Fast-growth firms and successful environmental entrepreneurs in emerging countries

Saeed Mirvahedi^{1,*}, Sussie C. Morrish², and Dmitri Pletnev³

¹Allameh Tabataba'i University, Tehran, Iran

²University of Canterbury, Christchurch, New Zealand

³Chelyabinsk State University, 129, Br.Kashirinykh str., 454001, Chelyabinsk, Russia

Abstract. Growth is a broad area and many aspect of growth is under research especially in smaller and entrepreneurial firms. Many research show that growth and fast growth happens randomly and is not a continuous phenomenon. In this study, we investigate how successful entrepreneurs grow their firms. The investigation involved ten fast-growth firm cases in Iran -as an emerging economy- in different industries. The research is qualitative and data gathered through semi structured in-depth interviews. After coding, all interviews are mapped. By using Decision Explorer® all causal maps are analyzed. Analysis show that fast growth is a direct outcome of entrepreneurial marketing (EM) practices and indirectly influenced by serendipity. Serendipity is an element observed in many firms that generally occurs at the initial phase of firm formation and could bring great opportunities but indirectly associated with fast-growth. However, serendipity itself is not important but the ability to recognize and exploit opportunity is a crucial activity that entrepreneurs are really great at it. The ability of entrepreneurs to exploit serendipitous opportunities and use entrepreneurial marketing practices in terms of innovative products and activities/process lead to fast growth. Other elements, such as network, innovation, and perseverance, could either directly or indirectly influence growth.

1 Introduction

Growth is an essential matter for any business, especially small and entrepreneurial firms. Although corporate growth is a well-researched area, it is less so in smaller firms (Glancey, 1998). Many studies have investigated growth and its relationship with other organizational activities and measures such as profit, market share, sales, number of employees, age and assets among others (see Beck, Demirgüç-Kunt, & Maksimovic, 2005; Liedholm, 2002; Weinzimmer, Nystrom, & Freeman, 1998). Many fast-growth firms are entrepreneurial, and pursue growth using innovative strategies (Das & He, 2006; Miozzo & DiVito, 2016); however, growth is a broad area, and many aspects of growth remain under-investigated. This study investigates how and why entrepreneurial firms grow and what

*Corresponding author: mirvahedi@gmail.com

elements are common in fast-growth firms in the context of a developing country. Our country of interest is Iran, the second-largest country in the Middle East and the 17th-largest country in the world, with over 81 million inhabitants and a land area of 636,372 square miles. Given this condition, Iran offers a fruitful area of study that is unique in terms of its composition, culture, and economy. Understanding how growth occurs in Iran and the role that entrepreneurs play are important contributions to both literature and economic development of the region.

1.1 Successful entrepreneurs and growth

Successful entrepreneurs exert more effort in pursuit of their goals (Przepiorka, [4]); thus are usually hard-working and tenacious people. Some essential characteristics make entrepreneurs inspiring leaders and lead to a successful company. Research shows that entrepreneurs' industry experience may result in better opportunities for growth, whereas alertness is a trait that can make a successful entrepreneur and firm (Glauser & Holland, [5]). Recent research also showed that the networks of entrepreneurs are an essential factor in the financial success of a firm (Banerji & Reimer, [6]). This finding supports previous findings on the benefits of networks in entrepreneurship and its relation to growth and firm success (Coviello & Munro, [7]).

1.2 Fast growth

The concept of fast growth is sometimes ambiguous. The term "fast growth" and "high growth" in some studies are used interchangeably. Nonetheless, they convey different meanings (Cooney & Malinen, [8]). "Fast-growth implies growth over time and measurement of speed, whereas high-growth alludes to quantity" [8, p. 4]. There is no consensus on the definition or measurement of fast growth, but various measures have been developed in different studies. Scholars like Littunen and Niittykangas [9] define fast growth as doubling turnover during a specific period with a pre-defined minimum sales turnover. Storey [10] applied other criteria to define a fast-growth firm suggesting that firms with a 30% compound turnover each year over the previous four financial years could be considered fast-growth firms. Also, he applied a specific current turnover amount for firms that had an acceptable turnover rate to avoid selecting imprecise samples for the study. Other scholars like Birch [11] used employee expansion as a measure for fast-growth. He defined firms ranking in the top 5% as fast-growth firms. Brüderl and Preisendörfer [12] considered doubling employment, plus creating five jobs within the first four years to be a fast-growth rate. In their study, only a small percentage of small new firms are considered fast growth. In another study in the US, achieving a compound three-year growth with a growth rate of 80% or more in each year was considered a fast-growth index [13]. Moschella, Tamagni, & Yu [14] argue that although entrepreneurial firms seek to find ways to grow fast, they seldom experience substantial growth, and continuous growth is an unusual phenomenon. Just 6% of small firms grow ceaselessly (Garnsey & Heffernan, [15]).

