

**A Methodology for Researching International Entrepreneurship in SMEs:
A Challenge to the Status Quo**

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Purpose of this paper:

To evaluate an alternative methodological approach to researching international entrepreneurship which mirrors the creativity of successful entrepreneurial organisations.

Design/methodology/approach:

The biographical approach discussed overcomes the pervasive linear thinking found in the wider management discipline. Successful entrepreneurial practice is anything but linear. This notion is embraced in the consideration of a methodology which mirrors its non-linear path.

Findings:

A biographical approach constructs richer and deeper data which would otherwise remain undiscovered. It allows for a more flexible approach to research. Triangulation with the more usual methods of survey work and in-depth interview ensures that quality and rigour are maintained throughout.

Research limitations/implications:

Research which adopts a more considered, critical perspective is limited in international entrepreneurship. There is evidence that critical entrepreneurship researchers are embracing alternative methodologies such as narrative, discursive and literary approaches which complement and challenge existing dominant thinking.

Practical implications:

Up to now, many practitioners have felt that researchers do not listen sufficiently to their stories of success and failure and that there is a lack of meaningful engagement with them. The approach discussed here helps to improve the relationship between researcher and researched.

What is original/value of the paper?

Following more creative approaches such as those espoused in this paper can help to facilitate more meaningful interaction between the researcher and the biographical subject.

Keywords: international entrepreneurship, marketing/entrepreneurship interface, methodology, creativity, biography

INTRODUCTION:

This paper considers the literature on international entrepreneurship and draws on previous research in order to illustrate the merits of pursuing a multi-method approach to data collection and to assist in the construction of more meaningful and actionable theory.

There is evidence that entrepreneurship research is widening its epistemological grounding. Methodological limitations of existing dominant research paradigms are highlighted and a 'new' approach is proposed whereby data triangulation from conventional quantitative and qualitative sources is combined with a biographical

orientation embracing contemporary and historical perspectives to understanding entrepreneurial decision making in the smaller international firm. The Marketing/Entrepreneurship interface paradigm of research is used in order to give support for the call for a more creative approach to researching and conceptualising international entrepreneurship. This creative orientation to the research process mirrors the behaviour of entrepreneurial small firms which often thrive in non-linear, sometimes chaotic environments where conventional linear, stepwise research methodologies fail to capture the full picture of owner/manager behaviour. Given that some entrepreneurial firms fall under the auspices of the 'born global' or 'instant international' typology, such behaviour clashes with much accepted modelling of internationalisation. Networking, opportunity recognition, relationship building, word of mouth marketing and creative use of limited resources are used successfully by the entrepreneur in order to gain competitive advantage in the international marketplace. All these factors are currently being researched at the Marketing/Entrepreneurship interface. Following a more creative approach to researching international entrepreneurship suggests adopting a postmodern or critical theoretical approach. The concept of postmodernism is linked to chaos and fragmentation in a world where formal, linear methods of understanding are being superseded by more creative conceptualisations and interpretations of the truth. Alternative visualisations and interpretations of international entrepreneurship fit with the current call for new theory such as narrative and discursive approaches in entrepreneurship generally where rich description, reflection and interpretation become part of the entrepreneurship story itself (Steyaert and Hjorth 2003; Hjorth and Steyaert 2004). There is growing acceptance of the need for alternative 'lenses' through which to

see entrepreneurial activity and so the net of theory is growing to include inputs from a range of paradigms in areas such as anthropology and literary studies where narrative, dramaturgical, fictive and discursive approaches have been adopted. A fresh look at international entrepreneurship fits with the wider call for the adoption of a linguistic turn in the social sciences and humanities and, more recently, in organisation studies (Deetz 2003).

OVERVIEW OF INTERNATIONAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP:

