The emergence of online global market place and the multilayered view of international entrepreneurship

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This article revisits the question posed in the previous issue: how should we approach the increasingly more complex international entrepreneurship decisions and problems? It aims to further elaborate on the previously proposed conceptual multilayered framework of international entrepreneurship by incorporating another encompassing layer to the framework, the rapidly emerging online global market place. This amended framework will portray a relatively comprehensive view of IE's influential and operational domains, and will also serve as the context for the highlighting papers that follow this article.

In the previous issue, we suggested that the evolutionary path of international entrepreneurship (IE) developments have transformed IE into a multidisciplinary discipline that would draw and also rely on few allied fields and disciplines (Etemad 2017). A schematic depiction of the framework was presented in Fig. 1 in the previous issue and is reproduced below. In favor of time and space, we abstract from the substance of theoretical arguments presented previously. Briefly, the framework identified primary influential domains that are integral constituents of the field, and also suggested that as a field of scholarly research and management decisions, IE should be defined at the common intersections of those influences. However, we will follow the previous approach of traveling across time and distance to pause and reflect on potentially significant developments and milestones along the IE's evolutionary path. Similarly, we will also treat each article in this issue as a new development and highlight selective features of it to enrich our view and the conceptual framework proposed previously.

This article's objectives are three folds: (i) to further elaborate on the conceptual multilayered framework in order to further enrich the breadth and depth of our collective perspectives and push the state theory forward for seeing farther horizons, (ii) to shed light on the role and the significant impact of the Internet on the expansion and emerging developments in international entrepreneurship, especially on the

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Fig. 1 Schematic illustration of the international entrepreneurship domain at the common intersection of (or connected overlaps among) selected influential disciplines as presented in the previous issue of the journal (see Etemad 2017)

managerial and practical sides, and (iii) to further examine the conceptual multilayered framework's potential as a unifying context in general and for highlighting the four articles that follow in particular.

Entrepreneurial internationalization appears to be at the very core of online developments, especially for the smaller firms that are not richly endowed with the received principles, on which the traditional international business (IB) theory is based. In general, smaller firms are resource-constrained, lack broadly based experiential knowledge, are relatively risk averse, and are incapable of making long-term commitments. In spite of the traditional IB theory's principal requirements (e.g., Johanson and Vahlne 1977, 1990), they internationalize and reach the far corners of the world located at long psychic distances from their respective home bases, while lacking much direct experience with the corresponding environments and seemingly high-risk operations in foreign markets. However, they mostly benefit from the Internet and their internationalization processes are assisted by the Internet-based technologies, agents, features, and facilities. At times, they directly open their doors to the emerging global market place and compete with others online directly or alternatively go through intermediaries, such as Alibaba.com, Amazon.com, among others, that facilitate their internationalization and related transactions. These online agents or institutions have been playing synergistic, if not symbiotic, roles (Dana et al. 2000, 2001, 2008) in easing smaller firms into the emerging and highly competitive global market place.

Following Friedman (2005), we suggest that there has been a flattening in the previously mountainous and perilous landscape of internationalization landscape and both the Internet and the WWW 2.0 have played significant roles in that process. The Internet has removed many of obstructive information barriers and obstacles on the "information highway" for reaching the online global market(s), which resides in the cyber space, but is also connected to the traditional markets. With access to a simple Internet browser, those who could not previously negotiate their way, due to geographic distance, paucity of information, and access barriers, can now enter the highway and reach the expanding and evolving online global market place, which is slowly overshadowing not only the traditional markets, but also theories based on such markets. For their increasing influence and impact on internationalization, we aim to briefly highlight the significant,

well-entrenched, but selective, developments for entrepreneurs who willingly explore these rapidly expanding territories in the *cyber space*.

Initially, this space was perceived as a *minor extraneous factor* and the bursting bubble of the *Dot.Coms* at the down of the young millennia seemed to confirm that perception at the time. Ironically, this space has not claimed any geographical territory over the past 30 years while intruding upon them at increasingly rapid pace. The limits of its reach, or eventual impact, appear to be beyond our ordinary perceptions and perspectives. The challenge before us, therefore, is to travel on the emerging “information highway” in order to briefly explore its mile stones in the hope that they can help us see farther. Such exploration may also help to place international entrepreneurship within the emerging online and digital context.

