SOCIAL MEDIA ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Sosyal Medya Girişimciliği

A B S T R A C T

Contrary to popular belief, social media has influenced not only the way of communication among people but also many different avenues. One of them has been entrepreneurship. By means of this medium, a new way of doing business has emerged; in which, any individual who has an opportunity to launch a business does not need too much infrastructure, investment, or to take risk. In this study, it is aimed to examine this new entrepreneurial phenomenon named as *social media entrepreneurship*. It is elaborate how the social media entrepreneurship differs from some other types of entrepreneurship, and the problematic of why those individuals involved in such entrepreneurial activity should be called the social media entrepreneurs have been accentuated. It is also aimed to present a proposed model for social entrepreneurs as well as introducing it with an academic perspective for this new type of entrepreneurship.

ÖZ

Sosyal medya genel kanının aksine yalnızca insanlar arası iletişimin şeklini değil, bununla birlikte birçok mecrayı da etkilemiştir. Bunlardan bir tanesi de girişimcilik olmuştur. Bu mecra sayesinde iş yapmanın yeni bir yolu ortaya çıkmıştır, buna göre herhangi bir yapıya, yüksek yatırımlara, çok yüksek riske gerek duymadan herhangi bir birey oturduğu yerden iş yapabilme fırsatına kavuşmuştur. Bu çalışmada *sosyal medya girişimciliği* adı verilen bu yeni girişimcilik fenomeninin irdelenmesi hedeflenmiştir. Böylelikle sosyal medya girişimciliğinin diğer bazı girişimcilik türlerinden farklarının ortaya konulması ve bu tür bir girişimcilik faaliyetinde bulunan bireylerin neden sosyal medya girişimcisi olarak adlandırılması gerektiği sorunsalı üzerinde durulmuştur. Ayrıca bu yeni girişimcilik türü için akademik bir bakış açısı getirebilmenin yanı sıra sosyal medya girişimcileri için bir model önerisinin sunulması da amaçlanmıştır.

INTRODUCTION

Entrepreneurs are in the position of being one of the most important driving force of economies (Dutta et al., 2009). This position has always pushed entrepreneurs to seek for change and to respond to changes that have developed outside themselves and to perceive changes as a field of opportunity (Drucker 1986: 28). Perhaps for this reason, it is often the case that the entrepreneurship and innovations are mentioned together in the literature (Wong et al, 2005; Scott, 2006; Windrum & Koch, 2008; Johnson, 2001) because entrepreneurs, as it is in the definition of Drucker (1986), must be people who have adopted a business model that must be constantly looking for innovation. In another definition, Shane (2003) describes entrepreneurs as “those people who undertake innovation, finance and business intelligence to transform innovations into economic products”. Innovating and being able to keep up with innovations, as understood from the definitions, is one of the important function of entrepreneurship.

One of the most significant development in the 21st century has been the discovery of internet technologies. The development of internet technologies, like many other areas, has transformed the way of businesses do business. The widespread use of e-commerce can be shown as the best example of that. Nowadays people have come to the point of being able to meet their needs in front of their computers, without leaving their homes in fact. However, the social media can be regarded as another discover that brings people’s communication to a very different dimension. Gunelius (2011: 10) has defined social media as “online publishing and communication tools based on participation, conversation, and narrative, founded on Web 2.0”. Although it was defined as a means of communication, the social media channel has also been seen as an opportunity by entrepreneurs and has become a trading center without borders, just as in e-commerce. Thus, for entrepreneurs who can perceive this opportunity, social media has converted it into a set of tools that they use to reach existing customers and target groups. From this aspect, social media entrepreneurs allows to reach out, communicate and relate to customers and target groups, in a way that will build confidence in the companies which provide goods or services (Safko, 2010).

As it can be understood from the above, the changing role of social media has gone beyond just interpersonal communication. Social media, from time to time, is able to determine even the fate of countries. The social media, which has such a great power and which is capable of offering serious opportunities, could not be expected to escape the notice of entrepreneurs naturally. As a result, entrepreneurs not being able to remain indifferent to social media, have become social media entrepreneurs. But since social media entrepreneurship shows similarities to some other types of entrepreneurship, social media entrepreneurs have often been referred to by other names. In this study, a discussion of what social media can offer to entrepreneurs, the boundaries of social media entrepreneurship and the emerging cognitive complexity issues are aimed to examine in a theoretical way.

