

Entrepreneurship in Golden Years—Creative Opportunity or Not?

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The aim of this research is to increase understanding of older age people start-up initiatives and related policy opportunity for supporting older age people entrepreneurship. The study analyses in-depth four older age people (50+) intentions and items influencing their individual choice and opportunities to start a business of their own. The following questions were upraised: Why older people want to become entrepreneurs? What kind of factors may influence on the opportunity recognition and exploitation when the older people want to become entrepreneurs? How in practice the older age people entrepreneurship and start-up initiatives could be supported? Based on content analysis of four interviews it could be argued that there exist several reasons to be self-employed in older age. It seems that both pull and push factors simultaneously have an influence on becoming entrepreneur. The role of innovation and growth as the main sources and competitive advantages of business opportunities is very low. Secure and flexible self-employment is more important than providing jobs for other people. The building blocks of entrepreneurship in older age are life and work experience, longitudinally developed know-how, personal networks, flexibility, and current personal life situations. Moreover, social aspects such as belonging to a community and opportunities to create and maintain social contacts were found to be important drivers of entrepreneurship in golden years. Economic gains are upraised but not in the sense of the most important item of motivation to be self-employed and/or start a business in older age. The policy implication of the research widens the focus group thinking, portfolio of possible actions, and institutional development ideas in order to foster older age entrepreneurship locally and globally.

Keywords: older age entrepreneurship, start-up motives and initiatives, business opportunities

Introduction

In the 21st century, there has been an increased interest focused on the older age people entrepreneurship and start-up initiatives. Compared with other research themes such as innovation, performance, network, and characteristics of entrepreneurship (entrepreneurial orientation) the phenomenon of older age people entrepreneurship seems to be an under-researched area in the field of entrepreneurship. Moreover, this research area is characterized by a scarcity of empirical data and studies that examine on older age people entrepreneurship and/or older age people who actually become self-employed or start a business.

Theoretical backgrounds to studying and understanding the phenomenon of older age entrepreneurship has been driven mainly from economic, sociological, and psychological approaches and prior efforts of combining

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these views. Both quantitative and qualitative studies have been exploited in order to describe and understand the phenomenon of older age entrepreneurship. Recent topics of older age entrepreneurship have covered such areas as older people attitudes to self-employment and factors influencing to self-employment (Curran & Blackburn, 2001); the influence of work history and age norms on entrepreneurial intentions in third age (Kautonen et al., 2010, 2011); ageing people motivations for business start-up (Kautonen, 2008); characteristics of early retirees as the next generation of entrepreneurs (Singh & DeNoble, 2003); the factors that affect grey entrepreneurs business behavior (Weber & Schaper, 2004) and institutional framework and factors influencing motives and incentives to be self-employed and/or start a business in older age (Kyrö, Moisala, & Nyrhinen, 2012).

The aim of this research is to take part in the older age entrepreneurship discussion and related policy opportunities for supporting entrepreneurship in golden years (older age entrepreneurship) by answering the following questions: Why older people want to become entrepreneurs? Especially, the research interest is of the meanings that person by themselves upraise to be important when planning to be an entrepreneur. What kind of factors influence on the opportunity recognition and exploitation when the older people want to start their own business? The study focused on the process of starting a new business, especially factors that have impact on the start-up process in the older age. Moreover, from the perspective of older age nascent entrepreneurs, what kind of needs for fostering entrepreneurship in golden age there may exists? (If there are needs). How in practice the older people entrepreneurship and business start-up initiatives could be supported? The paper proceeds as follows: first, some former studies related to the topic of research questions are going to be examined; thereafter, the methodology and data are explained; then the results are analyzed and interpreted; and finally the conclusions and implications are presented.

Theoretical Framework and Former Studies

Most European and developed countries including Finland have ageing population and in the future this trend seems to be strongly continue. During the next decade, a large amount of people are going to be retired in Finland (Statistics Finland, 2011). This could indicate that there is an opportunity to increase the share of older people in working population because the retired people are often in good health to continue work, and moreover work can be good for older age people health (Kristjuhan, 2008). In Finland, the age group of 55-74 years old people is the only age group where the share of entrepreneurs has been increased during the 21st century. In this age group the share of entrepreneurs has been increased from five percent to eight percent. Furthermore, in the whole entrepreneur population in Finland, the older age entrepreneurs share have increased from 10 percent to 14 percent (Järnefelt, 2011). However, the increase of older age entrepreneurship is not always based on positive opportunity, sometimes it could be also the only option to avoid poverty trap and unemployment (Curran & Blackburn, 2001).

Why Older People Want to Become Entrepreneurs?

Explanations of why older people want to become entrepreneurs are driven from several theoretical backgrounds such as economic, individual characteristics and resources, psychological, socio-cultural, and societal (contextual) views. Economic reasoning often point out the wealth creation as the main motivator to be self-employed (start own business). This thinking is based on the idea of rational actor which tries to increase economic wealth. One option to increase individual wealth is the opportunity that self-employment and/or start

own business offers. In line with this economic reasoning is that the main motive to be an entrepreneur is a reliable and steady stream of income which is required to support the person established lifestyle (Kautonen, 2008). However, some researchers have argued that self-employment at the older age is not explained only by personal wealth and income factors (Singh & DeNoble, 2003).

Furthermore, in the field of entrepreneurship, the so called pull and push factors have been used commonly to explain the factors influencing to self-employment and start a business processes (Kautonen, 2008). Pull factors are connected to factors that is believed to pull towards entrepreneurship such as increased earnings, opportunities to exploit ideas, need for achievement, learning, independence, increased social inclusion, societal respect, and self-fulfillment. Push factors are believed to be in some part of even negative aspects that push towards to self-employment. These factors could be for example unemployment, threat of unemployment, lack of alternative opportunities, dissatisfaction with current employment, insufficient pension and/or retirement funds, current development opportunities, age discrimination, social and health problems. Both pull and push factors have been upraised as influential factors in prior studies of older age entrepreneurship.

