Glynn, 2001). Researchers are also noting that the entrepreneurial journeys are dynamic processes requiring continual adjustments (Garud and Giuliani, 2013). Throughout their journeys, stories are continuously used and have become a very important part of the entrepreneurial toolkit, particularly in the early stages of new venture formation.

For this reason, there seems to be agreement that entrepreneurs need to be skilled cultural operatives who develop stories about who they are and how their resources will lead to future benefits for consumers and society (Lounsbury and Glynn, 2001). However, they still call for further research to analyse how such stories work (Downing, 2005); (Martens et al., 2007); (Terjesen and Elam, 2009). Questions about the effect of such narratives on stakeholders and require consideration (Downing, 2005). This research will attempt to address such issues in the geographical area where it is intended to take place.

1.2.5 Entrepreneurial Identity, Trust, and Legitimacy

Narratives are not only known as mediators between the entrepreneur's extant stock of cultural and institutional capital and the subsequent resource acquisition and development of a competitive edge (Lounsbury and Glynn, 2001) or as a valuable form of data to increase the relevance of knowledge produced by social sciences

academics, particularly in organisational studies (Rhodes and Brown, 2005), but they are also generally recognised as a methodological approach (Boje, 1991). This acknowledgment is considered quite different from previous beliefs when historically, narratological studies took methodological positions that stories, myths, sagas and other forms of narratives were an overlooked but valuable source of data for research in organisations, conceptualising them as a set of a storytelling practices (Rhodes and Brown, 2005). Even though science has often stood as the opposite of storytelling (Gabriel, 2000), organisation narratives has generally produced a rich body of knowledge (Rhodes and Brown, 2005) and may, thus, be viewed as constitutive of organizational realities (Boje et al., 1999).

Entrepreneurial narratives can therefore be viewed as speech-acts that bring into existence a social reality that did not exist before their utterance (Boje et al., 1999); (Brown, 2006); (Martens et al., 2007). From this perspective and for many entrepreneurs, identities may be formed, repaired or reconstructed by their skilful participation in narratives and dramatic processes as much as the objective quality of their products or services (Downing, 2005). As a result, narratives can enhance the entrepreneurs' status and socially confirm him/her by constituting this fine line that would make them either appears to be as visionary or strange characters. In short, it can be the difference between success and failure.

This study responds to calls for researching the entrepreneurial identity (O'Connor, 2002); (Brown, 2006); (Navis and Glynn, 2011) via a social constructionist approach through discourse and narratives (Boje et al., 1999); (Brown, 2006); (Martens et al., 2007). It is assumed that discourses provide entrepreneurs with the means of

interacting and dialoguing with others about concepts which enable them to construct an understanding of themselves, their identities, their beliefs and to satisfy their need for sense-making of their experiences (Hjorth, 2005). Entrepreneurial talk is therefore regarded as framed around whatever is suitable to meet the need of the occasion or the context (Jones, 2008).

Ontologically, this research conforms to principles of a fragmentary, shifting and dynamic nature of identity (Hjorth, 2005). Consequently, the identity construction process is one of self-reflection about past experiences and what they mean to that person. Its activities and characteristics are not fixed; instead they are dynamic and constantly emerging, realized, shaped and constructed through social processes (Hjorth, 2005). Brunner (2004) concedes that stories may not happen in the real world but are rather constructed in the human mind and as a result, autobiographies are not a record of what actually happened but an interpretation of experiences (Brunner, 2004). Davis and Harre (1991) take it further in claiming that the identity narrative structure often resembles a fairy tale or narrative fiction (Davies, 1990)

Similarly, the concept of trust in entrepreneurial activity is generally viewed by most scholars as a socially constructed phenomenon and resulting from habitual behavior in which individuals draw on habits without calculations or justifications (Smallbone, 2002a). It is therefore not an objective phenomenon across culture and countries (Welter and Smallbone, 2006). This concurs in Gambetta's (1988) widely believed definition of trust in business behaviour as being based on a perception of the probability that other agents will behave in a way that is expected (Gambetta, 1988).

Smallbone & Lyon (2002) acknowledge that qualitative approaches are most suitable to investigate the emergence of trust relationships: how trust is built up and, circumstances in which trust is lost (Smallbone, 2002a). In fact, they believe that quantitative data on trust is very difficult to collect and should only be limited to nature and extent of trust (IBID).

From another perspective, Welter & Smallbone (2006) explain that trust, being a dynamic phenomenon, generally requires a longitudinal approach (Welter and Smallbone, 2006), which bodes very well with Ring & Van De Ven (1994) recommendations of collecting "events" as an effective way to research a process based nature of trust (Ring, 1994). This research will follow this recommendation and attempts to link the stakeholders' perception of trust to a particular event (if this was the case) through the interview questionnaires.

The following sequential map (Figure 1.1) summarises the research logic and direction with its related themes and concepts adopted in this thesis.

Entrepreneurial Process Direction (Shane, 2003)	International Entrepreneurship Concepts	Cultural Adaptation Process	Entrepreneurs Engage in Narratives to:
		Entrepreneurs leverage their social & cultural capital in their new venture (Baron & Markman, 2000)	
Existence of Opportunity	Coombs et al (2009): International entrepreneurship is a subset of the entrtepreneurship literature		Develop an Organizational Identity (Czarniawska, 1994; O'Connor, 2002; A.D. Brown, 2006)
Discovery of Opportunity		*but face:*	
Decision to Exploit	ION (Individual Opportunity Nexus) Concept	Identity Issues (Czarniawska, 1994; O'Connor, 2002; Brown, 2006)	
Execution Part (Resource Acquisition, Strategy, Organizing Process)	Process by which international markets are used in the discovery, creation and/or exploitation of future goods and services	Trust & Legitimacy Issues (Lounsbury & Glynn, 2001; Navis & Glynn, 2011)	Establish Trust & Legitimacy with Stakeholders (Aldrich & Fiol, 1994; Lounsbury & Glynn, 2001; Navis & Glynn, 2011; Welter & Smallbone, 2006)

Figure 1   Mapping the Research

1.3 The Research Context

1.3.1 The Industry Context

Research has shown that the rate of venture creation often differs significantly across industries and that the distribution of industries in a particular geographic area can influence the people there to exploit entrepreneurial opportunities, thus supporting

the cultural values of a society and role theory of venture creation (Cochran, 1965). In fact, Shane (2003) has shown evidence that the propensity for entrepreneurs to exploit opportunities and create firms may be deeply affected by the industry context when examined from the knowledge conditions, demand conditions, industry life cycles, appropriateness conditions and industry structure perspectives (Shane, 2003a).

Within this research's geographical context, the Lebanese economy is primarily based on the service sector which accounts for more than 79% of the country's GDP (GEM Lebanon National Report 2018, 2018). Construction, tourism, and various financial services which employ about 45% of the population, are the most prominent sectors among Lebanon's exports and imports of commercial services (European-Commission, 2014b). With trade employing almost half as much, it is safe to say that 2/3 of the Lebanese working population are either in trade or in services.

As a result, it is not surprising to see that Lebanese entrepreneurs are often drawn towards those two sectors and that they have a propensity to create new ventures within those fields. According to the 2018 Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM Lebanon National Report 2018) review report, nearly 80% of start-ups in Lebanon in 2018 were in the Wholesale, Retail or Consumer Services sectors. Particularly with services, they seem to be able to provide the level that many locals and Arab consumers require (Sayigh, 1962).

Similarly, according to the latest Global Entrepreneurship Monitor World Report 2020/2021, the sectors that draw the entrepreneurs in the early stage of

entrepreneurial activities in the GCC countries, are Wholesale and Retail and, consumers' services sectors, which are typical in emerging countries, rather than the business services sectors that are more characteristic of Europe and North America's new ventures (GEM Global Entrepreneurship Monitor 2021). More specifically, it is reported that the percentage distribution of new or existing ventures in the wholesale, retail and consumer sectors in Saudi Arabia, Qatar and the UAE was respectively at 85%, 62% and 63% of all entrepreneurial firms (GEM Lebanon National Report 2018). Therefore, it would be safe to assume that Lebanese entrepreneurs are drawn to expand into the GCC markets primarily, for perfect compatibility and growth potential reasons.

1.3.2 The Environment Context

Research has shown that a favourable institutional environmental for productive entrepreneurship composed of both the "rules of the games" as well as the social legitimacy and acceptance is generally deemed to be of utmost importance (Shane, 2003a). It is further added that the factors that influence productive entrepreneurship are economic, political and cultural environments. Wealth, economic stability, access to capital, taxation system, political freedom, property rights and general propensity of acceptance among community members are also found to be extremely crucial to the development of entrepreneurship (Shane, 2003a). The environment context in this thesis will be viewed from the assumption that Lebanon's economic environment is considered 'hostile' to the development of entrepreneurship due to the incessant political feuds and economic instability for the past five decades in contrast to the

Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, which are favourable and encouraging the entrepreneurial spirit and new venture formation. The next section will review the environmental context in Lebanon and the GCC countries.

1.3.2.1 The Entrepreneurship Context in Lebanon

According to Ahmed and Julian (2012), entrepreneurship in Lebanon is merely about the collection of resources to start a business venture on a small scale with the expectation of a reasonable income to the shareholders (Ahmed and Julian, 2012). Those ventures which, often take the form of small enterprises (employing less than 50 employees) are in their majority family businesses and constitute about 97% of all firms and employ about 51% of the total workforce (LEADERS, 2017). Not only those family businesses are believed to constitute about 85% of Lebanon's private sector, but in a war-torn economy and in the virtual absence of governmental support, they are now generally considered as the only intact socio-economic institution capable of supporting entrepreneurial activity (Fahed-Sreih, 2006).

The propensity to start a new venture in Lebanon is considered high in comparison to its neighbouring countries. Effectively, the GEM 2018 report ranked Lebanon first in the Middle-East North Africa (MENA) region for new business ownership, first for Total early stage Entrepreneurial Activity (TEA) and first for established business ownership but, third for starting a new business (GEM Lebanon National Report 2018, 2018). Additionally, the report pointed out that one in four adults in Lebanon in 2018 was either starting or running a new business (GEM Lebanon National Report 2018, 2018).

However, while Lebanese entrepreneurs have the skill of pinpointing opportunities, they may lack knowledge in managing their business (Ahmed and Julian, 2012). Current management practices are still traditional and many employ from their ethnic community or their not-so-well-trained relatives in sensitive managerial positions exposing frequently the product quality and resulting in lack of transparency. Capital financing is therefore difficult to arrange and many entrepreneurs resort to auto-financing their ventures (Ahmed and Julian, 2012).

Furthermore, a study by the ERF (Funded by the EU and AEFSD) noted that SMEs in Lebanon operate under obsolete regulations and that the country still does not have a regulatory framework that organizes their work. Recommendations are for the establishment of an enabling legislative framework to facilitate and encourage engagement in the formal, micro, and small-scale enterprises, to provide incentives for enterprise establishment and growth, including licensing/registration procedures, regulating taxation, tax administration, customs fees, and costs of essential services in a way that would assist these SMEs (ERF Research Report, 2013).

From a practice perspective, the local business environment is also considered hostile with incessant political instability. Operating costs can be significantly elevated when compared to neighbouring countries rendering Lebanese manufactured products' penetration into regional markets extremely hard. Nevertheless, many new Lebanese ventures have managed in providing differentiation and created good and services that Arab consumers appreciate (Ahmed and Julian, 2012). When it comes to international entrepreneurship, Lebanese are also known to stand true to their Phoenician heritage and have always

kept their eyes on the far seas for better business opportunities (Sayigh, 1962). In fact, hundreds of thousands are known to have immigrated in the past century to the Americas, Africa, Australia and, more recently, to the GCC countries resulting in strong ties with the outside world. It is known that have been of great influence in transmission of ideas, new methods, new forms of organizations and most importantly, remittances (Sayigh, 1962). Following economic instability in the past two decades, the recent years have witnessed a wave of local entrepreneurs following a trend of franchising their businesses in the more institutionally friendly GCC countries particularly in the service sectors and in hospitality.

Starting a new business is an individual decision that is greatly influenced by preferences, attitudes and expectations and set in a social, cultural and economic context which affects both that decision and the ability of any business to prosper and endure (GEM Global Entrepreneurship Monitor 2021, 2021). The following section explores Lebanon's entrepreneurial framework conditions in comparison with global and regional settings as per the GEM 2020/2021 global report and the 2018/2019 report about Lebanon.

1.3.2.1.1 Lebanon Global Ratings

According to the 2018/2019 Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM) report, Lebanon scored above average in five of the twelve framework conditions but below average for seven conditions entrepreneurial framework conditions when compared to the GEM global averages of 54 countries. It scored poorly in government policy (46th) and support (37th) in terms of the burden of bureaucracy, public procurement and,

access to permits and licences. The score was also relatively low in research and development transfer (42nd) and, very poorly in internal market openness or entry regulation (54th) as burdens and entry conditions are a significant issue for entrepreneurial activity in Lebanon with ineffective anti-trust laws. The lack of good physical Infrastructure (47th) is also seen as hindering enterprise, especially in terms of the cost and accessibility of good communications (GEM Lebanon National Report 2018).

However, Lebanon scored very well in social and cultural norms (3rd of 54) and within access to entrepreneurial finance, the country was better than average (22nd) because of relatively strong in access to Venture Capital but weak in terms of Initial Public Offerings (IPO's). It also scored well in entrepreneurship education at both school (10th) levels but much less well for post-school and the university knowledge base (28th) for the lack of subsidies for technology. The commercial and legal infrastructure (23rd) was rated only average, mainly due Lebanon previously reputed solid professional and banking services (GEM Lebanon National Report 2018).

Please refer to below figure 1.2 for further details.

Figure 22: Expert Ratings of Lebanon and GEM Global Averages

Entrepreneurial Finance (22/54)

Cultural and social norms (3/54)

Physical infrastructure (47/54)

Internal market burdens or entry regulation (54/54)

Internal market dynamics (39/54)

Commercial and legal infrastructure (23/54)

R&D transfer (42/54)

Government policy: support (46/54)

Government policy: tax & bureaucracy (37/54)

Government entrepreneurship programmes (39/54)

Entrepreneurial education at school age (10/54)

Entrepreneurial education at post-school stage (28/54)

GEM — Lebanon

Source: GEM Global Report, 2018/19

Figure 2   Lebanon Expert Ratings and GEM Global Averages

Source: GEM Global Report, 2018/19

1.3.2.1.2 Lebanon Regional Ratings

When compared to other regional countries in the Middle East North Africa (MENA) region, Lebanon averaged 4.67 in the GEM National Entrepreneurship Context Index, below the regional average of 5.01. Its regional ranking was similar to its global ranking in that Lebanon scored low in every governmental initiative, from policy and support or programs. Research and development transfer as well as the ease of market entry and propensity for growth were also found to be below the regional averages.

As for entrepreneurial education in schools and post-schools, the score was better than the average. Similarly, Lebanon was well ranked in access to entrepreneurial finance and in its commercial infrastructure. On a positive note, it scored high in cultural and its social norms index, which encompasses the extent to which social and cultural norms encourage new business initiatives. Naturally, this includes social support for individual risk-taking (GEM Lebanon National Report 2018, 2018).

Please refer to below comparative table 1.1 for the various metrics of the GEM Global Report 2018/2019

	NECI (National Entrepreneurship Context Index)	Entrepreneurial Finance	Government Policy: Support	Government Policy: Tax & Bureaucracy	Government Enterprise Programs	Enterprise Education: Schools	Enterprise Education: Post Schools	Research and Development Transfer	Commercial / Legal Infrastructure	Internal Market Dynamics: Growth	Internal Market Dynamics: Ease of Entry	Physical Infrastructure	Cultural and Social Norms
Egypt	4.72	4.88	4.74	3.88	4.42	2.58	4.13	3.84	4.97	5.70	4.86	7.24	5.07
Turkey	5.05	5.28	5.04	3.86	4.65	3.06	5.61	5.00	6.15	6.91	4.65	6.75	5.55
Iran	4.29	4.24	4.25	3.26	3.23	3.21	4.18	3.67	3.96	6.29	4.30	6.35	4.65
Morocco	4.26	4.00	3.80	4.41	3.77	2.07	4.46	2.88	5.51	5.00	3.43	7.34	4.21
Lebanon	**4.67**	**5.25**	**3.66**	**3.81**	**4.17**	**4.42**	**5.32**	**3.65**	**5.74**	**4.75**	**4.19**	**4.37**	**7.22**
Saudi	4.40	3.57	4.94	4.03	4.43	1.94	3.46	3.09	4.20	5.51	4.09	6.89	6.00
UAE	5.92	4.81	6.69	5.80	6.21	4.99	5.65	4.85	5.72	6.68	5.11	7.53	6.84
Israel	5.08	5.85	4.09	2.84	4.39	3.11	5.26	4.81	6.30	5.23	4.15	7.70	7.73
Qatar	6.69	5.81	6.89	6.44	6.57	6.76	7.30	6.41	6.29	7.16	5.91	8.01	6.81
Regional Average	**5.01**	**4.85**	**4.90**	**4.26**	**4.65**	**3.57**	**5.04**	**4.24**	**5.43**	**5.91**	**4.52**	**6.91**	**6.01**

Table 1-1   Lebanon Regional Ratings

Source: GEM Global Report, 2018/19

In conclusion, the environmental and economic contexts in Lebanon represent numerous challenges for nascent entrepreneurs to start their ventures. However, and despite the political instability and all other economic hardships, entrepreneurship initiatives are still thriving. According to the 2018 GEM report, Lebanon ranked first

for new business ownership and first for established business ownership, but third for starting a new business of the eight MENA countries. Furthermore, the GEM 2018 report indicates that more than 30% of 25-34 year olds in Lebanon were starting or running a new business, compared to 17% of the same age group in Turkey (next highest in MENA), and 15% in Iran (GEM Lebanon National Report 2018, 2018).

1.3.2.2 The Entrepreneurship Context in the GCC Countries

This section sheds light on the entrepreneurship context of the main GCC countries that influenced this study – namely Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Qatar – in comparison with global averages. The intent is to show the positive environment that the governments of these countries offer for the entrepreneurial activities to prosper. In fact, the national entrepreneurship context indexes, which summarizes in one number the average state in an economy's environment for entrepreneurship are amongst the highest globally (GEM Global Entrepreneurship Monitor 2021).

Furthermore, the entrepreneurial framework conditions indicators show 12 important entrepreneurship indexes with scores above the global averages as per the below table 1.2. It is therefore assumed that the countries' economic conditions and the overall entrepreneurship infrastructure are considered favourable.

Please refer to Appendix A for a comprehensive Economy Profile for each country.

	Entrepreneurship Framework Conditions	Saudi Arabia	UAE	Qatar	Global Average
1	Government Policy: Support and Relevance	6.2	6.8	5.5	4.5
2	Government Policy: Taxes and Bureaucracy	5.3	5.7	5.8	4.0
3	Government Entrepreneurship Programs	5.9	6.0	5.7	4.8
4	Entrepreneurial Education at School	2.9	5.8	5.3	3.2
5	Entrepreneurial Education Post-School	4.6	5.6	6.0	4.9
6	Research and Development Transfer	4.7	5.1	5.4	4.1
7	Commercial and Professional Infrastructure	5.6	6.0	5.8	5.2
8	Ease of Entry: Market Dynamics	6.9	6.2	5.8	5.2
9	Ease of Entry: Market Burdens and Regulations	5.8	5.2	4.8	4.5
10	Physical Infrastructure	8.1	7.3	7.1	6.4
11	Social and Cultural Norms	6.4	7.3	5.9	5.1
12	Access to Entrepreneurial Finance	6.0	5.3	5.1	4.5

Table 1-2   Entrepreneurship Framework Conditions Scales (GEM Global Entrepreneurship Monitor 2021)

However, it does appear that in most GCC countries, the figures of SMEs contribution to the economy are rather on the low side. As per the UNESCSAP, OECD, SBA country factsheets, CAS 1996 report, SMEs employ around 68% of developed countries working population and, on average, contribute to 53% to their GDP (OECD, 1996 CAS 1996). SME's are hence considered as the major driver for economic growth and governments extensively promote new venture creation (European-Commission, 2014a). In Saudi Arabia, they only contribute 29% to its GDP (www.zawya.com) and employ about 25% of its local workforce – with Saudi nationals representing 10% as the rest are mostly migrant workers. In the UAE, they

contribute to 40% of its GDP and employs 43% of its workforce (Tirupathi et al., 2020)

With such figures, being on the low side when compared to other developing countries, one may conclude that the entrepreneurship initiatives in the GCC are still relatively inefficient, despite the overall favourable context that presents an opportunities environment for exploitation.

The CGI report attributes such inefficiency to two primary reasons. The first one is the difficulty in accessing the necessary capital to generally fund SMEs in the early stages. The second reason is lack of information on SME formation, employment, financial performance and survival. It is further called on the SME authorities to survey, monitor SME development and interact with entrepreneurs to develop programs for the sector (CGI-Report, 2011). A local bank report in Saudi Arabia also cited low efficiency and weak management as reasons behind the relatively weak growth rate of entrepreneurship initiatives in Saudi Arabia (National-Commercial-Bank, 2013).

Additionally, the current economic environment is considered very challenging for the SMEs to remain competitive and maintain growth. The abundance of family conglomerates and multifaceted corporations that have immensely grown in the last three decades has rendered growth prospects for SME's rather dismal. Effectively, the life span of SME's in Saudi Arabia is 7 years (CGI-Report, 2011), which may be considered on the low side. Recognising the importance of SMEs and their contribution to economic growth, governments in the GCC have taken steps towards

bolstering their growth through focused policy initiatives. For example, both the government of Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) have considered national SME promotion laws, among the various programs promoting entrepreneurship that are currently in place.

It is worthy to note herein that Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and Qatar are all Islamic countries where religion is very closely watched and is considered a way of life. The religious aspects are predominant in all the social and business activities of the GCC society. According to Nasra and Dacin (2010), countries that are "deeply rooted and pervasive religious identities, normative, cultural-cognitive, and regulative institutional frameworks are highly resistant to change" (Nasra and Dacin, 2010) p598. Entrepreneurs are therefore advised to explore beforehand all the cultural and social limitations that are imposed by the stringent religious practices, and which may heavily affect the venture creation decision.

1.4 Research Objectives, Problem and Questions

1.4.1 Research Objectives

This thesis investigates the role of entrepreneurial narratives and storylines in crafting a new identity with the new venture stakeholders in a cross-border expansion and how they help establishing trust and legitimacy in the firm. It also attempts to explore how Lebanese entrepreneurs leverage all their social capital and cognitive skills and initiate new ventures in GCC countries.

Therefore, the following objectives were identified:

The role of narratives: To identify a clear set of behavioural patterns and their characteristics or strategies in entrepreneurial narratives that serve to explicate and rationalise the entrepreneur's new and emergent identity.

How trust is established: To explore and identify a clear set of symbolic language, narratives and behaviours that entrepreneurs engage in to instil trust about the new venture. Approaches may be different but they all seek to ultimately achieve an understanding among trusting parties (customers, suppliers and other individuals) that "everything will work out" (Aldrich and Fiol, 1994).

How legitimacy is achieved: To explore and identify a clear set of symbolic language and entrepreneurial behaviours to project both cognitive and socio-political types of legitimacy in the new venture.

1.4.2 Research Problem

The extant literature on entrepreneurship recognizes the effects of the mentioned narratives on the founders' identity works and on establishing trust and legitimacy in the new venture (Lounsbury and Glynn, 2001); (Steyaert, 2007). However, there is a relative lack in research in the Gulf Cooperation Council geographical area (Bruton et al., 2008); (Nasra and Dacin, 2010) and falls short in explaining how trust and legitimacy are achieved, particularly with 'confirmed' entrepreneurs who have already established a successful business in their home country and are looking to geographically expand it overseas.

Specifically, this thesis is set to explore how Lebanese entrepreneurs, who primarily find their market small in size and their working environment very unaccommodating

with incessant political feuds, expand their ventures into culturally analogous Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries with the expectation of a better return on investment and, how they leverage their social capital and cognitive skills in order to form a new identity, earn the trust of the various stakeholders and gain legitimacy in their new ventures. Based on their initial success back home, the entrepreneurs in this thesis tend to be extremely confident about the merit of their business model and engage in narratives with much perseverance, determination, and passion. Given this background, this study examines how those storylines can influence the identity, trust, and legitimacy in an internationalization context of Lebanese small firms.

1.4.3 Research Questions

Addressing the research gaps outlined above and taking account of extant theories on entrepreneurship (Shane and Venkataraman, 2000); (Shane, 2003b), international business concepts (Oviatt and McDougall, 1994), and narratives theories (Boje, 1991); (Czarniawska, 1998); (Brown, 2006) and subsequently their effects on trust (Welter et al., 2004); (Welter and Smallbone, 2006) and the legitimacy of the firms (Aldrich and Fiol, 1994); (Suchman), the following two research questions for this study are formulated as follows:

1. **What is the role of the entrepreneurial narratives in constructing an identity for the new ventures in the process of international expansion of the firms?**

2. **How are trust and organisational legitimacy achieved between the entrepreneurs and the various stakeholders?**

1.5 Rationale of the Study

1.5.1 Contribution to the Field of Study

Scholars and researchers have created a reservoir of knowledge on entrepreneurial identity over the past three decades around three major streams: the antecedents to entrepreneurial identity, the various forms they take and, their initial impact on the course of new ventures (Mmbaga et al., 2020). However, it has also been admitted that the field still remains relatively underdeveloped, particularly in emerging countries (Bruton et al., 2008); (Nasra and Dacin, 2010), and in areas such as the exploration of post-emergent stages of the entrepreneurial identities as they unfold (Mmbaga et al., 2020) whereby effectual thinking and heuristics are important decision-making factors as they help to reduce the uncertainties (Sarasvathy, 2001).

As new ventures grow, expectations from various audiences often encourage new narratives to match organizational identity claims around "who we claim to be as a venture" and audience expectations of "who we expect you to be as a venture". Effectively, this thesis attempts to respond to calls for researching the post-emergent entrepreneurial identity (O'Connor, 2002); (Brown, 2006); (Navis and Glynn, 2011) and is in a position to contribute to the large body of knowledge as identity claims may change or develop (Wry and York, 2017) when introduced to unfamiliar audiences in an internationalization context.

From another perspective, the aim of this thesis is to increase our understanding of trust in the entrepreneurial activity. Trust is generally viewed by many scholars as a

socially constructed phenomenon and generally results from habitual behaviour, in which individuals draw on habits without calculations or justifications (Smallbone, 2002a). Additionally, the field is largely seen as a conceptually complex and a multi-dimensional phenomenon as it occurs at both the micro and macro levels; with individuals, groups, organizations and institutions and, defining the multi-level concepts or dimensions is a daunting task (Savolainen et al., 2019).

However, trust may be extremely critical for entrepreneurs as it has the potential of reducing some of the inherent risks that are closely related to their entrepreneurial activity (Welter, 2012) and may act as a sanctioning mechanism to complement the institutional framework (Welter and Smallbone, 2006). It also forms the foundation for people to cooperate and, it develops in repeated interactions between the concerned parties through deliberate actions and calculations (Lewicki et al., 2006). Communication and narratives are viewed as a key means for interacting and for building trust (Savolainen et al., 2019). This thesis contributes to the largely scarce empirical field of study about how entrepreneurial narratives can influence the trust building with their stakeholders in an internationalisation context.

Finally, this thesis can also increase our understanding of the firm's legitimacy in a new country in the context of 'confirmed' entrepreneurs who have already established a successful business in their home country and are looking for international expansion. This study responds to calls for empirical research to increase our understanding about the firms' legitimacy in both its pragmatic and moral forms (Suchman, 1995) and, in its cognitive and socio-political forms (Aldrich and Fiol, 1994).

1.5.2 Contribution to Theory

Extant theories on entrepreneurial identity works are generally abundant but remain largely disjointed, making it difficult to take stock of what we know (Mmbaga et al., 2020). This thesis relies on the theoretical understanding of the process of the cultural adaptation activity (Baron and Markman, 2000) in carving a new identity (Lounsbury and Glynn, 2001) in the new venture, pertinent to the above-mentioned geographical area where the study is taking place and is well positioned to contribute to theory of how some entrepreneurs form, maintain and revise their identity (Brown et al., 2015); (Marlow and McAdam, 2015)

In their seminal work, Lounsbury and Glynn (2001) specifically propose a framework of how entrepreneurial stories facilitate the crafting of a new venture identity upon which legitimacy may be conferred by investors, competitors, and consumers (Lounsbury and Glynn, 2001). Effectively, it is argued that storytelling as being an antecedent to entrepreneurial identity and legitimacy is portrayed in the below figure 3. This thesis attempts to further explore this gap and shed a light on how it may be achieved.
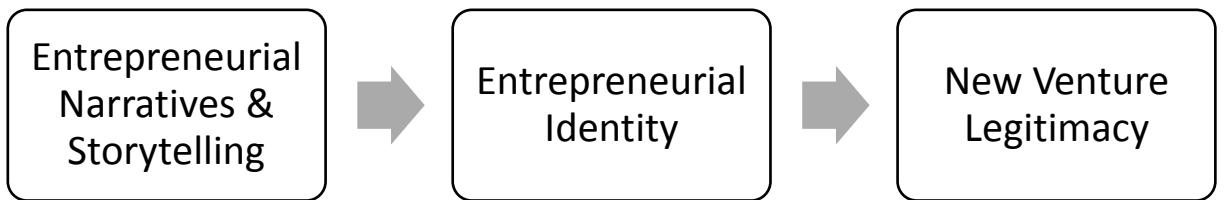
Figure 3   **Narratives, Identity and New Venture Legitimacy**

Adapted from Lounsbury & Glynn, 2001

In addition, this study also attempts to explicate the theoretical role of entrepreneurial narratives in establishing trust with their various stakeholders, a topic that is largely considered under-researched (Welter and Smallbone, 2006). We call for further qualitative empirical studies about the role of trust in the entrepreneurial activity, beyond the entrepreneurial networking, rather than just assuming that it is necessarily an inherently positive influence on entrepreneurial behaviour (IBID).

From another perspective, Welter (2012) notes that generally trust involves risk-taking and is related to emotions (Welter, 2012). Savolainen (2019) posits that communication is a key means for interacting in building trust (Savolainen et al., 2019) and in today's business and management, can occur in multi facets and via multi channels. To further advance our theoretical understanding of trust, we may be able to explore how storylines influence the stakeholders' emotions and consequently influence the trust building process between entrepreneurs and stakeholders.

This thesis also answers Suchman (1995) calls for progressing legitimacy research by exploring how it differs from one industry to another, from public to private

organizations, from new to old sectors, or from the beginning of the organizational life cycle to the end (Suchman, 1995). The thesis attempts to theoretically build on such areas, particularly on organisational life cycles and sectors.

Finally, this research aims to contribute to the very limited theoretical research has been generally done in the Middle East area. According to Nasra et al (2010), not one single article dedicated to examine entrepreneurship within this specific part of the world has surfaced in top management journals between 1990 and 2008 (Bruton et al., 2008); (Nasra and Dacin, 2010). To date, entrepreneurship articles about the Middle East region are still very scarce and the call for theoretical development was encouraged upon discussions with academics, practitioners and policy-makers (Nasra and Dacin, 2010).

1.5.3 Contribution to Practitioners and Policymakers

This research is possibly able to contribute to potential entrepreneurs and practitioners who are looking to internationalise their business beyond borders, particularly in the Arabian Gulf region, an area which has experienced significant economic growth in the past five decades. It allows them to better understand the relationship that exists between the home context and international new markets and leverage their existing home country reputation as needed. It also permits the internationalising entrepreneurs reassess their strategic entry approach of necessity-based and opportunity-based entrepreneurship by better evaluating the opportunities and threats in either case. Additionally, it prepares them to consider changes to their business models and alter routinized workflow and processes by encouraging them

to further experiment, learn and adjust identities as dictated by the new context. Strategically, it also advises them promote selves by directing their identity narratives and trusting cues and behaviours towards the consideration of business mutuality and economic quid pro quo proposals. It also encourages them to seize every opportunity in making distinctiveness claims to shore up the firm's legitimacy (Lounsbury and Glynn, 2001). Finally, from an institutional perspective, this research has also potential implications to policy makers, in terms of providing more customised policy-support for entrepreneurs and for small business owners.

1.6 Study Approach

To answer the research questions, we selected a socially constructionist qualitative case approach (Eisenhardt, 1989, Yin, 2003), which was deemed appropriate for meeting the research objectives of this thesis. Ontologically, it is in line with the researcher's views that reality is not objective but socially constructed and given meaning by people. A case methodology was followed as the aim is to investigate in-depth a real-life phenomenon within an organization and within its environmental context. We used semi-structured interviews as a primary method to collect empirical data with open-ended questions to allow entrepreneurs to engage in narratives about their nascent organizational life along with their personal interpretations of key events and major stories. The collected data was triangulated against the firms' identity claims as posted on their corporate websites, such as company information and other relevant firm-related data.

We discuss the details about research design and methodology in Chapter 3.

1.7 Thesis Structure

This thesis is composed of six main chapters. Its structure presents the context and the findings in a systematic manner, enabling the reader to recognise its relevance to theory and practice. The structure is represented in below Figure 4

Chapter 1: Introduction to the Thesis

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Chapter 3: Design and Methodology

Chapter 4: Research Findings

Chapter 5: Discussion of the findings

Chapter 6: Implications, Limitations, and Future Research
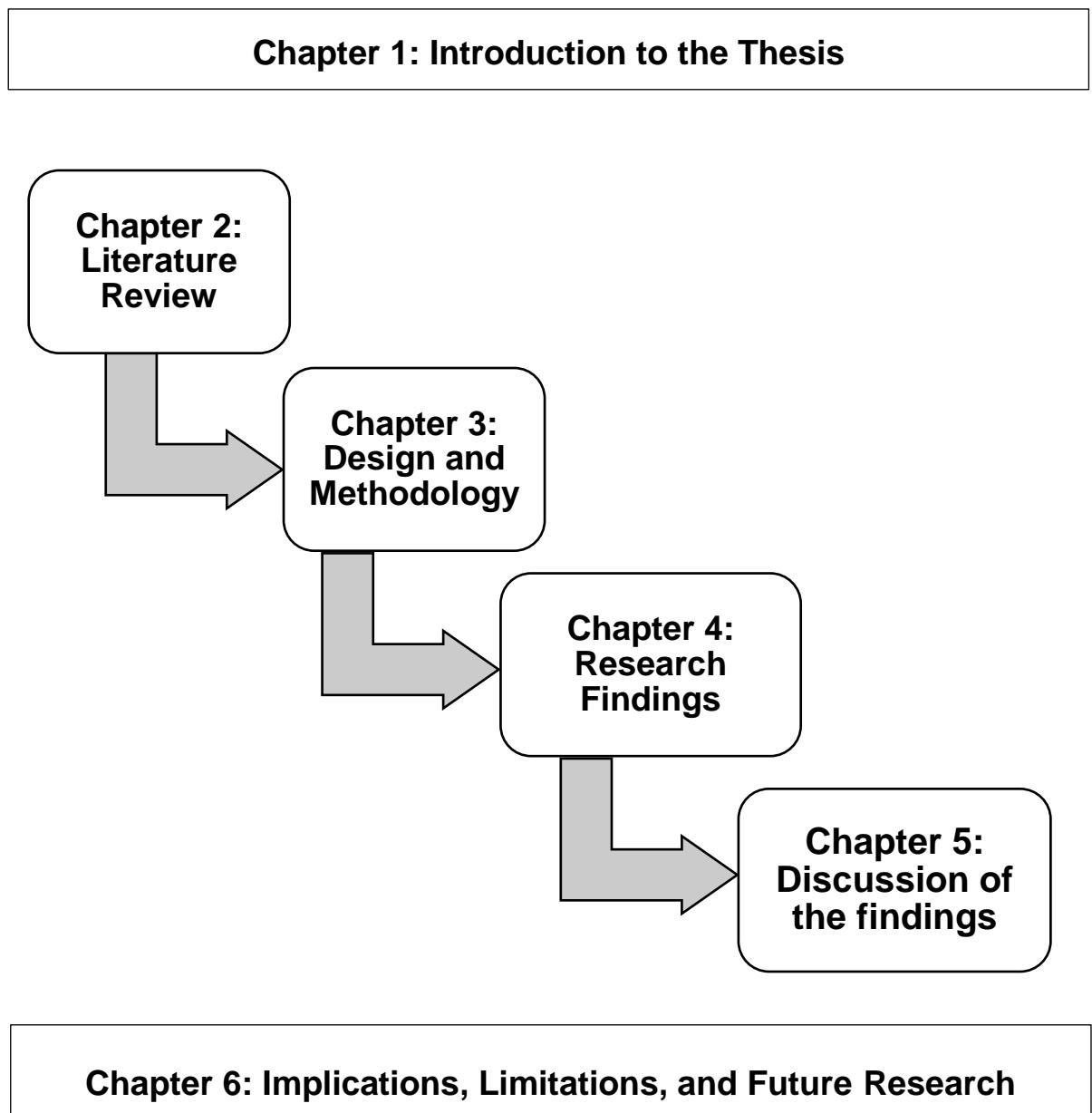
Figure 4   Thesis Structure

Chapter 1 sets the stage for the thesis by introducing the research topics, bounding the field of study, and explaining the researcher's personal interest in the thesis. Then, it sets the research context, problem statement, the theoretical gap in the literature followed by the research questions and objectives. In addition, chapter 1 explains the rationale of the study with its contribution to theory and practice and describes the adopted case design and research methodology of the thesis.

Chapter 2 reviews the relevant literature pertaining to the entrepreneurial process, approaches and opportunity recognition, international entrepreneurship concepts, the internationalisation of small firms and its effect on the firms' post-entry growth and survival. Given the entrepreneurs' social and cultural capital, organisational narratives are examined for purpose of constructing a comprehensible identity, establishing trust among the various stakeholders and, in gaining market legitimacy. Chapter 2 is concluded with a conceptual framework and suggested propositions that are derived from the extant literature.

Chapter 3 discusses the research methodology and the researcher's ontological and epistemological stances. It further examines narrative and process approaches in researching entrepreneurship, previous studies that adopted such methods and the effects of those narratives for identity works and for the establishment of trust and legitimacy in the new venture. The research design and the logic of adopting a case study approach are discussed along with the case selection criteria and interview format protocols. To conclude the methodology section, the qualitative data analysis stages and strategies are detailed as per the guidelines of Morse (1994) and Miles and Huberman (1994).

Chapter 4 informs about the empirical data collection and general findings. It shows the steps that were followed to interpret the data and how it was distinguished and regrouped in patterns of similarities and differences for each broad category; identity works, establishing trust and gaining legitimacy and in both the cases of slow-growth and fast-growth entry forms post internationalisation.

Chapter 5 interprets and discusses the findings pertinent to how narratives influence identity works, establishing trust and gaining legitimacy in the context of both slow-growth and growth-oriented firms internationalisation modes. Comparison between extant knowledge and the research findings are highlighted and tabulated at the end of section.

Chapter 6 concludes the discussion with details about the research theoretical and practical contributions that are attained in both its originality and its utility, particularly in one of the least studied areas in IE, which is the context of the GCC emerging markets. It also discusses the research limitations in reference to biases, generalizability, and inferences to other contexts.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

The purpose of this section on literature review is primarily to set the boundaries of the area of interest and to investigate how scholars commonly approached topics of contextual entrepreneurship, an area which has recently witnessed a surging interest (Welter et al., 2019).

A clear definition of the field of entrepreneurship will start off this review (Low and MacMillan, 1988); (Shane and Venkataraman, 2000), with its historical stages and the sources and nature of entrepreneurial opportunities as seen from three perspectives: the economic school (Schumpeter et al., 1934); (Kirzner, 1973), the cultural cognitive school (Weick, 1979b), and the socio-political school (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983, Giddens, 1984); (Aldrich and Fiol, 1994). The field of international entrepreneurship will also be viewed from an International Business (IB) perspective with its International Entrepreneurship (IE) concepts (Oviatt and McDougall, 1994); (Coombs et al., 2009), the different streams of international opportunity exploitation (Johanson and Vahlne, 1977); (Oviatt and McDougall, 1994), the born-global firms (Knight and Cavusgil, 2004), international new ventures' entry strategy (Kalish et al., 1995) and, growth approaches (Tan, 2009); (Kiss et al., 2013).

The entrepreneurs' social and cultural capital (Baron and Markman, 2000); (Lounsbury and Glynn, 2001) and aspects of the overall entrepreneurial process (Hjorth, 2005); (Steyaert, 2007); (Hjorth et al., 2015) will be discussed with the

related fields of organizational narratives (Boje, 1991); (O'Connor, 2002) and organizational storytelling (Czarniawska, 1998); (Gabriel, 2000); (Brown, 2006).

Finally, the phenomenon of how entrepreneurs engage in various narratives and storytelling with the aim of crafting a new identity (Martens et al., 2007, Phillips, 2013, Marlow and McAdam, 2015) and, establishing trust (Welter and Smallbone, 2006, Gabbay and Leenders, 2003) and legitimacy (Aldrich and Fiol, 1994, Lounsbury and Glynn, 2001) in their new international venture will be addressed. The functions and content of such narratives will be discussed and how, through the increasing trust and legitimacy, they facilitate resources acquisition thus, help create a competitive advantage.

2.2 Entrepreneurship Concepts

2.2.1 The Entrepreneurship Field

The field of entrepreneurship has largely been characterized by scholars as fragmented and in ferment (Gartner and Birley, 2002, Zachary and Mishra, 2011). Some believe that it still struggles for legitimacy and generally lacks a conceptual framework for it does not fully explain a set of empirical phenomena (Shane and Venkataraman, 2000) or because it has so much interface with other existing and more established fields, such as Economics and Strategic Management (Busenitz et al., 2003, Landström et al., 2012). In fact, the theories which have been put forward by scholars to explain the field of Entrepreneurship range from economic (Schumpeter et al., 1934); (Kirzner, 1973) to psychological - with a shifting emphasis on the individual's need of achievement (McClelland, 1965) or locus of control (Rotter, 1966), to sociological focusing on the social context (Reynolds, 1991), to

anthropological with the cultural environments affecting behaviours (North, 1990a), to opportunity-based (Drucker, 1985); (Shane and Venkataraman, 2000) and to resource-based (Aldrich, 1999). Many scholars believe that the diversity of approaches and lack of a singular view weaken the field but, like many others, we believe that such heterogeneity can also be a source of richness and diversity; making the field very dynamic (Audretsch, 2012) and that the researcher may therefore approach his case from a variety of angles that is inherent to their specific context.

However, much of the debate that is revolving around the factors that are necessary for entrepreneurship to occur, have receded as of lately and it seems that the field have moved towards a consensus around a core idea that entrepreneurship is a process that depends on both opportunities and individuals (Shane, 2012). Still, some criticisms have also surfaced over the research foundations on which the entrepreneurship field has been built (Volery and Mazzarol, 2015), such as methodological issues (Bouckenooghe et al., 2007), its focus (Zachary and Mishra, 2011) or its relevance to policy and practice (Rosa, 2013).

From a contextualization perspective, and according to Welter et al (2019), the discussion has also very much evolved over the past thirty years from a decontextualized "Silicon Valley" standard model of high growth, technology driven and venture capital-backed and of little focus on the "environment" (Aldrich and Pfeffer, 1976); (Hannan and Freeman, 1977) into a more contextualizing entrepreneurship research (Zahra, 2007); (Welter and Smallbone, 2011) and ultimately, to even a bigger emphasis on the entrepreneurs' active involvement and enactment of contexts (Fletcher and Selden, 2016); (Baker and Welter, 2017);

(Welter et al., 2019). Taken together, these waves represent the range and the diversity of the field and help comprehending entrepreneurship and innovation as everyday activities.

Historically, the notion dates to the 18th century when economists Richard Cantillon and Jean-Baptiste Say advanced the concept of "entrepreneurs" as non-fixed income earners who would pay known costs of production but earn uncertain incomes. But it wasn't until the 20th century that the concept began to develop, and many believe that the term of entrepreneurship is largely owed to the Austrian economist Joseph Schumpeter (1934) who looked at it from a macro-economic perspective. In Schumpeter (1934) theory of economic development, the entrepreneur is any person that carves out new combinations of the factors of production. According to Schumpeter (1934), it is not only those independent businessmen in any exchange economy but also any person who fulfils that role even he is an employee of a company, a manager or a board member etc. Schumpeter (1934) regarded them as "wild spirits" or the agents behind innovation destabilizing the economic equilibrium but driving the economy forward but asserted that they cease to be entrepreneurs once they establish their own firms and start managing their businesses as a routine. In 1985, Peter Drucker took the innovation role of the entrepreneur even further arguing that it was the mean by which they necessitated change (Drucker, 1985). Israel Kirzner (1973) also assumed that the market is imperfect and is always in disequilibrium hence the existence of business opportunities. It is the "alert" entrepreneur who pushes the market towards equilibrium but evidently, it is never reached (Kirzner, 1973).

Nevertheless, most scholars agree about the traits of an entrepreneur. They mostly believe that he/she possesses a different psychological profile than the rest of the population, or even from the less successful ones. They are mainly intuitive, seek independence, in desperate need for achievement (McClelland, 1965), possess an internal locus of control (Rotter, 1966), have a higher propensity for risk taking and most importantly enjoy a high tolerance for ambiguity (Veciana, 1999). However, according to Kirzner (1973), emphasis is on the alertness factor to business opportunities that an entrepreneur must possess as a main psychological trait which is the knowledge of where to find market data.

