



The entrepreneurial intention-action gap and contextual factors: Towards a conceptual model

**Authors:**

Paul Roos¹ 
Melodi Botha¹ 

Affiliations:

¹Department of Business Management, Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences, University of Pretoria, Pretoria, South Africa

Corresponding author:

Melodi Botha,
melodi.botha@up.ac.za

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Background: Previous work on entrepreneurial intention suggests that intention does not necessarily lead to entrepreneurial action; this is referred to in the literature as the entrepreneurial intention-action gap. Current entrepreneurship literature has focused on this gap and how it occurs, but limited work focuses on the contextual factors, such as self-identity, family, and formal institutions, and their influence on the entrepreneurial intention-action gap.

Aim: To determine the influence contextual factors may have on an entrepreneur's ability to overcome the entrepreneurial intention-action gap; therefore, an inductive conceptual model is developed that encompasses these influences.

Setting: This qualitative study was conducted with ten agri-entrepreneurs from different agricultural organisations in South Africa.

Methods: Semi-structured interviews, with a reverse-flow approach, were conducted telephonically with participants. The study employed a generic qualitative research design and Atlas.ti was used to conduct thematic analysis to identify and analyse patterns (themes) that emerged from interviews with respondents.

Results: The study inductively develops a conceptual model that could be empirically tested in future research to determine whether this model can be used to bridge the entrepreneurial intention-action gap. This model may be applicable not only to the agriculture sector but also to other industries.

Conclusion: New knowledge regarding self-identity factors emerged from the findings. The article also supports existing literature by suggesting that family members have an influence on an individual's success in becoming an entrepreneur. Finally, the unique dynamics of formal institutions in South Africa are presented and a contribution is made by shedding light on how entrepreneurs and formal institutions should collaborate to bridge the entrepreneurial intention-action gap.

Keywords: entrepreneurial intention-action gap; entrepreneurial intention; entrepreneurial action; contextual factors; self-identity; family business; formal institutions; agri-entrepreneurs; qualitative research.

Introduction

Many individuals have the intention to start a new venture and to become an entrepreneur, but only a small percentage of these proceed from intention to taking the new venture into action (Oliveira & Rua 2018:507–534). This creates the entrepreneurial intention-action gap and many scholars have investigated this gap by exploring the relationship between entrepreneurial intention and action (Meek, Pacheco & York 2010), the barriers to taking entrepreneurial action (Bogatyeva & Shirokova 2017; Oliveira & Rua 2018), and the probability of overcoming the intention-action gap (Botha, Carruthers & Venter 2019). Entrepreneurial intention refers to an individual's *belief* that they will start a new business venture in the future (Bird 1988:443; Thompson 2009:681), whereas entrepreneurial action is action through new products or processes, entry into new markets, or the creation of new ventures (McMullen & Shepherd 2006:132).

Bogatyeva and Shirokova (2017:34) emphasise that contextual factors may significantly affect the likelihood of an individual's taking entrepreneurial action, suggesting that more emphasis must be placed on the context in which a prospective entrepreneur functions. Current entrepreneurship studies have a descriptive focus on the skills and characteristics of an entrepreneur, but there is a

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need for a deeper understanding of the contextual factors that make up an entrepreneur (Fitz-Koch et al. 2018:129–166).

Fitz-Koch et al. (2018:149–157) name three distinctive contextual factors within entrepreneurship that provide insight into the foundations of an entrepreneur: (1) self-identity in the entrepreneurship domain is concerned with the values and attitudes that influence motivations, goals, and intentions towards being an entrepreneur (Fitz-Koch et al. 2018:149–157), and plays a concrete role in the motivation process behind entrepreneurial actions (Obschonka et al. 2015:773–794). (2) Family influences: individuals who have entrepreneurial family members are more likely to become entrepreneurs (Carr & Sequeira 2007:1095; Jodl et al. 2001:1249). Scholars even suggest that growing up in an entrepreneurial family may be the strongest predictor for becoming an entrepreneur (Lindquist, Sol & Van Praag 2015:1). (3) Formal institutions form the rules and norms of the environment within which an entrepreneur functions (Bruton, Ahlstrom & Li 2010:422). To create an enabling environment for entrepreneurs to proceed from entrepreneurial intention to action, a strong institutional environment that motivates individuals to become entrepreneurs is crucial (Autio & Fu 2015:8; Estrin, Mickiewicz & Stephan 2013:24).

The purpose of this article is therefore to firstly conceptualise a deeper understanding of the gap between entrepreneurial intention and action. The understanding of this gap is crucial, as many potential entrepreneurs have high intention levels but never pursue a business start-up; that is, they never take entrepreneurial action. Furthermore, this study aims to understand how the three contextual factors influence the entrepreneurial intention-action gap. The outcome of this article is to build a conceptual model that indicates how the three contextual factors influence an individual's ability to proceed from entrepreneurial intention to action.

This study is conducted in the agricultural sector and focuses on the influence that the three contextual factors have on the entrepreneurial intention-action gap of agri-entrepreneurs (i.e. entrepreneurs who are active in or closely linked to the agriculture sector).

The following research questions guide the article:

- Which self-identity traits influence the entrepreneur's ability to progress from entrepreneurial intention to action?
- What influence did exposure to entrepreneurship through family members have on the entrepreneur's ability to progress from entrepreneurial intention to action?
- What influence did formal institutions have on the entrepreneur's ability to progress from entrepreneurial intention to action?

This article makes two specific *theoretical* contributions. Firstly, by developing an inductive conceptual model, value is added to an under-researched field and sector: entrepreneurship in the agriculture sector. The conceptual model is a valuable

outcome for the academic community, as there is a need to form a deeper understanding of the foundation that makes up an entrepreneur who takes the leap from intention to action (Bogatyeva & Shirokova 2017; Fitz-Koch et al. 2018). Inductively, the themes that emerged from the data are used to develop the conceptual model further. Furthermore, understanding the contextual factors that could influence this intention-action gap could shed light on which factors are important to develop when bridging this gap. Secondly, emphasising the importance of self-identity and its influence on the intention-action gap offers a greater understanding of what is required from individuals with entrepreneurial intentions to take the leap to entrepreneurial action. There is a lack of studies that focus on the role self-identity plays in taking entrepreneurial action (McElwee 2008).

The study also makes specific contributions to *practice*. Firstly, the presented conceptual model can be used by entrepreneurial support organisations to identify potential entrepreneurs who are most likely to make the leap from entrepreneurial intention to action. The conceptual model has the potential to aid the screening processes of government entrepreneurship programmes and business incubators. Secondly, future researchers can conduct empirical quantitative studies to confirm the model's applicability. This is valuable for business incubators, as the conceptual model enables them to focus on candidates that are most likely to bridge the entrepreneurial intention-action gap, resulting in more efficient use of resources. Thirdly, agri-entrepreneurs can use the conceptual model to understand how the contextual factors, specifically self-identity, can enhance their own ability to pursue new entrepreneurial opportunities or ventures within this sector.

Theoretical foundation

Defining entrepreneurs and agri-entrepreneurs

Longenecker et al. (2017:8) define an entrepreneur as an individual who pursues an opportunity in a new or existing business to create value, while assuming both the risks and rewards for their efforts. The definition indicates that an entrepreneur is an individual who not only recognises an opportunity but takes action in a bid to capitalise on an opportunity (Kautonen, Van Gelderen & Fink 2015:2). To make this study more specific, the term 'agri-entrepreneur' is used to describe an entrepreneur who operates a business in the agriculture sector. Agri-entrepreneurs are farmers who have entrepreneurial attributes, such as being more equipped towards newness, innovativeness, diversification, being market orientated, and having more of an awareness of the entrepreneurial ecosystems they function in (Fitz-Koch et al. 2018:146; McElwee 2008:471). Although an entrepreneur is an individual who acts on recognised opportunities, being an entrepreneur is not a once-off action at a given time – entrepreneurship is a state of constant striving and improvement (Boyd & Vozikis 1994:63). For the purpose of this article, the term 'entrepreneur' refers to an individual who is exercising entrepreneurial action (e.g. starting a new business).