Individual characteristic such as personal health has been emphasized to be some of the important motives to be self-employed in older age. Entrepreneurship could be seemed as an opportunity for older people to maintain personal health because older people are more likely to suffer ill-health than younger groups (Curran & Blackburn, 2001). Health of the older age people could be seeing both pull and/or push factor affecting on decision to become an entrepreneur. Good health could pull factor that improve the process of being self-employed (start own business) or push factor in the case of ill-health when for example to carry out of current work is not possible or problematic. Therefore, new opportunities have to be discovered if the person wants to continue career in working life or as an entrepreneur.

Resource based theories (Barney, 1991) have been applied when analyzing the factors influencing motives to become self-employed. It is believed that diverse resources and constraint of resources have an impact on older age entrepreneurship such as financial resources and constraints with financial resources (Singh & DeNoble, 2003), social capital and intellectual capital of person (Nahapiet & Goshal, 1998). Furthermore, the combined knowledge base and experience base have been acknowledged to be a possible item to foster the start-up process of nascent entrepreneurs. Personal networks have also discovered to influence on opportunity to becoming an entrepreneur in older age (Singh & DeNoble, 2003).

Most commonly applied psychological theories in prior research on entrepreneurship such as McClelland's (1961) theory of need for achievement and Rotter's (1966) locus of control theory have been used to explaining the personality item possible motivation to be an entrepreneur. McClelland's (1961) theory suggests that individuals with a strong need to achieve often find their way to be self-employed or start own business. Rotter (1966) stated that especially internal control expectation which refers to the control over one's own life is associated with entrepreneurial characteristics. Recently, the role of learning and people desire to personal development has been emphasized as an important factor to influence on decision to be self-employed and in development of businesses (Macpherson & Holt, 2007).

Socio-cultural theories such as the theory of planned behavior (TPB) (Ajzen, 1988, 1991) combines psychological and socio-cultural theories in order to explain and predict overall human behavior and therefore,

can be utilized in explaining and predicting older age self-employed and business start-up initiatives. According to Kautonen et al. (2011), it could be argued that entrepreneurial behavior is intentional, and intention is the immediate antecedent of behavior. The TPB (Ajzen, 1988, 1991) emphasize that intentions are explained by three conceptually independent factors such as: (1) attitude toward the behavior (the degree to which a human being has a favorable or unfavorable evaluation or appraisal of the behavior in question); (2) the subjective norm (social pressure to perform or not to perform intended behavior); and (3) behavioral control (the perceived ease for difficulty of performing the behavior). These elements together explain the person intention to be or not be an entrepreneur.

In the societal level of overall macro-economic situation, attitudes and institutional factors may foster or impede the possible self-employment and/or start own business intentions. Weber and Schaper (2004) found out that U.K. economic situation in diverse sectors change such as job retrenchment was the single most common reason for starting a business in older age. Related to the attitudes of Curran and Blackburn (2001) and Kautonen (2008) upraised the role of age discrimination in work places that may have several diverse form such as older workers experience of discrimination in the work, limited access to training opportunities, overall career development, and difficulties to attain job because of older age. Curran and Blackburn (2001) stated that governments and employers have shift towards less attractive pension and welfare arrangements for older people which could influence as a push factor to become self-employed in order to avoid decrease of personal welfare. Cultural context seems to be matter, one example is the study of Kautonen et al. (2011) who find out that positive age norm in the region increase directly older age individuals intentions to be self-employed and/or start own business.

What Kind of Factors Influence on the Opportunity Recognition and Exploitation in Older Age?

Derived from recent innovation and growth studies (Heimonen, 2012; Siikonen, Heimonen, & Pellikka, 2011) only few firms and their entrepreneurs could be labeled as innovative growers. Based on diverse definitions of innovation and growth around 0.2-10 percent of all active firms and their entrepreneurs fulfill the requirements of these definitions (OECD Oslo Manual, 2005; Työ-ja elinkeinoministeriö, 2011). It could be also assumed that older age entrepreneurs follow the overall characteristics of whole firm and entrepreneur population according to innovation and growth items. Therefore, based on this logic, most of the recognized and exploited business opportunities of older age people are not innovative from the market perspective. Furthermore, overall older age nascent entrepreneurs are not growth oriented by developing products with IPRs (intellectual property rights) or use radically different new business concepts. Older age entrepreneurs may be more willingness to looking for stable and profitable outcomes that fit with the person established lifestyle. These entrepreneurs could be called lifestyle-entrepreneurs who seek both personal as well as financial success (Weber & Schaper, 2004). Some empirical findings support the importance of lifestyle entrepreneurship within the group of older age people. For example, Peters, Storey, and Cressy (1999) discovered that business established by older workers (50+) exhibited slower growth rates than those of ventures undertaken by younger age entrepreneurs. Moreover, Weber and Schaper (2004) emphasized that older age entrepreneurs sometimes sees their business ventures as a supplementary form of income rather than principal wealth generator.

Older age may foster the ability to recognize and exploit the opportunities in a successful way. Curran and Blackburn (2001) detected that older people were more likely to have the experience and assets for business ownership than younger age groups. Parker (2001) argued that older entrepreneurs have also better access to

capital than younger entrepreneurs. Several studies reports (Cressy & Storey, 1995) that the survival rates of established businesses are in group of older age entrepreneurs (+50 years old) higher than younger age start-ups. These findings could indicate that there exist age related differences of survival rates of new businesses. However, Kautonen (2008) detected no performance differences between prime age (18-50) and older entrepreneurs (50+). There is a need of further empirical studies in order to understand the new business creation phenomenon of older age.