It is also worthy to note that the entrepreneurs' psychological or personality traits approach that differentiated entrepreneurs from other individuals (Busenitz and Barney, 1997) have produced a large body of research (Powell and Baker, 2014) but, regrettably, it still remained irreconcilable as entrepreneurs represent a rather heterogeneous group who do not possess comparable personality types or a specific set of psychological traits (Mmbaga et al., 2020).

Additionally, Gartner (1985) noted that entrepreneurship is approached via several angles and is always associated with innovation, creativity, organization creation, owner-manager, risk bearer, uniqueness and creating value. However, Gartner (1988) later criticized the approach which studies the entrepreneur's personality traits and recommended instead to focus on the functional creation of new organizations (i.e., how organizations emerge). Discussions about personality traits receded for a while, but have recently gained ground again in researching how personality may influence the creation of new organizations (Rauch et al., 2009). Other scholars have also investigated the theme in a way to get to the "heart" of entrepreneurship

(Stevenson and Gumpert, 1985) the "force" of entrepreneurship (Bays, 1988) or the "spirit" of entrepreneurship (Abdnor, 1988). As a stand-alone topic, others have focused on the entrepreneurial event (Gartner, 1985), the entrepreneurial phenomena (Brockhaus, 1987) , and the entrepreneurial behaviour (Bird and Jelinek, 1988).

On a comparable note, the shift in researching entrepreneurial traits has progressed in the past two decades to examine the entrepreneurial orientation (EO) (Covin and Slevin, 1989). EO is defined as the processes, practices, and decision-making activities leading to a new entry and with several dimensions, such as innovativeness, pro-activeness, risk-taking, competitive aggressiveness and autonomy (Lumpkin and Dess, 1996). This has progressed to include two other important traits: the relevance of entrepreneurial passion and of perseverance (Gerschewski et al., 2016). Within the internationalization process, entrepreneurial orientation characteristics were identified by scholars to be positively related to the speed to market (Zhou et al., 2007) and the sales intensity of the firms (Zhang et al., 2012); (Gerschewski et al., 2016).

In the past two decades, a new perspective in researching entrepreneurship emerged, which elucidates the process-oriented character of organizing (Steyaert, 2007) and to further contextualize more deeply in social and human sciences such as sociology, anthropology and philosophy rather than just in economy (Hjorth, 2005). Steyeart (2007) calls for reconstructing the creative process view range from complexity and chaos theory to the interpretive and phenomenological, social constructionist, pragmatic and practice-based to the relational materialist. Such

attempts impacted the entrepreneurship field and placed it in the broader context of social and management research.

Many researchers have attempted to reconcile the many approaches into three main views that focus on organizational context, on performance criterion or on entrepreneurial behaviour (Audretsch, 2012), but to many others, the theory of entrepreneurship simply remains the theory of value creation in explaining the entrepreneurial experience from intention and the discovery of opportunity, to the development of entrepreneurial competence, and to the appropriation of entrepreneurial reward (Mishra and Zachary, 2015). Clearly, such heterogeneity seems a source of richness and diversity, rendering the field extremely dynamic (Audretsch, 2012).

2.2.2 Entrepreneurship Approaches

2.2.2.1 Opportunity Concepts

Through the Individual Opportunity Nexus ION concept, Shane and Venkataraman, (2000) may have placed the notion of "opportunity" at the heart of any entrepreneurial venture (Shane and Venkataraman, 2000); (Shane, 2003b), but debates never ceased about the origins of "entrepreneurial opportunities" and whether they are discovered or created or, in other words, of objective or subjective natures (Companys and McMullen, 2007). According to (Company and McMullen, 2007), opportunities are researched from three different approaches: the economics school, the cultural cognitive school, and the socio-political school. First, the economics approach relies on the conjecture that opportunities objectively exist in society due to the disequilibrium in the market and to the availability of economic resources. It is

believed that said opportunities exist at a certain time and place in society but may not be obvious to all people. Only an alert entrepreneur (Kirzner, 1973) who wishes to "experiment" with all available information and gather capabilities and resources will be in a position to discover such opportunities (Company and McMullen, 2007).

The economic approach of the market disequilibrium and availability of economic resources explains many aspects of the entrepreneurial process by emphasising on the innovation part but ignores other important aspects such as psychological traits of the entrepreneurs. If this is the case, one may wonder about the case of late Steve Jobs (Apple) and Larry Page (Google). It is arguable that due to their traits of sheer determination and exceptional coding talents that got them as far as they did. Another critique to the economic approach is that it generally favours first movers and ignores the innovative works of those who perfected it. A relevant example is Michael Dell who did not invent the personal computers but was the first to customize it and sell it directly to consumers (Magretta, 1998).

On the other hand, the socio-cultural cognitive school encompasses several theories that opportunities exist once they are defined and enacted by individuals and firms (Weick, 1979a). It is therefore a subjective phenomenon whereby the institutional framework is what determines venture creation at a certain time and place (Veciana, 1999). It is also contingent on both the degree of ambiguity in the environment and on the ability of entrepreneurs to develop the mental models necessary to spot and define such opportunities (Company and McMullen, 2007). In a similar vein, Sarasvathy (2001) argues that entrepreneurs often develop effectual thinking as opposed to causal thinking that is typical of managers, given that opportunities are discovered and exploited based on the resources that are available to them, their

ability to develop networks and relationships and, the losses they are willing to sustain (Sarasvathy, 2001).

However, the socio-cultural view which over-emphasizes the cultural factors on the "enactment" of opportunities and hence, the development of entrepreneurship is equally criticised. For example, those opposing the marginalisation theory of Hoselitz (1963) which credits the role of marginalized people and other minorities in the society in elevating their conditions and promoting economic development, hint that venture creation is therefore, not the result of a rational decision. Similarly, Cochran's (1965) theory of entrepreneurship, which suggests that the society's cultural values, the social expectations and the role expectations are major determinants in the supply of entrepreneurs, is criticized for ignoring the role of innovation or other economic factors such as risk or profit.

Finally, the socio-political school tends to see opportunities as an objective phenomenon existing in a complex web of social relationships that regulate economic action and within a certain network structure that requires a social actor with high political resources to mobilize them (Company and McMullen, 2007). It highly depends on communication and information exchange as well as the extent of the relationship between the various stakeholders (Suppliers, customers, bankers, public and private agencies), family & friends and the entrepreneur (Aldrich and Fiol, 1994). Therefore, the network is what defines the opportunity while the entrepreneur's role is to perceive it and exploit it, provided he/she possesses significant political and narrative skills to process the various sources of information, to persuade others coming on board (Company and McMullen, 2007).

While the socio-political view and the highly important element of networking contains a lot of merit in the development of entrepreneurship, those who criticize this perspective claim that institutional deficiencies may also create opportunities as was the case in Eastern Europe in the early 90s after the USSR breakdown. Another example would be the alteration of governance mechanisms to suit some needs like the case of the eminent domain for the company "Solidere" in Lebanon.

2.2.2.2 Necessity Entrepreneurship

The above paragraphs discuss the existence of entrepreneurial opportunities based on the varying perceptions of the relative value of resources and the price upon which, the markets will stabilize (Kirzner, 1973). However, there has recently been acknowledgement about the entrepreneurial intention out of necessity (Sahasranamam and Sud, 2016); (Fairlie and Fossen, 2018). This concept classifies the entrepreneurs' start-up initiatives because of "lack of any other choice" (Sahasranamam and Sud, 2016) and many of them operate in what is referred to as 'informal' economy, with higher rates in emerging countries (Schneider and Enste, 2002), as entrepreneurs find more autonomy, flexibility, and freedom than in the formal one (Sahasranamam and Sud, 2016).

Opportunity and necessity-based motives have also been referred to as 'pull' or 'push' entrepreneurship (Reynolds et al., 2005). The 'pull' factor is often associated to attractive and profitable business opportunities in contrast to the 'push' factor that is related to dissatisfaction with current situation (Amit and Muller, 1996). This theory gained prominence with studies attributing the presence of high entrepreneurship levels to the pull-push paradigm in both low-income and high-income countries

(Reynolds et al., 2005); (Audretsch, 2012) and at the individual-level antecedents (Sahasranamam and Sud, 2016).

In conclusion, understanding the entrepreneurship phenomenon is a complex matter. We have reviewed the main perspectives, but this does not seem to fully explain the field and it is not limited to those views.

2.2.3 The Entrepreneurship Process

Perhaps, the most dominant concept of entrepreneurship remains as the one characterized by Shane and Ventakaraman (2000) as the nexus of two phenomena: the presence of enterprising individuals and the presence of lucrative opportunities (Shane and Venkataraman, 2000). Their seminal article about "The Promise of Entrepreneurship as a Field of Research" in the Academy of Management Review has been cited over 18,100 times and this research proposes adhering to Shane and Venkataraman (2000) entrepreneurship framework (Shane and Venkataraman, 2000). Prior to this, the paradigms were mostly about defining the entrepreneur as a person building an enterprise and therefore, undermining the opportunity quality.

From the concept of the opportunity existence and its discovery, we now turn to the entrepreneurial process which begins with the perception of the existence of opportunities in which resources can be recombined at a potential profit (Shane, 2003a). It involves "the identification and evaluation of opportunity, the decision whether or not to exploit it, the efforts to obtain resources, organizing these resources into a new combination and, the development of a strategy for the new venture" (Shane, 2003a) p111. Shane (2003) also recognizes the effects of both the industry context and the macro-environment on the discovery and the exploitation of

the opportunity as well on the execution part. However, these different activities are also affected by the entrepreneur's individual attributes such as psychological and demographics factors (Shane, 2003a). Please refer to Figure 5
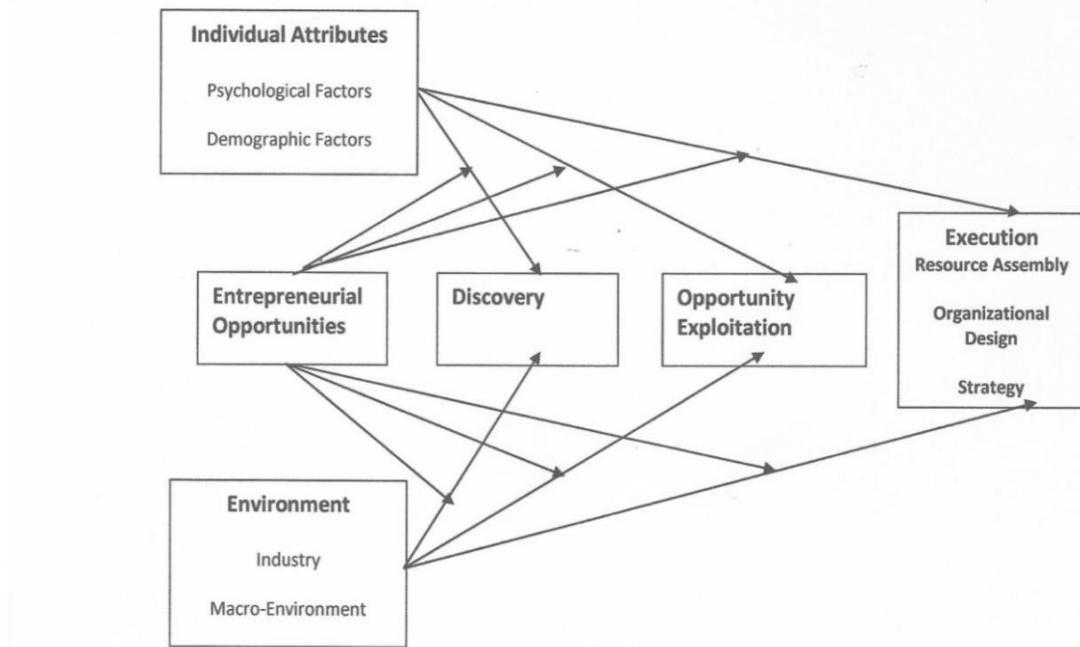
Figure 5   The Entrepreneurial Process Model (Shane, 2003b)

2.2.4 The Entrepreneurial Process Direction

In reference to the above-mentioned model, Shane (2003) also posits that particularly in the execution part, the activity is directional and ordered. Assuming the opportunity exists, the sequence starts with the discovery of said opportunity by an entrepreneur who takes the decision to exploit it. Then, he/she gathers resources, chooses a strategy, and organises the appropriate set-up that would lead to performance (Refer to Figure 6). Even though Shane (2003) admits the possibility of

feedback loops and non-linearity, he assumes that the constructs are sequential and that each one is dependent on the preceding.

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┌─────────────┐     ┌─────────────┐     ┌─────────────┐
│ Existence of│ ──▶ │ Discovery of│ ──▶ │ Decision to │
│ Opportunity │     │ Opportunity │     │   Exploit   │
└─────────────┘     └─────────────┘     └─────────────┘
       │
       ▼
┌─────────────┐     ┌─────────────┐     ┌─────────────┐
│  Resources  │ ──▶ │Entrepreneurial│ ─▶│ Organisation│
│ Acquisition │     │   Strategy   │    │   Process   │
└─────────────┘     └─────────────┘     └─────────────┘
                           │
                           ▼
┌───────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│                                                         │
│                      Performance                        │
│                                                         │
└───────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
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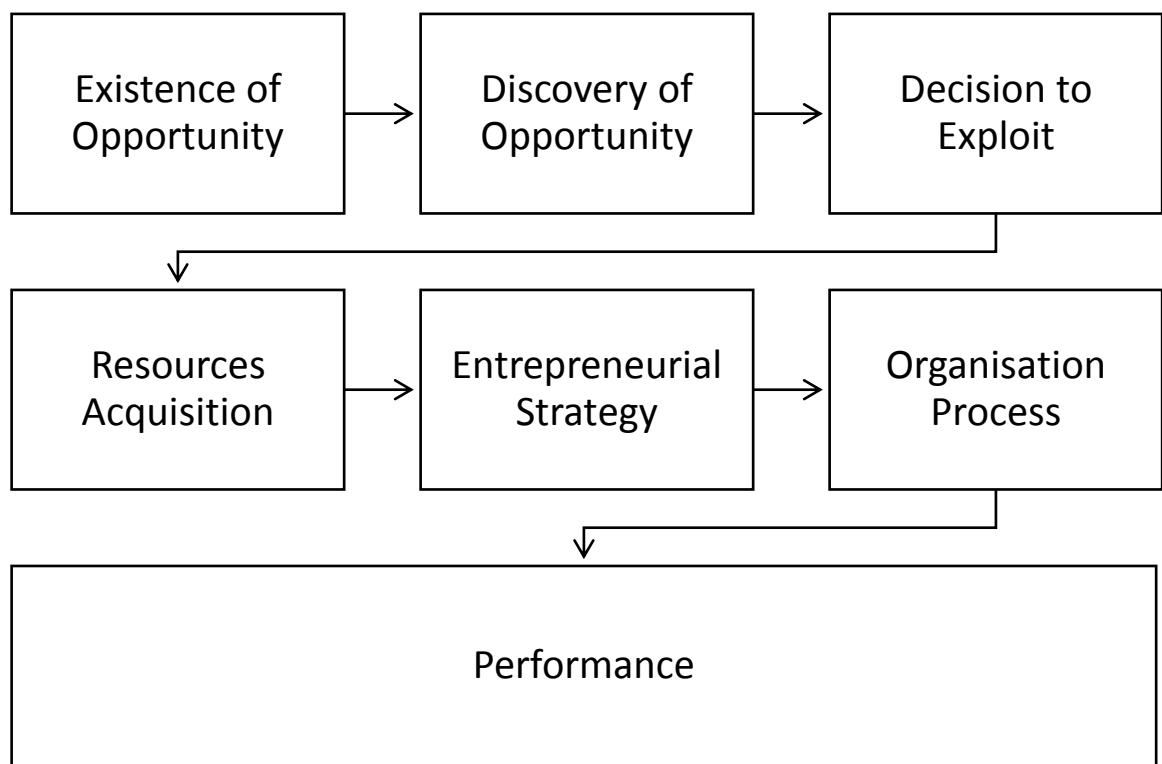
Figure 6   The Entrepreneurial Process Direction (Shane, 2003a)

2.3 International Entrepreneurship

2.3.1 International Entrepreneurship Concepts

The above-mentioned entrepreneurial process model and direction as posited by Shane (2003) may explain the phenomenon, but it does not fully explain the

internationalisation process and how new start-ups exploit their opportunities in international markets. In light with the rising interest to explain the field of international entrepreneurship (IE), particularly with intense globalisation and with the emergence of start-up firms that, from inception, engage in international business (Oviatt and McDougall, 1994, Knight and Cavusgil, 2004), the research field has broadened from studying differing national entrepreneurial cultures (Thomas and Mueller, 2000) to the internationalisation of small-and-medium-sized enterprises (Lu and Beamish, 2001) and technological learning (Zahra et al., 2000).

Theoretically, McDougall and Oviatt (2000) suggested that International Entrepreneurship (IE) conceptually rests at the intersection of two disciplines: entrepreneurship and international business (IB) (McDougall and Oviatt, 2000). Some of the theories that are widely used to explain the internationalisation process are network theory (Lu et al., 2010) (Zhou et al., 2007) which acknowledges that social networks internationalisation (Chandra et al., 2020), the resource-based view (RBV) (Barney, 1991) which, explains the process in terms of resources and capacity accumulation to achieve international competitive advantage through knowledge transfer (Oviatt and McDougall, 1994); (Lu and Beamish, 2001); (Chandra et al., 2020), the eclectic paradigm or OLI framework (Ownership, Location and Internalisation) (Dunning, 2001), the liability of foreignness (Zaheer, 1995) and international marketing (Onkvisit and Shaw, 1989). They have also defined the field as being businesses that are organized across national borders, involved in new and innovative activities and, having the goals of growth and value creation (Oviatt and McDougall, 1995). However, in 2005, their definition of international entrepreneurship was reformulated by recognising opportunities as being either of objective or

subjective (enacted) nature, using the following: "International entrepreneurship is the discovery, enactment, evaluation, and exploitation of opportunities across national borders to create future goods and services" (Oviatt and McDougall, 2005) p540. This definition, which focuses on opportunities and highlights entrepreneurial activity across national borders, links the entrepreneurship and international entrepreneurship literature. Similarly, Coombs et al (2009) have drawn resemblance between the two fields and posited that the study of International Entrepreneurship can be viewed as a subset of Entrepreneurship literature, rather than a subset of International Business literature but, they have also noted that this lacks recognition and that the concept has not yet been closely studied (Coombs et al., 2009). They have also added that the link of this notion with the existing literature is rather tenuous and requires further research as international business theories do not fully explain small firms' cross-border creation or involvement (Coombs et al., 2009).

For this thesis, we build on both Coombs' (2009) assumption that the entrepreneurship literature explains the phenomenon of cross-border new ventures and on the reworked definition of Oviatt and McDougall's (2005) international entrepreneurship for it stresses on the enactment of opportunities and settles the discussion about their nature of whether they are objective or subjective.

2.3.2 Entrepreneurship in Emerging Economies

The above concepts can shed the light on international entrepreneurship phenomena, but they seem to hardly explain whether they are applicable in developing countries. As a reminder, the internationalisation environment that this research is taking place is in the GCC geographical area, which is commonly

considered as "emerging economies" context. According to Bruton et al (2008), the economy within these countries is characterised to be increasingly moving to market orientation and on expanding trade and industry foundation by supporting entrepreneurship initiatives, as they are known to play a major role in a country's economic development (Bruton et al., 2008). However, the authors also noted that the vast body of research about entrepreneurship is focused on North America and Europe and that little is known about the small firms' internationalisation in emerging countries, such as East Asia, East Europe, Latin America and the Middle East (Bruton et al., 2008) and that research in the mentioned areas remains very limited (Chandra et al., 2020). Many researchers have advised against assuming that the findings or established theories in developed economies are forcibly applicable to emerging economies (Peng and Luo, 2000). They call for theory testing and that further exploration must be conducted, particularly from the social, psychological and organisational behaviour perspectives and not only from strategic perspectives (Bruton et al., 2008). This study may answer those calls by providing some meaningful insights on identity construction and trust works and, by extending international entrepreneurship theories in emerging countries.

According to Chandra et al (2020), the IB literature proposes that the internationalisation of SMEs has particular characteristics in developing countries and that the larger companies from developed countries have advantages over SMEs from developing countries in terms of their liability of foreignness, benefitting from size and scale economies, trust and more importantly, international experience (Chandra et al., 2020). Based on De Clercq et al (2012), Chandra et al (2020) added

that international experience plays a major role in the probability of survival the firms in the international market (De Clercq et al., 2012); (Chandra et al., 2020).

Additionally, Chandra et al (2020) explored the barriers may influence SME's internationalisation from developing countries and added that they can be attributed to internal factors (human capital, resources poverty, size, age, products and location) and external factors (procedures, currency barriers, government barriers and socio-cultural factors) with market conditions and managerial experiences as moderators (Chandra et al., 2020). They have concluded that many questions regarding the internationalisation of SMEs are still unanswered, but the successful ones are dependent on several factors such as innovation, managerial experience, knowledge, local and network collaboration and, entrepreneurial mind-set (IBID).

Considering that most entrepreneurship theories tend to revolve under the assumption that the triggers are profit maximization (Baumol, 1962); (Douglas and Shepherd, 2000) and self-interest maximizations (DeLeon, 1996); (Acs and Storey, 2004), researching entrepreneurship in emerging countries will likely lead to similar conclusions. However, the cultural values and motivations in some emerging countries may also differ and other triggers such as the welfare of others, maintaining a status–quo or, maintaining networks and friendships are potentially factors for enhancing new venture creation and internationalisation (Bruton et al., 2008).

Finally, it is important to state that although emerging countries may share similarities, they may on the other hand vary greatly in their sizes, histories, cultures, economic dependencies and development paths (Bruton et al., 2008). Consequently, generalisations ought to be very carefully stated.

2.3.3 Migrant Entrepreneurship

Generally, migration is widely linked to the development of nations (De Haas, 2010) and is considered to provide economic and social benefits, mainly due to migrant remittances that help poverty reduction in home countries (Adams Jr and Page, 2005); (Naudé et al., 2015). With a relatively high propensity for self-employment, migrant entrepreneurship therefore, takes a heightened importance in the global business environment and is extremely relevant to IB (Sinkovics and Reuber, 2021).

Defined as entrepreneurial activities of foreign-born individuals in a country that is other than their birth, migrant entrepreneurship can also be characterised to be influenced by 'push' and 'pull' factors. 'Push' factors are usually characterised as negative factors, often manifested in the forms of bureaucracy, corruption, or economic restrictions in home countries (Salamanca P and Alcaraz, 2019), and which force migration and drive individuals to self-employment (Naudé et al., 2015). In contrast, 'pull' factors are considered as positive such as the existence of a favourable entrepreneurial ecosystem in the host countries (access to financing, business support, legal and copyright policies) and which tend to attract migrants (Salamanca P and Alcaraz, 2019); (Sinkovics and Reuber, 2021) to an environment in which they can thrive and become creative (Naudé et al., 2015).

Although that migration is sometimes blamed to cause brain-drain on developing countries (Di Maria and Stryszowski, 2006), migrant entrepreneurship is also renowned for providing benefits for both the home and host countries, as seen from an entrepreneurial social capital and networks perspectives (Sinkovics and Reuber, 2021). Effectively, diaspora networks are often credited with facilitating innovation catch-up in some developing home countries which in turn, would allow the offering

of more globally competitive products and services (Lorenzen and Mudambi, 2013). As for the host country, migrant entrepreneurs are mostly prominent in providing specialized human capital that is often deployed to pursue international opportunities (Coviello et al., 2017) while simultaneously providing social influences for the local entrepreneurs to possibly explore global opportunities (Sinkovics and Reuber, 2021).

From another perspective, the myths describing migrant entrepreneurs as 'super-entrepreneurs' in terms of being more entrepreneurial than natives or, in providing remittances to fund start-ups in their home countries of origin or, in bringing back entrepreneurial skills when they re-migrate, are all views that are not fully supported by empirical evidence (Naudé et al., 2015). Effectively, in referring a 2012 GEM survey about innovation in enterprises, no significant difference was found between the innovativeness of migrant and non-migrant entrepreneurs and, remittances were generally found to be largely used for consumption in home countries (household expenditures, poverty reduction, education support etc.) rather than funding start-ups and self-employment activities (IBID). Finally, in the case of non-permanent migrants and their potential return to start up enterprises in their home countries, research has shown that migrants may lose contact with their networks that were established in host countries, rendering it more difficult to start a new enterprise. As their social capital depreciates, they also cease to be likely more entrepreneurial than their non-migrants' peers (Black and Castaldo, 2009); (McKenzie, 2011); (Naudé et al., 2015) despite some advantages of such as experience or financial savings accumulated abroad.

In conclusion, migrant entrepreneurship is an important phenomenon that is relatively under-researched and which success factors lies upon the migrants' ability to

navigate policy constraints, monetize social networks, establish trust and legitimacy and, adapt to host business environment (Sinkovics and Reuber, 2021).

2.3.4 International Entrepreneurship Modes of Exploitation

According to (Batsakis and Theoharakis, 2021), the IB literature discusses the internationalization process from all the three angles of *why* (e.g. market, resources, efficiency, innovation-seeking motives), *where* (e.g. location choice, geographic scope), and *how* (e.g. foreign market entry mode choice, the role of distance) in an attempt to legitimize and rationalize cross-border initiatives in terms of costs versus rewards (Batsakis and Theoharakis, 2021). Additionally, it also highlights the firms' actual characteristics and suggests that the ability to internationalize early and succeed in foreign markets is directly related to the development of the firms' internal capabilities, network relationships and resources (Sapienza et al., 2006). These would include inimitable knowledge and innovation, consisting of critical competences and embedded routines (Autio et al., 2000); (McDougall et al., 1994); (Zahra et al., 2000); (Knight and Cavusgil, 2004), which are in essence, characteristics of successful entrepreneurial ventures. Please refer to Figure 7

Firms Characteristics:
Development of Internal Capabilities
Resources Acquisition
Innovation

Ability for a Firm to Internationalize and Succeed
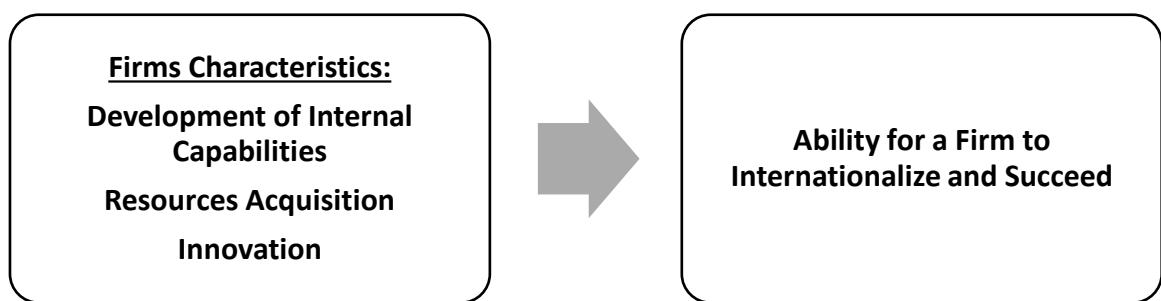
Figure 7   Characteristics Requirements for Firms' Internationalization

Beyond the firms' capabilities and resources, the post-entry strategies in foreign market entries have also been an interest in the IB literature (Tan, 2009). Kalish et al (1995) suggested two entry strategies: a sprinkler strategy (breadth) and a waterfall strategy (depth) of growth (Kalish et al., 1995). Breadth denotes the dispersion of growth in new foreign market entries while depth refers to the extent of which, resources are committed to scale operations in markets where the firm already operates (Batsakis and Theoharakis, 2021). Recently, researchers are suggesting that both scale and scope of growth are inter-related and mutually affected by each other as a result of new market learning, therefore exploring synergistic or simultaneous approaches (Shi et al., 2020). However, such conflicting approach, which can lead to serious organizational tensions, places high importance on the knowledge capacity and on the cognitive orientation abilities of the firms' leading managers and the CEO (Batsakis and Theoharakis, 2021).

Additionally, most IB scholars draw specific attention to time-related aspects within the analysis of the internationalization process in general, and to its speed in particular (Batsakis and Theoharakis, 2021). Effectively, Jones and Coviello (2005) suggest that the internationalization speed should be explicitly incorporated in the process (Jones and Coviello, 2005) whereas Chetty et al (2014) relate the importance of speed to managerial challenges (Chetty et al., 2014). Their argument is that the internationalizing firms, who may not afford to grow in incremental steps or even at a high pace in a single direction, ought to consider growing rapidly in terms of breadth and depth (Batsakis and Theoharakis, 2021).

When exploring the various modes of international opportunity exploitation, three main streams have been identified in the literature: the **Economics** stream, the

Behavioural/Process stream and more recently, the **Rapid Internationalisation** stream (Schuffel, 2008). Adherers to the first stream explain that the internationalisation decision is based on economics such as cost, investment, risk and control and that their approach is backed up by theories such as the Transaction Cost Economics (TCE) (Coase, 1998) and Resource Based View (Teece et al., 1997, Barney, 1991) and on other IB theories such as the eclectic paradigm (Dunning, 2001), liability of foreignness (Zaheer, 1995) and international marketing (Onkvisit and Shaw, 1989). On the other hand, the behavioural / process stream is seen as an evolutionary process or the process / stage model (Johanson and Vahlne, 1977). Finally, supporters of the rapid approach, like Oviatt and McDougall (1994) believe that domestic inertia may be crippling if internationalisation is postponed as some of the resources that have provided competitive advantages in the past may turn into disadvantages when kept after their benefits have faded (Oviatt and McDougall, 1994). Within this stream, we also distinguish both the **Born-Global** firms, a term that was first used by Rennie (Rennie, 1993) to mainly identify the business firms who, since inception, seek superior international business performance from the application of knowledge-based resources to the sale of outputs in multiple countries (Knight and Cavusgil, 2004) and, the swift and abrupt approach, known as the **International New Venture Creation INV** as firms who seek to derive significant competitive advantage from the use of resources and the sale of outputs in multiple countries (Oviatt and McDougall, 1994).

In contrast to international new venture perspective along with its time-related aspects and speed components, the evolutionary stream or the process approach remains the classical and by far, a relatively safer approach for beyond-borders

expansions. And believing that most existing internationalisation theories overlooked cultural differences issues and the needed internal foundations so that companies could handle international activities, Johanson & Vahlne (1977) developed their PMI model through empirical findings in an attempt to explain the process or the sequential steps in the direction of increased foreign dedication (Johanson and Vahlne, 1977). This approach, which is often referred to it by the **Uppsala Internationalisation Model,** can be summarized as the process of increasing involvement in international operations across borders and distinguishes the following four different steps of recognition and exploitation of an opportunity in entering an international market as shown in the below table that was adapted from Forsgren and Johanson (1975).

- Step 1: No regular export activities (sporadic export).
- Step 2: Export via independent representative (export mode).
- Step 3: Establishment of a foreign sales subsidiary.
- Step 4: Foreign production/manufacturing.
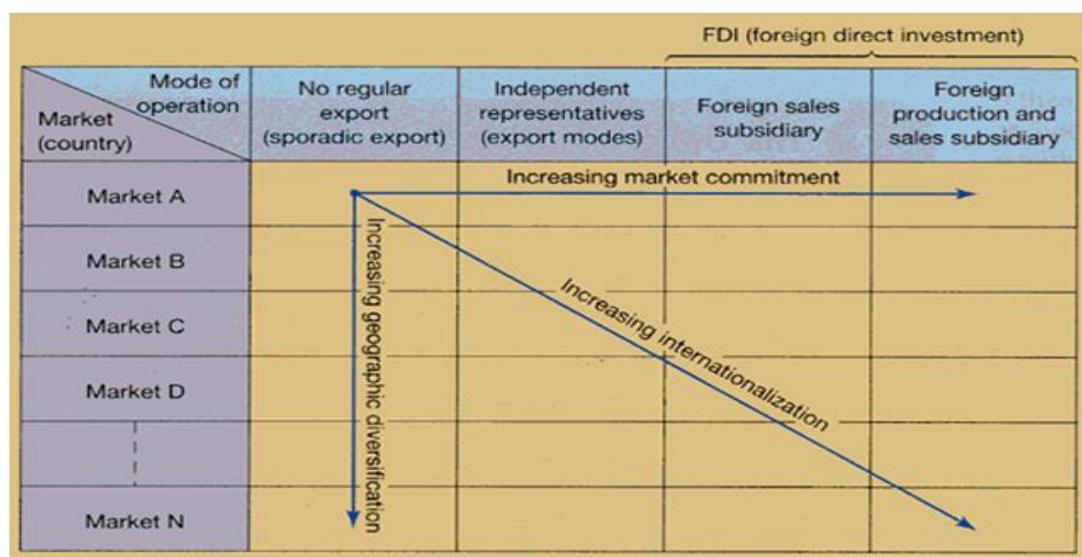
Figure 8   The Uppsala Internationalisation Model

Adapted from Forsgren and Johanson, 1975

Their observation showed that companies normally start their expansion in a nearby market. When they gradually gain increased knowledge and establish better control of resources, they expand to a more distant market referring to cultural differences (language, politics, and geography) or the difficulty to acquire knowledge and information from the market. Their study also showed that most often companies enter a new market through export before the establishment of a foreign sales subsidiary or foreign production. The **Uppsala model** thoroughly explains on how foreign market risks are mitigated by acquiring tacit knowledge about the new challenges and by incrementally changing their commitments to those markets. However, it worthy to point out that the Uppsala Model focuses on traditional cross-border behaviour and not accelerated entrepreneurial internationalization behaviour (Oviatt and McDougall, 2005).

Given that the internationalization economics are justified, scholars mostly debated around the following two dominant approaches in how should a firm internationalize: should it be through a slow, stable and dynamic process that reacts to market disequilibrium by making a series of incremental decisions to mitigate risks and navigate cautiously through uncertainty (Johanson and Vahlne, 1977) or should it be rapid, abrupt and striving to exploit international resource asymmetries, better known as the International New Venture Creation (INV) (Oviatt and McDougall, 1994). A number of studies which have drawn insights from the Uppsala Model posit that firms benefit from a slow and incremental internationalization process (Liang et al., 2014) while other studies show that firms gain more benefits by internationalizing rapidly (Mathews and Zander, 2007); (Powell and Baker, 2014).

From another perspective, the principal authors of the Uppsala Model have finally concluded that "old models of internationalization processes are still applied quite fruitfully at the same time as several studies have suggested that there is a need for new and network-based models of internationalization. We think it might be worthwhile to reconcile and even integrate the two approaches" (Johanson and Vahlne, 2003). P84. They also provide an outline to integrate both approaches which considers both an incremental and a rapid entry, depending on the market knowledge factor and on the national culture and, focusing mainly on network relationships involving customers and suppliers (Johanson and Vahlne, 2003).

In conclusion, the literature on entrepreneurship and international entrepreneurship places the individual and the opportunities at the heart of every venture, whether it is domestic or across national borders and, moderated by the entrepreneurial orientations. However, the speed of internationalization depends on many influences such as tacit market knowledge, technology, competition and network relationships (Oviatt and McDougall, 2005).

2.3.5 Post-Entry Growth: Scope and Scale

The previous paragraphs reviewed the various opportunity exploitation modes of entry such as the Uppsala model, the rapid internationalization stream and the Born-Global as well as the entry strategy, namely the sprinkler or the waterfall strategies (Kalish et al., 1995). Post-entry growth in the internationalization process have also gained considerable grounds in research (Tan, 2009); (Kiss et al., 2013) particularly when it comes to its effect on the firms' survival (Headd and Kirchhoff, 2009) or on its costs versus benefits relationship (Coad et al., 2020).

However, the interest has recently shifted towards exploring the firms' different sources of knowledge supporting the growth and, on their new learning in their expansion endeavour (Puthusserry et al., 2020). Interest is also placed on how the scope and scale are mutually affected and can promote each other (Shi et al., 2020). Puthussery et al (2020), suggested that rapidly internationalising firms use a wide range of internal (trial and error, self and experiential learning) and external (peer networks, international associations, international connections developed in trade fairs) sources of knowledge to enhance products, market and technological knowledge (Puthusserry et al., 2020). The authors have also added that internal sources of learning are often characterized as being congenital and experiential whereas the external sources are mostly vicarious learning (IBID).

2.3.5.1 Benefits of Growth

Generally, growth has positive effect on firms' viability and research has often shown that SMEs slow growth is associated with lower survival rates (Headd and Kirchhoff, 2009). Along the same lines, Wiklund (2007) affirms that growth and survival go together, hand in hand (Wiklund et al., 2009). From another perspective, Coad et al (2020) posited that problems of growth are less dangerous than the problems created by its absence, as it creates a stream of funds and sends a positive signal to lenders, stakeholders and competition about the firms' viability and prospects (Coad et al., 2020). The authors further explained that sales income is clear evidence of growth and becomes the core constituent of a track record easing the access to borrowing and possibly lowering the cost of finance whereas in contrast, declining sales lead to difficulties in covering fixed costs and raise concerns about the firm's

viability (IBID). Finally, growing firms are more credible in attracting new talent, which provides the firm a much wider pool of employees to choose from (IBID).

2.3.5.2 Cost of Growth

However, exceptionally fast growth firms can have a negative effect on new ventures and empirical research has shown lower survival rates than those who have adopted moderate growth (Pierce and Aguinis, 2013). Growth does incur costs, particularly when it is the case of a rapid growth, thus endangering the firms' survival (Sapienza et al., 2006). Therefore, growing firms are advised to only seek "profitable growth" for many reasons. The primary cause is mainly due to all the risks that can be associated with the firms' inability of managing cash cycles while compensating between cash generation and cash consumption and, with all the up-front costs of investments in infrastructure. Other reasons involve the typically higher-than-normal borrowing costs, the willingness to engage in "risky behaviours" in the cases of exceptionally high growth and, the quality of managerial decisions, which may decrease as a result of time compression such as new employees' hires and training (Coad et al., 2020).

2.3.5.3 Shape of Growth

In conclusion, moderate or "profitable growth" brings important benefits to the firm in the context of new ventures as, not only its resources are better optimized, but more importantly, credible signals are sent to stakeholders about its survival. In cases of high growth, those signals may decline when costs are not well managed and, after a certain point, they may even destroy shareholders' value (Coad et al., 2020). The overall relationship between growth and survival takes the shape of an inverted U-

shape (See Figure 2.5) whereby growth improves the firms' chance of survival to a certain point after which, it reduces this chance as the costs exceed the benefits of growth (IBID).

BENEFITS OF GROWTH:

Growth provides legitimacy to a new venture, and is a positive signal to stakeholders regarding the firm's viability. Growth of resources helps resolve disputes between employees and offers them promotion opportunities. Beyond a certain point, however, the marginal benefits of growth decrease because the credibility and legitimacy benefits are established.

COSTS OF GROWTH:

Costs of growth are low to begin with, but as growth rates become positive, they increase at an increasing rate, for reasons such as financial problems related to the cash cycle, up-front costs of investments in infrastructure, higher interest rates for high-growth firms' loans, time compression diseconomies, and adverse effects of time pressure on quality of decisions and quality of hires.

NET EFFECT: INVERTED U-SHAPE

While growth improves survival up to a certain point, nevertheless there exists a positive growth rate beyond which the costs of growth exceed the benefits of growth, and beyond this growth rate further growth reduces survival chances.

Figure 9   **Effect of Growth Rate on Survival Rate: An Inverted U-Shaped Relationship**

(Adapted from Haans et al, 2016; Coad et al, 2020)

2.3.6 The Effect of Internationalization on Growth

It would be logical to assume that a foreign market entry presents entrepreneurs with additional growth prospects as the firm would probably be increasing its revenue base. But the internationalisation process which is often plagued with major risks and uncertainties requires the firms to adjust to the new context by inducing structural changes, developing new routines and, adapting its resource base to sustain such activities (Schuffel, 2008). In fact, the work of Hessels and Parker (2013) illustrates

some of the risks when internationalising SMEs for coalitions with external organizations in order to obtain resources and information for the purpose of overcoming internationalisation barriers and achieving growth (Hessels and Parker, 2013). The authors recommend coalition strategies and warn against any informal collaboration between firms to safeguard any competitive advantage that the SME may possess (IBID).

However, adjusting to the new context creates in turn, a new capability for further internationalisation (Schuffel, 2008). Drawing on the works of Stinchcomb (1965) and Hannan (1998), the author posits that internationalisation has the potential to imprint ability for effective adjustment and that the new capabilities that are developed from dealing with uncertainties would provide the organizations with the necessary flexibility to pursue growth opportunities (IBID). Along the same lines, Sapienza (2006) characterises the internationalisation process as exposing a venture not only to growth opportunities, but also to opportunities of learning how to grow and, in expanding the scope of these firms' activities, products and markets (Sapienza et al., 2006). The new learning in the international market may then be leveraged to strengthen the business activities in the domestic market (IBID). In this context, the internationalization process is expected to increase a new venture's probability for growth (Schuffel, 2008).

2.3.7 The Effect of Internationalization on Survival

With the internationalisation of firms becoming a prevalent growth strategy, even for SMEs, it would therefore be crucial to understand the conditions under which internationalisation may be beneficial for firms' survival (Freixanet and Renart, 2020).

Empirical research has shown potentially different consequences for the survival prospects of internationalising firms (Meschi et al., 2017); (Freixanet and Renart) within the main two opposite internationalisation approaches: the internationalization process theory or Uppsala model (Johanson and Vahlne, 1977) and the international new venture (INV) approach (Oviatt and McDougall, 1994); (Knight and Cavusgil, 2004). The earlier studies have produced mixed empirical results, with some proposing that early internationalization is associated with higher performance (Autio et al., 2000); (Zhou and Wu, 2014), while others have noted that early foreign market entry is likely to bring about important challenges for SMEs' survival (Meschi et al., 2017). However, more recent research tends to favour the more sequential or gradualist models for they assume that a significant time lag has occurred between a firm's establishment and its first foreign entry, thus developing internationalisation readiness. According to Meschi et al (Report), the "failure rate for firms adopting the late, slow, and cautious sequential expansion approach is significantly lower than in small firms adopting any paths to internationalization" (Meschi et al., 2017) p279. This also bodes well with the findings of Freixanet and Renart (2020) that claim that INVs have a lower chance of survival than late internationalisation (Freixanet and Renart).

The main differences between both internationalisation approaches relies in that the INV puts in perspective the managers' competences and experiences as enablers of firms' early and successful foreign market entry whereas in the process model the history of firm actions supersedes the relevance of such individual competencies (Oviatt and McDougall, 1994); (Sapienza et al., 2006). Accordingly, the survival odds among international new ventures may be improved by setting the pace of

international expansion, improving on their managers' competencies (Sapienza et al., 2006) and by the development of dynamic capabilities of reconfiguring their organisational routines (Freixanet and Renart, 2020). It is further argued that making up for the lack of routines and the positional disadvantages is costly and will add to the mortality hazard of young internationalising firms (Sapienza et al., 2006).

2.4 The Entrepreneurs' Social and Cultural Capital

Culture is a term that is widely associated to the entrepreneurial process. In fact, it is linked to the workplace discussions in general, even though it can be understood at many levels of analysis (Hofstede et al., 2002). But whether it is on a national or organizational level, it takes the shape of "informal institutions" or patterns and repetitions of common behaviours (Stephan and Uhlaner, 2010). And by drawing on the definition of culture as a set of norms, beliefs, principles and ways of behaving that together give each entity or organisation a distinctive character (Brown and Ennew, 1995), it would safe to assume that rudiments of social and cultural dynamics are hugely embedded in all start-ups, an aspect that entrepreneurship researchers have so far largely neglected (Lounsbury and Glynn, 2001).

However, elements of "culture" and "social norms" are traditionally theorized as a constraining force rather than an enabling one (Lounsbury and Glynn, 2001) so it is reason why entrepreneurs are being regarded as skilled cultural operators who would shape interpretations of the potential of their new venture to those who may supply needed resources (Lounsbury and Glynn, 2001). Actually, and as of lately, more emphasis is being put on researching the entrepreneur's social capital rather than his personality traits (Baron and Markman, 2000). In parallel, attempts were also made

during the past decade to re-contextualize entrepreneurship research (Hjorth et al., 2008) by paying explicit attention to social and cultural context and by making it more grounded in social and human sciences (Hjorth et al., 2008) reinforcing the importance of the entrepreneur's social capital and skills and linking it to future success. This is supported by an empirical study of examining the relationship between national culture and entrepreneurship in 40 countries conducted by Stephan and Uhlaner (2010) who found positive association between socially supportive cultures and entrepreneurship rate in a country (Stephan and Uhlaner, 2010). The conclusion was that social capital drives both the overall level and the quality of national entrepreneurship (IBID). It is further evidence that cultural norms and social habits are deeply embedded in the entrepreneurial activity.