Daunfeldt & Halvarsson [16], Pletnev, Naumova, Mirvahedi [17], Pletnev, Barkhatov [18] posit that fast growth happens when firms are younger, and as they age, the probability of growing fast decreases. An earlier study by Glancey [1] also found that growth is a function of location, industry, and profitability where younger firms experience a higher rate of growth than older firms.

Scholars developed a new model showing what influences fast growth (Zhang, Yang, & Ma, [19]). This model proposes that the environment, firm resources, entrepreneurial attributes, and entrepreneurial strategies are the primary influencers of fast growth. Another

study found that a firm's capabilities in terms of marketing, finance, and innovation were attributes that assisted firms in achieving fast growth (Barbero, Casillas, & Feldman, [20]). A recent study focused on the role of R&D and innovation and concluded that in some countries, there is a clear link between fast growth and innovation (Blasco, Teruel, & Jové-Llopis, [21]). Another study showed that strategies that focus on the high quality of products and services; and strategies that focus on offering low-cost products are standard practices that firms adopt to gain a competitive advantage (Upton, Teal, & Felan, [22]). They also found that planned strategies, involvement of board of directors in goal setting, and sharing information with staff are other practices that lead to fast growth.

The existing literature that investigates how entrepreneurial firms or small businesses grow as well as how they manage to grow rapidly, revolves around four main elements of entrepreneurial firms. It is an entrepreneur's characteristics, firm attributes, culture and resources, industry and environment, and the existence of a strategy or willingness to grow. These all appear to be essential elements for fast growth. Therefore, growth depends on what lens the researcher is looking through. Some scholars, like Coad et al. [23] Dobbs and Hamilton [24] believe that no integrative and unique theory can explain fast growth.

The chance may play a role in entrepreneurship. To justify temporary high growth, Storey [25] attempts to explicate the growth of entrepreneurial firms based on optimism and chance (OC). He considers optimism as an integral part of entrepreneurship and chance as a driver of business continuity. He argues that an entrepreneur has fixed in the short and medium-term resources like human and social capital and so unable to explain why entrepreneurial firms experience various growth rates. The entrepreneur likened to a gambler who sits in front of a roulette wheel and desires to invest money. They continue staying at the table as long as they have sufficient resources to invest.

Following Storey's OC theory and Coad study based on Gambler's Ruin theory, the chance regarded as an integral part of entrepreneurship and its role in optimism and entrepreneur motivation to continue the business should not be ignored. Glancey [1] observes that there are scholars who consider growth in small firms as a stochastic process, which is the result of market turbulence, managerial ability, diversification, and pure chance. Wagner [26] finds that "persistence of chance" in terms of growing fast exists if a firm has had faster growth in the past. It means that chance affects growth, but he indicates that further research is required to examine whether it is pure chance or something else that results in a successful firm. He further explains that in doing so, scholars need to investigate innovation, strategic planning, attitudes, and expectations of managers.

1.3 Research purpose

Heeding the call of many scholars and understand this phenomenon better, we think it appropriate to investigate fast growth in specific contexts such as a country or region. The main research problem in this study revolves around the main elements that lead to fast growth among high grown firms in Iran. Our country of interest is Iran, and the focus is revenue growth. Thus the main research question is: What leads to fast growth in entrepreneurial firms in Iran?

