Founder Pre-Entry Experience and New Venture Innovation Over Time: An Examination of Multiple Paths

ABSTRACT

Founder pre-entry experiences are widely recognized as a source of variance in innovation across new ventures, but extant theory gives short shrift to the evolving founding team context. In this paper, we theorize and test a model that examines the complex interplay between pre-entry experience and membership dynamics and establishes a direct impact of team fluidity on innovation, and its moderating influence on the relationship between pre-entry experience and innovation. Together, these influences and associated predictions help deepen our understanding and form the outlines of a richer theory of pre-entry experience effects on venture innovation. Using structural equation modeling, we test the model and associated hypotheses within a large cohort of 1,579 new ventures tracked for eight years. The results provide broad empirical support for the model across a wide range of specifications, but mixed support for specific hypotheses.
Zeki Simsek is a Professor of Management and Gressette Chair of Business Strategy and Planning at the College of Business. Prior to this appointment he held the Eversource Scholar of Technological Entrepreneurship and Ackerman Scholar at the University of Connecticut. Simsek's research focuses on strategic leadership, innovation, and entrepreneurship. His papers regularly appear in the field’s premier outlets such as the Academy of Management Journal, Strategic Management Journal, Organization Science, Journal of Applied Psychology, and Journal of Management, among others. The New England Journal of Entrepreneurship in 2016 recognized Simsek as one of the most influential authors globally in entrepreneurship research in the 21st century as a result of his research output in top-tier management journals from 2000 to 2015. A recent analysis measuring scholarly impact in management education in the Academy of Management Learning and Education put Simsek in the top 1.6 percent out of more than 6,325 authors in the area of strategic management. An award winning teacher, Simsek has taught executives, masters, undergraduates, and Ph.D. students. Through his venture consulting class, he and his students have provided evidenced based solutions to address the pressing problems or nascent opportunities for hundreds of small to medium-sized firms. Simsek is currently the Chair of Management Dept. TPR Committee, and has held numerous departmental, school, and university-level committees and faculty council positions. In part as recognition of these efforts across the spectrum from the school and university to community levels, and in part for his scholarly achievements, Simsek received the Research Excellence, as well as Distinguished Service awards at the University of Connecticut prior to joining Clemson in 2016. Simsek currently teaches Strategic Management course in the MBA program, and Ph.D. Seminar in Strategic Management: Research Foundations. He also serves as an associate editor of the Academy of Management Journal, and on the editorial boards of Strategic Management Journal and Academy of Management Discoveries.