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A STRATEGIC APPROACH TO ORGANISATIONAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP: EMPLOYEES' AWARENESS OF ENTREPRENEURIAL STRATEGY

ABSTRACT: *The purpose of the paper is to explore employees' awareness of the entrepreneurial strategy in an organisation. We argue that employee awareness of the clarity and flexibility of entrepreneurial strategy differs depending on gender, age, seniority, education, and working experience. We provide a theoretical overview explaining the interaction between performance-oriented strategic management and entrepreneurship, based on organisational innovation. Our study delineates the specifics of a strategic approach to organisational-level entrepreneurship, explaining in depth the integration of entrepreneurship and strategy. The data was collected from a total of 39 managers and 50 employees holding non-managerial positions in 19 Serbian companies. The results*

of the analysis show a statistically significant difference in employees' awareness of the clarity and flexibility of entrepreneurial strategy, depending on gender, level of education, and seniority. The research presents empirically and theoretically substantiated evidence regarding the necessity to make entrepreneurial strategy an integral part of corporate strategy and to make employees aware of the relevance of strategy in achieving long-term competitive advantage. Based on these considerations the results are critically evaluated their implications and limitations are discussed, and avenues for further research are recommended.

KEY WORDS: *Entrepreneurship, management, organisation, strategy, employees, behaviour*

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1. INTRODUCTION

Businesses are constantly implementing a wide range of activities to increase sales, decrease costs, and improve quality by focusing on growth and development, but in most cases they do not have a clearly specified strategy. Innovative activities are mainly ad hoc, tactical, and reactive. Entrepreneurship is much more than an individual initiative and it has the potential to provide a strategic direction for the organisation. It is necessary to develop a strategy capable of guiding entrepreneurial activity by clearly defining how entrepreneurial the organisation wants to be, and, equally importantly, making employees, as the agents of change, aware of the strategy and willing to act accordingly.

There has been a considerable amount of research on entrepreneurial behaviour in organisations that aims to shed more light on this unique concept (Pryor, Webb, Ireland, and Ketchen 2015; Narayanan, Yang, and Zahra 2009; Morris, Kuratko, and Covin 2008; Baden-Fuller 1995), but considerable ambiguities remain (Hornsby, Kuratko, Shepherd, and Bott 2009; Dess, Ireland, Zahra, Floyd, Janney, and Lane 2003). Researchers have analysed how the internal organisational context affects entrepreneurial behaviour (Zahra, Jennings, and Kuratko 1999). However, in previous empirical studies the theoretical and conceptual foundation has been insufficient, and this deficiency is the fundamental motivation for conducting this study. We research whether employees are aware of entrepreneurial strategy and how they perceive it, according to their individual characteristics and position in the organisation.

The main research goal is to investigate the importance of taking a strategic approach to formulating and implementing entrepreneurial activity in a business and to identify how aware employees are of these efforts. First, we investigate the interdependence of entrepreneurship and strategic management. Entrepreneurship promotes a constant quest for new sources of competitiveness, while strategic management strives to create and maintain competitive advantage in a given context. Second, we elaborate a new conceptual framework of strategic entrepreneurship or undertaking entrepreneurial activities in an organisation from a strategic perspective. The purpose of linking strategic management and entrepreneurship is to have a more thorough insight into how the new value creation process develops in an organisational context. Third, we shed new light

on the relevance of adopting a strategic perspective when managing entrepreneurial initiatives in an organisation. Finally, the implementation of a entrepreneurial strategy depends on the employees' personal characteristics, cognitive abilities, and position in the organisational hierarchy. Our research investigates and clarifies the key factors influencing employees' perceptions that entrepreneurial strategy management must consider when building an entrepreneurial business. The research goal is to analyse employees' gender, age, seniority, education, and working experience to identify how these variables affect the way employees perceive the clarity and flexibility of entrepreneurial strategy.

The paper is structured as follows. The first section provides a review of the literature on theoretical considerations related to the interaction of strategic management and entrepreneurial behaviour. The second section outlines and elaborates the relevance of a strategic approach to organisational entrepreneurship which integrates entrepreneurship and strategy. The third section analyses the key aspects of employees' awareness of entrepreneurial strategy and the fourth presents the methodology and results of the empirical research. Finally, the findings are critically evaluated and their implications, research limitations, and further research directions are discussed.

2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND AND HYPOTHESIS

2.1. Strategic management vs. entrepreneurial behaviour in organisations

Entrepreneurship and strategic management are dynamic processes that focus on improving overall business performance through discovering new methods of value creation. Strategic management and entrepreneurship interact constantly (Stivenson and Jarillo 1990) but in different domains (Ireland, Hitt, and Sirmon 2003). Each of them has its own intellectual platform and scope but these two independent domains interact and communicate. Strategic management strives to create and maintain competitive advantage in a given context, while entrepreneurship promotes a constant quest for new sources of competitiveness through products, processes, or market innovations (Kuratko and Audretsch 2009). Strategic management deals with factors affecting organisational performance, strategy, environment, and sustainable competitive position. The scope of strategic management includes all actions and decisions focused on new

business creation and innovation development: corporate and business strategy, implementation, leadership, planning, and teamwork (Day 1992). Entrepreneurship, on the other hand, is more closely focused on the innovation of products, processes, and markets (Daily, McDougall, Covin, and Dalton 2002; Sharma and Chrisman 1999; Lumpkin and Dess 1996), or the identification and exploitation of opportunities as the foundation for new value creation (Shane and Venkataraman 2000). Companies today are under constant pressure to continuously learn and innovate (Aleksić Mirić 2019). The main purpose of linking strategic management and entrepreneurship is to get a more thorough insight into how the process of new value creation is developed when a new business venture is established in an organisation (Erić Nielsen, Babić and Nikolić 2016).

