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The Theory of Entrepreneurship Becoming as an Analytical Framework: Towards an Integrative Conceptual Model

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Abstract

Purpose. Entrepreneurship research remains challenged by the lack of a unified theoretical paradigm, often divided between micro-level analyses of individual entrepreneurial agency and macro-level examinations of structural influences. While these perspectives provide valuable insights, they have largely been pursued in isolation, resulting in fragmented understandings of entrepreneurial phenomena. This paper aims to address this gap by developing an integrative, meta-theoretical framework that conceptualizes entrepreneurship as a dynamic process of becoming, shaped by the continuous interplay between entrepreneurial agency and structural conditions within entrepreneurial ecosystems.
Design/methodology/approach. The paper employed a meta-theoretical analysis, drawing from theoretical bases outside the management sciences (Sztompka's and Giddens' theories of society) to explore entrepreneurship as a phenomenon in constant transformation and an indissoluble fusion of individual and structural factors.
Findings. Combining Sztompka's social becoming approach with Giddens' structuration theory, the study advances a processual and relational perspective that transcends the traditional micro-macro duality, offering new avenues for empirical research and a deeper understanding of entrepreneurship as an unfolding social phenomenon.
Practical implications. The results emphasize the importance of an integrated approach to entrepreneurship, providing a deeper understanding of its nature and dynamics as the interplay between individual and structural factors. This can help entrepreneurs, managers, and policymakers make informed decisions and develop effective strategies to capitalize on existing opportunities and create new ones.
Originality/value. The paper contributes a novel meta-theoretical framework that conceptualizes entrepreneurship as a processual and relational phenomenon embedded within a broader social context. Drawing on Giddens' theory of structuration and Sztompka's theory of social becoming, the study bridges the traditionally polarized domains of individual agency and structural constraints in entrepreneurship research. The proposed model, comprising two interrelated processes – integration and endorsement – offers a comprehensive lens for empirically engaging with entrepreneurial dynamics, thereby advancing theoretical understanding beyond the prevailing micro-macro duality.

Keywords entrepreneurship, entrepreneurship becoming, entrepreneurship dynamics, entrepreneurial process, conceptual framework of entrepreneurship, society becoming, structuration theory.

INTRODUCTION

Entrepreneurship is still in search of a solid theoretical paradigm. It is often considered a broad label encompassing a significant amount of research (Shane & Venkataraman, 2000). So far, meta-theoretical debates on the phenomenon of entrepreneurship have brought about no breakthrough. Although it is not a new phenomenon, fundamental issues concerning the nature of the entrepreneur and entrepreneurial action, as well as the essence of entrepreneurship, still require resolution (Phan, 2004; Kuratko et al., 2015). Entrepreneurship is seen as one of the most promising fields ichan business education and research. However, most studies have been additive rather than integrative, and entrepreneurship theory requires frameworks that can integrate these fragmented research approaches (Jana, 2020).
The phenomenon of entrepreneurship can be framed from two theoretical perspectives. The micro-view perspective examines the entrepreneur's motivation, potential, and ability to direct or influence the outcome of entrepreneurial processes that lead to the creation of new ventures. This approach (including the entrepreneurial trait theory, the venture opportunity theory, and the strategic formulation theory) is built on the inside-out framework and is mainly related to the action dimension of entrepreneurship (Kuratko et al., 2015; Jana, 2020). The macro-view perspective focuses on external processes that can determine the success or failure of entrepreneurial ventures, but remain beyond the direct control of individual entrepreneurs. This approach (including the environmental school of thought, the financial/capital school of thought, and the displacement

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school of thought) is built on the outside-in framework and concerns mainly the context and environment of the entrepreneurial action (Bhat & Khan, 2014; Kuratko et al., 2015).

However, the implications of these two perspectives for entrepreneurship dynamics still need to be clarified. The literature requires a unified theoretical foundation that integrates the micro- and macro-view perspectives. They are often separated from each other in the practice of entrepreneurship research. Researchers focus on either the entrepreneurship action or the environmental and structural aspects. The research must sufficiently consider the dynamics of the relationship between an acting individual and a structure, as well as the interactivity, recurrence, co-conditioning, and duality of these relationships. The structure generates specific opportunity configurations for entrepreneurial agency, within which the entrepreneur introduces innovations to capitalize on these openings. At the same time, to succeed in the market, the entrepreneur continually seeks to redefine the structure itself - both to enhance the exploitation of emerging opportunities and to mitigate the constraints it imposes. What remains unclear is how these two dimensions—micro and macro—jointly shape entrepreneurship, or even how entrepreneurship can be defined in holistic terms, beyond the confines of either perspective alone. These unresolved questions constitute the core of the research problem. Consequently, this study aims to broaden the existing understanding of entrepreneurial dynamics by accounting for the interpenetration of micro- and macro-level perspectives, as well as by adopting a processual approach. In entrepreneurship research, there is a growing need to develop new analytical frameworks in line with the direction proposed by Hjorth et al., who argue that “rather than study static variables in isolated relationships, process studies accepted a world full of processes and looked to find patterns and associated outcomes in organizational and agent performance over time, a process being a sequence of individual or collective events, actions and activities unfolding over time in context”(Hjorth et al., 2015).

Our study explores how Giddens’ structuration theory (1984) and Sztompka’s theory of society becoming (1991) can be applied to the study of entrepreneurship from a processual perspective. Building on these theoretical foundations, we propose a meta-theoretical model of entrepreneurial becoming that offers a conceptual framework for empirically engaging with entrepreneurial processes as dynamic, unfolding, and relational phenomena. This unfolding occurs through the enactment of entrepreneurial agency as it interacts with, responds to, and is shaped by the broader entrepreneurial ecosystem.

Within the conducted research, we applied the proposed model to the Spotify case study primarily as an exemplification of how this framework can function as a research device for capturing entrepreneurship as a social phenomenon - focusing on how it unfolds and the mechanisms that constitute it across time and space - rather than as a finite process aimed solely at fixed outcomes such as new ventures or firm creation. This application enabled us to explicate the framework, demonstrate its practical utility in such empirical studies, and provide evidence of its value in analyzing entrepreneurial phenomena characterized by ongoing change and relational complexity.

The paper employed a meta-theoretical analysis, incorporating perspectives from Sztompka’s and Giddens’ sociological theories, to examine entrepreneurship as a continuously evolving phenomenon that intricately blends individual and structural elements.

According to Zhao, such metatheorizing consists of three main sub-branches (Zhao, 1991, pp. 382-383), which were considered in the conducted research study:

- metatheorizing for a better understanding of extant theory
- metatheorizing as a prelude to theory development or construction (as a large body of theoretical literature has been cumulated, it becomes possible and necessary to build new theories based on analyzing extant ones)
- metatheorizing to establish overarching sociological perspectives (involving broad and general theoretical orientations regarding the study of the researched realm)

Our study focused on the analysis of “micro-macro” linkages and “background assumptions”, which Zhao (1991, pp. 382-383) identifies as the types of studies within metatheorizing for the better understanding of extant theory (besides, meta-theoretical analysis may also encompass the types: “levels” and “paradigms”). Additionally, the conducted analysis included background assumptions regarding the issue of agency in entrepreneurship theory, taking into account the assumptions of Giddens’ and Sztompka’s theories on the agency-structure dualism, one of the most long-standing dualisms in the social sciences (Lee & Jones, 2015). The conducted analysis also encompassed the second subbranch identified by Zhao (2014) as metatheorizing as a prelude to theory development or construction. The analysis included the evaluation of existing social and entrepreneurship theories, the linkages between these theories, and the underlying assumptions of these theories, ultimately leading to the formulation of entrepreneurship as a theory in the form of a conceptual framework based on the analysis of extant theories.

