

Entrepreneurial capability, start-up strategies and challenges among start-up entrepreneurs in China: Basis for business viability framework

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Abstract

The entrepreneurial ecosystem in China is one of the most dynamic and vibrant in the world. In recent years, there has been a surge in the number of start-up businesses in China, and these businesses have achieved significant success. However, start-up entrepreneurs in China also face a number of challenges, including a lack of access to capital, a competitive market, and a complex regulatory environment. This study examines the entrepreneurial capability, start-up strategies, and challenges among start-up entrepreneurs in China. The study uses a survey of 300 start-up entrepreneurs in China to collect data on these factors. Descriptive research design was used in this study because the goal of the study is to describe the entrepreneurial capability, start-up strategies, and challenges among start-up entrepreneurs in China. The questionnaire is a good choice for a data gathering instrument because it allows the researchers to collect data from a large number of start-up entrepreneurs in China. This data can then be used to develop the start-up framework. Results of the study revealed moderate agreement on their entrepreneurial capability as to leadership and management, active learning and analysis, integrity and commitment and passion and self-achievement. The respondents agreed on their start-up strategies as to planning, marketing and sales strategy. They also agreed on the challenges of new-startup in terms of funding, management and technological know-how and innovation skills. Result shows that there is no relationship between entrepreneurial ability, start-up strategies and start-up challenges. A framework for start-up entrepreneurs were developed to enhance their entrepreneurial capability.

Keywords: entrepreneurial capability, start-up strategies, start-up challenges

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1. Introduction

With the rapid development of the digital economy and the introduction of entrepreneurial policies, entrepreneurship has become a key topic at present (Wu et al., 2019; Yuan et al., 2020; Jia et al., 2021; Scuotto et al., 2022). Science and technology such as the internet promote economic growth, and emerging enterprise groups appear in the spring breeze of innovation and entrepreneurship. Since 2012, the number of Chinese enterprises registered has increased sharply. There were 3.159 million newly registered enterprises in China in the first three-quarters of 2015. According to the Hurun Global Unicorn List 2020, China ranked second globally with 227 Unicorn enterprises. Start-ups are “potential stocks” facing high risk and high returns. Entrepreneurial capability, start-up strategies and start-up challenges can reflect entrepreneurial spirit and have an essential impact on the success of the business.

Entrepreneurial capability is the ability to identify opportunities and aligning the suitable resources and efforts to seize these opportunities. Entrepreneurial capability (EC) captures a firm’s capacity to sense, select, and shape opportunities, and synchronize their strategic moves and resources in pursuit of these opportunities. and Entrepreneurial capability explain its dimensions, highlighting its role in achieving and sustaining a firm’s competitive advantage. It is instrumental for realizing a firm’s game-changing strategies, that is, those strategic moves that fundamentally alter the nature, domain and dynamics of competition. The study of Nikitina et al., (2020) identified that ethical and sustainable thinking as well financial and economic literacy were considered to be the least important competences, while motivation and perseverance were commonly ranked as highly important by entrepreneurs.

Some of the strategies of start-up entrepreneurs include developing and assembling a business plan, finding out everything there is to know about your clients, setting measurable goals, and documenting these goals. All of these business startup strategies aid in developing a company's vision and direction. The start-up target market, value proposition, and objectives are combined to create these comprehensive strategies. The social media marketing approach is also combined with the content marketing plan.

Prospective techno-preneurs are motivated to launch a business despite uncertainty by the availability of entrepreneurial opportunities. It illustrates how start-up opportunity and uncertainty affect a venture's ability to succeed. The study of Thanh et al., (2022) demonstrates that thorough evaluation of company opportunities at the pre-start-up phase will significantly aid in advance planning, help avoid potential obstacles, and guarantee start-up success.

It is a fact that there is no one-stop fix for the escalating problems that entrepreneurs in this era face. No entrepreneurs possess a magic wand that will allow one to instantly overcome the so-called obstacles. Startups must be tenacious and concentrate on maintaining their integrity in the face of all obstacles if they are to confront and overcome the so-called challenges of a hostile business environment.

