

Chapter 1

Local Municipalities’ Involvement in Promoting Entrepreneurship: An Analysis of Web Page Orientation to the Entrepreneurs in Portuguese Municipalities

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ABSTRACT

Entrepreneurship is considered as a driving force for employment and economic growth. Attending to the current problems of unemployment in our societies the importance self-employment and, consequently, the concept of entrepreneurship, resulting in its increasingly interesting and necessary study. The purpose of this research is to examine through a content analysis, the information on entrepreneurship, provided by websites of local authorities. To measure this information, attending to the limited previous literature on the subject, we propose a model supported on the cluster analysis. The cluster’s definition was based on the results achieved through a set of indicators supported by relevant information and adjusted to the objectives, supported in papers and documents containing the dimensions to be considered in entrepreneurship policy. The results achieved highlights that the information provided to entrepreneurs by municipalities is scarce and is focused on the resources and communication with entrepreneur.

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INTRODUCTION

In recent years, a growth interest in issues related to entrepreneurship was registered (Sullivan and Meek, 2012), and are associated with economic growth (Audretsch, 2009). Entrepreneurship is one of the main drivers of innovation, competitiveness and economic growth (Van Stel et al., 2005; Romero and Fernandez, 2007; Audretsch, 2009). Empirical research suggests a favorable impact of new companies in the development and economic growth (Audretsch et al., 2006; Acs and Plummer, 2005). Stam et al. (2006) defined entrepreneurial spirit as a strong subjective motivation to create businesses or established autonomously in the market and therefore the ability to capture market opportunities, take risks and innovate continually. Recent studies reveal a positive and strong correlation between the promotion of entrepreneurial spirit and economic growth (Minniti, 2012). According to this author, entrepreneurial activities contribute to the development of new markets and existing markets.

Entrepreneurs disclose difficulties in the entrepreneurial process, mainly in the first years. Create a business and growth sustainable in long term its not easy for most of them. Therefore, support services and infrastructures are fundamental to facilitate and encourage entrepreneurial process.

In this sense public administration plays an important role in supporting and encouraging entrepreneurship and new technologies, especially the Internet. This support facilitates the transmission of information, being a useful ally to encourage entrepreneurship. Technology providing to organizations a new way to interact with their stakeholders, and the Internet afford a new way to disclose information (Bonsón and Escobar, 2004). Moreover, technology makes more effective and efficient public management, and also improves transparency, democracy, participation and responsibility towards social needs. Public authorities are striving to make progress, innovate and transform the delivery of public services through Internet (Wimmer, 2002), hence it is interest to know if institutions take advantage from the potential of the information and communications technology (ICTs) to provide information and support to the entrepreneurial process in a regional level. Disclosure information through the websites is an increasingly practice adopted by organizations and allowing a greater proximity between institutions and citizens (Joseph and Taplin, 2011; Moneva and Martin, 2012; Nevado et al., 2013). This practice intend a better gather with citizen's needs, due to the increasing demand for information generated in recent years (Rodriguez Gallego and Garcia, 2010).

Most studies related with information disclosure focused on the private sector, however, in recent years has witnessed a remarkable growth of this research on the public sector. Several authors (Caba et al., 2005; Laswad et al., 2005) focus their studies on the dissemination of economic, financial and non-financial information in the public sector. While others (Farneti and Guthrie, 2009; Nevado et al., 2013; Navarro et al., 2015) study the dissemination of information on Social Responsibility in public organizations. However, there are no publications focused on the disclosure of information about entrepreneurship by public organizations.

This chapter aims study the disclosure of information about entrepreneurship by local administration. Local administration (municipalities) are closest with citizens, and provide in general information and support to promote entrepreneurship in their territories. To achieve our goal we analyse the issue of disclosure of information about entrepreneurship through the analysis of municipalities websites in the Alentejo region - Portugal. The main contribution of this study attending to the lack of literature on the subject, is the creation of a set of indicators to assess and compare the websites of municipalities, in terms of information provided to entrepreneurs.

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