In the next step, considering the meta-theoretical and abstract nature of the constructed model, a case study of Spotify was employed to operationalize the individual components of the model, thereby demonstrating its practical and empirical utility in research. The Spotify case study was purposefully selected as an example of a company that vividly illustrates how entrepreneurial actions can simultaneously adapt to existing structural conditions and actively transform them. The primary criterion for selecting this case was the complexity of actions and relationships involved in the success of the streaming platform. This success was based not only on a series of actions directly related to the development and launch of the new music streaming service but also required orchestrating a range of occurrences to reshape the ecosystem (e.g., standards, laws, regulations, collaboration models, billing models, consumption models, etc.) within which these actions took place.

This type of selection enables an in-depth examination of the phenomenon under study using the proposed model, through the identification of specific entrepreneurial practices that contributed to the success of the analyzed venture. This illustrates how the model can be employed to study the processual and relational nature of entrepreneurship. This paper employed a qualitative case study method to illustrate the practical application of the proposed meta-theoretical model of entrepreneurship as a process of becoming. The model is based on the premise that entrepreneurship is a dynamic process through which entrepreneurial practices unfold, driven by two interrelated dynamics: integration with existing structures and endorsement within social, cognitive, and normative contexts.

To analyze the data, the presented model of entrepreneurship becoming was used to identify how the processes of integration and endorsement—realized through entrepreneurial actions within entrepreneurial ecosystems—contribute to the process of entrepreneurship becoming. The application of the proposed model to the Spotify case study demonstrated how this framework can be operationalized to analyze entrepreneurship as a process by examining the structures, systems, and events involved in entrepreneurship.

The data were collected based on descriptions of Spotify's activities available in the literature. The analysis involved identifying and analyzing various types of literature sources, ranging from monographs to market and company data, as well as scientific and journalistic articles. For each source, attention was paid to the credibility of the source. The book "Tajemnica Spotify" (English: "Spotify Untold: How a Small Swedish Start-Up Changed Music Forever") by Carlsson & Leijonhufvud (2020) served as the primary source for analyzing the history of the company's creation and development, which was deepened with market and company data using the market data service statista.com (Spotify - Statistics & Facts, 2024) and other sources (Spotify subskrypcja: Ile kosztuje, zysk, wyniki w 2024 roku, 2024; Misiewicz, 2024). Additionally, the following articles were used as sources of valuable insights into the topics of industry impact (Historia rewolucji muzycznej: Jak powstał streaming muzyki, 2018; Fleischer, 2020; Casagrande, 2021; Pratama et al., 2023), business model (Voigt et al., 2017; Mirov, 2018), and freemium model (Holm & Günzel-Jensen, 2017; Sawicki, 2018; Panda, 2020).

All the results were grouped and analyzed in the context of the chosen framework.

This paper offers a significant contribution to the field of entrepreneurship by advancing a meta-theoretical framework that redefines entrepreneurship as a process of becoming, rather than a static trait or activity. Drawing from Giddens' theory of structuration and Sztompka's theory of social becoming, the paper situates entrepreneurship within a processual, relational, and socially embedded perspective, thereby bridging the often-polarized domains of individual agency and structural constraint in entrepreneurship research.

It overcomes the existing micro-macro duality of entrepreneurship, i.e., the entrepreneur's ability to direct the action versus the context and environment of the entrepreneurial action and its impact on this context. It explains the phenomenon of entrepreneurship in a new light - not as something finite and complete, but rather as something that is becoming and, in fact, a process of becoming itself. The proposed conceptual model describes not only the interplay between an entrepreneur as an individual and the entrepreneurial ecosystem as the structure of entrepreneurial action, but also entrepreneurship as a process of becoming. The process is not a one-time action, but a continuous phenomenon that cannot be confined to a defined time and structural framework. The meanings, resources, and operating rules are negotiated as components of the existing structure, within which the entrepreneur is identifying an opportunity. Consequently, this study presents a novel approach to empirically engaging with entrepreneurship, treating it as a processual and relational phenomenon that is constituted and unfolds within a broader social context.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND: ENTREPRENEURSHIP – IN SEARCH OF IDENTITY

Entrepreneurship constitutes a complex and multifaceted phenomenon, deeply embedded in both economic and social processes. Despite the significant scholarly attention it has received, its conceptual boundaries remain contested, fragmented, and fluid. The plurality of interpretations and disciplinary approaches results in the absence of a universally accepted definition. Instead, scholars continue to explore and refine the epistemological and methodological foundations of entrepreneurship research (Schumpeter, 1934; Drucker, 1985; Stevenson & Jarillo, 1990; Barot, 2015; Urbano et al., 2019; Shane & Venkataraman, 2000; Diandra & Azmy, 2020; Zahra et al., 2024). There is still a noticeable lack of a clearly defined theoretical framework to explain the socio-economic phenomenon of entrepreneurship empirically. Entrepreneurship theory has become a unifying concept that encompasses various research areas, including entrepreneurial characteristics, innovation, SMEs, uncertainty, and profit (Shane & Ventekamaran, 2000). The scientific discipline of entrepreneurship faces the challenge of establishing its own identity, and an especially interesting aspect is the duality in thinking about entrepreneurship. This duality involves considering entrepreneurship, on the one hand, as an organized activity (related to enterprises, especially SMEs) and, on the other hand, as a psychological concept (related to entrepreneurship as an attitude and behavior). Entrepreneurship involves deliberate actions by individuals who can alter existing systems and reflect on their actions, considering and utilizing both the systems that currently exist and the ones they create during their everyday activities. These insights suggest that there are new avenues for understanding and researching entrepreneurship. It is essential to emphasize that individuals are not inherently entrepreneurs; rather, they cultivate their entrepreneurial skills through the actions they take when identifying and seizing opportunities. Although these approaches offer valuable analytical heuristics, they do not fully capture the essence of what entrepreneurship is. Reductionist perspectives tend to focus either on the micro-level of entrepreneurial decisions and behaviors or the macro-level of social, institutional, and cultural factors that shape them (Kyrgidou & Hughes, 2010; Hitt et al., 2011, p. 57).

The diversity of perspectives reflects a broader dilemma within the field of entrepreneurship, one that revolves around fundamental questions: how should entrepreneurship be understood — as an individual act, a collective process, a structural outcome, or as an interaction among all these dimensions? Some conceptual frameworks emphasize individual agency, focusing on the traits, intentions, and competencies of the entrepreneur. Others highlight the importance of broader socio-institutional conditions — such as markets, norms, and regulations — as forces that either enable or constrain entrepreneurial behavior. Blundel & Lockett (2011) describe entrepreneurship as a socially embedded activity that generates economic and social value through the creation or transformation of economic activity. This, they argue, occurs within a complex web of interactions involving individuals, teams, organizations, institutions, and networks. Stevenson and Jarillo (1990) propose a processual definition, viewing entrepreneurship as a dynamic pursuit of opportunity, unconstrained by existing resources — a stance that resonates with the fluid and emergent nature of entrepreneurial practice.

