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Managing network motivations of [Ev]Entrepreneurs

Dr. Saskia de Klerk*
North-West University, Potchefstroom, 2520, South Africa AND School of Business, UNSW, Canberra, ACT, 2610, Australia

Email: s.deklerk@adfa.edu.au

Dr. Stefan Kruger
North-West University, Potchefstroom, 2520, South Africa

Prof. Melville Saayman
North-West University, Potchefstroom, 2520, South Africa
Email: Melville.Saayman@nwu.ac.za

*Corresponding author: Dr. Saskia de Klerk

Abstract

Entrepreneurial networks are important in the development of any industry. These networks offer access to resources, information, support and markets. In a dynamic, fast growing and diversified industry such as the wedding industry, the role of networks becomes an interesting lens to view entrepreneurs' motivations to attend events, for example an exhibition. In this research, we have surveyed 159 eventrepreneurs to investigate their motivations to network in this context. The selling and non-selling expectations of these networks provided insight into what networks they use and the objectives they set for these networks. Our findings have shown that their main selling motive was to establish networks for business purposes, while the main non-selling motive was developmental in nature, for staff and on a personal level. This research contributes to networking, entrepreneurship and event management literature to provide a better understanding of the network motivations and skills of entrepreneurs in this industry.

Keywords: network, motives, entrepreneur, expectations, selling, non-selling

Introduction

Entrepreneurship and tourism have long been a major focus of most emerging economies (Hall, Daneke, & Lenox, 2010; Roxas & Chadee, 2013). Tourism's potential to help restore the global economy has been highlighted by the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) for a number of years (Goldin, 2010) and this opinion was echoed in the G20 Heads of State address in 2012 (WTTC, 2012). For entrepreneurs in general and also for entrepreneurs in the tourism industry, it is important to create the ideal environment-opportunity fit to help them develop their business and enhance their business operations (York & Venkataraman, 2010). The importance of efficient management of events (Soteriades & Dinou, 2011) and the influence of networking at these events on the success of the businesses (Stam, 2010) are highlighted in literature.

Networking is widely accepted as being an instrumental part of building entrepreneurial social capital that contributes to a business's success (Martinez & Aldrich, 2011; Peverelli, Song, Sun, & Yu, 2011). Networking offers the entrepreneur the opportunity to develop and nurture relationships on a personal and professional

level that provide support (RoAne, 2004) and share information (Timmons & Spinelli, 2004), access to market insight (Uzzi & Dunlap, 2005) and social capital (Boe, 1994; Burt, 2002). Networking facilitates the transfer of knowledge (Inkpen & Tsang, 2005), which is crucial in the development of entrepreneurs' skills. Kregar, DeNoble, and Antoncic (2012) describe three levels of the network structure that influences firm growth as 1) access to resources; 2) information; and 3) friendship or support. Events offer a structured environment in which entrepreneurs from the same industry can build their personal and professional networks. This important service and infrastructure support can enhance the entrepreneurial development of the industry. Therefore the purpose of this research is to explore the networking motives (selling and non-selling) of [ev]entrepreneurs at a wedding expo. It is especially important in the context of the growth of events and exhibitions globally.

This study adds to the small body of literature on entrepreneurs' motivations to attend an event such as an exhibition. The eclectic nature of the operators in the wedding industry, the often single management of these operations, as well as a lack of markets and support make this an interesting context to view the way in which they perceive the opportunity and operate to manage these networks. It furthermore contributes to contemporary debates on entrepreneurs, event management and networks for business development and economic growth, and offers insight into how entrepreneurs conduct their business, how they network and the value of social capital in their environment.

Literature review

The importance of structured and supported events in the developing of specific industries has been given increasing attention by government and industry role players (Soteriades & Dimou, 2011). Increased interest can also be seen in literature, such as emerging terminology like "event tourism" (Getz, 2008; Duan, 2010; Andersson & Lundberg, 2013), artrepreneurs (De Klerk & Saayman, 2012) and "event entrepreneurs", also referred to as eventrepreneurs (Panyik, Costa, & Ratz, 2011).