Multiple factors that support and/or prevent business opportunity recognition and exploitation have been founded out in several prior empirical studies. For example, Singh and DeNoble (2003, p. 220) developed a typology of older age entrepreneurs. They defined three groups of older entrepreneurs with diverse characteristics influencing to become self-employed and/or start own business. These groups were labeled as reluctant entrepreneurs, constrained entrepreneurs, and rational entrepreneurs. Reluctant entrepreneurs characterized by lack of employment opportunities and employers discrimination which stems from stereotypes such as older workers are less productive, less flexible, less committed, less able to cope with new technology, more prone to injuries and more likely to leave organization than younger workers. Constraint entrepreneurs characterized inability to act (start own business) or perceived constraints such as lack of capital and family constraints. Rational entrepreneur covers individuals who decide to become entrepreneurs as a rational choice. The decision is based on a comparison of person's current position (work) with self-employment (e.g., if future returns will be greater than current ones).

Weber and Schaper (2004) upraised several factors that may impede and/or increase opportunity recognition and exploitation. Factors that impede opportunity recognition and exploitation were defined as failing health with lower productivity and energy levels and lower education levels. Factors that increase opportunity recognition and exploitation were technical knowledge and management experience. Factors that may have both impeding and/or increasing effects of opportunity recognition and exploitation were defined as industry experience and the point in the family life-cycle of which the business venture begins. Furthermore, life experience and personal networks showed to decrease the knowledge gaps and lack of formal education within older people. Some authors have emphasized that strong personal formal and informal networks such as family support assist the start-up process (Birley, 1985). Moreover, gender view may have also explanatory power in older people entrepreneurship (Weber & Schaper, 2004). Curran and Blackburn (2001) discovered that reasons for not to be self-employed are considered several things such as uncertainty of income streams, older age people may feel too old to start a business of their own, lack of job security and too high risks related to self-employment and/or starting own business.

How in Practice the Older People Entrepreneurship and Start-up Initiatives Could be Supported?

It could be argued that current employment and economic development policies especially in Finland have not acknowledged the opportunities of older people entrepreneurship. Kyrö et al. (2012) pointed out that there exist several institutional and cultural issues that have to be developed if the whole potential of older age entrepreneurship is going to be utilized in the society. Especially, there seems to be needs to develop employment laws in a way that support and make entrepreneurship to be a real choice of future life compared with retirement and systems that currently strongly support staying at work in the end of working career of person. The opportunities to shift employment career to entrepreneurial career have not yet been acknowledged as a real option in many aging societies.

Kautonen et al. (2011) stated that if policy purpose is to increase enterprising activity in the older age segment of people, there have to be a portfolio of several instruments that should include measures that address older age people's general awareness of older age people entrepreneurship as a viable, positive, and attractive career opportunity. Especially, such activities may not only generate economic benefits but also contribute toward a better quality of life (Kautonen et al., 2011).

Furthermore, Curran and Blackburn (2001) emphasized that there is a lively ongoing discussion considering older age self-employment while the most severe problems are related to the sparse empirical support of policies why and how to fostering older age entrepreneurship. It seems that policy makers are keen to support self-employment among older age people in order to decrease the high unemployment rates and costs generated by the group of older people. Curran and Blackburn (2001) pointed out that self-employment is not a very interesting option for most of the older people. However, older age people that are still in working life seem to be very potential group for to become self-employed (start own business) in golden years. Currently, there is a lack of study focused on policies supporting older age entrepreneurship and understanding of actor based meanings of older age entrepreneurship. There is a need for more quantitative and qualitative studies on older age entrepreneurship in order to produce empirical understanding of the possible needs for supporting older age nascent entrepreneurs and active entrepreneurs. This information is highly needed in order to have empirical support for policy initiatives focused on older age entrepreneurship.

The framework for the thematic interview has been based on the previous literature and empirical studies of older age entrepreneurship. The main themes and major items of the construct include in the following text.

Why Older People Want to Become Entrepreneurs?

- Economic, pull/push factors (Singh & DeNoble, 2003; Kautonen, 2008);
- Individual characteristics such as personal health (Curran & Blackburn, 2001);
- Resource based theories including social and intellectual capital (Barney, 1991; Nahapiet & Goshal, 1998; Singh & DeNoble, 2003);
- Psychological theories including learning and people desire to personal development (McClelland, 1961; Rotter, 1966; Macpherson & Holt, 2007);
- Socio-cultural theories (Theory of planned behavior (TPB)) (Ajzen, 1988, 1991);
- Societal level including overall macro-economic situation and institutional factors (Weber & Schaper, 2004; Curran & Blackburn, 2001; Kautonen, 2008; Kautonen et al., 2011; Kyrö et al., 2012).

What kind of Factors Influence on the Opportunity Recognition and Exploitation in Older Age?

- Life-style entrepreneurs (Weber & Schaper, 2004);
- Performance also including growth, innovation, survival aspects (Cressy & Storey, 1995; Blackburn et al., 1999; Peters, Storey, & Cressy, 1999);
- Factors that support and/or prevent business opportunity recognition and exploitation (Singh & DeNoble, 2003; Weber & Schaper, 2004) online shop theoretical assumption.

How in Practice the Older People Entrepreneurship and Start-up Initiatives Could be Supported?

- Institutional and cultural influence (Kyrö et al., 2012);
- Portfolio of several instruments (Kautonen et al., 2011);
- Focus group thinking (Curran & Blackburn, 2001).