Despite growing academic interest in entrepreneurship research, the field continues to struggle with a fundamental issue: a lack of a clear identity and conceptual ambiguity regarding what entrepreneurship is. Dominant theoretical approaches remain abstract — either “downward,” focusing on the individual entrepreneur, their motivations, personality traits, competencies, or intentions, thereby neglecting the broader social context of entrepreneurial action; or “upward,” reducing entrepreneurship to the function of socio-economic structures such as institutions, regulations, and market opportunities. As Sztompka argues within the framework of the “third sociology”, both the micro-level abstraction (“downward”) and the macro-level abstraction (“upward”) divert us from the actual reality of social life. The former tends to flatten the embeddedness of individual action in its social context, while the latter overlooks the agency and situational complexity of concrete interactions. For Sztompka, what is ontologically real in society is not isolated action or overarching systems, but rather social events — instances where typical social practices are enacted in specific situations, forming coherent biographical and cultural narratives (Sztompka, 2007, p. 31). From this perspective, entrepreneurship should not be understood merely as a personal attribute of the entrepreneur, nor as a systemic output of structural conditions. Rather, it emerges as a dynamic, socially embedded process — situated in time and space, enacted through interaction, decision-making under uncertainty, relational coordination, and negotiated meanings. As Luckmann observes, “the type of being that continuously imposes itself upon us is the reality of everyday life; this reality appears as given and unquestioned in ongoing, ordinary experience” (Luckmann 1989, p. 20, as cited in Sztompka 2002, p. 31). Only by adopting this “third” perspective — rooted in everyday experience — can we avoid the analytical reification that misrepresents entrepreneurship. This perspective reveals entrepreneurship as a real, socially embedded, and complex process shaped by everyday life. The processual perspective (Hjorth, Holt & Steyaert, 2015; Kuura & Lundin, 2019; Su et al., 2019) is grounded in this ontological shift. It not only portrays entrepreneurship as akin to a process but also considers processualism to be a fundamental condition of entrepreneurial phenomena. Entrepreneurship becomes a continuous movement between potentiality and actualization, characterized by tensions, ruptures, and emergent order. Research within this stream focuses not on who the entrepreneur is, but on how entrepreneurship comes into being — through what practices, in which contexts, and under what constraints and opportunities. Such a perspective shifts scholarly attention from static categories to dynamic relations, in line with structuration theory (Giddens, 1984) and the theory of becoming (Sztompka, 1991). Both frameworks conceptualize social reality as emerging from the interaction between agency and structure.

Although this research study is meta-theoretical, it addresses significant issues within a processual perspective founded on one of the most fundamental dualisms in entrepreneurship. Authors point out many dualisms: entrepreneurs and non-entrepreneurs, commercial (for profit) and non-commercial (social) entrepreneurs, necessity-based and opportunity-based entrepreneurship, male and female entrepreneurs, the “casual” school and the “effectual” school of entrepreneurship, qualitative approach and quantitative approach to data collection or agency and structure (DiMaggio, 1988; Ardichvili et al., 2003; Mair & Marti, 2006; Nicholls, 2006; Sarason et al., 2006; Alvarez & Barney, 2007; Bhowmick, 2007; Battilana et al., 2009; Mole & Mole, 2010; George et al., 2014; Lee & Jones, 2015; Alvedalen & Boschma, 2017; Theodoraki & Messeghem, 2017; Malecki, 2018; Maroufkhani et al., 2018; Cardella et al., 2021; Ng, 2021; Steiner et al., 2022). The last one is the most essential. Lee & Jones (2015, p. 341) aptly explain the structure-agency dichotomy in strategic entrepreneurship research by drawing on the Shakespearean metaphor of “Romeo and Juliet” proposed by Venkataraman and Sarasvathy (2005). In this metaphor, strategic management is “all balcony and no Romeo,” while entrepreneurship is “all Romeo and no balcony” (Lee & Jones, 2025, p. 341). The former (the balcony) emphasizes the institutional context (culture, institutions, constraints), whereas the latter (Romeo) emphasizes the entrepreneur and their actions. Imagine “the balcony scene” and another scene where either there is “no balcony” or “no Romeo”, and we have entirely different stories. We cannot prioritize either ‘Romeo’ over ‘the balcony’ or ‘the balcony’ over ‘Romeo’, but they must coexist, creating a dualism of structure and agency. Venkataraman and Sarasvathy (2005) propose an effectuation approach (which suggests that entrepreneurs start with available means and create goals based on the resources they have, emphasizing flexibility and adaptability, allowing entrepreneurs to leverage unexpected opportunities and contingencies (Sarasvathy, S. D., 2001, p. 259), which helps reconcile the agency-structure dualism by emphasizing the interaction of the entrepreneur with their institutional environment. As Giddens (1984) and Sztompka (2002) argue, reducing entrepreneurship to a single pole neglects the actual dynamics of social life. Sztompka (2002) proposes a third analytical dimension: the individual-structural field, in which agency and structural conditions are in constant interplay. This is a space of becoming — an emergent zone where observable entrepreneurial outcomes arise through the mutual constitution of actor and structure.

Entrepreneurship, therefore, cannot be adequately understood as a singular act or a stable identity. It should be analyzed as a *processual phenomenon* — dynamic, relational, and temporally embedded. From this perspective, entrepreneurship is not something one *is* or *does*, but something that *happens* — a process of becoming that unfolds through time and space. Structuration theory and the theory of becoming offer nuanced frameworks for understanding entrepreneurship as both action within structures and the co-creation of those structures. By framing entrepreneurship as an interplay between agency and structure, these approaches offer an alternative to both deterministic and voluntaristic models. Our conceptual model draws on the foundational sociological insights of Giddens and Sztompka, integrating them with contemporary processual perspectives on entrepreneurship.

This article calls for a paradigm shift: from conceiving entrepreneurship as a fixed object of analysis to recognizing its fluid, relational, and emergent nature. Such an approach not only deepens theoretical understanding but also broadens the scope of empirical research — enabling scholars to capture the disordered, contingent, and transformative realities of entrepreneurial life. This perspective opens research opportunities to analyze how entrepreneurs respond to established structures and how they shape and transform them. Giddens and Sztompka’s theory examines how entrepreneurs navigate existing frameworks while transforming them.

MODEL OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP BECOMING

This section presents a comprehensive theoretical perspective and a practical, interpretative scheme for entrepreneurship. That perspective reconstructs and reinterprets the concept of entrepreneurship from a processual standpoint by analyzing the dynamic tension between individual entrepreneurial agency and its structural and systemic conditions. Drawing on Giddens’ theory of structuration and Sztompka’s notion of social becoming, this perspective highlights entrepreneurship as an emergent, socially embedded process shaped by the continuous interplay between individual actions and institutional contexts. In this context, entrepreneurship is framed as an emergent, socially embedded phenomenon, shaped through a continuous dialogue between the actor (the entrepreneur) and the structure (institutions, rules of the game, and the broader environment) as integral components of the entrepreneurial ecosystem.

To ensure the success of their venture, entrepreneurs must integrate their actions with available resources, opportunities, and structural and systemic conditions, thereby creating a conducive space for entrepreneurial activity. At the same time, they must generate endorsement and support for their initiatives from other actors and stakeholders within the entrepreneurial ecosystem.

These two processes—strategic integration and the generation of endorsement—constitute the core of entrepreneurship becoming, understood as a dynamic social phenomenon emerging at the intersection of individual agency and the structural dynamics of the entrepreneurial ecosystem.

This process, unfolding in time and space and subject to continuous transformation, enables a deeper understanding of how entrepreneurship happens, rather than merely who engages in it and why. Accordingly, the partial aim of this section was not only to explain how a particular firm or individual operates, but to provide an ontological and theoretical framework for understanding what entrepreneurship is as a social phenomenon, how it comes into being, and what mechanisms constitute it across temporal and spatial dimensions.