ENTREPRENEURSHIP

The notion of entrepreneurship originally comes from the French word “*entreprendre*” which means “to take over, to undertake, to commit, to take up, to attempt” (Wickham, 2006: 5). According to the Oxford Dictionary, an entrepreneur is defined as a person who undertakes the responsibility of business or businesses, together with the possibility of profit or loss (Oxford Dictionaries | English, 2018). These definitions may provide insights into what entrepreneurship means, but due to the lack of viewpoints, the acceptability of these and similar dictionary definitions from a theoretical perspective seems to be weak. For instance, in the definitions in mention, taking risk as a dominant viewpoint (Cantillon, 1755; Atkinson, 1957), the need to innovate and dynamism (Drucker, 1986; Schumpeter, 1934), the ability to organize and manage production factors (Say, 1953), innate (McClelland, 1962) or later-acquired (McMullan and Gillin, 2001) personality traits, the importance of the environment and opportunities offered by the environment (Acs and Audretsch, 2003) are disregarded. On the other hand, it seems too hard to make a conscience definition of entrepreneurship anyhow. In fact, Peter Kilby (1971) has tried to describe entrepreneurship as a fictitious character “*Tefarlumba*” by exploiting entrepreneurship with a metaphor because of the difficulty of its identification: “It is a big and important animal. Although many traps have been set up and it has been captured by many, no one has ever succeeded in enslaving it. All those who said they saw it said that it was enormous and very imposing. Nevertheless, there is no consensus reached on its features until now”.

However, for entrepreneurship, without indulging in such as desperation, a definition can be made; "to aim at offering a product or service by combining production factors, and to create an organization by taking the possible risks as a result of all these activities" (Çiçek, 2016: 365). What is important here is that the entrepreneur needs to perceive this as an opportunity to actualize this activity and to create an organization to seize that opportunity (Mueller, 2001: 52). Entrepreneurship is related to change and is more likely to come into existence in times of uncertainty (Casson, 1982). Therefore, it can be said that the entrepreneur fulfills functions of delivering the market to the balance point through identification of untapped potential opportunities, the use of resources existing in the market more efficiently, and the delivery of new information to the market (Smith and DiGregorio, 2002).

From a different perspective, entrepreneurship has an emphasis on creating value. However, in order to create value, it is necessary to set up a profit-oriented new business or grow a business or to introduce new goods or services (Bird, 1989: 4). In other words, an entrepreneur is a person who is considered as a valuable asset for the society. A valuable person, on the other hand, is the person who can produce, who can create value while producing, who can make people elated with values that they create, and who can add splendor to human life (Çiçek, 2015: 259). From this point of view, in the essence of entrepreneurship there lies the perceptions and intuitions of an individual or an organization related to distinguish and profit by an opportunity that has not been tapped before, even if it was tapped, it has not yet been properly benefited from and their superior abilities to exploit unique resources in the direction of growth in mention in order to create a new value (Hitt et al., 2001; Ireland et al., 2001). Entrepreneurs can thus create value for the individuals and society, respond to economic opportunities, and even initiate a process that causes changes in the economic system with the innovations they bring (Muzyka et al., 1995: 352).

When individual benefits of entrepreneurship are observed, it appears that entrepreneurs can receive monetary rewards and personal satisfaction by taking the necessary time, and effort, and bringing together financial, social and psychological risks (Coulter, 2001: 4). Researchers (Burns, 2016; McGrath and MacMillan, 2000; Blawatt, 1995; Haynie et al., 2010; Cunningham and Lischeron, 1991; Douglas and Shepherd, 2002; Niemann, 2002) have emphasized the necessity of having certain features in order to be able to accomplish all mentioned benefits. According to them, an entrepreneur must be innovative, optimistic, determined, tolerant to ambiguity, having leadership qualifications, result-oriented, risk-taking, flexible, learning-oriented, loving the feeling of independence, skillful, seeking success, environmentally sensitive, persevering, a person who can devote him/herself in long periods, regarding money as a performance criterion, opportunistic, visionary, with planning/organizing skills, with internal discipline and ambitious.