Structurally, following this introduction, this article starts with a brief highlighting of the early entrepreneurial and pioneering Internet-based initiatives that constructed the pervasive infrastructure by the Internet-based and information and communication technologies (IBTs and ICTs) that paved the road for reaching the online global market place. This brief review should enable us to see the evolution and *develop a broader view* of the online developments and their actual and potential impacts on its participating agents as well as others in IE. We then place the previously proposed conceptual multilayered framework within the spatial context of the online, digital and global market place before highlighting the empirical findings of the four articles that enrich our discussions. A brief discussion of implications at the end calls for further exploration of selected related issues.

Revisiting the conceptual multilayered framework of international entrepreneurship

The conceptual multilayered framework placed international entrepreneurship (IE) at *the common intersection* of five layers, each representing one of the traditional disciplines influencing IE, with the understanding that others could be incorporated as developments and scholarly needs necessitated them. We noted that any comprehensive framework should be able to incorporate, and also account for, pertinent developments and perspectives. We also suggested that the *common intersections* of the multilayers should theoretically be where influential forces emanating from different fields would meet and interact and their collective interactions would impact associated developments.¹ With the advent of Internet and the emergence online global markets, entrepreneurial activities of online actors, and online intermediaries, regardless of their initial motives, time and location, have impacted the path of international market developments in general and entrepreneurial internationalization in particular. For the lessons of their entrepreneurial initiative that paved a smoother road for internationalization, they are briefly highlighted next.

Evolutionary waves of developments towards the online economy and the global marketplace Three fundamental technological processes have synergistically accelerated in the past two decades. *Digitization* has been the principal pillar of *digital*

¹ The term “common intersection” should be viewed as the common space open to, if not housing, pertinent influences.

economy, including communication and dissemination of information, especially through the Internet. Benefiting from the deployment of IBTs and ICTs, and supported by of underlying infrastructural foundations of the information highway (or cyber space), *internetization* (Etemad et al. 2010) collectively facilitated the emergence of “networked” and “collaborative” supply chains and value nets in the digital economy. The quest for creating higher values and delivering them to the ultimate consumers for attaining growth overshadowed other secondary objective and have also strengthened the backbone of the digitized global market place. A cursory analysis of these evolutionary developments over time, combining digitization, internetization,² and value-creating processes, points to significant, still ongoing, and mostly disruptive waves of evolutionary progress that have reached ever-higher milestones over the past two to three decades. These waves profoundly have impacted firms, buyers, and suppliers in the affected sectors and even industries at the time. However, parallel developments have gradually engulfed nearly all industries. It is difficult to find a significant industry that has remained immune. Each of the waves resulted in higher value delivery, further disintermediation, and higher user participation that have combined to provide progressively higher perceived values to the ultimate users.

1. *Online information matching enterprises.* Online firms, such as [Expedia.com](http://www.expedia.com) (founded in 1996—www.expedia.com), [Travelocity.com](http://www.travelocity.com) (www.travelocity.com founded in 1996), All Hotels (founded in 1997—www.allhotels.com), among many others, received information on customers’ preferences for travel-related services and matched them to suppliers’ offerings in a timely fashion while controlling for costs—all contributing to the higher perceived values. These firms offered expanded choice beyond those of one supplier of travel-related services, while saving their customers’ efforts, time, and money. Beyond their relatively large initial (and ongoing) investment in creating their technological platform(s) for maintaining their respective *online network of suppliers and buyers to perform matching functions*, their marginal cost for matching supplies to demands was relatively small, as their matching and optimizing functions were routinely performed by software programs on their platform; while their revenues, based on a pre-negotiated rates (e.g., a percentage of the transaction’s price), increased over time. These firms did not own transportation firms or airlines, nor had any local investments, but reached international buyers and suppliers and thus operated internationally. Their increasingly higher perceived values and wider reach gave them a global competitive advantage and disrupted their traditional counterparts.
2. *Classifieds on demand.* The *Craig List* (www.craigslist.com, founded in 2004), [Kijiji.com](http://www.Kijiji.com) (www.Kijiji.com, founded in 2005), among others, did not explicitly match demands and supplies (or buyers and suppliers), but expanded their classified listings much beyond travel-related categories by maintaining an extensive listing of suppliers on many categories similar to newspaper classifieds. Additionally, the Internet expanded their reach and enabled their respective use by interested users, regardless of their time and location, and