Historically the focus of international business researchers has been on the multinational firm but there is a growing interest in smaller internationalising entrepreneurial firms (McDougall and Oviatt 2000; Cubillo and Cerviño 2004). Defining international entrepreneurship is still in a state of evolution. McDougall (1989) saw it as focusing on the international activities of new ventures, rather than including already established firms but then this has largely been the case in entrepreneurial research generally. Giamartino et al. (1993) carried out a survey of the Academy of Management membership and found a variety of interpretations including research in ventures that become international under the founder's tenure, ventures that begin as international, teaching comparative issues and topics, teaching cases about international start-ups, comparative research and teaching cases from other countries. Wright and Ricks (1994) viewed international entrepreneurship as a firm-level business activity which crossed national borders and which involved inter-relationships between the business and the international environment. They also note the growing impact of the smaller international firm, accompanied by increasing research on small business. McDougall and Oviatt (1997) defined it as new and innovative activities that have the goal of value creation and

growth in business organisations across national borders, while they now define the concept as a combination of innovative, proactive, and risk-seeking behaviour that crosses national borders and is intended to create value in organisations (McDougall and Oviatt 2000). Interestingly, they note that there is still no unifying, clear theoretical and methodological direction. The field of international entrepreneurship is growing markedly and this has been recognised by the launch of the Journal of International Entrepreneurship in 2003. Recent issues have covered topics such as international entrepreneurship and the internet (Sinkovics and Bell 2005), branding strategies of born globals (Gabrielsson 2005), micromultinationals (Ibeh et al 2004) and female entrepreneurship (Lituchy and Reavley 2004).

EVIDENCE OF INTERNATIONAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN THE SMALLER FIRM:

The increasing impact of globalisation and technology is resulting in more and more opportunities for the smaller firm in the international marketplace as conventional barriers begin to dissolve and the firm uses its entrepreneurial competencies to leapfrog other impediments (Wright and Etemad 2001; Fillis 2002a; Fletcher 2004). Noting that international business is no longer the sole domain of the large, resource-rich company, Knight (2001:156) investigates the relationship between entrepreneurship and strategy in the international SME, and notes the increasing importance of understanding the behaviour of the SME:

SMEs account for over 95% of businesses, create roughly 50% of total value added worldwide and, depending on the country, generate between 60% and 80% of all new jobs...While they historically have not been associated with international business...SMEs now account for about a quarter of exports in most industrialised nations...Internationally-active SMEs are emerging in notably large numbers

throughout the world, and they tend to be more dynamic and grow faster than strictly domestic firms...

THE MARKETING/ENTREPRENEURSHIP INTERFACE:

There has been developing research interest in the link between entrepreneurship and small business since the start of the 1980s (Wortman 1986) and the link between marketing competencies, organisational performance and entrepreneurial orientation has been found to be positively linked Smart and Conant (1994). Many firms carry out business via highly informal, unstructured, reactive mechanisms while others develop, over time, a proactive and skilled approach where innovation and identification of opportunities give the firm a competitive edge. At the two ends of the continuum, formal marketing involves highly structured, sequential decision making while entrepreneurial decisions tend to be haphazard and opportunistic. The Marketing/Entrepreneurship interface deals with the overlap, or areas of commonality, such as analytical skills, judgement, positive thinking, innovation and creativity (Carson 1995). Day and Reynolds (1998) argue for the promotion and acceptance of the Marketing/Entrepreneurship interface as a recognised paradigm of research. Hackley and Mumby-Croft (1998:505) note that:

marketing and entrepreneurship share common conceptual and practical ground and that this commonality can be made sense of in the context of a conceptual framework which emphasises the applied creative problem solving dimension of each field. Thus to the extent that creative (or innovative) behaviour is a significant feature of radical marketing success, it might also be said to lie at the heart of much successful entrepreneurial endeavour.

Morris and Lewis (1995) identify the increasing interest and application of the marketing and entrepreneurship interface, with the establishment of a special interest group by the

American Marketing Association and the Academy of Marketing tackling both theoretical and practical perspectives.

MARKETING/ENTREPRENEURSHIP INTERFACE RESEARCH ON INTERNATIONAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP:

Publication of research into international entrepreneurship issues is diverse but there have been a number of collections of papers which are relevant to the area from within the Marketing/Entrepreneurship interface community of researchers. Bjerke and Hultman (2000) investigate the relationship between marketing, entrepreneurship and national culture; Merrilees et al. (2000) examine the role of the distributor/client relationship in entrepreneurial internationalisation; Broderick (1998) researches skills development in internationalising SMEs from behavioural and entrepreneurial perspectives and Watson et al. (1998) focus on export development issues in SMEs.