Entrepreneurship research in Iran is growing dramatically (Bagheri & Akbari, [27]), and this demonstrates the need for building practical theories in all the aspect of entrepreneurship. Private sector activity in Iran includes small-scale workshops, farming, some manufacturing, and services, in addition to medium-scale construction, cement production, mining, and metalworking. The role of small and entrepreneurial enterprises in Iran economic growth and job creation have a positive relationship with entrepreneurship development (Rezaei-Moghaddam & Izadi, [28]). According to ISIPO (Iran Small Industries and Industrial Parks Organization), the contribution of SMEs in Iran is about

98% and demonstrates a vital share of entrepreneurship. Although entrepreneurial firms are growing, the effect of unfair sanctions should be considered (Cheratian, Goltabar, & Calá, [29]). Exploring elements of fast growth will shed some understanding of how firms grow in Iran and what influences this growth.

2 Methodology and data

The nature and scope of the study warrant a qualitative method. More specifically, we use a multiple case approach (Yin, [30]). Using semi-structured interviews (Riege, [31]; Storey, [10]) with the founders of firms, we investigated ten fast-growth entrepreneurial firms in Iran. These firms have an average growth rate of 300% and belong to various business sectors.

There are several indicators of fast growth. We use revenue growth as a measurable and tangible index. To find suitable firms, we asked a consulting institute in Iran to provide us with a database of potential Iranian fast-growth firms to interview. Following established indicators in literature, we adopt measures like doubling turnover during a specific period of 30% compound turnover in each year [9, 10] as our criteria in selecting participants. Table 1, shows demographic information of participants in this study.

Table 1. Demographic information of firms and entrepreneurs.

Code	Business	Year founded	Type of Market	Age / gender of entrepreneur	Education of Entrepreneur	Entrepreneurial background	Growth
ATI	Technical Services	2000	B2B	58-M	High school diploma	Yes	400% in the last year
BTI	Manufacturing	2001	B2C	44-M	High school diploma	No	200% in last four years
CTI	Technical Services	2002	B2B	45-M	MSc	No	300% in past four years
DTI	Technical Services	2005	B2B	53-M	MBA	No	500% in past four years
ETI	IT	2006	B2C	39-M	MBA	No	100% every year in past 6 years
FTI	Technical Services	2006	B2B	44-M	MSc	No	100% every year in past 6 years
GTI	Technical Services	2006	B2B	47-M	BSc	No	600% in the last year
HTI	Manufacturing	2008	B2B	45-M	MSc	No	600% in the last year
ITI	Service	2009	B2B	39-M	BSc	Yes	900% in past 3 years

JTI	Service	2010	B2B	37-M	MBA	No	600% in the last year
-----	---------	------	-----	------	-----	----	-----------------------

We used causal mapping to analyze interviews [32, 33]. The causal map is a cognitive map for building cause and effect relationships between concepts and illustrates mental models [33, 34]. Concepts considered as variables, and causal beliefs demonstrate the relationship between two concepts. The benefit of causal mapping is in its ability to elicit tacit knowledge of entrepreneurs, which is difficult to express [35].

We follow a primary coding schema established by researchers to accomplish the coding signs to cover all requirements of the right map (see, for example, [34]). In Table 2 a complete coding category used in this research is shown.

Table 2. Coding category: Adapted from [34].

Symbol	Definition
+	Positively affects
-	Negatively effects
=	Is equivalent to, is defined as
e	Is an example of, is one member of
L	Leads to

The causal mapping follows a four-step guide to map out the verbal and written words from an interview or reports. The first step is to identify causal statements that capture a relationship between two concepts followed by identifying the type of relationship between concepts that called codifying the links. The third step is building a primary causal map where the researcher would be able to elicit all key concepts, make a relationship among them, and make a primary map. The final step involves tidying up and finalizing the map (Narayanan & Armstrong, [36]).

We applied central concepts and cluster analysis to analyze data. Central concept analysis deals with concepts with many peripheral concepts surrounding them. It means that central concepts are nodes that play a significant role in the map. Cluster is a useful command for slicing the model into small chunks to get rid of other irrelevant concepts in a particular area. Cluster helps scholars to see the map in hierarchy view with more relevant concepts. We improved the reliability of our coding by using an external coder and comparing their coding to ours [33, 34]. The percentage of agreement was at a satisfactory rate. We observed an agreement rate of 82% that fell within the satisfactory rate used in previous studies of 93% and 88% [34].

3 Results and Discussions

After mapping out the interviews, we ran central concepts analysis in each map and aggregated all central concepts. **Error! Reference source not found.** shows the frequency of elements leading to fast growth. We discuss the elements that surfaced in more than a third of the participating firms.