² The alternative view of internetization is networking through the Internet for outward internationalization. Such internationalization runs counter to Johanson and Vahlne’s (2009) view of “insidership,” where aspiring firms internationalize by cultivating and joining local networks.

resulted in the implicit internationalization of many suppliers. Local and international buyers and suppliers provided all the necessary information and delivered the demanded service, while exposing the matching firm to nearly no operational risks. Naturally, they all fell outside the scope and coverage of the traditional IB theories. Importantly, the founders of these firms were the pioneering entrepreneurs exploring entrepreneurial internationalization in the newly emerging digital, collaborative, and networked economy then. Furthermore, most of their entrepreneurial initiative proved to be both disruptive and detrimental to their traditional counterparts. The travel agencies that were intermediating between travelers and carrier, for example, experienced a slow demise; as online travel agencies expanded their reach and offered higher values.

3. *Online auction houses.* Pioneered by eBay (www.ebay.com, founded 1995/1997), a typical online auction house, initially enabled auctioning of mainly goods between customers (C2C). They gradually expanded to almost everything offered for sale, and demanded, without time or geographic restrictions. eBay, for example, should be considered as the Walrusian³ auctioneers of the early digital market. Although it imposed no geographical restrictions on transactions, it did not become a broadly based international digital market place. However, it did put in place the early semblance of a global market place, on which other pioneering enterprises, such as Amazon.com and Alibaba.com, among others, capitalized later on (please see “*Almost everything on-demand*”, below).

Soon after 1997, eBay quickly introduced additional value-adding options, including alternative auction processes and shipping choices as well as rating of buyers’ and sellers’ behaviors (a valuable information not readily available before). Each progressive wave of technological advances added to the users’ perceived value in terms of increased flexibility, ease of transactions, and controlled risks (due to performance-based ratings and indices), among others; while saving participating parties’ efforts, time, and money. Although Ebay.com has been conducting international business worldwide, it barely owns a few physical assets beyond its headquarters in San Francisco Bay area. However, it has invested massively in creating and improving upon its technological and online platforms, which are enabling it to hold substantive amounts of information-, learning-, and knowledge-based assets (or ILKA capital assets, for short). These expanding assets have given it a large international competitive advantage, arising from its *first mover advantage*, that is unlikely to deteriorate, decay, or be overshadowed by others. Similar to the above travel-related enterprises, eBay had a very high-fixed developmental costs coupled with relatively small marginal costs associated with ongoing transactions. It is noteworthy that ILKA assets grow constantly and eventually pose as extreme barriers to other upstarts aiming to enter, replicate and compete.⁴

³ Walrus, an Austrian economist, was the first economist to characterize a market as a place, where buyers and sellers would meet and buyers would bid for supplies, or sellers would auction them off, until supplied cleared.

⁴ These assets enable their knowledge- and technologically oriented operating platforms, mostly centralized at their headquarters with minimal foreign holdings, to offer exceedingly higher values to their ultimate users and partners worldwide and around the clock. The true nature of their digitally networked international operations, however, differs from their traditional counterparts.

4. *Reverse auction website.* Price Line (www.priceline.com—founded in 1997) is a pioneering example. It reversed the auction process by forcing suppliers to competitively bid for a buyer's pre-specified demand (for transportation from point A to point B) by lowering their prices, which resulted in increasing the buyer's (traveler's) value. It continued later with a service to help its clients to prepare a strategic bid, which progressively enabled them to capture exceedingly higher values. The above waves were mainly in services, but the progressive waves expanded into supplying goods and service, including manufactured goods.
5. *Print and music on-demand.* Typical examples of the emerging "print-on-demand" industry include firms, such as www.cafepress.com (founded in 1999), www.zazzle.com (founded in 1999), Designed By Humans (www.designedbyhumans.com, founded in 2000), www.treadless.com (founded in 2001), www.teefury.com (founded in 2008), among many others. These online firms begun to respond to the ultimate consumers' on-demand expectations and demands. To expand the demand for their goods and services, they encouraged, and even required in some cases, the customers' *active participation in a number of value-creating, or value adding, activities, including creation or co-creation of concepts, designs, and ideas for printed materials.* Through its large and transactional web sites, Cafepress, for example, supported distribution and marketing of purchased products by independent customers to become online businesses, whereby buyers individually and collectively contributed to the value creation equation (e.g., Cafepress provided a functional and fully supported online store front for its potential buyer for re-sale of its supplied products co-created by the buyer and Cafepress). Furthermore, Cafepress' *online community building and intellectual property developments encouraged buyers' and suppliers' continued engagement and involvements, regardless of their time and locations.*