From a similar perspective, it is the entrepreneur's social attributes such as favourable reputation, high status, and high referrals (social capital) coupled with good first impression and an inherent ability to interact with others (social skills) that play a crucial role in their subsequent success (Baron and Markman, 2000). Within the framework that they have developed, the above authors detailed how high levels of social skill may enhance their reputation and broaden the entrepreneurs' social network. The outcome of high social capital is often associated with an enhanced access to information and increased trust from others, and is often linked to higher financial outcomes or to the likelihood of receiving funds from potential venture capitalists (Baron and Markman, 2000).

In conclusion, high levels of social skills may on one hand, broaden the entrepreneur's social network and on the other hand, improve performance of key tasks such as capital acquisition, recruitment, gaining customers and forming

business alliances; all leading to enhanced success and legitimacy (Baron and Markman, 2000). However, in the context of entrepreneurial organization creation, social skills are often related to the power of entrepreneurs' pitches and narratives (Lounsbury and Glynn, 2001). Storytelling and perhaps more generally, narratively performed imagination (Hjorth, 2007) is essential to the organizing process and legitimization. It is often about producing a convincing story of a promising future that engages the key stakeholders, along with the entrepreneur, in a journey that is productive of the desired outcome.

2.5 The Organizational and Entrepreneurial Narratives

2.5.1 Organizational Storytelling

Organizational storytelling is not only limited to entrepreneurial activities, but it is virtually abundant in all managerial and organizational environments. In fact, according to Boje (1991), organizations are storytelling systems as he considers stories as favourite and effective means not only for communicating, but also for sense making among stakeholders (Boje, 1991). To Mclean et al (2015), storytelling is a critical way of organizing (Maclean, 2015) while Gabriel (2000) sees that stories and storytelling provide access to deeper organizational realities and regarded them as forming a relatively special narrative phenomena competing with other types of discourse, including theories, clichés, statistics and reports (Gabriel, 2000).

Obviously, the choice of using stories as a communication tool is not hazardous. According to Martens et al (2007), they are easily learned and remembered (Martens et al., 2007). Gabriel (2004) also sees them as an elegant way to configure apparently independent and disconnected elements of existence into related parts of

a whole (Gabriel, 2004). However, he distinguished between narratives that purport to represent facts, and stories that make no secret of their purpose to use facts as poetic material, moulding them, twisting them and embellishing them for effect (IBID).

O'Connor (2002) was able to identify three main types of stories within organizations: Personal (Founding and Vision), Generic (Marketing and Strategy) and Situational (Historical and Conventional) (O'Connor, 2002). Within this view, entrepreneurs are likely to mix all three types of stories within their pitches as they cautiously position their identity distinctively with a clear competitive advantage yet, conforming to norms and expectations at the same time (Lounsbury and Glynn, 2001). Those ideas will be further detailed in the next paragraphs.

However, scholars agree that narratives in organizations are the products of particular contexts and must be analysed in situ (O'Connor, 2002); (Brown, 2006) attending closely to the socio-cultural elements and anchoring their reality in context (O'Connor, 2002); (Martens et al., 2007)

2.5.2 Entrepreneurial Narratives

As previously mentioned, entrepreneurs tend to manage the uncertainty that pervade their environment by telling stories and effectively, most scholars agree that entrepreneurs are raconteurs (Martens et al., 2007). They tell stories on daily basis, either orally to customers and suppliers or via a written format to VCs, bankers or the Media (Martens et al., 2007). Some stories are brief such as promotional stories, as found on websites (Czarniawska, 1998) while others can be too elaborate such as investment prospectuses and year-end reports, but in all cases, they must pique the interest of investors, must motivate and must resonate with audience members

(Martens et al., 2007). Their content is often about extant stock of resource capital and institutional capital whereby they attempt to point out why the new venture merits capital investment (Lounsbury and Glynn, 2001).They are characterized as being impression management stories with a plot and topics about emphasizing distinctiveness, stressing appropriateness, character development, hopes for a happy conclusion and, positive self-presentation to real and potential stakeholders (Lounsbury and Glynn, 2001). In brief, there is now increasing recognition that storytelling is an integral part of the entrepreneurial toolkits (Maclean, 2015).

Good stories entertain, explain, inspire and educate, while bad stories disappoint and insult the audience's intelligence (Gabriel, 2000). Narrative experts borrow familiar symbols so that their stories are well understood and original symbols so that their stories stand out (Martens et al., 2007). While their function is primarily entertainment, they are also about stimulating imagination, providing moral education, justification, explanation, advice as well as warning (Gabriel, 2000).

The best stories are those which stir people's minds, hearts and souls and by doing so give them new insights to themselves, their problems and human conditions (Rhodes and Brown, 2005). Gabriel (2000) posits that the quality of a story lies in its delivery as well as its plot (Gabriel, 2000). The vocal power and variety are deemed essential elements for dissipating trust among audience members and inviting them to sensitize with the story. From another perspective, O'Connor (2002) also stresses about narrative competence as being the ability to plot oneself not only as primary, but also as a secondary or minor character (O'Connor, 2002).

As per Czarniawska (1998) and Gabriel (2004), stories possess implicit or explicit temporal sequencing providing a sense of plot (Past history, present status and

future aspirations) with a narrative subject featuring a goal while a set of forces that enable of impede the subject of attaining goal (Martens et al., 2007). It is reason why entrepreneurial narratives are mostly constructed according to the theoretical framework of the journey (Campbell, 2003), which is a quest for meaning through which actors envision and make sense of personal transformation, illuminating identities as unfolding through a process of way finding in response to events, transitions and turning points (Maclean, 2015).

To recap, narratives provide an approach for understanding human conduct, the intention, purpose and reason occurring between individuals (Czarniawska, 2005).

2.6 The Entrepreneurial Identity

2.6.1 Identity in Entrepreneurship

The previous paragraphs highlighted that the entrepreneurial process is very context-specific and that the entrepreneurs engage in various sorts of narratives about their own past and present experiences and futures perspectives (Middleton, 2013). They would narrate about a contextual identity that would make them successful in their environment and accordingly, it would be safe to assume that such an identity is subjected to various cultural interpretations based on the prevalent societal norms and beliefs. Scholars agree that the inability to develop a coherent and a positive sense of self as a founder can adversely affect motivation and well-being and, eventually can contribute to the demise of the venture (O'Neil et al., 2020), hence its very importance.

The entrepreneurial identity is therefore defined as the constellation of claims around the founder, new venture and market opportunity and it articulates who they are as a firm, what they stand for and why they are or can be successful (Navis and Glynn, 2011). It justifies the existence of the company (O'Connor, 2002) and conveys what central, distinctive and enduring about it (Brown, 2006). It usually describes the nature of the market, the organization and the individual; three levels that are important to investors in assessing value to an entrepreneurial venture (Navis and Glynn, 2011). Under conditions of uncertainty, identity takes a heightened importance, functioning as a critical organizational resource and a device for sense-making (Navis and Glynn, 2011). It also helps overcome information asymmetry or uncertainty and, facilitates resource acquisition (Martens et al., 2007). It is therefore very important for entrepreneurship, particularly in the early stages of operation.

Identities based theories seek to answer questions of "who am I?" or "who do I want to be?" (Powell and Baker, 2014) and draw upon two streams: Identity theory (Stryker and Burke, 2000) which views the self as based on a person's role that holds specific expectations, which is the role defines who we are and gives guidance of how we behave and, social identity theory (Tajfel and Turner, 2004) which views self as based on identification with social groups in which group members think and act alike – behavioural guidance is provided through group membership and comparison to "out" groups (Stryker and Burke, 2000). Self and society mutually shape and influence each other.

Recently, in a large scale scholarly articles review, Mmbaga et al (2020) identified four distinct areas of conversation concerning identity and entrepreneurship namely: distinctions, variations, constructions and intersections (Mmbaga et al., 2020). In the

first cluster, which is "distinctions", the body of literature is set to explore how entrepreneurs and their corresponding identities different or were distinct from other groups (Shepherd and Haynie, 2009). The second cluster "variations" studies how entrepreneurs' passions, motivations and intentions led to variations among them (Cardon et al., 2008). The third area of conversation is concerned in the construction, the creation and the evolution of entrepreneurial identities through narratives (Martens et al., 2007); (Jain et al., 2009); (Phillips, 2013). Finally, the fourth cluster invokes the intersections or interface between the entrepreneur's identity and that of the venture (Lounsbury and Glynn, 2001); (O'Neil et al., 2020); (Navis and Glynn, 2011).

Conversations	**Themes**	**Focus**
Distinctions	Family Business Identity	Focus is about how entrepreneurs, and their corresponding identities are distinct from other groups
Variations	Variation in role identity and in social identity of entrepreneurs	Variations or varieties of identity types among entrepreneurs (drawing on Role identity and on Social Identity theories)
Constructions	Identity Works Identity Narratives	Examines how entrepreneurs form, maintain, revise and lose identities. Studies how narratives influence identity and how entrepreneurs leverage it to acquire resources and/or venture legitimacy
Intersections	Ventures Hybridization (Balancing multiple identities)	Intersection of the identities of entrepreneurs and other entities) occurring in the field that each focus on a unique set of research questions and topics of interest

	Markets and Categories	

Table 2-1   Entrepreneurial Identity Clusters (Adapted from Mmbaga et al, 2020)

This research will primarily focus on the third area of conversation, which is primarily the identity construction using narratives, and on how it may serve the entrepreneurs as a steppingstone in establishing trust and legitimacy in their new venture among the various stakeholders. The theme about identity works and identity narratives will be fully covered in the next sections.

To recap, identity research in entrepreneurship offers insights to the entrepreneurial process by incorporating explanations of "who entrepreneurs are" and "what they do". The conversation has shifted from an early discussion of a single identity to the existence of a variation of identities, yet providing distinctions within social groups, and how identities are constructed and modified over time. Finally, it is concluded that a common theme that is common to all the conversations is the entrepreneurs' enactment of their identity i.e., how the entrepreneurs see themselves and how others see them. Such activity certainly impacts many outcomes such as the entrepreneurs' behaviour, emotions and thought processes (Mmbaga et al., 2020).

2.6.2 Identity Works

To date, identity works (or identity construction) remains one of the most significant conversations with research on entrepreneurship and examining the construction of identities contributes to our understanding of the processes that shape entrepreneurial actions and outcomes over time (Mmbaga et al., 2020). It is mainly

regarded as a dynamic phenomenon that is constantly emerging, being realized, shaped and constructed through social processes of life episodes and human interactions (Phillips, 2013). But to many scholar, and despite renewed interest and importance, the process of which the founder identity evolves and takes shape remains unexplained (O'Neil et al., 2020). This study particularly will focus on the identity construction process in the geographical context where it takes place and attempts to answer calls to produce similar research (Nasra and Dacin, 2010).

Identity works is best known as the individuals' engagement in forming, maintaining or revising an identity to ensure coherence or distinctiveness (Brown et al., 2015) and the process involves developing or changing identities with the purpose of becoming more efficacious in their entrepreneurial endeavours (Grimes, 2018). Naturally, entrepreneurs are considered prime example of identity crafters as they tend to have considerable agency in constructing their identity relative to others given that they are less constrained by bureaucratic norms (Mmbaga et al., 2020). They serve as both the creators and curators of their ventures identities so much that ventures are often synonymous of their founders (Navis and Glynn, 2011). For this reason, distinction between the entrepreneur's identity and the venture's identity has not been distinguished in this research and the term 'identity' was interchangeably used for either case.

Scholars are increasingly examining how individuals negotiate and construct identities to fit new work requirements; a task which involves selecting and discarding possible selves according to internal standards and possible feedbacks to fit both role demands and own self construal (Ibarra, 1999) and this research is underpinned by the argument that is constituted through interaction of the individual, society and

culture (Giddens, 1984). The researcher also views that identity works and the entrepreneurial mind-set are continuously developed and modified through face-to-face interactions in work related situations (Down and Reveley, 2004); (Downing, 2005) For many scholars, entrepreneurship can be seen as a process of identity construction (Ireland and Webb, 2007).

Theoretically, research so far have implicitly assumed that founders seek to align themselves with a set of role or social identities that they deem desirable (O'Neil et al., 2020) and that it often focused on external forces such as social contexts, pushing entrepreneurs to adapt their identities to fit certain social norms (Down and Reveley, 2004). According to Grimes (GEM Lebanon National Report 2018), it is these forces which create demands that end up destabilising the individuals' identities (Grimes, 2018). This perspective evokes the debates on views over the origins of entrepreneurship with external forces as main influencers and whether they are economic or socio-political. This also suggests that identity works is in constant adjustment and positioning because of external social contexts spurring economic changes.

Additionally, recent research progressed to explore internal factors as well, prompting entrepreneurs to form or shift their identities. It emphasises on the suggestion that entrepreneurs are reflexive subjects and that they undertake actions that are reflective of who they are and what they do (Marlow and McAdam, 2015). From the entrepreneurs' perspective, the tendency now is to align their work as founders with their personal identity, their beliefs and their values rather than to social or role identities (O'Neil et al., 2020).

Although it remains contested, attempts to explain how entrepreneurial identity works is achieved is also present in the literature. According to Sarasvathy (2008), entrepreneurs usually work hard to establish an identity and then reify it in a variety of routines, procedures and strategic choices (Sarasvathy and Dew, 2005). Ibarra (1999) identified three main behaviours that individuals adopted to construct their identities as they transition into new roles: observing role models, experimenting and with one's own image and, evaluating image and identity based on feedback (Ibarra, 1999); (Middleton, 2013). Zhang & Chung (GEM Lebanon National Report 2018) drew aspects to the construction of entrepreneurial identities process through the identification of three-stages: exploration of possible self or identity exploration, building an entrepreneurial mind-set and narratives development (Zhang and Chun, 2018).

Accordingly, the reactions of others in validating new behaviours or providing feedback play an important role. The emergent entrepreneurial identity is therefore a mix of culturally embedded exploration of possible self, dialogue (feedback) and interaction. It relates to the entrepreneurial process in how that identity shapes an entrepreneur's behaviours (Leitch and Harrison, 2016).

In conclusion, it is argued that the emergence of a new entrepreneurial identity is a social and a contextual process (Middleton, 2013) and that it can be crafted and re-crafted as an on-going project of the self, underlying sameness and difference (Lounsbury and Glynn, 2001). Within this view, identity can be regarded as claims through observing one's behaviours and the reactions of others towards whom the identity is negotiated, initially in the form of a provisional self, which is then refined through experience (Ibarra, 1999) (Middleton, 2013). This further reinforces extreme

views about entrepreneurship, that an individual does not really start as an entrepreneur, but rather becomes one (Morris et al., 2012).

2.6.3 Narratives for Conveying a Comprehensible Identity

Narratives, which can be verbal and written accounts about the narrator, are often used to convey a comprehensible identity (O'Connor, 2002); (Brown, 2006); (Navis and Glynn, 2011) and serve the entrepreneurs by making choices from the range of possibilities that are available to them in relating and interacting with the cultural, discursive or institutional notions of who or what they might be (Phillips, 2013). They tend to illustrate to audiences how identity formation and change are achieved and, shape the interpretation of an entrepreneur and the potential of their venture (Mmbaga et al., 2020). Consequently, a relatively coherent and consistent self-identity is achieved by positioning the self, within and against a set of culturally available discursive resources, making the entrepreneur more connected (Phillips, 2013).

In the previous paragraphs, we have noted that the entrepreneurs' favourite mean of communication is storytelling (Boje, 1991); (Czarniawska, 2005); (O'Connor, 2002) (Rae, 2004); (Steyaert, 2007) and that they expertly use stories as means to express their identity to others. They construct an entrepreneurial identity by applying their other identities and positions, their own past and present experiences and futures perspectives as resources (Hytti, 2005); (Middleton, 2013). They are also known to use 'negotiated narratives' as a way to develop a sense of who they are and what they do, recognizing that identity is an expression of relationship to past or future conversations, events, experiences or ideas (Middleton, 2013). Nevertheless, they

also often experience tensions and feedbacks that can affect identity creation (O'Neil et al., 2020) and accordingly, construct identities based on oppositional and appositional principles (Jones, 2008). Sustainable entrepreneurs also use proficiently narratives and stories as they must reconcile social and environmental value creation with profit generation (O'Neil et al., 2020). It often takes the metaphorical shape of the journey (Maclean, 2015). Other entrepreneurs narrate and explore the role of clichés such as bravery, risk, ambition and self-sufficiency in highlighting their identity (Down and Warren, 2008). In short, narratives are generally used in a systematic process of positioning in which rights and duties are negotiated to allow for the creation of a more dynamic role (Davies, 1990).

2.6.4 Narratives for Conveying an Organizational Identity

Similarly, organisational identities are generally viewed through the lens of narratives and storytelling that participants author about them, in documents, conversations and electronic media (Brown, 2006). In fact, it is believed that the totality of such narratives, which are usually complex, fragmented and heterogeneous in nature, constitute what is referred to as collective identity (Brown, 2006). As per Czarniawska (1994) and A.D. Brown (2006), it can be characterized as follows:

- Organizations' identities are the fruits of multiple narratives of several types such as tragedy, irony, and romance

- Social processes of networking and pervasive influence of leaders often result in many storylines and themes within an organization

- Identity of organizations are best regarded as continuous processes of narration where narrator and audience formulate, audit, applaud and refuse various elements of the produced narrative.

Consequently, the very fabric of the organization is constantly being created and recreated through elaboration, contestation and exchange of narratives (Brown, 2006) and the notion of identity is certainly not fixed as individuals are continually engaged in "forming, repairing, maintaining, strengthening or revising the constructions that are productive of a precarious sense of coherence and distinctiveness (Phillips, 2013) p796. According to Leitch and Harrison (2016), the actions and behaviours of the founder or founding team of an entrepreneurial firm are infused with meaning as a result of the individual's identity (Leitch and Harrison, 2016). Consequently, the personal and organizational identities are used interchangeably in this research, and it is posited that it remains as such until the firm seizes to be entrepreneurial.

2.6.5 Business Models

2.6.5.1 Business Model Concepts

A firm's business model is best known as the system of interdependent activities that are performed by the firm and by its partners, and the mechanisms that link these activities to each other (Zott and Amit, 2010). It consists of the firm's resources, competences, organisational structure and value proposition (Baden-Fuller et al., 2010) and addresses the firm's key processes and profit formula (Johnson et al., 2008). The work of Clauss et al. (Report), which analysed 120 components of business model literature between the years 2002 to 2014 concluded that the

discussion diverges into three dimensions: 1) Value Proposition, 2) Value Creation and 3) Value Capture (Clauss, 2017); (Rissanen et al., 2020). In short, business models address the following three main questions: 1) Who is the customer? 2) What does the customer value and 3) How we make money in this business (Magretta, 2002). It is therefore a template that is designed by the firms' managers to meet its perceived customers' needs and that depicts the way the firm operates.

However, the above-mentioned definitions were criticized by some scholars as they were not found to capture enough the dynamic nature of business models, which are bound to be altered and subjected to changes. For example, McGrath (2010) suggests that only in rare cases, firms can anticipate their business models in advance and adds that "what works and what does not work can be learned over time" (McGrath, 2010). Accordingly, firms need to consider altering their business models to accommodate for new opportunities, alleviate new threats, avoid disruptions, expand capabilities and navigate through the overall changing environments (Saebi et al., 2017). Foss and Saebi (GEM Lebanon National Report 2018) also discussed business model dynamics and characterised them as aspects of business model erosion, business model evolution, business model transformation or, business model innovation that are sometimes caused by technology push or demand-pull approaches (Foss and Saebi, 2017). Failure can also be a source of learning as it can bring up the learning and better acknowledging the "opportunity space" by emphasising which opportunity to choose, the right business partner, the right country and clients' domain etc. (Chandra et al., 2012).

However, in the context of entrepreneurship and new venture creation, the firms' business model conceptualisation is broadly consistent with the emerging literature

on entrepreneurial identity, which was largely discussed in the previous paragraphs. In both settings, the focus is mainly on value proposition, on value creation and on value capture (Clauss, 2017). According to Navis and Glynn (2011), the entrepreneurial identity discusses who they are as a firm (value proposition), what they stand for (value creation) and why they are or can be successful (value capture) (Navis and Glynn, 2011). Similarly, consistent with Casadesus and Ricart (2010) definition, Rissanen et al (2020) identified the three elements that constitute the firms' business model as it justifies the "logic of the firm (value proposition), the way it operates (value creation) and how it creates value for its stakeholders (value capture)" (Casadesus-Masanell and Ricart, 2010); (Rissanen et al., 2020) p260.

Based on the similarities in the expression of the mentioned concepts: value proposition, the value creation, and the value capture, it can be concluded that the narratives about an entrepreneurial identity are comparable to narratives about a firm's business model. These aspects are further portrayed in the below table 2.7.

	Value Proposition	Value Creation	Value Capture
Entrepreneurial Identity (Navis and Glynn, 2011)	Who they are as a firm	What they stand for	Why they are or can be successful
Business Model (Casadesus-Masanell and Ricart, 2010, Rissanen et al., 2020)	Justifies the logic of the firm	Justifies the way it operates	Explains how it creates value to its shareholders

Table 2-2   Entrepreneurial Identity and Business Model Definitions and Dimensions

2.6.5.2 Business Model Change

As mentioned, aspects involving business model innovation and, business model modifications and change are well observed in the literature (Sosna et al., 2010); (Saebi et al., 2017); (Foss and Saebi, 2017). New opportunities or new threats generally constitute the main drivers to initiate a business model change (Saebi et al., 2017). A high probability of losses can also make the entrepreneurs react by making internal changes such as cost-cutting, hence leading to a business model change. In many cases, internationalising firms may also modify their model by augmenting their risk exposure because they believe they have little to lose (Rissanen et al., 2020).

However, researchers also warn that there should be strong incentives to do it because changing a business model in a new environment is risky as it involves altering routinized work flow and processes with uncertain outcomes (Saebi et al., 2017). Child et al (2017) investigated the role of context and attributed the variation in SMEs business models to three main factors: 1) industry context, 2) entrepreneurial experience and 3) home market context (Child et al., 2017). Consequently, in the context of internationalisation, changing the existing business model or creating a new one that is inherent to the new environment and which allows the firm to remain competitive, is highly recommended (Rissanen et al., 2020).

Based on Ellis (2011) and Chandra et al (2013), the identification and the development of international opportunities, which can be defined as chances to exchange with new partners in foreign markets, are characterised as being cyclical in the sense that they may generate other opportunities through learning and exposure to new information and as a result, may trigger business models changes (IBID).

Consistent with the Uppsala model of internationalisation of the firms' progressive involvement in a foreign market (Johanson and Vahlne, 1977), empirical research show that business models undergo a process of trial and error and sustain cycles of exploration before exploitation (Rissanen et al., 2020). Sosna et al (2010) posit that changing the business model facilitates the trial and error learning and eases the adaptation process in the new environment (Sosna et al., 2010). It is therefore a dynamic process of constant learning and continuous adaptation, given all the uncertainty and lack of knowledge of new foreign markets (Sosna et al., 2010). To this research, the empirical findings will attempt to provide explanations about business models adaptation and change and how the home market context affects that change.

2.6.5.3 The Role of Home Market Context in Business Model Change

It is not surprising that the home country culture and context can influence a change in a firm's business model and can ultimately determine its willingness to pursue risky internationalisation through business model experimentation (Rissanen et al., 2020). By conducting a qualitative study to explore the underlying reasons for a business model change when internationalising, the authors found that the home market context can have two kinds of effects: 1) the home market maturity which can have a strong effect on the timing of the internationalizing efforts. 2) whether the company's home market is used to strengthen the value proposition or whether it may be disguised depending on how the original country is seen in international markets (Rissanen et al., 2020). In fact, in a comparative case study of two companies of similar backgrounds but from different countries of origin: Russia and Finland, the authors found that the Russian company decreased its dependence on the riskier

home market context by internationalising early, as opposed to the Finnish who grew its business in their relatively more stable and mature home country, for a long time before internationalising (Rissanen et al., 2020).

From another perspective, Child et al (Report) found that the home country development level is an important factor and can affect business model variation in the case of the internationalizing SMEs (Child et al., 2017). Characteristics such as trade agencies, industry association and resources institutes can play a role in determining which business model to adapt (IBID). In contrast, small home market or home countries that are plagued with political risks, instability or corruption often seek internationalization to decrease dependency on home market (Cuervo-Cazurra et al., 2018a). In such cases, the author posits that a business model modification is highly likely and may even come natural to the internationalising entrepreneurs, claiming that their hostile home environment may have rendered them very flexible and that they may have already learned how to adapt to disruptions and sudden changes (IBID).

In conclusion, there is consensus among scholars that due to the risky aspects of the internationalization process, continuous modifications of business models are often required. The home market has great effects on how a company adapts its business model during internationalization, especially when facing threats. The process is often achieved not by careful planning but rather on learning through experiments and adjusting the different elements over time (Dmitriev et al., 2014) (Rissanen et al., 2020).

2.7 Trust Concepts

2.7.1 Definition and Characteristics of Trust in Business

Over the past two decades, trust has gained considerable attention across many disciplines and fields of study such as economics, business management, sociology, psychology etc. It is also a universal, social and culture related phenomenon as it forms potential for people to collaborate and commonly, requires a reciprocal activity and interaction between individuals or within groups and organizations (Savolainen et al., 2019)

Particularly, in business relationships, it serves as a mechanism for coping with opportunistic behaviour and helps to reduce uncertainty by providing information (Hohmann, 2004). According to Lewicki and McAllister (1998), it can lower transaction costs, hence its economic importance, it can also protect relationships from shocks and greatly facilitates conflict resolution (Lewicki et al., 1998). In short, it plays a vital role in successful inter-organizational relationships (Lumineau, 2017) and can improve firm performance (Panda et al., 2020).

As trust has been studied across many social science disciplines and is conceptually complex and multi-dimensional (Savolainen et al., 2019), it would be very difficult to agree on a simple definition. For the purpose of this research, we will adhere to Gambetta's (1988) general definition as being the probability that the trustee will act in a way that is beneficial or at least not detrimental for the trusting party to consider some form of cooperation with him, and in terms of business behaviour, trust is based on a perception of the probability that other agents will behave in a way that is expected (Gambetta, 1988); (Welter and Smallbone, 2006). But since we are talking

about probability, it means that there is a level of risk taking (Welter, 2012) that is involved in the trust decision. It is therefore related to one's own decision to accept the risk and, it can be regretted (Koller, 1988).

Perhaps, another meaningful definition is the willingness to be vulnerable (Mayer et al., 1995). It can be best described as a bet that is voluntary placed, subjectively rational and motivated by self-interest, involves an element of risk and subjected to possible gain or loss. Because it is dependent on knowledge of the situation, it is therefore of a dynamic nature and, just as relationships, evolves in both positive and negative manners.

In the Business-to-Business (B2B) context, trust emerges when one party has confidence in the other party's intention to act in the interest of the relationship (Cuevas et al., 2015) and it can develop in various ways: through actions and calculations (Lewicki et al., 2006) or as leap of faith (Mollering, 2005). In most B2B relationships, contracts are inherently incomplete so trust can play a potent role in addressing contingencies and in ensuring cooperation (Shen et al., 2019). It can also play a decisive role in determining attitudes and behaviour of both parties by encouraging positive emotions, collaboration, information sharing and creativity (Connelly et al., 2018) leading to competitive advantage for both sides (Cuevas et al., 2015). Parties can proactively build trust by signalling commitment, consistency, fairness and justice and, by information sharing (Shepherd and Zacharakis, 2001).

Lewicki & McAllister (1998) identified both trust and distrust within relationships; with trust as being confident positive expectations regarding another's conduct. In contrast, they have identified distrust not as the absence of trust, but as confident negative expectations regarding another's conduct. The authors also recognized the

two bases for trust and distrust with a calculus base and an identification base. The calculus base is about the assessment of costs and rewards, typically associated with professional relationships, while the identification base is about affinity and mutual understanding relative to friendships and personal aspects (Lewicki et al., 1998). The authors also developed a framework separating trust and distrust as constructs. Hope, faith, and confidence characterize high trust social realities while fear, scepticism, wariness and vigilance describe the status of high distrust. The opposites of those characteristics hold true for low trust and low distrust situations. The purpose of the framework is to lay the proper theoretical foundation of trust in another person and to highlight that it varies in different situations and contexts and, that trust and distrust may even coexist in the same relationship (Lewicki et al., 1998).

In terms of the temporal nature of trust, conventional wisdom suggests that trust strengthens with time. However, some studies report that the correlation between the two is not always positive (Ekici, 2013). From another perspective, Lewicki et al (1998) posited that the evolution of trust across relationship life cycle progresses through three major phases: exploration or monitoring, expansion which is a phase in which trust becomes reciprocal and finally, maturity whereby partners are confident that they will not be exploited for their vulnerabilities and consider contracts as unnecessary (Lewicki et al., 1998) while Flynn and Forman (2001) suggest that trust dynamics are influenced by the stage of the life cycle that the venture is in, when the relationship is initiated (Flynn and Forman, 2001).

2.7.2 Personal and Institutional Trust

Extant literature on trust differentiates between personal trust and institutional trust (Williamson, 1993) (Welter and Smallbone, 2006). As described in the previous chapter, the link between trust and the overall context of entrepreneurship is complex and the extent and forms of trust are affected by the overall institutional framework. It would be then logical to assume that personal trust gain importance when formal sanctioning mechanism fail or are absent. In the next sections, this research will highlight the extent of which the entrepreneurs realize the importance of personal trust with respect to their stakeholders, and how it affects their actions and behaviours.

It is also noted that personal trust is mostly characterized by informalities and involves a record of previous exchange providing data on the exchange process (Zucker, 1986). In other words, trust builds on initial knowledge about the partner and that this person will not behave in a way that is detrimental to the relationship, even when no written or explicit rules are set out (Hohmann, 2004).

Typically, entrepreneurs prefer informal sources such as friends and family when looking for information or credits. They also tend to govern most of their business relations informally as they seldom use written contracts for deals or for employing people. But whether it is in personal or commercial relations, trust is often based on a calculated risk The author further explains that the trusting person is convinced that he/she is engaging in a rational behaviour because the risks associated with the bestowed trust that is not being fulfilled are justified by the potential gains if the trust is maintained (Williamson, 1993). However, in this context, associating personal trust

to just economic gains undermines the effects of the social and networking elements in the entrepreneurial activity.

On the other hand, institutional trust refers to social, cultural, political and institutional embeddedness of economic transactions (Williamson, 1993). Put differently, it comprises of sanctioning mechanisms and informal codes of conducts and values (Hohmann, 2004) with reliance on courts when enforcing contracts and, on turning to business support agencies or banks when asking about credits. While this aspect is difficult to capture empirically, it is considered very essential for an efficient market economy as institutional trust enhances entrepreneurial initiatives (Welter and Smallbone, 2006). They have added that changes in trust go hand in hand with stages of business development and that in a context of low institutional trust, the role of trust is magnified whereas in Western countries with trustworthy institutional context, personal trust plays a lesser role as the business develops but without domination (Welter and Smallbone, 2006).

However, the author noted that empirical data results indicate that even in functioning institutional environment, personal trust is often needed in the entrepreneurial context. Therefore, entrepreneurship is generally affected by a mixture of personal and institutional trust, which are inextricably intertwined (Welter and Smallbone, 2006). Where poor institutional trust prevails, entrepreneurs will have to rely on networking to mobilize resources and to cope with constraints imposed by highly bureaucratic structures and personal trust may be a substitute for the deficiencies in institutional environment (IBID).

2.7.3 Prior Research on Trust in Businesses

Although trust is an elusive concept and probably one of the most difficult to handle in empirical research (Welter and Smallbone, 2006) for it is of a dynamic nature, socially embedded and may assume different meanings depending on the context (Hohmann, 2004), the topic has picked the interest of many scholars (Welter, 2012) (Welter and Smallbone, 2006) (Hohmann, 2004) (Smallbone, 2002b). The underlying approach is that trusting is generally a rational choice–making process (James and James, 1990) and that it is inherently cognitive and based on information provided from trustor's side (Hardin, 2002).

Empirically, levels of trust usually cannot be measured. Welter & Smallbone (2006) concur with other scholars' claims that there is not an obvious unit in which trust value can be measured in any given context and, suggest that questions such as "how much trust do you have in…" should not be asked since respondents are not in a position to clearly detect and evaluate levels of trust (Welter and Smallbone, 2006). However, scholars agree that trust can be researched with indirect questions concerning past trusting behaviour. Researchers can also measure the importance of trust for businesses or the prevalence of forms of trust-related enterprise behaviour (Oral agreement, advice from friends, credits from family). For example, in an indirect empirical approach to trust, Nuissl (2002) notes that respondents were able to explain why cooperation is sought after, how it should be organized and which qualities should be considered when assessing a potential partner (Nuissl, 2002).

Empirical research about entrepreneurial activities indicates that personal trust dominates, particularly in the initial phases and can influence forms of entrepreneurial behaviour. Typically, entrepreneurs rely first on social networks and

turn to friends for their first customers. The role of personal trust here involves sharing information, generating ideas, and assembling resources. As transitions progressed, reliance of friends and families diminishes and empirical results show a change in trust forms hence, the existence of the temporal life cycle of trust.

In conclusion, empirical research on trust is generally expected to take a longitudinal case-study approach type to capture the process nature of trust-based relations and their value to entrepreneurship. Recommendations also involve paying a special attention to the social and institutional embeddedness of both trust and entrepreneurial behaviour (Hohmann, 2004)

2.7.4 The Role of Trust in Entrepreneurship

The role of trust in entrepreneurship is very important as it provides a context where business relationships are in the initial phases of the venture life cycle, rendering it a fertile ground to explore the dynamics of trust. According to Aldrich and Fiol (1994) and Gartner and Low (1990), it is assumed that organizations emerge when entrepreneurs are successful in achieving an understanding among the trusting parties, i.e. potential customers, creditors, suppliers and other individuals and organizations that everything will work out (Aldrich and Fiol, 1994). This is normally achieved through trust building actions with suppliers and customers, who are constantly trying to make sense of his/her behaviour as they observe his/her market entry. Additionally, and because interpersonal relationships strong ties are bound to develop as a result of interaction, and do bind individuals through their common interest for the long term, trust in entrepreneurship takes a major role in the firm's success (Savolainen et al., 2019).

From another perspective, some related research focused also on the role of social networks in the creation of small ventures, which in turn enhances the trust as most entrepreneurs rely on informal sources in their personal networks to mobilize resources before venture set-up. Most entrepreneurs, and for fear of the risk of having their idea copied, seek to belong to a network containing trust (Hohmann, 2004). Networks also assist new ventures in creating legitimacy (Jensen, 2002). In the paragraphs that will follow, we will show that legitimacy and trust are inter-related topics, and that lack of legitimacy reflects lack of trust because new firms are not known. Simply said, if firms are not trusted by their potential suppliers and customers, they cannot be legitimate (Hohmann, 2004) (Aldrich, 1999)

2.7.5 Narratives for Establishing Trust in the New Venture

Research about the role of trust is abundant in the literature, but relatively only few entrepreneurship studies explored role of trust in the creation of new ventures (Welter and Smallbone, 2006). The majority of research on entrepreneurial trust seems to have focused on the importance of social networks (Welter and Smallbone, 2006) and only very few have explored the role of narratives on trust (Gabbay and Leenders, 2003).

As interaction and communication is often a key means for trust-building (Savolainen et al., 2019), trust-building narratives can take many shapes and forms. Testimonials remains a preferred means in expressing confidence about the company by typically including stories of high benefits and low costs. The study by Gabbay and Leenders, (2003) extends the discussion to include the nature of such narratives and testimonials - which in today's business is becoming more and more technology

oriented – and in describing emotional and non-tangible gains, how the products are beneficial for people they care for, how the business actually helps others and finally, how the products hold not only a positive impact on the world but also give chance to others to benefit as well (Gabbay and Leenders, 2003).

Previously, we have also argued that trust is a bet and that its level is a function of an expected gain or loss. Consequently, it would be logical to assume that if one can influence the perceived gain or loss through the use of narratives by manipulating the expectations and reframing the beliefs, it would be possible to influence the trust level (Gabbay and Leenders, 2003). This can be easily achieved because trust often depends on the dynamics of the dyadic interaction between the trustor and the trustee. Accordingly, increasing trust level would become subject to development and fixed trust is an unreasonable matter (Gabbay and Leenders, 2003). Furthermore, as objective information is rarely available, the chance of having a trustee reconstruct negative information into a positive one or a trustee's manipulation of information to alter the trustor's perception of gain and losses is always possible (James and James, 1990). This further reinforces the idea that trust can be enhanced through narratives.

2.8 Gaining Legitimacy

2.8.1 Defining Legitimacy

To trust a new venture and provide it with resources and support, stakeholders and creditors need to perceive it as legitimate (Aldrich and Fiol, 1994) (Lounsbury and Glynn, 2001) and entrepreneurs are expertly known to conform to their ventures' legitimation requirements of both 'being heard' and 'being predictable'. Research has

shown that such a process is generally developed through the verbal action of making claims about a new venture formation (Down and Warren, 2008).

However, legitimacy should not be understood by just that or 'marking' the emergence of a new firm such as officially registering it, setting a bank account, or listing a phone number only. On the contrary, it is about establishing a firm that is creating a role (Middleton, 2013). Other than "have value", organizations need also to "make sense" and nascent entrepreneurs tacitly consider their legitimization activities as part of their engagements with their key stakeholders. They actively negotiate their rights and duties and, employ strategies in order to gain legitimacy (Suchman, 1995). Therefore, it is seen a socially constructed phenomenon that involves congruence between the actions and behaviours of the legitimate entity (i.e. the entrepreneur) and the shared beliefs of related social groups (Suchman, 1995).

For the purpose of this research, we will adopt Suchman's (1995) definition of organizational legitimacy as being a "generalized perception or assumption that the actions of an entity are desirable, proper, or appropriate within some socially constructed system of norms, values, beliefs, and definitions" (Suchman, 1995). In our opinion, such definition bodes well with the role of entrepreneurs who negotiate their identity while carefully managing the tensions between adhering to some social norms and carving new combinations about factors of production to an existing social order (Schumpeter et al., 1934). In some extreme cases, few entrepreneurs manage to overcome existing legitimacy barriers and succeed in establishing a new set of norms, paving the way for an emerging industry to grow (Aldrich and Fiol, 1994).

According to Suchman (1995), there exists three types of organizational legitimacy: pragmatic, moral (normative) and cognitive. A pragmatic type is characterised by

conforming to demands, selecting friendly audiences and promoting an image, while the moral is about conforming to ideas, defining goals, and demonstrating success to convince others. Finally, the cognitive type includes conforming to models, seeking certification and institutionalization. In other words, it is created when an organization pursues goals that society deems to be proper and desirable (Suchman, 1995).

The extant literature on legitimacy approached the topic through two channels: the strategic approach and the institutional approach (Suchman, 1995). The former considers legitimacy as an operational resource that organizations extract from their cultural environments and employ in pursuit for their goals. Therefore, it assumes a high degree of managerial control over the legitimation process. In contrast, the institutional approach is not considered as an operational resource but a set of constitutive beliefs. In other words, organizations do not simply extract legitimacy from their environment but rather it is the institutions that interpenetrate the organization in every respect.

2.8.2 Why is Legitimacy Important?

According to Aldrich & Fiol (1994), access to capital, access to markets and government protection are all dependent on legitimacy (Aldrich and Fiol, 1994) (Suchman, 1995). Generally, audiences are likely to supply resources to organizations who appear desirable, proper, appropriate, and most importantly, trustworthy. Based on Gartner & Low (1990), Aldrich and Fiol (1994) also confirm that the social process of gaining legitimacy is often shaped by achieving trust in the organizing process (Aldrich and Fiol, 1994) as new ventures creators must interact with extremely sceptical customers, creditors, suppliers, and other resources holders

who are afraid of being taken for fools. As such, Suchman (1995) views that legitimacy enhances stability and comprehensibility of organizational activities, ensuring their continuity (Suchman, 1995) and in turn, audiences perceive legitimate organizations as predictable and trustworthy.

Undoubtedly, legitimacy is very important, and ventures thrive for that taken-for-granted status which would make them beyond dissent. However, the literature generally portrays the legitimation process as a conformist and a peaceful behaviour adhering to norms and demands whereas the reality of the whole entrepreneurial process, and hence the firm's legitimacy and survival, is very much marred with all sorts of stiff competition and uncertainty, particularly in the nascent phases. The entrepreneurial path to stability is often a thorny road in which the firm's survival is in question daily. In such circumstances, it would be probably inconceivable for the spirited entrepreneurs to approach strategic legitimation demands in an appeasing manner and without a fight.

2.8.3 Organizational Legitimacy Strategies

Given the importance of legitimacy for new venture founders, strategies are needed to encourage a trusting party in sharing the expectations as well as the competences the entrepreneurs. Drawing from the work of Dees and Starr (1992) which claims that power of persuasion must be used by the venture founders to overcome all scepticism and any resistance from the guardians of the status quo, Aldrich and Fiol (1994) suggested that entrepreneurs must achieve two types of legitimacy: cognitive and socio-political. The former, which is spreading knowledge about the new venture, is often achieved using symbolic language and behaviours. The latter socio-political

type involving a process by which a venture is accepted and deemed appropriate by the key stakeholders, is achieved though narratives and through coherent stories that are free from contradictions to make a case that their venture is compatible with norms (Aldrich and Fiol, 1994). The authors proposed the entrepreneurs who follow such strategies achieve the sought legitimacy and approval faster than others (IBID). Please refer to below table 2.3

Type of Legitimacy		
Level of Analysis	**Cognitive** **(Spreading Knowledge)**	**Socio-Political** **(Appropriation by key stakeholders)**
Organizational	Develop knowledge via symbolic language and behaviours	Develop trust by maintaining internally consistent stories (Business Model)

Table 2-3   Types of Legitimacy (Adapted from Aldrich & Fiol, 1994)

From another perspective, Suchman (1995) suggests that a road map to gain legitimacy consists of a three-phase path which involves conforming to the dictates of pre-existing audiences, select an audience that will support the new activities and manipulate the existing environment to create new audiences (Suchman, 1995). Again, this view conforms to the classic economic views and justifications of venture creation, leading up to market legitimacy but it certainly does not bode well with socio-cultural or socio-political views.

2.8.4 Narratives to Establish Legitimacy and Legitimate Distinctiveness

So far, it was argued that because of the novelty and uniqueness of new ventures, entrepreneurs confront problems associated with lack of legitimacy or external validation and entrepreneurs must tell stories about their stock of capital (Lounsbury and Glynn, 2001). As a result, entrepreneurial narratives and stories strive to make

the unfamiliar familiar, by framing the new venture as understandable and legitimate with the key aspect of reducing uncertainty (Lounsbury and Glynn, 2001).

Legitimacy can therefore be also viewed as the firm's endorsement by powerful institutional actors such as investors, bankers, and other resource providers etc., and the perception that the venture is "desirable, proper or appropriate with some socially constructed system of norms, values, beliefs and definitions" (Navis and Glynn, 2011) p479. It involves a "trade-off between the emancipating aspects of 'entrepreneuring' and the accommodation of constraints" (Navis and Glynn, 2011) p479.

As mentioned, entrepreneurial stories tend to highlight the entrepreneurial processes in all stages and particularly in the earliest as they are mainly about establishing legitimacy (Lounsbury and Glynn, 2001). They tell tales about how their new venture can be located within legitimized groups such as distinguished industries, life cycles and sectors (Lounsbury and Glynn, 2001). Most of them establish an identity by positioning themselves in relation to others through a process of differentiation, describing their own group but simultaneously separating themselves from others (Phillips, 2013). They strive for "optimal distinctiveness" by constantly evaluating to which degree they should stress on sameness or distinctiveness, in most parts for the effort of acquiring resources (Lounsbury and Glynn, 2001).

To recap, entrepreneurial narratives are mostly built on emphasizing the firm's legitimate distinctiveness which embeds both conformity and deviance and, containing identity elements that can be seen as competing or even contradictory (Navis and Glynn, 2011).

2.9 Conceptual Framework of the Dissertation

2.9.1 Introduction

Generally, conceptual frameworks aim to give direction to a study or be identified as an outcome of a study (Green, 2014). They tend to illuminate the research process that is relatively obscured by the vast amount of extant literature and if concepts are defined as "symbolic statements describing a phenomenon or a class of phenomena" (IBID), then a conceptual framework can be best described as an interpretive diagrammatic format of interrelated phenomena, which can guide the research project. Maxwell and Loomis (2003) describes it as the "systems of concepts, assumptions, expectations, beliefs and theories" supporting and informing the research that is being conducted (Maxwell and Loomis, 2003). As a result, it can be composed of the experiential knowledge of the researcher, extant theory and research, pilot and exploratory research (IBID p.44). In short, it helps strengthening the study, maintaining its coherence and ensuring that the researcher focuses on what he/she is trying to achieve.

According to Green (2014), qualitative researchers tend to use conceptual frameworks (or theoretical frameworks – if the research is underpinned by one single theory) in one of two ways. The first is in the design and can be part of literature review either in an explicit way in the form of a diagram or embedded in the literature. The subsequent analysis of the data would then refine it or, develop new theories or variations of existing theories as research outcomes (Somekh and Lewin, 2011). The second way in utilising conceptual or theoretical frameworks is by using the research to develop the framework, which renders it more generalizable (Polit and Beck,

2004). Researchers who are mostly interested in grounded theory strategies find this approach very useful.