Table 3. Elements leading to fast growth.

Central concepts	Frequency in firms	Influence on fast growth
Serendipity	9/10	Indirect
Entrepreneurial marketing practices	7/10	Direct
Knowledge and experience	7/10	Direct/Indirect
Networks/ Communication skills	6/10	Direct/Indirect
Innovation	5/10	Direct/Indirect
Perseverance	5/10	Direct/Indirect

3.1 Serendipity

One of the main contributions of this study is providing evidence of the existence of serendipity and its indirect association with fast-growth in the investigated businesses. We report that serendipity is an integral element of a business. All participants believe in some form of serendipity in their day-to-day business. They indicate that serendipity cannot be ignored in their business and that its role in their success needs highlighting. The cluster analysis showed that serendipity potentially brings new opportunities to the firm, and entrepreneurs discover and exploit these new opportunities using their skills, ability, alertness, and opportunistic point of view. To this end, entrepreneurs tried to keep themselves informed about their market and the changes in it. Serendipity serves as a catalyst or facilitator of growth occurring at the start of the growth process.

Serendipity is not just pure chance, and entrepreneurs differentiate serendipity from chance. Extant literature holds that serendipity leads to fortunate accidental discoveries but happens only to prepared minds. Serendipity may explain success in entrepreneurial firms and argues that perhaps it's time to abandon our fixation with customer focus and start taking serendipity seriously. In a recent study, Mirvahedi and Morrish [37] introduced "entrepreneurial serendipity" and indicates that serendipity is a common phenomenon in all businesses. The way entrepreneurs exploit serendipitous opportunities to determine whether firms grow or not. It is worth noting that serendipity is indirectly related to growth, and there are other mediating variables between them. Sometimes the causal maps seemed to show a direct link between serendipity and fast growth but in further investigation, we found that a firm's ability to exploit new opportunities and to implement an effective marketing strategy mediates the relationship between serendipity and growth.

3.2 Entrepreneurial Marketing Practices

Elements of entrepreneurial marketing were evident in the causal maps of firms that have limited resources but with the willingness to grow. Entrepreneurs develop their style of marketing in terms of marketing practices, and this is the practical layer of being entrepreneurial. Entrepreneurs in this study thought and behaved in their style, rather than employing traditional marketing practices. They used the framework of traditional marketing but adapted it in a way to service their market faster and more efficiently in terms of cost-benefit. For instance, offering premium quality products and services along with higher prices was one of the strategies that the firms employed. Most entrepreneurs believed that if they offered high-quality products at a higher price, there would be buyers in the market that were not price sensitive. Also, entrepreneurs constantly looked for new opportunities through their available means and market intelligence. They gained market intelligence by keeping close to the market (presence in the market) and by looking for subtle changes that were likely to affect their business. Similar to the concept of managing by walking around, these entrepreneurs do "marketing by walking around" as a key strategy to obtain market and customer information instead of traditional marketing research. Entrepreneurs also spent plenty of time around the market to strengthen their relationship with their customers. Most of the practices they do could be categorized entrepreneurial based on established EM elements

To better understand and show the marketing practices employed by participating firms, we divided their practices according to the traditional marketing mix (4Ps) to explore how entrepreneurs applied marketing practices to the benefit of their firms, and how they achieved efficient use of their marketing resources, and how they achieved good returns for

their marketing expense.

Product/service is the first concern of entrepreneurs, especially when they operate in a very competitive or chaotic market. The findings illustrate that most of the firms focused on the premium quality of products and services. In many cases, this decision (entering the quality market as they call it) was a pre-set goal or initial strategy. In many cases, providing the best quality was an unplanned strategy. Most of them just acted according to their gut feeling or insight because they did not have marketing knowledge or experience; therefore, they chose a quality focus. In other cases, entrepreneurs conducted formal or informal marketing research to understand the needs of the market. Informal research here included experience and market sense. The range of products and services is another element important for fast growth. This strategy was employed by entrepreneurs to control the future of the firms and increase profitability. Entrepreneurs believed that they should not put all their eggs in the same basket, so they made a portfolio of products or services to increase the performance of the firm in the marketplace. To achieve this strategy, firms needed to be very innovative in creating new products and services.