According to Salamzadeh and Tajpour, (2021), there are six different types of difficulties that media startups must overcome: obstacles relating to the law, infrastructure, human capital, fundraising, media credibility, and content. The content related challenges are among those which confront some of the most significant obstacles during the development stage.

The development and application of big data, the internet and other technologies have provided good soil for Chinese innovative enterprises, and Chinese start-ups have mushroomed rapidly. The present study has certain managerial implications for start-ups as it will look on entrepreneurial capability, start-up strategies and start-up

challenges.

Entrepreneurs promote economic development, foster innovation, and create jobs. Thriving businesses support charities and invest in community projects. Therefore, entrepreneurial skills and capability help create innovative businesses that benefit the economy and community. Start-ups should pay attention to professional cognition, ability, and leadership and management style in management recruitment and post promotion. Leadership development and training in start-ups are also necessary. Enterprises can regularly hold relevant training courses and experience sharing meetings to cultivate entrepreneurial leaders. The commitment view under the social exchange theory shows that employees' perceived sense of support from the organization will make them obligatory to the employer. Start-ups should emphasize the construction of organizational atmosphere to improve the effectiveness and interest connection between employees and organizations through certain performance appraisal and promotion systems so that all can work together for the benefit of the organization and achieve its mission, vision, goals and objectives.

This study may enhance one's analytical and logical skills that enable one to solve any problem. Entrepreneurship mainly helps solve daily-life problems and eases pain points with the help of innovative products and services provided. Entrepreneurship education may provide students with necessary preparation to meet the challenges and problems of economic crisis and unemployment. Any discipline could benefit from entrepreneur drive to enhance the beneficiaries' creative capacity and raise a generation of self-reliant youths sustaining the economy.

Start-ups are centers of novel innovations. They generate jobs, which implies more career opportunities; more employment leads to a stronger economy and a healthier economy has a direct bearing on the growth of not only the cities where the start-ups locate but on the growth of the country as a whole. It is in this light that the researcher decided to conduct this study.

Objectives of the Study - The study aimed to examine the entrepreneurial capability, start-up strategies and start up challenges among start-up entrepreneurs in China and developed a Start-up framework for Entrepreneurs. Specifically, it described the entrepreneurial capability as to leadership and management, active learning and analysis, integrity and commitment and passion and self-achievement; determined the start-up strategies as to planning strategies, marketing strategy and sales strategy; assessed the start-up challenges as to funding, management and technological know-how and innovation skills; tested the significant relationship between entrepreneurial capability, start-up strategies and challenges and developed a Start-Up Entrepreneurial Capability Framework for start-ups.

2. Methods

Research Design - The research design is the overall strategy and analytical technique to integrate, in a coherent and logical way to guarantee full investigation of the research subject. The descriptive research design will be used by the researcher in order to determine the entrepreneurial capability, startup strategies and startup challenges of the respondents. Descriptive design according to McCombes (2022) aims to accurately and systematically describe a population, situation or phenomenon. A descriptive research strategy can study one or more variables using a wide range of research techniques. Descriptive design will be used in the study as it will determine, describe and validate the research findings. This will cast light on current issues to describe the entrepreneurial capability, startup strategies and challenges through a process of data collection that will enable to analyze the situation more completely. When the goal of the research is to discover traits, frequencies, trends, and classifications, descriptive research is the best option.

Participants of the Study - The research participants were the start-ups entrepreneurs in four cities in China coming from Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou and Shenzhen. There were 300 startup entrepreneurs who were used as research participants of the study. The proponent used purposive sampling which is known as judgment, selective or subjective sampling in which a researcher relies on his judgment when choosing members of the

population to participate in the study. The non-probability sampling technique, known as purposeful sampling, is used when the researcher makes the decisions about which items to include in the sample. Researchers frequently think that by using excellent judgment and obtaining a representative sample, they may save time and money (Black, 2010).

