Editorial

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1 Introduction

In the last few decades, the literature on family firms has experienced exponential growth, particularly after the launch of the *Family Business Review* (*FBR*) in 1988, and since then many contributions have developed and deepened this fruitful research field (Jimenez-Castillo and Hoy, 2019). One of the topics that has influenced this research field lately concerns the non-financial goals pursued by family firm managers (e.g., Basco, 2017; Williams et al., 2018; Vazquez and Rocha, 2018), which is in line with the socio-emotional wealth (SEW) research stream started with the seminal research of Gómez-Mejia et al. (2007).

Although the SEW perspective has seen enormous growth recently, in terms of publications, it remains an underdeveloped subject partially rooted in social psychology with new extensions (Mattias, 2016), integrating eclectic entrepreneurship theory.

This special issue contributes to the literature on entrepreneurial performance in the family firm context, by providing a selected set of research articles revealing different dimensions of this still under-explored subject, especially the challenging questions concerning balanced management of SEW, growth, performance and succession in family firms.

In the view of Martínez-Romero and Rojo-Ramírez (2016), further research efforts are needed to distinguish between ownership and management in order to analyse SEW variations over time. Thus, it is necessary to advance knowledge on the effects and implications of strategic alternatives considering different combinations of control and management on family firms' entrepreneurial performance.

For Wright and Dana (2003), the strategic alternatives to be addressed by small entrepreneurial units have undergone dramatic changes and spatial constraints are no longer impossible barriers to overcome. This is fundamentally due to the emergence of a new paradigm, characterised by reduced transaction costs and increased managerial complexity that push both small and large entrepreneurial units to implement multi-prong strategies, in order to deal with distinct scenarios, namely:

1 symbiotic management with an ally in the same network

2 competing with a rival in a different network

3 dealing with a different network, and perhaps joining it.

More recently, Saiz-Álvarez et al. (2020) state that family firms are unique *per se*, in the sense that they face specific challenges and are required to develop vital strategies to integrate and coordinate distinct types of resources and actions conducive to more sustainable performance. This needs to be approached using different perspectives and measures, and not only by considering the neoclassic approach to the firm, founded on the analysis of both external and internal determinant factors.

In this framework, there is plenty of room to explore the role played by SEW in determining entrepreneurial performance from different approaches, due to its importance and relevance for family firm performance, namely survival, growth, productivity and innovative performance, as well as corporate governance and performance along their life cycle.

This is a hot topic with an emerging body of theoretical and empirical applications and implications devoted to SEW components acting as determinant factors of family firm performance, considering both the exogenous and endogenous actors that can work jointly towards sustainable performance founded on the still unexplored behavioural, psychological and relational dimensions, concerning the corporate governance of family firms.

This special issue presents a solid set of selected contributions, which substantially improve the current level of understanding about the external and internal determinant factors of SEW and entrepreneurial performance of family firms, using eclectic approaches and multidimensional analyses, as well as considering the macro, micro and individual levels of analysis.

Returning to the debate initiated by Wright and Dana (2003) and Dana et al. (2008), it must be outlined that both entrepreneurs and family firms need to (re)think competitive strategies in order to ensure survival and compete successfully in global markets. Nevertheless, further research efforts are required to reveal the role played by the often neglected socio-emotional determinants, as well as the individual characteristics of the founder/CEO.

2 Contribution of this special issue

Continuing to enrich this ongoing debate, in the current special issue, SEW theory and eclectic entrepreneurship theory are tackled, namely socio-emotional determinants, entrepreneurial profile of the founder/CEO, entrepreneurial orientation, pro-activeness and innovation, intellectual capital, knowledge management, failures and performance of family firms.

Accordingly, this special issue features six scientific contributions about the SEW and entrepreneurial performance of family firms, including a selection of contributions by scholars and researchers from Germany, Italy, Mexico and Spain.

This introductory article presents the results of an extensive review of eclectic research methods, as well as an overview of the contributions included in the current special issue.

Firstly, the research by Martínez-Romero, Martínez-Alonso and Casado-Belmonte develops an innovative study about: 'The influence of socioemotional wealth on firm financial performance: evidence from small and medium privately held family businesses'; analysing how different SEW dimensions influence financial performance in such firms.

In spite of the interest in family firms' financial performance, not much research has been made on this matter, matching financial management with SEW. Some research, for example by Kotlar et al. (2018), has lately analysed the trade-off between financial wealth and SEW and Martínez-Romero et al. (2019) analyse the effect of SEW on family firm value creation but indeed more research on this challenging subject is needed.

The authors in this first research analyse a sample of 173 family firms, revealing that two SEW dimensions:

1 family members' identification with the firm

2 the renewal of family bonds through dynastic succession; have a negative and significant effect on financial performance.

This study advances knowledge on the relationship between family involvement and financial performance; and complements the partial view offered up until now, by including the SEW approach, its multidimensional nature and the effects of its various dimensions.

Secondly, Bövers and Hoon present a study on: 'Unpacking socio-emotional wealth: exploring the origins of affective endowment in founder firms', in which they address and explore personal SEW priorities of owners controlling and managing a business.

