THE ENTREPRENEURIAL INTENTION BETWEEN REASONED ACTION AND PLANNED BEHAVIOR

Empirical evidence in the case of the Tunisian public civil servant

Hammami Hajer
Affes Habib
Review

The entrepreneurial intention between reasoned action and planned behavior: Empirical evidence in the case of the Tunisian public civil servant

Hammami Hajer and Affes Habib

Faculty of Economics and Management of Sfax

Accepted 19th February, 2013

The analysis of the entrepreneurial intention makes it possible to apprehend the behaviors leading to the creation of a company. Indeed, the entrepreneurial intention constitutes the first act in the entrepreneurial process and therefore, the study of its subjacent factors is of great range particularly when they are the civil servants public. However, the determinants of the entrepreneurial intention remain still not unanimously identified and rudimentary. This fact is inspired in particular from the literature which attempted to analyze this concept and from the results which are sometimes antagonistic and differentiated on the matter. We will try in this paper to locate the factors of the entrepreneurial intention while following a comparative approach between the reasoned action theory and the planned behavior theory and adding the necessary refinements. With this intention, we base ourselves on an analysis of the hierarchical regressions for the prediction of the intention of the Tunisian public civil servant.

Key words: Entrepreneurial intention, reasoned action, planned behavior, entrepreneurship, Tunisia.

INTRODUCTION

The reasoned action theory versus the planned behavior theory of the entrepreneurial intention

The reasoned action theory is a model which takes as a starting point the theory of social psychology. This model developed by Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) defines the bonds between the social beliefs, attitudes (Fishbein and Ajzen (1980), define the attitude as the situation of an individual who must react in a way more or less favorable or unfavorable opposite an object, a person, an institution, an event or any other aspect different from the world to which the individual belongs), standards, intentions and behaviors of the individuals. According to this model, the behavior of a person would be determined by her adopted behavioral intention. This intention would be identified by the attitude of the person and its social standards relating to its environment.

Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) define the perceived social standard as the perception of the individual on the fact that the majority of the people who are significant in her eyes, makes it possible to carry out or not its intentional behavior. Moreover, according to this theory, the attitude of a person towards a behavior would be determined by its behavioral beliefs multiplied by its evaluation of these consequences of the action.

With regard to the beliefs, they are defined by the subjective probability of the individual on the fact that to carry out a particular behavior will produce specific results. This model is thus based on the postulate that the external motivation influences the attitudes and by modifying the structure of the beliefs of the individual.

In addition, the intention to carry out a behavior is also determined by the subjective standards which themselves are determined by the normative beliefs of an individual and by his motivation to be yielded to the standards. Moreover, the reasoned action theory declares that all the other factors, influence the behavior in an indirect way, and that, by influencing the social attitude and/or standards. To this end, Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) refer to these factors as external variables. In this respect we can quote for example, the characteristics of the tasks, the interface or the user, the nature of the development or the implementation, the political influences, the organizational structure, and so on (Davis et al., 1990).

Another analysis bearing on the application of the reasoned action theory showed that the model made it
possible to carry out good predictions on the choices which made an individual when it is vis-a-vis several alternatives (Sheppard et al., 1988).

The theory of the planned behaviors is complementary to the theory of reasoned action. According to Ajzen (1987; 1991), the utility of this new model comes from the limitations related to the behaviors on which the individuals had only one perceived control. He has added in his model a third variable which, according to him, would influence the intention to carry out a behavior, namely perception of control about the behavior.

The perception of control refers to the available resources of the individual, his own capacities, available opportunities and to the perception of the importance managing to carry out the results. The concept of perception of control approaches more to the concept of auto-effectiveness of Bandura (1982). Indeed, the beliefs of an individual on his auto-effectiveness can have an influence on its choice of activities, its preparation for the activity and finally on the effort which it sets up during the activity in question.

In fact, the model of Ajzen takes its beginning from the principle that three variables (the attitude, subjective standards, and the perception of control) can directly influence the intentions to carry out a behavior. This intention influences in its turn the behavior of the individual. Therefore, we will try in what follows to propose a theoretical model, that is, a specified whole of relations of dependence which can be tested empirically. Generally, two traditional variables were retained by the theory of the reasoned action, desirability and perceived social standard (Kruglanski and Klar (1985), regard the perceived social standard as an antecedent and a factor of entrepreneurial intention which is summarized by the personal attitude towards the behavior), which one adds the variable relating to feasibility (We prefer to retain the term of feasibility perceived rather than that of perceived personal effectiveness because of the greatest clearness of the concept) when it is about the theory of the planned behavior.