The growth of this market has been rapid. Even though not all events are tourism focused, they still contribute to tourism by increasing the attractiveness of markets and destinations. Business tourism (including meetings, trade conventions and exhibitions) has also been recognised as facilitating the gathering and networking of entrepreneurs in a specific industry or line of work (Jin, Weber, & Bauer, 2012). These events provide an opportunity for the exhibitors to market their products and services (Jago & Deery, 2010; Weber & Ladkin, 2011). The Exhibition and Event Association of Australasia voices its commitment to the development of this industry in the subtitle of its online brochure: "Building a stronger voice for the exhibition and event industry" (EEAA Secretariat, 2013:1). Other groups suggest that the potential of the expo as a face-to-face marketing channel is undervalued and that a strategic focus can help organisers and industries to develop, plan and manage events more effectively (Getz, 2008), and support entrepreneurs even more (Aaker, 1991). Industry support can include a number of activities such as education, training and setting a benchmark for best practice in the industry (EEAA Secretariat, 2013). The present study focuses on the contribution that has been made by entrepreneurs' networking and coordinated efforts at such events. Entrepreneurial opportunities that arise from being part of a network have received some notice in literature (Ladkin & McCabe, 2010; Narayana, 2011; Lee, Lee, & Yoon, 2012), but need more focus for increased and more targeted support and development of these entrepreneurs.

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An 'expo' (short for 'exposition') or trade show is a large public exhibition of products or services (Oxford Dictionaries, 2010). Such an event contributes to a specific sector and has significant economic, socio-cultural, research and development impact (Potts & Cunningham, 2008). It attracts foreign investment, tourism activity, local trade and promotion (Getz, 2008). Events therefore provide one synchronised market (Morris, Pryor, & Schindehutte, 2012) which attracts large crowds and creates publicity (Silvers, 2012). Events support the growth and promotion of entrepreneurial ventures (Getz, 2008), the creation of employment opportunities, more competitive product and service offerings, and the development of social capital (DCMS, 1998; DCMS, 2001; Richards, 2011).

The wedding industry has shown increased growth (Childress & Friedkin, 2012) and makes a substantial contribution to local tourism, as well as economies in general (Stevenson, 2011; Wilson, Ypeij, & Babb, 2012). This is spearheaded by the large number of entrepreneurs that this sector generates, including entrepreneurs of food and beverage, catering, provision of personal services such as wedding planning, clothing, travel, photography and videography, bands, singers, disc jockeys, favours and gifts, stationery such as invitations, menus and thank-you notes, and print and online media for wedding magazines, as well as brochures (Howard, 2006). These businesses are often labour intensive (SA.info, 2012) and therefore make a valuable contribution to the creation of employment opportunities. Events that bring these diverse entrepreneurs together also offer them the opportunity to see what is happening in other areas of this industry, share their knowledge (Stokes et al., 2010) and talk to indirect competitors, seeking areas to combine their offering and services to support each other. Without these events it would be time consuming, costly and difficult to build the required networks.

Networking and social capital development

Networking is broadly defined as direct or indirect interaction between role players (Borgatti & Halgin, 2011). These interactions are geared towards the alignment of business operations and the creation of a competitive advantage (De Man, 2004). Structured events offer extensive networking opportunities to increase economic activity and support. Most of these entrepreneurs (such as fashion designers, caterers and musicians) work on their own or in a micro- to small business setting (Granovetter, 1985). They can reap the benefits of having access to a large number of potential network members to build a diverse range of links (Zhao & Aram, 1995; Hansen, 1996). They can also expand their access to information, support and collaboration (Chauvet, Chollet, Soda, & Huault, 2011), their opportunities to exchange goods and services and initiate new projects or contracts (Stokes, Wilson, & Mador, 2010). This leads to enhanced social capital.

Social capital is not something that is owned privately and it does not involve financial, human or physical capital, but it is transferable and accessible if tapped into (Portes, 1998; Zhao, Ritchie, & Echtner, 2011). It may be defined as "the capacity of individuals to gain some sort of value or benefit through their social engagement and networking practices" (Portes, 1998). This engagement facilitates network success elements (Weber & Weber, 2011), such as trust, norms, coordination and cooperation, to develop mutual benefit and business success (Putnam, 1993). An event thus facilitates the development of social capital through diverse connections. Network diversity offers access to a variety of products and services; this enhances entrepreneurial activity and, ultimately, business growth (Ostgaard & Birley, 1996).