The interaction between strategic management and entrepreneurship aims to connect the creative aspect of entrepreneurship with performance-oriented strategic management. Sandberg (1992) argues that the intersection between strategic management and entrepreneurship incorporates new business creation, innovation, identifying opportunities, and risk-taking. Schendel and Hofer (1979) argue that entrepreneurship is the essence of strategic management and distinguish between entrepreneurial strategy, which indicates the organisation's position in relation to the competitive environment, and integrative strategy, which manages the outcomes of entrepreneurial behaviour. Seen from this perspective, entrepreneurship is subordinate to the strategic management process.

Guth and Ginsberg (1990) analyse the factors driving innovativeness and how corporate entrepreneurship influences the strategic renewal of an organisation. This approach is flawed due to its excessive generality and a lack of clear distinction between cause and effect. Corporate entrepreneurship is not regarded as a possible strategy in itself but as an independent phenomenon existing separately from strategy. Floyd and Lane's (2000) more process-oriented model explains strategic renewal as new ventures undertaken within the organisation, with particular emphasis on management support. However, they analyse strategy separately from entrepreneurship, neglect the effect of entrepreneurial initiatives, and their analysis mainly focuses on the organisational units responsible for innovation. (Covin and Miles 1999) have an alternative approach;

their model describes how knowledge is created through various entrepreneurial activities: strategic renewal, sustainable regeneration, business domain redefinition, organisational rejuvenation, and business model restructuring. Corporate entrepreneurship strategy is not included in this model, either explicitly or implicitly. Hornsby, Naffziger, Kuratko, and Montagno's (1993) model of entrepreneurial behaviour determinants focuses on specific behaviours leading to the creation of new business ventures. This model is of limited scope, analysing drivers of entrepreneurial behaviour at the individual level without taking strategy into consideration. A slightly different variation of this model was introduced by Kuratko, Ireland, Covin, and Hornsby (2005), who analyse the preconditions and outcomes of entrepreneurial tactical management. None of these models provide a clear definition of corporate entrepreneurship strategy.

2.2. A strategic approach to organisation-level entrepreneurship: integrating entrepreneurship and strategy

To maintain a sustainable competitive position, management needs to think and act strategically in terms of product/process innovation and development. Nevertheless, these aspects are often neglected and companies focus instead on the efficiency of daily operations. Many companies are involved in entrepreneurial activities without having formally described and envisioned a corporate strategy. An entrepreneurial strategy is as "a vision-directed, organisation-wide reliance on entrepreneurial behavior that purposefully and continuously rejuvenates the organization and shapes the scope of its operations through the recognition and exploitation of entrepreneurial opportunity" (Ireland, Covin, and Kuratko 2009). Recent studies focus not only on creating an effective strategy but also on the modelling, antecedents, and contingent effects of differentiation and integration (Lloret 2016; Burgers and Covin 2016; Baruah and Ward 2014; Shimizu 2012; Villiers-Scheepers 2012; Ireland et al. 2003; Venkataraman and Sarasvathy 2001).

The new conceptual framework of strategic entrepreneurship has been built by integrating the different aspects of entrepreneurship and strategic management. Strategic entrepreneurship involves the business undertaking entrepreneurial activities from a strategic perspective that involves risk and proactive behaviour. Strategic entrepreneurship encompasses looking for new concepts, ideas, and opportunities through entrepreneurial activity while at the same time exploring

potential sources of competitive advantage through a strategic management process. It is important to point out that both of those processes are necessary for value creation; neither of them is enough in itself. Strategic entrepreneurship is based on systematic innovation and involves formulating explicit goals and strategies, implementing them, and monitoring performance and adjustments based on identified deviations.

Companies with entrepreneurship deeply embedded in their corporate and business strategies have a better chance of outperforming competitors in the long run (Covin and Miles 2007). Corporate entrepreneurial strategy at the organisational level should result in enhanced competitiveness, new value creation, and strategic repositioning. This strategy indicates to what extent and how a business strives to become entrepreneurial. The key issues that the strategy should reflect are innovation intensity and frequency, preferred risk propensity, activities outside the core of competence, expectations from business/product units, how to handle new/existing products/services/markets in the future, where the innovation hub should be located, etc. The ultimate goal for the company is to gain external expertise from new ventures and incorporate it into strategically relevant organisational knowledge. The strategy development can be either emergent or deliberate, but it should be underpinned by a strong vision and sense of direction. The vision should be ambitious but rooted in reality, and there must be a strong strategic intent if the vision is particularly challenging. Strategy comes from both the top and the bottom of the organisation, with the strong involvement of all levels of management (Burns 2013, 473–475).

