

Entrepreneurial Venture Creation through Anchor Event Activities: Pop-Up Stores as On-Site Arenas

Authors : Birgit A. A. Solem, Kristin Bentsen

Abstract : Scholarly attention in entrepreneurship is currently directed towards understanding entrepreneurial venture creation as a process -the journey of new economic activities from nonexistence to existence often studied through flow- or network models. To complement existing research on entrepreneurial venture creation with more interactivity-based research of organized activities, this study examines two pop-up stores as anchor events involving on-site activities of fifteen participating entrepreneurs launching their new ventures. The pop-up stores were arranged in two middle-sized Norwegian cities and contained different brand stores that brought together actors of sub-networks and communities executing venture creation activities. The pop-up stores became on-site arenas for the entrepreneurs to create, maintain, and rejuvenate their networks, at the same time as becoming venues for temporal coordination of activities involving existing and potential customers in their venture creation. In this work, we apply a conceptual framework based on frequently addressed dilemmas within entrepreneurship theory (discovery/creation, causation/effectuation) to further shed light on the broad aspect of on-site anchor event activities and their venture creation outcomes. The dilemma-based concepts are applied as an analytic toolkit to pursue answers regarding the nature of anchor event activities typically found within entrepreneurial venture creation and how these anchor event activities affect entrepreneurial venture creation outcomes. Our study combines researcher participation with 200 hours of observation and twenty in-depth interviews. Data analysis followed established guidelines for hermeneutic analysis and was intimately intertwined with ongoing data collection. Data was coded and categorized in NVivo 12 software, and iterated several times as patterns were steadily developing. Our findings suggest that core anchor event activities typically found within entrepreneurial venture creation are; a concept- and product experimentation with visitors, arrangements to socialize (evening specials, auctions, and exhibitions), store-in-store concepts, arranged meeting places for peers and close connection with municipality and property owners. Further, this work points to four main entrepreneurial venture creation outcomes derived from the core anchor event activities; (1) venture attention, (2) venture idea-realization, (3) venture collaboration, and (4) venture extension. Our findings show that, depending on which anchor event activities are applied, the outcomes vary. Theoretically, this study offers two main implications. First, anchor event activities are both discovered and created, following the logic of causation, at the same time as being experimental, based on "learning by doing" principles of effectuation during the execution. Second, our research enriches prior studies on venture creation as a process. In this work, entrepreneurial venture creation activities and outcomes are understood through pop-up stores as on-site anchor event arenas, particularly suitable for interactivity-based research requested by the entrepreneurship field. This study also reveals important managerial implications, such as that entrepreneurs should allow themselves to find creative physical venture creation arenas (e.g., pop-up stores, showrooms), as well as collaborate with partners when discovering and creating concepts and activities based on new ideas. In this way, they allow themselves to both strategically plan for- and continually experiment with their venture.

Keywords : anchor event, interactivity-based research, pop-up store, entrepreneurial venture creation

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