Networking motivations at events

Tanford, Montgomery, and Nelson (2012) identify five factors that influence attendance

and satisfaction at organised tourism events: the programme, networking, external activities, location and the costs of attending. Other important reasons for attending include access to new markets and the opportunity to exchange ideas and valuable information. New businesses or businesses with innovations use this opportunity to showcase or test prototypes (Ford, 1998; De Klerk & Saayman, 2012). The organised nature of these events (such as exhibitions, festivals, expos and other similar 'marketplaces') improves the success of the overall business practice, since most of the infrastructure and other support services are already offered to enhance the overall business climate (Arcodia & Whitford, 2006). Therefore one can argue that the economic value of events and creative industries such as the wedding industry (Potts & Cunningham, 2008) stretches beyond mere production and showcasing of goods and services to the creation of social capital and employment opportunities for people in the creative market. Social capital, which is beneficial to the industry and individual businesses, is created by promoting networking among the role players in this market. A network provides information (Borgatti & Halgin, 2011), knowledge and support to all role players (Wright & Miller, 2010) to help them make their businesses succeed (Longenecker, Petty, Palich, & Hoy, 2012).

It can therefore be said that the entrepreneurs' selling motives include making a profit and showcasing their goods and services. Some of the non-selling motives that have been mentioned in the literature are more involved in the development of social skills. These softer issues of networking at events are mentioned in literature to include issues of market sensitivity and a feeling of belonging and being part of a larger group (Janta, Brown, Lugosi, & Ladkin, 2011). Entrepreneurs can find inspiration (Schumpeter, 1934), combine existing products and services more creatively (Low & MacMillan, 1988; Veciana, 2007), and exploit opportunities on their own (McCline & Bhat, 2012) or by combining their powers (Manson, 2001; Gruber, MacMillan, & Thompson, 2013). The events provide an environment to take risks (Chen, Su, & Wu, 2012; Garrett, Covin, & Slevin, 2009), make a profit (Scarborough, 2011) and find future strategic networks (Weber & Weber, 2011). Knowledge of how the entrepreneurs perceive their networks at these events and how they organise these efforts are important to event management and other support institutions. This knowledge can help in the development of more focused educational and skills development programmes, as well as service delivery in general.

The importance of having different levels of networks and different objectives for these networks can help eventrepreneurs to utilise their time more effectively in building these networks. In the following section, we will describe the research methodology and then discuss the main findings.

Methodology

In this study of eventrepreneurs who are participating in a wedding expo, we have investigated their profiles, their motivations for joining networks and their actual networking behaviour. We have used a combination of quantitative and descriptive research methods.

Data collection

The data were collected at a wedding expo that was held at the Coca-Cola Dome in Johannesburg, South Africa from 31 March to 1 April 2012. The events manager of the wedding expo was contacted beforehand to obtain permission to conduct the research and to explain the protocol that was required for administering the questionnaires. Fieldworkers distributed the questionnaires to all 260 exhibitors after trading hours and 159 fully completed questionnaires were included in the statistical analysis. According to Krejcie and Morgan (1970), out of a total

population of 260 (N), a sample of 159 (S) is considered representative.

Survey instrument

The questions that were used in the questionnaire were based on Kerin and Cron (1987), as well as Hansen (1996), and were further enhanced by consulting other relevant literature. The questionnaire had three sections: Section A collected exhibitors' demographic profiles, including age, education, exhibiting history and spending behaviour at the wedding expo. Section B asked exhibitors to rate the importance of various selling and non-selling motives on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 = not important to 5 = extremely important. Section C evaluated exhibitors' business effectiveness by asking them to rate a variety of statements on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 = strongly agree to 5 = strongly disagree. (See Tables 1 to 3 for lists of the motives and effectiveness statements.)

Data analysis

The data capturing, exploratory factor analysis (EFA) and Spearman's rank correlation coefficient (or Spearman's rho) were done by using the IBM Statistical Package for the Social Sciences version 20.0 (SPSS Inc., 2012). Amos (Amos Development Company 2009) was used to test our structural equation model (SEM).

The authors used EFA to reduce the data and to assess the strength of the inter-correlations among our set of variables (Comrey & Lee, 2013). We also used Bartlett's test of sphericity and the Kaiser-Meyer Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy. Bartlett's test of sphericity should be $p < 0.05$ and the KMO should be between 0 and 1 for an EFA to be considered appropriate. An oblimin rotation with Kaiser normalization was used. Only factors with eigenvalues larger than 1.0 were retained for further analysis in this study. Cronbach's alpha was used to indicate the internal consistency of a scale. As suggested by Pallant (2010), the Cronbach's alpha of a scale should be above 0.7 to be acceptable and for shorter scales; values of 0.5 may often be considered acceptable. Therefore, in this study we also reported on the mean inter-item correlation, for which Briggs and Cheek (1986) recommend a value ranging from 0.2 to 0.4. A Spearman rank correlation coefficient measures the linear and nonlinear relationships among the set of variables (Cohen, Cohen, West & Aiken, 2013) and was used for ordinal or ranked data.

