

INFORMATION STUDIES DAYS 2020

# **The Selection of Digital Information Sources: The Case of Entrepreneurs**

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## **Research Background**

The widespread of digitalization, especially for online search engines, has a significant impact on how entrepreneurs access information (Muhamad et al., 2018). Business owners use the Internet and digital devices to seek, retrieve, learn, share, and use the information for conducting day-to-day business activities. Despite the popularity of digital information sources, current

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research often discussed the entrepreneurs' challenges in reaching quality information through online sources. To illustrate, Hokkanen (2009) revealed entrepreneurs' obstacles in reaching new legislation information. Meanwhile, Nguyen (2018) and Zeleti et al. (2013) criticized the accuracy, sufficiency, and relevance of online information sources for entrepreneurs' use. These findings indicate a necessity to examine and understand entrepreneurs' information-seeking behaviors in the digital realm. Furthermore, the entrepreneurship literature faces insufficient work on the domain of information behavior study- i.e. information-seeking behaviors (ISB) (Spigel, 2015; Theodoraki et al., 2017). The process of information in which entrepreneurs engage may have a significant impact on the outcomes of their decision and later on business success. That is why an understanding of entrepreneurs' ISB is essential to support their success. The ISB study covers how people make choices about where and how to find information, as well as the way they consider or act based on the information they receive (Choo, 2005). This study thus aims to examine and investigate entrepreneurs' intention to select digital information sources.

Previous studies review that information literacy (Chen, 2012; Kim and Sin, 2011), source characteristics (Khansum, 2014; Kim and Sin, 2011), social norms (Savolainen, 2015; Xie and Joo, 2010), and type of task (Bronstein, 2010; Lee et al., 2012) have a positive impact on the intention to select an information source. This research thus uses these determinants to study entrepreneurs' intention to use digital sources in the entrepreneurship environment. By doing so, this study contributes to information-seeking behavior and entrepreneurship disciplines. In particular, it addresses the information source selection of entrepreneurs in the digital world. The objectives of this research are (i) to examine the role of the proposed factors in the entrepreneurs' intention to use digital information sources and (ii) investigate the extent impact of these factors through an empirical study. The study objectives are examined deductively by forming several hypotheses derived from theory as the following:

- H1. Social norms have a direct positive impact on the intention to use digital sources.
- H2. Type of task (hereinafter: ToT) has a direct positive impact on the intention to use digital sources.
- H3a. The accessibility of the information sources has a direct positive impact on the intention to use digital information sources.
- H3b. The quality of the information sources has a direct positive impact on the intention to use digital sources.

- H4a. Through the accessibility of the sources, Information Literacy (hereinafter: IL) has an indirect positive impact on the intention to use digital sources.
- H4b. Through the quality of the sources, IL has an indirect positive impact on the intention to use digital sources.
- H4c. IL has a direct positive impact on the choice of sources through the ToT.

## Methodology

This study aims to describe the influence of various factors on the intention to use digital information sources among the entrepreneur. Therefore, quantitative research was employed to test the research hypothesis. The research was conducted in Finland. The participants were mainly from Turku, Helsinki and Tampere region. The structural equation model (SEM) using SmartPLS v.3.0 was conducted. The research data was collected through a survey. A call for participation was sent via private message to the users with an entrepreneurial profile located in Finland on LinkedIn. It was also distributed via emails to different entrepreneurial organizations in Finland, e.g. Upgraded Finland, Tribe Tampere, Boost Turku, the Hub, VietES, Nuoret Yrittäjät, and Startup Finland. The researcher also reached the participants through different entrepreneurial events organized by Kiuas, Boost Turku, and NewCo Helsinki. Entrepreneurs were invited to complete an online survey voluntarily. As a result, 145 entrepreneurs in Finland participated in the study. The questionnaire includes questions on the participants' demographic background, their frequency, and self-reported proficiency in the use of digital tools and digital information sources.

## Discussion

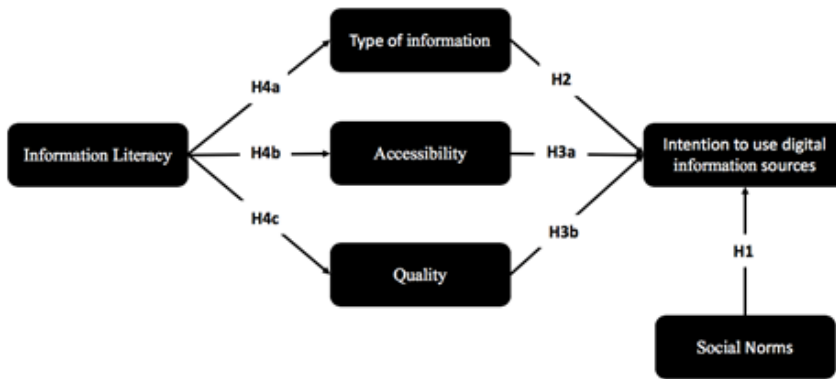


Figure 1. The model of entrepreneurs' intention to use digital information sources.

Overall, the majority of participants responded positively to all proposed factors. Figure 1 presents a model that captures the relationships between the antecedent factors and the intention to use digital information sources. Social norms, sources' accessibility, ToT, and IL positively influence the entrepreneurs' intention to adopt digital information sources. These findings support H1, H2, H3a, and H4c. Moreover, the role of IL on both ToT, and sources' characteristics (quality, and accessibility) was also positive, which supports the H4a and H4b. Indirectly through ToT and source characteristics, IL guides the behavioral intention to select a digital information source. However, inconsistency in the previous studies (Bronstein, 2010; Kim and Sin, 2011) and contrary to the H3b, the sources' quality is found to have a negative effect on the entrepreneurs' intention towards digital information sources. In addition, this research found that the role of social norms is stronger to entrepreneurs who are immigrants, or females, or those who were born after 1985.

## Conclusion

In this paper, the influence of four different factors has been analyzed with a sample of 145 Finnish entrepreneurs to understand their intention to use digital information sources. These factors consist of the type of task, social

norms, sources' characteristics (quality and accessibility), and IL. Based on the research findings, we also provide practical recommendations. For instance, due to the role of IL, this research proposes a pro-active engagement of entrepreneurship education in promoting and training IL for entrepreneurs or potential entrepreneurs of all ages. Furthermore, the findings in characteristics of the sources, the recommended service providers to design and implement user-friendly interfaces and functions, that is most simple for users to engage. They also need to learn and update users' needs and expectations. This continuous learning-process is essential for maintaining and attracting users to select these information sources.

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