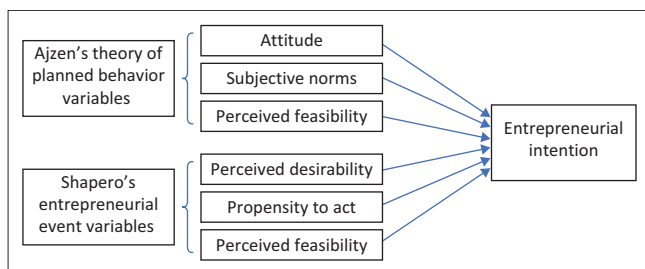
Conceptualising entrepreneurial intention and supported theories

Having entrepreneurial intention does not necessarily mean action and that a business will follow, because entrepreneurial intention only refers to the *possibility* of starting a new venture. Ajzen's theory of planned behaviour (TPB) implies there are three independent determinants of intention, namely (1) the individual's attitude towards the intended behaviour, (2) the subjective social norms towards this intended behaviour, and (3) the individual's perceived control over the intended behaviour (Ajzen 1991:188). However, entrepreneurship research cannot depend solely on models that were developed in other domains, such as psychology, as many intention-behaviour studies concern single acts (such as taking medicine or exercising) and the entrepreneurial process is significantly more complex and enduring than performing a single act. Shapero's theory of the entrepreneurial event is more specific to the entrepreneurship domain by accounting for time lags in acting on and using potential by adding 'propensity to act' to the theory. The entrepreneurial event model (EEM) implies that intentions are formed through perceived desirability and perceived feasibility, which are enforced by the individual's propensity to act on decisions (Krueger, Reilly & Carsrud 2000:418).

The two main theories used in this study to shed light on entrepreneurial intention are (1) Ajzen's TPB, and (2) Shapero's theory on the entrepreneurial event (conceptualised in Shapero's EEM model). These models are more similar than different; for example, common denominators in each model are the individual's self-belief in their ability to complete a task (self-efficacy), how the individual feels about a task, and how personal and contextual factors may influence the formation of intentions. This shows that, although the theories differ, there are common themes that make up the micro-foundations that form the essence of an entrepreneur. Figure 1 combines Ajzen's TPB and Shapero's EEM to shed light on how these two theories together form entrepreneurial intentions.

Conceptualising entrepreneurial action and supported theories

Action is an imperative criterion for being an entrepreneur. The Rubicon model of action (Frese & Zapf 1994:271–340) consists of four distinct phases that follow each other in a



Source: Adapted from Krueger, N.F., Jr., Reilly, M.D. & Carsrud, A.L., 2000, 'Competing models of entrepreneurial intentions', *Journal of Business Venturing* 15(5–6), 411–432. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0883-9026\(98\)00033-0](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0883-9026(98)00033-0)

FIGURE 1: Ajzen's theory of planned behaviour and Shapero's entrepreneurial event model on entrepreneurial intention.

specific order, namely: predecisional phase, postdecisional-preactional phase, actional phase, and postactional phase. The predecisional phase is characterised by 'wishing for and deliberating about ventures that an individual may want to pursue'. This is followed by deciding and the preactional phase, where the individual chooses which actions to pursue after having compared all possibilities and having weighed the desirability and feasibility of each. Thereafter, the individual forms an intention to see the action through. The third phase is action initiation and the actional phase. Here one must be mindful that not all intentions proceed into actions. The likelihood of proceeding from goal intentions to actions is determined by the volitional strength of the goal intention, meaning that an individual is more likely to pursue a goal if the individual believes they can obtain the goal and that the benefits of achieving the goal will be worthwhile. The final phase of the Rubicon model of action is goal achievement and the postactional phase. This phase is concerned with evaluating whether the entrepreneur achieved the intended goal (Frese & Zapf 1994:271–340).

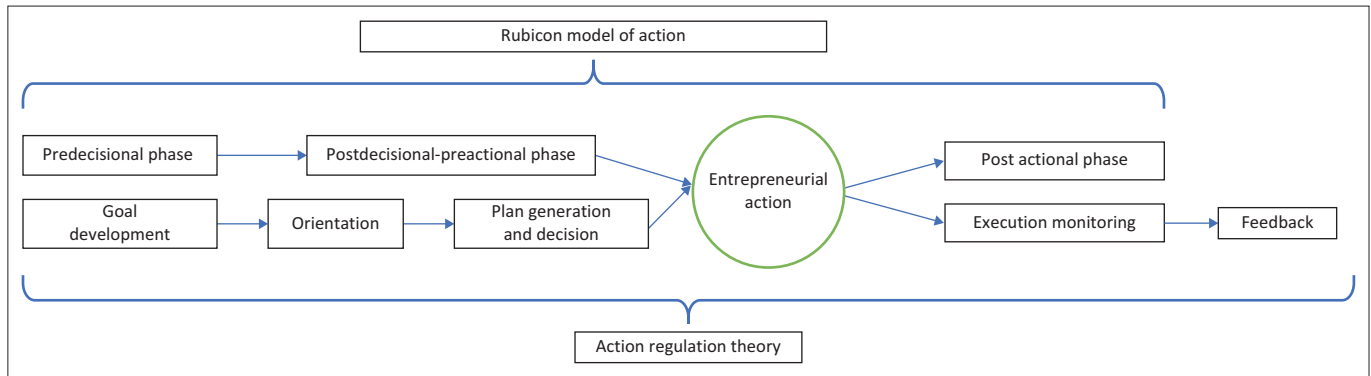
The model based on the action regulation theory (Gollwitzer 1990:53–92) is partially like the Rubicon model of action. The steps within this action model are: (1) goal development, (2) orientation, (3) plan generation and decision, (4) execution monitoring, and (5) feedback. According to Frese and Zapf (1994), goal development is a complex process that stems from the wishes of an individual, which translate into wants and, after comparison with other wants, translate into intentions, whereafter a goal can be developed. The second phase is goal orientation, where the individual prepares to strive towards the goal. This is followed by plan generation and decision-making, where the individual synthesises the desired result and what is required to achieve this goal within the given environment. The next phase is plan execution and monitoring, where the individual navigates the environment and constantly adapts to changes to achieve their goals. The last phase in this model is the feedback phase, where they assess how far they have progressed towards the goal (Frese & Zapf 1994:271–340).

The theory takes the individual through the process of first forming possible desirable outcomes and comparing these to find which outcomes to strive towards. After the individual decides on the best goal, planning and actions towards this goal follow. There is also a reflective phase that enables the individual to do introspection into goal attainment.

Figure 2 combines the Rubicon model of action and action regulation theory in relation to entrepreneurial action.

The entrepreneurial intention-action gap

Forming intentions and planning to start a new business are not enough to make an entrepreneur (McMullen & Shepherd 2006:134). Entrepreneurial intentions are only a 'screening process' that separates individuals who intend to be an entrepreneur and individuals who are not interested in



Source: Adapted from Frese, M. & Zapf, D., 1994, 'Action as the core of work psychology: A German approach', in H.C. Triandis, M.B. Dunnette & L.M. Hough (Eds.), *Handbook of industrial and organizational psychology*, vol. 4, 2nd edn, pp. 271–340, Consulting Psychologists Press, Palo Alto, CA; Gollwitzer, P.M., 1990, 'Action phases and mind-sets', in E.T. Higgins & R.M. Sorrentino (Eds.), *Handbook of motivation and cognition: Foundations of social behaviour*, vol. 2, pp. 53–92, The Guilford Press, New York, NY.

FIGURE 2: The Rubicon model of action and action regulation theory on entrepreneurial action.

pursuing an entrepreneurial path. It appears that a significant portion of individuals who *intend* to become entrepreneurs are unable to close the gap between intentions and actions (Bogatyreva & Shirokova 2017; Meek et al. 2010:493–509; Oliveira & Rua 2018:507–534). Therefore, scholars investigate a growing research construct, namely the entrepreneurial intention-action gap (Bogatyreva & Shirokova 2017; Botha et al. 2019:1–15; Meek et al. 2010:493–509).

Oliveira and Rua (2018:526) found that 69% of respondents were unable to proceed to entrepreneurial action and certain barriers had a significant impact on an individual's ability to take entrepreneurial action. Financial resources and personal barriers were the most significant in hindering an individual's ability to continue to entrepreneurial action. With regard to the institutional environment, Bogatyreva and Shirokova (2017) found a positive relationship between a supportive entrepreneurial university environment and the likelihood of entrepreneurial action for university students. The same positive relationship occurs where there are well-developed entrepreneurial institutions. Even among existing entrepreneurs, intentions do not always lead to action. Botha et al. (2019) suggest that entrepreneurial competencies might be the missing link that is required to proceed from entrepreneurial intention to action. From these competencies, higher levels of self-efficacy led to higher levels of entrepreneurial intention and thus resulted in a higher likelihood of continuing to entrepreneurial action (Lembana, Chang & Ke Liang 2020:9).

While it is clear that there is a gap between entrepreneurial intentions and the ability to proceed toward entrepreneurial action, the elements that enable an individual to proceed from entrepreneurial intention to action are not yet perfectly known. Previous studies, as summarised in Table 1, that focused on the entrepreneurial intention-action gap were mainly quantitative in nature (Bogatyreva & Shirokova 2017; Botha et al. 2019; Oliveira & Rua 2018). In this article a qualitative perspective is taken, as it can add value by exploring a deeper understanding of how individual entrepreneurs have taken the leap from entrepreneurial intention to action.

The influence of contextual factors on the entrepreneurial intention-action gap

The next section explains the sectoral focus of the study to understand the context of this study and the uniqueness of entrepreneurship in the agricultural sector. Thereafter, the three contextual factors and their individual influences on the entrepreneurial intention-action gap are discussed.