With participation of potential customers (or collaborators), Cafepress' co-creation process is capable of creating more than 50,000 items on daily basis (exceeding Walmart's total annual SKUs), but only those demanded and sold are produced with no inventory left at the end of the day. Cafepress not only produces and delivers a large number of items on daily basis; it also encourages its customers to collaborate with Cafepress on related value-adding aspects by, for example, "owning and running" their own online store (i.e., a much smaller operation, where Cafepress is the sole supplier) for marketing and distributing printed materials, which not only continually expand Cafepress' reach, but also synergistically and symbiotically (Dana et al. 2000, 2001, 2008) supports small-scale online international entrepreneurship, all of which are supported by its technological platform. Therefore, Cafepress and similar online institutions help individual entrepreneurs to sell online and potentially internationalize.

Sell a Band (<http://www.sellaband.com>), a digital and networked music-on-demand firm (founded in August 2006), pushed the frontiers even further than that of Cafepress. In addition to all of the above features of the print-on-demand industry, SellaBand enabled "music lovers" to (i) nominate a favorite music tune, (ii) contribute to its professional production and on-line sale, and (iii) become a shareholder in the international sales and profits of the tune. SellaBand crowd funded the financing of professional production, international marketing, and distribution of the tune on the SellaBand online through its own early version of crowd-founding platform. In fact,

SellaBand matched not only the music lovers to their favorite musicians (similar to the above matching cases); it enabled crowds to become investors in music ventures, which was not done before. SellaBand's activities opened many new frontier and were viewed as highly disruptive to the traditional music industry.

In favor of time and space, we abstract from many similar developments in different industries in the interim period between 2005 and 2010 to characterize the current state of the digitally networked international market place. As Air B and B and Uber taxi exemplify more recent developments that are integrating, if not engulfing, exceeding larger number of previously isolated local, or national, markets into the emerging global market place (for lodging and transportation on-demand), we briefly highlight them below.

6. *Lodging and transportation on-demand.* Air B and B (<http://www.airbnb.com>) and Uber taxi (<http://www.uber.com>) are the recent celebrated examples, but they are not the only ones capitalizing on the newly emerging global market place. They conduct their respective international business by providing lodging and transportation services and compete with their traditional counterparts vigorously nearly worldwide, but the fundamentals of their operations differ dramatically from their traditional counterparts. Air B and B (stylized as Airbnb) offers a *list of more than four million lodging facilities in more than 65,000 cities in more than 190 countries* without owning major lodging facilities, such as international hotel chains. Such lodging facilities are supplied by the collaborative local members of a voluntary network that owns (or controls) these properties and offer them for rental use through Airbnb. According to Airbnb figures, it has already served more than 200 million guests worldwide. It has outnumbered services of any international hotel chains in terms of number and location of lodging establishments, diversity and range of service, price points, and other characteristics of services they have offered. In contrast to relatively limited and standardized offerings of international hotel chains, Airbnb offers access to unique features that match and exceed typical buyers' expectations, which are all present online and accessible at one's finger tips, regardless of time and locations. As for their lodging suppliers, they are being exposed to, if not involved in, the international marketing of their services indirectly through Airbnb. As a result, local lodging suppliers have become implicit *online international entrepreneurs* without leaving their respective locale.