SOCIAL MEDIA ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Social media can be described as websites that allow people to create online communities and facilitate sharing contents created by users (Kim et al., 2010: 216). The most important condition here is that the content produced in the social media is created by the users on themselves (Bozarth: 2010: 8). In other words, social media is the sum of the content produced by its own mass. These contents can be produced by different means as well as being different things of every kind. For example, Facebook is not a publishing company. It does not create content, whereas what it does allows users to create their own content on their behalf (Comm, 2009: 2). According to the data in 2017 of the Internet World Stats website; the world's internet users have reached about 4.1 billion people (54.4% of the world population) (Internetworldstats.com, 2018). According to the "Digital in 2017 Global Overview" report published by "We Are Social and Hootsuite"; approximately 2.8 billion people around the world use social media at least once a month and more than 91% of them do it with mobile devices. It shows that an average social media user spends 2 hours and 19 minutes each day using social platforms (We Are Social, 2018). These statistics also show that the use of social media has reached a significant magnitude all over the world. It is inevitable that the opportunities offered by this developments are carefully assessed by entrepreneurs.

It is possible to define the social media entrepreneur as a person who seeks profitable opportunities through social media and who initiates and manages a business within this social structure. It is observed these entrepreneurs marketing products or services within social media platforms, as well as making money through the content which they produce. We can distinguish social media entrepreneurs from other people through their ability to see these lucrative opportunities in the environment where billions of people surf every day, as well as their ability to transform their innovative ideas, almost like in every field of life, into profitability. In a structural sense, it is also true that they have a different environment than known entrepreneurs. This environment represents an area where borders disappeared, in the name of doing business. If need be, a street, an office, a room in a house, any corner in the nature, can be a place where a social media entrepreneur can produce content, conduct business and earn money, as well as any user anywhere in the world can be his/her target audience, in fact even his partner, investor, shareholder of the business he/she is about to run.

At the forefront of the most attractive aspects of entry into social media, is the fact of entrance barriers being very low. This confirms that social media offers a suitable environment for entrepreneurial activities. The reasons for low barriers are low costs, fewer regulations and market opportunities (Khajeheian, 2013: 132). In this sense, it can be said that social media entrepreneurship is less risky than other types of entrepreneurship. In other words, to launch a business through social media is actually an easier way of doing business.

Differences of Social Media Entrepreneurship from Other Types of Entrepreneurship

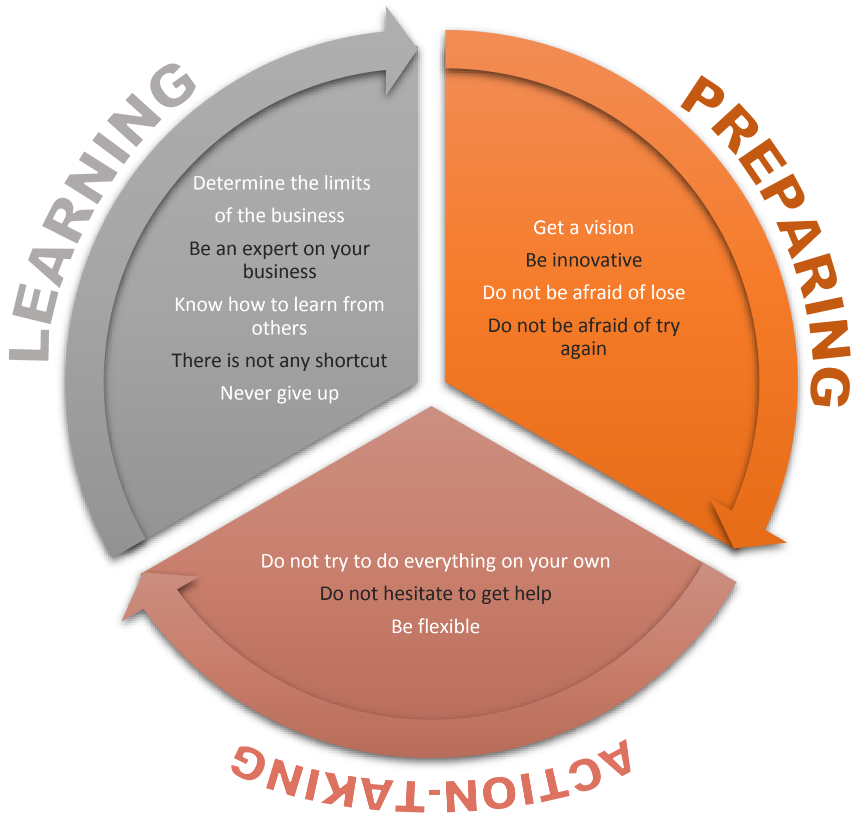
It seems that social media entrepreneurship is often likened to other types of entrepreneurship and used in conjunction with descriptions such as internet entrepreneurs and techno-entrepreneurs. However, social media entrepreneurship needs to be dealt with differently from other entrepreneurial types. The main reason for this is that the work being carried out is conducted through social media platforms. For instance, there are differences between an entrepreneur engaged in e-commerce business and an entrepreneur selling through social media accounts. An entrepreneur who is engaged in entrepreneurial activity through social media does not need to have such an infrastructure on the other hand an entrepreneur who deals with e-commerce should have sales, technology, management, and innovation infrastructure per se. He/she can open an account on Instagram, Facebook etc. and in that way, he/she can market products to his/her followers. In that case, an entrepreneur who is involved in e-commerce should be named as internet entrepreneur or techno-entrepreneur while the other entrepreneur should be named as social media entrepreneur because of the difference in the infrastructure he/she uses.