Data Gathering Instrument - The instrument tool used in the study is the questionnaire. Survey questionnaire is a tool for gathering data that is mostly employed in normative studies. This a form or document that has been carefully and methodically created containing a series of questions created with the intention of eliciting comments from respondents or research informants data or information gathering. It is a type of inquiry document that includes a carefully written and organized set of inquiries designed to obtain the data that will provide understanding of the nature of the issue being investigated. The researcher developed a modified standardized survey questionnaire appropriate for this study to gather the needed data. The first part determined the demographic profile of the respondents according to age, sex, civil status, and highest educational attainment.

The second part assessed the entrepreneurial capability of the start-up entrepreneurs in terms of leadership management, active learning and analysis, integrity and commitment, and passion and self-achievement. This part adapted the questionnaire on Entrepreneurial Capability Scale from the study of Lv et al. (2015). The third part assessed the start-up strategies of the start-up entrepreneurs in terms of planning, marketing, and sales strategies; while the last part will deal with the assessment of the start-up challenges being encountered in terms of funding, poor management, and technological know-how and innovation skills. The study was subjected for content validation and reliability test. The content validation helped the proponent to identify errors in the questions that exist when studying options so that these errors can be minimized or eliminated and research study can obtain more accurate and valid result. Reliability test was done to ensure consistency of the results.

Data Gathering Procedure - The proponent has full understanding of the topic used different e-books, published research and online references. Through extensive reading and understanding, the proponent was able to gather relevant to gather substantial literature that will serve as an excellent source in the construction of questionnaire. After the approval of the questionnaire, a letter of permission addressed to each start-up entrepreneur was sent via e-mail to request permission to conduct a study. Approval was obtained for the researcher to push through with the study. The questionnaire was administered through survey questionnaire and distributing via google forms from the respondents. Thereafter, the selected respondents were given enough time to answer the questionnaire. The allocated time for distribution and collection of the survey questionnaire was sufficient for the researcher to gather the data needed for the study.

Ethical Considerations - Before the actual conduct of the survey, respondents were informed of the purpose and intent of the study. They were assured that information obtained will be kept in utmost confidentiality and will be used for academic research purposes only. Ethics was practiced in the conduct of research to guarantee that all information that will be gathered will be strictly for research purposes only. It ensured the confidentiality and anonymity of the respondents by not requiring their names when they answer the questionnaire. The proponent guaranteed that the respondents answered the questions voluntarily.

Data Analysis - The proponent used statistical tools to interpret the results. Frequency, percentage and weighted mean were used to assess the average of the respondent's assessment on their entrepreneurial capability, entrepreneurial strategies and challenges. Weighted mean was used in finding more accurate average by considering the weight of each value. The weight can be thought of as a measure of the importance of each value in the data set. The Pearson-r test was used to analyze the significant relationship among entrepreneurial capability, entrepreneurial strategies and challenges.

3. Results and Discussion

The results shown in Table 1 indicate that leadership and management (3.46) and passion and self-achievement (3.46) are the most develop capability of the respondents' entrepreneurs. Overall, the findings

that the respondents have the highest weighted mean in the two dimensions of leadership and management and passion and self-achievement are positive ones. They suggest that these respondents are likely to be effective leaders and managers, and that they are likely to be successful in their careers. The study of Smith & Doe (2023) investigated the relationship between leadership, management, and passion for self-achievement. A sample of 100 participants completed a survey that measured their levels of leadership, management, and passion for self-achievement. The results showed that respondents who scored higher on leadership and management were also more likely to score higher on passion for self-achievement. People who are passionate about their work and their goals are also more likely to be successful. They are more likely to be motivated and driven to succeed. They are also more likely to be resilient in the face of challenges (Jones & Brown, 2023).

Table 1

Entrepreneurial Capability

Indicator	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation	Rank
Leadership and Management	3.46	Agree	3.5
Active Learning and Analysis	3.48	Agree	1.5
Integrity and Commitment	3.48	Agree	1.5
Passion and Self Achievement	3.46	Agree	3.5
Composite Mean	3.47	Agree	

Table 2

Respondent's Start-Up Strategies

Indicators	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation	Rank
Planning Strategy	3.45	Agree	3
Marketing Strategy	3.48	Agree	2
Sales Strategy	3.49	Agree	1
Composite Mean	2.48	Agree	

Table 2 shows that the respondents surveyed have moderate practice of the start-up strategies. The grand composite mean value is 3.48, representing respondents' planning, marketing and sales strategies.