The attempt to address the challenges that entrepreneurship faces in finding its identity is made by placing it within a broader social context. At the epistemological level we refer to Sztompka's (1991, 2002) theory of becoming society and Giddens' (1984, 1993) theory of structuration. The value of Sztompka's theory of becoming lies in the synthesis of previous research results and the way it is formulated, namely, its high internal coherence and orderliness, as well as its freedom from jargon typical for many concepts of social life and sometimes challenging to understand in the field of management science. We refer to A. Giddens' theory of structuration because of its previous use in numerous studies in the field of management sciences (e.g. accounting (Englund et al., 2011), information technology (Jones, Karsten, 2008), strategic management (Pozzebon, 2004; Whittington, 2010), organizations studies (den honda 2012; Sarason, 1995; Heracleous, Barrett, 2001; Heracleous, Hendry, 2000) and entrepreneurship (Bhowmick, 2007; Jayasinghe, 2003; Mair, Marti, 2004; Mole, Mole, 2010; Sarason et al., 2006), but above all its extensive roots in the theory of social sciences.

The theories of structuration and becoming transcend traditional sociological distinctions such as structure and action or subjectivity and objectivity. These theories incorporate complex concepts such as the duality of structure, practical and discursive consciousness, recursiveness, temporality, and contextuality of action. In these theories, in the ontological layer, what really exists, the ultimate substrate of social life, is not individuals or supra-individual structures and systems, but, as Sztompka writes, the third level of social reality, a specific social field, individual-structural (2002, p. 530-532). Giddens' theory confirms this argument by writing about social structure as rules and resources used by social actors, which exist only as memory traces of the acting subjects.

In this approach, there is a mutual dependence and ontological inseparability between structure and agency. The duality of structure, according to Giddens, or individual-structural duality, as Sztompka writes, are social structures constituted by human subjectivity, which are, at the same time, the framework for human actions. Social structure is created and exists only through the actions of people in social life. Giddens (1984) views structure as comprising rules and resources, whereas Sztompka (1991) identifies four dimensions of structure (Table 1). These structures are both used and created during everyday practices. In other words, in their everyday interactions, people use the rules and resources that constitute social organization, and in doing so, they reproduce these resources and structural rules (Giddens, 1984).

Table 1. Structural Dimensions in Sztompka's Theory of Social Becoming and Giddens's Structuration Theory

Theory of becoming - dimensions of structure	Structuration Theory - rules and resources	Description	Entrepreneurship perspective
Normative structure	Normative rules	Configuration of rules for different people in different positions - limits or discourages certain actions, and at the same time prescribes certain actions and encourages them.	Rules and regulations
Ideal structure	Interpretive rules	The configuration of beliefs and views held by people in different positions within the organization suggests rejection of some beliefs but requires recognition of others.	Preferences and expectations of customers and stakeholders
Interactional structure	Authority resources	Typical forms of communication between people in different positions - typical interaction paths that close one and open other communication channels.	Network of contacts, channels and patterns of interaction
Opportunity structure	Allocative resources	Typical distribution of opportunities to access socially valued goods - limits the resources necessary for certain activities, but also favors certain activities by providing the necessary resources.	Access to customers. resources, institutional support and monetizable business models

Source: Own elaboration based on: Sztompka (2002), Giddens (1986).

The concept of "becoming," as defined by Sztompka (2002), and "structuration," as articulated by Giddens, involve the intricate process by which individuals and groups actively create, maintain, and reshape social reality. This encompasses the establishment and transformation of groups, structures, organizations, and institutions through the contextual and structurally influenced actions of individuals and collectives. Actors utilize the structure, employ its properties, and modify or replicate it. Within this process, subjectivity is a distinct synthetic property exhibited by acting agents, which is manifested in their capacity for socio-historical practice. Subjectivity pertains to the potential capacity of organizations to transform themselves. It is not solely about the capabilities of individuals, collectives, or groups, or the potential of social structures alone. Instead, it is the specific outcome of the capacities, skills, motivations, knowledge, consequences, ambitions, and self-denial of society's members within the structural conditions in which they operate. (Sztompka, 2002, p. 531).

Structuration theory and becoming theory can provide essential insights for empirical work by offering sensitizing concepts that frame research, contextualize action, and inform interpretation of results. Building on those theories, the paper contributes to the body of knowledge by proposing a meta-theoretical model of entrepreneurship as a process of becoming, unfolding within two interdependent dynamics: the integration of entrepreneurial action with the rules, structures, and enabling conditions that are integral to the entrepreneurial ecosystem – allowing for both the utilization and transformation of its normative, material, and relational resources – and the attainment of social and systemic endorsement necessary for entrepreneurial legitimacy (Fig. 1). The model aims to explain how entrepreneurship emerges and becomes constituted through relational practices embedded within social, cognitive, normative, and situational contexts.

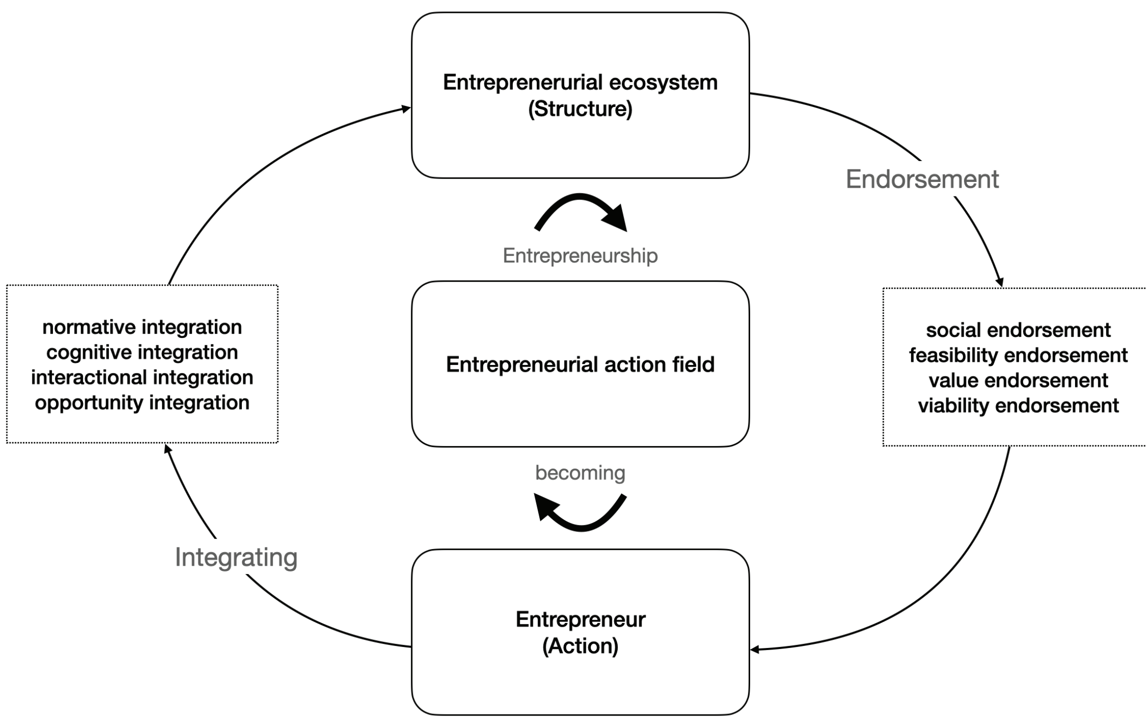

Figure 1. A meta-theoretical model of entrepreneurship as a process of becoming
Source: Own elaboration.