This design was applied in themed interviews and in the building of thematic constructs. In addition to the

above framework, for the interviewees were asked of their own perceptions of what older age entrepreneurship means for them and if there is exist needs that could be fulfilled by supporting the older age people self-employed and business start-up initiatives.

Methodology and Data

This study is an explorative research which utilizes a case of development project supporting and developing older age entrepreneurship (Senior Entrepreneurship 50+ project). This project is co-funded by European Community and Aalto University, School of Business, Small Business Center (SBC) and has been started in the end of 2011 (duration of the project was two years). The purposive sampling strategy has been the main strategy to acquire the data (Miles & Huberman, 1984). The data are based on four thematic interviews of individual person who have taking part in the project initiatives and actions. These people have been attained to the SYTY-seminar of older age entrepreneurship in February 16, 2012, which was arranged by the Aalto-University, School of Business, Small Business Center in Mikkeli. This seminar's one of the keynote speakers was former prime minister of Finland Mr Matti Vanhanen. Around 80 people participated in this seminar. Among these participators, the four interviewees were picked out because they stated their interested to participate in interviews focusing on the theme of older age entrepreneurship and were aged between 50-64 years old. Their approval of interviews was got by the questionnaire form related to SYTY-seminar. Moreover, all these persons were thinking to be self-employed (start their own business) in near future.

This study's basic assumption of knowledge claims is rooted on pragmatism and constructivism. Pragmatism is not committed to any one of the system of philosophy and reality (Cresswell, 2003). Therefore, individual researchers have a freedom to choose the methods, techniques, and procedures of research that best meet their needs and purposes. Pragmatist researchers agree that research always occurs in social, historical, political, and other contexts. Things that work also in practice are worthwhile to achieve. Furthermore, constructivism is based on the assumption that individuals seek understand of the world in which they live and work. The goal of constructive research is to rely as much as possible on the participants' views of the situation and phenomenon being studied (Cresswell, 2003).

As Arrow (1965, p. 12) pointed out values, judgements, beliefs, and attitudes are a matter of subjective rather than objective characteristics, and only the values and beliefs of an actor are relevant to explain his/her choice(s). Therefore, a qualitative approach fits better compared with quantitative methods in order to understand the peoples motives, intentions, and factors affecting on the process of to become self-employed (start own business) in older age. The empirical path will be followed to define the older age nascent entrepreneur's judgments and perceptions of the motives, intentions, and processes to become self-employed.

The primary data for the study were collected through interviews. The above framework for the theme interviews was applied and exploited to analyze the results of the study. The interviews were carried out from March 13-21, 2012, in the office of Aalto-University, School of Business, Small Business Center in Mikkeli, Finland. All the four interviewees were nascent entrepreneurs or thinking to be self-employed (established own business) in near future. The interviews were recorded and transcribed accurately. The text was classified accordingly and the content was analyzed. Created thematic constructs are based on the focus themes derived from prior theoretical backgrounds and empirical studies including the findings of study interviews. Further background information on the interviewees and their business initiatives are showed in Appendix Table A1.

Results

Why Older People Want to Become Entrepreneurs?

All the interviewed four persons (further used labels A, B, C, and D of persons) have recognized business opportunities which are based on providing diverse self-made services in the market. The characteristics and recognized business opportunities of the four nascent entrepreneurs are presented in Appendix. Two of the persons (person A and B) have previous experience of establishing a firm. One person (person C) has working experience related to developing businesses. Further, person (D) does not have any prior business experience. All the interviewed persons gave their own meanings of the motives and intentions of becoming self-employed. Person A, B, and D pointed out that economic factors such as wealth creation and reliable and steady stream of income are important factors to be self-employed (reasons: e.g., small pension, threat of losing unemployment benefits, and get rich). Person C sees part-time entrepreneurship as complementary item with work (business ventures as supplementary form of income (Weber & Schaper, 2004). All the persons emphasized that money is not the most important single item when becoming self-employed. This in line with Singh and DeNoble (2003) findings that self-employment at the older age is not explained only by personal wealth and income factors.

Several pull and push factors were upraised by the interviewees, furthermore, simultaneous pull and push factors were upraised by all respondents. Compared with prior research findings, the new views upraised from of interviews where that all the persons have acknowledged business opportunity. Age was also be seemed as an opportunity to exploit business idea and to become an entrepreneur (A and D) because of upcoming pension is seeing to decrease the economic uncertainty related to self-employment. Simultaneous pull and push factors were the following by single person: person A (unemployment-learning-opportunities to exploit recognized business ideas); person B (unemployment-age discrimination-lack of alternative opportunities-need for achievement-self-fulfilment-opportunities to exploit recognized business ideas); person C (threat of unemployment-need for achievement-learning-opportunities to exploit recognized business ideas; and person D (threat of unemployment-increased earnings-increased social inclusion-self-fulfillment-opportunities to exploit recognized business ideas).

In line with prior empirical results financial-, social- and intellectual-resource sources were emphasized by all respondents (Singh & DeNoble, 2003; Nahapiet & Goshal, 1998). Moreover, all interviewed person pointed out long-term developed combined knowledge, experience, and personal relationships as the most vital resources fostering the process of becoming self-employed. New views compared with prior studies were outside consults role in addition to with family, relatives, and friend roles in order to support start-up and self-employment initiatives. Moreover, updated entrepreneurship training was upraised by all persons.

Person A and B emphasized individual characteristics such as health to be important to maintain personal health. This results in line with Curran and Blackburn (2001) findings of older aged people health and entrepreneurship related issues. Furthermore, new findings detected related to psychological factors such as need to feel yourself somewhat useful in the society (all persons) and when retired how to fulfill the new phase of life (person D)? Entrepreneurship seems to give one option to find a worthwhile solution for these upraised questions.