Sectoral focus

Agri-entrepreneurs work in a variety of circumstances and in different entrepreneurial ecosystems from typical entrepreneurs (McElwee 2008:466). The agricultural sector has been neglected in recent entrepreneurship literature (Fitz-Koch et al. 2018; McElwee 2006; Vesala, Peura & McElwee 2007). Entrepreneurs in the agricultural sector face unique challenges when navigating their business, such as the adverse and immediate impact the natural environment might have on the business's feasibility (Fitz-Koch et al. 2018), making it an insightful sector to conduct research on.

Being a farmer does not equate being an agri-entrepreneur. McElwee (2006:471) and Fitz-Koch et al. (2018) identify and categorise different types of farmers and indicate which types of farmers are considered to be agri-entrepreneurs.

Self-identity

Self-identity in entrepreneurship refers to the values and attitudes that influence a person's motivations, goals, and intentions towards entrepreneurship (Fitz-Koch et al. 2018:149) and reflects the extent to which a person considers themselves to be fulfilling the criteria of a societal role (Obschonka et al. 2015:773–794). Vesala et al. (2007) investigated the entrepreneurial identity of farmers in Finland and distinguished between portfolio farmers (agri-entrepreneurs) and conventional farmers. The separation lies in the fact that portfolio farmers have entrepreneurial characteristics, while conventional farmers only focus on primary production. The model was structured as follows: firstly, the individual in question had to categorise themselves as an entrepreneur. Secondly, a number of aspects were investigated to get an understanding of the individual's level of entrepreneurial

TABLE 1: Previous studies on the entrepreneurial intention-action gap.

Authors	Title	Journal of publication	Year of publication	Key findings
Bogatyreva, K. & Shirokova, G.	From entrepreneurial aspirations to founding a business: The case of Russian students	Foresight and STI Governance	2017	Well-developed regional entrepreneurial institutions had a positive impact on enabling entrepreneurs to take entrepreneurial intention to entrepreneurial action.
Meek, W.R., Pacheco, D.F. & York, J.G.	The impact of social norms on entrepreneurial action: Evidence from the environmental entrepreneurship context	Journal of Business Venturing	2010	Social norms in which an entrepreneur operates may inhibit or enhance the efficacy of entrepreneurial assistance available.
Oliveira, A. & Rua, O.L.	From intention to entrepreneurial action: Assessing the impact of the barriers on the creation of new organizations	RAUSP Management Journal	2018	Lack of financial resources and personal barriers are the most significant factors hindering an individual's ability to proceed from entrepreneurial intention to entrepreneurial action.
Botha, M., Carruthers, T.J. & Venter, M.W.	The relationship between entrepreneurial competencies and the recurring entrepreneurial intention and action of existing entrepreneurs	The Southern African Journal of Entrepreneurship and Small Business Management	2019	Even among existing entrepreneurs, intentions do not always lead to action. Entrepreneurial competencies might be the missing link that is required to proceed from entrepreneurial intention to action.
Shiri, N., Shinnar, R.S., Mirakzadeh, A.A. & Zarafshani, K.	Cultural values and entrepreneurial intentions among agriculture students in Iran	International Entrepreneurship and Management Journal	2017	Social valuation plays an important part in forming entrepreneurial intentions.
Van Gelderen, M., Kautonen, T., Wincent, J. & Biniari, M.	Implementation intentions in the entrepreneurial process: Concept, empirical findings, and research agenda	Small Business Economics	2017	Entrepreneurial goals involve hierarchies of single acts in which an individual has to prioritise actions that may or may not help the individual to take entrepreneurial action. Emphasis is placed on the influence situational context may have on entrepreneurial action.

identity, namely self-efficacy, optimism, personal control, risk-taking, growth orientation, and innovativeness, where higher levels of each led to a stronger entrepreneurial identity. Portfolio farmers have a stronger entrepreneurial identity than conventional farmers (Vesala et al. 2007:60). The values used by Vesala et al. (2007) were able to distinguish between entrepreneurs and non-entrepreneurs. Thus, one can use these values to further investigate an entrepreneur's self-identity (Fauchart & Gruber 2011:935–957).

Studies have found that entrepreneurial self-identity is important to one's ability to be an entrepreneur and to predict entrepreneurial action in nascent entrepreneurs. Obschonka et al. (2015:773–794) and Rise, Sheeran and Hukkelberg (2010:1085–1105) suggest that self-identity ought to be added to Ajzen's TPB to improve the theory's ability to predict entrepreneurial action. The reinforcement, support, and confirmation of a person's sense of self are key components in a person's motivation to formulate intentions that may lead to action. Furthermore, self-identity has different motivational origins from subjective norms and attitudes (Rise et al. 2010:1099). This may shed light on the personal foundations that could affect an individual's ability to progress from entrepreneurial intention to action. Obschonka et al. (2015:773–794) added self-identity as a predictor variable in TPB and found that self-identity was more effective in predicting entrepreneurial intentions than the original predictor variables. Current entrepreneurship literature does not emphasise entrepreneurial self-identity enough, and the key role it plays in the motivation process behind entrepreneurial actions. Self-identity should not only play a vital role in predicting entrepreneurial action, but also be considered for the influence it has on other motivational factors (Obschonka et al. 2015:773–794).

Family influence

Business succession within a family is a widespread practice in the agricultural sector, where there is a strong sense of family legacy in the business (Fitz-Koch et al. 2018:150).

Having entrepreneurial parents increases the likelihood that an individual will become an entrepreneur by up to three times more than individuals who do not have entrepreneurial parents (Carr & Sequeira 2007:1095; Jodl et al. 2001:1249; Lindquist et al. 2015:1). Some scholars suggest that the strongest predictor for entrepreneurship is having parents that were entrepreneurs (Lindquist et al. 2015:1). It is not due to inherited genetics that individuals are more likely to become entrepreneurs, but rather due to the parents' nurturing effect through teaching their children about entrepreneurship (Lindquist et al. 2015:33). This provides evidence that being an entrepreneur is still an individual choice, but exposure to entrepreneurship through family members may influence one's motivations and decisions.

Contrary to the literature, Zellweger, Sieger and Halter (2011:521–536) found that exposure to entrepreneurship through family members had a negative effect on a person's likelihood to become an entrepreneur. Even though the individuals saw entrepreneurship as a feasible career choice and had relatively high levels of self-efficacy, it did not mean that they saw entrepreneurship as a desirable career (Zellweger et al. 2011:2). This was due to their experience of the sacrifices and constraints family members had to overcome to be entrepreneurs (Zellweger et al. 2011:11).

Formal institutions

To create a clear context of the environment in which an entrepreneur in an emerging economy functions, one must consider the impact of external role players, such as formal institutions. Formal institutions are human-developed constraints that give structure to political, economic, and social interactions (Estrin et al. 2013:24) and form the boundaries in terms of rules and norms of the environment and guide the expected behaviour of businesses in a country's economy (Bruton et al. 2010:422). Entrepreneurship thrives in institutional contexts with a strong rule of law that consists of predictable policy, an equal playing field with a non-arbitrary government, and sound independent law (Estrin et al. 2013:24). Autio and Fu (2015:8) emphasise

that, to stimulate economic participation and encourage entrepreneurship, well-designed political systems that protect property rights and political freedoms are important. When one considers the institutional factors that may influence entrepreneurship in society, one should keep in mind the cultural context in which entrepreneurs function, since institutional rules and norms are perceived differently by different societies (Dheer 2017:815). For example, individualistic societies see corruption as a hindrance in the entrepreneurial environment, but collectivistic societies may see corruption as a necessary part of the entrepreneurial ecosystem (Dheer 2017:822).

Based on the literature review, a conceptual model is developed in Figure 3, which presents the interlinked theory on the entrepreneurial intention-action gap. The conceptual model introduces the newly added contextual factors (Fitz-Koch et al. 2018:149–157) that influence an entrepreneur's ability to proceed from entrepreneurial intention to entrepreneurial action within the agriculture sector.

Developing a conceptual model

A conceptual model as presented in Figure 3 has been developed by following three distinctive steps:

1. Entrepreneurial intention literature and theories that support the literature are conceptualised by combining Ajzen's TPP and Shapero's EEM. The theories are presented in the model by merging all factors as a determinant of entrepreneurial intention.
2. Entrepreneurial action literature and theories are conceptualised using the Rubicon model of action as a general phase indicator and action regulation theory as exact steps in the process of proceeding from entrepreneurial intention to entrepreneurial action. The conceptualised entrepreneurial intention and entrepreneurial action models were then merged to paint a picture of how intention has led to action based on existing literature.

3. The merged intention-action model was then further expanded by adding the three contextual factors of this article as possible factors that might influence an entrepreneur's ability to proceed from intention to action.