There are two alternative, conventional approaches that entrepreneurship management can take to achieve a sustainable competitive position. The first relates to the fact that efficiency and productivity can be enhanced by incremental adjustments of processes and stimulated by management from the top all the way down to the bottom of the organisation (Burgelman 1984). ‘Induced’ behaviour involves taking advantage of the existing strategy and maintaining consistency with the current strategic context and planning system; for example, developing a new product within the current business. On the other hand, autonomous strategic behaviour is equivalent to entrepreneurship as it refers to the creation of new combinations of available resources that result in a foundation for radical innovation. It arises beyond the dominant logic and current strategic setting and

requires alignment, as when middle managers try to get support from top management to implement new ideas and projects, bypassing the prevailing context and questioning corporate strategy.

Entrepreneurial activity often occurs randomly and ad hoc; autonomous behaviour does not automatically imply the existence of a corporate entrepreneurship strategy (Ireland, Covin, and Kuratko 2009). Strategies that promote innovation and development are based on the entrepreneurial approach to competitive advantage, while strategies based on cost reduction and incremental improvements are focused on maintaining the current competitive position (Dess, Lumpkin, and McGee 1999). Entrepreneurial behaviour is more closely related to differentiation than to cost-management because differentiation requires creativity, engineering competence, marketing skills, and effective coordination, while cost leadership emphasises control, process skills, efficiency, and a structured set of organisational potentials. Companies promoting an entrepreneurial approach while pursuing a cost leadership strategy have below-average performance (Porter 1985). Zahra and Covin (1993) also claim that new products are more closely related to differentiation, while cost management is more focused on improving existing products.

Corporate entrepreneurial strategy should benefit the business in multiple ways. At the corporate level a major strategic imperative is to continue developing the entrepreneurial architecture, while at the business level the focus is on understanding the basis of competitive advantage and how customer value can be enhanced. Strategy is meant to encourage internal growth through innovation, new products and services, and entry into new markets. The purpose of a strategy is to encourage creativity but with a commercial overview, keeping marketing position and overall performance at the forefront of organisational goals. It should question existing marketing paradigms such as pricing, branding, and product life cycles while also disputing sectoral, performance, and customer conventions.

2.3. Employee awareness of entrepreneurial strategy

Entrepreneurial strategy must be known and clearly communicated to everyone in the organisation. The assumption that employees are fully aware and familiar with strategy and understand its potential implications is very risky. In the

context of entrepreneurial initiative, ambiguity or insufficient understanding of key strategic directions eventually leads to organisational disorder and employee passivity. Entrepreneurial organisational culture is oriented toward transferring and communicating a vision, based on continuous innovation and encouraging employees to put entrepreneurial spirit into action. In an entrepreneurial organisation one of the main aspects of corporate strategy is to formulate a strategic approach to entrepreneurship and to familiarise employees with long-term plans. The employee satisfaction level varies significantly in different organisational cultures according to the content of its values and norms (Janićijević, Nikčević, and Vasić 2018). They should be willing to personally initiate, participate in, and back up new ideas that enable the expansion of the core competence. Continuous improvement of business processes is a precondition for achieving an entrepreneurial vision. Failing to explicitly communicate strategy can irreversibly damage a company's ability to innovate. Management must be clear not only about strategy but also about what it means in terms of daily operations for the different organisational departments. Businesses need a strategic direction to overcome the challenges of a changing competitive arena, but this should be coupled with flexibility. Strategic flexibility refers to rethinking, reflecting, and aligning strategies, action plans, organisational culture, structure, and managerial systems. Because of the intensity and degree of environmental turbulence related to technology, regulation, and market trends, entrepreneurial strategy has to be adjustable. Management decides the company-preferred competitive position, but there are different ways to get there. It is necessary to have a good understanding of resources, to build dynamic core competencies, to focus on human capital development, to use new technologies effectively, to rethink strategy, and to align the organisation's structure and culture (Hitt, Keats, and DeMarie 1998). Recombining resources more efficiently implies that appropriate decisions have been made at the strategic level. Innovation and creative ideas inevitably change embedded patterns and methods, so it is crucial for strategy to be not only flexible but also essentially oriented to the future and to opportunities.

Employees are more or less willing to start a new venture depending on their personal priorities and values regarding life in general, which are heavily influenced by gender. Numerous studies have focused recently on gender differences in organisational entrepreneurship (Khyareh 2018; Kanze, Huang,

Conley, and Higgins 2018; Singh, Archer, and Madan 2018; Justo, DeTienne, and Sieger 2015; Wieland and Sarin 2012; Charness and Gneezy 2012; Boschini, Murena, and Persson 2012; Zhao, Seibert, and Lumpkin 2010; Fairlie and Robb 2009). Employees with dominant masculine values are ambitious, performance- and goal-oriented, and more self-confident, while employees with high feminine values cherish human relations and safety, are risk-averse, build strong social networks, strive for consensus, solidarity, and equality, are empathetic, genuinely care for others and about the quality of life outside the workspace, and do not admire standing out from the crowd (Hofstede 1980, 2001).

Hypothesis 1. *Employee awareness of the clarity and flexibility of entrepreneurial strategy varies depending on gender.*

Employee perceptions of the significance of entrepreneurship are positively related to age and increase up to a certain point in a career. Recent research (Baù, Sieger, Eddleston, and Chirico 2017) indicates that a failed entrepreneur's age is related to the likelihood of entrepreneurial reentry depending on career stage. The relationship is positive during the early and late career, but negative during the mid-career stage. Researchers have investigated the relationship between an individual's age and the likelihood of starting a new business (Baù, Sieger, Eddleston, and Chirico 2017; Langowitz and Minniti 2007; Ucbasaran, Wright, & Westhead 2003; Coate and Tennyson 1992). In our research we argue that employees' awareness of entrepreneurial strategy depends on their age.