Pricing is a significant issue that affects the whole company in terms of keeping or losing a market. This practice was highly connected to the quality of products, as entrepreneurs thought if the quality is high, customers will pay more for their products. They believed that when they offered high-quality products at higher prices, there would be buyers who were not sensitive to price. In pricing strategies, two scenarios emerged. The first scenario was a premium-pricing strategy with high quality as the key priority. This strategy not only creates a high-quality image but also puts firms in the market segment where quality was a focal emphasis for competitors. Participants also asked how concerned they were to lose their market. Respondents were not very concerned because the quality of their products and services was high, so their customers were very willing to pay more to get more value.

In some cases, they based pricing on the firm's bargaining power to sell its products or services. This strategy identified in two cases where entrepreneurs used their experience and knowledge about the market and set prices based on their perception, power to negotiate with customers, and the customers' willingness to buy. Notably, this method requires very high-quality services, knowledge, and experience to extend that high price to customers.

Firms widely used the internet in their distribution methods. For example, many of them established online shopping and systems of receiving customer requests through their websites.

One of the essential elements of marketing is promotional practices, and increasing awareness about the company, its brand, and its operation so that the company is well-known to people and customers. It is highly notable that the majority of the investigated firms did not employ traditional promotional methods such as TV and radio or outdoor advertising. Instead, they focused on using other inexpensive methods with greater influence on their target markets.

The sagacity of entrepreneurs led them to target the market with less expenditure and more efficiently rather than using traditional methods. Networks, word of mouth, internet, and other innovative methods boosted the firms' brands. Entrepreneurs believed that these tools, sometimes altogether and sometimes individually, helped them to improve their brands. Word of mouth, especially when the quality was more than acceptable, assisting them in keeping their brands at the top of people's minds. Apart from the internet, being present at fairs and exhibitions was a way of building and reinforcing the brand of the company. There were other low-cost, innovative ways entrepreneurs boosted their brands. For example, DTI's entrepreneur included his firm's catalog at the back of each book that was published. Some entrepreneurs wrote articles in magazines and newspapers to promote

their brand and inform people about what their companies did.

Brand power was a major concern for entrepreneurs. They needed their clients to remember them, and much effort was devoted to staying at the forefront of people's minds. Some firms did a huge amount of free or highly discounted work in order to attract customers to the company, introduce their brand, and establish themselves in the market. By leveraging such efforts, they penetrated the competitive market, and by supplying great quality products, they promoted their companies as some of the best firms in the market. Therefore, it demonstrates that these widely used marketing strategies pave the way for reaching goals and speed up the process of fostering brand awareness, especially at the early stages of the company life cycle.

3.3 Knowledge and Experience, Relying on Networks, Innovation, and Perseverance

Knowledge and experience are elements that influence the growth of firms. Its importance is apparent, particularly in the industrial service sector, given there is a greater need for professional knowledge in this sector. In two cases, entrepreneurs did not have related knowledge or experience, but further investigation revealed that partners of the business experienced in that business (Nikolaeva, Pletnev, [38]).

Marketing by networking is a distinctive strategy among fast-growth firms. This appears to be a reliable method for accessing cheaper resources in more significant quantities, especially for small firms. Entrepreneurs leveraged their networks to reach their target markets and gain more resources. Networking is an economical way to enable entrepreneurs to gain more benefits than employing traditional marketing strategies such as STP (segmentation, targeting, and positioning).

Our findings show there are four different ways the firms benefited from using networks. The first benefit is obtaining the required resources. Entrepreneurs leveraged their networks to access more resources, and this helped them to acquire resources quicker, cheaper, and more comfortable. Saving money is a benefit for entrepreneurs, and they could create a competitive advantage through it.

The second benefit is that it allowed firms to reach the right clients and customers. Using networks is especially crucial in helping new businesses gain the first client or lock down the first project. This is also an inexpensive way of targeting customers compared to traditional marketing and broad advertising. It decreases the cost of reaching the target market while simultaneously speeding up the process of finding new customers. Many entrepreneurs found their first clients at the start of their business through their networks.

The third benefit is that networks allow entrepreneurs to get new ideas and explore new opportunities. Sometimes networks serve as a facilitator in marketing research and getting information about the market. The fourth benefit is that networks help entrepreneurs to find business partners interested in investing in the business. Networks facilitate the process of meeting and finding reliable partners, facilitate marketing practices in entrepreneurial firms, and lead to saving time and money. They also increase the efficiency of marketing practices in smaller firms. Networks are highly important for entrepreneurs, and entrepreneurs should maintain and improve their businesses and social networks.