Additional variables adapted to the context of study
We will try in what follows to add other explanatory variables of the behavioral intention beside those expressed by Ajzen (1991). We suppose that the addition of some variables to the announced variables will improve the explanation of the intention to create a company. These variables which we will define and place within our model are the entrepreneurial identity and the professional role.

Ajzen and Fishbein (1980) and Sparks and Guthrie, (1998), described the concept of personal identity as an idea that a person is done on itself. These authors rely on an assumption according to which when an element becomes central in the personal identity of an individual, its behavioral intention is automatically adapted. Snyder and Debono (1995) highlighted that the individuals are motivated (having the intention) to live new situations which are in agreement with their values.

Therefore, in our specific context a civil servant of a public company will be regarded as a creator of company having their own entrepreneurial identity. Greenberger and Sexton (1988) suppose that the personal identity is a significant element of the intention (Bryant, 1993) shows that it is comparable with a will. This idea is consolidated by Foyolle (2000), which shows that "the intention is a will to achieve an act". Moreover, Bird (1988; 1992) presents also the intention like a freedom and an individual will; it is a state of mind which directs the vision, attention, experiment and action of the individual towards his own objective to create a company.

Several authors regard this factor as one of the most significant factors for entrepreneurial dynamics. For Lavoie (1988), the entrepreneurship "is rather a medium, a spirit and a state of heart". Kanter (1984) associates it with an "integrative" manner to approach the problems and the decision-making.

Moreover, the entrepreneurship is apprehended as a mentality and an attitude which pushes an individual alone or with others, with launching a new activity and taking the means to carry out a desire or a dream". For Drucker (1985), the entrepreneurship is a behavior and not a "feature of character".

In addition, the entrepreneurship evokes the passage towards the act to undertake, capacities, qualities, existing internal motivations for individual and which lead him to become contractor. The entrepreneurship is the result, at the individual level, of the influences being exerted on two plans: the formation of the entrepreneurial attitude and the acquisition of the role of contractor.

Moreover, Emin (2003) showed that the perceived professional role in addition to the perceived social standard exert an indirect significant effects on the intention by the means of their influence on the desire to create a company. This result was thwarted by the analysis of Boissin and Emin (2008) which have leads to the result according to which the entrepreneurial formation does not have a substantially significant effect on the evolution of the entrepreneurial intention and so the entrepreneurial act. On the basis of these ideas, we represent our theoretical model as shown in figure 1.

In other words, the subjacent assumptions from our research appear as follows:
A1: The desirability and the perceived social standard have a positive and significant effect on the intention of a public civil servant to create a company;
A2: Feasibility acts favorably and significantly on the intention of the public civil servant to create a company;
A3: The entrepreneurial identity and the professional role condition favorably and significantly the intention of a public civil servant to create a company.

RESULTS OF THE ESTIMATES
The objective of this section is to study the validity of the
applicability assumption of the model founded by the planned behavior theory, and on the basis of testing the behavioral assumptions which are associated for it. In other words, our empirical analysis will be organized around the direct antecedents of the intention in the specific case of the Tunisian public civil servant. In this respect, we suppose that in addition to the central variables recommended by the reasoned action theory and the planned behavior theory, we will add to it complementary variables relating to the entrepreneurial identity and the professional role.

To empirically present these ideas, we tried to test as a preliminary the relevance of our complementary variables for the formation of the intentions in order to underline the superiority or not of the planned behavior theory which can bring additional information of the intentionality to create a company in comparison with the reasoned action theory.

For the hierarchical regression analyses, all the variables are presented by combination of the items (by adding the items correspondent at each one) and the examination of the characteristics of the scales must be respected to identify the suitable conditions for our data (table 1).

For this end, one will follow the step of Ajzen and Fishben (1980) which includes three stages and which suggests that a model correctly predicts a behavior starting from an attitude. It is of primary importance that the definition of the latter is in perfect correspondence with the behavior to be predicted.

Firstly, we check the action of the two traditional components of the "desirability" and the "perceived social standard" (in accordance with the reasoned action theory). Into one second stage, we introduce "perceived feasibility" (in accordance with the planned behavior theory). Finally, we introduce the stage of the improvement of the explanation of the intention conceived from the side of the "entrepreneurial identity"
and the measurements of the "perceived professional role" as two complementary components for the formation of the intentions.

