
Editorial

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The role of family businesses is gaining importance being found important for their overall impact on societies in generating economic wealth. Family firms are often considered as the 'backbone of corporate life across nations, [...] a cornerstone of socioeconomic development' [Poutziouris et al., (2006), p.1]. Zahra et al. (2006, p.614) even call family firms 'the most enduring and venerable organisational form'.

Family firm are accordingly gaining increased interest also from the academic side. Next to an 'own journal', the *Family Business Review*, special issues of JBV or ETP or this special issue, also own conferences and associations (e.g., IFERA) and subdivisions of classical output channels (such as the ENT division of the AoM) have developed in the last decades. But always as a field of research develops, it is important to pause and evaluate the progress made and reflect on the directions to pursue in future so as to gain deeper insights into the phenomenon of interest (Sharma, 2004). This is where this special issue of the *International Journal of Entrepreneurship and Innovation Management (IJEIM)* sets on.

So far, especially the value creation perspective has been largely lacking from the family firm research, a relatively young academic field of enquiry (Poutziouris et al., 2006). The aim of this *IJEIM* special issue on 'entrepreneurial behaviour in family businesses' is therefore to target the dynamic side of these firms. Some recent theoretical and conceptual developments within the family firm research support the view that it could be possible to advance the knowledge on the entrepreneurial processes within family businesses. From the point of view of long-term survival (Sandig et al., 2006), the family forms a special resource in the company, the 'familiness' (Habbershon and Williams, 1999). As an ongoing relationship, the family forms an arena for carrying over the inherent and hidden knowledge of the business and its operations. The notions on familiness and portfolio entrepreneurship, among others, provide some guidance towards a more dynamic perspective on the behaviour and management of family businesses. Families and individual family members may have different roles in regard to the business – from investors to important actors.

Furthermore, the progress taking place in the theory of psychological ownership seems promising in understanding the process of opportunity recognition, innovation, growth and value creation. Family businesses are dynamic systems filled with economic and non-economic goals both at individual and collective levels. All this calls for new perspectives and ideas in theory development and empirical research. Therefore, the specific purpose of this *IJEIM* special issue is to encourage, develop and publish excellent research that integrates dynamic aspects of family businesses with regards to entrepreneurial behaviour and value creation.

Family firms are more complicated than their non-family counterparts. Zahra et al. (2006) therefore conclude that an effective theory of family firm research needs to include both descriptive and prescriptive research, including talking to their owners. This is what this special issue attempts by offering a broad kaleidoscope of research papers from 17 scholars (especially emphasising and thanking Pramodita Sharma from Concordia University who kindly agreed to write a special introductory article for us) from institutions from nine different countries. This special issue is an important step toward advancing new knowledge, practices and acceptance of family firm research both as an important part of the emerging entrepreneurship domain as well as its own discipline. We hope that this special issue contributes to the further advancement of family firm research under an entrepreneurial lens.

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