The results further break down start-up strategies into three key areas: planning, marketing, and sales. The sales strategy key result area has the highest composite mean score of 3.49, The finding that sales strategies obtained the highest weighted mean suggests that the respondents believe that sales are more important than planning or marketing for start-ups. This is likely because sales are the direct link between the company and its customers. By closing deals and growing the customer base, sales can help to generate revenue and ensure the company's survival. However, it is important to note that planning and marketing are also essential for start-ups. A well-planned start-up is more likely to be successful than one that is not. And a well-executed marketing campaign can help to attract new customers and grow the company's market share.

It is supported by Deeb (2023) he argues that a strong sales strategy can help start-ups to attract new customers, close deals, and grow their business. These two-research literature provide strong evidence that sales are essential for start-ups.

Table 3

Start-Up Challenges

Indicators	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation	Rank
Funding	3.48	Agree	1.5
Management	3.47	Agree	3
Technological know-how and innovation skills	3.48	Agree	1.5
Composite Mean	3.48	Agree	

The results of table 3 indicate that the respondents experience some challenges. The grand composite mean value is 3.48, representing respondents' challenges in terms of funding, management and technological know-how and innovation skills. The funding and technological know-how key result area has the highest

composite mean score of 3.48, this suggest that these are the two areas that startups most need support in. Startups often face challenges in securing the funding they need to get their businesses off the ground. This can be due to a number of factors, such as a lack of collateral, a limited track record, or high interest rates. Without adequate funding, startups may struggle to develop their products or services, hire staff, or market their businesses. Startups also need to have the technological know-how and innovation skills necessary to develop new products or services that are in demand. This can be a challenge for startups, as they may not have the resources or expertise to develop these skills in-house.

Startups in China often face challenges in securing the funding they need this can be due to a number of factors, such as a lack of collateral, a limited track record, or high interest rates. Without adequate funding, startups may struggle to develop their products or services, hire staff, or market their businesses. Startups in China face stiff competition from larger, more established companies. This can be a challenge for startups, as they may not have the resources or expertise to compete on price and they need to comply with a complex and ever-changing regulatory environment. This can be a challenge for startups, as they may not have the resources or expertise to understand and comply with all of the regulations. Startups in China face challenges in protecting their intellectual property. This can be a challenge for startups, as they may not have the resources or expertise to enforce their intellectual property rights (Zhang et., al 2020).

Table 4

Relationship Entrepreneurial Capability, Start-Up Strategies and Challenges

	Entrepreneurial Capability			Start-Up Strategies			Start-Up Challenges		
	r	p-value	int	r	p-value	int	r	p-value	int
Entrepreneurial Capability	-	-	-	.018	.753	NS	-.037	.519	NS
Start-Up Strategies	.018	.753	NS	-	-	-	-.046	.431	NS
Start – Up Challenges	-.037	.519	NS	-.046	.431	NS	-	-	-

Legend: Correlation is significant at p-value < 0.05, NS – Not Significant, S – Significant

Table 4 shows the results of correlation analysis of entrepreneurial capability, start-up strategies and challenges have no relationship amongst each other as proven by the computed p-values which are all higher than the alpha level of 0.05. This may due to some reason like the variables may not be measuring the same thing. For example, entrepreneurial capability may be measuring the skills and knowledge of an entrepreneur, while start-up strategies may be measuring the plans and actions that an entrepreneur takes to start a business. This could also be attributable to the fact that start-up challenges are a very broad category that includes many different challenges that start-ups face. It's possible that there is a relationship between entrepreneurial capability and start-up strategies, but that the relationship is not strong enough to be detected by the correlation analysis. Another reason is that maybe the sample size may be too small, the sample size needs to be large enough to represent the population of interest. If the sample size is too small, then the correlation analysis may not be able to detect a relationship that actually exists.