An additional step was added as the conceptual model in Figure 3 was adapted using the themes and findings that emerged from the data. Thus, the final model was further inductively developed and is presented as the inductive conceptual model (illustrated in Figure 7).

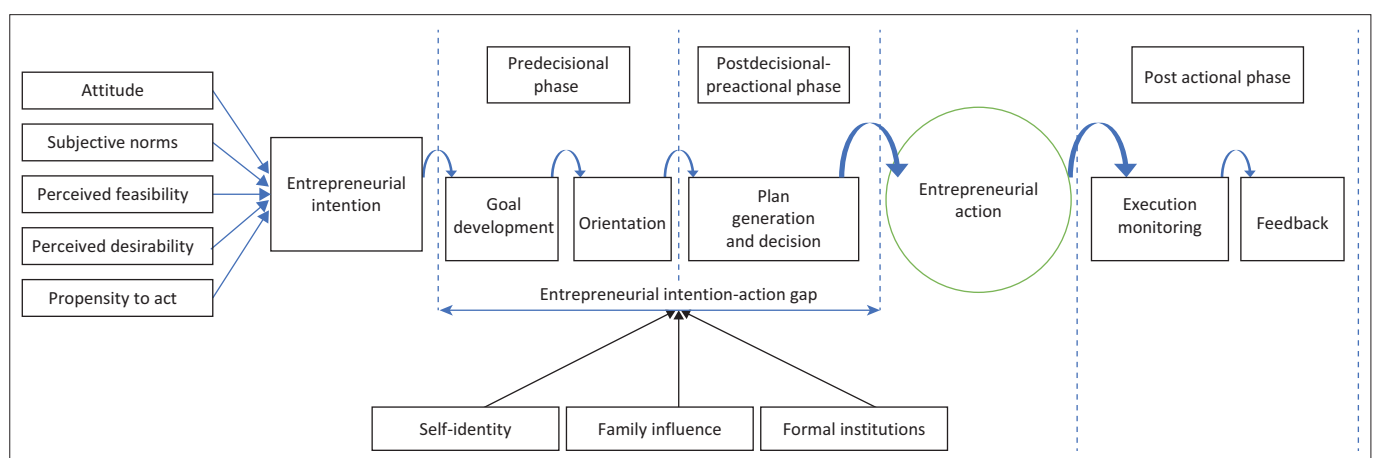
Methodology

Research design

This study employed a generic qualitative research design as this design originates from pre-knowledge of a specific topic and aims to more fully describe the topic from the participant's perspective (Plano Clark & Cresswell 2015:289). Participants in this study were asked to elaborate on their perspective of the influence that the contextual factors had on their ability to progress from entrepreneurial intention to action. As the research phenomenon is fairly unknown, an interpretivist research philosophy was adopted in this article. This philosophy contends that individuals interpret the objective reality in many different ways, and supports the statement that individuals are not mere 'puppets of society', but rather act upon how they perceive reality from their own standpoint (Plano Clark & Cresswell 2015). The participants' perceptions regarding the influence of the three contextual factors on their progression from entrepreneurial intention to action varied and were recorded as the respondents experienced them.

Sampling

The proposed study is conducted within the agricultural sector in South Africa, with a specific focus on agri-entrepreneurs. The inclusion criterion for sampling at the organisational level is that the organisation must currently be active in the agriculture sector in South Africa. The researcher sampled



Source: Adapted from Frese, M. & Zapf, D., 1994, 'Action as the core of work psychology: A German approach', in H.C. Triandis, M.B. Dunnette & L.M. Hough (Eds.), *Handbook of industrial and organizational psychology*, vol. 4, 2nd edn, pp. 271–340, Consulting Psychologists Press, Palo Alto, CA; Gollwitzer, P.M., 1990, 'Action phases and mind-sets', in E.T. Higgins & R.M. Sorrentino (Eds.), *Handbook of motivation and cognition: Foundations of social behaviour*, vol. 2, pp. 53–92, The Guilford Press, New York, NY; Krueger, N.F., Jr., Reilly, M.D. & Carsrud, A.L., 2000, 'Competing models of entrepreneurial intentions', *Journal of Business Venturing* 15(5–6), 411–432. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0883-9026\(98\)00033-0](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0883-9026(98)00033-0); Fitz-Koch, S., Nordqvist, M., Carter, S. & Hunter, E., 2018, 'Entrepreneurship in the agricultural sector: A literature review and future research opportunities', *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice* 42(1), 129–166. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1042258717732958>

FIGURE 3: A conceptual model for overcoming the entrepreneurial intention-action gap.

agricultural organisations from different geographic regions within South Africa, ensuring that the study's findings were representative across the country. Although the transferability of the findings may be questioned, as the study is sector-specific, the sampling method provide detailed information from a specific sub-group of organisations (i.e. organisations in the agriculture sector in South Africa).

The sampling technique used to sample individual participants is maximum variation sampling, meaning that the researcher deliberately sampled individuals from diverse backgrounds and perspectives (Polit & Beck 2012:517–518). The motivation for using maximum variation sampling is that common patterns appear despite the diversity of the sample. This is of significant value to the capturing of core experiences (Polit & Beck 2012:517–518) and enriching the value of the findings of the proposed study. Entrepreneurs with different demographic backgrounds may experience certain influences and situations differently; using maximum variation sampling takes these variables into consideration. Inclusion criteria for individuals are that the individual must be a founder or a family successor of the organisation in the agricultural sector.

Data collection

This study used semi-structured telephonic interviews for data collection. This data collection technique allows the researcher to explore the phenomenon in the study thoroughly and allows the researcher to actively adapt interviews within the structure of the discussion guide (Creswell 2012:218). A section of the discussion guide was adapted from a similar study that explored self-identity of farmers in a quantitative study (Vesala et al. 2007), and the rest of the discussion guide was formulated after careful consideration of existing literature. The researcher conducted a pilot interview with an agri-entrepreneur, resulting in a positive outcome. The discussion guide was thus used without any major alterations. A preliminary potential recruitment list was self-compiled prior to recruitment efforts commencing, consisting of 33 possible participants. Fourteen of the potential participants were contacted via email, inviting them to participate in the study, of which three responses were received: one agreeing to participate, one unwilling to participate, and one intending to participate, but was unavailable at the time when the interview was scheduled. Thereafter, certain prospective participants were contacted via phone call. This method yielded better results as more participants were willing to participate. Data saturation refers to the point at which no added information comes to light when analysing data (Polit & Beck 2012:512). Guest, Bunce and Johnson (2006:78) found that six participants in qualitative studies provide 80% of the information generated and that data saturation tends to occur between 6 and 12 participants. Ten participants were used in this study as data saturation occurred after seven interviews, whereafter three additional interviews were scheduled. No further interviews were scheduled as data saturation had occurred and this study sampled the same number of participants as other studies in the business management paradigm (Mostert,

Nieman & Kotzé 2017:6). All interviews were audio recorded with permission from the participants, transcribed and stored on a cloud storage facility as well as an external USB drive.

Data analysis

Thematic analysis was used to analyse the data and involves searching across the whole data set for emerging patterns (themes) to answer the study's research questions (Braun & Clarke 2006:86). A master list of codes was developed that consisted of pre-emptive codes (potential codes the researcher identified before data analysis) based on the literature review. As the researcher matched the pre-emptive codes with excerpts of text in the transcriptions, more codes were added to allow for added information that emerged. After the first round of coding, codes were combined by merging linked codes and removing redundant codes. The researcher analysed this final list of codes and matched it to overarching themes.

Trustworthiness and ethical considerations

To ensure credibility, an established and proven research method was used (Shenton 2004:64), namely semi-structured interviews, and the researcher used space triangulation by interviewing participants from different regions in South Africa (Polit & Beck 2012:590). Dependability refers to the stability of data over time and in various conditions (Polit & Beck 2012:585). To ensure that other researchers may replicate the study effectively, the study provides a clear explanation of the context and method. This study's dependability is further ensured by using maximum variation when sampling individuals, thereby ensuring a wide spectrum of respondents from a wide background. Confirmability refers to the ability to objectively gather and analyse data without the researcher's preconceived ideas or any bias having an effect on the results (Polit & Beck 2012:587; Shenton 2004:72). For confirmability, all recordings and notes of interviews were transcribed and documented without making amendments to the information. Member checking was also used during interviews to ensure confirmability; this was done by repeating what respondents had said so as to ensure that the interviewer had correctly understood their response. For adequate levels of transferability, the study's findings must apply to other contexts (Shenton 2004:70). The study ensured adequate levels of transferability by providing detailed descriptive data about the study, such as demographic information of respondents, contextual information, the research process that was followed, and the data collection methods. Although the transferability of the study may be questioned due to the study being sector-specific, sufficient information is provided to enable scholars to replicate the study in other contexts and sectors. The researcher also lists the identified limitations and future research opportunities that may arise from the study.