There is a confusion in other terms of entrepreneurship as well. Those who invent social media tools and those who do business through social media can often be confused with each other. The main reason for this misconception can be demonstrated as those entrepreneurs, who discover social media tools and those entrepreneurs, who do business through social media, can often be confused with each other. Because entrepreneurs who create social media platforms, in the fullest meaning of the term, are techno-entrepreneurs, and they deal with the algorithm and design side of the business. They evaluate opportunities in this direction. Whereas social media entrepreneurs evaluate a different opportunity by accessing users. In fact, it is known that these entrepreneurs often do not understand anything about algorithms and software development. For example, YouTube was invented by ***Chad Hurley***, ***Steve Chen*** and ***Jawed Karim***. Hurley had a design education at the University of Pennsylvania and Chen and Karim studied computer at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (En.wikipedia.org, 2018a). Additionally, while ***Felix ArvidUlf Kjellberg***, one of the top-earning YouTubers of broadcasting videos over YouTube, was studying industrial business and technology management, has become the owner of this title by courtesy of his channel where he shot video games (En.wikipedia.org, 2018b). As can be seen, both examples have achieved their goal in different paths. Here, an important question arises. What types of entrepreneurship characteristics do these entrepreneurs carry out? This article argues that the answer to this question might be that; "*While the creators of YouTube showed techno entrepreneurial characteristics through their design and computer* *knowledge, YouTuber Felix ArvidUlf Kjellberg demonstrated social media entrepreneurial characteristics by producing content"*.

When the infrastructure needed for entrepreneurship is examined, it seems that an ordinary enterprise may need public resource endowments, proprietary functions, commercialization, supply chain creation, ındustry associations, professional associations, government agencies and ınstitutional mechanism (Federalreserve.gov, 2018; Woolley, 2014). However, a social media entrepreneur need to work with an infrastructure in the type of an internet access, innovation (Khajeheian, 2013: 139), and a brilliant idea. These differences in the structure are other factors that distinguishes social media entrepreneurs from classical entrepreneurs. As can be understood from the above, social media entrepreneurs differ from other entrepreneurial types both in terms of the way they do business, and the instruments they need, as well as the structural differences they should have.

A Model Proposal for Social Media Entrepreneurship

It is possible to claim that the boundaries of establishing a business through social media or transforming an idea into money are virtually nonexistent. However, it is not possible for every business venture to succeed through every social media. The secrets of commercial success in social media are an important research topic. Basically, a three-step model proposal for social media entrepreneurship is presented in Figure 1.



Figurel 1. A model proposal for social media entrepreneurship

As can be understood from the model, social media entrepreneurship must be devised in three basic stages. The first stage is the learning process. According to this, an entrepreneur who is considering to do business in social media should first determine the limits of the business to be conducted, be an expert at what he/she is going to do, know how to learn from others, learn that there is not a shortcut of doing business and earning money and that he/she should never give up. The second stage is the preparation phase. In the preparation phase, the entrepreneur must have a vision, be innovative, and not be afraid to lose and try again. The final stage is the action-taking phase. The most important thing at this stage is that he/she should not try to do everything on his/her own.