The lack of a relationship between entrepreneurial capability, start-up strategies, and start-up challenges does not mean that these variables are not important. All three variables are important for the success of a start-up. Entrepreneurial capability is important because it helps entrepreneurs to identify opportunities, develop business plans, and raise capital. Start-up strategies are important because they help entrepreneurs to focus their efforts and allocate their resources effectively. Start-up challenges are important because they help entrepreneurs to identify and address the problems that they face.

Similar findings were revealed from the study of Kauffman (2019) which found that there is no significant relationship between the entrepreneurial capability of entrepreneurs and their success. The study analyzed data from over 10,000 entrepreneurs. It found that the entrepreneurs' entrepreneurial capability was not a significant predictor of their success. A study by the Harvard Business Review (2018) found that there is no significant relationship between the start-up strategies of entrepreneurs and their success. The study surveyed over 1,000 entrepreneurs. It found that the entrepreneurs' start-up strategies were not a significant predictor of their success.

Huarng et al., (2012) found that there is no significant relationship between the start-up challenges faced by entrepreneurs and their success. The study interviewed over 100 entrepreneurs. It found that the entrepreneurs' start-up challenges were not a significant predictor of their success.

Start-Up Framework for Entrepreneurs

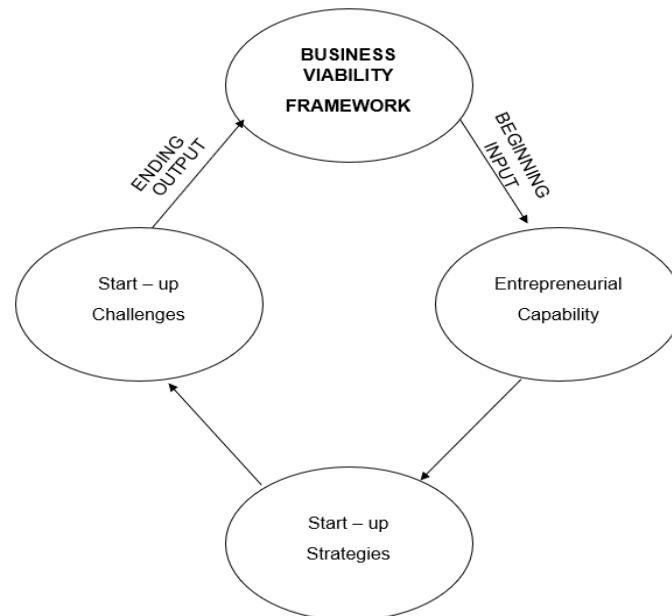


Figure 1. Start-Up Framework for Entrepreneurs

The startup process framework is not a one-size-fits-all solution. Each startup will need to tailor the framework to their specific needs and goals. However, the framework can provide a helpful starting point for startups that are looking to go from idea to launch and beyond.

The startup process is not always linear, and there will be times when the startup team needs to make changes to the plan. The startup team should get feedback from potential customers, investors, and other experts throughout the startup process. It takes time to build a successful startup. The startup team should not get discouraged if they do not see immediate results. The startup process can play a significant role in developing entrepreneurial capabilities. The startup process can help entrepreneurs develop their capabilities by learning by doing. The startup process is a great opportunity for entrepreneurs to learn by doing. They will need to learn how to identify and solve problems, manage resources, and deal with uncertainty. This can be a challenging but rewarding experience that can help entrepreneurs develop their skills and confidence. The process also provides entrepreneurs with the opportunity to gain valuable experience in the business world. They will learn how to interact with customers, suppliers, and investors. They will also learn how to navigate the regulatory environment and manage risk. This experience can be invaluable when entrepreneurs start their next venture.

The startup process can also help entrepreneurs build a network of valuable contacts. They will meet with potential customers, investors, and other entrepreneurs. These contacts can provide entrepreneurs with support, advice, and opportunities. A strong network can be a key to success for any entrepreneur. The process can also help entrepreneurs develop a positive mindset. Entrepreneurs will need to be confident and resilient in order to succeed. They will also need to be willing to take risks and learn from their mistakes. The startup process can help entrepreneurs develop these qualities, which are essential for success in entrepreneurship.