The participants signed an informed consent form before the interview was conducted. The interviewer briefed the participants before each interview, emphasising that the interview was voluntary and that they and their businesses' identities remained anonymous.

Findings

Description of the sample participants

The study consisted of 10 participants from five different provinces in South Africa. Nine of the participants were male agri-entrepreneurs; one female entrepreneur participated. The majority of participants specialised in fruit or vegetable production, with one participant specialising in cattle and dairy. Three participants specialised in certified organic production practices. Half of the participants are successors in their family business and the other half of participants were founders of their businesses.

Table 2 provides a summary of the profiles of the individuals who participated in the study.

Self-identity

Specific self-identity factors that are critical to overcome the entrepreneurial intention-action gap were found for

agri-entrepreneurs in this study and are discussed below. Figure 4 presents an overview of the data structure for the self-identity theme.

Self-efficacy

Self-efficacy refers to a person's belief that they are capable of achieving outcomes and goals (Boyd & Vozikis 1994). This is linked to self-identity in the sense that it refers to how a person believes in their own capabilities. To be considered successful in closing the entrepreneurial intention-action gap, the participants had to identify themselves as entrepreneurs and showcase self-belief in their own capabilities to be an entrepreneur. All participants did identify themselves as entrepreneurs, and all participants did display self-efficacy. However, different levels of self-efficacy were noted, suggesting a continuum of different levels of self-efficacy and entrepreneurial levels:

'It was always in my spirit to do business. To grow was always a part of me, it was a thing inside me ... but I've always had an

TABLE 2: Summary of profiles of participants in the study.

Participant number	Gender	Race	Organisation	Duration of interview	Experience in the sector	Main operations location	Domain of previous experience	Founder/successor
P1	Male	Mixed race	O1	70 min	16 years	Western Cape	Agricultural production	Founder
P2	Male	Black	O2	43 min	14 years	Eastern Cape	Agricultural production	Founder
P3	Male	White	O3	49 min	29 years	Limpopo	Agricultural production	Successor
P4	Male	White	O4	69 min	37 years	Limpopo	Commercial	Successor
P5	Male	White	O5	52 min	47 years	Western Cape	Commercial	Successor
P6	Male	White	O6	80 min	52 years	Gauteng	Agricultural production/organised agriculture	Successor
P7	Female	Black	O7	34 min	4 years	Gauteng	Human resources	Founder
P8	Male	White	O8	74 min	17 years	Eastern Cape	Banking	Founder
P9	Male	White	O9	52 min	41 years	Gauteng	Agricultural production	Founder
P10	Male	White	O10	44 min	7 years	Northern Cape	Marketing	Successor
Average				57 min				

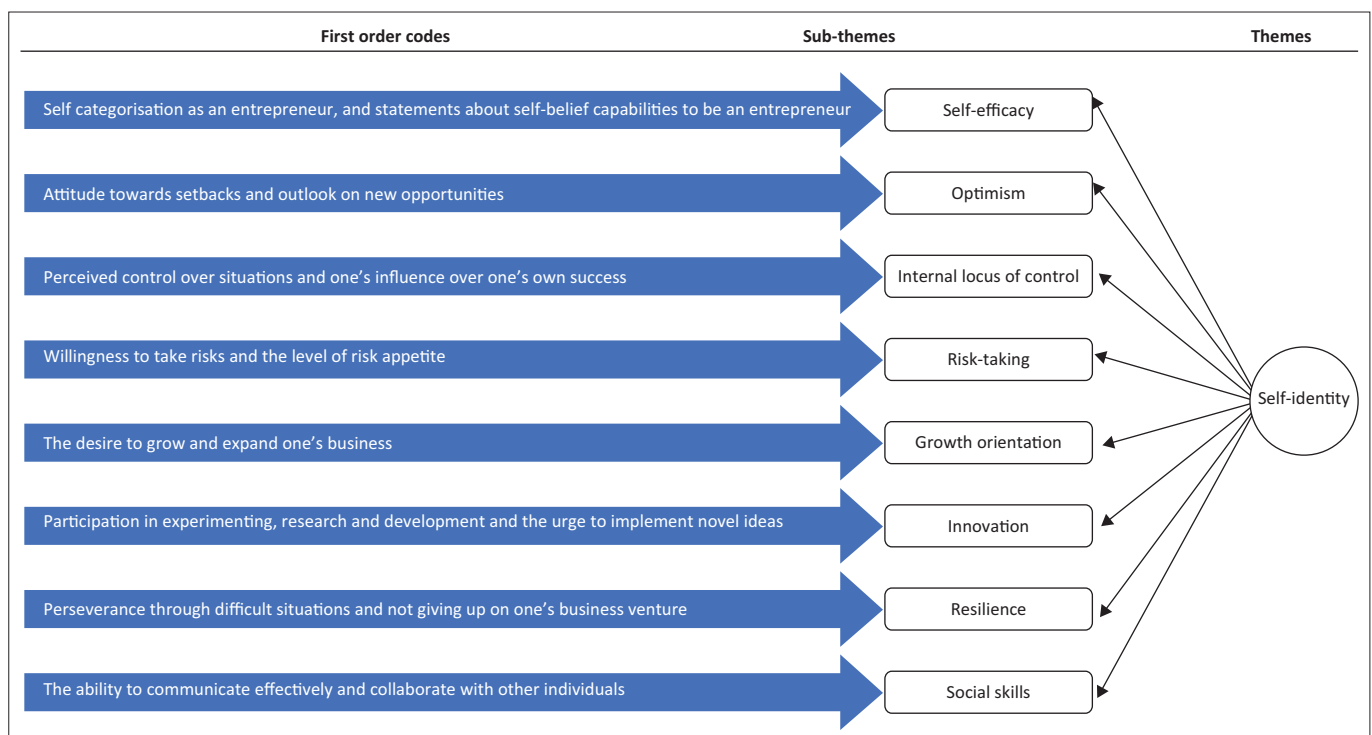


FIGURE 4: Overview of the data structure for self-identity.

urge to be an entrepreneur.' (P5, male, successor [translated from Afrikaans])

This supports and expands on the finding of Vesala et al. (2007) in confirming that self-efficacy is a crucial element of an agri-entrepreneur's self-identity, and expands existing knowledge by suggesting that different levels of self-efficacy exist. It is also clear that it plays a key role in closing the entrepreneurial intention-action gap, as all participants showcased this self-identity factor.

Optimism

Optimism reflects the extent to which an individual holds a generally favourable future expectancy (Carver, Scheier & Segerstrom 2010:879). Optimism is linked to an individual's self-identity because it refers to one's general attitude towards a situation. All participants in the study revealed a sense of optimism. This was assessed by exploring if setbacks had caused individuals not to act on a particular business venture, and how they managed setbacks. No participant had surrendered a business venture opportunity due to a setback. Passion towards one's business was proven to be a key originator for the agri-entrepreneur's optimistic attitudes:

'If [*the setback*] was, let's say, financial in nature, then you should because of that adapt and rather postpone to – instead of this year, rather do it next year. ... We move it to a later stage, but it never stopped us.' (P1, male, founder [translated from Afrikaans])

This finding suggests that optimism is an important self-identity factor for taking entrepreneurial action; this harmonises with Vesala et al. (2007) in proving to be an important factor in the self-identity of agri-entrepreneurs. The finding furthermore proposes entrepreneurial passion to be an antecedent to optimism.

Internal locus of control

Locus of control refers to an individual's perceived control over various situations. Individuals with an internal locus of control believe that they can decide their own future (Van Liew 2013). Locus of control links to one's self-identity by referring to one's perceived control of and impact on decision outcomes. Most participants demonstrated an internal locus of control and a belief of significant influence on their business's success. A common denominator in participants who indicated an internal locus of control was their being disciplined in their decision-making. This suggests that discipline could be an antecedent for having an internal locus of control, as the reason for being disciplined could be because one makes the decision with the intent to evoke a specific outcome:

'As your business grows, it becomes an organism and it's very complicated and interdependent. ... I think, you know the DNA is created by the founder. That DNA is to be picked up by other people in the group and, and the organism is interdependent.' (P9, male, founder)

This finding supports the literature (Down & Warren 2008; Vesala et al. 2007) by showing that entrepreneurs have higher levels of perceived control over their future.

Calculated risk-taking

Risk-taking refers to one's willingness to bear a state of uncertainty and the possibility of failure for the chance to make a profit or gain certain advantages (Vesala et al. 2007:52). All participants showed a willingness to take calculated risks, by balancing potential downsides with upsides in a venture opportunity and then making a decision on whether the risk was worth taking. Participants then implemented mitigation strategies in a bid to minimise the disruption the risk might have on their business. Furthermore, all participants in the study concluded that it is impossible to be an entrepreneur without taking risks:

'You should split your risks into smaller parts, and then you can take a proper risk on a smaller scale, because if the venture is not successful then your whole business is not in danger.' (P4, male, successor [translated from Afrikaans])

This supports existing literature (Vesala et al. 2007) by suggesting that calculated risk-taking is part of the self-identity of an entrepreneur who has overcome the entrepreneurial intention-action gap, and elaborates on the literature by proposing that entrepreneurs make use of risk mitigation strategies to minimise the negative impact of potential risks.