Hypothesis 2. *Employee awareness of the clarity and flexibility of entrepreneurial strategy varies depending on age.*

Management is willing to embrace the latent tension in an organisation since ongoing activities ensure the maintenance of a competitive position, while entrepreneurial actions disturb embedded patterns and bring discomfort but aim to secure the market position in the long run. Top, middle, and operational management have different responsibilities and roles in initiating and implementing entrepreneurial activities (Floyd and Lane 2000). At the strategic level, managers try to identify effective ways to create new or redefine existing business. Middle management proposes and develops entrepreneurial ideas aimed at improving the organisation's competitive position. Middle managers' strategic roles have also been described as part of the process of corporate

entrepreneurship (Wooldridge, Schmid, and Floyd 2008; Hornsby, Kuratko, and Zahra 2002). Operational management focuses on how the organisation's core competence can be used to exploit opportunities. There is a substantial literature on operations management, which has been developed in the context of managing innovation within established firms (Shepherd and Patzelt 2017; Sun, Hong, and Hu 2014; Khazanchi, Lewis, and Boyer 2007; Tatikonda and Rosenthal 2000). Employees, on the other hand, receive subtle signals from management structure about preferred behaviour, so they know how to proceed, even though they might be unaware of the formal entrepreneurial strategy. Therefore, the awareness and perceptions of individuals regarding the importance of enhancing entrepreneurial behaviour changes depending on their position in the organisational hierarchy.

Hypothesis 3. *Employee awareness of the clarity and flexibility of entrepreneurial strategy varies depending on their position in the organisation's hierarchy.*

Being exposed to diverse educational backgrounds enriches the perspective of team members and facilitates creativity and adaptability (Zimmerman 2008). 'Educational level' refers to the extent of the training received by members of the entrepreneurial team (Ensley and Hmieleski 2005). Managers often prefer high levels of education when it comes to addressing complex situations; however, lower levels of education are associated with different skill sets that may complement each other in building a new venture. Likewise, high levels of education usually correspond to strong conceptual skills, whereas low levels are associated with strong practical skills (Foo, Wong, and Ong 2005). Hence, education is one of the key factors influencing employees' perception of the relevance and characteristics of an entrepreneurial strategy.

Hypothesis 4. *Employee awareness of the clarity and flexibility of entrepreneurial strategy varies depending on educational level.*

Employees with a proven record of previously gained, firm-specific expertise are more likely to demonstrate a higher awareness of entrepreneurial strategy. Managers with industry experience can benefit a firm, as they are able to introduce competitive trends and conditions, specific technologies, industry-specific regulatory issues, and goodwill regarding certain customers and suppliers (Kor 2003). Almus and Nerlinger (1999) reveal a negative influence on a firm's

growth during the start-up period of entrepreneurs without professional experience. Colombo and Grilli (2005) find that the founders' average years of work experience have a positive impact on employee growth, independent of the industry where the experience was gained (Maschke 2012).

***Hypothesis 5.** Employee awareness of the clarity and flexibility of entrepreneurial strategy varies depending on work experience.*

3. RESEARCH DESIGN

3.1 Sample and method

The data presented in this paper was extracted from a more comprehensive field research study, comprising a random sample of 89 respondents from 19 companies operating in Central Serbia (15 in the production sector and 4 in the service sector). The companies in the sample operate in diverse industries including car manufacture, insurance, food processing and packaging solutions, and pharmaceutical/healthcare production. No single industry is represented in the sample with a proportion greater than 21%, which means no single activity dominates. Companies selected for the study were required to be at least two years old and to rely on product or service innovation for survival. Participating and non-participating companies showed no significant difference in terms of size, measured by the number of employees.

The author called the CEOs, introduced the objective and design of the study, and requested approval for the field investigation. The respondents were asked to fill in a questionnaire independently, according to their perceptions and best judgment. The respondents received the questionnaires with a cover letter delineating the research topic and guaranteeing anonymity. The questionnaire was pre-tested to find the average completion time. All respondents had been working with the superior they rated for at least one year. The response rate was 27.89%, which is comparable with similar studies.

We analysed the sample characteristics and classified respondents by gender, age, seniority, educational background, and working experience (Table 1). The sample is gendered as follows: men 63% (56 respondents), females 37% (33 respondents). The most numerous respondents are in the 36–45 age group (42%), followed by

26–35 years (32%), more than 45 years (20%), and less than 25 years (6%). The sample includes 39 managers: 8 senior managers (9%), 24 middle managers (27%), and 7 supervisors (8%). Fifty employees (56%) hold non-managerial positions. Most of the 51 respondents have a university degree, college, or a vocational education (57%), while the rest (38 – 43%) have a high school education or less. Fifty respondents have 5–25 years of work experience and they dominate the sample (56%). Twenty-six respondents (29%) have less than 5 years’ work experience and 13 (15%) have more than 25 years.