He/she needs to be able to get help from others when necessary and in that sense, he/she should be flexible.

CONCLUSION

As mentioned in the article, social media entrepreneurship is often confused with other entrepreneurship categories. The main reason for this is that social entrepreneurship is technologically similar to other entrepreneurship types. However, as noted in the article, social media entrepreneurship is actually separated from other types of entrepreneurship by the way of doing business, the instruments they need to do their job, and the infrastructure they must have. Another reason for this confusion is that the social media entrepreneurship has not been thoroughly studied in the academic sense. Because of the fact that its boundaries have not been defined yet. Due to this gap in the literature, there is a confusion of the concept in practice. For these reasons, social media entrepreneurship should be treated as a different species of entrepreneurship.

With reaching serious levels of use in the world, the social media has influenced many areas, and this growth continues at a great pace. Conceptual identification of those involved in entrepreneurship activities at this time may bring some conveniences. These conveniences such as social entrepreneurs' contribution to the economy and development, their reflection on other people, the effects on the mass they address and matters that can be learned or take lessons from, can be brought to the attention of the academia's periphery, as well as the practitioners.

This article can be regarded as a milestone in the phenomenon of social media entrepreneurship. The development of this work through other quantitative and qualitative researches will contribute to the different aspects of the study. Particularly in-depth theoretical discussion of the social media entrepreneurship phenomenon will provide valuable insights into the development of the model proposal and the development of a better definition of the infrastructure which they use.

REFERENCES

Atkinson, J. W. (1957). Motivational determinants of risk-taking behavior. *Psychological review*, *64*(6p1), 359.

Bird, B. J. (1989). *Entrepreneurial behavior*. Scott Foresman & Company.

Blawatt, K. (1995). Defining the entrepreneur: a conceptual model of entrepreneurship. In *Colloque du conseil canadien de la PME et de l'entrepreneuriat* (pp. 13-37).

Bozarth, J. (2010). *Social media for trainers: Techniques for enhancing and extending learning*. John Wiley & Sons.

Burns, P. (2016). *Entrepreneurship and small business*. Palgrave Macmillan Limited.

Cantillon, R. (1755). Essay on the nature of general commerce. *Henry Higgs, trans. London: Macmllan*.

Casson, M. (1982). *The entrepreneur: An economic theory*. Rowman & Littlefield.

Comm, J. (2010). *Twitter power 2.0: How to dominate your market one tweet at a time*. John Wiley & Sons.

Coulter, M. K. (2001). *Entrepreneurship in action*. Prentice Hall.

Cunningham, J. B., & Lischeron, J. (1991). Defining entrepreneurship. *Journal of small business management*, *29*(1), 45.

Çiçek, B., & Karakaş, E. (2015). Girişimcilik eğitimi alan adayların kurumsallaşma algısını ölçmeye yönelik bir araştırma. *Turgut Özal Uluslararası Ekonomi ve Siyaset Kongresi*, *3*, 11-13.

Çiçek, B. (2016). Girişimcilik dersinin öğrencilerin girişimcilik eğilimi üzerindeki etkisi: Muş Alparslan Üniversitesi İİBF'de bir araştırma. *International Conference on Quality in Higher Education,* 365-368.

Douglas, E. J., & Shepherd, D. A. (2002). Self-employment as a career choice: Attitudes, entrepreneurial intentions, and utility maximization. *Entrepreneurship theory and practice*, *26*(3), 81-90.

Dutta, N., Roy, S., & Sobel, R. (2009). Does a free press nurture entrepreneurship. *Department of Economics, West Virginia University*.

Drucker, P. F. (1986). *Management: Tasks, responsibilities, practices*. Truman Talley Books.

En.wikipedia.org. (2018a). *YouTube*. [online] Available at: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/YouTube [Accessed 11 Apr. 2018].

En.wikipedia.org. (2018b). *PewDiePie*. [online] Available at: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/PewDiePie [Accessed 11 Apr. 2018].