Growth orientation

Being growth orientated means to aim for maximising profit through growing one's business and expanding business activities (Vesala et al. 2007:52). Self-identity has to do with one's core attitudes and values. Therefore, the specific type of orientation a person is inherently inclined to forms part of one's self-identity. All participants were shown to be actively growing their business or planning to do so in the near future. Two core antecedents were identified as the reason for one's desire to grow the business: (1) being ambitious about the future of one's business, and (2) having organisational focus, by attending to detail, for example by knowing exactly what their business's core profit drivers were. A third antecedent emerged as a source of growth orientation, namely diversification. Interestingly, diversification was also an antecedent for innovation in participants, which will be discussed below:

'I now look at my age and I say I still want to grow; the business can afford to invest in another farm or invest in other things.' (P2, male, founder)

This supports existing literature (Down & Warren 2008; Vesala et al. 2007) through all participants showcasing an urge to grow their businesses and not stagnate in one place. This reaffirms existing literature by indicating that being growth oriented forms part of an entrepreneur's self-identity. Furthermore, the existing literature is expanded by proposing ambition, organisational focus, and diversification (jointly) to be antecedents to a growth orientation.

Innovation

Innovation refers to being curious and willing to experiment with and develop new products, markets, and practices (Vesala et al. 2007:52). Innovativeness springs from being curious and willing to try novel approaches, thus indicating a certain attitude in general, and forms part of the foundation that forms an individual. Again, all participants except one showed a form of curiosity and willingness to try new things. Curiosity was also identified as an antecedent of innovation, jointly with diversification:

'I mean you shouldn't try fixing something that isn't broken, right, but I think how you change is how you progress. If you don't adapt you will only stay behind.' (P3, male, successor [translated from Afrikaans])

This supports the literature in that innovativeness forms part of an entrepreneur's self-identity and has helped them to take entrepreneurial action (Vesala et al. 2007:52), and adds to the existing knowledge base by identifying antecedents of innovation and shedding light on their interrelatedness.

Resilience

Resilience refers to a specific mindset when confronted with adversity. It means having a positive disposition that translates into progression (Bernard & Dubard Barbosa 2016). Resilience is a function of one's attitude towards a given situation and is therefore part of one's self-identity. Most participants indicated that they had to endure periods of adversity before they were able to achieve a certain entrepreneurship goal:

'Specifically, I would say [*the key is*] resilience, a good drive, like a business drive, have a good acumen, and, yes, be willing to adapt.' (P7, female, founder)

This finding expands the existing entrepreneurship literature by finding a new construct that proves to be an important variable in an entrepreneur's self-identity, helping to close the entrepreneurial intention-action gap.

Social skills

All participants cited the importance of an ability to communicate and socialise with other people, be it other entrepreneurs, employees, institutions, or people in general. Therefore, in this study, social skills refer to one's ability to effectively socialise with other people to evoke a positive outflow of information or actions. As social skills form part of

one's nature, it is also a fundamental self-identity factor. This was also not an expected construct of the study and was not found in the literature. That all participants cited this as a key factor for taking entrepreneurial action suggests that it is a crucial dimension to add to agri-entrepreneurs' ability to close the entrepreneurial intention-action gap:

'People will be people. ... They also want to feel that they are valuable to the business. ... I make a big point of it to make my people feel positive; without them I cannot progress.' (P1, male, founder [translated from Afrikaans])

This finding further expands entrepreneurship literature as it addresses a previously unidentified self-identity factor that proves to be crucial for closing the entrepreneurial intention-action gap.

Family influence

Having entrepreneurial parents increases the likelihood that an individual will become an entrepreneur (Carr & Sequeira 2007:1095). Findings regarding the influence of relatives on agri-entrepreneurs' ability to close the entrepreneurial intention-action gap are discussed below. Figure 5 presents an overview of the data structure for the family influence theme.

Family legacy

Business succession within a family is a widespread practice in the agricultural sector, with a strong sense of family legacy in the business (Fitz-Koch et al. 2018:150). Family legacy therefore refers to a sense of pride in taking over the business from earlier generations in the controlling family. It was found that 5 of the 10 participants (50%) did experience a sense of family legacy. It is noteworthy that the participants who did experience this sense of family legacy felt strongly about it:

'The family bond runs and there is sentiment, that's why I continued with [*the business*] ... took over from his father and persevered and protected the property ... it's a lot more than just a business.' (P6, male, successor [translated from Afrikaans])

This was an intriguing finding from the study, as it contradicted Fitz-Koch et al. (2018:150), where a minority of participants had had this experience. This proposes that it might be a factor that is 'extreme' in nature, as it either has no influence or is a significant influence in an entrepreneur's career.

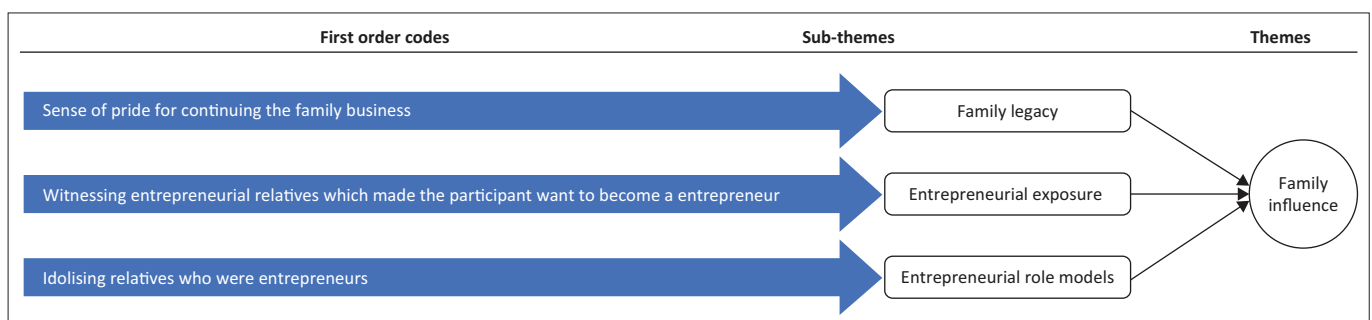


FIGURE 5: Overview of the data structure for the family influence theme.

Entrepreneurial exposure

Entrepreneurial exposure refers to seeing relatives who are entrepreneurs and understanding what it is like to be an entrepreneur. Witnessing relatives who are entrepreneurs could be a major influence in pursuing an entrepreneurial career. All participants, except one, had had exposure to entrepreneurship through relatives:

'My father had his own business. He had, what they call an egg packing business. ... I used to work there every Saturday and I used to work there every holiday.' (P8, male, founder)

This supports Lindquist et al. (2015) by suggesting that being exposed to entrepreneurial relatives is a major influence for a person to become an entrepreneur.

Entrepreneurial role models

Entrepreneurial role models are a further extension of entrepreneurial exposure by not only witnessing entrepreneurship through relatives but having one or more individuals one looks up to. Although the majority of participants (60%) had exposure to entrepreneurship, fewer had role models to whom they looked up. In essence, having entrepreneurial role models as relatives is a deeper form of exposure to entrepreneurship:

'So, I learnt that skill from him, I give a lot of credit to [my] people and the fact that I had the honour to grow up in those circumstances.' (P6, male, successor [translated from Afrikaans])

This supports the literature (Lindquist et al. 2015:33) by highlighting that relatives could have a nurturing effect on an individual. To add to existing knowledge, entrepreneurial exposure and entrepreneurial role models are interrelated; it was noted that high levels of positive entrepreneurial exposure transformed the young person into idolising an entrepreneurial relative, making them an entrepreneurial role model.

Formal institutions

Formal institutions are human-developed constraints that give structure to political, economic, and social interactions (Estrin et al. 2013:24) and form the boundaries in terms of

rules and norms of the environment an entrepreneur operates in. They guide the expected behaviour of businesses in a country's economy (Bruton et al. 2010:422). Figure 6 presents an overview of the data structure for the formal institutions theme.

Government aid

Government aid refers to any sort of aid provided by a country's government and is not necessarily financial aid. Participants were asked if they had ever received any sort of aid from the government that helped them take entrepreneurial action. Although half of the participants cited having received such aid, only one cited the assistance being one of the most important factors for taking entrepreneurial action:

'It was literally free money. So that is what they did to help me. I can tell you that if they did not do it, it would have been factually impossible for someone to join in the fruit game.' (P1, male, founder [translated from Afrikaans])

This finding expands on existing literature by suggesting that governmental institutions not only create a positive environment to do business in (Bruton et al. 2010:422), but also directly provide aid to individuals who are most likely to succeed. This may stimulate entrepreneurship and lower the high-capital entry barriers for entrepreneurs to enter the agri-sector.