Innovation assisted firms to set their practices and avoid passive action in the market. In particular, innovation played a significant role in high-technology industries (e.g. ICT) where entrepreneurs put much effort into increasing the rate of innovation in their companies to gain a competitive advantage. Innovation can be found not only in creating new products and services but also applies to create innovative methods of marketing or other processes.

Perseverance (hard work) is among the distinctive entrepreneur characteristics and a

source of serendipity and fast growth in our study. Perseverance influenced fast-growth in more than a third of the participating firms. The majority of entrepreneurs maintained that this was the main reason for their success, and there was no success without hard work and insisting on their vision to be successful.

4 Conclusion

Our findings lead us to conclude that serendipity does play a role in fast growth although it does not influence it directly. Serendipity opens up opportunities that need to be recognized and exploited (Mirvahedi, [39]) before they can lead to growth. Our participants exploited these opportunities using entrepreneurial marketing as a strategy (Morrish, [40]). EM therefore mediates the relationship between serendipity and growth. Although we found that other elements such as knowledge and experience, networks, innovation, and perseverance can also influence growth, our causal maps do not clearly show whether these are directly or indirectly influencing growth and warrants further investigation. Based on this, EM is a dominant strategy: employed by entrepreneurial firms to be more competitive in the market. In terms of practical strategies, they are very keen to improve the quality of products and services, and they desire to be the quality leader in their market. Besides, they gather information by being around and close to the market. This assists them to strengthen their ties with their customers as well. Networks play a very significant role in every aspect of the business, so expanding these relations and connections is a suitable strategy to pursue.

Our study offers an essential contribution to OC theory [25]. In OC theory, optimism and chance are two main factors that encourage entrepreneurs to continue the business. Optimism helps entrepreneurs to maintain hope that they may gain more and chance is a driver of entrepreneurial behavior, influencing whether they will continue their efforts. The study confirms correctness the comparison of the entrepreneur to a gambler who desires to invest their money in the game to earn more and more. Our findings showed that chance is not the only thing that may lead to a successful firm. The ability to recognize that chance and convert it to a new opportunity is likely to be more important than chance alone since serendipitous opportunities need to be leveraged by responding well to them and using available resources (Merrilees, Miller, & Tiessen, [41]). Entrepreneurs often define themselves as explorers of new opportunities. This suggests that the ability to realize and exploit an opportunity is important in being able to identify a serendipitous opportunity and use it. Based on our findings, we develop a fast-growth model that serendipity leads to opportunity recognition, and those opportunities exploited by EM strategies could lead to fast growth. The exploiting logic appears to have a bilateral relationship with EM strategies, but this needs to be further investigated (Mirvahedi [39]).

References

1. K. Glancey, International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behaviour & Research **4**(1), 18-27 (1998)
2. T. Beck, A. Demirgüç-Kunt, V. Maksimovic, The Journal of Finance **60**(1), 137-177 (2005) doi:10.1111/j.1540-6261.2005.00727.x
3. M. Miozzo, L. DiVito, Research Policy **45**(5), 964-986 (2016)
4. A. Przepiorka, Time & Society **25**(1), 40-60 (2016)
5. M. Glauser, D. Holland, *The Leadership Traits Shared by Successful Entrepreneurs. Entrepreneur & Innovation Exchange* (2016)