2.9.2 The conceptual framework

In this study, the literature review has discussed several concepts that are all interrelated and revolve around the entrepreneurial narratives. Whether it is the case of a new venture creation or the internationalization of a nascent firm, entrepreneurs tend to pave their way to success through passionately created narratives with the aim of constructing a new identity and establishing trust and legitimacy in the new venture. Accordingly, and based on the literature review, the conceptual framework which illustrates the research aim and research questions has been developed as per Figure 10.

Consistent with Lounsbury and Glynn (2001) theory of relating organisational storytelling to both identity construction and legitimacy in the entrepreneurial context (Lounsbury and Glynn, 2001), the calls of Steyeart (2007) to adopt a processual approach in researching entrepreneurship (Steyaert, 2007) and finally, the calls of Welter and Smallbone (2006) in exploring the role of trust in the entrepreneurial activity (Welter and Smallbone, 2006), the devised model relies on the main entrepreneurship (Shane and Venkataraman, 2000) (Shane, 2003b); and internationalisation theories (Oviatt and McDougall, 1994) (Knight and Cavusgil, 2004); (Coombs et al., 2009) and contributes to the literature by further exploring the processes of identity construction (Boje, 1991); (Brown, 2006); (Navis and Glynn, 2011); the trust (Welter, 2012) and legitimacy concepts (Aldrich and Fiol, 1994);

(Suchman, 1995) particularly within the geographical area that the research has taken place.

Decision to Expand into the GCC Countries (e.g. Saudi Arabia, UAE, Qatar)

Existing Identity in Home Country

New Narratives & Storylines to key Stakeholders:

Suppliers

Customers

Employees

Emergent Identity

Trust Development

Market Legitimacy
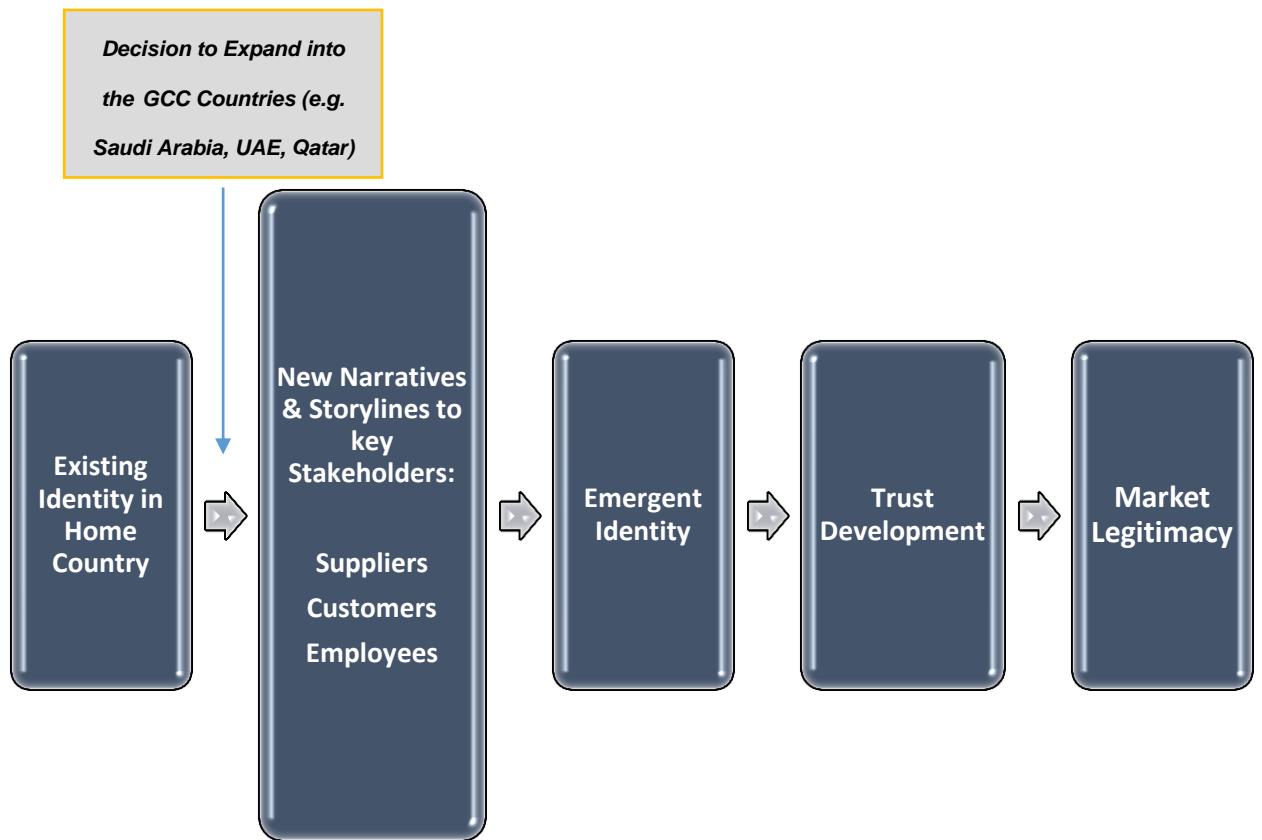
Figure 10   Conceptual Framework: Entrepreneurial Narratives, Identity and Trust: The Case of Lebanese Small Firms Internationalization

The components of the conceptual framework reflect extant theories about identity works in mainly how entrepreneurs form, revise and maintain their identities (Down and Reveley, 2004); (Jain et al., 2009); (Grimes, 2018) and on how they leverage narratives to build it and acquire resources (Martens et al., 2007); (Down and Warren, 2008); (Jones, 2008); (Phillips, 2013); (Stigliani and Elsbach, 2018) or establish trust and venture legitimacy (Lounsbury and Glynn, 2001); (O'Neil et al., 2020); (Fisher et al., 2017). As mentioned, these concepts were all evoked and abundantly discussed in the preceding literature review section. The data that was subsequently collected and analysed will review the generated propositions and possibly explore new emerging processes or behaviours as research outcomes. The conceptual framework may be altered because of the empirical findings.

2.10 Conclusion to the Literature Review

From the literature review section, we have noted that entrepreneurial narratives serve as essential mediators between the entrepreneur's extant stock of cultural and institutional capital and, the subsequent resource acquisition and development of a competitive edge and how they facilitate the crafting of an entrepreneurial identity (Lounsbury and Glynn, 2001). They are mostly centred on impression management (Baron and Markman, 2000) and legitimate distinctiveness (Navis and Glynn, 2011). We have also learned that organizational narratives must also resonate with audience expectations (Lounsbury and Glynn, 2001) and are widely recognized as a valuable form of data and a mean to increase the relevance of our knowledge, particularly in the context of crafting an entrepreneurial identity and, gaining trust and legitimacy in a new venture. The challenge remains in the significance of such

narratives and how they can they give us access to deeper organizational reality (Gabriel, 2000).

It was also argued in the literature review that concepts from extant literature were utilised to frame the research questions and develop a model and propositions in trying to explore how nascent and internationalizing entrepreneurs use narratives and possibly other signals to form a new identity and establish trust and legitimacy in their new venture. This research will attempt to address those concerns in the next sections by empirically testing and refining the propositions, by analysing the narratives meaning making and by responding to queries of what makes an effective entrepreneurial narrative for the purpose (Downing, 2005).

3   Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter is structured in two parts: the methodology and the research design. We start by stating the research aim, the research questions and the objectives. The next two sections 3.2 and 3.3 discuss the philosophical foundation for our exploratory case study and the philosophical stance of the researcher. Section 3.4 evaluates the paradigms of narrative research in entrepreneurship from a process thinking perspective. We will view the ontological and epistemological underpinnings and, the commonly used approaches in narratological research. The next section 3.6 argues for researching the identity construction process in entrepreneurship from a research design angle. Section 3.7 tackles the research design, the different and possible approaches that are available to the researcher and approaches that are available for the researcher. This part establishes the logic behind choosing case studies and views the main articles of researchers who have used such a method. Finally, the last two sections discuss the cases selection criteria and how the data was collected with an overview of all the different cases and firms' characteristics.

3.2 Research Questions and Objectives

This study proposes researching the process of the identity construction of the internationalising small firms and exploring how trust and legitimacy in the new activity are developed and conferred.

Addressing the research gaps outlined above, the following two research questions are formulated:

1. **What is the role of the entrepreneurial narratives in constructing an identity for the new ventures in the process of international expansion of the firm?**

2. **How are trust and organizational legitimacy achieved between the entrepreneur and the various stakeholders?**

To provide a basis for answering the above-mentioned research questions, the following objectives were identified:

The role of narratives: To identify a clear set of behavioural patterns and their characteristics or strategies in entrepreneurial narratives that serve to explicate and rationalize the entrepreneur's new and emergent identity.

How is trust achieved? To explore and identify a clear set of symbolic language, narratives and behaviours that entrepreneurs engage in to instil trust about the new venture. Approaches may be different but they will all seek to ultimately achieve an understanding among trusting parties (customers, suppliers and other individuals) that "everything will work out" (Aldrich and Fiol, 1994).

Legitimacy: To explore and identify a clear set of symbolic language and entrepreneurial behaviours to project both cognitive and socio-political types of legitimacy in the new venture.

3.3 Philosophical Approaches in Researching Social Science Phenomena

To date, scholars researching social science often debate whether a qualitative or a quantitative approach is best to adopt and the fashion has swung back and forth over the last few decades between the two (Easterby-Smith et al., 2012). Although they both are based on logic and empirical observation, they differ in their methodological approach and research design. A quantitative methodology relies on "the use of numbers usually in the form of measurements to attempt giving precision to a set of observation" whereas qualitative methods are based on evidence that cannot be reduced to numbers and any attempt to do so would not be useful (Remenyi et al., 2010). In the latter case, statistical approaches are not sensible and hermeneutic approaches are preferable (Remenyi et al., 2010). Social phenomena are therefore interpreted through texts or observation of participants while stress is on the context and on its subjective accuracy rather than its generalizability.

Understanding the philosophical issues is deemed very important as it enriches the research in three main areas: first, it helps clarifying the research design and how this will provide good answers to the basic questions that are being investigated. Second, philosophical knowledge will help the researcher which design will work, and which will not. The third reason is that it can help the researcher identify or create a design beyond his past experiences (Easterby-Smith et al., 2012). As for the philosophical logic for choosing a method over another, the researcher's ontological (nature of reality and existence or study of being) and epistemological (best ways of enquiring into the nature of the world or study of knowledge) views do widely affect

any research. Ontological views that may vary from realism to relativism or even nominalism (See Table 3.1) will layout the research foundation.

Ontology	Realism	Internal realism	Relativism	Nominalism
Truth	*Single Truth*	*Truth exists, but is obscure*	*There are many 'truths'*	*There is no truth*
Facts	*Facts exist and can be revealed*	*Facts are concrete but cannot be accessed directly*	*Facts depend on viewpoint of observer*	*Facts are all human creations*

Table 3-1   Ontological Ranges   (Adapted from Easterby-Smith et al, 2012)

The researcher's epistemological views which may vary from positivism to social constructionism (a view that reality is not objective but is socially constructed and given meaning by people) will suggest the research methodology and design (Easterby-Smith et al., 2012). Stayaert (2007) recommends that the focus should be on what people individually and collectively are thinking and feeling (Steyaert, 2007). It is reason why from an ontological perspective, experimental approaches may suit those who believe that reality is out there to be discovered or realists whereas discursive approaches may fit those who think it is rather vague and elusive.

The link between the various epistemological views and methodologies is close and often implicate the direction of the research. For those who see the world objectively, empirical research may be suitable as opposed to those who believe that knowledge is constructed subjectively; an interpretivist or qualitative approach may be best fit.

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To further illustrate how the relationship, we will seek help from middle stances of the methodological implication table (Table 3.2) as depicted by Easterby-Smith (2012).

Ontologies	Internal Realism	Relativism
Epistemology/ **Methodology**	**Positivism**	**Constructionism**
Aims	*Exposure*	*Convergence*
Starting Points	*Propositions*	*Questions*
Designs	*Large Surveys: Multi Cases*	*Cases and Surveys*
Data Types	*Numbers & Words*	*Words & Numbers*
Analysis / *Interpretation*	*Correlation and Regression*	*Triangulation and Comparison*
Outcomes	*Theory Testing and Triangulation*	*Theory Generation*

Table 3-2   Methodological implications of different methodologies (Adapted from Easterby-Smith et al, 2012

The researcher's engagement may also be vital to the outcomes; he/she may remain quite detached or involved with the participants. In narrative methods, the researcher may be considered detached if collection of stories is emphasized or maybe considered involved if the "researcher plays a role in encouraging participants to invent new stories that illustrate their feelings" (Easterby-Smith et al., 2012) p53.

3.4 Philosophical Stance of the Researcher

As mentioned in the introductory section (Chapter 1), a personal interest was developed in this study as the researcher himself has experienced first-hand the hardships of internationalizing a new venture in a neighbouring country between 2005 and 2008. In fact, the research questions stem from predicaments that were very closely experienced. Curiosity of how well-established entrepreneurs instilled trust and legitimacy in a new venture was provoked and the aim became to increase the general understanding of the mentioned phenomenon.

With prior knowledge and understanding of the local culture in that particular geographical location and given the highly contextual aspect of the entrepreneurial environment, the researcher is well aware of the fact that reality is socially constructed and given meaning by the various stakeholders. Appreciation of the different constructions and meanings that people place upon their experiences has been developed and a general interest in 'process thinking' (van de Ven and Huber, 1990) which would consider the phenomenon dynamically and capture 'reality in flight' (Pettigrew, 1992); (Langley, 2007) is contemplated in this study.

Based on the preceding and after having acquired the requisite methodological skills through the MSc phase, the researcher got even more convinced that reality can also

be subjective and is deeply affected by the environment. Effectively, explaining social phenomena via numbers may be redundant and may not utterly represent the overall picture and interpreting social behaviours may best be accomplished through a holistic inductive approach using qualitative research techniques i.e., narratives, personal observation of situations, events, individuals, interactions, processes, and interpreting texts. This position bodes well with the general characteristics of qualitative research as was best described by Cassel and Symon (1994) with "a focus on interpretation rather than quantification; an emphasis on subjectivity rather than objectivity; flexibility in the process of conducting research; an orientation towards process rather than outcome; a concern with context—regarding behaviour and situation as inextricably linked in forming experience; and finally, an explicit recognition of the impact of the research process on the research situation" (Cassell and Symon, 2004) p7.

The researcher believes that the above description summarizes the essence of qualitative research and positions this study in conformity with its philosophy. Additionally, the researcher is also an advocate of the process-oriented character of entrepreneurship as depicted by Steyaert (2007). Detailed explanations will follow in the next paragraphs.

On the other hand, the researcher is also aware of the weaknesses of constructionism in research. Other than the fact that access to data may be difficult and challenging to be accesses sometimes, the 'would-be-collected' data can also become inconsistent and the researcher may experience difficulties in reconciling the information. It may lead critics to question the trustworthiness of the findings from studies in which the standards are shifting and are subject to various interpretations.

Given the researcher's philosophical stance, the next section will discuss the narratological and process-oriented approaches in researching entrepreneurship with elaborate review of its various ontological and epistemological aspects.

3.5 Narrative Research in Entrepreneurship

Process views in entrepreneurship studies have gained attention in recent years and according to Steyaert (2007), "the ultimate idea is to uproot entrepreneurship studies and to envision it as a field of creative efforts that unfold along a rhizome-like logic" (Steyaert, 2007). In other words, it is about learning how participants react to evolving circumstances. This calls for research in entrepreneurship in a more creative way rather than connecting it to classical economic and mainstream psychology (IBID). Our research is inspired by this view.

3.5.1 Process Thinking Research

According to Langley (2007), process thinking in strategic organization involves considering the "phenomena dynamically in terms of how and why things - people organizations, strategies, environments – change, act and evolve over time" (Langley, 2007). In fact, she recommends researching the processes empirically via several angles of which we list two important ones: "Tracing back to understand the processes that have led the organization to reach a favourable position" or by "focusing on phenomena that are usually invariant and examine how they are constituted through on-going processes" (Langley, 2007). Researching the entrepreneurial identity construction through a process approach seems to be very fittingly appropriate.

Similarly, Steyaert (2007) calls for researching entrepreneurship from process-oriented perspectives (Steyaert, 2007). In his seminal article, he constructed a spectrum of process theories while drawing distinctions between many perspectives, each of which, according to him, provides a very different conceptualization of the process (Steyaert, 2007). They range from evolution, complexity, and chaos theory to interpretive, phenomenological, social constructionist (with its narrative offspring), pragmatic and action-based perspectives (IBID). Particularly, this research is interested in social constructionist perspectives, which particularly stresses on the linguistic construction of reality (Hjorth, 2005), and sees that entrepreneurship is conceptualized through a myriad of linguistic forms and processes, such as metaphors (Dodd, 2002), storytelling (Pitt, 1998), dramatization (Downing, 2005) and discourses (Perren and Jennings, 2005) (Steyaert, 2007).

Pragmatist philosophy as depicted by Sarasvathy's (2001) effectuation theory complements in our view the social constructionist epistemology. It regards entrepreneurship as a form of "make-it-happen" (Sarasvathy, 2001), in an incremental way and in a context of uncertainty in which neither means nor ends are pre-determined (IBID). Consequently, it highlights the entrepreneurial imagination and conjoins the task of entrepreneurship with creating a better world and a society we want to live in from the society we have to live in (Sarasvathy), 2001; (Steyaert, 2007). To recap, effectuation can be regarded as "a theory of design" but gives agency to the individual to make it happen (Steyaert, 2007)

3.5.2 Narratology Research

Narratology Research can be defined as the systematic study of narratives leading to an understanding of identities or collective identities as multi-voiced, quasi-fictional, pluri-vocal and reflexive constructions that unfold over time and embedded in discursive practices (Brown, 2006). It facilitates a focus on the structure of the narratives, which pre-exists the narrative that is being told. It consists of the analysis of the Fabula (events) and the Sjuzet (representation) with a purpose to explore the meaning of organizational experience: a mean through which managers acquired knowledge at work and researchers to examine the emotional and symbolic lives within organizations (Rhodes and Brown, 2005). Its recognized themes are processes of socialization, learning, strategic individuality, exercising power and control, sense making, culture formation, community mediation, IT implementation, and nostalgia (Rhodes and Brown, 2005).

From a process perspective, a narrative approach can enhance the "contextual and embedded understanding of the entrepreneurial process" (Steyaert, 2007). He adds that this is made possible because "stories are not conceived as individual expressions of entrepreneurs but as re-performances of cultural metaphors, macro-cultural discourses and political discourses" and concludes that the author is never the sole author of his/her own story (Steyaert, 2007).

Narratives are also well recognized as a methodological approach (Boje, 1991). This acknowledgment is considered a long shot from previous beliefs when historically, narratological studies took methodological positions that stories, myths, sagas and other forms of narratives were an overlooked but valuable source of data for research in organizations, conceptualizing them as a set of a storytelling practices (Rhodes

and Brown, 2005). Even though science has stood as the opposite of storytelling (Gabriel, 2000), organization narratives has always produced a rich body of knowledge (Rhodes and Brown, 2005) and may be viewed as constitutive of organizational realities (Boje et al., 1999).

3.5.3 Ontological and Epistemological Underpinnings

Ontologically, a narratives perspective in a process-oriented study claims that new organizations are constructed through countless stories that perpetually repeat, contradict and extend each other (Boje, 1995); (Czarniawska, 1998); (Boje, 2001). Entrepreneurship is therefore seen as a process of storytelling through which people became implied in an on-going emplotment (Downing, 2005) and entrepreneurial narratives can be viewed as speech-acts that bring into existence a social reality that did not exist before their utterance (Boje et al., 1999); (Brown, 2006); (Martens et al., 2007). Epistemologically speaking, collecting organizational stories can enable the researcher gaining insights to the organizational life. According to Easterby-Smith (2012), this may involve a level of engagement from the researcher to become part of the process of constructing and transmitting stories or it can be collected through interviews by asking people of stories they have heard about particular events (Easterby-Smith et al., 2012).

3.5.4 Entrepreneurial Narratives, Identity and Legitimacy

For many entrepreneurs, identities may be produced or reconstructed by their skilful participation in narratives and dramatic processes as much as the objective quality of their products or services (Downing, 2005). As a result, narratives can enhance an

entrepreneur's status and socially confirm him/her by constituting this fine line that would make them either appears to be as visionary or eccentrics.

Entrepreneurial narratives are also widely recognized to be linked to identity works and identity construction (Foss, 2004); (Downing, 2005), to legitimation and Legitimacy building (Aldrich and Fiol, 1994, Lounsbury and Glynn, 2001) and personal learning and practical knowledge (Rae and Carswell, 2001); (O'Connor, 2007). There is abundance literature about this subject and the next section will further discuss the commonly used approaches and methods that are used to research it.

3.5.5 Commonly Used Approaches in Narratological Research

Narratology is commonly used for researching questions which focus on grounded approaches and theory building rather than theory testing. For example, Stigliani and Elsbach (GEM Lebanon National Report 2018) studied the sense-making and sense-giving processes that are used by industry founders in the co-formation of organizational and industry identities and proposed a framework to illustrate how they addressed the tension between organizational distinctiveness and industry coherence using interviews (Stigliani and Elsbach, 2018). Grounded theory approaches were also used by Grimes et al (GEM Lebanon National Report 2018) to explore the process of "developing" identities as it enables individuals to be more efficacious in their entrepreneurial endeavours (Grimes, 2018). Zhang and Chun (GEM Lebanon National Report 2018) also used grounded approaches to produce a process model of how immigrants develop entrepreneurial identities (Zhang and Chun, 2018).

Narratologists also recommend auto ethnographic methods for researching story sense making (Boje, 2008). For example, Boje (1991) admitted to have spent eight months of participant observation in an office supplies firm collecting talks from customers, vendors, salespeople, managers etc. (Boje, 1991) Lounsbury & Glynn (2001) also recommended the use of ethnographic approaches to entrepreneurial stories in order to" understand how cultural entrepreneurship enables subsequent capital acquisition" (Lounsbury and Glynn, 2001). O'Connor (2002) spent 10 months of field research in a high technology start-up to capture the narrative types and categories in founding a new company (O'Connor, 2002). Using evidence from an ethnographic study, Down and Reveley (2004) suggest that entrepreneurs and identities are produced and reproduced by discourses while emphasizing on the micro-socially aspects of such narratives (Down and Reveley, 2004). Similarly, Down and Warren (2008) explored the application of clichés such as risk, bravery, ambition and self-sufficiencies as a distinctive linguistic feature of entrepreneurial self-identity construction using ethnographic methods (Down and Warren, 2008).

However, Boje (2008) also warns that ethnography is not a clear methodology and to an inexperienced observer it may be compromising (Boje, 2008). In fact, during his ethnographic research in 1991, he himself rarely found a BME retrospective whole narrative. Instead, he collected fragmented retrospections that were "so well understood by participants that a word or a photo could each imply a whole narrative moment" and that to an uninitiated observer, the narrative exchange can go totally unnoticed (Boje, 2008).

3.5.6 Commonly Used Methods in Narratological Research

Semi-structured interviews are also commonly used methods to collect data given that questions to evoke narratives are rightfully asked. Czarniawska (2000) posited that "it isn't unusual for interviewees to respond to questions with narratives if they are given room to speak" and that an interview situation can easily become a "micro-site for production of narratives" (Czarniawska, 1998). She even alluded to how to formulate a question prompting a narrative should the topic be a reform or uncovering a chain of events unfolding with time (*Could you tell me a story of … as you have experienced it? - Do you recall when…? What happened next?*) (Czarniawska, 1998)

Many other scholars adopted the use of interview methods in their narratological approaches. Rae & Carswell (2001) used in depth interviews with people who have demonstrated entrepreneurial attainment in running business ventures for the purpose of exploring their stories of the learning they experienced during their careers (Rae and Carswell, 2001). D. Rae (2004) developed the use of "practical theory", as a resource in entrepreneurial learning by interviewing entrepreneurs about life story accounts (Rae, 2004). Terjesen & Elam (2009) used semi-structured interview narratives to explore transnational entrepreneurs' internationalization strategies (Terjesen and Elam, 2009). McKenzie (2011) used interviews to analyse the "oral history" of several entrepreneurs and how they use storytelling to exchange information (McKenzie, 2011). Mclean et al (2015) also used life-history interviews with wealthy UK based entrepreneurial to develop the foundational theory of philanthropic identity narratives (Maclean, 2015).

3.6 Researching the Identity Construction Process

3.6.1 Findings from the Literature Review

According to a recent study by Mmbaga et al (2020) of 180 articles on identity in entrepreneurship, construction research and remains one of the most significant conversations within research on entrepreneurship and identity, outpacing all other conversations in the past decade (Mmbaga et al., 2020). Examining this course contributes to an understanding of the processes that shape the entrepreneurial behaviour, actions and outcomes over time (IBID). Our study attempts to contribute to this body of knowledge.

3.6.2 The Role of Narratives in Identity Construction

Narratives are widely recognized as a valuable form of data in research and a mean to increase the relevance of knowledge produced by social sciences academics, particularly in organizational studies (Rhodes and Brown, 2005). The entrepreneurial identity articulates "who they are as a firm, what they stand for and why they are successful" (Navis and Glynn, 2011), justifies the existence of the company (O'Connor, 2002) and conveys what central, distinctive and enduring about it (Brown, 2006). It usually describes the nature of the market, the organization and the individual; three levels that are important to investors in assessing value to an entrepreneurial venture (Navis and Glynn, 2011). Under conditions of uncertainty or ambiguity, identity takes a heightened importance, functioning as a critical organizational resource and a device for sense-making (Navis and Glynn, 2011). It also helps overcome information asymmetry and uncertainty and, facilitates resource acquisition (Martens et al., 2007).

Generally, organizational narratives are used to explore how individuals "make sense of events, introduce change and gain political advantage during their conversations" (Boje, 1991) and entrepreneurial stories can provide such needed accounts to explain, rationalize or promote a new venture to reduce the uncertainty, typically associated with entrepreneurship (Aldrich and Fiol, 1994); (Lounsbury and Glynn, 2001). Researchers also argue that the entrepreneurial journeys are dynamic processes requiring continual adjustments (Garud and Giuliani, 2013) and are often used to convey a comprehensible identity (O'Connor, 2002); (Brown, 2006); (Navis and Glynn, 2011). Throughout the entrepreneurial journey, stories have become a very important part of the entrepreneurial toolkit, particularly in the earliest stages of new venture formation.

Similarly, organisational identities are viewed through the lens of narratives that participants author about them in documents, conversations, and electronic media (Brown, 2006). Brown (2006) believes that the totality of such narratives, which usually are complex, fragmented and heterogeneous in nature, constitute what is referred to as collective identity (Brown, 2006). According to Czarniawska (1994) and Brown (2006), organizations' identities are the fruits of multiple narratives of several types such as tragedy, irony and romance and, they are best regarded as continuous processes of narration where narrator and audience formulate, audit, applaud and refuse various elements of the produced narrative (Czarniawska, 1998); (Brown, 2006). Consequently, the very fabric of the organization is constantly being created and recreated through elaboration, contestation and exchange of narratives (Brown, 2006) and the notion of identity is generally not fixed, as individuals are continually engaged in "forming, repairing, maintaining, strengthening or revising the

constructions that are productive of a precarious sense of coherence and distinctiveness (Phillips, 2013).

3.6.3 The Role of Narratives in Establishing Trust and Legitimacy

For the internationalizing firms, such narratives take a heightened importance as they not only serve the entrepreneur to develop an identity of a trustworthy person (Aldrich and Fiol, 1994) but they also instil the perception that his new venture is legitimate and that the entity's actions are 'desirable, proper, or appropriate within some socially constructed norms, values, beliefs and definitions (Suchman, 1995).

From another perspective, Aldrich et al (1994) also warn that new venture creations are plagued by the liability of newness and that the chances of survival highly depend on the legitimacy of the industry itself from a cognitive and socio-political point of view (Aldrich and Fiol, 1994). As a result, founding entrepreneurs of innovative ventures must be initiators of the process of the industry recognition and must achieve that by developing trust, reputation, reliability and legitimacy in the new activity (Aldrich and Fiol, 1994). Thus, entrepreneurs often confront problems that are associated with "lack of legitimacy" (Low and Abrahamson, 1997) and feel, therefore, compelled to create stories about their stock of capital providing needed accounts that explain, rationalize and promote a new venture in order to reduce the uncertainty, typically associated with entrepreneurship (Aldrich and Fiol, 1994); (Lounsbury and Glynn, 2001). Entrepreneurship stories strive to make the unfamiliar familiar, by framing the new venture as understandable and legitimate with the key aspect of reducing uncertainty (Lounsbury and Glynn, 2001) and the perception that the venture is "desirable, proper or appropriate with some socially constructed

system of norms, values, beliefs and definitions" (Navis and Glynn, 2011). It often emphasizes on distinctiveness when institutional context has legitimacy or when invention is competence destroying relative to the industry practices. In contrast, when the industry lacks legitimacy, stories typically resonate with the expectations, interests and agendas of the stakeholders and, adhere to the cultural norms and understandings of what is appropriate (Lounsbury and Glynn, 2001). According to the authors, it is a recursive "cultural entrepreneurship process" which mediates between the current entrepreneurial resources and their subsequent capital acquisition flowing back to affect their stock of capital and affects the acquisition of additional capital (IBID).

3.7 Research Design: A Case Study Approach

In this section, we will review the constructionist paradigms that are available to the researcher and briefly discuss possible approaches. We will highlight the pros and cons for using each one and attempt to provide the logic for choosing a case study that is highly dependent on identity narratives and explain how its protocol was developed.

3.7.1 Available approaches for the researcher

Starting from the assumption that the job of the researcher should be to illuminate different 'truths' and to establish how various claims for truth and reality become constructed in everyday life (Easterby-Smith et al., 2012), several approaches are available to the researcher which would fit this constructionist paradigm. Below we will briefly discuss some of the methodologies and then look at the case method and grounded theory.

3.7.1.1 Action research

According to Easterby-Smith (2012), action research assumes that "social phenomena are continually changing and that the researchers are often part of the change itself" (Easterby-Smith et al., 2012). It may also involve a small-scale intervention from the part of the researcher in the phenomenon being studied (Remenyi et al., 2010), hence the huge benefits for such an approach. However, the considerable amount of time that is needed for the effects of the intervention to be observed makes it inconvenient and inappropriate. Additionally, the researcher's self-awareness of his presence impacting the situation adds to the complexity of the findings.

3.7.1.2 Ethnography

The key principle of ethnography is that the researcher "has to immerse himself or herself in a setting and become part of the group in order to understand the meanings and significances that people give to their behaviours and to the ones of others" (Easterby-Smith et al., 2012). It is the type of field observation in which a detailed understanding of how the society that is being studied works and thus, qualifies as a strong form of constructionism. However, this may necessitate months or years, hence the impracticality of such research.

Accessibility restriction to firms adds to the degree of difficulty of conducting full ethnographic research in business and management. Scholars have also highlighted what they refer to as 'breakdowns' which are "events or situations in which the researcher's past experience gives no help in understanding what is going on"

(Easterby-Smith et al., 2012). Another disadvantage in such types of research is that they are normally not replicable (Remenyi et al., 2010).

However, several entrepreneurial narratology pioneer researchers recommended ethnographic routes (Boje, 1991); (Boje et al., 1999); (Lounsbury and Glynn, 2001) as it permits a more holistic view and an integral meaning making of the situation (O'Connor, 2002).

3.7.1.3 Phenomenology

Phenomenology is defined as the "study or a description of a phenomena; and where a phenomenon is anything that appears or presents itself to someone in their conscious experience" (Moran, 2000, Cope, 2005, Gill, 2014). It is widely used in the field of Psychology and is used to examine individual experiences by interacting with participants, creating thematic description of experiences and providing a "photographic slice of life" (Cope, 2005). He further posits that this philosophy "can be translated into an interpretive method" and can be employed by entrepreneurship researchers (Cope, 2005). In summary, citing Van Mannen (1983), phenomenological inquiry covers an "umbrella of interpretive techniques which seeks to describe, decode, translate and otherwise come to meaning, not the frequency, of certain more or less naturally occurring phenomena in the social world" (Cope, 2005).

This approach has been seldom used in business research due to its highly interpretive nature. However, interpretive phenomenology is becoming increasingly popular and recommended when studying sense-making through Smith et al (2009) Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) technique due to its strong philosophical underpinning and its double hermeneutics nature where the researcher

is trying to make sense of what the participant has made sense of what happened to him (her) (Smith, 2009).

For entrepreneurship research, Cope (2005) admitted that it may represent methodological risks because the "researcher does not impose any rigid or pre-existing framework on the interview process" and that he/she has to relinquish control in order to access the phenomenon (Cope, 2005).

3.7.1.4 Grounded Theory

Grounded theory was first formulated by Glaser and Strauss (1967) where they saw that the main task of the researcher was to develop theory through comparative methods. It means looking at the same event of process in different settings or situation (Easterby-Smith et al., 2012). However, the developed theory should meet the criteria to be sufficiently analytical to enable some generalization and at the same time, enable other people to relate the theory to their experiences (IBID). The approach of Strauss and Corbin (1989) seems to fit more the social constructivist approach where they recommend that the researcher familiarizes himself or herself with prior research and use structured processes to make sense of the data.

Even though this method is widely used among researchers within commercial organizations, it nevertheless presents a lot of challenges in collecting the 'right' data that will eventually serve in theory generation. In the case of this study, the researcher believes that there exist various ways of constructing and forming new identities and acquiring trust and legitimacy in a new venture and these are highly dependent on firm specifics (sectors, years in business, firm size, experience level

etc.) and on the entrepreneurs' actions and behaviours. All this appears to be too complex to be incorporated under a single theoretical framework.

3.7.1.5 Case Study

Case studies are widely used in organizational studies and across social sciences and according to Yin (2003), using case studies for research purposes remains one of the most challenging of all social science endeavours. Ridder (2017) summarizes the case study research process as it scientifically investigates into real-life phenomenon in depth, generally over time, and within its environmental context (Ridder, 2017) and it can be an individual, a group an organization or an anomaly (Eisenhardt, 1989); (Stake, 1995); (Yin, 2013); (Burawoy, 2009). Non random sampling is typical for case study research. When a case of interest is chosen, the contextual conditions are part of the investigation for theoretical purposes (Eisenhardt, 1989).

While the aim is to end up with a detailed case description, the emphasis of collecting data is on interviews, archives and participant observation whether it is a within-case or across-cases analyses (Yin, 2013 1989, Stake 1995). Researchers are recommended to triangulate data as part of their data collection strategy (Powell and Baker, 2014, Eisenhardt, 1989, Stake).

Despite being one of the most frequently used approaches in qualitative research, methodologists do not have full consensus on designs and implementations of case studies (Yazan, 2015). The below table (Table 3.5) summarizes the different views and conceptualizations of Yin, Eisenhardt and Stake and, where they may converge, diverge, or complement each other.

The advantage of using a case is that it allows research from various epistemological positions; from positivists (Yin, 2003; 2014) to social constructionists (Stake, 1995) but following specific approaches. There is also an intermediate position which is the one of Eisenhardt (1989) and which draws inspiration from both positivist and constructionist position (Easterby-Smith et al., 2012). Concerned about building theory from the cases that are studied, she recommends designs that are set but flexible in their adaptation, data collection using multiple methods and conducting both within case and across case analysis (Eisenhardt, 1989).

According to Hodkinson (2001), the strengths of case studies lie in that fact that they help understand complex situations, they are grounded in lived reality, they facilitate the exploration of the unexpected and unusual and they can facilitate conceptual and theoretical development. However, on the other hand, their limitations are that there are too much data for an easy analysis, that it too expensive if carried out on a large scale, that they do not lend to numerical presentations, that they raise concern about objectivity and that they are generalizable in the conventional sense.

	Robert Yin's (2014) - Case Study: Design and Methods	Robert Stake's (1995) The Art of Case Study Research	K Eisenhardt (1989) - Building Theories from Case Study Research
Epistemological Commitments	Positivism Gaps and Holes	Social Construction of Reality Constructivism	No Theory First

The Case	"A Contemporary Phenomenon within its real life context" Research Question. Empirical Inquiry. Existing Theory. Proposition Framework Addresses the "how" and "why" questions	"A specific complex functioning thing" Curiosity in the case. Understanding of research issues. Studies the complexity of a single case. Holistic Empirical Interpretive	Research Question. A Priori Constructs. Variables. No assumed relationships
Designing the Case	Four Types: Single holistic, Single embedded, Multiple holistic, Multiple embedded	Flexible Design. Changes can be made even after start. Progressive Focusing	Designs established from the outset but flexible about their adaptation.
The Data	Quantitative and Qualitative. But qualitative Data as a Primary Choice. Purposeful Sampling. Documentation, Archives, Interviews, Participant Observation	Purposeful sampling. Thick Descriptions. Holistic. Comprehension. Observation. Interviews, Document review	Theoretical Sampling, not random. Qualitative Data as a Primary Choice. Data collection through multiple choices

The Analysis	"Examining, categorizing, tabulating, testing and recombining evidence" **Techniques:** Pattern-matching, explanation building, time series analysis, program logic models and cross-case synthesis. Analytic Generalization	Learning from the Case **Techniques:** Categorical Aggregation. Direct Interpretation	Emerging Constructs and Relationships Within case and across case analysis. Hypothesis can be shaped or formed through 3 stages: Sharpening constructs Verify emergent relationship between constructs fit with evidence from each case Compare with literature
Validation	Construct Validity Internal Validity External Validity Reliability	Four Strategies for Triangulation: Data Source, Investigator , Theory, Methodological	

Table 3-3 **Comparison of three case study approaches (Partially adapted from Yazan (2015)**

3.7.2 The Reasoning for Using a Case Study Research

Given the preceding, this proposed research is shaped as an interpretative case study (Yin 2003; 2014; (Stake) forming an exploratory perspective on how internationalizing entrepreneurs formed, negotiated and constructed their emergent

identity. It will also look in depth at how they have earned the trust of the various stakeholders and successfully legitimized their businesses at both an organizational and a market industry level. The logic behind choosing such a method is because it is an empirical inquiry which allows the researcher to retain a more holistic viewpoint than through other approaches (Remenyi et al., 2010). It is also in a position to investigate a contemporary phenomenon within its real life context (Yin, 2003) while particularly focusing on understanding the dynamics present within single settings.

The research will not strictly follow a particular pattern or a precise approach of either one of the case study scholars. Instead, it will benefit from some of the added values for each recommendation, without of course, compromising on the epistemological views. In other words, the research which draws on entrepreneurial narratives is highly interpretive and adheres to Stake's (1995) in its epistemological views and social constructionism character. However, it will try also to benefit from some of the recommendations of Yin (2014) for data validation and, on Eisenhardt (1989) in terms of data analysis methods which may seem a bit more structured.

With the aim to capture essential entrepreneurial narratives about how they have constructed their new identity in the new environment, the entrepreneurs will be encouraged to reminisce and reflect on some early stories, anecdotes, events or turning points that seems to have market their international debut and carved their identities. The period of interest will be limited to the early years of operation. In a pre-interview meeting, they were encouraged to prepare their remembrances by either consulting their diary or converse about events with their peers. The researcher believes that such information can be gathered through semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions in which the entrepreneurs can engage in

narratives about their nascent organizational life along with their personal interpretations of key events and major stories. Other key stakeholders such as top employees who have accompanied the entrepreneurs in their promising journey, main suppliers or even top customers may shed a light on this process from a different perspective. Other data sources such as websites stories, a second-source interview about one entrepreneur identity with a book publisher and power points pitches to VCs will also help the researcher for triangulation. All this can provide a wealth of data to produce contextually rich and meaningful interpretations. Still, the success of the project draws on the ability of the qualitative researcher to extract depth and meaning in context.

At first, the researcher wanted to also include financiers such as VCs, bankers, and other investors in our interview list, but it turned out that, financing for the international expansion in all the eight cases, was self-made and carried out from own funds. This phenomenon was attributed for two main reasons: First, the existing capital market in the expansion countries is not favourable to foreign entrepreneurs as their small new ventures would be subjected to scrutiny and other organizational, institutional and legal adversities. Second, the expanding entrepreneurs, who believe in the merit of their business model that has proven to be successful in their home country, were reluctant to share large percentage ownerships with local investors.

The case selection criteria, the interviewing process, the questions format, and other related comments will be discussed in detail in the next section.

Many scholars have adopted the use of case studies when researching entrepreneurship and identity construction. The below table (*Table 3.4*) illustrates some of those examples.

Year	Author	Method	Article Title	Journal
2004	P. Lewis	Qualitative Case Study	Developing an Entrepreneurial Identity	The International Journal of Entrepreneurship and Innovation
2004	L. Warren	Qualitative Case Study	Negotiating Entrepreneurial Identity: Communities of Practice and Changing Discourses	The International Journal of Entrepreneurship and Innovation
2008	Jones et al	Qualitative Case Study	Narrative construction of the social entrepreneurial identity	International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behaviour & Research
2009	Jain et al	Qualitative Case Study	Academics or entrepreneurs? Investigating role identity modification of university scientists involved in commercialization activity	Research Policy - Policy, management and economic studies of science, technology and innovation
2011	J. Clarke	Qualitative Case Study	Revitalizing Entrepreneurship: How Visual Symbols are Used in Entrepreneurial Performances	Journal of Management Studies
2013	P. Lewis	Qualitative Case Study	The Search for an Authentic Entrepreneurial Identity: Difference and Professionalism among Women Business Owners	Gender, Wok and Organization

2013	Philips et al	Qualitative Case Study	Building entrepreneurial tie portfolios through strategic homophile: The role of narrative identity work in venture creation & early growth	Journal of Business Venturing
2014	Donnellon et al	Qualitative Case Study	Constructing entrepreneurial identity in entrepreneurship education	The International Journal of Management Education
2015	Marlow and McAdam	Qualitative Case Study	Incubation or Induction? Gendered Identity Work in the Context of Technology Business Incubation	Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice
2016	O'Neil and Ucbasaran	Qualitative Case Study	Balancing "what matters to me" with "what matters to them": Exploring the legitimation process of environmental entrepreneurs	Journal of Business Venturing
2017	Hytti et al	Qualitative Case Study	Navigating the family business: A gendered analysis of identity construction of daughters	International Small Business Journal: Researching Entrepreneurship
2017	Lee et al	Qualitative Case Study	Market Mediators and the Trade-offs of Legitimacy-Seeking Behaviours in a Nascent Category	Organization Science
2018	Ahsan et al	Qualitative	From Student to Entrepreneur:	Journal of Small Business

		Case Study	How Mentorships and Affect Influence Student Venture Launch	Management
2018	Dentoni et al	Qualitative Case Study	Learning "who we are" by doing Processes of co-constructing pro-social identities in community-based enterprises	Journal of Business Venturing
2018	Werthes et al	Qualitative Case Study	Cultural and creative entrepreneurs: understanding the role of entrepreneurial identity	International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behaviour and Research

Table 3-4   Peer reviewed Journal Articles about Identity Construction Using Qualitative Case Study Method

3.8 Case Selection & Interview Format

Narrative interviews are considered an essential source of data collection. According to Bartel and Garud (2009), the use of narratives enable individuals to draw on memory and past experience, thus bridging the past and present" (Bartel and Garud, 2009). Powell et al (2005) also believe that using narrative interviews present many other advantages especially that interviewees are not prompted to repeat words or phrases used by the interviewer and consequently giving stereotyped answers (Powell et al., 2005). Consequently, narrative interviews promote more elaborate memory retrieval and allow the interviewer to focus more on the listening part. However, the weakness with narratives is that it encourages interviewees to go off-topic, a tendency that entrepreneurs are famous of.

The research takes the form of an umbrella approach of eight case studies. The cases were chosen to cover contrasting internationalisation motives and consequently different types of growth strategies, namely out of necessity (slow-growth) or out of opportunity purposes (fast-growth), with four firms from each category. The idea to explore both types of necessity and opportunity-based entrepreneurship is to enhance the research generalizability. Effectively, noticeable distinctions were recorded and analysed. The next sections will detail those aspects.

Sixteen semi-structured interviews were conducted and chosen from various sectors in order to allow comparison across cases. Eleven interviews were conducted with the founding entrepreneurs themselves, three interviews with their top employees who have trusted them and accompanied them since inception in their exciting yet unpredictable journey, one interview with a preferred customer and another one with a major supplier. The intent is to get insights from various sources and further triangulate the data about identity formation and trust establishment claims as seen from other perspectives than that of the entrepreneurs. In three of the eight cases, there was more than one founding entrepreneur, so efforts were made to make sure of interviewing each founder as the aim was to capture the thoughts and perspectives of all partners. The questions were structured in a manner to capitalize on the various advantages that narrative interviews represent by asking a broad question with minimal and non-verbal encouragers, while at the same time bound the interview itself by the specific topics that are only relevant to the research. The data was triangulated against identity claims that are posted on the company website.