The Internationalising Craft Firm:

Fillis (2000a; 2001; 2002a; 2004) draws on the Marketing/Entrepreneurship interface in researching the internationalisation of the smaller craft firm. The craft sector, historically a much valued economic contributor to a country's wealth, is now viewed negatively by many. However, current craft production generally tends to be of high quality and of importance to both domestic and international market development and comparable economically to a range of other, more valued market sectors. Drawing on both quantitative and qualitative data, a profile of the craft firm and its owner/manager in the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland is constructed in order to assist in an improved understanding of how craft businesses behave. This profiling has enabled the

identification of several types of craft producer, ranging from the entrepreneurial business-minded craftsman to the lifestyle, where profit is deemed secondary in importance to other factors such as the ability to practice craft in such a way as to improve quality of life generally. Despite sometimes severe resource constraints, successful craft businesses can flourish, given their ability to utilise sets of creative competencies, ranging from the design of the craft product to the way in which business is developed. Improved understanding of this creative behaviour can be reached by utilising the Marketing and Entrepreneurship paradigm. Creative influences include the ability to practice informal networking, word of mouth communication, the identification of business opportunities, and risk taking behaviour with the craft product in particular and the business in general. The increasing impact of imported crafts, together with the lack of support by industry bodies has meant that, until recently, the craft sector has struggled to survive in the United Kingdom.

However, lessons appear to be emerging in improved craft practice and industry support from countries such as the Republic of Ireland, where the crafts of all types are now deemed highly important economically by both the Crafts Council of Ireland, the County Enterprise Boards and Enterprise Ireland. These bodies have remit for supporting both microenterprise development, as well as supporting larger companies both domestically and internationally. Research has shown that the craft sector in the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland contributes to both the domestic economy and internationally, via export development. The craft firm does not exhibit what could be described as traditional internationalisation behaviour (Reid 1983). Due to a number of industry

specific characteristics, craft businesses do not tend to follow a stages approach to progression in international markets as shown by the majority of other firms. Instead, they at times follow a similar pattern of behaviour as the small hi-tech company in internationalising instantly (Bell 1995; Knight and Cavusgil 1996). In common with many other smaller firms, the craft firm does not always have the same strategic options available to it as the larger enterprise and yet it can and often does develop both domestic and international business despite a sometimes severe lack of resources. Instead, exploitation of creativity is adopted by the entrepreneurial craftsperson both in terms of the work being produced and in the methods adopted in business development .

Creativity:

Creativity is a driver of competitive advantage. It is found in firms of all sizes, but perhaps has greatest impact within the entrepreneurial smaller firm. Creativity is viewed as a key competency at the Marketing/Entrepreneurship Interface, linked with related issues such as innovation, vision, leadership and motivation. The benefits of developing creative competencies are linked to a knowledge entrepreneur's set of 21st century business skills. Business creativity has existed in a variety of forms for centuries and can be traced to the Italian Renaissance (Fillis 1999), and Pre-Hellenistic Greece (Nevett and Nevett 1987). Although creativity is mentioned within entrepreneurship texts, much of this is fairly recent (Bridge et al. 1998) and in some cases, only linked to innovation or not at all (Chaston 2000). No historical precedence is uncovered for the existence of creativity as a business competency and as a phenomenon worthy of further study. The Marketing/Entrepreneurship paradigm of research serves as a platform for furthering the

investigation of creativity by offering opportunities for its investigation through a variety of research methodologies (Carson and Coviello 1996). Creativity as a research area within the Marketing and Entrepreneurship Interface is a growing area of enquiry (Fillis 2002b; 2002c; 2002d; 2000b; Fillis and McAuley 2000; Fillis and Rentschler 2006) Hackley and Mumby Croft 1998). Researching the phenomenon can be traced to areas outside the traditional boundaries of business and marketing:

The study of creativity, as no other subject, brings into a single arena the many characters of psychology, biography, literature and art. In trying to understand how man's greatest achievements come about, the initial focus is...upon the creative product...such as great works of art or science...The study of creativity need not limit itself to the eminent, the extraordinary. There are kinships between the small and the great and perhaps even between the creativity of everyday life and that of a great scientist or artist (Gruber et al. 1962: ix).

Styles and Seymour (2006) discuss the connection between international entrepreneurship and marketing, noting that creativity is one key area which they have in common. Creativity has long been of interest to entrepreneurship researchers but the search for rigour in marketing research has resulted in a lack of attention to creative thinking.

METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES:

Ritual has taken over at the expense of result. Ritual also offers a comforter for the insecure because a ritual can be fairly distinctly laid out and regulated, while entrepreneurial, innovative research is for risk-takers, often without a lifeline. Mainstream researchers are bureaucrats, while true scholars should be entrepreneurs (Gummesson 2002:337).