6. D. Banerji, T. Reimer, *Computers in Human Behavior* **90**, 46-52 (2019)
7. N. Coviello, H. Munro, *International Business Review* **6(4)**, 361-386 (1997)
8. T.M. Cooney, P. Malinen, *Firm growth as a research issue* (2004)
9. H. Littunen, H. Niittykangas, *Journal of Small Business and Enterprise Development* **17(1)**, 8-31 (2010) doi:10.1108/14626001011019107
10. D.J. Storey, *The ten percenters-Fast growing SMEs in Great Britain. Research report* (Deloitte & Touche, London, 1996)
11. D. L. Birch, *Job generation in America* (New York, 1987)
12. J. Brüderl, P. Preisendörfer, *International Journal of Sociology* **30(3)**, 45-70 (2000)
13. B.R. Barringer, F.F. Jones, D.O. Neubaum, *Journal Of Business Venturing* **20(5)**, 663-687 (2005)
14. D. Moschella, F. Tamagni, X. Yu, *Small Business Economics*, 1-22 (2018)
15. E. Garnsey, P. Heffernan, *Growth setbacks in new firms. Futures* **37(7)**, 675-697 (2005) doi:10.1016/j.futures.2004.11.011
16. S.-O. Daunfeldt, D. Halvarsson, *Small Business Economics* **44(2)**, 361-383 (2015)
17. D. Pletnev, K. Naumova, S. Mirvahedi, *E3S Web of Conferences* **04029**, 157 (2020) doi:10.1051/e3sconf/202015704029
18. D. Pletnev, V. Barkhatov, *Innovation in Sustainable Management and Entrepreneurship. SIM 2019. Springer Proceedings in Business and Economics. Springer, Cham*, 127-136 (2020) https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-44711-3_10
19. Y. Zhang, X. Yang, F. Ma, *Journal of Small Business and Enterprise Development* **15(4)**, 675-688 (2008)
20. J.L. Barbero, J.C. Casillas, H.D. Feldman, *International Small Business Journal* **29(6)**, 671-694 (2011)
21. A.S. Blasco, M. Teruel, E. Jové-Llopis, *Cuadernos de Economía* **37(75)**, 637-670 (2018)
22. N. Upton, E.J. Teal, J.T. Felan, *Journal of Small Business Management* **39(1)**, 60-72 (2001)
23. A. Coad, S.-O. Daunfeldt, W. Hözl, D. Johansson, P. Nightingale, *Industrial and Corporate Change* **23(1)**, 91-112 (2014)
24. M. Dobbs, R.T. Hamilton, *International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behaviour & Research* **13(5)**, 296-322 (2007)
25. D.J. Storey, *Optimism and chance: The elephants in the entrepreneurship room* **29(4)**, 303-321 (2011) doi:10.1177/0266242611403871
26. J. Wagner, *Small Business Economics* **4(2)**, 125-131 (1992) doi:10.1007/bf00389853
27. A. Bagheri, M. Akbari, *International Journal of Business Innovation and Research* **18(2)**, 208-241 (2019)
28. K. Rezaei-Moghaddam, H. Izadi, *Journal of Global Entrepreneurship Research* **9(1)**, 17 (2019)
29. I. Cheratian, S. Goltabar, C.D. Calá, *Spatial drivers of firm entry in Iran* (2019)
30. R.K. Yin, *Case study research: Design and methods* (Sage publications, INC, 2009)
31. A. Riege, *Qualitative Market Research: An International Journal* **6(2)**, 75-86 (2003) doi:10.1108/13522750310470055
32. F. Ackermann, C. Eden, *Making strategy: Mapping out strategic success* (SAGE, London, 2011)

33. R. Axelrod, *The cognitive mapping approach to decision making. Structure of decision* (1976)
34. P.S. Barr, J.L. Stimpert, A.S. Huff, Long Range Planning **26(1)**, 156-156 (1993) doi:10.1016/0024-6301(93)90335-d
35. V. Ambrosini, C. Bowman, International Small Business Journal **26(4)**, 403-431 (2008) doi:10.1177/0266242608091172
36. V. Narayanan, D.J. Armstrong, *Causal mapping for research in information technology* (Idea Group Publishing, 2005)
37. S. Mirvahedi, S. Morrish, Journal of Research in Marketing and Entrepreneurship **19(2)**, 182-200 (2017) doi: 10.1108/JRME-10-2017-0045
38. E. Nikolaeva, D. Pletnev, Journal of Advanced Research in Law and Economics **6(4)**, 768-774 (2015) doi:10.14505/jarle.v6.4(14).06
39. S. Mirvahedi, *An investigation into the role of serendipity, effectuation, and entrepreneurial marketing in fast-growth entrepreneurial firms. (PhD)* (University of Canterbury, Christchurch, 2014)
40. S. Morrish, Journal of Research in Marketing and Entrepreneurship **13(2)**, 120-125 (2011)
41. B. Merrilees, D. Miller, J. Tiessen, Small Enterprise Research **6(2)**, 3-11 (1998)