Finally, since we were dealing with multidimensional issues, we used multivariate statistical analysis (Weston & Gore, 2006; Nunkoo & Ramkissoon, 2012). We used a SEM, which provides a comprehensive means of testing and modifying theoretical models. A SEM consists of observed variables (in our case, selling and non-selling motives) and unobserved variables (in our case, effectiveness) that cannot be measured directly (Reisinger & Movondo, 2007; Schumacker & Lomax, 2004). A directional arrow points from cause to effects (see Figure 1) between variables in a model (Hancock & Mueller, 2010).

An SEM is a simplified approximation to reality and is usually evaluated by drawing from three broad classes of parsimonious fit indices to retain a model. An acceptable ratio of the chi square divided by its degrees of freedom (x^2/df) should range from 2 to 5 (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007; Gravetter & Wallnau, 2013). According to Hu and Bentler (1999), Arbuckle (2006), and Hancock and Mueller (2010), the comparative fit index (CFI) is truncated to fall in the range from 0 to 1, and values close to 1 are recognized as being indicative of a good fit. Root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) values between 0.08 and 0.10 are acceptable as a good fit (MacCallum, Browne, & Sugawara, 1996).

Results and discussion

Results showed that the average age of respondents was 36 years, that they were mostly female (74%) and that a significant percentage (68%) was well educated, having obtained a diploma or degree. Twenty-five percent had previously attended the wedding expo between three and five times. Wedding venues (19%) was the most represented type of business, followed by couture (16%), and stationery and publishing (15%).

The 20 motive statements were subjected to principal component analysis (PCA). Prior to performing the PCA, the suitability of the data for EFA was assessed. Assessment of the correlation matrix revealed the presence of many coefficients of 0.40 and above. These coefficients were used for item inclusion in the EFA. The KMO values for selling motives, 0.70 (Table 1), non-selling motives, 0.87 (Table 2), and effectiveness, 0.67 (Table 3), were sufficient, as they exceeded the recommended value of 0.06 (Kaiser, 1970) and Bartlett's test of sphericity (Bartlett, 1954) reached statistical significance ($p \geq 0.00001$) in all cases. The factors for selling motives (54.8%), non-selling motives (72.5%) and effectiveness (69.8%), with eigenvalues exceeding 1.0, accounted for the total percentages of variance that have been explained. To aid in the interpretation of these factors, an oblimin with Kaiser normalization rotation was performed. The rotated solution revealed the presence of a modest structure (Henson and Roberts, 2006) with all variables loading substantially on each factor. All the identified factors in Tables 2 and 3 had an acceptable level of reliability ($\alpha \geq 0.7$), but some of the factors in Table 1 did not. However, all the factors in Tables 1, 2 and 3 had a satisfactory mean inter-item correlation between 0.2 and 0.4.

From the selling motives that are listed in Table 1, we identified three factors: *Products*, *Network* and *Return on investment* (i.e. the expected outcome). Of these, *Network* attained the highest mean score. This factor supports findings by Hansen (2004), and De Klerk and Saayman (2012). The reputation of some eventrepreneurs at the expo will motivate others to attend in the hope of learning about products and attracting customers (Lacey, Close, & Finney, 2010). Therefore, the people who are included in this network (the event itself being considered a network) will influence the decision to be part of the network. Other exhibitor motives for attending events, expos or tradeshows that have been found by research are to make sales, obtain promotion, do market research, and to network to extend business contacts and obtain strategic benefits (Hansen, 2004; Severt, Wang, Chen, & Breiter, 2007).

Table 1 shows that the factor that attained the lowest mean score was *Products*, which is surprising. Expos present many opportunities to exhibitors, such as selling face-to-face to visitors at a lower cost as would be required by industry; low cost access to new and existing markets; markets that would not often be approachable; attractive marketing communications avenue; introducing new products; and a playing field for competing with larger businesses (Tanner, 2002; Smith, Hama, & Smith, 2003; Kozak, 2005).

The mean and standard deviations indicate that *Return on investment* was rated by the eventrepreneurs as important to very important. Therefore, introducing existing products to new customers and exhibiting as a support to other marketing activities are important factors for exhibitors to take into consideration if they want to achieve a high return on investment (Smith, Gropalakrishna, & Smith, 2004; Lee & Kim, 2008).