The sixteen interviews involved a very large amount of data and represented a moderate level of saturation. Based on Bastian et al (GEM Lebanon National Report

2018) study that aimed to collate extant research on women entrepreneurship in the MENA region, it revealed that comparable qualitative case studies interviews involved similar counts as levied by the below table:

Authors	Country	Data Type	Sample Size (Interviews)
Bodolica & Spraggon (2015)	UAE	Case Study and Semi-structured interviews	6
Dechant and Lamky (2005)	Bahrain & Oman	Interpretive Case Study	12
Gray and Finley-Harvey (2005)	Morocco	Structured Interviews	15
Itani et al (2011)	UAE	Mixed Methods	16
Al Sadi et al (2011)	Oman	Mixed Methods	22
McElwee and Al-Riyami (2003)	UAE	In-depth Interviews	25
Tlaiss (2013)	UAE	Semi-structured Interviews	20
Zamberi Ahmad (2010)	KSA	In Depth Interviews	19
Madichie and Gallant (2012)	UAE	Mixed Methods	10

Table 3-5   Comparable Qualitative Papers in the MENA region

In our study, the selected cases were Lebanese entrepreneurs who have successfully expanded their ventures in Saudi Arabia, Qatar or the UAE markets following the country's incessant political & economic instability triggering in the

unfortunate exodus of many businesses into the relatively more stable GCC countries. The limits of growth in the Lebanese home market were also a major driver for the internationalization decision. Commonly, our entrepreneurs have all embarked in a hazardous expansion journey believing only in the merit of their business model. They are either directly known to the researcher or have been introduced through common friends and have all expressed interests in collaboration particularly that it was intended for academic research. Their sectors range includes trading, internet and communication technology, digital branding and online services, fashion, contracting and construction and, hospitality. Such a variety enriches the external validity of the research.

At the beginning, all interviews were carried out in-person by the researcher himself, and preferably in the entrepreneurs' offices to better understand the context. Due to Covid-19 pandemic, the last three interviews had to be conducted via Zoom meetings or video conferencing. The time frame that was dispensed in collecting all the data was 14 months. The first interview was conducted in January 2019 and the last interview was completed in March 2020. Two cases, which are not part of the eight case studies, were dropped during the data collection because the entrepreneurs decided not to be part of the project after accepting it at first. The total number of actual interviews was 16, of which 3 were done in Dubai in the entrepreneur's office and 6 were conducted in their Lebanese offices. Of the 16 interviews, 12 were conducted face to face and only 4 were done online (Refer to Table 3.5). The duration of the interviews ranged from 38 to 65 minutes.

Not surprisingly, it was quickly detected during the interviews that the drivers to internationalise were split into two categories: necessity and opportunity. Accordingly,

their appetite for growth in the international market was mixed and the mind-set of four of the firms' owners was rapid growth whereas the creators of the other four firms operated out of necessity in a slow-paced development mode and with a "bootstrapping" mentality in their internationalization process. This has evoked the important discussion within the literature review about the antecedents of internationalisation: necessity and opportunity drivers. In our cases, it was apparent that all opportunity and growth-inclined firms were founded by two or more entrepreneurs, who have partnered and embarked on a challenging journey and, have pushed each other to achieve success. In contrast, the necessity-driven entrepreneurs are individuals who are more on a self-exploration journey and who tend to leverage their home identity, their existing business model, use of their ethnic resources and, have looked for internationalisation in the hope of creating a better future for themselves. Effectively, two of the eight firms were family businesses, and it was the daughters who have taken the initiative to branch out and internationalise in neighbouring countries to seek independence from their mother company. Accordingly, insights about the entrepreneurs' identity works in the new market and, trust development in the new venture were gathered and analysed across the two main internationalising streams: necessity and opportunity driven firms.

All the interview participants are very fluent in English, and they were asked to adhere to it to the best of their ability and refrain from expressing themselves in another language. They were never prompted in any way in trying to use an appropriate English term. If they have unintentionally provided terminology in another language (Arabic or French) - which is a common practice in the Lebanese culture, the transcripts included the corresponding English translation using Wikipedia or a

reputable dictionary. The interviewees were all asked for permission to have the meeting recorded and later prescribed. They were assured that data will only be used for academic purposes and that the identities of the firms and the participants will remain confidential. The questions were all addressed in the same order so as to provide sequence and structure to facilitate the subsequent data analysis.

The participants were also encouraged to share any other related documents that may enrich the research and provide data triangulation. In one of the cases, the researcher was offered a book which contained a chapter about our entrepreneurs and how they have succeeded in establishing a prosperous business overseas (Case 1). Most of them recommended consulting their website. Needless to say that this was done by the researcher before the interviews to get more acquainted with the firm's background. Another case has provided the researcher with power point pitches to investors when they were in their incubation phase (Case 4). This was used for further data triangulation.

The handling of the data was carried out using CAQDAS (Computer-Assisted Quantitative Data Analysis Software). With the aid of Nvivo 12, the transcripts will be sorted and analysed, and all emerged concepts will be coded. All information will be cross-examined, and emerging trends will be sorted. A detailed process of the data analysis from coding to pattern matching will be detailed in chapter 4.

The interview consists of three main parts. Please refer to <u>Appendix B</u> for the full list of interview questions.

Cases / Entrepreneurship basis	Interviews	Interviews With	Firm Size (Employees)	Sector	Active Countries
1 (Opportunity)	1	Founders / Entrepreneur # 1	1200 employees - 35 stores	Retail	Lebanon - UAE - Saudi Arabia - Bahrain
	2	Founders / Entrepreneur # 2			
	3	Top Customer			
	4	Supplier			
2 (Necessity)	5	Founder / Entrepreneur	30	Fashion (Bridal Boutique)	Lebanon - UAE (Dubai)
3 (Necessity)	6	Founder	10	Contracting / Construction	Lebanon - Qatar
4 (Opportunity)	7	Founder / Entrepreneur # 1	10	Online Interior Design	Lebanon - UAE (Dubai)
	8	Founder / Entrepreneur # 2			
	9	Founder / Entrepreneur # 3			
	10	Top Employee (Designer)			
5 (Opportunity)	11	Founder / Entrepreneur	31	Branding and Digital Marketing	Lebanon - Saudi Arabia - UAE
	12	Business Development Manager			
	13	Top Manager			
6 (Necessity)	14	Founder / Entrepreneur	340	Contracting / Construction	Lebanon - Saudi Arabia
7 (Necessity)	15	Founder / Entrepreneur	60	IT Solutions	Lebanon - Saudi Arabia
8 (Opportunity)	16	Founder / Entrepreneur	500	Hospitality Services	Lebanon - UAE (Dubai) - Saudi

Table 3-6   Cases Profile, Interviews and Firms Specifics

3.9 Qualitative Analysis

Qualitative analysis involves ways of discerning, examining, comparing and contrasting, and interpreting meaningful patterns or themes, emerging from the data (Miles and Huberman, 1994). The aim is to rigorously and creatively organise, find pattern in, and elicit themes from the data. While there is lack of a uniform standard or procedure, qualitative analysis can be very systematic and disciplined whereby the themes are particularly determined by the goals and objectives of the researcher and the angle taken to answer the research question(s). The process is a loop-like pattern of multiple rounds of revisiting the data as new questions emerge and new connections are revealed. Throughout the analysis process, the researcher is expected to contemplate the nature of patterns and common themes that have emerged and how they help to illuminate the broader study question(s), deviations from these patterns, whether these patterns or findings suggest that additional data needs to be collected and finally, whether the patterns that emerge corroborate the findings of any corresponding qualitative analyses that have been conducted (Miles and Huberman, 1994). In short, data analysis means searching for patterns in data.

Miles and Huberman (1994) suggest a general three-major-step in data analysis (Figure 3.6) which is: data reduction, data display and conclusion drawing and verification (Miles and Huberman, 1994). Data reduction refers to the process of selecting, focusing, simplifying, abstracting, and transforming the data that appear in written up field notes or transcriptions (Miles and Huberman, 1994). The main purpose is data manageability and comprehensibility. In evaluation, data reduction should be guided primarily by the need to address the salient evaluation question(s). However, in setting out similarities and differences, it is important to know how much

reduction needs to be achieved as not to "flatten" the data and undermine its strengths. Data display involves providing an organized and compressed assembly of information that permits conclusion drawing (Miles and Huberman, 1994). Proper display would allow the researcher to read into the data and discern patterns or relationships. Accordingly, the displaying narrative data technique would help us validate our model and identify the patterns that entrepreneurs tacitly engage in a new market entry. The conclusion drawing phase involves taking a step to consider the meaning making of the analysed data and to assess if the findings effectively answer the research questions. This entails that the data should be revisited several times for verification, plausibility, sturdiness and conformability or validity (Miles and Huberman, 1994). We refer to validity that the data is credible, warranted, and defensible.

It is important to highlight that analytic validity comprises obtaining evidence from multiple sources for triangulation. In this research, the data on identity construction is viewed not only from the entrepreneur's perspectives but also from the views of other stakeholders and was also checked against self-claimed identity information as listed on their company website, printed brochures, or on personal observations when the interviews were conducted in their premises. This has provided a much sought-after data validity and credibility.

Finally, the point of analysing data across multiple case perspectives is not a matter of verifying which data is most accurate. In fact, discrepancies between the cases and the self-reported and observed material may all reveal important insights in areas for future analysis and discussions. Similarly, Miles and Huberman (1994) encourage highlighting what they refer to as "following up surprises" (Miles and

Huberman, 1994). These are patterns in the data that differ from what might have been expected.

The below figure depicts the inter-relationships between each phase.
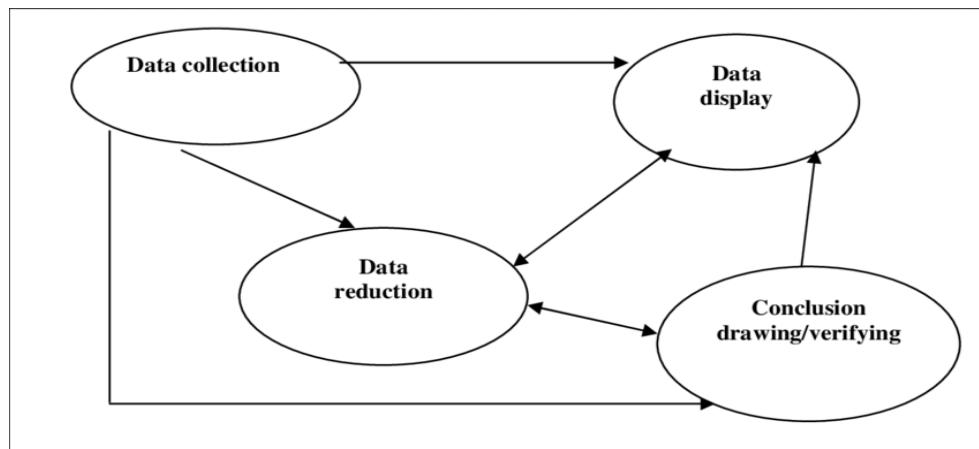
Figure 11   Miles and Huberman's Framework for Data Analysis

The above strategy, as developed by Miles and Huberman (1994) was influential in this research and was considered throughout the analysis. In fact, it was synthesized with Morse (1994) all-encompassing framework for analysis based on four stages: comprehending, synthesizing, theorising and re-contextualising (Morse, 1994). The characteristics of each stage will be detailed in the following paragraphs of this chapter. The analysis strategies recommended by Miles and Huberman (1994) of broad coding, pattern coding, drafting memos, distilling and ordering, testing executive summary statements, and developing propositions are all applied to the analysis framework (Houghton et al., 2015). Table 3.7 shows the relationship between the strategies and the stages.

Stages of Data Analysis		
Stages of Analysis Morse (1994)	**Analysis Strategies (Miles and Huberman, 1994)**	**Purpose**
1 **Comprehending**	**Broad coding**	General accounting scheme that is not specific to content but points to the general domains in which codes can be developed inductively.
2 **Synthesising**	**Pattern coding – Memo(ing)**	Explanatory, inferential codes to create more meaningful analysis. 'One of the most useful and powerful sense-making tools at hand' (Miles and Huberman).
3 **Theorising**	**Distilling and ordering - Testing 'executive summary' or memos statements**	Memos tie together different pieces of data into a recognisable group of concepts. 'Building towards a more integrated understanding of events, processes and interactions in the case' (Miles and Huberman).
4 **Re-contextualising**	**Developing propositions**	Formalise and systemise into a coherent set of explanations.

Table 3-7   **Stages of Data Analysis (Adapted from Houghton et al. (2015)**

Yin (1994) recommends that there should be a chain of evidence linking the derivation of evidence from initial research questions to ultimate case study conclusions (Yin, 2003). Eisenhardt (1989) concurs suggesting that the writing up of the research must provide enough evidence for each construct used and linking to theory (Eisenhardt, 1989). This serves to increase the internal validity of the research. Another step would also be to verify the findings with the case study participants as they should be able to agree with the verifiable facts that the researcher is presenting. Finally, the data analysis will be enhanced if references to existing literature are made and whether questions about conformity or inconsistency with extant research are raised (Cassell and Symon, 2004).

The data analysis was carried out using CAQDAS (Computer-Assisted Quantitative Data Analysis Software). Nvivo 12 Pro was the chosen CAQDAS as it allows the researcher to manage data and ideas, query the data and, with within and cross-case analysis (Houghton et al., 2015).

4   Data Analysis

4.1 Introduction

This chapter serves to describe and outline the empirical data analysis and the findings that were obtained from the interviews with the entrepreneurs and in some cases, with some of their stakeholders. The aim of the dissertation is set to explore how the entrepreneurs constructed a new identity and established trust and business legitimacy with their key stakeholders through narratives about a future that they envision and, supporting actions and behaviours as legitimising statements. The data incorporates evidence about existing identity prior to internationalisation, the entrepreneurs and key stakeholders' recollection about identity works pertaining to their specific context and, about how trust was established in the new venture. Comparative analysis and tabulations within the cases and across cases have provided potential rival explanations about best practices of how to internationalize an entrepreneurial venture in neighbouring countries.

Chapter 4 consists of several parts. First, the stages of analysis of comprehending, synthesising, theorising, and re-contextualising of the empirical data revealing the entrepreneurial identity construction, the trust establishment and gaining market legitimacy efforts are examined as set by Morse (1994). The data is then coded in "memos" and will be mixed in patterns of similarities and differences f that will later be distinguished and further re-grouped to form organising and main themes. This will be performed for each broad category (identity, trust and legitimacy) in each of the slow-growth and fast-growth firms' cases.

Each stage of Morse's (1994) analytical framework, which was illustrated in Table 3.6, will be explained and how the strategies of Miles and Huberman (1994) were implemented and handled.

4.2 Comprehending

According to Morse (1994), comprehending begins while collecting the data with the aim of gathering enough data to be able to write a coherent, complete and rich description (Morse, 1994). Miles and Huberman (1994) describe this stage as it involves "broad coding" which aims to uncover and develop concepts whereby the texts must be opened up so that contained thoughts, ideas and meanings can be exposed. At this point the data is de-contextualised because information is removed from its context.

In this research, this step was simplified as there were two progressive levels of familiarization with the data: the first level was the fact that all interviews were conducted by the researcher, mostly in person, allowing the tacit development of some broad codes and asking the questions in sequence. The second level of immersion was the fact that all the data transcription was also done by the researcher allowing further analytical and critical reflection to take place thus facilitating the coding process.

Accordingly, the interview data were all uploaded in NVivo 12 Pro and coded representing features or meanings within the texts based on the research questions of the dissertation. The selected broad categories were thus "identity", "trust", "legitimacy" and "entrepreneurial orientation". The "entrepreneurial orientation" category was chosen and included in the data collection, and subsequently, the

analysis as the researcher believed that it can be related to the trust and the legitimacy constructs and that it may act as a moderator. This will be argued in the discussion section in chapter 5. The broad codes, which were inductively developed using the CAQDAS software, were about "identity construction", "trust development" and "legitimacy works" and, appeared respectively in 594, 557, and 75 references from our empirical data. This illustrates the richness of the data in this dissertation.

4.2.1 The Identity Category

The next step involved further distinguishing the data from broad codes into sub-codes. In this research, the broad category of "identity" was further de-constructed into few new sub-categories such as initial identity, emergent identity, identity construction process (how), projected identity by owner and identity patterns inherent to each of the eight cases. The last category was deemed important for the within case analysis.

The process of grouping the data codes into sub-categories was sustained. Noting that the data within the "identity construction process (how)" category, which is considered at the heart of the research and most relevant to answer the research questions and leads all others appearing in 14 files and 232 references, was further distinguished into 18 sub-categories. Memos were assigned to each of sub-categories and were later regrouped to form organising themes.

4.2.2 The Trust Category

Similarly, the same task was carried out for the "trust" category. The data was grouped into several sub-categories such as "forms of trust", "how was trust earned", "why was trust awarded" and "trust patterns" in each one of the eight cases. Within

the sub-category of "how trust was earned" describing the process of entrepreneurial narratives, actions and behaviours, the data contained the richest information appearing in 14 files and 231 references. This is evident as the heart of the research was set to explore the process of trust building next to the identity construction. The "trust patterns" in each of the eight cases sub-category also contained very rich information with 223 references and it was deemed necessary to facilitate for the within-case and cross-case analysis. Memos were assigned to trust patterns and regrouped into overarching organising themes.

4.2.3 The Legitimacy Category

Finally, the same task was also used for the "legitimacy" broad code. The data about legitimacy signals were grouped in all eight cases, where it was most salient. Memos were assigned to the generated sub-categories and were later rearranged into organising themes.

4.3 Synthesising

Synthesising is the second stage of analysis and according to Morse (1994), it is the phase in which the merging of perceptions and cases to describe typical or composite patterns occurs. This involves coding the data or better known as "pattern coding" (Miles and Huberman, 1994), and its purpose is to re-arrange the data, which may have been dispersed by broad coding.

During the interviews, general differences in the firms' approaches to identity works between those who were characterised as necessity-based entrepreneurship and those who were characterised as opportunity-based were observed and became

apparent to the researcher. Therefore, it was evident to separate the case data into two main streams: necessity and opportunity based. As a reminder, the firms' distribution was exactly at half with four entrepreneurs out of eight were necessity and the remaining four were opportunity -based. At this point, patterns of similarities and differences within the vignettes that were broadly coded in NVivo 12 Pro were distinguished and "memos" were assigned to the data which was merged and re-arranged into some overarching themes. The task was separately done for both necessity and opportunity-based firms in each of the three categories that were identified in the "comprehending" section i.e., the identity works category, the trust category and the legitimacy category. Table 4.1 further illustrates the steps of the process.

Grouping Patterns of Similarities and Differences	**Identity**	Necessity Based
		Opportunity Based
	Trust	Necessity Based
		Opportunity Based
	Legitimacy	Necessity Based
		Opportunity Based

Table 4-1   Patterns Grouping Summary

As previously mentioned, depending on the entrepreneurs' appetite for growth in their expansion approach, the firms were distinguished as follows:

The necessity-based firms: For example, the Construction firm (Case 6), the IT solutions firm (Case 7) and the two family-firms whose international expansion was initiated by the 2nd generation, the daughters: Marble contracting firm (Case 2) and the Fashion Bridal Wear firm (Case 3)

The **opportunity-based** firms: Those were particularly looking for rapid growth and expansion such as the Retail Stores Group (Case 1), the Online Furnishing firm (Case 4), the Digital Branding firm (Case 5) and the Hospitality firm (Case 8)

Cases	Growth Pace	Firm Size (Employees)	Sector
1	Opportunity	1200 employees - 35 stores	Retail
2	Necessity	30 Employees	Fashion (Bridal Boutique)
3	Necessity	10 Employees	Contracting / Construction
4	Opportunity	10 Employees	Online Interior Design
5	Opportunity	31 Employees	Branding and Digital Marketing
6	Necessity	340 Employees (Most are Blue Collar – Site workers)	Contracting / Construction
7	Necessity	60 Employees	IT Solutions
8	Opportunity	500 Employees (Many Part-time employees)	Hospitality Services

Table 4-2   Necessity and Opportunity-Based firms' data

4.3.1 The Identity Works

4.3.1.1 Identity Works in Necessity-Based Firms

For the necessity-based firms, coding the data in the identity works category was achieved by reading the transcripts over and over for the purpose of identifying patterns of similarities and differences in the memos and re-arranging them according to a theme. The process which turned out to be very lengthy was composed of three steps. The first step involved extracting all the relevant memos about identity works, coding them and grouping them to form "organizing themes". In turn, those themes were further re-arranged and grouped to form the "main themes". For example, in the case of necessity-based firms, 42 first-level memos were identified. They were re-arranged and grouped to form 10 organizing themes. These were further reorganized and combined to constitute only three aggregate "main themes": **"Refining Appropriate Entry Mode", "Leveraging Connections and Networks"** and **"Promoting Self"**. Table 4.2 illustrates the three-step process.

The first main theme, which is **"Refining the appropriate entry mode"** involves setting initial footholds in the new market and considers the appropriate organisation design. It may be displayed in one of the cases, as a strategic choice by creating two different set-ups to accommodate for both low income and high net worth clients:

> *"We opened two (different) shops with two (different) brands or two different identities. We created "E------ Private", which is more luxury and upscale" (Case 2)*

However, in other cases, the entry mode can be greatly influenced or even dictated by the new context, leaving the entrepreneur with few choices. The following excerpt from Case 3 exemplifies it:

"It is the new context, the type of projects ... the types of dealings that you have with clients are completely different. Automatically, this makes it a different setup. You must have a different setup" (Case 3)

As for the second main category, which is about **"Leveraging Connections and Networks"**, the theme was salient in almost all necessity-based cases. In fact, the empirical findings reveal that most of the entrepreneurs we have interviewed obtained their first jobs and built their professional identity by leaning on their friends and leveraging their networks. The below excerpt illustrates how one entrepreneur penetrated the market:

"It was through friends. It was in 2008. I had a Lebanese (same ethnicity) friend who wanted to do some work in his offices" (Case 6)

Finally, in terms of the third main theme which revolves around "Promoting Self", the data reveals that it can be achieved in several ways; for example, sharing photos of existing set-up or of previous achievements or, through narratives serving to spread a reliability message as evidenced by the below vignette. It is important to state that it was extracted from the family business context in which the daughter wanted to expand the business on her own but, leveraging the existing home set-up.

"Because we had the set-up (a family set-up in Lebanon), we were able to "fool" people into thinking that we are a bigger company. We had a big establishment in Lebanon so we used to use the image of the company in

order to be accepted in applying or bidding for the big projects - we were a small company which was growing but we managed to have the chances of a large company, and not of a small company - we did not have a track record in Qatar but we have a track record in Lebanon and that was enough for them" *(Case 3)*

Memos (First Level Theme)	Organizing Themes	Main Themes
Lower mark-up to attract new projects	Refining Market Entry Mode	Refining Appropriate Entry Mode
Trading in Contracting (Flipping Work)		
Capitalization - Paying High salaries to accelerate growth		
Relied on Deposits to start - Recruited People		
Step by Step Start		
Looking for new revenue streams for survival		
Niche Markets - Innovativeness		
Use of Baby Steps - Progressive		
Consider New Market Entry as a Fresh Start		
Moved Staff to New Foreign Market		
Failed Partnerships	Setting up Appropriate Organizing Mode	
Designed a new set-up		
Saudi Partner with a good reputation		
New Set-up as required by context		
Restructuring		
Setting New Processes (to avoid problems)		
Monetary compensation to agents and gatekeepers	Reliance on Agencies	Leveraging Connections and Networks
Reliance on Agents for Growth		
Friendship and Business Networks for Growth	Reliance on Friendship and Networking for Growth	
Used connections to start		
Used connections to start - Website - Started with No Capital		
Reliance on Connections for New Work		
Politics in landing large contracts		
Families' endorsements to get large projects		
First Job through Friends and Connections		
Financing by partner and Solid management by contractor (Role Distribution)		
Use of Narratives to attract clients	Use of Narratives for Identity Recognition	Promoting Self
Use of Narratives as a substitute of track record		
Private Villa to attract Special Clients	Signalling Distinctiveness	
Did all the work - Wears many hats	Narratives about Overcoming Survival Challenges (Managerial - Financial - Environmental)	
Challenges to deliver good work		
Ensure Consistent Workflow		
Assuming Immediate Responsibilities (Large Team)		
Easier Requirements To Market Entry		
Performed all work then without banking guarantees (Not possible now)		
Financed by partners - Devised ways to overcome huge capitalization		
Identity Changes with Growth in Stages (Different Leagues)	Identity Progression	
Use of social media and Website for Identity Formation	Narratives & Smart Use of Marketing Tools to Promote Self	
Use of Mass Marketing and PR Agency for Identity Formation		
Relying on Word of Mouth for Reputation and Recognition		
Leveraging Previous Reputation (in home country)	Narratives about Old Reputation	
Smart Use of Ethnic Background		

Table 4-3   Identity Works in Necessity-Based Firms

4.3.1.2 Identity Works in Opportunity-Based Firms

In the case of opportunity-based firms, the same process of coding that was detailed with necessity-based firms was followed. The body of data that was collected was extremely vast with 127 identified memos or first level themes. Those themes were condensed and re-grouped to form 38 second-level themes, which in turn were re-arranged and re-assembled to form 4 main themes: "**Refining Appropriate Entry Mode**", "**Leveraging Connections and Networks**", "**Identity Construction/Adjustment: Experimenting, Learning and Adjusting**" and, "**Promoting Self**". Refer to below Table 4.3 for the illustration of the three steps process.

Similarly, the first main theme, which is about **"Refining the appropriate entry mode"**, is comparable to the finding of necessity-based firms but differs by placing emphasis on leveraging the learning that has been developed from new experiences and forcibly involves adjusting the mode of entry according to the contextual environment. This was clearly depicted in the following vignette by Case 5:

> *"Between Lebanon and the UAE, the scale automatically becomes different. The size of billing becomes different and naturally, you start growing organically in manpower. From 2006 to 2010, we saw a lot of growth in team size, footprint in revenue because it was just a different scale. Also, we were serving Saudi Arabia from the UAE, so growth came even faster, and this allowed us to become more structured. When you grow your team, you must automatically rethink how you are operating, your old chart and everything. …*

The skillset was different. The UAE expansion forced us to rationalize the business and get a digital set-up and a branding set-up" (Case 5)

As for the second main theme, which is about **"Leveraging Connections and Networks"**, it was also salient just as was the case of necessity-based firms but with a difference in the purpose. In other words, it is about establishing some economic quid pro quo that has proven to become useful for the long term as evidenced per the following vignette from Case 1:

"Over time, we started establishing relationships, we started having friends there… that have helped us in the initial phases… once we have built those relationships, what really helped was a salesman who said: it is the end of the month and we must sell like 300K by tomorrow, can you take it? We didn't really need it then but helped them making their targets and later, they helped us getting our targets. This was huge… a very important part of the business" (Case 1)

The third main theme that was generated is **"Identity Adjustment"**. This was salient in all opportunity-based firms by entrepreneurs who firmly believe in the merits of their existing identity, keep trying on adjusting it based on trialing about what can be achieved in the new context and as deemed appropriate within the new environment. It involves the process of experimenting, learning, and adjusting their identity as they are getting traction while reflecting about their income distribution and market wants and needs. The empirical results show that it takes the shape of narratives and is mostly instigated in changing their entry approach based on market orientation and driven by economic purposes such as expanding products ranges, introducing new services, or just seizing new opportunities. This dynamic nature of identity, which is

constantly in a state of flux particularly during the early years of operation, requires extreme flexibility from the entrepreneurs' part, a character that most are perfectly renown of. Excerpts from the online furnishing company (Case 4) or the trading company (Case 1) reflect the following:

"We had shifted our marketing strategy to accommodate for everything: the messaging, the content, the branding and the channels (to a lesser extent)" (Case 4)

Or

"We did not really know whether this was going to work; we just tried it out as we still do all the time. We always test products and see if they work, and this activity has always taken place ever since we started in the UAE... The ones that work are the ones we continue with and drop the ones that don't work" (Case 1)

Finally, the fourth main theme in identity works for opportunity-based firms was about **"Promoting Self"** as was the case in necessity-based firms. However, the salient difference was about how narratives are used to promote selves with confidence and very strong entrepreneurial orientation attributes such as innovation and passion. It involves impression management and narratives of a well thought-of business model about a future that they imagine and innovative problem-solving ideas of a past that they have dwelled. For example:

"(About their website) … when we were calling customers and sharing with them how the process works, the feedback that we were getting was that it looks like an international website. The neatness of the user experience and

the design of the website helped also, not to mention the localization of the website. All those combined helped the customer experience and a customer there sees that it is not buggy, everything is well thought off …" (Case 4)

Memos (First Level Theme)	Organizing Themes	Main Themes
Positioning by Inspiration - Forming a Vision	**Creating a Vision**	**Refining Appropriate Entry Mode - Learning and Leveraging Previous Experience**
Forming a Vision - Following a Role Model		
Different Launching in various markets: Probation Period - Evaluative Task Force (every department is involved)	**Setting Up Appropriate Structure**	
Taking Advantage of Economic Boom	**Seizing Favourable Economic Conditions**	
Internationalization Logic: (Existing Capabilities - Existing Portfolio - Existing Know-how - Existing Team - Adversities in Home Country - Experimenting Mentality (*Start and see what opens*))	**Internationalization Logic - Experimenting**	
Comparative Analysis: Exploration Mode	**Refining Market Entry Mode - Learning from Experience**	
Comparative Analysis: Restructuring for Growth -------		
Errors in Marketing Entry Approach (Lack of Exposure and Visibility made task difficult) - Learning from Experience		
Different Entry Approach (small versus large market) - Increased budget to save entry time - Comparative Analysis		
Different Targeted Clientele - Different Approach - Learning from experience		
Different Entry Approach - Different Marketing Approach but Same Operation Process		
Satisfying Brokers and Gatekeepers	**Reliance on Agencies**	**Leveraging Connections and Networks**
Establishing Business Relationships - Economic Quid Pro Quo	**Establishing Business Relationships**	
Opportunities with Relationships		
Expansion strategy (Establishing connections & Creating track record) - Low Risk Entry		
Identity Adaptation - Identity changes and evolves with context but the core must be there.	**Identity Adaptation - Context**	**Identity Construction / Adjustment: Experimenting, Learning and Adjusting**
Identity adaptation as an on-going process		
Identity Shift as per context - Flexibility		
Identity Shift (As dictated by context)		
Shifting identity Focus because of Income distribution - Trialling, Reflection, Learning & Adjusting	**Identity Adjustment - Revenues Drivers**	
Identity Shift (Revenue Drivers)		
Identity Shift: Before, an online designer platform but now furnishing and decorating website - Identity Shift	**Identity Adjustment: Experimenting, Learning and Adjusting**	
Positioning and Flexibility: Catering to all Budgets		
Comparative Analysis: Identity Adjustments (Different Market; Different Discourse) - Trialling, Reflection, Learning & Adjusting		
Experimenting and Trialling with Identity (or business model)		
Identity Change due to Learning - Trialling, Reflecting, Learning & Adjusting		
Change in Identity: More detail oriented - Trialling, Reflecting, Learning & Adjusting		
Change in Approach Trialling, Reflecting, Learning & Adjusting		

Shifting identity Focus because of Income distribution - Trialling, Reflection, Learning & Adjusting		
Identity Adjustments (Iterative Process) - Trialling, Reflection, Learning & Adjusting		
Identity Change due to Different Approach		
Change in Business Concept (how business is introduced)	Identity Adjustments (Changing Narratives)	
Change in Approach - Refined Self Identity Claims		
Expanding Suppliers' Base (More Variety)	Identity Adjustments (Diversification)	
Diversification - Success		
Identity as defined by Market Gaps	Identity Adjustments to Accommodate Market Gaps and Needs	
Identity Adjustments to accommodate for market needs		
Identity Adjustments to accommodate for market needs - Comparative Analysis		
Looking for gaps and build an identity that would attract a niche segment		
Identity Expansion - Exploring other possibilities	Identity Adjustments: Experimenting - Re-assessing Positioning	
Increasing Products Range		
Experimenting - Comparative Analysis		
Experimentation - Expanding Products Range - Seizing Opportunities		
Experimenting		
Experimenting in Store sizes to reach Optimum		
Identity Adjustments: New Processes (Local Number)	Identity Adjustments: Changing Processes	
Processes Changes (Learning) - Clients - Trialling, Reflecting, Learning & Adjusting		
Processes Changes (Learning) - Suppliers - Trialling, Reflecting, Learning & Adjusting		
Flexibility: Making Choices (Design to Products) - Being Open to Alternatives -	Identity Construction - Flexibility	
Flexibility: Well-Designed Approach		
Identity Rigidity at Business Maturity - Flexibility against Rigidity		
Comparative Analysis - Flexibility: Being Open to Alternatives -		
Innovation for Identity	Identity Construction - Embedded Innovation	
Identity and Brand related to People - Customer buying Passion	Identity Construction - Feel of Passion	
Engaging in certain tasks and not others (Identity Positioning by Division(ing)	Identity Construction - Positioning by Division(ing)	
They know what they don't want to do - Identity Positioning by Division(ing)		
Evolving Identity - Reflective Debates	Identity Construction - Reflective Debates	
Comparative Analysis: Localization - Trialling, Reflection, Learning & Adjusting	Identity Construction as a result of Experimenting, Learning and Adjusting	
Comparative Analysis - Different Narratives in different Countries - Narratives about Speed and Time Management - Trialling, Reflection, Learning & Adjusting		
Comparative Analysis: Different Positioning (Regional) with suppliers in different countries - Trialling, Reflection, Learning & Adjusting		
Brainstorming for a solid identity		
Identity adaptation: Mix and Match: Local Managers with PRs - Cross functional departments moving from market to market		
Flexibility - Identity Validation - Trialling, Reflection, Learning & Adjusting		
Identity as a learning Curve		

Step by Step Progression - Evolutionary Process	**Identity Construction as Evolutionary Process**	
Hard to source goods at good prices - Perseverance paid off	**Identity Construction - Perseverance**	
Build Strong Reputation - Aggressively chase work		
Expansion based on 1) the Offering 2) Target group 3) Something unusual (Uniqueness)	**Identity Construction Requirements**	
Young and Associated- Approachable and Dynamic - Designing Right Size		
Right size firm – Un-associated and Independent - Approachable and Dynamic		
Positioning - Winning a Landmark Account - Legitimacy		
Human factor involvement (not like a factory - same outcome) - Right Staffing		
Identity Clarity (Setting Clear Processes) - Follow-up		
Promptness to market in implementing an idea - Speed to Market		
Pitching and winning large accounts - Landmark Projects - Building a Reputation - Legitimacy	**Building a Reputation**	
Winning a Landmark Account - Legitimacy	**Legitimacy - Building a Reputation**	
Pitching against major players: Identity and Legitimacy	**Legitimacy - Pitching against existing Players**	
Differentiating Selves - Building Reputation	**Differentiating Selves**	
Differentiating Selves		
Differentiating Selves - Being Inspired in the US		
Credibility (existing identity) - Positive Interaction - Commitment - Passion -	**Use of Narratives**	**Promoting Self: Use of Narratives for Conveying a Reliable and Trusting Identity**
Offer Complete Package (even outsource) - Overall approach		
Overall approach		
Narratives to work with Existing Large Suppliers (Narratives about Innovation)		
Complete Package - Options Open - Market Contextual Needs Basis		
Positioning: Cutting Edge		
Flexibility: Agility and Independence		
Identity Change: Loss of Flexibility No Longer an Independent Firm - Trade-offs between Growth and Bureaucracy	**Narratives about Trade-offs**	
Identity Change: Loss of Flexibility - Trade-offs between Growth and Loss of Independence / Flexibility		
Narratives about being Pro-active	**Narratives about being Pro-active**	
Flexibility: Customers' Needs define the Identity	**Entrepreneur's Traits - Flexibility**	
Praising the entrepreneur (founder) - Evolution - Flexibility (No rigid engagement in identity formation)		
Innovation as a process	**Narratives about Innovation**	
Innovation for Identity - Innovation for Survival		
Identity and Innovation: Reliability, Consistency and Being well informed rather than Innovation		
Innovativeness (in-setting new processes -online)		
Innovativeness (Pushing online business)		
Innovativeness (New Concepts)		
Passion for Pushing the boundaries	**Narratives about Passion**	
Excitement (opening branches - getting first bank credit)		
Success breeds passion - Passion about doing good deeds to community		

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Risk Taking is part of the identity that is being built	
Passion is addictive - Passion as Identity Enhancer and Stimulator - Passion as a Substitute of Trust	
Passion equivalent to Obsession and Perfection of Business	
Nature of Passion as Volatile (Comes and Goes)-	
Identity as in Perseverance (Motivation) -	**Narratives about Perseverance**
Identity for Perseverance (Having Thick Skin)	
Identity for Perseverance (Customers: Can you handle us?)	
Rationally Perseverant	
Narratives about Pro-activeness: Looking for gaps and possible failures	
Narratives about Neat User Experience, Website Professionalism and Processes Clarity - Trialling, Reflection, Learning & Adjusting	**Narratives about Professionalism - Experimenting, Learning and Adjusting**
Taking Stock - Accomplishment - Trialling, Reflecting, Learning and Adjusting	
Identity about Reaction in tough times and about changes in you	**Narratives about Reactions, Changes, and Identity Evolution**
Risk Taking and Innovation - Bold Ideas - Boutique Size Company and Taking Risks Pay off	**Narratives about Risk Taking**
Narratives about Risk Taking and Bureaucracy -Boutique Size Company (flexibility) and Taking Risks Pay off	
Identity is built around passion. Otherwise, failure	
Risk Taking - New shops compared to competition	
Pro-activeness - Keep Expanding - Risk Taking	
Risk Taking with new suppliers - Make sure not to pass on opportunities	
Specialization - Skills Balance - Talent Distribution	**Narratives about Specialization and Talent Distribution**
Staff Training - Customer Service	**Narratives about Staff Training**
Staff Training - Positive Customer Service	
Staff Training - Positive Customer Service	
Identity about Customers Testing You	**Narratives about Identity**
Identity is the thinking part - The people are the identity - It is about reading the person in front of you	
People are your Identity	
Identity: Being able to read the person in front of you	

Table 4-4   Identity Works in Opportunity-Based Firms

4.3.2 Trust Works

The same process was followed for coding, identifying patterns, and generating themes about trust works as per the data that was collected. Similarly, distinguishing between necessity-based and opportunity-based firms was observed as this was deemed necessary by the researcher. As a reminder, it is important to state that the data that was collected viewed how "trust" was awarded by suppliers, clients, and employees but from the entrepreneurs' perspective as a result their narratives and behaviours. The same contextual data was triangulated in some from the suppliers, clients and employees point of views. Thus, the same group of data was viewed, from both the entrepreneur perspective and from one or more of the stakeholders' perspectives.

4.3.2.1 Trust Works in Necessity-Based Firms

In the case of necessity-based firms, 44 first-level memos were identified. They were re-arranged and grouped to form 10 second-level themes or organizing themes. These were further reorganized and combined to constitute three aggregate categories: **"Promoting Self"** by exhibiting capabilities, attributes, commitment, and leadership, **"Promoting Organization"** by publicising their products/service, their business model, and their culture and finally in **"Developing Narratives"** revolving around their previous reputation and encouraging business mutuality. The below table 4.4 illustrates the three-step process and the emergence of the three main themes.

The first main theme is about **"Promoting self"** and includes exhibiting the entrepreneurs' capabilities, commitment and leadership. The below anecdote

illustrates a classic entrepreneurial behaviour aimed to instil a long-lasting feeling of commitment by exhibiting excess confidence, controlled risk-taking and, promoting self as a reliable and trustworthy person:

"It was one of the first projects … it was around USD 3M. Well, if I wanted to buy the product but I cannot finance it and there was a Lebanese Manager, Sam, at that company. I spoke to him over the phone, and he said: I cannot award it to you because your company credit with us is only 0.5M USD. I said OK but you know me well Sam and you know that I will not let you down. What I did is that I put a piece of land in Lebanon worth about USD 1.5M as collateral for them and they gave me the credit facility to be able to purchase the products. You need to supply, install, and then get your money. So, this is how I started" (Case 7)

The second main theme of **"Promoting Organization"** was observed in instilling a feeling of trust by promoting the firm's products and services, the business model and, the overall culture through letters of recommendations and accomplishments. For example, it can be the rhetoric of how they attracted, retained, and gained the trust of their employees by offering good compensations, profit sharing programs and job delegation or, in rendering a service to a distressed client in a bad situation. The below anecdote of Case 7 illustrates the latter situation:

"They gave the project to a contractor and after 3 months, he left everything on the ground and did not come back. The owner came to me back again and asked me if I could fix the problem they are in, that we need to finish it in 15 days and that they are very tight on the budget. I delivered it in 15 days, and we did a great job: everything was installed and all went perfect. From that day

on, we were awarded every project this company had: The Data Centre etc. Today, we are doing a 1M USD project for them. These incidents are very important sometimes when you save them" (Case 7)

Finally, the third main theme, which is **"Developing Narratives of Previous Reputation and Mutuality"**, is about leveraging a previous reputation, to create a win-win situation which will be in the interest of both the supplier and the entrepreneur. In such a case, trust is not tilted nor subjected to time testing as both parties have an interest to develop this working relationship. It is best displayed through the below anecdote from Case 6, in which the entrepreneur contributed to the creation of such a trusting situation:

"Freddy is an owner of a company that is rated Class 1 i.e., he has access to large magnitude projects. To him, he has the opportunity of financing someone like me who can run small work for me. He knows that I could manage that sort of work and he was making a profit on my price. So, it was a win-win situation; everyone was happy. Now the question is why is he giving me work? I think that it is related to personal issues or networking. He trusts that if he gives me a down payment without guarantee, I will not use it for other purposes" (Case 6)

Memo (First Level Themes)	Organizing Themes	Main Themes
Clients: Trust in Entrepreneur's Creativity	**Exhibiting Entrepreneurs' Attributes**	**Promoting Self: Impression Making - Exhibiting Capabilities, Attributes, Commitment & Leadership**
Clients: Trust in being easily accessible and in building Networks and Friendships - Youth and Dynamism		
Clients: Trust in Seeing Motivation and Perseverance		
Suppliers: Courage - Confidence - Risk Taking		
Suppliers: Appreciation and Reciprocation - Quid Pro Quo Relationship	**Exhibiting Entrepreneurs' Capabilities, Commitment & Leadership**	
Employees: Sacrifice resulting from Trust in owner - "look for their interest"		
Clients: Offered Alterative after a set-back		
Clients: Owner Presence on the Jobsite - Customer Care		
General: Continuous Workflow - Continuous Cash Flow		
General: Easier to grow a business than to recede		
General: Workaholic		
Clients: Personal Attention from Owner		
Clients: Fulfilling Tasks - Taking it as a Challenge		
Suppliers: Timely Payment Commitments - Relationships - Trust		
Suppliers: Timely Payment Commitments - Reputation - Time - Trust		
Clients: Turn-around of a losing project - Performance Work - Trust		
Suppliers: Timely Payments		
Clients: Managed Growth (Remained with Capabilities)	**Controlled Growth - Risk Taking**	
General: Sustainability	**Business Sustainability**	
Clients: Trust in Products	**Promoting Trust in Products or Service**	**Promoting Organisation: Products/Service - Business Model - Culture**
Clients: Trust in New Approach: Consultancy to Advise Clients		
Trust in Offering Personalized Service		
Clients: Recommendations about Execution Speed and Quality		
Clients: Good Track Record		
Clients: Referrals to their Friends and Family members	**Referrals**	
Clients: Trusting the store - Word of Mouth		
Employees: Surrounds Firm with Staff of Similar Ethnicity - Trust in sharing same Culture	**Promoting Firm Culture & Business Model**	
Employees: Solidarity with the team - Trust		
Employees: Team of Commandos - Trust		
Employees: Sacrifice resulting from Trust in owner		
Employees: Delegation	**Promoting Compensation, Delegation & Profit Sharing**	
Employees: Well Paid Salaries - Profit Sharing		
Employees: Sharing Responsibilities - Ownership		

Employees: Employees as part of the Company		
Building on Trust - Evolving Trust	**Narratives about Entrepreneurs' Reputation - Previous Accomplishments**	**Developing Narratives: Previous Reputation - Promises**
Clients: Previous work achievements		
Employees: Previous Work Relations		
Clients: Cyclic Causality: Trust - Delivery (good job) - More Trust		
Clients: Cyclic Causality: Trust - First job - Trust		
Employees: Time - Trust		
Clients: Promises - Leap of Faith	**Use of Narratives - Mutuality - Leap of Faith**	
Clients: Capabilities and Trust from previous work experience - Win-win arrangements		
Clients: Sending a message - Making a statement		
Employees: Risk Taking on a new adventure - Trust		

Table 4-5   Generating "Trust" Main Themes in Necessity-Based Firms

4.3.2.2 Trust Works in Opportunity-Based Firms

In the case of fast-growth firms, a similar process for identifying patterns and generating themes about trust works was followed as per the data that was collected. Distinguishing between necessity-based and opportunity-based firms was also observed and the "trust" data that was collected viewed how trust was conferred by suppliers, clients, and employees as per the entrepreneurs' perspective. This step helped triangulating the same contextual data in some cases as seen from all suppliers, clients, employees themselves.

The data was very rich as 138 memos or first level themes (Clients: 75, Employees: 34, Investors 2, General 8, and Suppliers 26) were extracted. As for second-level themes, 18 themes were re-arranged and re-grouped to form three main themes: **"Promoting Self"**, **"Promoting Organization"** and, **"Developing Narratives Centered around Business Mutuality"**. Table 4.5 describes the three-step process.