Job retrenchment (person A, B, and C) and restructuring (person D) were discovered to be societal factors that have influence to find new perspective(s) for these persons. Also Weber and Schaper (2004) find out that U.K. economic situation in diverse sectors change such as job retrenchment was the single most common

reason for starting a business in older age. Other societal factors were age discrimination (person A and B), less attractive pension, and welfare arrangements (person A and D). Socio-cultural factors that were found to influence on why older entrepreneurs want to become entrepreneurs were age norm, positive attitudes towards self-employment. This finding support Kautonen et al., (2011) results that positive age norm in the region increase directly older age people intentions to be self-employed and/or start own business. Figure 1 is presented the first construct of combined theory driven factors and interview findings explaining why older age people want to become entrepreneurs. Bolded text in the boxes presents new findings compared with prior findings/understanding.

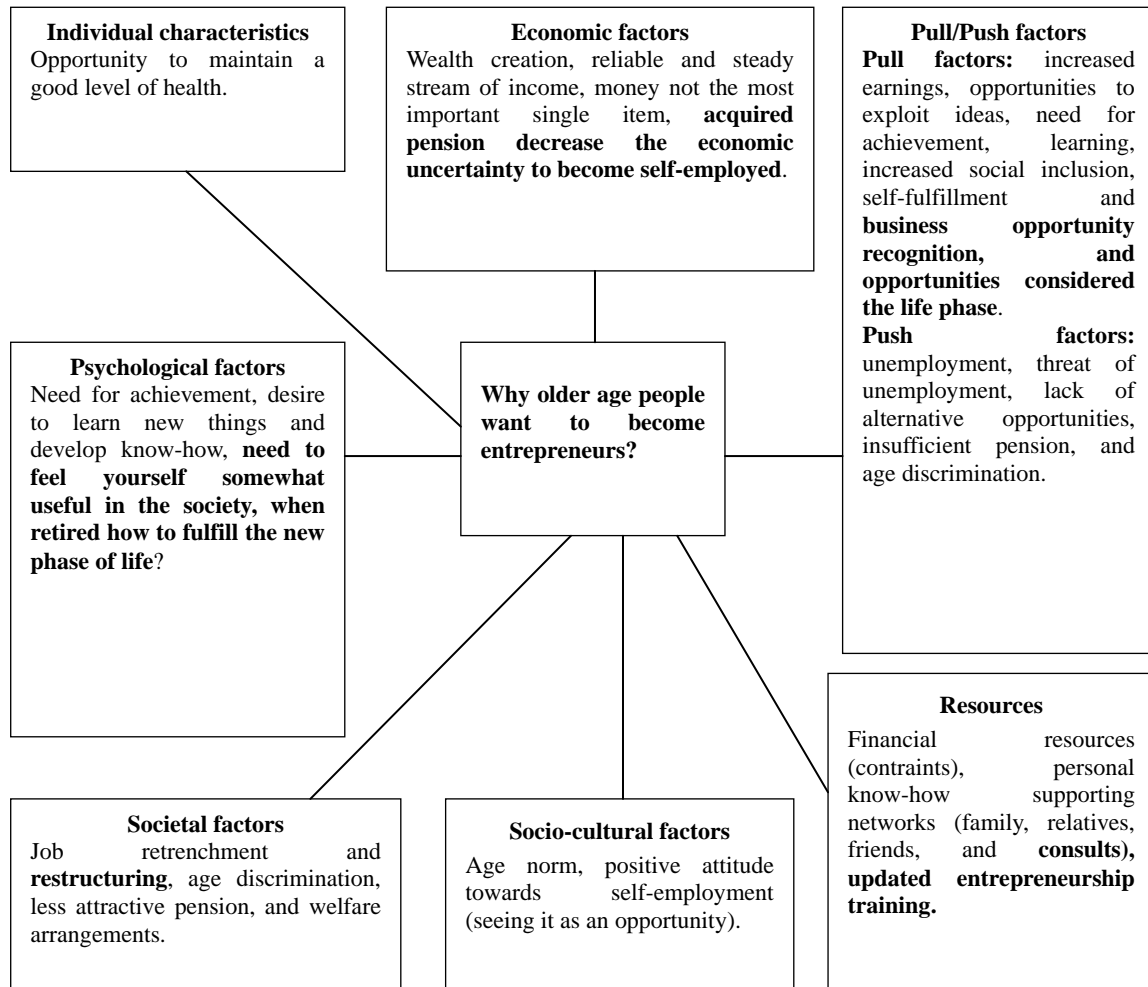


Figure 1. Combined theory driven factors and interview findings explaining why older age people want to become entrepreneurs.

What Kind of Factors Influence on the Opportunity Recognition and Exploitation in Older Age?

The results of this study emphasize that older people are more willingness to look for stable and profitable business opportunities that fit with the person established lifestyle (Weber & Schaper, 2004) than innovative high growth initiatives of their businesses. Self-employment is more important than providing new jobs for

other people. These results are in line with recent findings of innovative growing firms (Heimonen, 2012). Entrepreneurship and business related term success is defined by the persons as subjective evaluation of overall situation of person life where entrepreneurship and business success are understood as a part of complex life of person.

Business venture opportunities are recognized and exploited as supplementary form of income (e.g., increasing the income streams with pension, persons A and D). Furthermore, business opportunities are recognized as simultaneous opportunity to work and at the same time doing part-time self-employment, or act as retired freelancer (persons C and D). These findings confirm the Weber and Schaper's (2004) prior results that business ventures are seen as supplementary opportunity to form income than principal wealth generator. Moreover, following motives of business recognition and exploitation that considered the person lifestyle were emphasized:

- Have fun to do what you want to do (person D);
- It is a hobby and at the same time a opportunity to earn some money (persons B and D);
- Flexible working hours (with long weekends) (persons A, B, and D);
- Opportunity to maintain good health and functionality (all persons).