Recent research shows how SEW presents the challenge of not directly assessing the locus and drivers of family members (Jiang et al., 2018), which change as research on SEW moves forward. In this same line of reasoning, previous research shows that SEW is not exclusive to family members, since it also originates from personal and family levels (Miller and Le Breton-Miller, 2014), reaching different perceptions from those of family firm owners (Martínez-Romero and Rojo-Ramírez, 2016).

According to this research line, the authors of this article conduct a qualitative study, where the roots of emotional endowment and personal SEW are examined. The evidence points to two types of personal SEW priorities, namely achievement-related priorities and ties-related priorities. The authors bring added value to family business research and the related framework, by expanding both the research on SEW and on intergenerational intention by combining them in a unique way.

Thirdly, Lazzarotti, Gjergji and Visconti address the still unexplored relationship between SEW and innovativeness in the family firm context. To do so, the authors develop an original approach entitled: 'Socioemotional wealth and innovativeness in Italian family firms: what happens when the leader is a latest-generation member?'.

Following the latest research in the field, which starts to analyse the influence of family firms on innovativeness, particularly in SMEs (Filser et al., 2018; Ferrari, 2019) and the role played by family firm managers in the implementation and effectiveness of technological innovation (Martínez-Alonso et al., 2019), the authors of this paper analyse this relevant issue in the context of Italian family firms, with the main motivation being to deepen knowledge about the effects of different SEW dimensions on family firm innovativeness, by focusing on a particular player, i.e., the young leader who belongs to the last generation of family managers and who is increasingly engaged in firm management. Founded on a hierarchical regression estimation procedure of a selected model specification, the empirical findings reveal that two SEW dimensions above all characterise young leaders when they foster innovation, i.e., low emotional attachment and great attention to nurturing binding social ties.

Fourthly, Ruf, Moog and Rius contribute to clarifying that non-family members of family firms show different strategic behaviours, regarding application of the SEW construct. The authors develop an approach on: 'Values as antecedents of socio-emotional wealth behaviour in family firms'; taking as reference the recent SEW theory, to explain differences in decision-making by acknowledging the unique connection between a family and its business. The authors contribute to the ongoing research using SEW theory, by investigating individual, family and family business values as antecedents and underlying motivators of SEW behaviour, influencing strategic decision-making in family firms, directly and as a mediator via SEW. The findings reveal that individual and collective family values are the main drivers of SEW behaviour, changing over time and leading to a different focus in terms of the SEW dimensions, which is then represented in the strategic decisions made in the family business.

Fifthly, Jiménez-Jiménez, Sanz-Valle and Perez-Caballero address the controversial relationship between entrepreneurial orientation and a firm's family status. In the literature, family firms have been so far considered more conservative and risk-adverse than non-family firms and, therefore, with less entrepreneurial orientation. However, some recent studies revealed that family firms also take risks. The authors contribute to the ongoing debate by developing a study entitled: 'Entrepreneurial orientation and innovation success in family firms'; where they contrast the entrepreneurial orientation of family firms versus non-family firms, suggesting that the relationship between entrepreneurial orientation and performance, in particular when measured as new product success, is higher for family firms than for non-family firms. In addition, they reveal that there are no differences between family firms and non-family firms regarding entrepreneurial orientation.

The sixth and final research from Ferrari addresses the importance of having non-economic goals, in the family firm context, in order to pursue SEW, such as the desire to preserve business continuity and involve the next generation in the family business. The author develops a very challenging approach to: Exploring the side effects of socioemotional wealth. A multilevel analysis approach to the dysfunctional dynamics in family business succession'; founded on a sample of eight family firms, and aiming to reveal the roots of dysfunctional patterns resulting from business transmission specifically. The author highlights the strength of a multilevel approach in providing empirical evidence to support the idea that striving for non-economic goals could be myopic behaviour, resulting in undesired long-term effects for generations involved in a business transmission process.

The six papers advances the existing knowledge on SEW determinants, by integrating both SEW theory and eclectic entrepreneurship theory into the research framework about family firms' entrepreneurial performance. This is also a solid set of contributions that enrich the behavioural theory of the firm, which is far from complete, with a need to return to the lens of analysis exploring both the individual and organisational level, especially addressing the sustainability and growth challenges of family businesses.

Lastly, it should be noted that the main strength of this special issue lies in its 'ability to pass the test of time'; due to the eclectic variety of topics, contexts and research methodologies covered, which ratifies practitioners and researchers' increasing interest in SEW issues, as well as SEW theory's potential to become a cornerstone for advancing knowledge on the determinants of entrepreneurial performance, non-economic performance and the behavioural approach to the firm.

A final word of gratitude is due to the Editor-in-Chief of the *International Journal of Entrepreneurship and Small Business* (*IJESB*), Professor Léo-Paul Dana, for his clear guidance during the edition/creation process. We believe this special issue will become a required reference in future research about SEW and the entrepreneurial performance of family firms. We would also like to thank the reviewers who contributed greatly with their valuable time and energy to improve the quality of the articles with highly pertinent comments and suggestions.

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