Legislative barriers

Legislative barriers are synonymous with 'red tape' and refer to governmental barriers and hindrances that make it harder for entrepreneurs to take entrepreneurial action. Most participants in this study said they were slowed down by red tape. Participants had a good understanding that there are reasons for the barriers, but still regard it necessary for people to challenge these regulations:

'Look, in some cases you just have to adjust your businesses accordingly, and some areas you just need to challenge certain policies get the best out of it, but with our maturity we've also learnt that most of those regulations there's a reason why they are there, although it might make it look like they making our lives difficult.' (P2, male, founder)

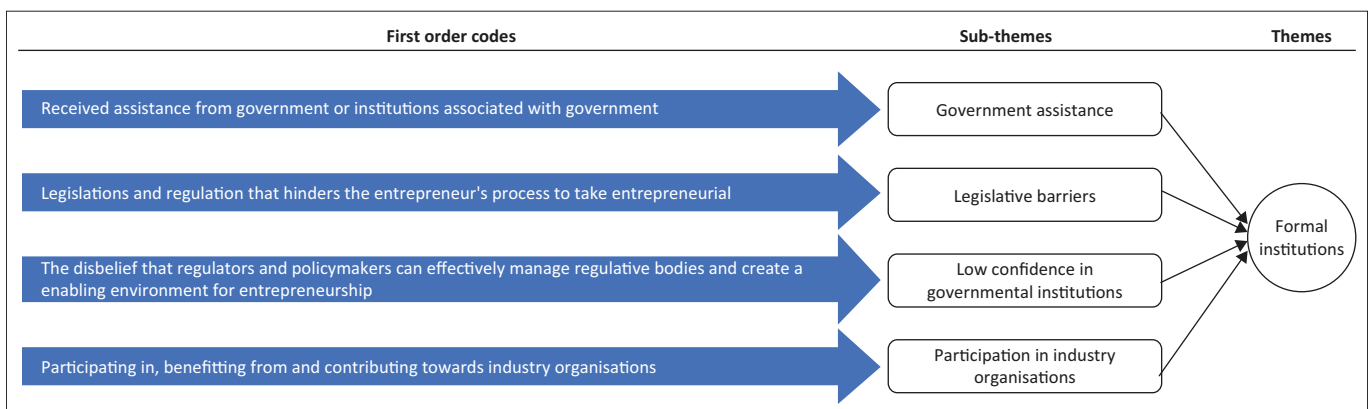


FIGURE 6: Overview of the data structure for the formal institutions theme.

The finding supports existing literature (Bruton et al. 2010:426), that a fine balance must be struck between too rigid and too little legislation, so as to keep entrepreneurs motivated to pursue new ventures in an ethical and lawful manner. It furthermore supports existing literature by providing evidence that institutional fairness is important to create an environment for entrepreneurs to function in, by providing a platform to appeal and challenge legislation in a legal system (Autio & Fu 2015:8).

Low confidence in government institutions

Confidence refers to the perceived competence and capability to effectively manage certain situations (Shrauger & Schohn 1995). If entrepreneurs are to receive aid from an institution, it is important to have confidence in the institution's usefulness. All participants showed *not* having confidence in the aid government institutions may provide:

'I think one of the problems in our country is that a lot of our farmers have a great confidence in the state and its ability to solve your problems. And in retrospect, if you think about it, they actually created more problems than they solve.' (P9, male, founder)

This finding expands the literature (Autio & Fu 2015:8) by suggesting that although a country may have a functioning political, economic, and legal system, there may still be unutilised potential for governmental assistance to aid entrepreneurs.

Participation in industry organisations

This finding is a natural outflow from the finding above, as agri-entrepreneurs seek other ways to spearhead institutional support through the private sector. Industry organisations are independent entities in the agri-sector and provide members with assistance through, for example, negotiating with regulators on behalf of the industry. All participants form part of an industry organisation in their domain. There are numerous benefits that were cited by participants, such

as funding, networking opportunities, and bargaining power by negotiating as a group of agri-entrepreneurs:

'The commercial partner got involved, the department of agriculture provided funds, and when we came to the farm again – it was a big success.' (P1, male, founder [translated from Afrikaans])

This finding further expands the literature (Autio & Fu 2015) by suggesting that, in an emerging economy context, with low perceived levels of confidence in governmental institutions, it is valuable to have an industry organisation platform where entrepreneurs can bargain collectively with regulators and have a platform for collaboration.

Summary of thematic analysis findings

Three main themes, each with several sub-themes, emerged from the findings. In Table 3 each research question is outlined and linked to a main theme in the second column. The third column identifies each sub-theme, also linked to a main theme and research question. Column 4 onwards indicates which sub-themes were identified per participant; each participant is listed per column.

Conclusion

Summary of findings

This study intended to conceptualise a deeper understanding of the entrepreneurial intention-action gap in agri-entrepreneurs and to introduce a conceptual model that represents factors that may have a significant influence on closing the intention-action gap.

Using a similar approach to Vesala et al. (2007), all participants saw themselves as entrepreneurs. This, in conjunction with the implemented sampling method, confirms that participants were fit for the study. The interview data in this article confirmed that the predetermined self-identity factors that normally have a significant influence on closing the

TABLE 3: Identified themes provided from the research per participant.

Theme		P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	P8	P9	P10
Which self-identity traits influenced the entrepreneur's ability to continue from entrepreneurial intention to action?											
Self-identity	Self-efficacy	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
	Optimism	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
	Internal locus of control	-	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	-	x
	Calculated risk-taking	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
	Growth orientation	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
	Innovation	-	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
	Resilience	x	-	x	-	x	x	x	x	x	x
	Social skills	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
What influence did exposure to entrepreneurship through family members have on the entrepreneur's ability to continue from entrepreneurial intention to action?											
Family influence	Family legacy	x	-	x	-	x	-	x	x	-	-
	Entrepreneurial exposure	-	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
	Entrepreneurial role models	-	x	x	-	x	x	-	x	-	x
What influence did formal institutions have on the entrepreneur's ability to continue from entrepreneurial intention to action?											
Formal institutions	Government aid	x	x	-	-	x	-	x	x	-	-
	Legislative barriers	-	x	x	-	x	-	x	x	x	x
	Low confidence in governmental institutions	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
	Participation in industry organisations	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x

entrepreneurial intention-action gap are applicable in the South African agri-sector. Antecedents of the predetermined factors were also identified and discussed in the previous section. Furthermore, this article identified two additional self-identity factors that have a significant influence on closing the entrepreneurial intention-action gap. All participants highlighted that social skills (be it with other entrepreneurs, employees, or suppliers) are crucial for entrepreneurial action. The vast majority of participants also cited that resilience was key to building a successful agri-business, and that an agri-entrepreneur will go through trying times in their business cycle.