Based on prior understanding (Singh & DeNoble, 2003) that several factors affect opportunity recognition and exploitation, also in this study the interviews showed several factors that seem to influence on the opportunity recognition and exploitation. Herein, these factors are categorized as factors that overall support opportunity recognition and exploitation and factors that prevent opportunity recognition and exploitation which were in the following text.

Factors Supporting

Prior studies upraised factors such as life experience, personal networks, family support, assets for business ownership (e.g., equipment and capital no need for start-up investments), management experience, and technical knowledge

New factors compared with prior understanding in this study were showed to be industry know-how and experience, several business opportunity ideas, outside consultation help to develop further business idea and concepts, prior experience to establish a business, updating entrepreneurship course, hobby, enterprise allowance, understanding customer needs and requirements (existing market demand), diverse opportunities to be self-employed such as business partnership, change of generation, shared customer projects with existing entrepreneurs and firms, freelancer opportunity, good health condition which were in the following text.

Factors Preventing

Prior studies upraised factors such as uncertainty of income streams, failing health, negative stereotypes related to group of older age people.

New factors compared with prior understanding in this study were showed to be too strong appreciation culture of salaried work, the low amount of enterprise allowance (500-800 euros per month) compared with high risk related to self-employment especially during the first years of start-up process.

Figure 2 is presented the second construct of factors influencing business opportunity recognition and exploitation of older age nascent entrepreneurs. Bolded text in the boxes presents new findings compared with prior findings/understanding.

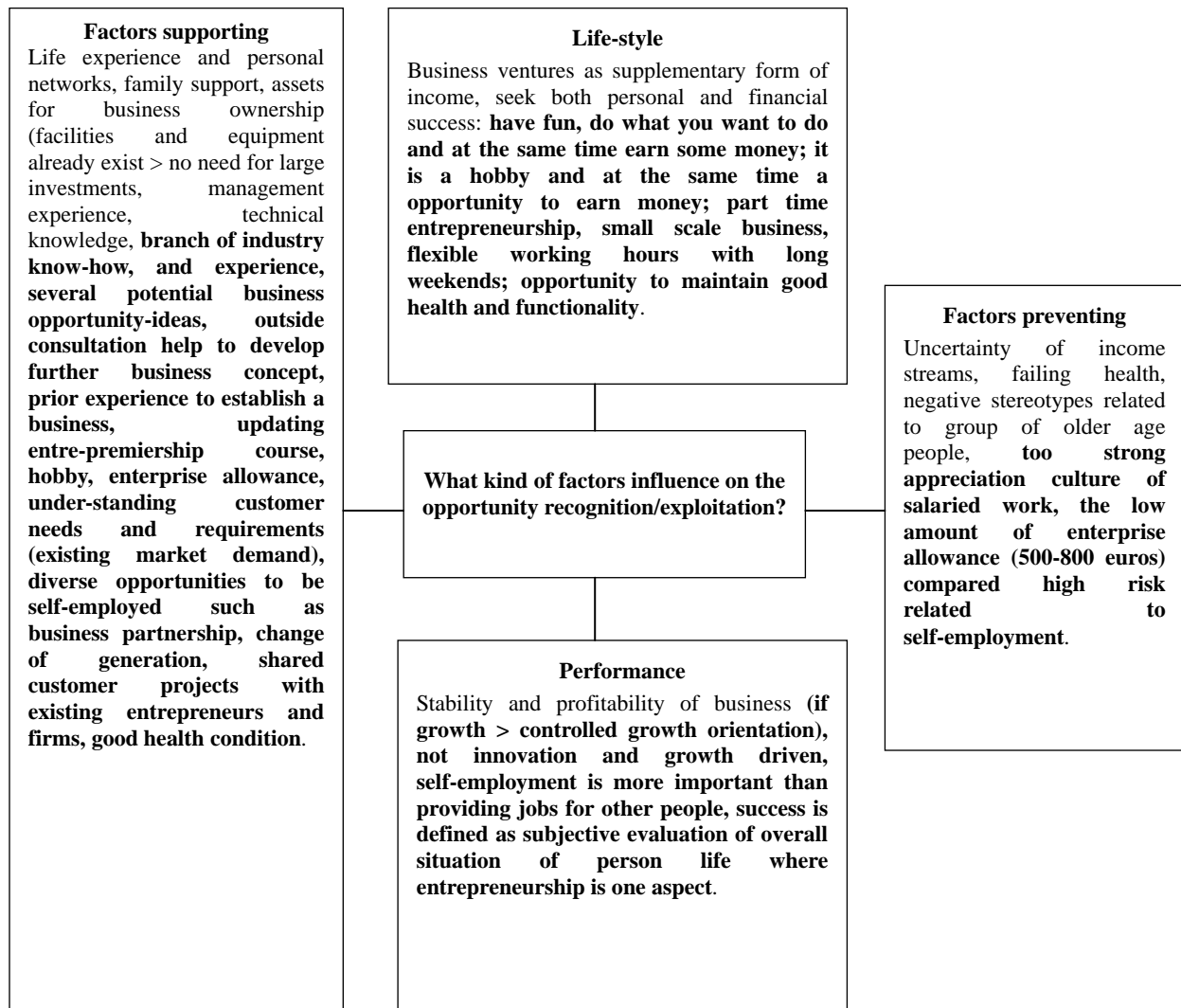


Figure 2. Factors influencing business opportunity recognition and exploitation of older age nascent entrepreneurs.