Similarly, *Uber taxi* (local ride sharing, taxi hailing, and transportation services) offers its transportation-on-demand services in more than 800 cities by more than a million drivers in more than 80 countries, outnumbering any international firm in taxi, ground transportation, or ride-sharing anywhere in world by an order of magnitude. Similar to their processors, such as eBay, both Airbnb and Uber, among other emulators, have developed highly massive ILKA assets through their powerful technological platforms with near absence of owning foreign (local) physical assets. They also bear relatively small operational risks and much lower costs than their international counterparts, as all of the necessary local (foreign) assets, experiential information and knowledge, and local services are provided by their local partners. In principal, they match the on-demand information with the corresponding information on supplies online, but at global scale and with global reach. However, their matching function is much more complex than the early versions performed by online travel agencies, such

as [Travelocity.com](#) or [Expedia.com](#). In that process, they have implicitly internationalized the suppliers of their respective industries and transformed their entrepreneurial orientations (Etemad 2015a, b) from local to global. It is difficult to foresee how such internationalized processes would revert back to where they were only a decade ago. On the other side of transactions, firms such as Uber receive and store massive information on their platforms as well as fully controlling all transaction-related flows through their respective centralized platforms.⁵

In summary, the above progressive waves of developments and internationalization have increasingly relied on the online users participating in the emerging global market place supported by expanding online infrastructure. The prospect of reversal seems rather dim as the quest for information acquisition and accumulation for generating information- and knowledge-intensive assets for generating exceedingly more revenues looms stronger than ever before.

7. *Almost everything on-demand: [Alibaba.com](#), [Amazon.com](#), and [Rakuten.com](#).* In light of the extensive information presented in the next article discussing the development of [Alibaba.com](#) (Chinese-based Alibaba—[www.alibba.come](#)), we refrain from highlighting the massive online developments by [Alibaba.com](#) and similar other international (e.g., US-based [Amazon.com](#), Japanese-based Ratuken—[www.ratuken.com](#)), regional, and national (e.g., Indian-based Flipkart—[www.flipkart.com](#); UAE-based Souq—[www.souq.com](#)) that characterize the growing institutions playing and supporting the *global market place and the online economy*. The expanding global market place is slowly overcoming barriers, boundaries, and borders, through which growth-oriented small, medium-sized, and even large enterprises participate in the online global economy. As a result, they are indirectly internationalizing their supplies that compete in the global market place, although not independently or directly initially. Alibaba, Amazon, Ratuken, Flipkart, and Souq, to name a few, create incremental value for their ultimate consumers (B2C) and other businesses (B2B) by offering alternatives to direct internationalization. In that process, they also regulate transactions, intermediation, and logistics. For example, both Alibaba and Amazon offer highly advanced worldwide cloud services (AWCS) with global reach. Therefore, these massive online institutions active in the global market place are undeniably influential international players, regardless of their respective locations and size. Their activities alone highlight the need for recognizing the emergence of the digitally networked infrastructure in the previously proposed multilayered framework as the newly emerging context for online-related (or assisted) transactions. This further suggests the need for incorporating the online context into the layers of the conceptual multilayered framework proposed earlier.

Accordingly, the set entitled as the “Off and Online Networks” in Fig. 2 is an attempt to schematically represent influences emanating from the emerging online activities and institutions. In recognition of the influences of the Internet, WWW 2.0,

⁵ As the two cases of Air B and B and Uber are conceptually similar, we focused on only one of them. For simplicity and ease of referencing, we refer to their underlying processes and global operations as “uberization” (in contrast to Internationalization).

and the emerging global market place, we have retitled all influential sets in Fig. 1 by acknowledging their online components. This minor adjust is designed to explicitly acknowledge the correspondence between the online and the traditional (offline) influences and operations. Finally, we acknowledge that the previous “common intersections” have also become multilayered and more complex and necessarily more adaptive now (Etemad 2004), pointing to relations between the off- and online component, forces and influences emanating from each domain or discipline, which may collectively pose new challenges both theoretically and operationally.