The process of becoming is embedded in the relationship between entrepreneurial activities and the entrepreneurial system. As components of a common structuration process, entrepreneurial activities and their structural and systemic context mutually shape and constitute one another in the process of becoming. Entrepreneurial action is constituted through a relational and dynamic process of engagement with the entrepreneurial ecosystem, through the reproduction of practice patterns shaped by the context into which these actions are integrated. The entrepreneur needs to integrate their actions with the entrepreneurial ecosystem to create an entrepreneurial action field. Concurrently, the process of endorsement unfolds - a relational mechanism through which entrepreneurial actions and identities are socially validated within the ecosystem, enabling access to legitimacy, resources, and participation in the emerging field of entrepreneurial becoming. Entrepreneurs play an active role in shaping and engaging with the various elements of entrepreneurial ecosystems, rather than simply relying on them as external factors. The suggested mechanism is based on Giddens' (1984) structuration theory, which emphasizes the dual nature of entrepreneurship. This duality is evident at both the level of the entrepreneur's qualities and at the level of the system in which entrepreneurs are involved, often serving as the primary driving force. That duality means that entrepreneurial processes are only possible with the ecosystem that mediates and enables them, and the entrepreneurs who reproduce this ecosystem. Adapting the findings of Giddens (1984) and Sztompka (2000) on duality, entrepreneurship is not only a means of entrepreneurial practices but also their outcome, shaping and being shaped, constructing and being constructed simultaneously.

The relational and dynamic nature of entrepreneurial becoming is captured in the model through two interdependent processes: (1) integration — understood as the embedding and co-constitution of entrepreneurial action within the structural, normative, cognitive, and opportunity-related dimensions of the entrepreneurial ecosystem; and (2) endorsement — defined as the external, relational process through which entrepreneurial initiatives and identities are socially validated by other actors, enabling legitimacy, access to resources, and the reduction of uncertainty across four types of risk: social, feasibility, value, and viability, which together constitute four key dimensions of endorsement (Fig. 1).

Integration

Assuming that integration is the process of combining diverse elements into a single, well-functioning system or structure, the integration of entrepreneurial action into the entrepreneurial ecosystem involves not only incorporating such action into the existing structure but also ensuring its synchronization with other components of the ecosystem (Table 2). A key aspect of this process lies not only in aligning entrepreneurial initiatives with the ecosystem's existing requirements, but also in skillfully reshaping certain parameters of the ecosystem itself in order to create a field/space for effective and impactful entrepreneurial activity. This dual dynamic – of adaptation and transformation – is essential for fostering a coherent and enabling environment for entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurs take action to pursue their individual goals; however, these actions are both enabled and constrained by the entrepreneurial conditions with which they must be integrated. Entrepreneurial activity does not occur in a vacuum, but within a broader social system—one that, in its most complex form, may resemble a multi-sided platform. This system provides: (1) operational standards, (2) interpretive frameworks, (3) established norms for process implementation along with access to resources and organizational capabilities, and (4) access to markets, thereby enabling the monetization of created value.

Table 2. Key dimensions of entrepreneurial–structural integration as processes of entrepreneurial action field constitution

Dimension of Integration	Focus	Structural Component	Mechanism of Field Constitution
Normative Integration	Adaptation and synchronization of entrepreneurial action with the normative social structure, enabling both the actor's embedding in and co-creation of social order through reflexive alignment with social norms and values	Norms, cultural codes, moral expectations	Internalization and reproduction of shared norms through action; legitimizing entrepreneurial activity within the social environment
Cognitive Integration	Adoption and co-creation of belief systems and interpretive frameworks that guide entrepreneurial perception and action, enabling alignment with shared meanings (ideal structure) and reproduction or transformation of interpretative rules	Knowledge structures, schemas, language, and sense-making patterns	Reflexive alignment with local meaning systems, contributing to how entrepreneurship is understood and framed in a specific context
Interactional Integration	Embedding within social networks and patterns of interaction Embedding within social networks and patterns of interaction that structure access to influence, legitimacy, and coordination, shaped by interactive routines and authority resources	Social relations, communication routines, roles, and social capital	Engaging in repeated social exchanges, building trust and mutual recognition, and establishing intersubjective presence within a community or field.
Opportunity Integration	Accessing and activating context-specific possibilities and material resources embedded in the opportunity structure and mobilized through allocative resources	Material and institutional resources, infrastructures, and access	Mobilizing enabling conditions such as funding, technologies, institutions, and shaping trajectories of action by navigating opportunity structures.

Source: Own elaboration.

In the light of Giddens' and Sztompka's theories, entrepreneurial-structural integration constitutes an internal, structural dimension of legitimization. It refers to the process whereby entrepreneurial practices are progressively embedded within and co-constituted by existing social structures, drawing upon their rules, resources, interpretations, and behavioral patterns. Rather than a one-way involvement, this integration involves active, ongoing processes of mutual adaptation, alignment, and co-creation between entrepreneurial actions and the broader socio-structural context. Thus, entrepreneurial-structural integration is not merely about fitting into pre-existing structures, but about constituting and evolving the field of entrepreneurial action, enabling entrepreneurial practices to be repeated, replicated, and transformed in accordance with both formal and tacit institutional requirements.

The field of entrepreneurial becoming is not a fixed space, but a co-created domain that emerges as entrepreneurs integrate their actions with broader structural conditions – including institutions, beliefs, norms, resources, and networks. This integration is what constitutes the very field in which entrepreneurship unfolds. Such embedding situates entrepreneurial initiatives within this dynamic and relational field – a social space continuously shaped through interaction, legitimation, and negotiation. Without this processual integration, entrepreneurial initiatives risk being perceived as alien or misaligned with the system, impeding their legitimacy and sustainability.

Endorsement

Building on the assumption that any system is reproduced by its participants through practices that operate within the system's structural terms, one of the primary mechanisms of entrepreneurial becoming is conceptualized as the process of endorsement. For the developed model, endorsement is understood as the public expression of support, recommendation, or approval for a product, service, brand, individual, or initiative by an influential and credible person, organization, or institution.

The model captures how entrepreneurs obtain endorsement for their activities—thereby building trust, enhancing credibility, and influencing the decisions of stakeholders such as customers, investors, and business partners. Through this process, they mitigate the risks associated with entrepreneurial action across four dimensions: social, feasibility, value, and viability. These four risk categories simultaneously delineate the four core dimensions of endorsement identified in the proposed model: social endorsement, feasibility endorsement, value endorsement, and viability endorsement (Table 3).

Table 3. Key dimensions of entrepreneurial endorsement: mechanisms of legitimacy, risk mitigation, and entrepreneurial action field constitution in the entrepreneurial ecosystem

Dimension of Endorsement	Focus	Structural Component	Mechanism of Field Constitution
Social Endorsement	Support and recognition for entrepreneurial activities by influential and credible individuals, organizations, or institutions, which builds trust and social legitimacy within the ecosystem. It helps mitigate social risk associated with societal reactions, acceptance, norms, and user behaviors through community engagement, user experience research, and effective communication.	Social relations, authorities, reputation, and influence networks.	Public recommendations, support, and positive evaluations that reinforce social acceptance and visibility of the entrepreneur and their activities.
Feasibility Endorsement	Support and recognition of the technical and operational feasibility of entrepreneurial endeavors, based on assessments of competencies, resources, and capacity to execute the venture. It addresses feasibility risk, including potential technical or operational challenges (e.g., technological gaps, resource shortages, budget overruns).	Competencies, resources, infrastructure, and institutional support.	Verification and confirmation of project feasibility by experts and institutions, reducing uncertainty and enhancing confidence in the capability to deliver.
Value Endorsement	The expression of approval and recognition of the value offered by a product, service, or initiative, emphasizing its uniqueness and significance for stakeholders. It reduces value risk: that the product or service will not meet user expectations.	Market values, customer needs, and unique value proposition.	Public validation of the value and attractiveness of the offering, influencing perceptions among customers and business partners.
Viability Endorsement	Support signaling the sustainability, stability, and long-term prospects of an endeavor. It addresses viability risk, which concerns the profitability and enduring success of the business model.	Business model, profitability, financial, and institutional support.	Recognition of the capacity to generate profits and sustain operations in the market, thereby enhancing credibility with investors and stakeholders.