How in Practice the Older People Entrepreneurship and Start-up Initiatives Could Be Supported?

Based on the previous understanding and empirical studies of older age people entrepreneurship (Curran & Blackburn, 2001; Kautonen, 2011; Kyrö et al., 2012), if there exists supporting needs and possible problems to be solved from the perspective of society there have to be more fine grained understanding of focus group(s) characteristics (Curran & Blackburn, 2001), institutions influential role, and cultural awareness of opportunities older age entrepreneurship (Kyrö et al., 2012) and, moreover, portfolio of several practical instruments to support if there exists needs to fulfilled and problems to be solved.

Curran and Blackburn (2001) showed in their study in U.K. that especially older age people who are in working life may be possible actors especially are motivated and have willingness to start a business of their own and/or there is decreased amount of factors that may prevent the self-employed initiatives compared with already retired persons or unemployed older age people. In this study, we find out that also some of the people who are unemployed or are under threat of unemployment in older age may have strong intentions to be self-employed. Therefore, in future focus group(s) thinking when supporting older age people entrepreneurship

initiatives have to acknowledge the diversity of groups older age people and actions planned have to derived based on contextual factors including person related opportunities and life-situation.

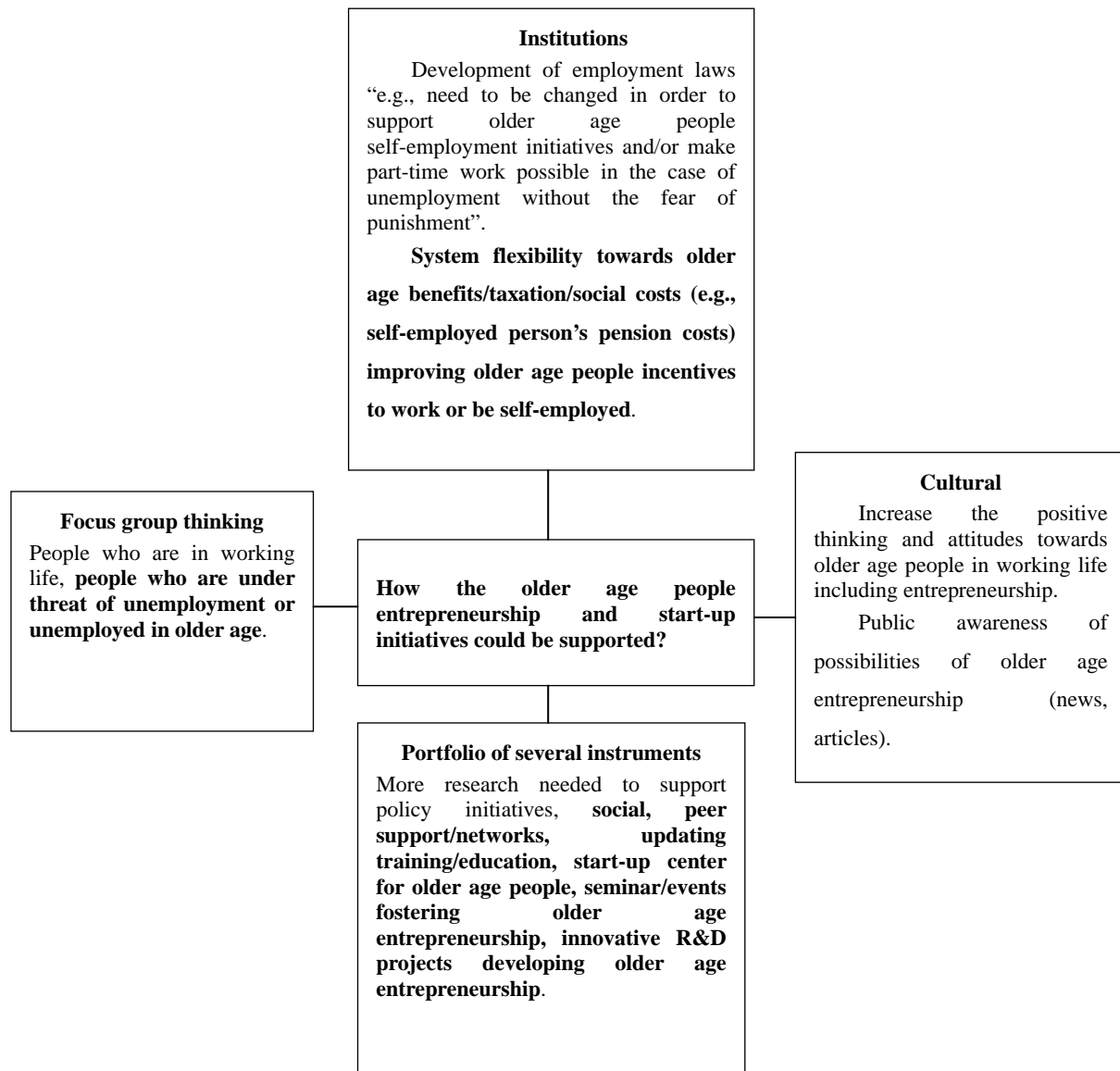


Figure 3. Items supporting the older people entrepreneurship and start-up initiatives.

Both institutional and cultural items were showed to be influential (all interviewed persons) in order to support the older age people entrepreneurship and start-up initiatives. The study findings are in line with Kyrö et al.’s (2012) report of senior entrepreneurship in Finland. If the goal is to support the older age people incentives to work or be self-employed, the focus has to be also on the development of system flexibility towards older age people (e.g., self-employed person’s pension costs, taxation and other benefits). In Finland, it seems that employment laws need to be changed in order to support both work and self-employment initiatives (including part-time work/entrepreneurship), especially in the case of unemployment of older age without the fear of punishments (person A). Something has to be done also with public awareness of positive

possibilities/opportunities in society. Moreover, negative age discrimination especially in working life seems to be a cultural driver for seeing self-employment as a real and some cases the only choice to continue working in older age.