The first main theme that was generated revolves around **"Promoting Self: Exhibiting Entrepreneurial Orientation & Leadership Traits or Leveraging Previous Accomplishments"**. We illustrate this aspect using the below two excerpts. The first message revolves around the entrepreneurs' ability to and impress promote self as was indirectly communicated to the researcher by a supplier about the entrepreneur of Case 1:

> *"…Because this is his gift. He has the gift of coming off very well with people of big companies. He has this ability" (Case 1)*

Another example of promoting self is the ability to exhibit entrepreneurial orientation and particularly, to display passion as it was illustrated in the below vignette by a founder while explaining to the researcher about the reasons why clients are using his services:

> *"People buy your passion. Passion is also addictive… I think it is type of energy that attracts people and makes them want to invest in you, buy into you, hang out with you, use your product, use your service etc. When people spot that passion in you, whether it is a colleague, team member, a supplier or a client, they will be more inclined to buy you or buy into your service even if they don't know you or if they don't trust you yet" (Case 5)*

The second main theme, which revolves around **"Promoting Organization: Products and Services, Vision and Ethics"** in instilling trust in businesses is also shared by several entrepreneurs in the case of opportunity-based firms. They often start by explaining their business model while emphasizing on transparency and clarity of processes (lack of hidden agenda) and by making use of testimonials that are displayed on their websites and by using other marketing tools. For example:

"We go through the funnel. Start with awareness and telling them what the service is. After that we go to consideration conversion. The first step in the user journey is showing them a social media video about the benefits of using our firm like testimonials from clients who used us and did a transformation project. We depend a lot on social media. 90% is social media" (Case 4)

From the perspective of another entrepreneur (Case 5), he confided that the trust that is bestowed upon the firm is deeply rooted to his direct involvement and physical presence, and while carrying vicarious messages to all the stakeholders, contributes to instilling trust. He attested:

"First, I was much more involved… than other owners. I was always present, directly meeting with everyone and you know when you run a business, when you run your own P&L, your own HR, your own financing and sit with a CEO; you are not just talking about a specific topic" (Case 5)

Promoting an organisation and the entrepreneur's vision and ethics can also be carried out from an employee perspective, particularly when he/she feel that his/her ideas are heard and respected. We illustrate this aspect with the following vignette that was confined to us by one top employee in Case 5:

"My job is to challenge new ideas and make sure that I find loopholes in whatever we try to build or … whatever opportunity we are looking at. For me, we are building this thing together. These builds trust. As much as I challenge, there is a part where I feel that he has a vision. The result of those many challenges let me to be convinced of the merit of this vision" (Case 5)

Finally, the third main theme to instill trust is about **"Developing Narratives Centered around Business Mutuality"**. The empirical data reveals that the entrepreneurs create a tendency to show other stakeholders, particularly suppliers and employees that there exists a business mutuality when and if they join forces. To illustrate this, the entrepreneurs of Case 4 shared their approach with a particular supplier and how they have managed at the end, to earn his trust:

> *"We are talking big international furniture brands…. We are trying to find a way to work with them. The discussion we are having now is to become a tool for the designers with these companies so instead of reaching out to our clients directly, we use this part of our business… Once we have a couple of projects with them, we approach them either directly or through a referral or similar. We explain to them the projects that we have completed with their products and ask them to discuss about how we can improve this partnership with you. Usually, we would start with a small commission and increase it with him"* (Case 4)

As mentioned earlier, this approach is commonly used with employees whereby the entrepreneurs attempt to highlight to them mutual interest benefits. Because of the company relatively nascent track record and over viability concerns, they tend to offer equity sharing to earn their employees' trust in exchange for retention and maybe, peace of mind. The following two excerpts are prime examples:

> *"But I say what convinced her is an alignment of interest; she did not want to do technical interior designer jobs. Instead, she wanted a management thing, and she liked the idea"* (Case 4)

Or

"I have made sure, mostly after 2010, to allocate equity for top team members and that is a formula that I apply across the board, and it is the best formula for me. It makes me sleep well at night because I know that the people with me are not just there for a job, it is their business as well" (Case 5)

Memos (First level theme)	Organizing Themes	Main Themes
Clients: Feel of the Entrepreneurs' Passion leads to Trust	Exhibiting Entrepreneurial Orientation (Passion, Perseverance, Risk Taking) & Survival Capabilities (Experimenting, Learning and Expanding)	Promoting Self: Exhibiting Entrepreneurial Orientation & Leadership Traits - Leveraging Previous Accomplishments
Clients: Passion to get things done under pressure		
Clients: People buying Passion - innate human attraction		
Clients: Risk Taking reinforcing a feeling of trust in the firm		
Clients: Throwing Challenges - Perseverance		
Clients: Ability of entrepreneur to expand in best locations (trust in brand)		
Clients: Ability to expand into neighbouring countries		
Clients: Apology after admitting a mistake was made		
Clients: Creating Trust in Brand		
Clients: Accomplishment under time pressure		
Clients: Assuming responsibility - Care about the business -		
Clients: Chemistry - a subjective attribute		
Clients: Chemistry with Clients as an asset		
Clients: Longevity without any problem		
Clients: Innovativeness in improving system - Expanding online business		

Clients: Experimenting		
Clients: Experimenting and Collecting Database		
Clients: Experimenting and Learning about market needs		
General: Passion - Reputation Trust Cycle		
Employees: Commitment and Passion trickling down	**Exhibiting Entrepreneurial Orientation from Employees Perspective (Capabilities & Passion)**	
Employees: Owner's Capabilities and Follow-up		
Employees: Prior Cutting-Edge Capabilities - Reputation		
Employee Trust - Leap of faith (got curious and got convinced)		
Employee Trust - Innovativeness (Youth, Not Traditional and New Product)		
Employees: Leadership (Pushing employees forward)	**Exhibiting Leadership from Employees Perspective (Leading by Example)**	
Employees: Leading by example - Working hard - Sweating off in front of employees		
Employees: Owner doing all small Work - Leading by Example		
Employees: Owner Involvement - Leadership by example		
Employees: Owner Involvement Begets Trust		
Employees: Owner involvement in everything		
Employees: Owner Leadership - Owner always finding a solution (capabilities)		
Employees: Working Together - Solidarity		
General: Leading by example - Others watching you at work		

Clients: Delivery under pressure		
Clients: Experience Accumulation	**Leveraging Achievements - Delivery of Quality Work**	
Client Trust - Experience to Increase Trust ---- Client Trust - Referrals to Increase Trust		
Clients Trust: Efficient Use of Social Media tools - Testimonials		
Clients: Trust is about Prior Track Record		
Clients: Trust is about Delivery - Keeping Promises		
Clients: Trust is about Delivery - Keeping Promises		**Promoting Organization: Products and Services, Vision, and Functionality**
Clients: Trust is Linear: Delivery-Trust		
Clients: Cyclical aspect of trust		
Clients: Never been disappointed - Trust		
Clients: Keeping original US price tags on products to enhance trust	**Providing Good Quality / Well Priced Work - Keeping Promises**	
Clients: Delivering Quality Work		
Clients: Quality and well-priced products		
Clients: Quality and well-priced products		
Clients: Trust in products: No Improper, counterfeit, or unauthorized products		
General: Keeping Promises		
Clients Trust: Handling of a bad situation - Apology - Customer Care	**Reacting Constructively after Bad Service / Defective Product**	
Clients: Owners' interference after an unfortunate incident		
Clients: Owners' interference after an unfortunate incident - Taking		

charge and adjusting the situation	
Clients: Positive reaction from owner after a misfortunate event	
Clients: Positive reaction from owner after a misfortunate event - Feeling respected	
Clients: Positive reaction from owner after a misfortunate event - Providing options and solutions	
Clients: Paying attention to customers complaints to instil trust	
Clients: Satisfied client about the way an incident was handled	
Clients: Improving Staff Training Competency	**Improving Customer Care / Staff Training Competency**
Clients: Improving Staff Training Competency	
Clients: Improving Staff Training Competency - Personal Attention	
Clients: Improving Staff Training Competency - Personal Attention - Preferential Treatment	
Clients: Improving Staff Training Competency - Personal Attention - Professionalism	
Employee Trust - Belief in the Idea	**Promoting the Vision and Business Model (Tickling the fancy)**
Employee Trust - Convincing Answers	
Employee: Trusting Owner's Vision	
Employee Trust - Investors Endorsement	
Employee Trust - Time	
Client Trust - Convincing Website	**Unveiling a Convincing, Ethical & Consistent**
Client Trust - Distinct Packages to Increase Trust	

Clients Trust = Image Consistency	**Image - Showing Processes Clarity and Transparency**	
Clients Trust = Website Transparency		
Clients Trust: Advertising Exposure		
Clients Trust: Clean and Localized Website = more Trust		
Clients Trust: Deposit Payment		
Clients Trust: Use of Narratives - Funnel Approach (Social Media Video, Testimonial, Transformation)		
Customers Trust: before and after Photos		
Customers Trust = 100% Money Back Guarantee		
Customers Trust = Physical Check		
Clients Trust: Visuals Leads to More Trust		
Clients Trust: Website layout, Professional Service, Human Interaction = More Trust		
Clients: Ethical Reputation		
Client Trust - a Well-Designed Process to Increase Trust		
Clients Trust = Clear Process		
Clients Trust = Transparency		
Clients Trust: Assurance (Guarantee Statements)		
Clients Trust: Transparency (Clear and Displayed Online Processes) -		
Suppliers: Experimenting - Exhibiting Cautious Market Entry - Low risk	**Experimenting - Exhibiting Cautious**	

	Market Entry - Low risk	
Employee Trust: Alignment of Interest	**Preserving Employee Rights & Dreams (Employees Specific)**	
Employees: Fulfilling employees dreams		
Employees: Preserving employees' rights -		
Employees: Preserving employees' rights - Business taking care of its people		
Employees: Respectful Behaviours in treating female staff		
Employees: Getting a loan to pay off salaries		
Employees: Quid pro Quo relationship: Promising Experienced Staff of better overseas packages		
Employees: Profit Sharing - Equity sharing program		
Employees: Founder relying on and trusting old team		
General: With trust, employees are prepared to stay long hours for you - Pay back		
Suppliers: Sequence: Helping - Favouritism - Business Improvement	**Establishing Mutual Interest Type of Relationship**	**Developing Narratives Centred around Business Mutuality**
Suppliers: Sequence: Helping - Prioritization - Business Improvement		
Suppliers: Care about consistent and growing business -		
Suppliers: Do more than promised in targets		
Suppliers: Helping suppliers reach targets - Quid Pro Quo relationship		
Suppliers: Meeting Payment Commitments - keeping promises		
Suppliers: Payment to Brokers - Forming and Maintaining a strong loyalty base		

Suppliers: Trust cycle (Help others to grow and everyone comes up ahead)	
Suppliers Trust: Equal Interest	
Clients: Supplier Client Relationship as partners can get you out of situations	Establishing Good Connections and Relationships - Economic Quid Pro Quo
Clients: Trust begets positive Relationship which begets trust	
Clients: Establishing mutual trust	
Clients: Leveraging Social Media Marketing	Establishing Owner/Clients Communication & Leveraging Marketing Tools
Clients: Leveraging Social Media Marketing - Spreading awareness	
Clients Trust: Nurturing Approach - Follow-up (human element) - Communication	
Clients Trust: Perseverance - Follow up	
Suppliers Trust: Progressive Approach - Look for partnerships	Promoting Self via Use of Narratives (Trusting the Trend) - Leveraging Experience and Reputation
Suppliers Trust: Use of Narratives (Trusting the trend)	
Suppliers: Entrepreneurs ability to use narratives and to promote self	
Suppliers: Entrepreneurs' ability to establish relationships	
Suppliers: Thinking and Dealing for the long term - Business Improvement	
Investors Trust: Leveraging Previous Experience - Use of Narratives	
Suppliers: Leveraging Experience and Reputation	
Suppliers: Leveraging Reputation	
Suppliers: Positive Reputation (Only a handshake)	
Suppliers: Respecting Suppliers wishes - Comfort in dealing - Enhancing	

positive reputation	
General: Leveraging Reputation	
Investors Trust: Pitching for a Reason - Deep Belief - Show of Passion	
Clients Trust: Benefit of Doubt - Leap of Faith	**Feeling Positive - Risk Taking - Leap of Faith**
Clients: Trust Achieved by Leap of Faith	
Suppliers: Trust is Incremental and Accumulation	**Leveraging Time to Earn Trust**
Suppliers: Trust was built over time - Combination of many little things - Incremental	
General: Success is ultimate measure of trust	
General: Trust begets trust	
Suppliers Trust = Calculated Risk	
Employees: Open line of Communication & Discussions with Owner	**Establishing & Preserving Communication**
Employees: Owner Transparency - Brainstorming sessions - talking about good and bad	
Employees: Owner Transparency (everyone knows everything about the business)	
Employees: Owner listening to employees - Open Communication	
Employees: Owner Presence - listening and solving their problems increases the trust	
Employees: Employee role of challenging ideas - Owner Partnership	

Table 4-6   Generating "Trust" Main Themes in Opportunity-Based Firms

4.3.3 Establishing Legitimacy

4.3.3.1 Establishing Legitimacy in the case of Necessity-Based Firms

In the case of necessity-based firms, the two main generated themes were **"Developing Narratives"** and **"Establishing Market Presence"** as shown in Table 4.6. Legitimacy works as achieved by the internationalising entrepreneurs often takes shape concurrently with their trusting works. In fact, this research' empirical data reveal that they end up developing narratives about their successful home-grown operation to instil trust and impress audiences. Their content revolves around products and processes distinctiveness to ultimately portray an image that they are legitimate and backed by a prosperous entity in their home country. This was clearly reflected in the below excerpt from Case 3:

> *"We had a big establishment in Lebanon, so we used the image of the company there in order to be accepted in applying or bidding for big projects" (Case 3)*

While it may be important for some entrepreneurs to just sense that they have become legitimate players in the new market when they are simply invited to price new work and be part of the bidders' mix, others may feel that a true sign may be when they get in a position to turn down "unattractive" work.

Another strong indication of legitimacy was depicted in the data when some entrepreneurs succeed in establishing market presence by ensuring longevity and winning a "status changing" account. To them, it would be an essential eye opener account that would be sending strong signals to their competitors about them becoming a force to be reckoned with. In some cases, they are even prepared to

take foolish risks. Effectively, within this research, the two different contractors of cases 6 and 7 recounted similar stories about how they did not even hesitate to help distressed clients by stepping in to fix others' "mistakes" and even spending some out-of-pocket money for the sake of gaining instant legitimacy. This scenario may seem abundant in contracting jobs, but the entrepreneurs are certainly eyeing on potential new work with the clients that were rescued and on gaining a legitimacy status.

> *"The owner came to me back again and asked me if I could fix the problem they are in, that we need to finish in 15 days and that they are very tight on the budget. I said not to worry about it and that I will continue the project and deliver it in 15 days" (Case 7)*

Memos (First level theme)	Organizing Themes	Main Themes
Developing Narratives about Reputation - Networking	Developing Narratives about Reputation	
Strong Referrals: a sign of Legitimacy		
Differentiation: Introducing Consultants	Developing Narratives about Distinctiveness	
Differentiation: Personal Service		Developing Narratives - Leveraging Previous / Home Reputation
Leveraging Reputation for Legitimacy		
Leveraging Mother Company Reputation for Legitimacy	Leveraging Previous / Home Reputation	
Leveraging Mother Company Image for Legitimacy		
Legitimacy as a Result of Established Trust and Previous History		

Leader in Home Market - Leveraging reputation for legitimacy		
Bidding and Winning New projects (Being in the Mix)	Establishing Market Presence	
No Longer pursuing non-interesting projects. Legitimate Presence		
Replacing a non-competent contractor	Developing Competences	Establishing Market Presence
Ability to Repair/Fix Others' Works		
Being Awarded a Landmark Project - Winning a Status Changing Account	Winning a "Status Changing" Account	
Ensuring Continuous Workflow (Cash Flow)	Ensuring Longevity (Cash Flow)	
Recruiting Experienced Staff to Capitalize on Major Projects	Attracting Talent/Potential Partnerships	
Association / Partnerships with Powerful Market Players for Growth		

Table 4-7   Establishing Legitimacy in the Case of Necessity-Based Firms

4.3.3.2 Establishing Legitimacy in Opportunity-Based Firms

In the case of opportunity-based firms, legitimacy tends to be achieved in a slightly different manner than those who opt to internationalise in a necessity-based manner. The main themes that were generated from this research's empirical data are **"Developing Trust in Firms' Capabilities and Competences"**, **"Leveraging Third Parties' Recognition"** and **"Establishing Market Presence"** by obtaining recognition from the various stakeholders, as shown in Table 4.7. The data reveals that internationalising opportunity-based firms tend to rely less than their necessity-based counterparts on their home-grown reputation for legitimacy and, focus instead on developing growth capabilities and careful planning. By the means of carefully constructed narratives or on trusting photos and videos of recently completed work, the entrepreneurs tend to recount their market learning and their newly acquired competences to various audiences by emphasizing distinctiveness and developing trust in the new venture's capabilities. This was exemplified by the following excerpt from Case 8:

> *"We make sure the brand is solid enough before we even think of taking it to either a regional or international level. We make sure that we have taken all the learning. Basically, you must stand out to be able to succeed" (Case 8)*

Another significant observation was made in the entrepreneurs' attempt to establish legitimacy in their ventures is in **"Leveraging Third Parties Recognitions"** by highlighting to all concerned stakeholders, prior endorsements as were received by demanding third parties such as winning entrepreneurship competitions, media

exposure or interests from demanding incubators, accelerators, and lenders. This narrative has certainly piqued the interest of an experienced employee within Case 4 and who was convinced of the newly formed venture's legitimacy and was persuaded to join forces on such basis:

> *"The fact that they are fund raising and that they are receiving funds falls within this security zone. It makes you feel that: Ok, investors are endorsing this idea" (Case 4)*

Finally, the third main theme that was generated from the data is about **"Establishing Market Presence"**. Like necessity-based firms, opportunity-based firms attempt to achieve it simply by being compared and classified to other major market competitors or just winning a "status changing" account. However, the data reveals that according to entrepreneurs, solid legitimacy stems from being approached by others with business interests such as suppliers or bankers, who are interested in working collaboration by extending them credit or, investors who want to partner with them. The entrepreneur of Case 8 expressed the following:

> *"They know the brand … I am receiving requests left and right from operators and from groups in Saudi Arabia that they want the brand there, and they want to co-manage it with us; basically, they want us to launch it in their country" (Case 8)*

Similarly, the founder of case 5 assumed that he had achieved market legitimacy when he was approached by a multi-national company (MNC) who wanted to acquire a stake in his firm. He expressed:

"I kept on growing it until we were approached by … to acquire the business"

(Case 5)

To most entrepreneurs, it feels it is the ultimate sign of market acceptance and recognition.

Memos (First level theme)	Organizing Themes	Main Themes
Ability to Expand Firm Scope of Work	Developing Narratives about Growth Capabilities	Developing Narratives about Trust in Firms' Capabilities and Competences
Capabilities to Strategize and Learn Prior to Market Entry		
Operating in a Favourable Environment		
Opening Shops in Prestigious Locations		
Capacity for Expansion		
Improving Competencies	Developing Narratives about Competences and Distinctiveness	
Creating Distinctiveness		
Distinctiveness For Legitimacy		
Creating an Innovative Business Model		
Developing Trust in Firm Capabilities	Developing Trust	
Entrepreneur Capabilities and Leadership		
Producing Trusting Work Photos and Videos		
Frequency in Winning Competitions	Winning Entrepreneurship Competitions	Leveraging Third Party Recognition (Other than the Stakeholders)
Winning Entrepreneurship Competitions		
Winning Many Entrepreneurship Competitions		
Winning Prizes Despite Tough Competitions		
Earning Free Media Exposure	Receiving Media Exposure	
Recognition from Media		
Top Media Exposure		

Credibility and Endorsement by Accelerators	Recognition and Interest from Lenders / Accelerators	
Endorsement by Accelerators Programs & Media Exposure		
Endorsement by Accelerators Programs and Find Managers		
Endorsements by Lenders and Financial Institutions		
Comparison with Other Prestigious Competitors	Being Compared to Other Major Market Competitors	Establishing Market Presence - Earning Market and Stakeholders' Recognition
Being Invited to Participate in RFQs		
Recognition from Competitors		
Winning a "Game Changer" Account	Winning a "Status Changing" Account	
Winning a Large Account		
Interest from Bankers	Being Approached by Others for Work Collaboration	
Brand Recognition: Approaches by Potential Partners from Other Countries		
Endorsement by Institutions		
Endorsement by Reputable Agents		
Endorsement by Reputable Suppliers		
Endorsement by Suppliers / Credit from Suppliers		
Endorsements by Bankers for Credit		
Recognition from World Renown Establishments Seeking Partnerships		
Endorsement by Clients (Proven Model)	Getting Endorsement from Clients (Proven Model)	
Doing Work for Prestigious Clients		

Proven Business Model		
Recognition from Clients		
Piquing Interest from MNCs	**Piquing the Interest of MNCs**	
Interest of Acquisition by MNCs		

Table 4-8   Establishing Legitimacy in the Case of Opportunity-Based Firms

4.4 Theorising

According to Morse (1994), theorising involves building a comprehensive account of the data by examining the relationships between identified categories and the data (Morse, 1994). It does not mean the development of theory (Houghton et al., 2015) but, rather the building towards a more integrated understanding of events, processes and interactions in the case by distilling the memos and testing them against the data. It is about challenging the data (Morse, 1994) and very important in terms of making comparisons across the cases separately in slow-growth and fast-growth firms.

4.4.1 Identity Construction

In this project, the main themes which were generated for "identity construction" in both necessity and opportunity-based firms were comparable. They follow a similar path but with some notable differences in the approaches. They can be summarized by three main patterns in both situations with "**Refining the Appropriate Entry Mode**", **"Leveraging Connections and Networks"** and, finally in **"Promoting Self"**

Refining the Appropriate Entry Mode

In the case of both necessity and opportunity-based firms, the empirical data show that it involves setting initial footholds in the new market and in making consideration for the appropriate organisation design, as influenced by the new context. The entrepreneurs opting for an incremental, progressive and a slow-growth approach seem to consider their new market entry as a fresh start and choose to create a brand-new organising mode, independent from the mother home company with brand new processes. In contrast, opportunity-based firms will often try to adopt an approach that is manifested in leveraging the lessons learned from their previously formed identity, in experimenting in the new market context and in constantly drawing fresh new lessons. It is generally more about re-adjusting an existing identity to fit the new environment.

Leveraging Connections and Networks

Similarly, in the case of both the cases of necessity and opportunity-based firms, the empirical data show that leveraging connections and networks is important to all the internationalising entrepreneurs. They all try use of their contacts but in slightly different manners. While in the case of necessity-based firms, reliance is on friends and contacts, particularly in the award of their first jobs, the emphasis with fast-growth firms is more towards establishing clear business relationships that are characterised in satisfying brokers and gatekeepers or in highlighting economic quid pro quo benefits to both parties.

Promoting Self

For the internationalising firms, the empirical data reveal that perhaps, the predominant feature in identity construction is about promoting self. In the case of the necessity and opportunity-based approaches, the preferred tool that is available to the entrepreneurs remains the use of targeted narratives. The content is often about impression management in signalling distinctiveness, overcoming survival challenges and, about identity flexibility and adaptation in the new environment. Additionally, in the case of opportunity-based firms, narratives about entrepreneurial orientation traits were also very salient where the entrepreneurs tend to highlight characteristics such as innovation, risk-taking, passion and perseverance.

Identity Adjustment

As mentioned in the previous paragraphs, the data reveal that there exist noticeable distinctions in opportunity-based firms, who tend to adjust an existing identity rather than to consider a fresh new start. Because time and growth are important considerations to be accounted for, the tendency for opportunity-based firms is to experiment, reflect and continuously adjust their existing identity to accommodate for market gaps and needs. This can be sparked by or linked to many factors such as revenue drivers, product range expansion, new market niche positioning or, just localisation matters. *Refer to Table 4.8 for a recap of all the findings*

4.4.2 Trust Works

The same process of "theorising" or the building towards an understanding of events was adopted in the case of "trust works". The generated main themes that were common for both necessity and opportunity-based firms were also mutual in the sense that they can be summarized by three in **"Promoting Self"**, in **"Promoting**

Products and Services, Business Model and Organisational Culture" and, finally **"Developing Narratives"**. However, a major difference was noted in the last theme, and particularly in their narrative content: necessity-based firms tend to leverage previous home reputation and work achievements whereas opportunity-based firms have tendency to relinquish the home reputation and narrate about business mutuality while highlighting economic quid pro quo benefits. These topics will be fully discussed in section 5 of this thesis.

Promoting Self

In the cases of both necessity and opportunity-based firms, promoting self for trust works involves impression making by exhibiting capabilities and commitment. The empirical data reveal that leadership skills with particularly the owners' direct involvement or "leading by example", begets trust among the various stakeholders. However, the data also show that all other self-promotion and impression making facets should only be a follow-up to universally appropriate entrepreneurial behaviours such timely due payments and keeping promises, which according to all entrepreneurs, ranks at the top of their commitment's lists. They have all stressed on creating a long-term positive reputation of reliable and trustworthy individuals for to be able to succeed.

Additionally, the data show that in the case of opportunity-based firms, promoting self for trusting purposes would also include leveraging previous work or accomplishments and, exhibiting entrepreneurial orientation traits, with passion. It involves highlighting referrals and testimonials. Smart use of social media tools would also greatly contribute to this trusting effect as was evident in the Case 5, the online marketing case. As for passion, the interviews revealed that many founders believe

that it was due to their direct involvement and to their passion that a certain "leap of faith" around the firm was created with the various stakeholders and, which the entrepreneurs have successfully built upon. For many, passion has become as one of the most dominant entrepreneurial traits.

Promoting Products and Services, Business Model and Organisational Culture

Promoting the organisation products and services is very common for entrepreneurs to enhance trust. This is shared in of necessity and opportunity-based firms and is typically achieved through clients' referrals and word of mouth. So founding entrepreneurs often finds themselves engaged in trusting activities such as offering personalised services, ensuring on-time delivery, staff training, and safeguarding customers' satisfaction, which in turn would elicit a positive word of mouth, referrals and an enhanced trusting reputation.

But when it comes to instilling trust with employees to lure them into believing in the firms' activities and business model, the data reveal that the entrepreneurs resort to highlighting their leadership practices in unveiling a convincing, ethical and a consistent image. To beget trust, they also tend to empower their staff by introducing profit sharing programs and, allowing them to share responsibilities through delegation. The latter reason was salient in opportunity-based firms whereby "time" is a major factor in the firms' growth cycle hence, the importance of employee retention.

Developing Narratives

Finally, and for trusting purposes, entrepreneurs find themselves also engaged in narratives about a reputable past and a promising future, while highlighting competence and quality delivery. Again, the empirical data show that this was

apparent in the cases of both the necessity and opportunity-based firms, but it is clearly ostensible that the narratives in opportunity-based firms were centred on economic quid pro quo and on business mutuality. Whether it is a supplier, a client or an employee, the entrepreneurs tend to portray that they all have a common interest in combining efforts, even though it is deeply understood that the trust building is primarily a function of time and of the entrepreneurs' behaviour. It is this win-win situation that they will try to promote, will start-up the relationship and brings long-term benefits to all parties.

Please refer to Table 4.8 for a summary of all the findings

4.4.3 Establishing Legitimacy

As for "establishing legitimacy", the empirical data shows that the entrepreneurs achieve it in both the necessity and opportunity-based cases by **"Developing Narratives"**, **"Leveraging Third Parties' Recognition"** and **"Establishing Market Presence"**.

Developing Narratives

The pattern of developing narratives for legitimacy is present in both the necessity and opportunity-based cases however, their content greatly differs. In the case of necessity-based, the entrepreneurial narratives are mainly constructed around distinctiveness and about leveraging the home firm reputation, implying vast experience and history. However, in the case of opportunity-based firms, the narratives revolve mostly around developing trust in the firms through its developed capabilities and competences, all leading up to solid positioning and market legitimacy.

Leveraging Third Parties' Recognition

Additionally, the empirical data reveal that opportunity-based firms tend to leverage third parties' endorsements and recognition for enhanced market legitimacy. This was clearly detected in case 5, in which the entrepreneurs showed pride in their entrepreneurship competitions and awards that they have won, in the media recognition that they have enjoyed and, in the endorsements and funding from various investors.

Establishing Market Presence

Finally, when it comes to establishing market presence, the data reveal that the entrepreneurial approach was similar in both necessity and opportunity-based firms, but it varied in scale, with patterns of earning market and stakeholders' recognition by winning a status changing job/account, by being approached by others for work collaboration, or by attracting talent. In both cases, it is about solidifying their existence status and about being well positioned in the mix with all the other major market players. However, in the case of fast-growth firms, it would also be about establishing potential partnerships and interest from MNCs.

Please refer to Table 4.8 for a recap of all the findings

It is worthy to note that, at this point, all the generated main themes and the findings about identity construction, the trust works and, the establishment of legitimacy were all tested against the data. This iterative process was performed to ensure that the memos that were about the data could be traced back and found in the data. It is mainly about data reliability and findings confirmation.

Findings			
Patterns		**Necessity-Based**	**Opportunity-Based**
Identity Construction	**Refining the Appropriate Entry Mode**	Considering New Market Entry as a Fresh Start	Emphasis on Leveraging Previous Experiences, Experimenting and Learning
	Leveraging Connections and Networks	Reliance on Friends and Networks	Establishing Clear Business Relationships
	Promoting Self	Use of Narratives: Distinctiveness, Flexibility and Adaptability	Use of Narratives: Distinctiveness, Flexibility and Adaptability Use of Narratives: Highlighting Entrepreneurial Orientation
	Identity Adjustment	-	Experimenting, Reflecting, Learning and Adjusting
Trust Works	**Promoting Self**	Promoting Self: Impression Making - Exhibiting Capabilities, Commitment - Leadership	Promoting Self: Exhibiting Entrepreneurial Orientation & Leadership Traits – Leveraging Previous Accomplishments
	Promoting Products and Services, Business Model and Organisational Culture	Promoting Products and Services: Word of Mouth and Clients Referrals – Employee Retention	Promoting Products and Services: 'Word of Mouth and Clients Referrals – Employee Retention through Profit Sharing
	Developing Narratives	Developing Narratives about Previous Reputation - Promises	Developing Narratives Centred around Business Mutuality

Establishing Legitimacy	Developing Narratives	Distinctiveness - Leveraging home firm reputation	Developing Trust in the Firms' Capabilities and Competences
	Leveraging Third Parties' Recognition	-	Leverage Third Parties' Endorsements and Recognition
	Establishing Market Presence	Winning a Status Changing Job/Account Attracting Talent	Winning a Status Changing Job/Account Attracting Talent - Interest from MNCs

Table 4-9   Recap of all the Findings

4.5 Re-contextualising

This phase involves the development and the sharpening of propositions (Miles and Huberman, 1994). According to Mayer (2015), the presence of a conceptual framework and propositions facilitates the analysis of qualitative data for it can be done in a more systematic way. Propositions can therefore be defined as statements that are concerned in establishing logical relationships among concepts (Maxwell and Loomis, 2003). The recommendations of Eisenhardt (1989) in shaping propositions were followed in generating six propositions with "iterative tabulation of evidence for each construct, replication, and not sampling, logic across cases and, searching for evidence for "why" behind relationships" (Eisenhardt, 1989). It is the elegance of these propositions that makes the qualitative research transferable (Morse, 1994). At this point, the findings can be compared with previous research, thus ensuring its rigour (Eisenhardt, 1989); (Houghton et al., 2015).

In light of the data analysis and based on the literature review, propositions that revolve around building an identity and establishing trust and legitimacy were generated. They are shaped as follows:

Proposition 1a:

The notion of an emergent entrepreneurial **identity** that legitimizes a new venture creation in a neighboring country is shaped by the entrepreneurs' narratives to key stakeholders emphasizing about 1) refining the appropriate new entry mode, 2) leveraging previous reputation and gained experience and, 3) promoting self, in the case of necessity-based firms.

Proposition 1b:

The notion of an emergent entrepreneurial **identity** that legitimizes a new venture creation in a neighboring country is shaped by the entrepreneurs' narratives to key stakeholders emphasizing about 1) refining the appropriate new entry mode, 2) leveraging previous reputation and gained experience, 3) "adjusting" their existing identity that has resulted from new experiments and learning and, 4) promoting self, in the case of opportunity-based firms.

Proposition 2a:

Trust in an expanding new business in GCC countries is achieved through the entrepreneur's narratives about 1) promoting self through impression management, 2) promoting organization business model and culture and, 3) developing narratives leveraging old reputation for a promising future, in the case of necessity-based firms.

Proposition 2b:

Trust in an expanding new business in GCC countries is achieved through the entrepreneur's narratives about 1) promoting self through impression management, 2) promoting organization business model and culture and, 3) developing narratives that are mainly centered around business mutuality, in the case of opportunity-based firms.

Proposition 3a:

For the internationalising firms and in the case of a necessity-based enterprise, the entrepreneurs who are successful in building networks of trust around their business also instil the perception that their new venture is **legitimate** by 1) developing narratives about previous reputation and 2) establishing market presence.

Proposition 3b:

For the internationalising firms and in the case of an opportunity-based enterprise, the entrepreneurs who are successful in building networks of trust around their business also instil the perception that their new venture is **legitimate** by 1) developing trust in the firms' capabilities and competences, 2) leveraging third parties' recognition and 3) establishing market presence.

5 Discussion

5.1 Introduction

The previous chapters argued how narratives, which are verbal or written accounts to that tell others about the narrators, have emerged as a key tool for the entrepreneurs that is used for identity formation (Steyaert, 2007); (Jones, 2008); (Chasserio et al., 2014); (Maclean, 2015), trust works (Welter et al., 2004); (Welter, 2012) and legitimacy (Roundy, 2010); (Phillips, 2013). It was also argued that extant research in this topic which grew substantially after 2009 (Mmbaga et al., 2020), revealed that the entrepreneurs consider narratives and storytelling as their favourite and most effective means of communication with topics about emphasizing distinctiveness, stressing appropriateness, character development, hopes for a happy conclusion and, positive self-presentation to real and potential stakeholders (Lounsbury and Glynn, 2001). As such, entrepreneurial identity narratives shape the interpretation of an entrepreneur and their venture's potential (Lee et al., 2017); (Martens et al., 2007); (Phillips, 2013) and are considered to be a powerful force that can pull into a cohesive message, via a story, making the entrepreneurs more legitimate (Aldrich and Fiol, 1994); (Marlow and McAdam, 2015).

Through eight case studies and via sixteen in-depth interviews with the entrepreneurs or with some of their stakeholders (suppliers, customers, or top employees), this research answers to calls of researching the effects of narratives and attempts to provide insights of how they are used to construct a new identity and establish trust and legitimacy in their new venture mainly as entrepreneurs lack a reliable track record. The research also reveals patterns of similarities and

differences between necessity and opportunity-based firms in the context of entrepreneurs internationalising their ventures into neighbouring countries. The findings that were discussed in Chapter 4 bode well with the various theories and concepts of extant literature, which were previously argued in Chapter 2 of this thesis. In this section, some of the mentioned theories and concepts will be revisited and a discussion will be carried out as to how this study contributes or challenges the literature in the following areas:

Firstly, in exploring the role of entrepreneurial narratives in an internationalising context, this study has drawn on extant literature to devise a conceptual model. Consistent with the calls of Lounsbury and Glynn (2001) of relating organisational storytelling to both identity construction and legitimacy in the entrepreneurial context (Lounsbury and Glynn, 2001), the calls of Steyeart (2007) to adopt a processual approach in researching entrepreneurship (Steyaert, 2007) and finally, the calls of Welter and Smallbone (2006) to explore the role of trust in the entrepreneurial activity (Welter and Smallbone, 2006), the devised model advances the literature by further exploring the processes within its key constituent concepts (identity, trust and legitimacy) particularly within the geographical area that the research has taken place.

Secondly, this research distinguishes between two main internationalisation approaches of firms into neighbouring countries: necessity and opportunity based. It is argued that all entrepreneurs are 'growth oriented' (Berner et al., 2012) but in this research, necessity-based enterprises is referred to internationalisation firms that are initiated by a single individual who tend to leverage home country's acquired resources and experience and prefers to grow it at own pace, in contrast to

opportunity-based enterprises, which are typically initiated by more than one partner and, who tend to be passionate for growth hence, push each other to grab market share. This research explores the effect of both approaches on the processes of identity construction, trust works and gaining legitimacy in that particular geographical context.

Thirdly, this study explores the role of home market context and how entrepreneurs tend to leverage their company's home-grown reputation in accordance to their internationalisation approaches: necessity and opportunity-based. Research has shown that home reputation is used to either strengthen the value proposition or it may be disguised depending on how the original country is seen in international markets (Rissanen et al., 2020). However, extant literature on leveraging home reputation does not consider the internationalising modes. This study is able to advance the literature in how the home market reputation is leveraged in both necessity and opportunity-based cases.

Finally, this study explores narratives and consequently the identity construction and trust work from the perspectives of not only the entrepreneurs but also as seen by some of their key stakeholders such as employees, suppliers, and customers. In the following, we discuss our results in detail and reflect upon the devised conceptual model.

The chapter is concluded by comparing this study's findings with extant theories and extant knowledge for each construct (identity, trust, and legitimacy). It recaps the areas where this thesis supports previous research and contributes to knowledge. The various tables at the end of each section summarize the discussion.

5.2 Identity Works

The theoretical conversation about identity in entrepreneurship was discussed in section 2.6. Even though it is characterised as disjointed and diverse, it was found to be channelled into four main steams: distinctions, variations, construction and intersections as a result of bibliometric analysis of about 180 articles about this particular subject from the last two decades (Mmbaga et al., 2020).

This research will primarily focus on the third area of discussion, which is primarily about identity construction, using narratives. Generally, the body of literature on identity construction studies how they form, maintain, and revise identities over time and how narratives influence identity and how entrepreneurs leverage it to acquire resources and gain venture legitimacy (Mmbaga et al., 2020). It also examines how entrepreneurs construct an entrepreneurial identity by applying their other identities and positions, their own past and present experiences and futures perspectives as resources (Hytti, 2005) (Middleton, 2013). More recent articles cite identity work design, or the freedom and ability to infuse personal values into a new venture, as a primary reason for becoming an entrepreneur (Hsu et al., 2021). In this study, the interview data revealed that in the case of necessity and opportunity-based entrepreneurial firms, the identity works process comprises of four distinct themes: 1) refining the market entry mode, 2) identity adaptation and adjustment, 3) leveraging connections and networks and 4) promoting self. Below are the details for every theme.

5.2.1 Necessity-Based Firms

5.2.1.1 Refining Market Entry Mode

In the context of the internationalising firms into the GCC countries, the empirical data show that in the case of necessity-based firms, the entrepreneurs usually construct an identity that would involve creating a new or a different setup, which could be different than the model that was created in the home country. They tend to consider their internationalisation initiative as a fresh start in a new environment, based on the vast practice experience that they have already acquired and the value proposition that has also been validated. However, this seems to create some tension in their identity that is brought to the new market: their willingness to detach themselves from the homeland company yet, leverage its existing and favourable reputation when necessary. The interviews revealed that the entrepreneurs attempt to carefully balance this act as it was very well emphasized by both the bridal wear company (Case 2) and the marble cement company (Case 3) who sometimes in her sales pitches, showed photos of their existing large home country entity for legitimacy purposes and to lure clients in thinking that entrepreneur is bigger than reality.

Generally, decreasing the dependency on the home market was observed in the literature with the work of Cuervo-Cazura (GEM Lebanon National Report 2018), depending in how the home country's reputation is regarded in the new context and whereby they propose that through the development of management capabilities, a firm can actually perform better in an emerging market rather than in the home market (Cuervo-Cazurra et al., 2018b). But in the case of this research, the necessity-based entrepreneurs chose to leverage their status strictly on demand and

depending on the circumstances. Put differently, they tend to emphasise or downgrade the home-grown reputation for self-serving purposes.

The data also revealed that the entrepreneurs did not effectively seek to ally themselves with powerful market players within their industries or attempted to form partnerships with the locals in contrast to the literature which considers that it can be the entrepreneurs' preferred new means for market entry (Chandra et al., 2012); (Puthusserry et al., 2020). Prior studies explored the role of partnerships in reducing the risk and uncertainties in an internationalisation initiative, especially in the absence of international entrepreneurial experience (Lu and Beamish, 2001); (Chandra et al., 2020). This was not observed in our data, and it is due perhaps, to the generally wary character of necessity-based entrepreneurs who would rather seek discretion in order to safeguard their nascent ideas, particular to that specific context. The only form of partnership that was brought up in the interviews was strictly shaped for status legitimation purposes in accordance to the local legal and regulatory regime. In other words, it was formed to assist both parties: the entrepreneur in granting him a license to locally operate and, to the local partner in benefitting from yearly financial revenues.

Additionally, the interview data revealed that entrepreneurs of necessity-based firms tend to penetrate the market in an incremental and progressive manner. Cautious steps were deemed necessary not only to ensure continuity and survival but also in order to alleviate the uncertainty that is associated with the internationalisation process (Meschi et al., 2017); (Freixanet and Renart, 2020). In fact, the marble cement firm (Case 3), the bridal wear firm (Case 2), the contracting firm (Case 6) and the IT solutions firm (Case 7) have all expressed in their interviews that they have

adopted incremental and progressive approaches. It is evidence to the reigning paradigms that entrepreneurs are only prepared to take calculated risks (Hytti, 2005); (Zahra, 2007). In the initial phases, their main worry was to stay in business (Sapienza et al., 2006); (Berner et al., 2012), a concern that is on the mind of all entrepreneurs of both the contracting (Case 6) and IT solutions sectors (Case 7). During the interviews, they have evoked their early emotions of perseveringly looking for new ways to generate revenue streams in the new market for survival. This cautious approach observation also bodes well with the Uppsala Model or the firms' progressive involvement in a foreign market (Johanson and Vahlne, 1977), a strategy that was found to be still very dominant in the firms' internationalisation into the GCC countries.

5.2.1.2 Leveraging Connections and Networks

The data that was extracted clearly showed that the necessity-based oriented firms admitted their strong reliance on networking and on establishing friendships with clients to secure new business and growth. This was exemplified with the marble cement company (Case 3), the bridal wear company (Case 2), the construction firm (Case 6) and the IT solutions company (Case 7). In fact, most entrepreneurs recall that they were awarded their first job or sales contract through the help of friends and close connections. They were also aware of the fact that their friends have taken a chance on them and have put their reputation on the line. In return, this seems to have enticed the entrepreneurs to perform and not let down those who have recommended them.

Networking and friendships are also perceived very essential for growth not only in the start-up, but also in the post-entry phase. The entrepreneurs felt that there was a

strong need to pursue networking for as long as they can to ensure sales stability. This was observed in the cases of the marble contracting entrepreneur (Case 3), the construction entrepreneur (Case 6), the bridal wear company founder (Case 2) and the IT solution entrepreneur (Case 7) who have all expressed their strong reliance on preserving business and networking relationships to push sales. Here, it is worthy to note that reliance on business friendships seems to be more characteristic of some sectors than to others, as in contracting and in services where business exchanges tend to be large in size and for a long duration. In such cases, networking takes a heightened importance because securing a project may be directly linked to the continuity or to the company's survival. This was detected in the discussion with the entrepreneurs in the contracting sectors.

From another perspective, the data also suggests that entrepreneurial firms tend to rely on the various agents, public relation figures and connected gatekeepers who know key clients or high net worth persons. They are aware of that fact that their market entry involves collaboration with intermediaries, and they are prepared to financially compensate them in exchange for good public relations (PR) and solid representation. This was the inherent approach of the fashion firm case (Case 2) in which the founder expressed her strong reliance on public relation consultants and social celebs to bring in high net worth buyers to the store.

The use of business and social network relationships by the internationalizing entrepreneurs has also been well observed in extant literature. For example, it has been considered to be a 'resource at hand' (Evers and O'Gorman, 2011) and found to be vital to the firms' growth and survival (Sapienza et al., 2006) as it is often used to complement their entrepreneur's limited resources. Furthermore, it is argued that

the entrepreneurs must possess prior knowledge about the new market (Evers and O'Gorman, 2011), information acquisition capabilities and make use of it efficiently (Chandra et al., 2020). Other studies have also shown that networks can affect internationalisation (Chandra et al., 2020), and that this prior knowledge encourages the internationalisation of SMEs (Owen-Smith and Powell, 2008) and may positively affects firms' performance (Lu et al., 2010). Similarly, Zhou et al (2007) studied this aspect and argued that home-based social networks play a mediating role in the relationship between both inward internationalisation (learning new technologies or about the needs of international market) and, outward internationalisation (learning about or utilizing foreign technologies, management skills and capital investment) and, firm performance (Zhou et al., 2007).

In this dissertation, the empirical findings, which are mainly about the firms' post-internationalisation status, support the claims that network relationships are a key characteristic to complement a firm's growth in a foreign market. It is argued that effectuation (Sarasvathy, 2001) influences the internationalisation process. It is also assumed that the concept of effectuation is applicable in the use of the networking activity in a post market entry because the entrepreneurs are focused on all possible "effects that can be created" via those networks (Sarasvathy, 2001).