Coviello and Jones (2004) carry out a review of over fifty empirical studies in international entrepreneurship in order to gain insight into the 'state of the art' of international entrepreneurship methodologies. The authors carried out a systematic

analysis of the articles, focusing specifically on factors such as research context, time frame, sample characteristics, data collection and analysis procedures. They call for the adoption of a multidisciplinary approach to understanding and acknowledge the need for dynamic, time dependent research designs which integrate positivist and interpretivist methodologies. Giamartino et al. (1993:39) also highlight the need for fresh understanding in international entrepreneurship research, supporting the need to avoid ritualistic, methodological behaviour:

One member even suggested that it could be “dangerous” to export U.S. entrepreneurship technology into other cultures that do not have an indigenous fit. We have to remember that the models of entrepreneurship are generally U.S. models (or more expansively models derived from industrial countries) and may not apply the same way, with the same results, elsewhere.

This position is also highlighted in SME internationalisation research where the quantitative approach still dominates and thereby inhibits new theory development (Fillis 2001). A wider, cross-disciplinary perspective is called for in order to bring fresh understanding (Wright and Ricks 1994:700):

“...international business scholars need not only to draw upon different disciplines but to do so in a co-ordinated way” (Dunning (1989:421). This calls for new modes of study that are not just multidisciplinary, but truly interdisciplinary.

By following a path of research which embraces data triangulation from both a contemporary and historical perspective, this paper explores the benefits of embracing methods, concepts and theories from disciplines outside the conventional confines of business research in order to better inform understanding of smaller firm international entrepreneurship.

The research methodologies used in researching the smaller firm tend to be similar to those adopted in larger firm research but questions are now being asked of the legitimacy of such approaches (Brownlie 1998; Brownlie and Spender 1995). Brown (1995) suggests a re-evaluation of each researcher's position which should result in considering the methodological alternatives on offer and to perhaps transfer their loyalties to a completely different paradigm. This is precisely what the author and others are promoting when adopting the Marketing/Entrepreneurship paradigm of research in their work.

Brown (1995:13) discusses the merits of these alternative, fresh perspectives:

Numerous studies of avant-garde movements in the arts, academic disciplines and many walks of life, reveal that the engineering of some sort of "crisis" or radical break (often involving new terminologies) is vitally necessary for the "outsider" or challenging group...Not only does this help provide the challenging group with a sense of cohesion and shared purpose, but the subsequent process of accommodation eventually places the...younger generation of "radical" thinkers at the centre of power as the "establishment" ages and disengages.

Kent (1986:150) also notes the need for alternative theoretical visualisation. An alternative sociological interpretation is offered where the focus is on the manager constructing his/her own interpretation of the realities of business, resulting in an individual style of management and decision making. This sociological interpretation is greatly assisted by adopting the biographical approach to research:

...it is necessary to go beyond observation of action towards an understanding of the ways in which managers perceive, justify and attribute meanings to the courses of action that they currently pursue. It is necessary to reconstruct the subjective world in which managers operate before any insights into managerial processes become available for inspection.

At the fundamental level within entrepreneurship and other areas of management, three schools of research can be identified. There are those who follow the rationale of

positivism which perpetuates the validity of linear, prescriptive approaches to understanding, with the focus on study replications rather than theory construction (Hunt 1983). Another, smaller, but growing, body of researchers focus on the humanistic, mainly qualitative dimensions of research, intent on theory construction and generation of new knowledge rather than replication (Hirschman 1986). There is a final group of researchers who have identified the merits of the various schools of thought and have adopted a pluralistic, sometimes multi method approach to research (Brannen 1992). They believe that by being able to triangulate data which has been constructed from both a scientific, positivistic perspective, as well as having the opportunity to generate new theory from a more humanistic orientation, the strengths of both schools of thought can interact in a meaningful way. When the opportunity arises to be able to combine approaches, then the emerging data often tends to be of a much richer, and more interesting nature. At the centre of this process is the need for a creative philosophy and practice in research.

Collection and interpretation of contemporary data is the dominant mode of acquisition of relevant information, but there are also merits in examining business behaviour from an historical perspective. Collingwood (1956:242) viewed the historical research process where material is synthesised together as:

a web of imaginative construction stretched between certain fixed points provided by critically evaluated source material. The process is creative but also critical; the coherence must be consistent with the preponderance of available evidence. The more evidence subsumed under an historical synthesis the better...