Federalreserve.gov. (2018). [online] Available at: https://www.federalreserve.gov/newsevents/conferences/woolley-conference-presentation-20111109.pdf [Accessed 1 Feb. 2018].

Gunelius, S. (2011). *30-minute social media marketing: Step-by-step techniques to spread the word about your business*. McGraw-Hill.

Haynie, J. M., Shepherd, D., Mosakowski, E., & Earley, P. C. (2010). A situated metacognitive model of the entrepreneurial mindset. *Journal of business venturing*, *25*(2), 217-229.

Hitt, M. A., Ireland, R. D., Camp, S. M., & Sexton, D. L. (2001). Strategic entrepreneurship: Entrepreneurial strategies for wealth creation. *Strategic management journal*, *22*(6-7), 479-491.

Internetworldstats.com. (2018). *World Internet Users Statistics and 2018 World Population Stats*. [online] Available at: https://www.internetworldstats.com/stats.htm [Accessed 11 Apr. 2018].

Ireland, R. D., Hitt, M. A., Camp, S. M., & Sexton, D. L. (2001). Integrating entrepreneurship and strategic management actions to create firm wealth. *The Academy of Management Executive*, *15*(1), 49-63.

Johnson, D. (2001). What is innovation and entrepreneurship? Lessons for larger organisations. *Industrial and commercial training*, *33*(4), 135-140.

Khajeheian, D. (2013). New venture creation in social media platform; towards a framework for media entrepreneurship. In *Handbook of social media management* (pp. 125-142). Springer, Berlin, Heidelberg.

Kilby, P. (1971). Entrepreneurship and economic development.

Kim, W., Jeong, O. R., & Lee, S. W. (2010). On social Web sites. *Information systems*, *35*(2), 215-236.

McGrath, R. G., & MacMillan, I. C. (2000). *The entrepreneurial mindset: Strategies for continuously creating opportunity in an age of uncertainty* (Vol. 284). Harvard Business Press.

Mueller, S. L., & Thomas, A. S. (2001). Culture and entrepreneurial potential: A nine country study of locus of control and innovativeness. *Journal of business venturing*, *16*(1), 51-75.

Muzyka, D., De Koning, A., & Churchill, N. (1995). On transformation and adaptation: Building the entrepreneurial corporation. *European Management Journal*, *13*(4), 346-362.

Nieman, G. (2006). *Business management: A value chain approach*. Van Schaik Publishers.

Oxford Dictionaries | English. (2018). *entrepreneurship | Definition of entrepreneurship in English by Oxford Dictionaries*. [online] Available at: https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/entrepreneurship [Accessed 27 Mar. 2018].

Say, J. B., & Reynaud, P. L. (1953). *Jean-Baptiste Say*. Dalloz.

Safko, L. (2010). *The social media bible: tactics, tools, and strategies for business success*. John Wiley & Sons.

Schumpeter, J. A. (1934). *The Theory of Economic Development*. Princeton University Press.

Scott, A. J. (2006). Entrepreneurship, innovation and industrial development: geography and the creative field revisited. *Small business economics*, *26*(1), 1-24.

Smith, K. G., & Di Gregorio, D. (2002). Bisociation, discovery, and the role of entrepreneurial action. *Strategic entrepreneurship*, 127-150.

Shane, S. A. (2003). *A general theory of entrepreneurship: The individual-opportunity nexus*. Edward Elgar Publishing.

We Are Social. (2018). *Digital in 2017: Global Overview - We Are Social*. [online] Available at: https://wearesocial.com/special-reports/digital-in-2017-global-overview [Accessed 11 Apr. 2018].

Wickham, P. A. (2006). *Strategic entrepreneurship*. Pearson Education.

Windrum, P., & Koch, P. M. (Eds.). (2008). *Innovation in public sector services: entrepreneurship, creativity and management*. Edward Elgar Publishing.

Wong, P. K., Ho, Y. P., & Autio, E. (2005). Entrepreneurship, innovation and economic growth: Evidence from GEM data. *Small business economics*, *24*(3), 335-350.

Woolley, J. L. (2014). The creation and configuration of infrastructure for entrepreneurship in emerging domains of activity. *Entrepreneurship theory and practice*, *38*(4), 721-747.