5.2.1.3 Promoting Self

As discussed in Chapter 2, promoting selves takes the form of the rhetorical strategies entrepreneurs use to construct identities. The extant literature indicates that most of this work focuses on identity narratives, which are the verbal or written accounts that tell others about the entrepreneurs and about their plans to make their ideas successful (Aldrich and Fiol, 1994). It is perhaps reasons why entrepreneurs

are known to use 'negotiated narratives' as a way to develop a sense of who they are and what they do, recognizing that identity is an expression of relationship to past or future conversations, events, experiences or ideas (Middleton, 2013).

In fact, our fieldwork data shows the range of possibilities and the strategies that are available to the entrepreneurs in promoting selves using the means narratives. It was noted that slow-growth entrepreneurs use narratives to attract clients (Case 3), to innovate (Case 7) and to successfully make use of available marketing tools (social media, public relations, word of mouth) (Case 2). It was also used to signal distinctiveness (Case 2 and Case 3) or to gest about how they were able to overcome challenges in assuming responsibilities (Case 6). Finally, the empirical data also revealed that some entrepreneurs resorted to narratives in relation to their past by emphasising on a luminous track record (Case 3) or leveraging by their home country reputation (Case 2 and Case 3). In short, it is a way for them to parade their cognitive skills and previous achievements for audience recognition purposes.

Our findings strongly corroborate extant knowledge. Effectively, narratives about entrepreneurial distinctiveness has been largely cited in the literature (Aldrich and Fiol, 1994); (Steyaert, 2007), and particularly in Lounsbury and Glynn (2001) seminal work in which storytelling is used as a means. Legitimacy stories are all about impression management with a plot and topics about emphasizing distinctiveness, stressing appropriateness with hopes for a happy conclusion (Lounsbury and Glynn, 2001). They serve the entrepreneurs to instil favourable interpretations of the wealth creating possibilities of the new venture, particularly when the institutions lack legitimacy or entrepreneurial invention. It is therefore a perceptive tactic and this

study's empirical data conforms to extant literature in this aspect as all entrepreneurs in all the cases adopted such narratives.

5.2.2 Opportunity-Based Firms

5.2.2.1 Refining Market Entry Mode

In the context of the internationalising of opportunity-based firms into the GCC countries, the empirical data revealed that almost all the entrepreneurs, who relatively lacked international experience, have undertaken a large cross-border endeavour without proper planning. By believing solely in the merit of their vision, it appears that they have embarked in launching a business in a foreign market based on their previous domestic experience of setting up a successful venture and on the growth prospects in the GCC geographical context.

This perhaps stands counter to earlier studies showing that acquiring international experience diminishes the risk of internationalization and the liability of foreignness (Chandra et al., 2020) and allows businesses to export to increasingly distant markets, hence increasing the probability of their survival in the international market (De Clercq et al., 2012); (Chandra et al., 2020). The interview data showed that international experience was not properly acquired prior to the internationalisation decision in any of the fast-growth cases. It also seems that new markets rational business decisions such as devising innovative solutions to problems, conducting direct forms of customer research, and designing new value propositions were not adequately considered. Factors related to home country specifics such as small size markets, economic uncertainty and political turmoil seemed to have greatly affected and accelerated the entrepreneurs' decision to internationalise. This may have also

enticed them to work hard, persevere and perform. Their flexible mind-set, quick adaptation to the new context and their engagement to new market learning may have offset their lack of preparedness. These topics will be further discussed in the next section.

From another perspective, the empirical data also revealed that reliance on available government programs that would ease the process of a new market entry and consequently, achieve better performance in international markets (Lu et al., 2010) were not even explored by the entrepreneurs. In their interviews, this aspect was not even brought up as part of their internationalisation plans. It can possibly be attributed to lack of trust in business agencies that are destined to provide proper guidance to entrepreneurs or in other official institutions, which may be characteristic of some emerging countries.

However, the entry mode of opportunity-based firms has also been characterised as being incremental and progressive in the context of the internationalising firms into neighbouring countries. Cautious steps were deemed necessary to alleviate the uncertainty that is associated with the internationalisation process and ultimately, ensure continuity and survival. It is further evidence that entrepreneurs are only prepared to take calculated risks, even for the ones that seek fast growth. The interview data even show that entrepreneurs, as they earn experience in the new market, tend to take a step back to take the learning and re-evaluate their market penetration approach, make sense of their nascent experience and, assess themselves relative to other competitors and to the new context. This was evident in many forms within the cases of the digital branding company (Case 5), the online furnishing company (Case 4) and the hospitality firm (Case 8). Such findings are in

line with the Uppsala Model or the firms' progressive involvement in a foreign market (Johanson and Vahlne, 1977); (Johanson and Vahlne, 2003), the sense-making activity in an internationalisation context (Anderson and Boocock, 2002) and the enhancement of the firms' internal capabilities and resources (Sapienza et al., 2006).

Like the case of necessity-based firms, the opportunity-based firms also simultaneously showed willingness to conveniently detach themselves from the homeland company yet, leverage its strong and favourable reputation when appropriate. The empirical data revealed that the entrepreneurs did not attempt to ally themselves with powerful market players within their industries or vehemently tried to form partnerships with the locals in contrast to the literature which encourages getting involved in direct acquisition for opportunity-based (Madhok and Keyhani, 2012) or forming partnerships for a secure market entry to reduce the internationalization risks and uncertainties that could arise in the absence of international entrepreneurial experience (Chandra et al., 2012); (Puthusserry et al., 2020); (Chandra et al., 2020).

5.2.2.2 Leveraging Connections and Networks

The data that was extracted shows that several opportunity-based firms admitted their reliance on networking and on establishing friendships with clients to secure new business and growth. However, this was less apparent than in the case of necessity-growth firms. Opportunity-based entrepreneurs tend to rely primarily on marketing push approaches and on sales actions to establish traction in the new market, rather than on connections and friendships.

Opportunity-based entrepreneurs are also known to establish new relationships to ensure continuity, but they tend to look at them as a two-way relationship in quid pro quo business arrangements. It is based on common interest which would end up in mutual financial benefits for both parties. This was well detected in the case of the retail firm (Case 1) who managed to establish personal friendships with their suppliers that is solely based on mutual interests and for the purpose to ensure a continuous flow of supplies. It was also seen in the case of the online furnishing group founders (Case 4) who have tried to connect with suppliers and establish a business friendship on the basis that it would be in the interest of both. It is argued that those friendships primarily serve the entrepreneurs to increase the trust, a topic which will be discussed in the next sections.

5.2.2.3 Promoting Self

In this study, the fieldwork data revealed the range of possibilities that are available to opportunity-based entrepreneurs in promoting selves using the means of narratives. As mentioned before, its main purposes remain for impression management use and to promote selves as a reliable entity, as was the case with necessity-based entrepreneurs. However, the empirical data show that the content differs from the founders of opportunity-based firms. Although they are also used to innovate (Case 1), to attract clients (Case 4 and Case 8) or to be used in marketing (Case 4), it was mostly formulated to express distinctiveness and the uniqueness of their business model (Case 1, Case 4, and Case 5). Additionally, the empirical data show that they particularly stress on their main entrepreneurial orientation (EO) characteristics such as innovation (Case 1, Case 4, Case 5, and Case 8), pro-activeness (Case 4 and Case 8), calculated risk-taking (Case 1, Case 4, and Case

8), passion (Case 5 and Case 8) and perseverance (Case 5). As discussed in the literature review chapter, EO traits are considered central to the process of entrepreneurship (Slevin and Terjesen, 2011); (Gerschewski et al., 2016) and are often manifested in the founder's ability to remain pro-active and innovate, while simultaneously taking calculated risks (Covin and Slevin, 1989).

Additionally, the fieldwork data show that opportunity-based firms that impression stories such as winning a large account and pitching against other legitimate market players (Case 5) or, using optimally their human resources by properly training existing staff (Case 1) were shared with other stakeholders to instil a reputation of professionalism. Other narratives including identity flexibility for being in the phase of value proposition validation (Case 4 and Case 5), market positioning by delineating what they do and what they don't do (Case 4), in learning and taking stock about the firm's direction (Case 5) and finally, of sacrifices and making trade-offs (Case 5) also served the purpose of promoting the entrepreneurs' reputation for reflexivity, learning quick adaptation, and projected prospects. The flexibility and the learning part will be thoroughly discussed in the next section.

The empirical data also revealed that some entrepreneurs resorted to narratives in relation to their past and to their previous accomplishments in their home country by emphasising on a bright track record such as winning entrepreneurship competitions as was the case of the online furnishing group (Case 4) or in the case with the hospitality firm (Case 8). Again, it can be argued that those narratives' main role is for promotion and trusting purposes among the various stakeholders and it was not consistent among all the cases. Few entrepreneurs seemed to be agnostic about promoting selves by leveraging an existing homeland identity as other firms did. The

decision to internationalize and to enter a new market was sometimes viewed as an exploration journey and the entrepreneur's confidence about future success stems from tacit knowledge and previous learning as levied in the case of the online branding firm (Case 5).

In conclusion, the above examples illustrate how the entrepreneurs applied various self-serving strategic narratives for the purpose of enhancing status and promote selves relative to their stakeholders. Sometimes, positive home market reputation is used to also enhance the value proposition but in other cases and particularly when the home market reputation can be seen as fragmented and chaotic, it was found to better disguise it. This concurs with extant literature about home market reputation in emerging market contexts (Cuervo-Cazurra et al., 2018b).

5.2.2.4 Identity Adaptation and Adjustment

Particularly with opportunity-based firms, the empirical data showed that identity construction narratives are often centred on adjusting their identity. This procedure involves experimenting and requires maintaining extreme flexibility from the entrepreneurs' part who often find themselves engaged in taking market learning and reflecting on it. The literature review section of this thesis also viewed the identity construction process of a dynamic nature and changes based on the entrepreneurs' social interactions (Kreiner et al., 2006) and on their dialogue with the stakeholders (Downing, 2005). Down and Revely (2004) illustrated how identities are established in face-to-face interactions in work-related situations (Down and Reveley, 2004). Accordingly, it would be therefore safe to assume that the entrepreneurs, who have considerable agency and freedom in constructing and relative to others, who are

more constrained by bureaucratic norms (Hsu et al., 2021) continuously adjust their identities to become more efficacious in their endeavours.

The data revealed that the identity adaptation and adjustment process involve four distinct dimensions 1) experimenting; 2) claims of distinctiveness; 3) flexibility and; 4) new learning. The following paragraphs will detail those findings.

5.2.2.4.1 Experimenting

The interview data of this research also reveal that, when internationalising, all entrepreneurs get involved in a process of either developing or changing their identities. It further shows that those who are mostly interested in opportunity-based firms become very engaged in trialling and experimenting about their identity construction process. They tend to balance their act of "testing the waters" in their new market entry while simultaneously looking for market gaps and finding a niche segment in which they would specialise in. The experimenting phase which may involve diversification or improving the products range such as the case with the retail group (Case 1) or by mixing and matching products and services by trying different combinations as was the case of the hospitality group (Case 8), is often performed with extreme caution and harmony so as not to deviate much from their originally brought-to-market identity. Backed by their homeland experience, they tend to engage in comparative approaches and in making quick decisions about what may or may not work. The testing phase tends to pervade into specifics ranging from experimenting on store sizes to deciding on products, especially in the early phases. Accordingly, the entrepreneurs will settle on what works best for them by making a series of incremental decisions about their identity construction process to mitigate the risks and cautiously navigate through uncertainty. Most adjustments come in

instinctively by taking swift reactions to market orientation prompts and making sense of the revenue drivers. This was well expressed by the entrepreneur of the online furnishing group case (Case 4) in claiming that it would be impossible to be that visionary and know beforehand the identity that will be taken to the market.

It is worthy to note herein that the empirical data revealed necessity-growth entrepreneurs not necessarily resorting to trialling activities in constructing their new identity. Even though they tend to maintain flexibility, it seems it would be a lot easier for them to rely on their home market reputation, if favourable, with all its developed processes and routines. For them, experimenting can be costly and would require time and resources.

Business model changes and experimenting activities have also been observed in the literature (Sosna et al., 2010); (Rissanen et al., 2020). Small business owners are renowned for changing their business models (Saebi et al., 2017) and it would be logical to assume that in an internationalisation case, the need to experiment and change the business model would become even more magnified given the liability of newness (Stinchcombe, 2000) and all the uncertainty that surrounds a cross-border venture creation. This also concurs with the findings of Puthusserry et al (2020) who posit that, in the context of the SMEs' post internationalisation phase, the needed internal sources to enhance product, market and technological knowledge, stem from internal sources such as trial-and-error and experiential efforts (Puthusserry et al., 2020). Our findings add to extant knowledge in that this aspect is more characteristic to internationalising entrepreneurs with opportunity-based approaches than the ones of necessity-growth firms.

5.2.2.4.2 Distinctiveness

The empirical data revealed another dominant theme within the identity adaptation and adjustment, and it involves the claims and behavioural implications about distinctiveness from others. In their interviews, the entrepreneurs of fast-growth firms expressed interest in favouring such an approach. For example, the large retail group (Case 1) aspires to create distinctiveness in providing a large product range at unbeatable prices. The online furnishing group's claims and narratives revolve around differentiating selves as well in creating a business model based on technological practices and that is unique in the Middle East region (Case 4).

The data also showed that the differentiation approach in identity works varied among the entrepreneurs. For example, the hospitality firm owner (Case 8) discussed distinctiveness from a human resources point of view by singling out and employing the right staff. He further explained that, unlike a factory, his output product which is a fine dining experience depends so much on human elements and behaviours, hence the recruitment importance. Similarly, the digital branding firm (Case 5) opted to position itself as an independent and non-associated firm. Instead of using narratives and identity claims as was the case with the online furnishing group, the entrepreneur of the digital branding firm expressed his desire of achieving distinctiveness by designing the right size firm, which allowed him, at the same time, the flexibility to remain "small, agile and non-associated" when pursuing unique branding jobs or portraying his firm to be large-enough firm to land what he refers to as a "game changer account".

This aspect is not only limited to opportunity-based firms. In fact, the descendants of family firms (Case 2 and Case 3) emphasized on their creative distinction by finding a niche market to service. Their market approach is also characterized as being very

conservative consisting of adopting "baby steps" and "bootstrapping" by making a series of small and incremental decisions to ensure survival.

According to Mmbaga et al (2020), the body of literature has long observed the construction of the entrepreneurial identity and the aspect of uniqueness and distinctiveness is brought up in the conversation by qualifying that extant research draws attention "to the extent of which individuals engage in a range of behaviours, attributes and thoughts to purposely form, maintain, strengthen or revise an entrepreneurial identity to ensure coherence and distinctiveness" (Essers and Benschop, 2009); (Marlow and McAdam, 2015); (Mmbaga et al., 2020). Jones et al (2008) also alluded to identity construction process through distinctiveness (Jones, 2008). Citing Cerulo (1997), the authors explained that the two overriding concepts of identity construction are the narrative construction (Lounsbury and Glynn, 2001); (Steyaert, 2007); (Martens et al., 2007); Phillips et al, 2013) and through the process of "positioning through divisioning" (Parker, 1998) (Jones, 2008). The latter concept posits that the process of organising produces organisations through "divisioning" and that drawing boundaries is framed by human decisions about what counts as similarities and what count as differences (Parker, 1998). Put differently, it produces identities in relation of counter identities – Me and Not-Me (Burke, 1980). By emphasising distinctiveness, the entrepreneurs are in fact engaging themselves in classifications of both sharing and differences and, in belonging in one group and not another through their storylines (Davies, 1990); (Jones, 2008).

In this thesis, the empirical data corroborate existing knowledge and even adds to it in observing that is also the entrepreneurs' preferred entry mode for both necessity

and opportunity-based entrepreneurial firms in that specific geographical area of the GCC countries.

5.2.2.4.3 Flexibility and Adaptability

Through the interviews, the empirical data that was collected indicate that all the entrepreneurs believed that their identity in a new market entry approach ought to be dynamic and needs to be very flexible and adaptive. They firmly believed that it was due to such flexibility that they were able to penetrate the market. But this flexibility, which is qualified by many as an on-going process, is driven by market orientation factors effected in response to customers' needs and as imposed by the new context. They are therefore considered as the main influencers in new identity works as the entrepreneurs observe and adjust to what becomes a main revenue driver for them. The works will take shape of an iterative process feeding off from market traction and from continuous validation from potential clients taking in perspective the catering for all budgets, eventually leading up to fine-tune the business model as was well expressed by the online furnishing entrepreneurs (Case 4). Both the founders of the branding and digital marketing firm (Case 5) and the IT solution provider (Case 7) firms admitted that they were even compelled to alter their business model. The IT solution company owner further added that he was left with no choice but to take another path, which is contracting in IT.

However, the data also showed that the degree of flexibility in a new identity construction process and how much they are willing to change it varies between newly formed companies. Some believe that they are "still in the validation part of their business model" as was the case with the online furnishing entrepreneurs (Case 4) and they have internationalised on this basis. They have added that there will

come a time when they feel that they will eventually become more rigid, but this may come when the time is right. For others, who feel more confident about their value proposition such as the hospitality firm (Case 8), tend to think that flexibility in their new identity is an important matter and accordingly, their narratives would differ in every country. Nevertheless, to them the flexibility should only be partial because they are after preserving their initial reputation that was built in their home country. They believe that the identity should be formed based on opportunities recognition of niche segments in the new market while blending it with their core identity.

From an academic perspective, the extant literature also suggests that a firm's competitive advantage in the future will be tightly linked to co-creating unique value with customers and that they can even influence a firm's strategic direction. Customers may be seen as a key influence on the entrepreneur's decision-making process of new market entry (Perks, 2009). This was supported in our interviews data by our entrepreneurs. Other theories also support the concept of business models adaptation and change (Saebi et al., 2017); (Rissanen et al., 2020); (Puthusserry et al., 2020). This was also largely discussed in the previous paragraphs. New opportunities, new threats (Saebi et al., 2017), a high probability of losses or new risks exposure (Rissanen et al., 2020) may trigger the firms to modify their business models. The context of internationalisation certainly involves uncertainty and lack of knowledge of the new market and, is usually being offset by the entrepreneurs' introducing changes to their identity to ease the process of adaptation. It is achieved through the careful process of trial and error, learning and adaptation.

To recap, our data suggests that flexibility is a key factor in entrepreneurial firms and is regarded as a prime advantage. In fact, the founder of the digital branding firm (Case 5) expressed his frustration over the loss of such flexibility when his company was being acquired by a multinational, one entrepreneur. He believes that he has lost something valuable, which the agility and responsiveness that he once possessed and which could affect, future growth. Our findings agree with extant literature about the importance in maintaining flexibility in new identity construction but shows that it varies in its degree depending on the entrepreneurs' willingness to be detached from their initial home country reputation.

5.2.2.4.4 New Learning

Finally, the empirical data revealed that the fourth topic that characterises the process of identity adjustment and adaptation was found to be the new market learning. The identity works takes the shape of an iterative process that feeds off from market traction and from validation from potential clients. The identity may even be quite shady at that point and the entrepreneurs end up learning and fine-tuning their business models because of this interaction and dialogue.

Specifically, the entrepreneurs of the online furnishing group (Case 4) admitted that they have taken in consideration all the learning from the market by becoming a lot more detail-oriented and even changing their approaches and processes with both their suppliers and potential customers. Their identity shift was regrettably triggered because of some mistakes that the entrepreneur has made by not being very thorough and that ended up costing the group valuable money. Other entrepreneurs were also very open in their discussion about reflecting, actively taking all the new learning and, about shaping their new identity by taking stock of past events. This

was observed with the founder of the digital branding firm (Case 5) who proudly expressed about the benefits of the learning and how this has affected their new identity.

The post-entry stage success-based learning activity is a phenomenon that was also discussed in the literature (Puthusserry et al., 2020). More specifically, Puthussery et al (2020) concluded that self-learning, especially from trial-and-error and experiential efforts, were found to enhance product, market and technological knowledge and indicate that firms use a mix of integrated, vicarious, congenital, and experiential learning approaches to facilitate their post-entry growth and survival phases. In parallel, the entrepreneurs' events sense-making and reflective activities have also been abundantly researched in the past (Foss, 2004); (Downing, 2005); (Steyaert, 2007); (Stigliani and Elsbach, 2018). In fact, Foss (2004) posited that entrepreneurs tend to rationalize their market positioning and satisfy their need to make sense of their experiences (Foss, 2004). Chasserio et al (2014) concluded that individuals have multiple identities that are based on experience and self-reflection, which influence past, present and future behaviour (Chasserio et al., 2014). This research's empirical findings concur with such claims that the entrepreneurs become very reflective about all their novel experiences and tend to take all the market learning in adapting their identity. This also seems in congruence with recent findings which assumes that a significant portion of the entrepreneurs' motivation for identity works resides from within and not outside the entrepreneur (Mmbaga et al., 2020).

The below table 5.1 summarizes the research's contribution to extant literature and knowledge.

Research Findings (Identity Works)		Supports Previous Research Findings	Challenges Previous Research Findings	Extends /Contradicts Previous Knowledge	Contribution to Theory / Literature
Identity Works (necessity & opportunity-based Firms)	Exploratory research on how internationalising entrepreneurs use narratives to establish a self-serving identity in the context of emerging markets	Uppsala Model - Johanson and Vahlne (1977, 2003) - Sapienza et al (2006) - Lounsbury and Glynn (2001) - Cuervo-Cazura (GEM Lebanon National Report 2018) - Rissanen et al (2020) - Saebi et al (Report) - Evers and O'Gorman (2011) - Chandra et al (2020) - Gerschewski et al (2016) - Puthussery et al (2020)		Extends knowledge in the context of both necessity and opportunity-based internationalisation modes - Provides new insights about the entrepreneurs' identity adjustment and adaptation works by leveraging their new market experimentations and new learning	Internationalisation of New Ventures (INV) Literature - Entrepreneurial Identity Works Literature
			Chandra et al (2020)	Challenges knowledge about establishing partnerships as a preferred mode of entry for entrepreneurs, particularly in the case of nessity-based firms because of lack of personal and institutional trust (Fear of idea theft)	

Table 5-1   Contribution to literature / knowledge for Identity Works

5.3 Trust Concepts

In trust works, the data that was collected from the interviews involves the entrepreneurs' trusting claims and behaviours through three different perspectives: the suppliers, the customers, and the employees. The entrepreneurs were asked about how they believe they have instilled trust vis-à-vis their main stakeholders via their narratives, cues, and actions. The data was further triangulated from the concerned parties, i.e., suppliers, customers, and employees' point of views. This course of action was proven to be very effective for the purpose of understanding the process of trust works in the context of the internationalising firms into the GCC countries.

Trusting works resembles in many ways the identity construction process because it also depends on narratives and impression management but differs in the sense that it has to endure the test of time. In fact, trust researchers have always recommended studying trust in a longitudinal manner as it appears to change over time (Welter et al., 2004) (Welter and Smallbone, 2006). The authors have also advised observing behavioural cues and entrepreneurial behaviour in transition economies (Welter et al., 2004). These aspects were accounted for in collecting data and the interview questions were structured in a way so that the entrepreneurs can reflect on trusting activities over time.

Additionally, personal trust works takes a heightened importance in the case of internationalisation and particularly, when the entrepreneurs are considered newcomers to the mainstream society (Welter and Smallbone, 2006). Not only they have to prove themselves and ascertain their value proposition against incumbent

firms but also, achieve trust by overcoming the liability of foreignness (Zaheer, 1995) on both the personal and the firm level.

The principal themes that were obtained from the empirical data showed that in the context of necessity and opportunity-based firms, the trusting work that is done by the entrepreneurs' starts by promoting selves through impression making claims by exhibiting capabilities, commitment, orientation, and leadership. The narratives then escalate to cover promoting the organisation including its business model, its culture and its products and services. Finally, the narratives were found to have developed to suggest a quid-pro-quo type of relationship. However, differences were found in the way how this was achieved between the necessity and opportunity-based firms. This thesis will attempt to discuss the findings' nuances for each case.

5.3.1 Necessity-based Firms:

In the case of necessity-based firms, a general observation was detected in the sense that all entrepreneurs believe that the basis of trust in business is to ensure sustainability and a continuous cash flow generation. For them, it would be impossible to establish trust with the stakeholders in the absence of cash. They have described themselves as workaholic (Case 6 and Case 7) with a primary mission of ensuring survival and a continuous workflow generation.

Indeed, this general worry for all entrepreneurs is widely discussed in literature. It was found that the uncertainty and the complexity levels that internationalisation imposes on a firm increases its mortality probability (Sapienza et al., 2006) (Meschi et al., 2017) (Freixanet and Renart). From another perspective, extant research has also drawn attention to the founder's competences in generating sales and in

reconfiguring organisational routines (Freixanet and Renart, 2020). Ensuring survival is a major concern to all entrepreneurs across all cultures, hence the importance of trusting exchanges in their relationships with all the stakeholders.

5.3.1.1 Promoting Self

In promoting selves, the narratives of the necessity-based entrepreneurs that are targeted to their clients to bestow trust include the rhetoric of getting a special care and personal attention directly from them. This can include promises about physical presence on the jobsite (Case 3 and Case 6) and in being easily accessible (Case 6) in the case of construction and contracting sectors. Other ways of promoting selves are displayed in the entrepreneur's capacity to fulfil tasks, to consider every project as a new challenge (Case 6) or to exhibit a form of "heroism" in turning around a losing project and making it successful (Case 7). The entrepreneurs would also try to make an impression that they are taking calculated risks and are rationally managing their growth within their capabilities (Case 3 and Case 6) in addition to other actions and behavioural cues displaying perseverance and motivation (Case 3, Case 6 and Case 7). In their view, such acts substantially enhance the trust building with clients.

With suppliers, the entrepreneurs believe that trust can be achieved by making behavioural signals. It is usually established by building a relationship and by ensuring timely payments to suppliers (Case 3, Case 6 and Case 7) particularly in the early years of operation. These acts will create a trusting cycle which will also feed from quality delivery and keeping payment promises, hence enhancing further trust. In time, the relationship is bound to mature and will take a different shape.

5.3.1.2 Promoting the Organisation

As previously mentioned, no distinction in identity works is assumed between the founding entrepreneur and his organisation, particularly in the early stages. This would also apply to trusting matters such as trusting the entrepreneur or the firm. However, establishing trust differs from the identity construction concept because of its longitudinal aspect; research has shown that trust is always achieved with time (Welter et al., 2004) (Welter and Smallbone, 2006).

Therefore, the entrepreneurs engage in discourses and behavioural cues in promoting themselves first with their stakeholders but with time, they tend to shift the rhetoric in luring them to trust the firm instead. This is achieved by highlighting their approach in tackling a pain point, in leading by example in being constantly present and available solving arising daily problems (Case 6) and, in offering a personalized service (Case 2). The emphasis is highlighting a good track record (Case 3 and Case 6) and, on word of mouth (Case 2) or clients' referrals about quality delivery (Case 2).

The entrepreneurs may also resort to other tactics such as in the case of the bridal wear firm (Case 2) whereby the founder has admitted employing people from her ethnicity in order to enhance a trusting culture within the firm. This aspect, which may appear normal, holds a lot of bearing in an internationalisation context because the employees would feel more secured and, in turn, they would reciprocate by trusting the firm. Extant theories have indeed observed that immigrant groups in host countries achieve trust by grouping together particularly when institutional trust is lacking or where formal sanctioning mechanisms fail or are absent (Zahra, 2007); (Welter and Smallbone, 2006) (Welter, 2012).

However, from the employees' perspective, all of those who were interviewed agreed that trusting the owner primarily stems from the founder's readiness to delegate, to empower employees and involve them in making decisions and, to possibly extend a profit-sharing programme. It seems that the employees would reciprocate the trust faster if it is initiated first by the entrepreneurs or else, it would be left to endure the test of time.

5.3.1.3 Developing Narratives

As mentioned, the narratives that are developed generally revolve around promoting selves and the organisation. However, with time the narratives progress to build on the initial trust that has already been established. With the clients, this would include highlighting some recent accomplishments and, about a new win-win situation that is during development (Case 6). The same strategy has also been adopted with the suppliers to instil trust. The entrepreneurs would extend their appreciation for the business that is already going on, while at the same, express that they are worthy of the trust that has been bestowed on them (Case 3). The narratives serve to let the suppliers know that they have also benefited from the relationship.

As for the employees, the developed narratives include promises of a better future (Case 3, Case 6 and Case 7). The entrepreneurs would also leverage their accomplishments and previous working relations (Case 7). In turn, the employees who were interviewed admitted that they have taken a certain leap of faith and decided to join the entrepreneurs on a risk-taking new adventure (Case 3). This is evidence of the effect of narratives on the stakeholders.

These findings add to extant knowledge in highlighting the extent of the efforts the entrepreneurs make in promoting selves and their organisation to appear reliable and legitimate in the new setting. It adds to extant knowledge in showing how it is achieved with the various stakeholders.

5.3.2 Opportunity-based Firms

In the case of the opportunity-based firms, the empirical data show that, like the case of necessity-based firms, trust is primarily awarded by others because of their business stability in the new environment and the lack of any major setbacks. The stakeholders are continuously monitoring the entrepreneurs' entry to the new market and making sense of their actions and behaviours when the entrepreneurs are entrepreneurs are vividly engaged in promoting selves, promoting the firm, and developing narratives.

5.3.2.1 Promoting Self

In the case of the opportunity-based firms, the data also reveal that, especially with their clients, the entrepreneurs believe in the trust-reputation iterative cycle. They have realised that trust itself is a result of prior positive reputation or word of mouth, which in fact, is attained from initial trust. This aspect was reflected in many interviews that they are trying to maintain a good track record (Case 5 and Case 8), assuming responsibilities (Case 1) and to deliver under pressure (Case 5). Referrals and word of mouth take a heightened importance and for that purpose, the founders of the online furniture firm (Case 4) leveraged social media tools in an efficient manner and promoted selves by posting before-and-after photos, videos and clients' testimonials. Therefore, the entrepreneurs who were interviewed believe that they

have been trusted by clients for their abilities to grow and expand the business (Case 1), their perseverance and, that they are only prepared to take calculated risks in their expansions. Through those signals, clients' trust is even further enhanced.

When it comes to instil trust with suppliers, the fieldwork data showed similar patterns than in the case of necessity based. Similarly, the entrepreneurs believe that trust is achieved at first, by establishing a relationship with the suppliers and ensuring timely payments (Case 1 and Case 5). At an entry stage, it is the entrepreneurs' behaviour that will carry them through and promoting selves will be mainly limited to keeping promises, as the suppliers are still in the observation stages and, will certainly direct all the entrepreneurs' claims and promises in the testing and verification phases. It is safe to assume that trust reciprocation from the suppliers will be only reciprocated with time when it will also be complemented with significant growth in business exchange values.

Finally, the empirical data revealed that the entrepreneurs promoted selves with their top employees though behavioural cues by mostly exemplifying self-confidence and leadership. In fact, the entrepreneurs explained that it was critical for all staff to witness their capabilities and their follow-up (Case 5) as well as the efforts that were dispensed to make everything work out (Case 1). That would certainly include the owners' involvement in all aspects (Case 1 and Case 8), about always finding solutions to problems that might come up (Case 5) and, in their abilities to grow the company and push it forward (Case 4).

The above findings all portray that the promoting-self activities involve a combination of narratives, actions, and behavioural cues from the entrepreneurs' part to instil a feeling of trust among all the concerned stakeholders. Additionally, they would

emphasise on showing entrepreneurial orientation traits such as passion (Case 1, Case 4, Case 5, and Case 8), innovativeness (Case 1, Case 4, Case 5 and Case 8) and perseverance (Case 1, Case 4, Case 5 and Case 8). Effectively, during the interviewing discussions all traits were widely acknowledged by all the entrepreneurs and deemed very important. Particularly, passion was mostly distinguished and singled out as being most essential as it trickles down and, establishing a culture of commitment and solidarity within the company would certainly advance the firm forward (Case 1 and Case 5).

As mentioned before, EO traits are widely discussed in the literature but it was more in the context of new ventures and performance (Covin and Slevin, 1989); (Lumpkin and Dess, 1996), the born-global firms (Gerschewski et al., 2016) and, identity construction (Chandra et al., 2020). However, they were hardly discussed from the lens of achieving trust in the context of the internationalisation of entrepreneurial firms. The findings of this thesis emphasise the importance of EO traits to the stakeholders from a trusting perspective and contributes to extant knowledge by highlighting how it is strategically used by nascent entrepreneurs to gain the faith, conviction, and the recognition of the various parties in the new venture.

It is worthy to note herein that from employees' perspective, the data showed that they have also trusted the firm from other reasons. Naturally, they were attracted by the firms' innovativeness and the fact that the product is not traditional (Case 4 and Case 5). But to the designer and operation manager of the online furniture firm (Case 4) it was even more than that; it was a 'journey' she wanted to be part of. She opted to join a start-up firm despite having other options with more 'secured' organisations. This case exemplifies the very elusive phenomena of trust in its early phases, which

may stem from many various combinations of impression and dialogue. From the owners' perspective, trust was awarded because of reputation, potential and leadership whereas according to the employee, it was about curiosity. This is further evidence that trust can exist in many forms and for reasons that remain very complex and unexplained.

5.3.2.2 Promoting the Organisation

The empirical data reveal that instilling trust in the organisation can be generally achieved by promoting their general business model (Case 4) as well as their offered products and services (Case 1 and Case 8). In their interviews, some entrepreneurs have stressed more on the matter of keeping their promises about delivering quality work (Case 5). In both cases, the main concern revolves around establishing a good track record and a reputation of reliability.

The means of promoting a firm vary depending on the entrepreneurs' strategy. In the case of the online furniture firm (Case 4), trusting the business model involves providing a well-designed and a user-friendly website that includes visuals. Additionally, the workflow processes ought to be very clear and well described. According to many entrepreneurs, trusting the firm begins by instilling a feeling of clarity and that everything is well-thought of.

For the more 'traditional' entrepreneurs, the data showed that the founders of the discounted retail stores (Case 1) believe they have attained high trust levels with their clients due to ethical behaviour and the business potential with its ability to expand. But, when this information was triangulated by interviewing a loyal customer,

he mentioned that it was mainly due to good customer care in recalling the handling of an unfortunate incident that ended up drawing personal attention from the owners.

This specific anecdote shows differences in the perception of trust between the entrepreneurs and their customers. In addition to commonly expected behaviours such as ethics and pro-activeness, the owners have tendencies to perceive trust through impression management initiatives such as growth and expansion whereas for their clients, it is always about the little things, such as paying special attention and providing personalised service. This further illustrates the multi-level complexity of the trust concept and shows it can be instigated from many origins.

When it comes to employees, the data revealed that trust in firms generally stems from believing in the owners' vision and in observing the validation of their value proposition. Both the owners and their respective staff realise that with only time will talk about the benefits of maintaining such a relationship, if chemistry between their personalities does exist. However, the empirical data showed that other hidden factors may influence trust as well. For example, the top designer of the online furnishing company (Case 4) admitted in the interview that her trust in the firm was influenced by seeing others endorsing the idea, such as investors. The mere fact that the entrepreneurs were receiving funds contributed towards enhancing the trust.

From another perspective, different trusting signals were noted by the designer of the branding firm (Case 5) who has admitted that her trust in the firm was enhanced by the way how the owners respectfully treated other female staff. To her, it is a matter that carries a lot of significance. Similarly, the founders of the retail store (Case 1) believe that trust from employees is awarded simply by preserving rights and fulfilling their dreams. This claim holds considerable importance in the GCC area particularly

that this matter has have received international media attention with allegations from the International Labour Organisation (ILO) about breached rights by some firms and requesting government protection for migrant workers from abusive practices (ILO CEACR: ILO Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations, 2019).

All the data that has been gathered from the interview concurs with extant knowledge about trust as it is about one's own decision to accept the associated risks. Consistent with the literature, it appears that the entrepreneurs are decreasing the risk levels (Welter, 2012) that accompanies the trusting initiatives. It describes it in terms of encouraging positive emotions, collaboration, information sharing and creativity (Connelly et al., 2018) and that building it starts by sending signals of commitment, consistency, fairness and justice and, by information sharing (Shepherd and Zacharakis, 2001).

However, this thesis can add to the literature by showing that even though trust may be reciprocated between two parties, but the means of attaining it may vary. Our data depicted situations in which trust was attained between entrepreneurs and employees or customers, but everyone sees that it has been reached from completely different reasons and perspectives.

5.3.2.3 Developing Narratives

With opportunity-based firms, the empirical data revealed that generally, the developed narratives differ from the slow-growth ones in that they are more centred on business mutuality and quid-pro-quo types of relationships. In the previous section, even though it was noted that the narratives for necessity-based firms are

used to highlight benefits for both parties, but it was also wrapped in promises and hope for a better future. With the opportunity-based firms, the discussion is more about sharing responsibilities, establishing partnerships, and building a successful company together. The entrepreneurs are communicating to the stakeholders that in case of success, they would have also played a major role and would likely reap benefits. Generally, this rhetoric appeals to most stakeholders as it brings to them a sense of achievement.

However, this may not be applicable equally to all the stakeholders. While it can be understood that narratives can be efficiently used with suppliers and employees to instil trust, it is harder for entrepreneurs to convince their customers that trusting them, before prior exchange, would end up being in their own interest. Ideally, clients do possess many options to be served from many sellers and self-serving rhetoric may therefore not be very useful.

Realising that it must be very convincing, the entrepreneurs' trusting narratives revolve around making an impression about the perceived gains for the trustors in the relationship. For example, to enhance trust, the retail entrepreneurs (Case 1) developed their narratives just by emphasizing on positive shopping experiences and on improving staff competencies. The online furnishing entrepreneurs (Case 4) maintained a consistent narrative about image consistency through a transparent and a professionally made website with distinct packages for all budgets and with very few unfortunate incidents. Furthermore, they have carefully used website testimonials and before-and-after photos, which is often a preferred means in expressing confidence about the company by including stories of high benefits and low costs. Finally, both the hospitality entrepreneur (Case 8) and the digital branding firm

entrepreneur (Case 5) established trust through narratives with display of extreme passion and desire to succeed.

In contrast, the narratives that are developed with the suppliers are relatively more straightforward and differ from the clients because the entrepreneurs realize that it is potentially within the suppliers' interest to collaborate. The empirical data reveal that the entrepreneurs emphasize on trying to build a relationship for the long term, which is always a supplier's aspiration, and by staying true to their ability to persevere and promote, they often use a nurturing approach and highlight the new trends of online sales and how such growing opportunities should not be bypassed. This was detected with the online furnishing entrepreneurs (Case 4) with narratives to suppliers about keeping up to date with new trends.

But the entrepreneurs also realize that trust is a complex phenomenon that is built over time. All their actions and behavioral cues are also expected to go concurrently with their narratives and the most important one of them all is about maintaining a strong loyalty base by meeting payment commitments to agents and brokers as well or respecting the suppliers' wishes. Effectively, the retail entrepreneur (Case 1) revealed in their interviews that if their European supplier asked them to limit their sales to certain areas or not to sell to third parties, they would do it. According to them, such behaviors, along with the narratives, help build the necessary trust.

With the employees who are also eagerly seeking engagement and a long-term commitment, narratives also play a big role for those who are looking for a safety net. The entrepreneurs have already grown accustomed in passionately explaining their business model and can easily persuade employees with a rhetoric that they are building the firm together. In general, the narratives would answer to general

concerns that typically top employees would worry about such as collaboration and teamwork cultures, transparency in the dealings and, promises about maintaining an open line of communication with the owner. The entrepreneurs would also add enthusiasm to the conversation by informing them about previous work-related accomplishments and that they are on a new risk-taking adventure that would likely be constructive and positive.

When this information was triangulated with both the employees of the online furniture firm (Case 4) and the digital branding firm (Case 5), they said that the conversation certainly picked their interest and made them curious about the prospects. Both employees acknowledged that the entrepreneurs have kept their promises about sharing responsibilities with them. While the online furniture firm (Case 4) top employee admitted that trust was established when she got convinced about the firm's value proposition from the answers that she had obtained from the owners, the top designer of the digital branding firm (Case 5), who has been with the firm for a while, stressed that it was about that particular relationship that she had established with the entrepreneur from the beginning, the firm's transparency dominating culture in that everything can be discussed and, the brainstorming sessions they have collectively held together to solve pressing issues. Furthermore, she has admitted that it was also due to characters' compatibility of accepting her designer's role of challenging ideas and in the owner's role of listening.

In the literature review of this study (Chapter 2), it is argued that interaction and communication is a key means for trust-building (Savolainen et al., 2019) and that narratives can take many shapes and forms (Gabbay and Leenders, 2003). Gabbay and Leenders (2003) further added that, in order to increase the trust, those

narratives can play a role in describing emotional and non-tangible gains, how the products are beneficial for people and finally, how the business helps others (Gabbay and Leenders, 2003). In short, the literature corroborates that narratives are essential tools that are available to the entrepreneur and aimed to increase the trust.

Our findings agree with extant knowledge about the value of storylines in building trust and further adds to it by showing that developing narratives among the various trusting parties in an entrepreneurship context, revolves around the notion of setting up economic quid-pro-quo relations. This thesis further argues that narratives differ in their objectives with the various stakeholders and shows the range of content that can exist within the various stakeholders' cases, depending on the degree of their perceived risks.

As was the case with identity works, the below table summarizes this research's contribution to extant literature and knowledge for establishing trust in a new internationalising venture.

Research Findings (Identity Works)		Supports Previous Research Findings	Contradicts Previous Research Findings	Extends /Contradicts Previous Knowledge	Contribution to Theory / Literature
Establishing Trust necessity-based & opportunity-based Firms)	Exploratory research on how internationalising entrepreneurs develop narratives to promote selves and the firm's business model, to establish Trust in the context of emerging markets	Welter (2004) - Welter and Smallbone (2006) - Covin and Slevin (1989) - Gerschewski et al (2016) - Connelly et al (GEM Lebanon National Report 2018) - Shepherd and Zacharakis (2001) - Welter (2012) - Gabbay and Leenders (2003		Extends knowledge of establishing Trust in the context of both **necessity**-based & opportunity-based internationalisation firms in showing how narratives are developed and how different strategies are used to promote self	Trust Literature - Internationalisation of New Ventures (INV)
					Trust Literature - Internationalisation of New Ventures (INV)
				Extends knowledge about the role of narratives in establishing Trust and how they are developed to highlight business mutuality and an economic quid pro quo situation	Identity Works literature
				Extends knowledge about highlighting the role of Passion in establishing Trust	EO Literature

Table 5-2   **Contribution to literature / knowledge for Establishing Trust**

5.4 Gaining Legitimacy

Thus far, this study discussed the effect of the narratives that entrepreneurs engage in constructing a new identity and establishing trust in their new venture in an internationalisation context. It argued about the tight coupling that exists between the identity of the firm and the identity of the entrepreneur, particularly in the early stages. Similarly, the notion of trust is also perceived as fused between the firm and the entrepreneur.

When it comes to gaining legitimacy, the data revealed that it is achieved upon establishing a solid market presence at a firm level and being endorsed or recognised as a market force by third parties. Even though that the entrepreneurs enhance this legitimacy status through narratives about distinctiveness and about the firms' newly developed capabilities and competences, it is observed that legitimacy is mostly awarded by the various stakeholders to the firm and, not to the entrepreneur. Therefore, signs of detachment between the firm and the entrepreneur are witnessed at this stage.

The data revealed that nuances exist in the way narratives are developed to gain legitimacy from different audiences between necessity-based and opportunity-based firms. The next paragraphs will detail the differences and discusses how the founders of opportunity-based enterprises tend to leverage third parties' recognitions and use it to gain legitimacy.

5.4.1 Necessity-based firms

In the case of necessity-based firms, the empirical data show that gaining market legitimacy is primarily achieved by developing narratives and in establishing a solid

market presence. The narratives are centred on emphasizing distinctiveness while, at the same time, involve conveying to the various stakeholders, impressions about both nascent and existing home country reputation. Referrals from satisfied clients are considered strong legitimacy signals that entrepreneurs build upon in their narratives. It is also reason why they are keen about networking and establishing relationships with key customers and major market players.

5.4.1.1 Developing Narratives

Narratives about home country reputation serve the entrepreneurs very well about conveying an image to audiences about longevity and experience, thus enhancing their market legitimacy. Additionally, over claims about previous successes or about being among home market leaders cannot be easily challenged and would therefore benefit their position. This was detected in the case of the marble contracting firm (Case 2) in which they have admitted in the interview that they would show potential customers photos of their home country factory to influence the clients' perception and make an impression that they are "bigger" than they are. In brief, entrepreneurs are also specialists in leveraging existing reputation for gaining market legitimacy.

The data also revealed that narratives about distinctiveness also play a major part in enhancing legitimacy. The entrepreneurs believe that claims about uniqueness in using resources and introducing new combinations to provide services separating the firms from their competitors advance the perceptions of trust and legitimacy. This was portrayed by the bridal firm founder (Case 3) who believes that introducing exclusive personalised services and consultants to advise her clients distinguished her firm from other competitors. As such, this has triggered a favourable word of

mouth in the market, which in turn, enhanced further trust and legitimacy in the venture.