Imagination and creativity are often lacking in both in terms of how the researcher visualises central issues and in terms of how the research is carried out. Imagination and creativity were identified by Schumpeter (1936:65) as central to success as far back as the Production era:

...creative demand stimulation was basic to entrepreneurial success in any business; the effective entrepreneur actively sought to create new consumer demand.

Creativity should also be encapsulated in the researching of entrepreneurial behaviour. Brown (1996) compares and contrasts a range of criteria associated with the adoption of scientific and artistic methods of research (Table 1):

Take in Table 1

Chia (1996) notes that what is needed in terms of teaching and communicating new ideas is a move away from the analytical problem solving approach to a paradigm-shifting mentality which involves resourcefulness and imagination and a spirit of entrepreneurship. Chia describes imagination as being able to make connection between previously unrelated ideas, bodies of knowledge and experienced phenomena so that fresh insight is given to a particular situation. An example of such thinking is in post structuralism or postmodern deconstruction. By incorporating a mixture of methodological approaches, this mirrors entrepreneurial marketing practice:

...this integrated approach resembles the process by which the practitioner achieves a level of knowledge and understanding acceptable to him/her. For example, marketing practitioners, and in particular entrepreneurs, intuitively practice such a philosophy. They are not encumbered by rules, rigours and restrictions when conducting research for their business and in fact, collect and analyse information in a “naturalistic” manner. This point is well documented in the debates

surrounding the variances and even dichotomies between academic marketing theory and marketing practice (Carson and Coviello 1996:55).

Postmodern philosophy tends to be viewed as representing some kind of reaction to, or departure from, modernism and modernity (Brown 1993:22)

Postmodernists reject attempts to impose order and coherence upon the chaos and fragmentation of reality. Instead, they argue, we should accept that knowledge is bounded, that our capacity to establish meaningful generalisations is limited and, rather than seeking the impossibility of universal truths, we should rejoice in the ephemerality, contingency and diversity of the physical and human worlds as we experience them, be comfortable in the absence of certainty, learn to live without definite explanations and recognise that the objectives of the Enlightenment project are utopian and unattainable.

Brown identifies a range of particular characteristics associated with the modern and the postmodern, where the majority of existing entrepreneurship theory can be viewed as grounded in the former, while actual entrepreneurial behaviour is positioned within the latter environment (Table 2):

Take in Table 2

BIOGRAPHY AS METHODOLOGY:

Morrison (2001) carried out a biographical analysis of entrepreneurship, noting that biographical analysis can provide a retrospective account which related to much more than a memoir. Gummesson (1991:158) identifies the benefits of adopting such an approach where the value relates:

...pre-eminently in yielding data about participants' views of social and business situations in which they were actually and personally involved.

Although biographical analysis often involves secondary interpretation of relevant issues (Bulmer 1992), the depth of understanding and the ability to incorporate wider social and other environmental factors into the data text can result in a greater quality of information than if in-depth interviews or postal surveys were carried out by themselves. Also, contemporary biographical data collection can also involve primary interpretation of pertinent issues since the 'story-teller' is the owner/manager of the business.

Carson and Carson (1998) discuss the use of historical methods as an alternative procedure for researching the firm. They draw on the work of Topolski (1991) who appraises the merits of quantitative methodology versus historical approaches:

Whereas logical positivists draw conclusions based on empirical data subjected to "multivariate analysis", historiographers prefer "impressionistic analysis" where conclusions are drawn based not on quantitative statistics, but rather on narratives that capture mood, feeling, underlying thought processes, and motivations.

This approach is very appropriate in determining the motivations of the owner/manager of the smaller firm. Evidence of entrepreneurial behaviour is contained within historical and contemporary biographies and related material concerning creative individuals, groups and organisations. By comparing the behaviour of creative individuals and the entrepreneurial smaller firm, a clearer understanding of smaller firm international entrepreneurship can be reached. One of the most challenging tasks when carrying out a biographical or other historical investigation is the need for filtering out irrelevant issues in order to identify relevant underlying themes. The same can be said of analysing qualitative interview data. Bevir (1994) remarks on the opportunities of subjectivity in historical research:

It is the historiographer's judgement, representing the application of accumulated knowledge, experience, understanding, and even imagination, that allows the creation of relatively unbiased conclusions from subjective facts.