Brief highlight of the articles appearing in this issue

As discussed above, the conceptual multilayered framework of international entrepreneurship is expected to provide a context for highlighting articles appearing in this issue. The second article in this issue is entitled as “Alibaba: Entrepreneurial growth and global expansion in B2B/B2C markets” and is authored by Syed Tariq Anwar. This paper examines the rapid growth and the evolutionary path of a Chinese-based enterprise that typifies, and has become an integral part of, the global market place, discussed earlier. Alibaba enterprise is a group of ten-related companies (see Fig. 1 in the article), each of which performs different complementary tasks or provides specialized facilities and functions, which collectively support and enable Alibaba as a whole to function as a major player in the emerging global market place. Although this market place is open to worldwide buyers, sellers, and service providers, the majority of participants in Alibaba’s market place are Chinese enterprises and individuals. Following its predecessors, discussed above, Alibaba matches worldwide on-demand needs with suppliers and supplies on global basis. Based on the firm’s figures, Alibaba has more than 500 million active users in more than 200 countries.

Similar to the earlier pioneering and entrepreneurial initiatives, as discussed earlier, Alibaba started by its founder, Jack Ma, and small team of 17 associates in 1999 in Hangzhou, a historic city near Shanghai. That small number has grown steadily to more

Fig. 2 Schematic illustration of international entrepreneurship at the common intersection of selected influential disciplines contextualized for online and offline spaces

than 50,000 employees (in 2017). Its success has been in its creation and delivery of higher values through its expanding “multisided platforms,” which cover a broad and rich set of tasks and functions, including information matching, “triangular exchange,” and digital infrastructural services, such as cloud computational services, among others. Its revenues have grown exponentially since its inception. Starting with 6.7 billion yuans in 2010, its revenues have grown steadily to exceed 158 billion yuans in 2016 (about \$23 billions, as reported in March 2017). Such growth rates point to the increasing participation of enterprises and individuals in the online global market place that Alibaba.com is supporting. Furthermore, they also point to the higher number of active agents, such as smaller enterprises, that have preferred to take advantage of the global markets through Alibaba.com as opposed to direct involvements. This is a confirmation of the need for explicit recognition of online initiatives as integral part of entrepreneurial internationalization activities.

In light of Sayed Tariq Anwar’s extensive discussion of Alibaba by, we refrain from further elaboration of the topic. It suffices to add that the Internet in general and WWW 1.0 were initially perceived as exogenous to the firms’ environment. Many firms questioned the value of getting involved, and the bursting of the so-called Dot.Com Bubble lent some credence to those early perceptions. However, the growing extent of online activities point to an upward trend—i.e., larger number of participants are embracing the Internet, and more enterprises are exploiting the WWW 2.0’s interactivity as a rich source of opportunity for creating and delivering added perceived values to their ultimate customers. Furthermore, the concept of value creation, viewed broadly with the national economic perspective, has also formed the core argument in the general discussion of growth, employment, and wealth creation. These topics are addressed by the next article in this issue.

The third article in this issue is entitled as “The impact of FDI on the performance and entrepreneurship of domestic firms” and is authored by Mico Apostolov. The direct and indirect effects of foreign direct investment (FDI) have been the subject of many studies, and their impacts, including those with the short- and long-term effects on different aspects of national and international activities, have been extensively examined in the past. However, there is a paucity of research on FDI’s influence on entrepreneurship and job creation through entrepreneurial start-ups, especially in the emerging open small economies, such as Macedonia (population of 2.1 million in 2017). This and related topics have remained relatively under-explored, if not unexplored. This article sets to examine FDI’s influence on (i) the creation of incremental employment, directly or indirectly, (ii) the incidents of new start-ups in the short to medium terms, and (iii) FDI’s catalytic effects on restructuring of the economy in the longer term. The article reports positive overall impact associated with FDI.

Within the context of the conceptual framework, FDI could be viewed as an economic vehicle stimulating higher value creation and value capture in the economy through access to international markets forcing a more efficient exploitation of national resources, especially when such operations are conducted by the dominant agents of FDI, the multinational enterprises (MNEs). MNEs can indeed be viewed as the network of sister subsidiaries linking multilocal operations with related and complementary functions. MNEs are global market players and expect, and even impose, international performance standards on their subsidiary operations. In turn, subsidiary operations demand similar performances from their suppliers and consequently offer higher values to their buyers nationally and internationally. Viewed differently, the MNEs’ network of

sister subsidiaries resembles globally networked online operations with one principal exception: different subsidiary operations are semi-independent, as they are fully or partially controlled by their common headquarter. It appears logical, therefore, to suggest that their open access to the international markets confers certain economies upon the national economies in which they operate. As stated earlier, the article found that FDI had a positive impact on employment, entrepreneurship, productivity, reduction of barriers, and re-structuring of economy in the open economy of the Macedonian Republic, but not on new start-ups for self-employment. Increased employment enabled job seekers to find gainful employment as opposed to self-employment by starting-up a new firm for creating their own jobs.