Table 1 Exploratory factor analysis of selling motives

Motives	***Products***	***Network***	***Return on investment***
Testing new product ideas	.795		
Introducing new products	.668		
Selling at the wedding expo	.184		
Enhancing and maintaining my business profile		.689	
Establishing relationships with new customers		.639	
Communicating face to face with potential new customers			
Developing existing relationships with customers		.502	
Introducing existing products to new customers		.294	
Exhibiting as a support to other marketing activities			.224
Developing new products/market segments			.683
			.660
Cronbach's alpha	.52	.60	.62
Mean inter-item correlation	.28	.31	.35
Mean and standard deviation	3.66 ± .97	4.60 ± .52	3.71 ± .93

Extraction method: principal component analysis; rotation method: Oblimin with Kaiser normalization

Table 2 shows that *Staff development* was the most important non-selling motivational factor, as it obtained the highest mean. Boo and Kim (2005) suggests that to achieve a competitive advantage, exhibitors need a well-trained sales team who are knowledgeable about their products and competitors.

A learning relationship between exhibitors and customers offers economic benefits to both parties involved. Incorporating a learning relationship between exhibitors and potential customers creates a twofold process, such as sharing of market information, thereby influencing behaviour (Dyer & Singh, 1998; Ling-Yee, 2006). Research on the customer-supplier relationship has identified the factor *Sharing information* as an important element of a working relationship between exhibitors and customers (Dyer & Singh, 1998; Ling-Yee, 2006).

Market information had the lowest mean, namely 3.66. This factor was also found by Friedman (2009) and Jin, Weber, and Bauer (2012). According to the results that have been obtained here, a new trend for eventrepreneurs at expos is to move away from a sales-oriented and ordering function to an information and communication function, that is looking for new sales ideas and finding new sources of supply. This could be because of increased competition.

Table 2 Exploratory factor analysis of non-selling motives

Motives	***Staff development***	***Sharing information***	***Market information***
Enhancing and maintaining the morale of my business employees			
Training and developing sales team	.932		
Motivating my sales people	.761		
Providing information about new products to customers	.739		
Providing market information to customers			
Finding new sources of supply		.765	
Seeing the latest trends		.574	
Looking for new sales ideas			.387
Gathering competitive information			.664
Identifying new prospects			.553
			.539
			.394
Cronbach's alpha	.91	.70	.80
Mean inter-item correlation	.76	.54	.43
Mean and standard deviation	3.10 ± 1.4	3.96 ± 1.0	3.66 ± .97

Extraction method: principal component analysis; rotation method: Oblimin with Kaiser normalization

Table 3 reports the results of how effective the eventrepreneurs perceived their participation at the expo to be. Two factors were identified: *Achieving objectives* and *Areas for improvement*. The importance of effectiveness and the usefulness of the two factors in Table 3 have been well documented in literature (Yuksel & Voola, 2010; Berné, Garcia-Uceda, & Múgica, 2012).

Table 3 Exploratory factor analysis of wedding expo's effectiveness

Questionnaire Statements	***Achieving objectives***	***Areas for improvement***
I always assess the performance of the wedding expo objectives.		
I always determine specific objectives before participating at the	.856	

wedding expo.		
With better post-expo follow-up, the effectiveness will increase significantly.	.805	
With better knowledge of marketing at the wedding expo, the effectiveness will increase significantly.	.531	
With better planning of the wedding expo activities, the effectiveness will increase significantly.		.882
With more financial resources, I can increase the effectiveness of the wedding expo participation.		.851
		.349
Cronbach's alpha	.78	.74
Mean inter-item correlation	.53	.48
Mean and standard deviation	3.98 ± .81	3.84 ± .86

Extraction method: principal component analysis; rotation method: Oblimin with Kaiser normalization

Tables 4, 5 and 6 report on the results of the Spearman rank correlation coefficients and include the strength of the relationships between the *r*-values. The following values were used as guidelines to interpret the results (r = 0.10 to 0.29, small; r = 0.30 to 0.49, medium and r = 0.50 to 1.0, large) as suggested by Cohen (1988). All correlations were statistically significant with a $p \leq 0.05$.

