

Chapter 7

ASIAN ENTREPRENEURSHIP RESEARCH

A Profile and Assessment

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INTRODUCTION

Comprehensive treatments of entrepreneurship research are usually done in the context of an entire volume, rather than in a single chapter (e.g., Sexton & Smilor, 1986; Sexton & Landström, 2000). In the last twenty years a large quantity of managerially related entrepreneurship research has been published, but the majority of this has been conducted and published in Europe and North America. During this same period of time many Asian countries were experiencing rapid levels of economic growth, which was being driven by local entrepreneurs. Small and medium size businesses (SMEs) were accounting for much of the increase in employment and in many countries accounting for growth in exports. Research about Asian entrepreneurs gradually began to appear with the introduction of journals devoted to entrepreneurship. This trend was supported by the appearance of journals published in Asia about entrepreneurship.¹ More recently economic growth in China, Southeast Asian and South Asia has fueled research interest in entrepreneurship (Morris, 2001). Thus, there is now a considerable body of research literature, and the academic community can benefit from a comprehensive assessment of both what has been done, what has been learned, and what are the most meaningful directions for future research.

In this chapter some contextual background is provided, so that the continent's more than 50 political units can be seen as related entrepreneurship research groups, where the quantity of entrepreneurial behavior may or may not be related to the quantity of entrepreneurship research. Then, a framework is presented for discussing entrepreneurial research focused on this continent, and each of the distinct areas of research are discussed in terms of the entrepreneurial process. Finally, an assessment is made with respect to where the current state of research stands, what are the major gaps in this research, and what are the best ways to systematically fill these gaps.

THE CONTEXT OF ENTREPRENEURIAL BEHAVIOR IN ASIA

Some countries in Asia have been the source of larger numbers of entrepreneurship studies than other. The reasons for this relate to the variety in the countries, but there are some factors that are more obviously related to the discrepancy. The analysis here indicates that economic factors, including both per capita purchasing power parity and the absolute size of the economy are important drivers of research. In addition, the presence of a tradition of academic research, academic journals, and a willingness to support and/or collaborate with outsiders in such research appears to be important. Finally, the major journals of entrepreneurship tend to publish in English, which may be a limitation of this review, but which enhances the degree to which the research done can be diffused to academics in other countries. On balance, these factors help to explain why some countries are relatively more represented in this research area, either as active researchers or as research samples.

Per capital GDP based on purchasing power parity (PPP) is a useful way to measure of the rate of entrepreneurial activity that one might expect in a nation. Asia has 10 countries with PPP of over US \$15,000.² However, four of these are small oil producing countries (Qatar, Brunei, Bahrain and Kuwait) that are unrepresented in the research literature. Hong Kong and Singapore have been the subject and source of much research, while Israel, South Korea and Japan have been the source of some research. There are a number of countries at the lower end of the PPP scale that are not represented in the research literature. However, lower PPP countries, which are also large economies such as China and India, are well represented. This suggests that both economic development, growth, and size act to attract academics involved in entrepreneurship research, in the same way that the availability of research grants and external funding attracts scholars to certain research topics. However, it also means that conclusions we draw from the existing bodies of research must be circumspect since mid-size and poorer economies are very under-represented in the published entrepreneurship research.