Source: Own elaboration.

At the level of entrepreneurial practice, endorsement refers to the process through which entrepreneurial action gains legitimacy, recognition, and acceptance from various stakeholders. This is manifested in the actions, engagement, and contributions of actors within the system. Similar to the process of integration, endorsement occurs through ongoing interactions between participants and the structural conditions of the entrepreneurial ecosystem. It reflects the dynamic interplay between innovative entrepreneurial practices and the enabling structures of the ecosystem, which together shape the process of entrepreneurial becoming.

Entrepreneurial ecosystem endorsement refers to the external, relational process through which entrepreneurial actions and identities are socially validated by other participants within the ecosystem. Rather than simply reinforcing a pre-existing structure, this process contributes to the co-creation of the field of entrepreneurial becoming – a dynamic and emergent domain shaped through the alignment of entrepreneurial agency with structural conditions such as institutions, norms, expectations, resources, and networks. Through active engagement and recognition within this evolving field, entrepreneurs gain legitimacy, access to resources, and opportunities for market entry.

The nature of entrepreneurs is to bend the rules to explore new opportunities for action, often at the risk of incurring costs. By pushing the boundaries, they risk not earning social legitimacy. Interpretive rules define the patterns of interpretation that social actors follow. The role of entrepreneurs is to introduce new, disruptive ideas. Trying to convert the ideas into products, they risk that the current level of technology will prevent their implementation. By experimenting with new ventures, they push the boundaries between what is available according to the contextually accepted rules of access to resources (authoritative resources) and what they can achieve by implementing innovative solutions. Allocative resources define the patterns of access to tangible assets. They are transformative capacities that provide real direct authority over material objects and phenomena. Relating this concept to entrepreneurial activities, they describe how entrepreneurs acquire tangible assets by implementing relevant business models that enable the monetization of their ventures.

Giddens' theory of structure (1984), in combination with Sztompka's theory of the becoming of society (1991), enables us to explain not only how entrepreneurs adapt to social structures but also how they can creatively develop and change them by capitalizing on the opportunities they present. While the integration process—which encompasses both the adaptation and synchronization of entrepreneurial initiatives with structural contexts—supports alignment with the surrounding environment, the endorsement process ensures that entrepreneurial activities are recognized as consistent with systemic values, norms, and expectations, as well as being feasible, valuable to customers and other stakeholders, and viable for investors. Thus, the proposed model provides a meta-theoretical framework for describing, analyzing, and explaining how entrepreneurial phenomena are constituted and unfold within a broader social context, with which each entrepreneurial activity maintains a dynamic and reciprocal relationship.

SPOTIFY AS A CASE OF ENTREPRENEURIAL BECOMING: EMPIRICAL INSIGHTS ON THE DYNAMICS OF INTEGRATION AND ENDORSEMENT

The case of Spotify was purposefully selected as an illustrative example of a company that vividly demonstrates how entrepreneurial activities can both adapt to existing structural conditions and actively reshape them. This type of case selection is instrumental in nature, as it allows for a more in-depth depiction of the phenomenon under investigation. Its primary objective is to test the proposed theoretical framework by identifying specific practices (actions) that contributed to the success of the venture in question. The article employs a qualitative case study method to illustrate the practical application of a meta-theoretical model of entrepreneurship as a process of becoming. This model is grounded in the assumption that entrepreneurship is a dynamic process through which entrepreneurial practices emerge via two interrelated dynamics: integration with existing structures and endorsement within social, cognitive, and normative contexts.

The history of Spotify (Carlsson i Leijonhufvud, 2020) demonstrates how innovative entrepreneurial actions can transform structures by adapting to existing conditions (laws, regulations, collaboration models, billing models, consumption models), as well as by changing them (the freemium model, new billing models, personalization of experiences). The result of this entrepreneurial becoming is the creation of the leading company in the music streaming market with over 600 million users in 2024, of which nearly 40% use paid packages (Spotify subskrypcja, 2024). Spotify's market share in the streaming sector currently exceeds 30% (Spotify - Statistics & Facts, 2024). The music streaming sector has a history spanning over 20 years, with its beginnings dating back to 1993, when the Internet Underground Music Archive (IUMA) debuted, allowing independent artists to share their tracks online. The next step in the development of the industry was the debut of last.fm in 2002, which was a kind of social service combined with free online radio. Then, in 2005, Pandora entered the market, which was the first legally operating and also profitable streaming service. The breakthrough came in 2007, when the first version of Spotify was launched (Historia rewolucji muzycznej: Jak powstał streaming muzyki, 2018). According to 2022 data, 78% of the world's population listens to music through streaming services, with a roughly equal number of people using paid music services and video services like YouTube. Total streaming revenues reached $17.5 billion, accounting for 65% of music industry revenues globally, and even 84% in the USA (Misiewicz, 2024).

Table 4 presents selected actions undertaken by Spotify aimed at integrating with existing structures, as well as actions intended to transform those structures. It also includes activities aimed at gaining endorsement for the new model of music consumption introduced by the platform. The identified actions within normative integration included active participation in shaping new market and regulatory standards as well as engagement in the debate on fair access to digital markets. Cognitive integration was achieved by presenting the subscription-based streaming model as an ethical alternative to piracy—understandable, fair, and aligned with the values of various stakeholders, including artists, users, and record labels. Interactional integration was implemented through extensive collaboration with artists and record labels, personalization of user experiences, and technological integration with a wide ecosystem of devices and platforms. Opportunity integration involved leveraging technology, creating new advertising channels for small businesses, and redefining the music market's structure in a way that benefits artists, users, and investors alike. Simultaneously, Spotify's actions illustrate the process of gaining social endorsement by cultivating a brand image that is inclusive, creative, and committed to the development of music culture. Feasibility endorsement was achieved through arguments demonstrating that the streaming model is not only legal but also profitable for creators. Value endorsement took place through convincing stakeholders to co-create value within the new business model, while viability endorsement was reflected in the global scalability of the model, the dynamic growth of the user base, and the ability to adapt to local markets.