As Curran and Blackburn (2001), Kautonen et al. (2011), and Kyrö et al. (2012) stated that there is a need for more research on older age people entrepreneurship in order to provide empirical knowledge that could be used as background information when deciding policy interventions. Kautonen (2011) argued that a portfolio of action/interventions is needed to cope with the needs and problems of older age entrepreneurship. In this study, the following actions suggested by the interviewed nascent older age entrepreneurs:

- Need for social, peer support networks/relationships;
- Updating training/education;
- Start-up centers for older age people;
- Seminar/events fostering older age entrepreneurship and upraise the positive public awareness of the importance of the phenomenon;
- Innovative R&D projects focused on developing diverse themes of older age entrepreneurship.

Figure 3 is presented the third construct of how the older people entrepreneurship and start-up initiatives could be supported. Bolded text in the boxes presents new findings compared with prior findings/understanding.

Conclusions

In this study, the subjective constructs of four older people have been analyzed. These person have upraised the intentions to be self-employed in the near future or have already established own firm. Analysis of the study focuses on the motives to become self-employed, factors that may have influence on opportunity recognition and exploitation. Moreover, the prior understanding and items influencing of older age people entrepreneurship where developed further.

Based on explorative interviews and constructs of the four older people, it seems that there exist several reason and single factors that also simultaneously with other factors influence on intentions and opportunities of becoming self-employed. Related to economic factors, this study adds a new perspective to the prior discussion (Singh & DeNoble, 2003) that especially acquired pension seems in some cases decrease the economic uncertainty to become self-employed. Further, related to pull and push factor studies of the older age people entrepreneurship (e.g., Kautonen, 2008), this study add a new pull factor especially the person life phase as an opportunity to exploit business idea to be tested in future studies and especially simultaneous pull and push factors influencing older age people start-up initiatives. The role of outside consultation and updated entrepreneurship training influence should also be verified in future studies. In societal level, job restructuring is a macro-economic factor that may have influence on older age people initiatives to be self-employed. Moreover, need to feel yourself somewhat useful in the society and how to fulfill the new phase of life are new things to be upraised including previous psychological factors (McClelland, 1961; Rotter, 1966; MacPherson & Holt, 2007; Ajzen, 1988).

Life-style, performance, and factors supporting and/or preventing the opportunity recognition and exploitation were analyzed more detailed. Based on the results, it seems that both personal and financial successes are important. Self-employment is seeing as an opportunity for both full- and part-time actions. Stability and profitability of business and flexibility, happiness, self-fulfillment, and opportunity to maintain

good health and functionality seems to be more desired than innovation driven growth motives of exploiting business opportunities. Self-employment is more important than providing new jobs for other people. The results of this study confirm the prior findings of Weber and Schaper (2004).

Singh and DeNoble (2003), Kautonen (2011), and Weber and Schaper (2004) found that uncertainty of income streams and negative stereotypes (age norm) and failing health were also factors that prevent the possible opportunity recognition and/or exploitation of an business opportunity with this study interviewed person. One new perspective according to this study is the strong culture of appreciation of salaried work which has prohibited entrepreneurial intentions to become self-employed. Several factors supporting opportunity recognition and/or exploitation were acknowledged such as life-experience, personal networks, family supports, assets for business ownership, management knowledge, technical experience (Singh & DeNoble, 2003; Weber & Schaper, 2004). Moreover, this study pointed out several other factors such as branch of industry know-how and experience, several business opportunity ideas, outside consultation help to improve business idea, updating training course of entrepreneurship, hobby, enterprise allowance, understanding of customer needs, diverse opportunities to be self-employed and good health condition.

The contribution and main implication for the support initiatives of older age people entrepreneurship is widen the perspectives of focus group thinking also including older age people who are unemployed and/or under threat of unemployment (Curran & Blackburn, 2001). Furthermore, there is a need for develop institutional aspects and flexibility of the system if the goal is to improve older age people incentives/motives to continue work or to be self-employed. In order to influence age discrimination, public awareness of possibilities of older age entrepreneurship has to be one important theme of public policy discussion in the future ageing societies. Finally, this study confirms Kautonen's (2011) ideas of the need for several instruments when supporting older age entrepreneurship. Older age people by themselves pointed out that there are needs focused on aspects such as social/peer networking, updating training, start-up centers for older entrepreneurs, pilot projects, seminars, and events that give positive publicity and shows to the society that entrepreneurship in golden years is a golden opportunity for the society.

The results of the study cannot be directly generalized since the interviewees have been selected from the population of older age people which were highly motivated to become self-employed and/or start own business or they have already established their own business. Thus, by comparison with the studies where data also include person that do not see self-employment as a positive opportunity in older age or there are other constraints which makes self-employment initiatives complex is not straightforward.

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Appendix A

Table A1

Background Information on the Interviewees and Their Business Initiatives

Person	Sex	Current status	Recognized business opportunity
A	Male	Unemployed	Personal services including accounting, 40 years working well-being, and small scale farming services experience forest sector (have established a company for his wife)
B	Male	Unemployed	Marketing and sales services including 30 years working consultation (have established own firm) experience (banking, sales and marketing)
C	Female	Threat of unemployment	Expert services developing businesses working experience in (desire to continue working and several developing sees entrepreneurship as a part-time organization opportunity)
D	Female	Threat of unemployment	Services focused on gardening, mushroom 25 years experience of education, planning, and consultation working in association (Martat)