Table 1. Sample characteristics

VARIABLE		Frequency	% of Total
Gender	Male	56	63
	Female	33	37
Age	18–25 years	5	6
	26–35 years	29	32
	36–45 years	37	42
	More than 45 years	18	20
Seniority	Senior managers	8	9
	Middle managers	24	27
	Operation managers	7	8
	Employees (non-managerial positions)	50	56
Education	University degree, vocational school	51	57
	High school degree	38	43
Work experience	Less than 5 years	26	29
	5–25 years	50	56
	More than 25 years	13	15
Total		89	100

Source: Authors’ calculation

3.2 Measures

Entrepreneurial strategy-making was measured using a modification of Hart’s instrument (1991). The questionnaire, as the research method, is consistent with previous theoretical and empirical studies (Miller 1983; Miller and Friesen 1983; Morris and Sexton 1996; Hornsby et al. 2002; Ireland et al. 2006). The statistical software package SPSS was used for data analysis. Employee awareness of the

clarity and flexibility of entrepreneurial strategy were measured using subjective qualitative performance measures. All statements were grouped within the two independent variables, clarity of strategy and flexibility of strategy, and each variable was measured according to a set of five statements. A five-point Likert scale was implemented, with respondents ticking the fields to denote the extent they (dis)agreed with each affirmatively defined statement, with anchors ranging from “strongly disagree” (equalling 1) to “strongly agree” (equalling 5). Respondents were asked to assess entrepreneurial strategy in terms of clarity (for example, “Strategy is clearly defined and well known”) and flexibility (for example, “Strategy relies on continuous improvement of business processes and activities”). The reliability of the scale was measured by Cronbach's Alpha coefficient ($\alpha=0.712$). As the minimum threshold for this ratio is 0.7, the questionnaire is reliable as a measuring instrument and the variables used for measurement are internally consistent (Nunnally 1978).

4. RESEARCH RESULTS

In this section we first present the t-test for two, independent, sample research results. We run this test to compare respondents based on the gender variables (Table 2) and educational level (Table 3).

The results indicate that there is a statistically significant difference between male and female respondents for items 7 ($p=0.000<0.001$), 3 ($p=0.041<0.05$), and 5 ($p=0.024<0.05$). There is also a statistically significant difference between male and female respondents at probability level $p<0.1$ for items 4 ($p=0.052$), 6 ($p=0.056$), and 8 ($p=0.091$). In total, statistically significant differences were identified in 6 out of 10 observed aspects.

Table 2: Comparison of respondents’ awareness according to gender (t-test for two independent samples)

Items	Males M (SD)	Females M (SD)	t	Sig.
1. There is a clear blueprint for this organisation’s strategy that was set some time ago.	4.11(0.85)	3.94 (1.03)	0.833	0.407
2. Our organisation continually adapts by making appropriate changes in its strategy based on feedback from the marketplace.	4.00 (0.83)	3.88 (0.93)	0.636	0.526
3. Business planning in our organisation is ongoing, involving everyone in the process to some degree.	2.75 (1.25)	3.36 (1.50)	-2.074	0.041**
4. The strategic orientation of the company is mainly toward growth.	4.39 (0.76)	4.06 (0.79)	1.973	0.052*
5. The strategic goal of the company is maintaining a sustainable competitive position.	4.23 (0.84)	3.82 (0.95)	2.293	0.024**
6. People are encouraged to experiment in this organisation so as to identify new, more innovative approaches or products.	3.98 (1.18)	3.48 (1.15)	1.936	0.056*
7. The strategy relies on constant improvement of business processes and methods.	4.32 (1.94)	3.48 (1.09)	3.824	0.000***
8. The way we do things in this organisation is well suited to the business we are in.	3.89 (0.76)	3.55 (1.00)	1.852	0.091*
9. Long-term potential is valued over short-term performance in this organisation.	3.18 (1.25)	2.79 (1.17)	1.458	0.148
10. People in this organisation are very dynamic and entrepreneurial.	3.84 (1.02)	3.88 (0.89)	-0.184	0.854

*probability level $p < 0.1$; ** $p < 0.05$; *** $p < 0.01$; M- Mean; SD-standard deviation*

Table 3: Comparison of respondents' awareness according to education level (t-test for two independent samples)

Item	University degree M (SD)	High school degree M (SD)	t	Sig.
1. There is a clear blueprint for this organisation's strategy that was set some time ago.	3.90 (1.06)	4.24 (0.63)	-1.851	0.068*
2. Our organisation continually adapts by making appropriate changes in its strategy based on feedback from the marketplace.	3.92 (0.84)	4.00 (0.90)	-0.421	0.675
3. Business planning in our organisation is ongoing, involving everyone in the process to some degree.	2.57 (1.27)	3.53 (1.33)	-3.450	0.001***
4. The strategic orientation of the company is mainly toward growth.	4.12 (0.89)	4.47 (0.56)	-2.175	0.032**
5. The strategic goal of the company is maintaining a sustainable competitive position.	4.10 (0.92)	4.05 (0.73)	0.250	0.803
6. People are encouraged to experiment in this organisation so as to identify new, more innovative approaches or products.	3.88 (1.29)	3.68 (1.04)	0.776	0.440
7. The strategy relies on constant improvement of business processes and methods.	4.22 (1.14)	3.74 (0.92)	2.127	0.036**
8. The way we do things in this organisation is well suited to the business we are in.	3.86 (0.80)	3.63 (0.94)	1.220	0.227
9. Long-term potential is valued over short-term performance in this organisation.	3.29 (1.24)	2.68 (1.14)	2.376	0.020**
10. People in this organisation are very dynamic and entrepreneurial.	3.71 (1.08)	4.05 (0.77)	-1.766	0.081*