Table 4. Integration and endorsement in action: A Case Study of Spotify

DIMENSION	SUBDIMENSION	ACTIONS & TOOLS	EXPLANATION
Normative Integration	Regulatory compliance	Lobbying and influencing legislation, such as involvement in the Music Modernization Act (MMA) in the United States Obtaining formal approval from regulatory institutions and the music industry for the operation and development of a new music streaming model Adapting to local regulations, especially in terms of copyright and privacy protection	Facilitating licensing and development of the streaming market
	Standard co-creation	Ensuring that copyrights are respected by taking over the Loudr platform for music licensing – simplifying licensing Engagement in developing new legal and market standards for streaming services	Reducing legal risk and simplifying payments for artists
	Transparency	Promoting a more transparent and creator-friendly compensation model Negotiating licensing agreements with music labels for the legal and compensated distribution of digital music	Enhancing financial transparency and negotiation position
Cognitive Integration	Alignment with values and vision	Subscription-based streaming as an ethical and legal alternative to music piracy	Increasing the legitimization of streaming as a legal form of music consumption
	Market education	Promoting the value of fair compensation for artists (e.g., Spotify publicly sharing data on artist payouts) Raising awareness of convenient and legal music use while supporting creators	Increasing trust of artists and users in the payment model
Interactional Integration	Collaboration	Engagement in designing and promoting initiatives supporting artists (e.g., Spotify for Artists, programs for independent creators that enabled them to reach a wider audience)	Increasing artist engagement and loyalty
	Technological partnerships	Seeking technological partnerships (e.g., Google, Apple, Amazon) and integration with smartphones and audio devices like Sonos, Google Home	Strengthening presence in the technological ecosystem
Opportunity Integration	Market creation	Freemium/Premium model offering users free access to music with ads (freemium version) and the option to upgrade to a paid premium subscription, free of ads but with better sound quality, as a market structure redefinition Identifying and leveraging opportunities in the streaming market (technological convergence: streaming, Internet, mobile devices)	Establishing a new standard in the digital music market
	New channels creation	Collaboration with advertisers and creating new opportunities for brands (e.g., new advertising options in Spotify Ads Studio, which allowed smaller businesses to create and broadcast ads on the platform). Identifying opportunities in the music market due to the lack of a legal, convenient, and universally accessible platform to play music at reasonable prices	Gaining new revenue streams and advertising partners
	Technological innovation	Utilizing technology to create new opportunities (e.g., using artificial intelligence in recommendation mechanisms, which enhanced user experience, increased time spent on the platform, and attracted new subscribers)	Increasing personalization and time spent on the platform
Social Endorsement	Brand image	Building the image of a company with a „friendly culture" and innovative approach (e.g., organizing events, collaborating with artists, creating podcasts, and engaging in local music-related initiatives) Alignment with the vision and values by a broad group of stakeholders – users, artists, the music industry, and the public	Increasing social acceptance and positive brand image
	Loyalty	Transparency and openness in communication, such as operational guidelines, privacy policy, and the impact of platform usage on artist compensation Engaging subscribers through community values (e.g., Spotify Wrapped – an annual summary of listened tracks, account sharing) – personalizing relationships	Building a loyal community and culture around the brand
Feasibility Endorsement	Profitability	Proving the profitability of the streaming model for artists and record labels, which led to a shift in attitudes and formal acceptance	Gaining music industry acceptance of the model
	Expansion	Rapidly achieving a massive user base, giving the company an edge over competitors, while educating the market about the value of paid music	Strengthening market position and scalability of the model

DIMENSION	SUBDIMENSION	ACTIONS & TOOLS	EXPLANATION
Value Endorsement	Value co-creation	Proving that the business model is fair and not aimed at monopolizing the market, transparency and adherence to fair play principles Convincing various stakeholder groups of the value of cooperation and that the company operates in their best interests, creating value for both itself and those it collaborates with	Increasing stakeholder engagement in platform development
	Ethics	Implementing fair compensation for creators for the use of their work.	Enhancing reputation as an ethical music platform
Viability Endorsement	Scalability	Pioneering in the streaming segment and convincing stakeholders of an innovative business model that offers not only convenient access to music but also fair compensation for artists	Strengthening leadership position in the digital music market
	Adaptability	Satisfying investor interests and company growth through global market expansion and adaptation to local needs (e.g., offering diverse payment options, supporting local artists, integrating with local partners)	Increasing adaptability to local needs

Source: Own elaboration based on: Carlsson i Leijonhufvud, 2020; Spotify subskrypcja, 2024; Spotify - Statistics & Facts, 2024, Historia rewolucji muzycznej: Jak powstał streaming muzyki, 2018; Misiewicz, 2024, Fleisher, 2020; Voigt, et al., 2017; Sawicki, 2018; Pratama, et al., 2023; Casagrande, 2021; Panda, 2020; Mirov, 2018; Holm & Günzel-Jensen, 2017.

The aim of presenting the above case study of the music streaming platform Spotify, which has revolutionized the music market in less than 20 years, was to enhance the clarity of the concept and demonstrate its practical utility through its application in real-world actions undertaken by Spotify. The authors sought to illustrate how the mechanisms through which entrepreneurs adapt to or transform their structural environments can facilitate the understanding of the concept of entrepreneurial becoming in practice. Facing complex and challenging structural conditions (e.g., legal regulations, collaboration and billing models, and cultural models of music distribution), Spotify navigated within this framework while concurrently executing various entrepreneurial initiatives aimed at transforming these structural conditions (e.g., the freemium model, new billing models, and personalization of experiences). Spotify has adapted to existing structural conditions while also actively transforming them, explaining how entrepreneurs, through innovative entrepreneurial actions, evolve and develop. Therefore, this case study enhances the understanding of the presented theoretical model within the context of real business activities. At the same time, for Spotify to achieve market success, it was necessary to endorse the ecosystem created by the subscription-based streaming business model in the actions of all actors involved in the new model of music distribution and consumption (e.g., artists, listeners, music labels, advertisers, etc.). The entrepreneurship of Spotify required these actors to abandon the old model of music distribution and consumption in favor of engaging with a new one. This enabled a practical illustration and empirical grounding of the proposed model of entrepreneurship as a process of becoming. It demonstrates that entrepreneurship does not emerge solely from individual actions nor exclusively from structural frameworks, but rather from dynamic interactions between entrepreneurial practices and their context, occurring at the level of the entrepreneurial field.

The empirical insights derived from the Spotify case analysis point to several important practical implications of the entrepreneurship process. First, viewing entrepreneurship as a dynamic process emphasizes the need for entrepreneurs to actively engage in both mechanisms of integration and endorsement. Entrepreneurs may benefit from adopting a dual approach: not only adapting to existing regulations, market norms, and technological ecosystems but also shaping and transforming these structures through innovative practices. This approach encourages the pursuit of proactive strategies that combine compliance with regulatory requirements and efforts to establish new industry standards. Moreover, the model highlights the importance of building broad endorsement among diverse stakeholder groups—including customers, partners, regulators, and investors—through transparent, ethical, and value-based practices. Such multidimensional endorsement enables ventures to co-create value and enhance ecosystem resilience. Ultimately, the relational and contextual nature of the becoming process suggests that success hinges on continuous interaction and negotiation within the entrepreneurial field, rather than isolated actions.

CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSION

The text discusses the dynamic structural conditions of entrepreneurial initiatives and how entrepreneurs interacting with these conditions contribute to the emergence of entrepreneurship. The main focus is on the interplay between structural properties of the social systems and individual entrepreneurs undertaking initiatives. It introduces a meta-theoretical framework that redefines entrepreneurship as a process of becoming, rather than a static trait or activity. Drawing from Giddens' theory of structuration and Sztompka's theory of social becoming, entrepreneurship is situated within a processual perspective, thereby bridging the often-polarized domains of individual agency and structural constraint in entrepreneurship research. This perspective presents entrepreneurship as a dynamic, relational, and socially embedded process of becoming — constituted through parallel and interdependent processes of integration and endorsement. The model provides insight into how entrepreneurship is neither merely an individual trait nor a product of structure, but rather emerges as a temporary configuration of context, meanings, relationships, and social endorsement that enables the initiation, development, and sustenance of entrepreneurial action.

The research aims to establish a theoretical foundation for future empirical studies in entrepreneurial management. The paper fills a gap in entrepreneurship research by shifting focus from just entrepreneurial actions and attitudes to examining the dynamics of the entire entrepreneurial process within the ecosystem.