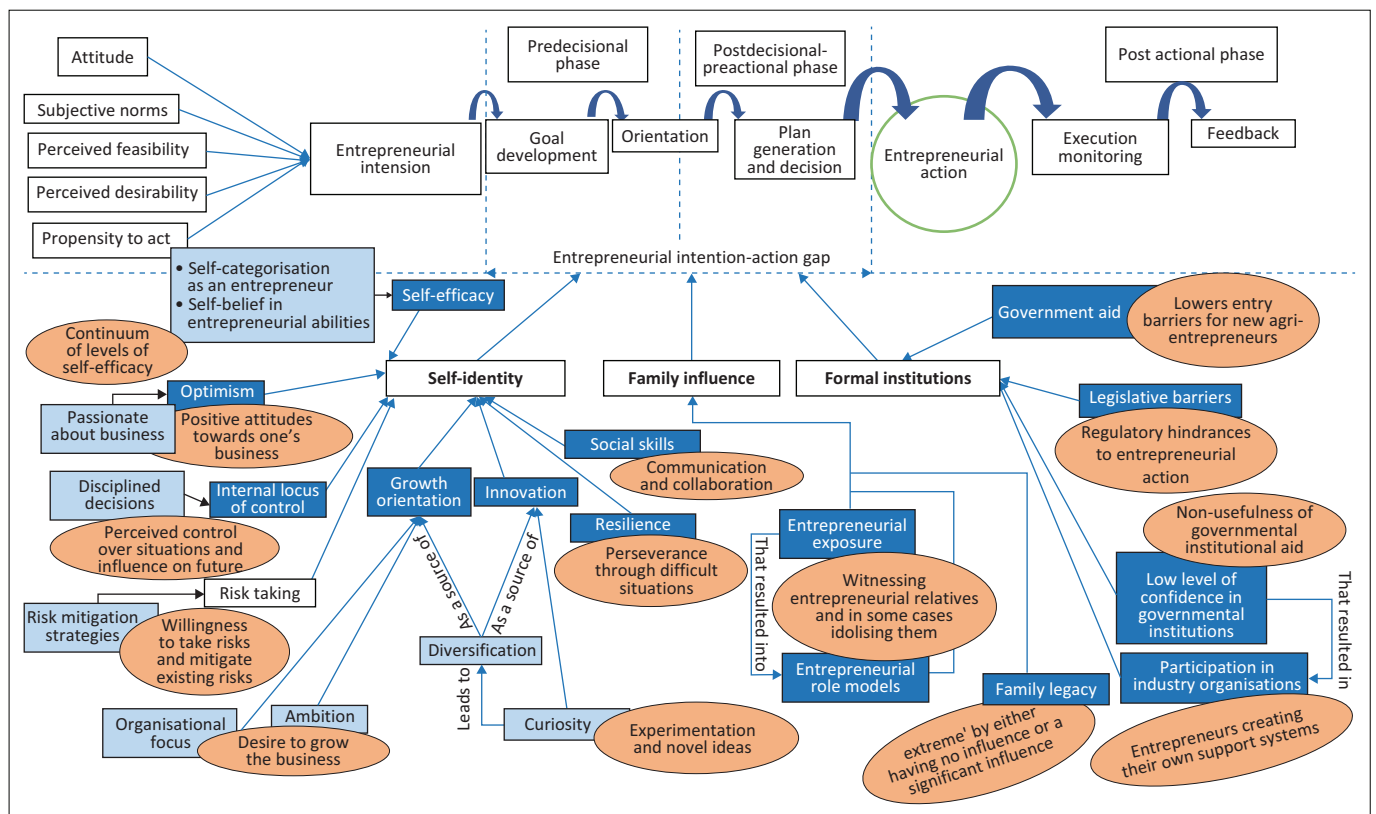
It was found that family members had a significant influence on individuals' ability to close the entrepreneurial intention-action gap, although not directly, but rather on a psychological level. It was found that family legacy for continuing business operations was not a significant influence for becoming an agri-entrepreneur; however, if the individual did have a sense of family legacy for the business, it had a significant influence on them to become an agri-entrepreneur. Exposure to entrepreneurship through relatives proved to be a common factor that caused individuals to become entrepreneurs. However, only 6 out of 10 participants believed their relatives to be entrepreneurial role models. This novel insight suggests that the two constructs are interrelated and that entrepreneurial exposure may result in seeing an individual as an entrepreneurial role model.

In the South African agri-sector, governmental aid to entrepreneurs is perceived to be low. The overall confidence in governmental bodies was low among participants as well. This suggests that legislative and regulatory support is not perceived by the participants to be sufficient to stimulate entrepreneurship. As entrepreneurs form part of industry organisations that allow for collective bargaining, the industry organisations function as a middleman between entrepreneurs and regulators. In this article support was found for industry organisations being crucial support structures for agri-entrepreneurs.

Figure 7 provides an expansion of the conceptual model as presented in Figure 3 by following an inductive approach and incorporating the findings of this study. Furthermore, this graphical illustration indicates how the findings influence and provide novel insight to current research. Each of the main themes in this study has been listed as the factors that influence overcoming the entrepreneurial intention-action gap. Each sub-theme is then linked to a main theme, accompanied by an explanation to provide further insight into the findings of the study. Some sub-themes have additional sub-themes that provide further novel insight into the findings of the study.

Theoretical implications

This article sheds light on an under-researched area in the entrepreneurship literature, namely the entrepreneurial intention-action gap of agri-entrepreneurship. This study



Source: Adapted from Frese, M. & Zapf, D., 1994, 'Action as the core of work psychology: A German approach', in H.C. Triandis, M.B. Dunnette & L.M. Hough (Eds.), *Handbook of industrial and organizational psychology*, vol. 4, 2nd edn, pp. 271–340, Consulting Psychologists Press, Palo Alto, CA; Gollwitzer, P.M., 1990, 'Action phases and mind-sets', in E.T. Higgins & R.M. Sorrentino (Eds.), *Handbook of motivation and cognition: Foundations of social behaviour*, vol. 2, pp. 53–92, The Guilford Press, New York, NY; Krueger, N.F., Jr., Reilly, M.D. & Carsrud, A.L., 2000, 'Competing models of entrepreneurial intentions', *Journal of Business Venturing* 15(5–6), 411–432. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0883-9026\(98\)00033-0](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0883-9026(98)00033-0); Fitz-Koch, S., Nordqvist, M., Carter, S. & Hunter, E., 2018, 'Entrepreneurship in the agricultural sector: A literature review and future research opportunities', *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice* 42(1), 129–166. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1042258717732958>

FIGURE 7: Inductive conceptual model: The influence of contextual factors on the entrepreneurial intention-action gap.

reaffirms that the pre-identified self-identity traits that are present in entrepreneurs are also present in agri-entrepreneurs, and further expands the knowledge on these self-identity traits by adding resilience and social skills as crucial self-identity traits. It is clear that self-identity factors play a significant part in enabling entrepreneurs to pursue new ventures. The study expands the knowledge on family legacy in the family business domain by suggesting that family legacy either has no effect or has a significant effect on entrepreneurs. Findings also support existing literature that exposure to entrepreneurship through family members has a significant influence on individuals becoming entrepreneurs; however, this does not mean they see their entrepreneurial relatives as entrepreneurial role models. The study found that functional legislative systems are paramount in creating an environment for entrepreneurs to function. Furthermore, the study expands the existing knowledge base by proposing that industry organisations are crucial for agri-entrepreneurs to flourish and increase their bargaining power with regulators. This study makes a significant theoretical contribution by introducing a conceptual model that highlights the influence that self-identity, family influence, and formal institutions have on the entrepreneurial intention-action gap. The conceptual model was further developed by inductively using the themes that emerged from the data. Therefore, an inductive conceptual model is presented in Figure 7 which graphically illustrates the findings of this article.

Managerial recommendations

Entrepreneurs and managers in businesses should use the identified self-identity traits in their screening processes when hiring new employees, as it will enable them to hire an employee who has entrepreneurial tendencies that will lead to higher performance, and will instil an entrepreneurial culture within the business, which may ultimately spearhead above-average performance.

Both agri-entrepreneurs, as well as government officials, should place more emphasis on the use of industry organisations as (1) they allow agri-entrepreneurs to bargain collectively, increasing their bargaining power, and (2) they provide more effective and accurate insights and communication between regulators and entrepreneurs. Industry organisations give a collective voice to the agri-sector.

The proposed updated model may, after confirmation through quantitative studies, provide useful insights to business incubators, as the use of the model will aid their screening processes and result in business incubators assisting candidates who are most likely to succeed as entrepreneurs. This will also lead to a more effective use of resources.

Limitations and directions for future research

There is a limitation in the transferability of the findings in this study, as it focused only on the agricultural sector. Future research may address this limitation by replicating the study and evaluating its applicability in other sectors of the economy. Furthermore, the study followed a qualitative

approach and may not be representative of entrepreneurs in general. The conceptual model was furthermore not tested quantitatively and there is thus no certainty of the model's efficacy. Future research may address this limitation by testing the model in quantitative studies to find evidence of its efficacy. The factors that were investigated as influences on the entrepreneurial intention-action gap were based on future recommendations from Fitz-Koch et al. (2018); it may be the case that other influences on the entrepreneurial intention-action gap have been overlooked. A wider net in future studies can address this limitation by qualitatively exploring what other influences entrepreneurs experienced when closing the entrepreneurial intention-action gap. Future studies may also explore each sub-theme in the identified themes in this study in more detail to show each specific influence on closing the entrepreneurial intention-action gap. For example, one could explore the sub-theme 'self-efficacy' (sub-theme to the 'self-identity' theme) in more detail to show its specific influence.

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Competing interests

The authors have declared that no competing interest exists.

Authors' contributions

P.R. collected and analysed the data as well as preparing the draft of the article. M.B. edited and reviewed the draft and assisted with the conceptualisation and writing of the final draft.

Ethical considerations

In the case of qualitative studies, you may use the data collected during the pre-test of your discussion guide as the first interview for your main study provided that (1) the pre-test participant met all the inclusion criteria that apply to your main study, (2) you only made minor changes to your discussion guide based on the results of the pre-test and (3) the data collected during the pre-test still apply to your study. If you are unsure, consult your study leader. Any further changes to your study's purpose, research questions or objectives, methodology, and research instrument must be done in consultation with your study leader.

Mr Theuns Kotze (on behalf of the Department of Business Management, University of Pretoria): u16034482/2020, 21/08/2020.

Data availability

The authors confirm that the data supporting the findings of this study are available within the article [and/or] its supplementary materials.

Disclaimer

The views and opinions expressed in this article are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of any affiliated agency of the authors.

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