Table 4 shows that for selling motives as a business motive, a medium positive correlation was observed between *Products* and *Network* (r = 351), and a large correlation between *Products* and *Return on investment* (r = 0.584). *Network* correlated with *Products* (r =0.351) and *Return on investment* (r = 0.346). There was a large positive correlation between *Return on investment* and *Products* (r = 0.584), and a medium correlation with *Network* (r = 0.346).

For non-selling motives, *Staff development* correlated with *Sharing information* (r = 0.429) and had a large positive correlation with *Market information* (r = 0.742). *Sharing information* correlated with *Staff development* (r = 0.429) and *Market information* (r = 0.415). A large correlation was observed between *Market information* and *Staff development* (r = 0.584), and a medium correlation with *Sharing information* (r = 0.346). All the factors that are displayed in Table 4 showed a medium to large correlation with each other.

Table 4 Spearman rank correlation coefficient of entrepreneurs' business motives

Selling motives	***Products***	***Network***	***Return on investment***
Products		.351**	.584**
		.000	.004
N	157	157	157
Network	.351**	1.000	.346**
	.000		.101
N	157	159	159
Return on investment	.584**	.346**	1.000
	.000	.000	
N	157	159	159
Non-selling motives	***Staff development***	***Sharing information***	***Market information***
Staff development		.429**	.742**
		.000	.004
N	156	155	156
Sharing information	.429**	1.000	.415**
	.000		.000
N	155	156	156
Market information	.584**	.346**	1.000
	.000	.000	
N	156	156	158

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed) (Pallant, 2010).

Table 5 shows a further analysis of the relationship between selling and non-selling motives and the business effectiveness of the eventrepreneurs at the wedding expo. This analysis was performed in all cases to ensure that there was no violation of the assumptions, homoscedasticity and linearity. There was a small correlation between *Products*, *Achieving objectives* (*r* = 0.268) and *Areas for improvement* (*r* = 0.209). *Network* correlated with *Achieving objectives* (*r* = 0.178). This finding implicates that networks are seen as a method or tool to achieve objectives. *Return on investment*

showed a small positive correlation with *Areas for improvement* (*r* = 0.187). *Staff development* correlated with *Achieving objectives* (*r* = 0.236) and with *Areas for improvement* (*r* = 0.368). This finding relates to having a strategy for support and finding the right people to support the business objectives. In addition, *Sharing information* showed a correlation with *Achieving objectives* (*r* = 0.301) and *Areas for improvement* (*r* = 0.259). *Market information* correlated with *Achieving objectives* (*r* = 0.215) and with *Areas for improvement* (*r* = 0.346).

Table 5 Spearman rank correlation coefficient between selling and non-selling motives and effectiveness

Attendance motives of entrepreneurs	***Achieving objectives***	***Areas for improvement***
Products	.268**	.209**
	.001	.009
N	156	156
Network	.178*	.128
	.026	.109
N	157	157
Return on investment	.153	.187*
	.056	.019
N	157	157
Staff development	.236**	.368**
N	.003	.000
	155	155
Sharing information	.301**	.259**
	.000	.001
N	155	155
Market information	.215**	.346**
	.007	.000
N	156	156

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed), *Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed), (Pallant, 2010).

Table 6 shows correlations between the eventrepreneurs' demographic characteristics, business motives and effectiveness. Total spent showed a small

correlation with *Return on investment* (*r* = 0.172). The number of employees attending, including the eventrepreneur, correlated with *Staff development* (*r* = 0.329) and with *Market information* (*r* = 0.207). Stand costs correlated with *Products* (*r* = 0.324), *Return on investment* (*r* = 0.326), *Staff development* (*r* = 0.337), *Sharing information* (*r* = 0.200) and *Market information* (*r* = 0.294). There was a small positive correlation between the amount spent on food and beverages and *Staff development* (*r* = 0.238) and *Market information* (*r* = 0.211). The amount spent on parking showed a large correlation with *Areas for improvement* (*r* = 0.636). This is an important observation for future development and to offer better infrastructure support.