Sauley and Bedeian (1989) criticise the over-dependence of management researchers in using scientific research methodology and statistical techniques used for testing the strength of supposed relationships:

...the frequent use of the .05 level as the maximum acceptable probability for determining statistical significance is too often a matter of custom rather than independent thought.

Carson and Carson (1998) note that facts can be collated from a range of primary and secondary sources. including the written record (e.g. biographies, memoirs, diaries); creative output and relics (e.g. letters, public documents, receipts). One of the challenges of biographical research is in understanding the impact of societal forces during the period under examination which may have affected the subject's thought processes (Stansky 1990). The personality of the subject interacts with societal and historical forces (Manuel 1988). Jones (2001) notes that the biography has proved a useful source of data when interpreting historical records, tracing its use from Roman times, the Anglo Saxon era, to the Middle ages and the 19th century. Jones (2001:326) discusses its wider applicability, in particular referring to evidence of entrepreneurial activity within a social context:

While there can be no doubting the importance of biographical data for the historian, there does appear to be a lesser appreciation of the possibilities of biography as an appropriate tool for the systematic analysis of socio-historical themes.

The use of the biography or life history as a research method was popular among sociologists of the Chicago School of urban sociology in the 1920s and 1930s (Aspinwall 1992). Jones (1992) adopts a biographical approach to management research, where biography is seen, not as historical data, but instead as a current data collection method. In this context, people are the authors of their future biographies. Respondents are asked to divide their lives into a number of sections, from birth to the present. They are then requested to recall key moments, feelings, sensations and experiences. Analysis identifies any important patterns or themes in this laddering technique. The method centres on the belief that each individual has a unique personal construct system (our individual biography) which cannot be identified through the traditional face to face depth interview or survey alone. Marshall (1992) sees traditional management research and the biography as being closely related, with the researcher 'telling the story' of the investigation. Salama (1992) identifies the organisational biography as a research method, with the story of the firm supplying in-depth theoretical insights.

One of the main challenges of carrying out a biographical approach to writing is the ability to join together various technical, contextual and personal factors into an understandable narrative focusing on the individual:

Biography is necessarily the narrative of life and cannot avoid giving the main role to the individual. Yet it must also find the means of granting the context a portion of that role. The question is, how? The "strong programme" in the sociology of science implies that the individual is reducible to the social context, and that even scientific events are strictly determined from the outside by social contingencies. ...In the perspective of contextual biography, the psychological and existential dimension plays the role of an internal environment that interacts with the other contexts in which the subject evolves. The network of enterprises...is a key aspect of that internal environment...Biography has never ceased within the history of science, and its significance has never been denied...For Robert Young (1988),

biography was the basic discipline for human science; individual life histories brought us much closer to a knowledge of human beings than the cognitive approaches that dominate current psychology (Vidal 2003:75,76).

It is the story of the firm, the manager, the customer and the market which we are interested in, not the snapshot picture gained by the postal questionnaire.

Historical investigation involves a number of stages, from collecting the evidence, carrying out the process of internal criticism in order to authenticate the evidence, external criticism through the comparison of the evidence with other available material and finally, synthesising the evidence into a meaningful form (Gottschalk 1956). The degree of truth derived from historical investigation is argued by some to be of higher order than via the scientific method (Elton 1967). Adoption of the biographical approach to research alongside more conventional entrepreneurship research methodologies appears to suggest a postmodern position but the biographical approach itself contains critical elements missing from much existing methodological paradigms. Critical theory consists of three elements:

Demystifying the ideological base of social relations; a questioning of Postivistic methodology whether that be in relation to the nature of reality, knowledge and explanation; and the importance of self-reflexivity of the investigator and the linguistic basis of representation. Critical theory rejects scientific, foundational approaches to human nature and instead favours interpretative approaches to human behaviour which need to be contextualised in time and space... Burton (2001:726)