*probability level $p < 0.1$; ** $p < 0.05$; *** $p < 0.01$; M – Mean; SD – standard deviation*

There is a statistically significant difference between respondents depending on education level for items number 3 ($p=0.001<0.001$), 4 ($p=0.032<0.05$), 7 ($p=0.036<0.05$), and 9 ($p=0.020<0.05$). There is also a statistically significant difference between respondents depending on educational background at probability level $p<0.1$ for items 1 ($p=0.068$) and 10 ($p=0.081$). Again, statistically significant differences were identified in 6 out of 10 observed aspects.

In Table 4 we show the output of the ANOVA analysis. We tested whether there is a statistically significant difference between group means for three variables: age, seniority, and working experience.

Statistically significant differences were identified in 5 out of 10 observed aspects of seniority, i.e., managerial positions in the organisational hierarchy. The significance value is below 0.001 for item number 7 ($p=0.002$) and $p<0.05$ for items 5 ($p=0.017$), 6 ($p=0.031$), 10 ($p=0.026$), and 9 ($p=0.096<0.1$), which are statistically significant differences in the means. There was no statistically significant difference between group means for the variables 'age' and 'working experience', as determined by one-way ANOVA.

For seniority we performed a t-test for two independent samples (Table 5), developed depending on respondents' position in the organisational hierarchy. Thus, we compared managers with employees and identified statistically significant differences in 5 out of 10 observed aspects. The significance value is below 0.001 for item number 7 ($p=0.000$) and $p<0.05$ for items 5 ($p=0.023$), 6 ($p=0.046$), 8 ($p=0.042$), and 9 ($p=0.027$).

Table 4: ANOVA test – age, seniority, and working experience

Item	Age		Seniority		Working experience	
	F	Sig.	F	Sig.	F	Sig.
1. There is a clear blueprint for this organisation’s strategy that was set some time ago.	0.127	0.944	0.363	0.780	1.443	0.242
2. Our organisation continually adapts by making appropriate changes in its strategy based on feedback from the marketplace.	0.579	0.631	0.266	0.849	1.917	0.153
3. Business planning in our organisation is ongoing, involving everyone in the process to some degree.	1.020	0.388	0.769	0.514	0.801	0.452
4. The strategic orientation of the company is mainly oriented toward growth.	1.315	0.275	1.225	0.306	1.877	0.159
5. The strategic goal of the company is maintaining a sustainable competitive position.	1.487	0.224	3.589	0.017**	0.353	0.704
6. People are encouraged to experiment in this organisation so as to identify new, more innovative approaches or products.	0.319	0.812	3.096	0.031**	0.225	0.799
7. The strategy relies on constant improvement of business processes and methods.	0.186	0.906	5.549	0.002***	0.985	0.378
8. The way we do things in this organisation is well suited to the business we are in.	0.352	0.788	1.516	0.216	0.441	0.645
9. Long-term potential is valued over short-term performance in this organisation.	0.159	0.924	2.182	0.096*	2.246	0.112
10. People in this organisation are very dynamic and entrepreneurial.	1.684	0.177	3.243	0.026**	1.198	0.307

*probability level $p < 0.1$; ** $p < 0.05$; *** $p < 0.01$;

Table 5: Comparison of respondents' awareness according to position (t-test for two independent samples)

Item	Managers M (SD)	Employees M (SD)	t	Sig.
1. There is a clear blueprint for this organisation's strategy that was set some time ago.	3.97 (0.96)	4.10 (0.89)	-0.640	0.524
2. Our organisation continually adapts by making appropriate changes in its strategy based on feedback from the marketplace.	3.97 (0.84)	3.94 (0.89)	0.185	0.854
3. Business planning in our organisation is ongoing, involving everyone in the process to some degree.	2.77 (1.18)	3.14 (1.50)	-1.306	0.195
4. The strategic orientation of the company is mainly oriented toward growth.	4.28 (0.83)	4.26 (0.75)	0.132	0.896
5. The strategic goal of the company is maintaining sustainable competitive position.	4.31 (0.77)	3.90 (0.86)	2.321	0.023**
6. People are encouraged to experiment in this organisation so as to identify new, more innovative approaches or products.	4.08 (1.08)	3.58 (1.23)	2.021	0.046**
7. The strategy relies on constant improvement of business processes and methods.	4.49 (0.88)	3.64 (1.06)	4.006	0.000***
8. The way we do things in this organisation is well suited to the business we are in.	3.97 (0.84)	3.60 (0.86)	2.060	0.042**
9. Long-term potential is valued over short-term performance in this organisation.	3.36 (1.135)	2.78 (1.07)	2.256	0.027**
10. People in this organisation are very dynamic and entrepreneurial.	3.67 (1.11)	4.00 (0.83)	-1.565	0.122

*probability level $p < 0.1$; ** $p < 0.05$; *** $p < 0.01$;

Finally, a post hoc analysis was performed in order to examine individual mean difference comparisons across all four levels of seniority, as this is the only variable to show an overall statistically significant difference in group means for

all ten items. Post hoc Tukey analysis (Table 5) identifies statistically significant differences between different hierarchy levels for items 5, 6, 7, and 10.