These findings agree with extant knowledge as the notion of linking trust to legitimacy as an antecedent was largely debated in the literature. Effectively, this study's literature review discussed that Gartner and Low (1990) views that the social process of gaining legitimacy is often shaped by achieving trust in the organizing process as new ventures creators must interact with extremely sceptical customers, creditors, suppliers, and other resources holders who are afraid of being taken for fools (Aldrich and Fiol, 1994). The authors argue that entrepreneurs must therefore develop trust in the new activity by maintaining internally consistent stories, which eventually lead to legitimacy (IBID). Lounsbury and Glynn (2001) also introduced the concept of "optimal distinctiveness" in constantly evaluating to which degree the founders should stress on sameness or distinctiveness in most parts for the effort of acquiring resources and improve on market legitimacy (Lounsbury and Glynn, 2001); (Navis and Glynn, 2011).

5.4.1.2 Establishing Market Presence

The data also revealed that entrepreneurs believe that they have achieved legitimacy by establishing a solid market presence. To them, this is manifested by ensuring longevity with continuous workflow and by managing revenue and cash streams. From another perspective, it can also be levied in being considered "part of the mix" of participating in bidding and perhaps winning new projects. Ultimately, being awarded a landmark project or winning a status changing account also sends legitimacy important cues to both the stakeholders and the competitors.

On the other hand, the empirical data also show that market legitimacy is achieved for some entrepreneurs when they are no longer involved in pursuing non interesting projects or when they can reach the luxury of choosing the "right" work for them. For others, it would be when they start attracting talent or experienced staff or when they are in position to partner or associate selves with other powerful market players to capitalize on a given major projects. It can be summarized as the others' recognition in the firm's value proposition.

These findings bode well with extant literature. Suchman (1995) posits that legitimacy is a socially constructed phenomenon that involves congruence between the actions and behaviours of entrepreneurs and the shared beliefs of related social groups (Suchman, 1995). It is about establishing a firm that is creating a role in the market (Middleton, 2013) and accordingly, it is the perception of others that plays a major part in achieving it. This also helps explaining the reasons why entrepreneurs are keen on employing various strategies in order to gain legitimacy (Suchman, 1995).

5.4.2 Fast Growth Firms

In the case of opportunity-based firms, the empirical data show that the entrepreneurs follow a process that is like slow-growth firms in gaining market legitimacy as they also attempt to develop narratives in order to confirm their market presence. They tend to highlight endorsements of powerful entities such as lenders or other powerful market actors and, leverage third parties' recognition to instill trust and form a perception that their new venture is legitimate.

5.4.2.1 Developing Narratives

The data show that the legitimacy narratives that are developed are centred around portraying growth capabilities and about the entrepreneurs' abilities to expand the firm's scope of work. Their main purpose involves sending signals and cues about the firm's developed competences such as their capabilities to expand and open new shops in very prestigious locations, as was the case with the retail entrepreneurs (Case 1). Narratives also include signs of distinctiveness but conforming to culturally and socially accepted norms and behaviours, like the case of slow-growth entrepreneurs. Additionally, the empirical data revealed that legitimacy is also achieved through the process of enhancing trust in the firm. This was well illustrated in the case of the online furnishing group (Case 4) who were keen on producing stories and visuals works such as showing before-and-after photos or videos and uploading them on the firm's website for enhanced legitimacy.

5.4.2.2 Leveraging Third Parties' Recognition

As mentioned before, the empirical data also revealed that in the case of opportunity-based firms, the entrepreneurs tend to leverage all third parties' endorsements and recognition. For example, the online furnishing group (Case 4) made use of all past accomplishments of winning many entrepreneurship competitions with all its accompanying media exposure and, developed narratives that are centred around such recognition and that are aimed to earn the trust of stakeholders. Furthermore, they also shared with their audience the interests they have received from accelerators and other lenders. This is primarily destined to instil trust in the new venture and hence, gain market legitimacy. It is important to state that such a feature

was only seen in opportunity-based cases, whereby accelerators and lenders are mostly interested in partnering and supporting.

These findings bode well with extant legitimacy literature about conforming and manipulating strategies to influence the perception of others and gain legitimacy (Suchman, 1995); (Aldrich and Fiol, 1994); (Lounsbury and Glynn, 2001); (Middleton, 2013). Additionally, they also conform with previous findings in that legitimacy is achieved by the endorsements by powerful institutional actors such as investors, bankers, and other resource providers (Navis and Glynn, 2011). The data revealed that the entrepreneurs form their legitimacy narratives highlighting those aspects and support them with plausible cues and behaviours.

5.4.2.3 Establishing a Market Presence

Similarly, the empirical data show that like in the case necessity-based firms, the opportunity-based firms gain legitimacy by establishing a market presence. To the entrepreneurs, this can be manifested in any form that acknowledges the firm's existence. For example, the founder of the digital branding firm (Case 5) was content in being "placed in the same league" with other major market competitors and in being invited to participate in requests for quotations for major work. However, to the founder, the ultimate legitimacy was displayed when a multi-national company expressed an interest of acquiring a stake in his firm. From another perspective, the online furnishing group (Case 4) revealed that being approved by others for work collaboration exhibits a form of acceptance or legitimacy. The group considers all endorsements by institutions, reputable suppliers, or agents and, recognition by world renown establishments in seeking partnerships represent a perception of legitimacy. As for the hospitality entrepreneur (Case 8), approval by bankers for a

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credit line, not only shows trust in the founder, but endorses that his firm is a legitimate entity that has a propensity to grow.

To recap, the below table shows this research's contribution to the literature and knowledge in gaining legitimacy

Research Findings (Identity Works)		Supports Previous Research Findings	Contradicts Previous Research Findings	Extends /Contradicts Previous Knowledge	Contribution to Theory / Literature
Gaining Legitimacy (Necessity-based & opportunity-based Firms)	Exploratory research on how internationalising entrepreneurs develop narratives to gain legitimacy in the context of emerging markets	Fisher et al (Report) - Navis & Glynn (2011) - Aldrich & Fiol (1994) - Roundy (2010) - Suchmann (1995)		Extends knowledge of gaining legitimacy through narratives and how leveraging renown third parties' recognition is used as a strategy to gain legitimacy in the context of Necessity-based & opportunity-based internationalisation firms	Legitimacy Literature - Internationalisation of New Ventures (INV)

Table 5-3   Contribution to Literature / Knowledge in Gaining Legitimacy

6   Implications, Limitations and Future Research

6.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the theoretical and practical contributions of the dissertation based on the research questions and the findings of the study. It also addresses the researcher's biases, the generalizability, the limitations of the study and, potential directions for future research.

6.2 Contributions

6.2.1 Theoretical Contribution

According to Corley and Gioia (2011), a study's theoretical contribution is attained in both its originality (incremental or revelatory) and its utility (scientific or practical) (Corley and Gioia, 2011). In this research, originality stems from building on extant IE research by exploring how entrepreneurial narratives are used to construct an identity and establish trust and legitimacy in the context of international venture creation and particularly, in the GCC geographical area. As for utility, it is reached in the sense that the research findings offer practical recommendations to the internationalising entrepreneurs. The following sections will detail those aspects.

Additionally, and in terms of originality, this research not only focuses on the process of entrepreneurship and IE in emerging countries, but concentrates on one of the least studied area in IE, which is the Middle East (Nasra and Dacin, 2010). In fact, the vast body of research about entrepreneurship is focused on North America and

Europe and that little is known about the small firms' internationalisation in developing countries, such as East Asia, East Europe, Latin America and the Middle East (Bruton et al., 2008); (Romanello and Chiarvesio, 2019) and that research in the mentioned areas remains very limited (Chandra et al., 2020). The findings of this study will probably provide meaningful insights and will extend entrepreneurship and international entrepreneurship theories in emerging countries in general, and in particular, the GCC geographical area.

Many researchers have long advised against assuming that findings or established theories in developed economies are forcibly applicable to emerging economies (Peng and Luo, 2000) (Bruton et al., 2008). The IB literature proposes that the internationalization of SMEs has its own characteristics in developing countries (Haddoud et al., 2021) and that more theory testing and further exploration must be conducted, considering that most entrepreneurship theories revolve under the assumption that the triggers are profit maximization and self-interest maximizations (Van de Ven et al., 2007). Other factors such as the welfare of others, maintaining a status–quo or, maintaining networks and friendships can also be factors for enhancing new venture creation and internationalisation (Chandra et al., 2020). This research is able to address international entrepreneurship particularities in emerging economies.

Despite their contribution towards the national economy, SMEs in developing countries generally face several hurdles while internationalising. Such problems are often unique and different from those SMEs from developed countries mainly because of lack of institutional trust (Welter and Smallbone, 2006). According to

Chandra et al (2020), lack of resources and capabilities, the liability of smallness, marketing barriers, export-procedure barriers, internal organization and external operating environmental barriers, managerial incompetence, institutional barriers, human resource barriers, poor economic conditions, industry entry and exit barriers, knowledge gaps of external markets, currency fluctuations and country-level antecedents are some common barriers, which larger MNCs can overcome much better than smaller firms (Jones and Coviello, 2005, Sapienza et al., 2006, Chandra et al., 2020). Other moderating forces that constrain entrepreneurs such as cultural and institutional, are also known to influence organizational behaviour (North, 1990b). Bruton et al (2008) emphasize that regulation discourages IE development as these environments normally lack supportive institutions (e.g. property rights or legal structures) and consequently, the entrepreneurs are expected to face hardships in setting up and protecting their businesses (Bruton et al., 2008). Rissanen et al (2020) argues that institutional factors trigger changes and perhaps alter the firms' business model (Rissanen et al., 2020). Such factors are deemed essential to understanding entrepreneurship in emerging economies. However, they can be at the same time regarded as enabling factors, in the shape of opportunities that are opened to the entrepreneurs who make the most out of them and who may turn them into distinctive ventures. This serves to highlight the level of difficulty of internationalisation factors that need to be considered in the context of emerging economies.

To add another level of complexity, the GCC countries' context is also deeply rooted with pervasive Islamic religious identities and accordingly, the normative, cultural-

cognitive, and regulative institutional frameworks are highly resistant to change (Nasra and Dacin, 2010). But in the UAE, this was offset by the creation of a dual or parallel institutional framework in the form of free zones. This unique institutional duality has enabled the UAE to distance their international economic activities from their national institutional frameworks, thus gaining internal and external legitimacy and fostering international entrepreneurship (IBID). Similar approaches are being considered in both Qatar with the establishment of Qatar Free Zones Authority (QZFA) in 2018 and in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) with the launching of its 2030 vision aiming for a 'thriving economy and effective investments" (www.vision2030.gov.sa). It is in such unique GCC context that allows us to explore the effect of governmental and institutional support in facilitating the process of international entrepreneurship, which brings economic benefits for both the entrepreneurs and the hosting country.

From another perspective of originality, this research contributes theoretically by exploring the relationships between narratives and identity construction in the IE literature as highlighted in Chapter 5. Even though recent studies have explored narratives in how they are used as sense-making processes about life experiences, how identities are constructed relative to their behaviour as international entrepreneurs (Korhonen and Leppäaho, 2019) or in emerging industries (Stigliani and Elsbach, 2018) and, how international entrepreneurship is shaped as a rhetorical practice seen from comparative cultural perspectives (Williams, 2016), these attempts remain relatively very scarce. Additionally, the former study is achieved in the context of rapid internationalising firms and set to explore the entrepreneurs'

mental construction of the "self" (e.g. Pioneer, Native, Diplomat, Gambler, and Eclectic) influencing their behaviours, evoking the role of clichés (Down and Warren, 2008). Furthermore, conclusions are drawn based on entrepreneurial sense-making activities in recollecting stories events and in reflecting on their meaning-making. This was also all performed in hindsight. In contrast, this research is uniquely set to explore the role of narratives in an international entrepreneurship context in which the actors are negotiating an emergent identity, inspired by the successful business model which was created in their home country and, in their negotiated narratives and interactions with the various stakeholders, an area that is understudied in the international entrepreneurial development (Middleton, 2013).

Additionally, this research attends to the numerous calls of researching the relationship between entrepreneurship (and IE) and trust (Welter and Smallbone, 2006) particularly in association with the process view perspective of Williamson's (1993) 'calculated risk' (Welter). In other words, it is about measuring the potential loss that would be associated with a trusting act and assessing if it would be acceptable. This research, which is set in a context that very typical for the entrepreneurs in dealing with the unknown, contributes to extant knowledge as the actors tend to navigate through the unchartered internationalising territories.

Finally, the originality also stems from assessing the effect of entrepreneurial narratives on market legitimacy. Attempts to explore this relationship in the literature were relatively scarce and calls for further research in its process aspect are encouraged (Navis and Glynn, 2011), particularly that this phenomenon is mostly

studies in hindsight (Middleton, 2013). Again, this research is well set to explore the dynamics of this relationship in the context of emerging markets.

6.2.2 Implications for Managers and Policymakers

6.2.2.1 Implications for Managers

Given the diversity in use of identity narratives in entrepreneurship, the elusive concepts of trust and the multi-faceted aspect of legitimacy, this study is likely to be of interest to nascent entrepreneurs who are interested in the process of international venture creation and has potential implications for policymakers in terms of providing more customised support and assistance to small ventures founders. As for the internationalising entrepreneurs, the practical aspects can be summarised as follows:

Firstly, from an opportunity point of view, it can allow the entrepreneurs who are interested in a cross-border expansion, to explore and better understand the role of the home context with respect to internationalisation. Extant literature has highlighted the importance of home reputation in an internationalisation process (Rissanen et al., 2020) and although the outcome is not always guaranteed be up to the expectations of the entrepreneurs, they are highly encouraged to explore the niches in which they are able to leverage their home market reputation or detach from it, according to their industry sector, their mode of internationalisation and, on how the home country is regarded in the international markets. In this research, the fashion entrepreneur (Case 2) for example, has effectively leveraged her home country's leading status in fashion design in the MENA region with several successful luxury labels launched by Lebanese designers (Hassen and Tremblay, 2019) and creatively promoted her

products while emphasising the role of culture and knowledge exchange that uniquely characterises the Beirut fashion scene. Similarly, the hospitality entrepreneur (Case 8) vastly relied on his home country's positive culinary reputation (Zurayk and Ghyda, 2009) and promoted his ability to marry and rearrange different types of cuisines, appealing well to the GCC consumers (Ahmed and Julian, 2012). Both entrepreneurs have mentioned that this may have played a role, strengthened their case, and enriched their dialogue with the stakeholders.

Secondly, entrepreneurs are strongly recommended to actively explore their network relationships in promoting their internationalisation efforts (Coviello et al., 2017) which often will beget significant benefits to SMEs (Ibeh and Kasem, 2011). They may be lagging should they not re-activate their existing repertoire of networks and they are even encouraged to build new internationalising-enhancing ones (Ibeh and Kasem, 2011). Generating questions such as "who do we know in the targeted international market… who can we vet as internationally potential partners in the short, medium and long-term" … may help focus on vetting and connecting with the right partners, provided that a win-win situation is observed. This can be achieved by conducting thorough market research via both direct and indirect methods, and in observing that every single new meeting as a potential opportunity that could ease the burden of an international new entry. In doing this, entrepreneurs will be equipping themselves with valuable insights about the new market specifics and may potentially allow for some adequate staff recruitment and training (Ibeh and Kasem, 2011).

Thirdly, this research permits the internationalising entrepreneurs to closely realise the motives that characterize the entrepreneur's cross-border expansion and whether they are of necessity or opportunity-based nature. In either case, our findings distinguish the two different entrepreneurial outlooks towards internationalisation hence, the two distinctive approaches. While necessity-based entrepreneurs will consider it as a fresh new start that is relatively independent from the home base firm, the opportunity-based entrepreneurs tend to build upon their previous success and think of internationalisation as a natural expansion endeavour. Accordingly, such peculiarity helps reassess their strategic approach by better evaluating the opportunities and threats for either case and consequently adjust their narratives in promoting their new ventures.

Fourthly, it prepares the entrepreneurs to allow for substantial changes in their business models as it may be dictated by the new context. This research builds on the main finding that, in promoting selves, the entrepreneurs are encouraged to maintain extreme flexibility in their adaptation to the new environment and that this may call for threats to be analysed more thoroughly as they are the instigators to changes in business plans. Although that such changes in a new environment is risky because it involves altering routinized work flow and processes with uncertain outcomes but, on the other hand, it facilitates the trial and error learning and eases the adaptation process.

Fifthly, this research can advise the internationalising entrepreneurs in directing their trusting narratives, actions and behaviours based on business mutuality. Entrepreneurship trust researchers concluded that it may generally be built through

"initial control, a 'leap of faith' or discursive processes, depending on the objectives and the extent of the risk involved" (Welter, 2012) p204. This study builds on the discursive processes and extends the practical aspects of trust formation by positing that business mutuality features are considered of utmost importance, particularly in an internationalising context whereby trust is ultimately measured by the various stakeholders in the entrepreneur's ability to establish a viable and successful enterprise.

Sixthly, this study highlights the importance of making claims about distinctiveness and leveraging third parties' endorsements to achieve optimal legitimacy. In essence, business legitimacy in a new environment is perceived as "being heard and being predictable" (Aldrich and Fiol, 1994) and entrepreneurs are highly encouraged to seize every opportunity in converting favourable customers' feedback or service providers' praises and recognition into legitimate cues and signals about the new venture, particularly in the early phases when the firm is marred with uncertainty. Such use of narratives and verbal claims activity will certainly enhance the recognition process and conforms to Suchman (1995) views of the processes in creating a firm's legitimacy, namely by conforming to the dictates of pre-existing audiences, selecting an audience that will support the new activities and manipulating the existing environment to create new audiences (Suchman, 1995).

6.2.2.2 Implications for Policymakers

From an institutional perspective, this research has also potential implications for policymakers. Given the highly contextual and cultural influences that

internationalising entrepreneurs need to consider (Muzychenko, 2008), the related governmental policies, which could serve multi-faceted purposes, are able to improve their conditions and facilitate their task.

First, understanding the regulatory framework for start-ups with its various targeted programmes of a certain country in terms of policies, the legal requirements, and administrative costs for registering a new business and, taxation would certainly influence the entrepreneurs' cognitive and improve their decision-making abilities of identifying opportunities. Regulations that aim reducing the administrative costs for start-ups or easing the access to social and health benefits, has shown to encourage entrepreneurial initiatives, and proven to be a deterrent to the informal economy (OECD Report, 2018). Policymakers are therefore encouraged to well communicate with internationalising entrepreneurs, ease restrictions and find the right balance as not to inhibit entrepreneurship with costs and fees that are proportionally substantial to the internationalising small businesses and this can be achieved by greater digitalisation of procedures and possibly, better coordination between governmental departments.

Second, the findings of this study concur with the long withstanding paradigms and extant scholarly research about the importance of networking to entrepreneurs (Martinez and Aldrich, 2011); (Foley and O'connor, 2013). Accordingly, policies that promote entrepreneurial encounters between the various actors ought to be encouraged. A possible venue would be sponsored governmental international trade fairs, which are often attractive events to individuals, firms and institutions (Ramírez-Pasillas, 2007). They often serve in targeting export support, providing information

about grants, education and training, advice and coaching and finally, creating awareness campaigns about entrepreneurship general contribution and benefits to society while alleviating distorted information that could have been formed when promoting entrepreneurship.

Third, targeted policies can also help narrowing the gap in the geographical variations in entrepreneurial in start-ups and SMEs within a country (OECD Report, 2018); (Fritsch and Wyrwich, 2014) by designing and introducing governmental compensation support and stimuli programmes. Generally, this entices the entrepreneurial firms and small business owners to start in more rural and less dense regions within a country as opposed to starting in a major city thus; contributing towards a more evenly spread economic growth within a country.

6.3 Limitations

6.3.1 Research Methodology Limitations

6.3.1.1 Researcher Reflexivity and Biases

Reflexivity refers to the recognition that the involvement of the researcher as an active participant in the research process shapes the nature of the process and knowledge produced. Accordingly, the findings will inevitably be influenced by the researcher's ontological and epistemological views and recognised as a limitation. From another perspective, biases will be existent as information cannot perfectly be objective from either the supplier or the recipient side.

From another perspective and according to Remenyi et al (2008), difficulties in recalling the events accurately, difficulties in disposing accurate feelings or even suspicion that individuals have about revealing information that might poorly reflect on themselves may also affect the research findings.

However, biases can be minimised by using multiple sources of evidence with the process of triangulation (IBID) and scholars' recommendations involve listening to interviews with a focus on performance as an interviewer and putting all pre-suppositions down when writing the thesis. By triangulating the data with interviews from the stakeholders, it is believed that potential biases have effectively diminished.

6.3.2 Limitations of Research Scope

This study is bounded to a contextual setting that is unique to the emerging countries of the GCC area. Consequently, the initial findings would firstly apply to this specific geographical area. However, further research of entrepreneurial activities in new and nascent sectors in emerging countries setting would enhance this study transferability and contributes to a better understanding of how narratives influence identity, trust and market legitimacy.

It is also acknowledged that cultural and institutional theories related to specific regional shared attitudes, beliefs and social norms were not deeply considered as they could fall beyond the scope of this research. While admitting the GCC region is vastly renowned for its distinctive Islamic culture that can generally influence all sorts of business communication forms and specifically, entrepreneurial pitches and

narratives, this may represent a valid limitation that can be explored by future research.

6.3.3 Generalizability of the Research

Like any qualitative research, the generalizability of the research findings is considered as a limitation. Consistent with McCutcheon and Meredith (1993), case studies are sometimes said to lack rigour and objectivity (Remenyi et al., 2010) but according to Yin (2014), case studies are generalizable to theoretical propositions and the researcher's task is "to expand and generalise theories and not extrapolate probabilities" (Yin, 2013) p.21.

Accordingly, the tool chest of a qualitative researcher should be geared towards trustworthiness and ought to involve issues such as credibility, dependability and, transferability (Sinkovics et al., 2008). Therefore, generalisation may take the form of concepts, theories, specific implications and rich insights (IBID). Easterby-Smith et al (2012) recommend that the sample is sufficiently diverse to allow inferences to other contexts (Easterby-Smith et al., 2012).

This research attends to such requirements. The conceptual framework that was inspired from extant literature and theories provided a basis for rigour. The research design involved a diverse selection of cases according to a pre-defined protocol: internationalising entrepreneurs from various industries. This has allowed ensuring research reliability in capturing a wide array of empirical data from which important themes, key findings and significant propositions were generated.

To ensure construct validity, data triangulation was adopted by looking to interview not only the entrepreneurs but also some key stakeholders (three top employees, one supplier and one customer). This helped establishing adequate operational and consistent measures for the various concepts. Internal validity was also considered by allowing pattern matching between fast-growth and slow-growth firms. For external validity, this research responds to Easterby-Smith (2012) paradigm and argues that the sample was sufficiently diverse to allow inferences to other contexts. For this matter, multiple cases from various industry sectors were selected and interviews with both the entrepreneurs and a number of stakeholders were conducted, rendering the findings and generated propositions to be more robust and potentially more generalizable, subject of course to further testing in other settings (Eisenhardt and Graebner, 2007).

To summarise, it is acknowledged that generalizability limitations to this research do exist. It is further recognized that this study is specific to the cultural context of the cases. But having the main conceptual model involve identity construction, establishing trust and gaining legitimacy, which are constructs that are universally acknowledged to be very meaningful to all new venture founders across cultures; the value of this thesis will be in the interest to many internationalising entrepreneurs.

6.4 Directions for Future Research

Four directions for future research are recommended to follow from this study.

Firstly, as mentioned in the previous paragraphs, the generalisability is questioned as it would be typical to all qualitative case studies. It would therefore be recommended

to replicate the same process of exploration of entrepreneurial identity construction, trusting works and gaining legitimacy activities to other emerging market contexts to see if comparable findings emerge.

Secondly, this research distinguished between slow-growth internationalising firms of typically a sole entrepreneur and fast-growth internationalising firms that are formed by at least two partners and aim to rapidly gain market share. This research noted that their narratives approaches tend to be different and diverge particularly in their trust works and gaining legitimacy activities. Further research may be directed to explore narrative approaches in other emerging markets, given those two different modes of internationalisation tendencies.

Thirdly, this study was set to explore the role of home market context and how entrepreneurs tend to leverage their company's home grown reputation in accordance to their internationalisation approaches: slow-growth and fast-growth. This study considered how the home market reputation is leveraged to either strengthen the value proposition or disguise it, on command and depending on the situation, in the case of both slow-growth and fast-growth modes. Future research in emerging markets and comparative analysis may yield to more insights in regards to this phenomenon.

Finally, the findings revealed that internationalising entrepreneurs significantly relied on their repertoire of friends, connections and networks to secure their market entry, form their identity, establish trust and gain legitimacy. Future research may further look into moderating factors in narratives development about the value and the

relevance of networks such as firms' size, sectors, mode of internationalisation and timing of use.

Appendix A

ECONOMY PROFILE

Saudi Arabia

■ Population (2020): **34.3 million** (UN)
■ GDP per capita (2019; PPP, international $): **46.27 thousand** (IMF)

Attitudes and perceptions

	% Adults	Rank/43
Know someone who has started a new business	57.3	23
Good opportunities to start a business in my area	90.5	1
It is easy to start a business	91.5	1
Personally have the skills and knowledge	86.4	2
Fear of failure (opportunity)	51.6	6
Entrepreneurial intentions	25.1	19

Entrepreneurship impact

	% Adults	Rank/43
Job expectations (expecting to employ six or more people in five years' time).	9.4	7
International (25%+ revenue)	0.8	22
National scope (customers and products/process)	0.8	27=
Global scope (customers and products/process)	0.0	36=
Industry (% TEA in business services)	3.9	39

An equals sign (=) indicates that the ranking position is tied with another economy or economies.
* Those reporting "somewhat decrease" and "strongly decrease".

Motivational

(somewhat or strongly agree)

	% TEA	Rank/43	% Female TEA	% Male TEA
To make a difference	60.8	9	61.8	60.0
Build great wealth	86.9	4	86.7	87.0
Continue family tradition	53.2	3	55.9	51.1
To earn a living	89.5	3=	89.4	89.5

Activity

	% Adults	Rank/43	% Female	% Male
Total early-stage Entrepreneurial Activity	17.3	12	17.7	17.0
Established Business Ownership rate	5.1	32=	3.8	6.1
Entrepreneurial Employee Activity	1.1	28=	0.8	1.3

COVID-19-related

	% Adults	Rank/43
Pandemic has led household income to decrease*	71.0	12
Know someone who started business due to pandemic	41.6	11
Know someone who stopped business due to pandemic	57.1	10

	% TEA	Rank/43
Pursue new opportunities due to pandemic	52.1	9

EXPERT RATINGS OF THE ENTREPRENEURIAL FRAMEWORK CONDITIONS

GEM
Saudi Arabia

- Access to entrepreneurial finance 6.0 (3/45)
- Government policy: support and relevance 6.2 (4/45)
- Government policy: taxes and bureaucracy 5.3 (10/45)
- Government entrepreneurship programs 5.9 (10/45)
- Entrepreneurial education at school 2.9 (21/45)
- Entrepreneurial education post-school 4.6 (23/45)
- Research and development transfer 4.7 (13/45)
- Commercial and professional infrastructure 5.6 (16/45)
- Ease of entry: market dynamics 6.9 (3/45)
- Ease of entry: market burdens and regulations 5.8 (4/45)
- Physical infrastructure 8.1 (2/45)
- Social and cultural norms 6.4 (6/45)

EFCs scale:
0 = very inadequate insufficient status, 10 = very adequate sufficient status. Rank out of 45 recorded in brackets

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Figure 12 - Saudi Arabia Entrepreneurship Economic Profile (GEM Global Entrepreneurship Monitor 2021)

Appendix A (Cont'd)

ECONOMY PROFILE

United Arab Emirates

■ Population (2020): **9.8 million** (UN)
■ GDP per capita (2019; PPP, international $): **58.47 thousand** (IMF)

Attitudes and perceptions

	% Adults	Rank/43
Know someone who has started a new business	65.5	14
Good opportunities to start a business in my area	62.1	14
It is easy to start a business	69.5	10
Personally have the skills and knowledge	54.7	29
Fear of failure (opportunity)	47.1	13
Entrepreneurial intentions	29.3	16

Entrepreneurship impact

	% Adults	Rank/43
Job expectations (expecting to employ six or more people in five years' time).	10.6	5
International (25%+ revenue)	2.9	3
National scope (customers and products/process)	4.1	5
Global scope (customers and products/process)	1.2	3=
Industry (% TEA in business services)	15.8	27=

An equals sign (=) indicates that the ranking position is tied with another economy or economies.
* Those reporting "somewhat decrease" and "strongly decrease".

Motivational

(somewhat or strongly agree)

	% TEA	Rank/43	% Female TEA	% Male TEA
To make a difference	52.4	13	58.1	50.7
Build great wealth	77.7	8	75.9	78.3
Continue family tradition	47.6	5	47.5	47.6
To earn a living	74.7	15	79.6	73.1

Activity

	% Adults	Rank/43	% Female	% Male
Total early-stage Entrepreneurial Activity	15.4	17=	12.2	16.8
Established Business Ownership rate	2.5	41=	1.8	2.9
Entrepreneurial Employee Activity	1.7	23=	1.3	1.9

COVID-19-related

	% Adults	Rank/43
Pandemic has led household income to decrease*	68.1	14
Know someone who started business due to pandemic	40.4	12
Know someone who stopped business due to pandemic	59.5	6

	% TEA	Rank/43
Pursue new opportunities due to pandemic	45.6	14

EXPERT RATINGS OF THE ENTREPRENEURIAL FRAMEWORK CONDITIONS

— GEM
— United Arab Emirates

- Access to entrepreneurial finance 5.3 (13/45)
- Government policy: support and relevance 6.8 (2/45)
- Government policy: taxes and bureaucracy 5.7 (5/45)
- Government entrepreneurship programs 6.0 (8/45)
- Entrepreneurial education at school 5.8 (3/45)
- Entrepreneurial education post-school 5.6 (9/45)
- Research and development transfer 5.1 (8/45)
- Commercial and professional infrastructure 6.0 (10/45)
- Ease of entry: market dynamics 6.2 (9/45)
- Ease of entry: market burdens and regulations 5.2 (9/45)
- Physical infrastructure 7.3 (10/45)
- Social and cultural norms 7.3 (2/45)

EFCs scale:
0 = very inadequate insufficient status, 10 = very adequate sufficient status. Rank out of 45 recorded in brackets

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Figure 13 - UAE Entrepreneurship Economic Profile (GEM Global Entrepreneurship Monitor 2021)

Appendix A (Cont'd)

ECONOMY PROFILE

Qatar

- Population (2020): **2.8 million** (UN)
- GDP per capita (2019; PPP, international $): **91.9 thousand** (IMF)

Attitudes and perceptions

	% Adults	Rank/43
Know someone who has started a new business	52.6	26
Good opportunities to start a business in my area	72.3	8
It is easy to start a business	67.9	12
Personally have the skills and knowledge	68.2	11
Fear of failure (opportunity)	41.3	26
Entrepreneurial intentions	45.6	13

Entrepreneurship impact

	% Adults	Rank/43
Job expectations (expecting to employ six or more people in five years' time).	11.4	4
International (25%+ revenue)	1.8	13
National scope (customers and products/process)	7.8	1
Global scope (customers and products/process)	0.3	21=
Industry (% TEA in business services)	15.0	29

An equals sign (=) indicates that the ranking position is tied with another economy or economies.
* Those reporting "somewhat decrease" and "strongly decrease".

Motivational

(somewhat or strongly agree)

	% TEA	Rank/43	% Female TEA	% Male TEA
To make a difference	37.6	27	47.3	36.0
Build great wealth	77.5	9	78.3	77.4
Continue family tradition	27.7	21	21.0	28.9
To earn a living	56.6	28=	58.6	56.2

Activity

	% Adults	Rank/43	% Female	% Male
Total early-stage Entrepreneurial Activity	17.2	13	12.3	18.4
Established Business Ownership rate	6.1	25=	2.0	7.1
Entrepreneurial Employee Activity	6.6	1	2.3	7.7

COVID-19-related

	% Adults	Rank/43
Pandemic has led household income to decrease*	51.4	22=
Know someone who started business due to pandemic	23.6	18
Know someone who stopped business due to pandemic	42.7	21

	% TEA	Rank/43
Pursue new opportunities due to pandemic	41.9	19

EXPERT RATINGS OF THE ENTREPRENEURIAL FRAMEWORK CONDITIONS

- GEM
- Qatar

- Access to entrepreneurial finance 5.1 (14/45)
- Government policy: support and relevance 5.5 (8/45)
- Government policy: taxes and bureaucracy 5.8 (4/45)
- Government entrepreneurship programs 5.7 (14/45)
- Entrepreneurial education at school 5.3 (4/45)
- Entrepreneurial education post-school 6.0 (6/45)
- Research and development transfer 5.4 (7/45)
- Commercial and professional infrastructure 5.8 (13/45)
- Ease of entry: market dynamics 5.8 (11/45)
- Ease of entry: market burdens and regulations 4.8 (15/45)
- Physical infrastructure 7.1 (14/45)
- Social and cultural norms 5.9 (12/45)

EFCs scale: 0 = very inadequate insufficient status, 10 = very adequate sufficient status. Rank out of 45 recorded in brackets

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**Figure 14 - Qatar Entrepreneurship Economic Profile (GEM Global Entrepreneurship Monitor 2021)**

Appendix B

In our semi-structured interviews two sets of questions were prepared: A) targeted to the entrepreneurs and B) targeted to the stakeholder (Employee, Supplier or Customer)

A- <u>The Entrepreneur:</u>

	<u>Questions</u>	**<u>Theoretical Underpinning</u>**
<u>1-A</u> (10 min)	**<u>Narrative Construction of the Entrepreneurial Identity</u>** **I am interested in the process of the internationalizing entrepreneurs in constructing their identity. Can you elaborate on the process of your identity construction in the new setting?** *<u>Follow-on questions:</u>* • Do you think that you carried over the same identity (of the one back home) when you expanded the business? • (If different) Is it because of the new context? • Has your entrepreneurial identity changed or evolved over time?	• *<u>Epistemologically:</u> A socially constructionist approach to the entrepreneurial identity through discourse and narratives* • ***Fletcher (2003):*** *5th movement in entrepreneurship research. Focus is on processes to produce meaning. Ontologically: Activities and characteristics are not fixed (objects). Instead they are dynamic and constantly emerging, realized, shaped and constructed through social processes. Investigate the processes through which organizational meanings are constructed through language.* • ***Foss (2004):*** *Discourses provide entrepreneurs with the means of interacting and dialoguing with others about concepts which enable them to construct an understanding of themselves, their identities, their beliefs, etc.… to satisfy their need for sense-making of their experiences. Entrepreneurial talk is framed around whatever is suitable the meet the need of the occasion/context* • ***Czarniawska (1997):*** *Individuals construct a self-narrative of identity via autobiographies (Past)* • ***Cerulo, 1997:*** *A realist View: Principle of continuity and consistency of identity i.e it can be discovered* • ***Foss (2004):*** *Principles of a fragmentary, shifting and dynamic nature of identity – Identity construction is a process of self-reflection: past experiences and what they mean to that person*
<u>1-B</u>	**<u>Identity Construction by</u>**	• ***Navis & Glynn (2011):*** *For organizations, identity defines who we are & what we do; locates the organization within the industry* • ***Parker (1997):*** *Process of organizing produces*

	positioning **How would you characterize your entrepreneurial or business identity?** *Follow-On Questions:* • Can you locate yourself in one group and not another? • Are there activities within your trade that you are set about <u>not</u> being involved in? • How do characterize your entry mode?	*organizations through "divisioning" (classifications of both sharing and differences)* • ***Davis and Harre (1991)**: Positioning is the manner people locate themselves to belong in one category and not another, through storylines.* • ***Parker (1997)**: Drawing boundaries is framed by human decisions about what counts as similarities and what count as differences. Claims of apposition and opposition create the process of which organizations and identities are brought into existence.* • ***Burke (1980)**: define identities in relation of counter identities – Me and Not-Me*
(10 Min)		
2-A (10 Min)	**Entrepreneurial Trust: (How)** **How did you get the various stakeholders (Suppliers, Customers, Bankers, Lawyers, Auditors, Employees etc.…) to initially support you? How do you feel you earned their <u>trust</u>?** *Follow-on questions:* • Do you recall what was **their initial feeling** about you • How did their **feelings change** over time? • Can you discuss the relationship	• ***Aldrich (2000)**: Successful entrepreneurs build networks of trust, leading them to market legitimacy* • ***Gartner & Low (1990)**: Organizations emerge when entrepreneurs achieve an understanding among trusting parties (Customers, suppliers and other individuals / organizations) that things will work out.* • ***Aldrich (2000)**: Entrepreneurs develop an identity of a trustworthy person; all trusting parties will observe the entrepreneur's entry to market & make sense of his behaviors.* ***Welter & Smallbone (2006)**: Trust building is elusive people perceive actions differently*

	with each one of those, one at a time	
2-B (10 Min)	**Entrepreneurial Trust: (What, When & Why)** **Was there an incident / factor / event that enhanced that particular feeling of trust in Year 1? Year 2? Year 3?** **Do you recall when you felt somewhat "secure"? Why?** *Follow-on questions:* - Was there a particular event that you believe was critical / a turning point? - Who do you believe helped or hindered the business? - Were there any major setbacks? - If yes, how did you overcome them? - How did "trust" evolve? What gave you the sense of becoming "secure"?	- *Luhmann (2000): Trust can be a substitute for the risks that are inherent in decisions or situations.* - *Welter & Smallbone (2006): For entrepreneurs, trust allows them to reduce transaction costs because of relationships (not via contracts)* - *Williamson (1993): Forms of Trust: **Personal** (Non-Commercial) & **Institutional** (Social, Political, Cultural, Organizational etc....). Some differentiate between **Process-based** and **generalized**.* *Personal Trust: Positive data on record of prior exchange – Assume that partner will not behave in a way that is detrimental to relationship.* *Institutional Trust: Trust of institutional environment (Sanctioning mechanisms, Informal Codes of Conduct and Values)* - *Welter & Smallbone (2006): Changes in trust go hand in hand with stages of business development: in Western countries with trustworthy institutional context, personal trust plays a lesser role as the business develops but without domination. Entrepreneurship is affected by a mixture of personal and institutional trust*
3A (10 Min)	**Entrepreneurial Orientation relationship to:** - **Entrepreneurial Identity** - **Trust**	- *Lumpkin& Dess (1996): EO can be defined as "processes, practices, and decision-making activities that lead to new entry"* - *Miller Covin/Slevin (1989) scale: Pro-activeness, Innovativeness, Risk Taking* - *Gerschewski et al (2016): Passion, Perseverance & Global Mindset are complementary elements to the EO dimensions of pro-activeness, innovativeness and risk taking*

How do you think the following attributes have helped shape your new identity? 1. **Pro-activeness** 2. **Innovativeness** 3. **Risk-Taking** 4. **Passion** 5. **Perseverance** *Follow-on questions:* • How would you characterize their role in your success in the new environment? • Can you discuss each one at a time? • Do you believe it helped in having people instill their trust in you and in what you do?	

B- The Stakeholders (Supplier, Customer or Top Employee)

	Questions	Theoretical Underpinning
1-A (10 Min)	**Narrative Construction of the** **Entrepreneurial Identity** **I am interested in the process of** **the internationalizing** **entrepreneurs in constructing** **their identity.** **Can you elaborate on the**	• *Epistemologically: A socially constructionist approach to the entrepreneurial identity through discourse and narratives* • ***Fletcher (2003):*** *5th movement in entrepreneurship research. Focus is on processes to produce meaning. Ontologically: Activities and characteristics are not fixed (objects). Instead they are dynamic and constantly emerging, realized, shaped and constructed through social processes. Investigate the processes through which organizational meanings are constructed through language.* • ***Foss (2004):*** *Discourses provide entrepreneurs with the means of interacting and dialoguing with others about concepts which enable them to construct an understanding of themselves, their identities, their beliefs, etc… to satisfy their need for sense-making of their experiences.*

	process of the entrepreneur's identity construction in the new setting? *Follow-on questions:* • Do you recall what your initial thoughts, impressions or feelings of him were when you first met him? Did you believe in his story or business model? • Did this feeling change or evolve over time? • (If different) Is it because of the new context?	*Entrepreneurial talk is framed around whatever is suitable the meet the need of occasion/context* • ***Czarniawska (1997):*** *Individuals construct a self-narrative of identity via autobiographies (Past)* • ***Cerulo, 1997:*** *A realist View: Principle of continuity and consistency of identity i.e.it can be discovered* • ***Foss (2004):*** *Principles of a fragmentary, shifting and dynamic nature of identity – Identity construction is a process of self-reflection: past experiences and what they mean to that person* • ***Downing (2005):*** *emplotment process is a matter of "fitting of storylines into tacit plots with an expected pattern and conclusion" of either of a romantic, tragic, melodramatic or ironic nature*
1-B (10 Min)	**Identity Construction by "positioning through divisioning"** **How would you characterize the entrepreneurial or the business identity?** Follow One Questions: • Can you locate the company identity in one group and not another? • Did he attempt to do it?	• ***Navis & Glynn (2011):*** *For organizations, identity defines who we are & what we do; locates industry* • ***Parker (1997):*** *Process of organizing produces organizations through "divisioning" (classifications of both sharing and differences)* • ***Davis and Harre (1991):*** *Positioning is the manner people locate themselves to belong in one category and not another, through storylines.* • ***Parker (1997):*** *Drawing boundaries is framed by human decisions about what counts as similarities and what count as differences. Claims of apposition and opposition create the process of which organizations and identities are brought into existence.* • ***Burke (1980):*** *define identities in relation of counter identities – Me and Not-Me*

	• Can you locate the company identity in relation of counter identities? – Me and Not-Me. • Did he attempt to do it?	
2-A (10 Min)	**Entrepreneurial Trust: (How)** **As one of his Suppliers,** **Customers, Bankers, Lawyers,** **Auditors, Employees etc.…)** **How did you hear about the** **entrepreneur when he first** **started? How did you make** **sense of him?** *Follow-on questions:* • Do you recall what **your initial trust feeling** was about him? • How did your **feelings change** over time? • How did you get to trust him? Can you trust a new start-up from overseas? • Can you discuss your relationship with him?	• ***Aldrich (2000):*** *Successful entrepreneurs build networks of trust, leading them to market legitimacy* • ***Gartner & Low (1990):*** *Organizations emerge when entrepreneurs achieve an understanding among trusting parties (Customers, suppliers and other individuals / organizations) that things will work out.* • ***Aldrich (2000):*** *Entrepreneurs develop an identity of a trustworthy person; all trusting parties will observe the entrepreneur's entry to market & make sense of his behaviors.* • ***Welter & Smallbone (2006):*** *Trust building is elusive people perceive actions differently*
2-B (10 Min)	**Entrepreneurial Trust: (What &** **When)** **Were there any key events that** **enhanced the trust in your** **feelings of him in Year 1? Year**	• ***Luhmann (2000):*** *Trust can be a substitute for the risks that are inherent in decisions or situations.* • ***Welter & Smallbone (2006):*** *For entrepreneurs, trust allows them to reduce transaction costs because of relationships not via contracts* • ***Williamson (1993):*** *Forms of Trust:* ***Personal*** *(Non-Commercial) &* ***Institutional*** *(Social, Political, Cultural, Organizational etc.…). Some differentiate between* ***Process-based*** *and* ***generalized***. ***Personal Trust:*** *Positive data on record of prior exchange – Assume that partner will not behave*

	2? Year 3? **When did you feel mostly "secure"? Why?** *Follow-on questions:* • Were there a <u>particular event</u> that you believe was critical / a turning point in the trust building? • What do you believe helped or hindered the business? • Were there any major setbacks? • If yes, how did you overcome them? • How did "trust" evolve? What gave you the sense of becoming "secure" in your relationship with the entrepreneur?	*in a way that is detrimental to relationship.* ***Institutional Trust:*** *Trust of institutional environment (Sanctioning mechanisms, Informal Codes of Conduct and Values)* • ***Welter & Smallbone (2006):*** *Changes in trust go hand in hand with stages of business development: in Western countries with trustworthy institutional context, personal trust plays a lesser role as the business develops but without domination. Entrepreneurship is affected by a mixture of personal and institutional trust*
3-A (10 Min)	**Entrepreneurial Orientation** **relationship to:** • **Entrepreneurial Identity** • **Trust** **How do you think the following attributes have helped shape your new identity?** 1. **Pro-activeness** 2. **Innovativeness** 3. **Risk-Taking** 4. **Passion** 5. **Perseverance**	• ***Lumpkin& Dess (1996):*** *EO can be defined as "processes, practices, and decision-making activities that lead to new entry"* • ***Miller Covin/Slevin (1989) scale:*** *Pro-activeness, Innovativeness, Risk Taking* • ***Gerschewski et al (2016):*** *Passion, Perseverance & Global Mindset are complementary elements to the EO dimensions of pro-activeness, innovativeness and risk taking*

		Follow-on questions:	
		• Do you believe that those attributes were obvious in dealing with the entrepreneur • Can you discuss each one at a time? • Do you believe it helped you increase your trust in him?	

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