This appears to suggest that biographical and other historical techniques fit the critical theory genre. Critical theory may or may not be distinct from postmodernism, with some believing that they are incompatible or opposites (Hetrick and Lozada 1999). This interpretation would mean then that research at the Marketing/Entrepreneurship interface,

for example, that focuses on creativity and biographical approaches could be seen as critical in form. Ultimately, the joining together of the more popular research methodologies used in international entrepreneurship research grounded in in-depth interviewing and the postal survey, and the biographical approach results in a richer understanding of the core issues. With a focus on the SME and, more particularly, concentrating on the entrepreneurial owner/manager of the smaller firm, this prosopographical approach (Dixon 1998) results from the combination of theory and biography through data triangulation.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

There are a range of methodological limitations relating to the study of international entrepreneurship, not least in connection with the restriction of new theory development. This paper promotes the adoption of a multi-method approach where historical and contemporary data can be triangulated in order to stimulate more appropriate and actionable theory. The Marketing/Entrepreneurship interface is adopted as a research platform for encouraging this approach and in terms of promoting a more creative research philosophy generally. Researchers have largely failed to account for the increasingly non-linear behaviour of today's business environment when designing their research instruments and in the data collection and analysis processes. This can be countered by adoption of a more creative research philosophy grounded in non-linear thinking. Increased understanding of the phenomena of the born global or instant international firm which contradicts the linear modelling of the internationalising firm can be gained by following this approach. The craft firm, for example, exploits sets of

creative competencies such as networking, opportunity recognition, relationship building, word of mouth communication and creative use of limited resources in order to bypass traditional international trade barriers.

A creative approach to researching international entrepreneurship could be described as postmodern or critical theoretical in perspective. A postmodern methodology mirrors the postmodern business environment of chaos and fragmentation of customers and markets. The need to understand these factors is greater than ever as more and more smaller firms internationalise. Research at the Marketing/Entrepreneurship interface can be used as a starting point for increasing this understanding. The stimulus for embracing the biographical approach was derived from research on the internationalising smaller craft firm and the generation of a profile of an owner/manager typology. The outcome, or focus, is on the exploitation of creative competencies, where creativity is viewed as competitive advantage and is inextricably linked to innovation, vision, leadership and motivation. Enhanced insight into these factors is reached by following the biographical approach to research, from both historical and contemporary perspectives. The resultant multi-method data triangulation is used in response to the dominant ritualistic research methodologies of business research. Added insight is gained from adoption of a cross-disciplinary perspective where biography unveils details of the social environment which ultimately impacts upon and shapes decision making.

The juxtaposing of alternative, non-traditional marketing research methodologies such as the biography and other historical methods can result in the identification and extraction

of data which would otherwise remain undiscovered. By adopting a biographical approach to research, a much wider and longitudinal amount of data can be captured than conventional surveys and in-depth interview techniques alone. Benefits of adopting a biographical, historical approach to entrepreneurial research include the ability to focus on mood, feeling, thought processes and motivations in decision making and in providing additional insight into creativity. The researcher also brings creativity and imagination into the research process. The author has identified a range of creative entrepreneurial marketing competencies which can be investigated further within the field of international entrepreneurship using the combination of research methodologies as discussed in this paper (Table 3):

Take in Table 3

Originally stemming from research on the internationalising smaller craft firm, common creative factors, traits, behaviours and processes are found to span across time and industry sectors. Future research using a variety of approaches from within and outside the business area is encouraged in order to contribute towards creative international entrepreneurship theory.

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Table 1: Analysis of Scientific and Artistic Research Methodologies

<i>Criteria</i>	<i>Science</i>	<i>Art</i>
Mode of representation	Formal statements; literal language	Non-literal language, evocative statements
Appraisal Criteria	Validity paramount; unbiased methods of data collection and analysis; conclusions supported by evidence	Persuasiveness paramount; seek illumination; penetration and insight; arguments supported by success in shaping concepts
Point of Focus	Concentrates on overt or expressed behaviour (which can be recorded, counted and analysed)	Concentrates on experiences and meanings (observed behaviour provides springboard to understanding)
Nature of Generalisation	Extrapolates from particular to general; randomly drawn sample is deemed representative of universe and statistically significant inferences drawn about later from former	Studies single cases and the idiosyncratic, but presupposes that generalisations reside in the particular, that broad (if not statistically significant) lessons can be learnt from the unique
Role of Form	Results reported in neutral, unblemished manner (third person, past tense) and according to a standard format (problem, literature review, sample, analysis, implications)	Avoidance of standardisation; form and content interact; meaning of content determined by form in which it is expressed
Degree of License	Factual emphasis; little scope for personal expression or flights of imaginative fancy	Subjective orientation, imaginative self-expression both permitted and expected
Prediction and Control	Aims to anticipate the future accurately, thus enabling or facilitating its control	Aims to explicate, thereby increasing understanding, less algorithmic than heuristic
Sources of Data	Standardised instruments, such as questionnaire surveys or observation schedules, used to collect data	The investigator is the principal research instrument and his or her experiences the major source of data
Basis of Knowing	Methodological monism; only formal propositions provide knowledge (affect and cognition separate)	Methodological pluralism; knowledge conveyed by successful evocation of experience in question (affect and cognition combined)
Ultimate Aims	Discovery of truth and laws of nature; propositions taken to be true when they correspond with the reality they seek to explain	Creation of meaning and generation of understanding; statements seek to alter extant perceptions about the world