In addition we present our principal econometric results (tables 2, 3 and 4) by the use of the hierarchical regression analyses in which the intention constitutes the dependent variable, what makes it possible to evaluate the relevance of our theoretical model exposed before in the specific case of 60 Tunisian civil servant public.

Our results empirically bring back an average of multiple coefficient of correlation (r) of about 0.41 what indicates successful predictions of the intention by the
reasoned action theory, and underlines the strong variation in the results obtained. With regard to the result apprehended by the planned behavior theory, these variables carry out a multiple coefficient which is established to 0.33.

These first results validate the assumption about the relevance of the model of the reasoned action theory (first stage). This result is apprehended by the presence of a coefficient of correlation which explains more than 77% of the variance of the intention. In other words, the "desirability" and the "social standard" bring relevant information for the explanation of the intention. However, it is interesting to confirm the importance of informative contents of the model of the reasoned action theory. Nevertheless, we note that the desirability and the adjusted social standard are positively and statistically associated with a significant manner (significativity with the threshold of 1%). Therefore, our assumption A1 is validated.

The introduction of the variable measuring the variable "perceived feasibility" (second stage) generate a light increase in the coefficient of determination of the model of about 0.02 and which passes from 77.3% with the model of the action reasoned theory to reach 77.5% in the model of the planned behavior theory \( \Delta F=323.14 \) \( p<0.01 \). These results, show that the model of the planned behavior theory probably brings relevant additional information, and translated the presence of a substantial weight of the value granted to this model in order to predict the intentions.

These first results validate the assumption of a more significant relevance of model of the behavior planned theory compared to the model of the reasoned action theory which leads to more representative behavioral information for the formation of the intentions. These results obtained are significant for the two models, and the variables significantly predict the intention.

A close attention will be paid to the significant contribution of the measurement of "perceived feasibility" which suggests that the formation of the intentions to create a company by the public civils servant is affected by the perception of control. These results emphasize on the complementarity between the planned behavior theory and the reasoned action theory, and thus on the importance attached to the "perceived feasibility" which lead us to approach the concept of auto-effectiveness (personal effectiveness) of Bandoura (1982) and that of perceived control of Ajzen (1991).

However, the addition of certain variables (third stage) to the variables announced before (desirability, perceived feasibility and perceived social standard) in accordance with our assumption A3, contributes to the formation of the intentions. Moreover, the results presented above bring back an improvement in the joint effects \( \Delta F=75.55, \) \( p\)-value <0.01 \), and indicate an increase of the explained and moderate variance \( \Delta R^2 = 0.08 \).

Therefore, we can make sure that the adoption of the complementary contributions of the two variables entrepreneurial identity and professional role really leads to better information in the prediction of the intentions. It is one of criticisms formulated around the reasoned action theory and the planned behavior theory which thus underlining the possibility of integrating other explanatory variables of the behavioral intention into those stated by Ajzen (1991).

A positive and significant contribution of the entrepreneurial identity in the formation of the intentions of the Tunisian public civils servant of about 8.5% (marginal effect) indicating that the intention could be accompanied by a motivation of this latter to have their own entrepreneurial identities.

Concerning the effect of the professional role on the prediction of the intentions, it contributes slightly in the improvement of the quality of adjustment \( R^2 \) of about 0.4% but it presents a significant and positive coefficient at the threshold of 1% on the formation of the intentions of the Tunisian public civils servant.

**CONCLUSION**

Our analysis shows the significant contribution of the perceived feasibility which suggests that the formation of the intentions to create a company by the public civils servant is affected by the perception of control. This result emphasizes on the complementarity between the planned behavior theory and the reasoned action theory. Moreover, the addition of certain variables to the variables desirability, perceived feasibility and perceived social standard, contributes to the formation of the intentions. Indeed, the adoption of the complementary contributions of the two variables, entrepreneurial identity and professional role, really leads to better information in the prediction of the intentions.

In other words, our empirical results emphasize the role played by the entrepreneurial identity and the professional role in the formation of the intention of the Tunisian public civils servant. Thus, our analysis insists on the limits of the theory of the reasoned action and the theory of the planned behavior insofar as they did not add these two deciding factors of the entrepreneurial intention.

**REFERENCES**