The paper compares the entrepreneur's perspective as an actor and entrepreneurship as a system, which is often treated separately in entrepreneurship theory and research. Entrepreneurship involves seeking and creating opportunities to create value and develop organizations, and thus, it is closely connected with social change. Therefore, it should draw on knowledge from both the field of management and the social sciences to understand the causes, factors, and mechanisms of this change. The structural dualism proposed by Giddens suggests that an entrepreneur operating in a specific ecosystem encounters a structure that is both constituted by human subjectivity and a framework for human actions, constraining and opening up entrepreneurial initiatives.

This is combined with Sztompka's concept of "society becoming," in which the entrepreneur and the ecosystem are in a constant process of mutual influence and conditioning. This framework seems to be a suitable way to understand entrepreneurship, eventuating at the intersection of the individual and the system.

In the adopted conceptual model, entrepreneurship is a continuous process of integration of entrepreneurial action (matching the requirements of the ecosystem) and endorsing the entrepreneurial ecosystem (through the actions of the entrepreneur). The dynamic and complex nature of an entrepreneur operating within a specific entrepreneurial ecosystem creates a space for many new research questions. These questions are of interest not only to theoreticians but also to practitioners.

CONTRIBUTIONS TO THEORY

The research presented, based on Giddens' structuration theory and Sztompka's theory of becoming, is, to the best of our knowledge, the first to propose a dynamic "theory of entrepreneurial becoming" using the foundations of social sciences that treat society as something that occurs rather than exists. In its meta-theoretical framework, this approach contributes to the theory of entrepreneurship and provides a dynamic, reflexive, and emergent ontological perspective on entrepreneurship in management sciences, which situates entrepreneurship within a processual, relational, and socially embedded framework. This reorientation allows researchers to move beyond static models (centered, for instance, on entrepreneurial traits, intentions, or opportunity recognition) and instead conceptualize entrepreneurship as a social process dynamically unfolding in time and space. Grounding the analysis in a synthesis of Giddens' structuration theory and Sztompka's theory of becoming, this perspective ontologically affirms the inseparability of agency and structure. It emphasizes the dual nature of entrepreneurship as both shaped by and shaping its institutional and systemic context—an aspect that has been under-theorized in the existing literature.

The process of entrepreneurial becoming is understood through two interdependent mechanisms—integration and endorsement—which offer a novel lens for interpreting the duality of structure and agency. These mechanisms highlight how entrepreneurship is not only enabled by ecosystems but also actively constitutes and transforms them. Within this theoretical framework, we propose that entrepreneurship should be examined as a field of entrepreneurial becoming, co-constructed through an ongoing interaction between entrepreneur and systemic context, emphasizing reciprocal causality and mutual constitution, rather than one-directional influence.

Our meta-theoretical framework introduces a dynamic, reflexive, and emergent ontological perspective on entrepreneurship in management science. Precisely, we refer to a theoretical basis outside the management sciences that enables us to overcome the limitations of commonly used functionalist-systemic and interpretative-symbolic paradigms. Our contribution to entrepreneurship theory also lies in transforming highly abstract sociological theories into analytically useful categories, concepts, and research frameworks, offering a practical and interpretative scheme that effectively links theoretical abstraction with the empirical application.

Finally, the paper responds to ongoing epistemological and ontological debates within the field of entrepreneurship, which stem from the lack of unified, interdisciplinary theoretical frameworks. It proposes a more coherent theoretical identity for entrepreneurship by shifting toward a more integrated and processual understanding of entrepreneurial action within social systems.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

The conceptual model proposed in this paper serves as a cognitive framework that facilitates a more precise identification of the underlying factors that drive social change sought by entrepreneurs and the methods by which this change can be effectively implemented. This model enables the development of management strategies that support successful intervention in altering the social structure and composition of the change initiated by the entrepreneur. The paper presents an analytical and design perspective that can be utilized to foster entrepreneurship and innovation more effectively through structural adjustments and processes that facilitate change.

Based on these research results, several implications for practice can be identified. First, the proposed model offers an integrated approach that practitioners in the field of entrepreneurship should consider adopting for a deeper understanding of the interdependence between individual actions and structural dimensions in entrepreneurial processes. This provides an opportunity for a more comprehensive view of entrepreneurship, encompassing both individual action and the contextual perspective that can lead to more informed decisions and strategies.

Second, comprehending the interrelated nature of individual decisions and actions within the broader structural context can help professionals make more well-informed decisions by recognizing how the structural context shapes their initiatives. Consequently, entrepreneurs, managers, and policymakers can consciously select the context for their endeavors and strategically capitalize on opportunities. They can also find ways to adapt to the limitations of the context and bend its rules to suit their needs, while managing various associated risks such as social, technological, deployment, and business model risks.

Third, the presented model offers a way for entrepreneurs, managers, and policymakers to gain a better understanding of the dynamic nature of entrepreneurship, which is becoming at the interface of exploiting the opportunities of the current context and the continuous changes of this context resulting from entrepreneurial and innovative actions. Consequently, it can help them identify how to reshape the existing context to create new opportunities, which is just as crucial as seizing existing ones.

The operationalization of entrepreneurship becoming framework developed for the Spotify case study analysis (Table 4) may be particularly useful in this respect. Viewing entrepreneurship as a dynamic process underscores the need for entrepreneurs to both adapt to and shape their environments. By combining regulatory compliance with efforts to influence norms and ecosystems, entrepreneurs can pursue proactive strategies that foster innovation. The model also emphasizes the importance of establishing legitimacy through ethical and transparent practices that resonate with key stakeholders, including customers, partners, regulators, and investors. This multidimensional endorsement supports value co-creation and strengthens ecosystem resilience. For practitioners, the findings underscore the importance of collaborative networks and flexible business models; for researchers, they suggest the need for process-oriented methodologies that capture the dynamic nature of entrepreneurial activity.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

A significant limitation of this study is that the proposed model remains purely theoretical, which inherently restricts its immediate practical application and empirical validation. The model is presented as a conceptual outline, offering a broad framework for understanding the relationships between various categories. However, a detailed and precise description of these categories, along with the specific interactions and dependencies between the identified variables, is needed. This absence of detailed descriptions may limit the model's utility in guiding empirical research or practical implementation, as it needs to provide sufficient granularity to explore the complex dynamics within the entrepreneurial and innovative processes.

Overcoming these limitations requires a focused approach in future research. A key priority should be the detailed operationalization of the variables within the proposed model. This is a crucial step that enables precise measurement and empirical investigation of the complex relationships and influences that these variables exert on one another. By ensuring that each variable is clearly defined and measurable, researchers can more effectively explore dynamics within the model and validate its assumptions in real-world contexts.

As the research progresses, the development and refinement of hypotheses will play a pivotal role. Functions and dependencies between the various variables. This process will deepen our understanding of the theoretical framework and provide a structured approach to examining how these relationships manifest in different entrepreneurial environments.

Moreover, future empirical studies should uncover the specific adaptation mechanisms entrepreneurs employ within diverse social ecosystems. These ecosystems, shaped by unique financial, political, legal, and cultural systems, present distinct challenges and opportunities for innovation and entrepreneurial success. By studying these mechanisms, researchers can gain insights into how entrepreneurs navigate and adapt to their environments, which can inform broader theories of entrepreneurship and innovation.

The outcomes of such research have the potential to offer practical recommendations for entrepreneurs and policymakers alike. By identifying the conditions that significantly influence entrepreneurial and innovative processes, the research can provide actionable guidelines for fostering successful ventures. In particular, understanding how the ability to modify and adapt the structural elements within these ecosystems impacts entrepreneurial outcomes could be a critical factor in ensuring long-term success. This knowledge would enhance the theoretical understanding of entrepreneurship, stimulating further intellectual exploration and having tangible implications for practice, guiding future efforts in building resilient and adaptive entrepreneurial ecosystems.

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