Table 2: Modern and Postmodern Characteristics

Modern/Modernity	Postmodern/Postmodernity
Order/Control Certainty/Determinacy Foredooms/Factory Content/Depth Progress/Tomorrow Homogeneity/Consensus Hierarchy/Adulthood Existence/Reality Deliberate/Outer-directed Contemplation/Metaphysics Congruity/Design	Disorder/Chaos Ambiguity/Indeterminacy Post-Fordian/Office Style/Surface Stasis/Today Heterogeneity/Plurality Equality/Youth Performance/Imitation Playful/Self-centred Participation/Parody Incongruity/Chance

Source: Brown (1993:22), adapted from Harvey (1989) and Bouchet (1994)

Table 3: Creative Entrepreneurial Competencies Identified from Biographical Research, In-Depth Interviews, Postal Surveys, Literature Reviews and Conceptualisations

<p><i>Roe (1963) in study of creativity in science</i></p> <p>Openness to experience; Observance – seeing things in unusual ways; Curiosity; Accepting and reconciling apparent opposites; Tolerance of ambiguity; Independence in judgement, thought and action; Needing and assuming autonomy; Self-reliance; Not being subject to group standards and control; Willingness to take calculated risks; Persistence</p>	<p><i>Carson et al. (1995) in commentary on creativity within marketing and entrepreneurship in SMEs</i></p> <p>Opportunity-focused; Highly informal; Limited planning; Low-risk levels; Limited resources; Simple structure; Reflects entrepreneur’s personality; Entrepreneurial marketing networks; Analytical skills; Knowledge; Experience; Intuition; Judgement; Information gathering Creativity</p>	<p><i>Bridge et al. (1998) in commentary on creativity as part of entrepreneurship and small business</i></p> <p>Achievement motivation; Risk-taking propensity; Locus of control Need for autonomy; Determination; Creativity; Self confidence and trust Dedication; Goal seeking; Innovation; Networking and contacts; Developing relationships; Diligence and perseverance; Independence; Positive outlook</p>
<p><i>Fillis (2000b) in study of creativity at art and marketing interface</i></p> <p>Self belief; Innovative thought; Initiation of ideas; Work with change; Creativity as vision of the future; Creativity as school of thought; Creativity as strategic weapon; Rejection of established practices; Creativity as eccentricity Creativity as mystique; Unrestrained thinking; Creative controlling; Kinetic and dynamic creativity; Transmutation of ideas</p>	<p><i>Fillis (2000c) in study of creativity in small Scottish firms</i></p> <p>Creativity as freedom; Self-belief and ambition; Utilisation of creative business network; High motivational levels; Intuitive marketing; Good communication skills; Visualisation Versatile and flexible; Pre-pubescent creativity; Social and business interaction; Ability to cut through barriers and fight convention; Creativity for creativity’s sake; Unwilling to be controlled; Spirit of freedom and reputation; Creativity feeding self – esteem and actualisation; Creative problem solving; Non-standard solutions; Levels of creativity; Creative diagnostics</p>	<p><i>Herman and Fillis (2003) in study of entrepreneurial marketing endeavour of Isambard Kingdom Brunel</i></p> <p>Concern for reputation; penchant for a show of bravado; need for control of projects with limited delegation; penchant for building ‘Castles in the Air’ demonstrating creative imagination and ambition; ambitious for wealth and material comforts; Determination to succeed even in the face of repeated failures coupled with a willingness to keep trying; Willingness to use the best of traditional methods with innovative ideas; Ability to always look at something in a positive light; Ability to look beyond the immediate and into the future</p>