Table 6: Post Hoc Tukey test, seniority variable

Items	Intergroup comparisons	Means	Sig.
5. The strategic goal of the company is maintaining sustainable competitive position.	Group 2 – Group 4	4.50 – 3.90	0.019**
6. People are encouraged to experiment in this organisation so as to identify new, more innovative approaches or products.	Group 3 – Group 4	4.71 – 3.58	0.076***
7. The strategy relies on constant improvement of business processes and methods.	Group 2 – Group 4	4.50 – 3.64	0.004*
	Group 3 – Group 4	4.71 – 3.64	0.044**
10. People in this organisation are very dynamic and entrepreneurial.	Group 2 – Group 3	3.92 – 2.86	0.048**
	Group 3 – Group 4	2.86 – 4.00	0.017**

Group 1: senior managers; Group 2: middle managers; Group 3: operation managers; Group 4: employees (non-managerial positions)

*probability level $p < 0.1$; ** $p < 0.05$; *** $p < 0.01$;

There is a statistically significant difference between groups 2 and 4 (item 7, $p = 0.004 < 0.001$; item 5 $p = 0.019 < 0.05$), between groups 3 and 4 (item 10, $p = 0.017 < 0.05$; item 7, $p = 0.044 < 0.05$; item 6 $p = 0.076 < 0.1$) and between groups 2 and 3 (item 10, $p = 0.048 < 0.05$).

5. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The research indicates that male respondents are more aware than female respondents that the focus of the organisation should be to maintain a competitive position in the long run by pursuing a growth strategy. Male respondents believe that the cornerstone for achieving growth is an unambiguous

strategic orientation to enhance entrepreneurial initiative, experimentation, and innovation. They stress to a higher extent than females the necessity of strategy adaptation and flexibility through continual development of products and processes. On the other hand, female respondents point out the importance of participation and involving everyone in the planning process to some degree. These results are consistent with previous research on the male and female values (Hofstede and Hofstede 2005) that form the basis for investigating if employees are aware of entrepreneurial strategic orientation at the organisational level. Accordingly, men are more prone to taking risks and taking the initiative and are more proactive and performance-oriented, while women are more focused on interpersonal relations and getting people together to implement entrepreneurial activities. Our results complement those reported by Croson and Gneezy (2009), who note that women are mostly less competitive than men. Based on an analysis of 15 different studies, Wieland and Sarin (2012) report that extremely robust results indicate that women are more risk-averse than men. Therefore, we conclude that Hypothesis H1 is confirmed; i.e., there is a statistically significant difference between women's and men's awareness of the clarity and flexibility of entrepreneurial strategy.

We found no evidence of statistically significant differences between respondents of different ages and therefore conclude that Hypothesis H2 is rejected. The latest research reveals that the average successful start-up founder is middle-aged (45 years old), thus refuting the conception that entrepreneurs are young (Azoulay, Jones, Kim, and Miranda 2018). In general, research results on the relevance of age are inconsistent (Levesque and Minniti 2006; Reynolds, Camp, and Hay 2002) and need further investigation.

Hypothesis 3 was formulated to investigate if employee awareness of the clarity and flexibility of entrepreneurial strategy differs by seniority in the management structure. We found differences in respondents' awareness of how strategy should adjust depending on business processes and improvement methods. Different organisational levels have varying perceptions regarding the organisation's strategic goal being to maintain a competitive position, long-term v. short-term orientation, and employees' willingness to innovate, experiment, and behave in a dynamic, entrepreneurial manner. Middle- and operational-level managers influence employees differently when it comes to raising awareness about the

flexibility of entrepreneurial strategy, depending on the improvement of business processes and methods. Middle-level managers predominantly focus on maintaining a sustainable competitive position, while operational managers and supervisors encourage employees to experiment and identify new, more innovative approaches and products. Our results are in line with those of Floyd and Wooldridge (2000), who describe the roles middle-level managers perform identifying opportunities, developing initiatives, and renewing organisational capabilities. Kuratko, Ireland, Covin, and Hornsby (2005) integrate research with corporate entrepreneurship and motivation theory to link organisational antecedents to middle-managers' entrepreneurial behaviour and individual and organisational outcomes. The results reported here also suggest that the middle and operational managerial levels in an organisation generally perceive employees as more dynamic and entrepreneurial than they see themselves. We identified certain differences between managers and employees regarding perception of strategic issues. Managers tend to be more convinced than employees that strategy relies on the constant improvement of business processes and methods. They also believe more strongly that the business model is adequately suited to market conditions, and perceive competitive position to be the most important strategic goal. Managers see themselves as supportive and willing to encourage innovative ideas, and prioritize long-term potential over short-term performance. On the other hand, employees are more sceptical about strategic issues and do not fully understand the long-term orientation of the organisation. Hence, we conclude that Hypothesis H3 is confirmed; i.e., there is a statistically significant difference in employees' awareness of the clarity and flexibility of entrepreneurial strategy depending on their hierarchical position in the organisation.