The fourth article in the issue is entitled as “International entrepreneurship in resource-rich landlocked African countries” and is co-authored by Léo-Paul Dana and Vanessa Ratten. This article shares commonalities with the previous articles. In studying the landlocked and resource-rich countries in the African continent, including Botswana, Zambia, and Zimbabwe, the authors concluded that the national entrepreneurs did not effectively exploit international networks and thus suffered from insufficient openness to, or inefficient links with, international markets. The authors suggested higher efforts in the formation of networks for more efficient exploitation of rich local resources. While the fourth article (Dana and Ratten) attributed international entrepreneurship weakness in the examined countries to ineffective international networks, the last article in this issue identifies a need for strengthening entrepreneurship through more innovative and more potent entrepreneurially oriented education in the institution of higher education.

The fifth article in the issue is entitled as “Entrepreneurship Education and Training in Higher Educational Institutions in Ghana” and is co-authored by Smile Dzisi1 and Franklin Odoom. The authors’ research study of entrepreneurial education in polytechnics and other institutions of higher education in Ghana leads them to the conclusion that such education and training was in need of higher depth, research, and rigor in order to impart to trainees an entrepreneurial curriculum with advanced and effective content consistent with, if not reflective of, the prevailing entrepreneurial ecosystem in the Ghanaian environment, including problem-solving skills for responding to respective knowledge-intensive societal problem, expectations, and needs.

A brief discussion and implications

Collectively, the above articles lend further support to the concept of multilayers and their overlapping inter-relationship in the proposed framework. They also point to the emergence of stronger engagement in online activities for achieving higher global competitiveness and attaining larger efficiencies through expanded scale, scope, and network economies, which are resulting from access to, and participation in, the expanding global market place through the Internet. Online engagements, especially through the WWW 2.0’s interactivity, are likely to heighten ultimate customer’s demand for higher perceived values and higher satisfaction as well. The introductory discussion in the early parts of this article pointed to the further need for vigilance, as expanding transactions in the cyber space would be bound to pose their own characteristics and added complexities. Similarly, the online international entrepreneurship,

through the Internet-assisted access to the emerging digital and networked global market place, may prove to result in both fruitful benefits as well as novel logistical and technological challenges.

The brief review of seven evolutionary waves of increasing online involvements highlighted that the upcoming waves would likely be equally, if not more, disruptive than those of the past with clear winners and losers. As compared to the conduct of international business based on the traditional IB theory, the newly emerging pattern of internationalization (as currently practiced by firms such as Air B and B, Uber taxi, and many others; and termed as the “uberization” for simplicity) will be operating and evolving differently and posing corresponding challenges not foreseen by the traditional IB theory. Accordingly, the journal calls for further research covering online international entrepreneurship and also exploring processes based more on “uberization” models than those based on the traditional theories. The journal is equally open to extensive examination of related issues, including the public policy implication of such process, in the form of thematic or special issues.

The implications of the last two articles are equally profound. In spite of much evidence highlighting the advantages of networks, the study of landlocked resource-rich countries of Africa points out that they have not yet taken full advantage of such network for advancing international entrepreneurship in those countries. The question in need of further research is why that is still the case?

The implication of the fifth article points to the possible inconsistencies between entrepreneurial curriculum and the prevailing local ecosystem, embedded in the national socio-culture and economic system as well as in the traditional entrepreneurial practice, which pose the question of consistency, if not potency, of the entrepreneurial curriculum, especially when such curricular materials are adopted from, or patterned after, foreign contents. Again, the journal sees a need for research studies in the design and introduction of effective culturally and nationally consistent entrepreneurship education in general and similar education and training in international entrepreneurship in particular. Accordingly, the journal calls on the IE scholarly community to take up the challenge of associated issues regarding effective curriculum for innovative and stimulating education and training in international entrepreneurship.

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