Table 6 Spearman rank correlation coefficient of entrepreneurs' demographic characteristics, business motives and effectiveness

Demographic Characteristics	*Products*	*Network*	*Return on investment*	*Staff development*	*Sharing information*	*Market information*	*Achieving objectives*	*Areas for improvement*
Total spent	.161	-.002	.172*	.142	.068	.143	-.072	-.027
	.069	.981	.049	.109	.442	.103	.416	.764
N	129	131	131	129	129	131	130	130
Years exhibited at the wedding expo	-.023	-.042	.060	.154	.105	.033	-.025	.021
	.781	.605	.461	.058	.197	.684	.763	.798
N	153	155	155	152	152	154	153	153
Increase average sales	-.039	-.164	-.024	-.017	.074	-.031	-.189	.002
	.714	.119	.817	.876	.488	.773	.074	.985
N	91	92	92	91	90	92	90	90
Age	.005	.013	.028	-.109	.002	.034	-.002	-.087
	.954	.870	.732	.180	.985	.678	.981	.285
N	153	155	155	152	152	154	153	153
Employees attending expo (including respondent)	.105	.015	.086	.329**	.008	.207*	-.048	.013
	.196	.851	.287	.000	.921	.010	.556	.871
	153	155	155	152	152	154	153	153

N								
Highest qualification	-.096	.009	-.058	-.146	-.029	-.092	.149	-.054
	.247	.911	.478	.078	.729	.266	.071	.517
N	148	150	150	147	147	149	148	148
Exhibition fees per m^2	-.032	.067	.155	.087	.067	-.053	-.109	-.061
	.777	.545	.160	.435	.545	.632	.328	.586
N	82	84	84	82	83	84	43	83
Stand costs	.324**	.023	.326**	.337**	.200*	.294**	.027	.069
	.001	.821	.001	.001	.048	.003	.788	.499
N	98	99	99	98	98	99	99	99
Spent on accommodation	.064	-.023	.309	.401	.494	.219	.099	-.134
	.835	.937	.282	.175	.073	.451	.736	.647
	13	14	14	13	14	14	14	14
N								
Spent on food and beverages	.093	.028	.167	.238*	.081	.211*	.122	.169
	.358	.782	.096	.017	.422	.034	.226	.092
N	100	101	101	100	100	101	101	101
Spent on transport	.001	.038	.066	-.006	-.018	.087	.147	.034
	.991	.713	.523	.952	.864	.399	.153	.743
N	95	96	96	95	95	96	96	96
Spent on parking	-.230	.032	.317	.135	-.005	.277	.111	.636*
	.497	.927	.342	.693	.989	.410	.745	.035
N	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed); *correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed) (Pallant, 2010).

Lastly, the study data were used to create an SEM. Table 7 shows that business motives consist of achieving objectives and finding areas for improvement.

Table 7 Standardised regression coefficients of business motives and effectiveness

Observed variables	**Latent variables**	**Standardised regression coefficients β**
Products	*Business motives	.72
Network		.43
Return on investment		.75
Staff development		.78
Sharing information		.68
Market information		.75
I always determine specific objectives before participating at the wedding expo.	**Achieving objectives* (effectiveness)	.78
I always assess the performance of the wedding expo objectives.		.87
With better post-expo follow-up, the effectiveness will increase significantly.		.53
With better knowledge of marketing at the wedding expo, the effectiveness will increase significantly.	**Areas for improvement* (effectiveness)	.96
With better planning of the wedding expo activities, the effectiveness will increase significantly.		.77
With more financial resources, I can increase the effectiveness of the wedding expo participation.		.43

*All variables were statistically significant with $p \leq 0.05$.

The proposed model in Figure 1 was tested and the following statistical results were obtained: The standardised regression coefficient (β) indicates that eventrepreneurs' business motives (β = 0.36) influenced achievement of objectives and that business motives (β = 0.31) influenced areas for improvement. The proposed model obtained a reasonably acceptable fit statistic. The x^2/df yielded a satisfactory value of 2.73. The proposed SEM statistic had an acceptable CFI value of 0.87 and a good RMSEA of 0.10 with a 90% confidence interval of [0.084; 0.012]. A study by Kang & Schrier (2011) found that exhibitors' social value affects their willingness to pay and intention to return to future exhibitions at tradeshows. This finding supports the importance of non-selling motives (i.e., development and networking motives) and is somehow supportive of the relationship between business motives and effectiveness of participants at the Wedding Expo.