Hypothesis 4 was designed to test if employees' awareness of the clarity and flexibility of entrepreneurial strategy differs depending on their educational background. Our research indicates that highly educated respondents demonstrate to a greater extent the necessity to reflect on competitive position in the long run. They are more aware that the strategy of entrepreneurial activities should be flexible and result in significant improvements of processes and products to secure the market position. Respondents with a high school degree or less are, conversely, more oriented toward participation and getting clear directions through entrepreneurial strategy. They perceive themselves as

entrepreneurial and dynamic. Our study complements the results reported in other research (Vogel, Puhan, Shehuc, Kliger, and Beese 2014; Foo et al. 2005). Thus, we found evidence of statistically significant differences between these two groups of respondents, confirming Hypothesis H4.

No significant differences were identified depending on respondents' working experience, so Hypothesis H5 is rejected. This result is consistent with the lack of statistical evidence for the relevance of employees' age. Our results complement those of Douglas and Shepherd (2000), who show that some individuals value independence more than others, regardless of their age, resulting in the different career choices of employed versus self-employed.

6. CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

This study makes several contributions to the literature on entrepreneurship. First, it enhances our understanding of the organisational entrepreneurship process and its relevance to maintaining a sustainable competitive advantage. The research results provide a basis for drawing theoretical conclusions about cause-and-effect relations and a roadmap for a deeper understanding of the strategic approach to entrepreneurship in an organisational setting. Second, it sheds light on the entrepreneurship phenomenon by reducing research ambiguities and expanding the knowledge base of this cutting-edge discipline. We provide reliable evidence of the relevance of defining a clear strategic approach to internal entrepreneurial activity, and offer a more fine-grained analysis of the individual characteristics determining employees' perceptions of preferred behaviour. Reinforcing internal abilities and strengths, using them efficiently, and dealing with internal weaknesses are some of the most reliable sources of growth. Third, the survey reveals new facts about the causality of employee awareness of an organisation's entrepreneurial strategy depending on their individual characteristics: respondents of different ages, education, and positions in the organisational hierarchy have a different understanding of the organisational setting and priorities in terms of product/process development and innovation.

Our study has important practical implications for managers and practitioners and recommendations as to how to proceed in everyday business practice. First, managers should be aware that employees differ depending on gender and they need to encourage women to be innovative, more willing to take risks, and more

proactive, and not to hesitate demonstrating their entrepreneurial skills. This can be done by designing incentives and motivation mechanisms, adjusting compensation systems, offering mentor support, highlighting role models, and providing enough time to work on personal projects. Consideration should be given to whether it is better to create entrepreneurial teams that benefit from both male and female values, or to encourage individual effort. Second, the results indicate the strong influence of education when it comes to employee perceptions about the entrepreneurial direction of the business. Managers should realize that university-educated employees are more long-term oriented and should make an additional effort to help the rest of the organisation to embrace this approach. Even though less-educated employees prefer entrepreneurial strategy to be clear and unambiguous, it is crucial to realize that strategy should be suited to the business the organisation is planning to step into, and hence it must be flexible and oriented towards the long term. Third, the study shows that managers should foster mutual cooperation and coordination between the different managerial levels and communicate a clear message to employees regarding the entrepreneurial strategic direction. It is important to maintain open vertical communication and to highlight entrepreneurial activities as a tool for maintaining competitive position. Fourth, the results of study show managers that employees perceive themselves as dynamic and entrepreneurial, so the main challenge is how to put that potential into practice. Managers should create an entrepreneurial organisational culture to communicate entrepreneurial vision and strategy, implement a transformational leadership style, and act as mediators of change. Management at all levels need to have a profound understanding of the business, which can be achieved by rotating or expanding the fields of expertise. While strategic management focuses on setting a new strategic direction, middle and operational managers should exploit organisational competencies through entrepreneurial actions. Operational managers have a particular responsibility to encourage innovation and to actively support experimenting with embedded routines and patterns on a daily basis. That can be done through internal development programmes that design jobs that empower and enrich employees. The essential practical contribution of this paper is that it provides theoretically and empirically substantiated evidence that the creation of preconditions for encouraging corporate entrepreneurship sustains the organisation's long-term competitive position.

It is important to briefly mention the paper's most important conceptual, methodological, and analytical challenges. The first limitation of this is that it is unable to keep track of organisational entrepreneurial activities over time. The effectiveness of corporate entrepreneurial activities must be studied using longitudinal studies (Zahra et al. 1999). The second limitation relates to sample size. The research presented in this paper is an empirical pilot study for a long-term, multi-level project investigating the relationship between employees' entrepreneurial behaviour and the appropriate organisational setting. The research sample comprises 19 medium and large Serbian companies, selected based on their position as innovation leaders. It makes sense to conduct a small-scale study to test assumptions, despite potential flaws in terms of precision and the reliability of conclusions. Gartner (1988) points out that research on entrepreneurship is extraordinarily complex. Critical scholarship on entrepreneurship will always be uncomfortable with complacent fixations on any particular positions, ideas, theories, or methods (Tedmanson, Deirdre, Verduyn, Karen, Essers, Caroline, and Gartner 2012). Third, the research is limited to Serbia and cannot be generalised to the rest of the world without additional data based on cross-cultural analysis. However, the findings suggest that future research should pursue employee motivation and the impact of organisational entrepreneurship on organisational culture.

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