Overall, the startup process can play a significant role in developing entrepreneurial capabilities. By learning by doing, gaining experience, building a network, and developing a positive mindset, entrepreneurs can increase their chances of success.

Entrepreneurial capability is the ability to identify and exploit opportunities, manage resources, and take risks. It is a key ingredient for success in any business, but it is especially important for startups. Startups face a number of challenges that larger, more established businesses do not. They have limited resources, they are often operating in new and untested markets, and they are competing with larger, more well-funded competitors. In order to succeed, startups need to be able to think and act entrepreneurially.

Entrepreneurial capability can help startups develop successful strategies by identifying opportunities. Startups need to be able to identify opportunities that other businesses have not seen. This requires creativity, innovation, and a willingness to take risks. Startups have limited resources, so they need to be able to manage them effectively. This means being able to prioritize tasks, allocate resources, and make tough decisions. Startups need to be willing to take risks in order to succeed. This means being willing to put their time, money, and reputation on the line.

Startup strategies are essential for startups to overcome challenges. They provide a roadmap for the startup to follow, and they help the startup to stay focused on its goals. There are startup strategies in overcoming startup challenges. Startup strategies can help startups to identify the challenges that they are facing and to prioritize those challenges based on their impact on the startup's success. This can help startups to allocate their resources more effectively and to make better decisions about how to address the challenges. Startup strategies can provide startups with a framework for addressing challenges. This framework can include steps for identifying the challenge, developing a solution, and implementing the solution. This can help startups to be more systematic and organized in their approach to addressing challenges. Startups often face challenges that can be daunting and discouraging. Startup strategies can help startups to stay motivated by providing them with a sense of direction and purpose. This can help startups to maintain focus and to keep working towards their goals.

Startup framework, entrepreneurial capability, startup strategies, and startup challenges are considered a process because they are all interconnected and interdependent. Startup framework provides a roadmap for startups to follow, and it helps startups to stay focused on their goals. Entrepreneurial capability is the ability to identify and exploit opportunities, manage resources, and take risks. Startup strategies are essential for startups to overcome challenges and achieve success. Startup challenges are the obstacles that startups must overcome in order to succeed. Startup framework helps entrepreneurs to develop their entrepreneurial capability by providing them with a structure and a framework to follow. Startup strategies help entrepreneurs to overcome challenges by providing them with a roadmap and a set of tools. Startup challenges help entrepreneurs to develop their entrepreneurial capability by forcing them to learn and adapt.

Startup framework is a continuous process. It is not a one-time event. Startups must constantly be iterating and adapting their framework to changes in the market, technology, and customer behavior. Entrepreneurial capability is also a continuous process. Entrepreneurs must constantly be learning and developing their skills in order to be successful. Startup strategies are also a continuous process. Startups must constantly be evaluating their strategies and making changes as needed. Startup challenges are also a continuous process. Startups must constantly be facing new challenges and finding ways to overcome them.

By understanding the process of startup framework, entrepreneurial capability, startup strategies, and startup challenges, entrepreneurs can increase their chances of success.

4. Conclusions and Recommendations

Based on the findings, the respondents revealed moderate agreement on their entrepreneurial capability as to leadership and management, active learning and analysis, integrity and commitment and passion and self-achievement. They also agreed that planning, marketing and sales strategies were their start-up strategies. Findings disclosed that respondents agreed on the start-up challenges which focused on funding, management and technological know-how and innovation skills. Result shows that there is no relationship between entrepreneurial ability, start-up strategies and start-up challenges. A framework for start-up entrepreneurs were

developed to enhance their entrepreneurial capability.

Start-up entrepreneurs may develop a comprehensive marketing plan that includes a mix of traditional and digital marketing channels. Start-ups leaders may focus on developing the leadership and management skills of aspiring entrepreneurs, they may teach entrepreneurs how to motivate, inspire, and empower their employees. The framework developed may be used as a tool to improve the success of Chinese new startups. Future researches may explore entrepreneurial ability using dimensions such as customer value proposition, revenue model and competitive landscape.

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