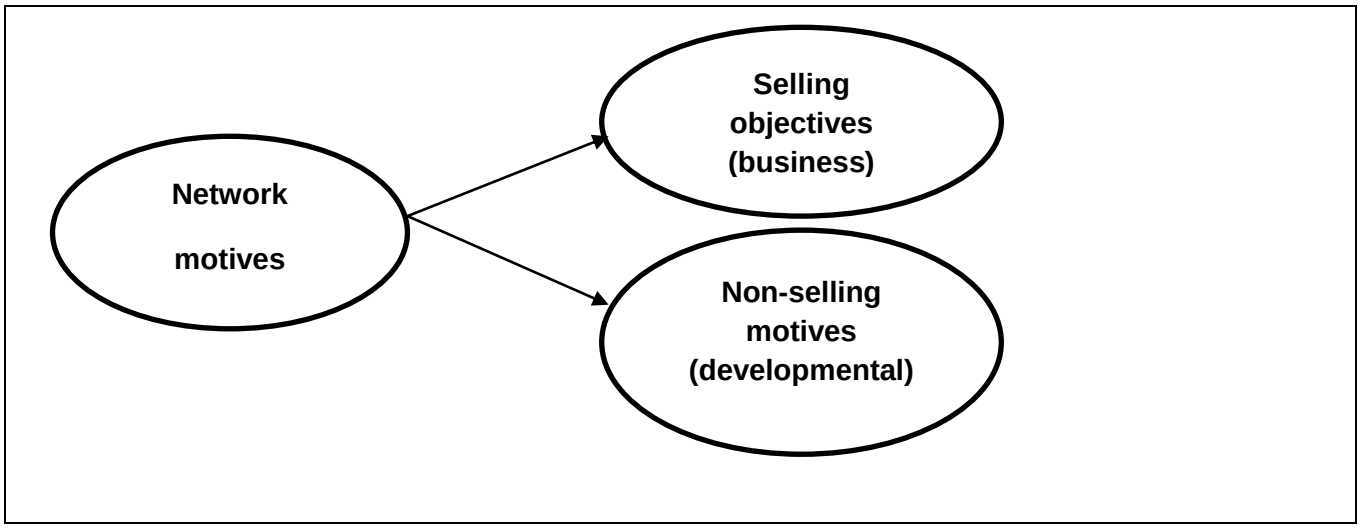

Figure 1 Model of the structural relationship between business motives and effectiveness, without the Measurement model

Conclusions and recommendations

This study has explored the network motives of eventrepreneurs in the wedding industry who are attending an exhibition. The network motivation and the way in which they structure these networks was the focus. This research has contributed to event management, entrepreneurship and networking literature. In particular, the study has examined the relationship between the eventrepreneurs' networking motives (selling motives, cf. 1, non-selling motives, cf. 2) and their experience (*Achieving objectives* and *Areas for improvement*, cf. 3). The study has found that the main selling motive was *Network (Make real connections)* and the main non-selling motive was *Staff development (Softer issues)*. This suggests that eventrepreneurs actively seek to identify the right connections and to gain specific resources through social capital.

It was highlighted in this research that social capital was perceived as the most important aspect that motivated these eventrepreneurs to attend the expos because of its strong contribution to the development of business value. The business value was articulated as the *access to opportunities*, *resources* and *support* for the entrepreneur. The findings revealed that the softer issues were deemed

more important motivators for attendance than the expected issues such as opportunity creation, marketing and exposure in the market. Therefore, to be able to network in this facilitated and synchronised environment with like-minded and industry-focused eventrepreneurs was considered as more important than pure operational and business profit motivations.

Little research has been done on the motivations of the eventrepreneur in attending structured events and other initiatives to support their businesses. The proportional impact of having the networking opportunity appose to just conducting business as usual at these events should not go unnoticed and their efforts should be supported in a more structured and developmental manner. These eventrepreneurs mentioned their objectives explicitly and illustrated that they have a strategic purpose in mind when attending these events, also in the way they go about organising their networks at these events. The findings showed that they organise their networks according to the achievement of specific objectives as an important criterion. Therefore a positive relationship was recorded between the *motivation to do business* and achieving objectiveness and improvement (*effectiveness*).

The study contributes to theory and empirical research on business motives and effectiveness by presenting a structural equation model (SEM) that suggests strategic implications for management and interesting directions for research. Coviello, McDougall, and Oviatt (2011) recommend that future research should focus on defining eventrepreneurs. Eventrepreneurs should not be characterised simply as entrepreneurs doing business in a specific market. The focus should not be on the market environment; rather, we need to argue that this is a specific breed of entrepreneur who strategises and seeks actively to do business in the expo environment rather than in traditional markets. Networking practices in this industry and the way in which social capital is developed in this market is also important to further enhance and grow entrepreneurial activity in the market. Because of the wide variety of events that are involved, we do not propose on the basis of this study a one-size-fits-all approach to researching exhibitions.

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