



Strategies for Network Building and Success: German Entrepreneurs in the U.S.

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the strategies German entrepreneurs undertake for establishing and leveraging professional networks in the United States in order to enable the growth and success of their startups. Globalization and digitization have changed the entrepreneurial landscapes worldwide, making the dynamics of cross-cultural networking ever more critical. Based on a qualitative approach via expert interviews with German entrepreneurs in the U.S., this research identifies the following key dimensions: networking strategies, cultural adaptation and resource exchange, boundaries trust-building strategies, professional support systems, and overcoming barriers. The findings emphasize the importance of enlarging networks with online platforms such as LinkedIn and strategically setting up physical and virtual events to make connections. Further, cultural adaptation is essential as entrepreneurs discovered the necessity to adapt the style of communication and business practice towards the American standards. In professional networks, exchanging resources and knowledge is a potent way of tapping into financial resources, market insight, and human talent. The base of professional relationship building is a sense of trust built upon mutual reliance in consistent relationship building and supporting one another. Other professional support mechanisms, such as mentorship and industry associations, can provide valuable advice and resources towards helping entrepreneurs navigate the complexities of the U.S. business environment. Overcoming challenges such as legal and regulatory barriers requires a robust network of knowledgeable contacts. The study offers practical recommendations to future international entrepreneurs and suggesting directions for further research on understanding how the role of networking on entrepreneurial performance evolves between different cultural contexts. This study contributes to the international entrepreneurship research debate, and the findings offer practical insights for those practitioners seeking to tackle the market with their venture in the United States.

Keywords: Networking Strategies, Professional Networks, International Entrepreneurship, Cultural Adaptation, Resource Acquisition, Digital Platforms

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SUMARIO

Este estudo investiga as estratégias que os empresários alemães adoptam para estabelecer e tirar partido das redes profissionais nos Estados Unidos, a fim de permitir o crescimento e o sucesso das suas empresas em fase de arranque. A globalização e a digitalização alteraram os cenários empresariais em todo o mundo, tornando a dinâmica das redes interculturais cada vez mais crítica. Com base numa abordagem qualitativa através de entrevistas a especialistas com empresários alemães nos EUA, esta investigação identifica as seguintes dimensões-chave: estratégias de trabalho em rede, adaptação cultural e troca de recursos, estratégias de construção de confiança nas fronteiras, sistemas de apoio profissional e superação de barreiras. As conclusões sublinham a importância de alargar as redes de contactos através de plataformas em linha, como o LinkedIn, e de organizar estrategicamente eventos físicos e virtuais para estabelecer contactos. Além disso, a adaptação cultural é essencial, uma vez que os empresários descobriram a necessidade de adaptar o estilo de comunicação e as práticas comerciais aos padrões americanos. Nas redes profissionais, a troca de recursos e de conhecimentos é uma forma potente de aceder a recursos financeiros, a conhecimentos sobre o mercado e a talentos humanos. A base da construção de relações profissionais é um sentimento de confiança assente na confiança mútua na construção consistente de relações e no apoio mútuo. Outros mecanismos de apoio profissional, como a orientação e as associações industriais, podem fornecer conselhos e recursos valiosos para ajudar os empresários a navegar nas complexidades do ambiente empresarial dos EUA. Para ultrapassar desafios como as barreiras legais e regulamentares, é necessária uma rede sólida de contactos bem informados. O estudo oferece recomendações práticas a futuros empresários internacionais e sugere direcções para mais investigação sobre a forma como o papel da rede de contactos no desempenho empresarial evolui entre diferentes contextos culturais. Este estudo contribui para o debate sobre a investigação no domínio do empreendedorismo internacional e as conclusões oferecem perspectivas práticas para os profissionais que pretendem entrar no mercado com a sua empresa nos Estados Unidos.

Palavras-chave: Estratégias de Networking, Redes Profissionais, Empreendedorismo Internacional, Adaptação Cultural, Aquisição de Recursos, Plataformas Digitais

Strategies for Network Building and Success: Empresários alemães nos EUA

Nicholas Peipp

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	ii
SUMARIO	iii
TABLE OF CONTENTS	iv
TABLE OF FIGURES	vi
TABLE OF TABLES	vii
TABLE OF APPENDICES	viii
GLOSSARY / ABBREVIATIONS	ix
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Introduction	1
1.2 Problem Statement & Research Question	2
1.3 Managerial and Academic Relevance	3
1.4 Dissertation Outline.....	4
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW & THEORETICAL BACKGROUND	5
2.1 Entrepreneurship and the Importance of Building Networks.....	5
2.2 Definition and Relevance	5
2.2.1 Definition Entrepreneurship within the Context of international Business	5
2.2.2 Theoretical Background on entrepreneurial Traits.....	7
2.3 Network Establishment	10
2.3.1 Definition Networks and Network Analysis	10
2.3.2 Importance of Networks.....	13
2.3.3 Network Structure	15
2.3.4 Network Content	18
2.3.5 Network Governance.....	19
2.3.6 Networks and Resources	21
2.4 The U.S. Context.....	23
2.4.1 Differences in Business Culture and Practices between the German and the U.S. entrepreneurial Landscape.....	25
2.4.2 Comparing the Legal and Economic Environments	28
2.4.3 Role of Specific Networks in Entrepreneurial Success.....	30

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY	34
3.1 Research Design	34
3.2 Data Collection.....	35
3.3 Development of Questionnaire.....	35
3.4 Data Analysis	35
CHAPTER 4: RESULTS & FINDINGS.....	37
4.1 Networking Strategies and Approaches	37
4.2 Cultural Adaptation and Integration.....	39
4.3 Resource and Knowledge Exchange	41
4.4 Trust and Relationship Building	42
4.5 Professional Support Systems	44
4.6 Challenges and Overcoming Barriers	46
CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION	49
5.1 Summary of Key Findings and Interpretation of Results.....	49
5.2 Practical Recommendations	52
5.3 Suggestions for Future Research.....	55
5.4 Limitations & Conclusion	56
Appendices	59
Bibliography	63

TABLE OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Jensen's Nodes and Links in Network Perspective	12
Figure 2 Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions - Germany vs. United States.....	25

TABLE OF TABLES

TABLE OF APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Interview Questionnaire	59
Appendix 2: Interview Analysis Table.....	62

GLOSSARY / ABBREVIATIONS

U.S.: United States

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

In recent decades, the relevance of networks has become a focus of research in the field of entrepreneurship. Researchers have been at the forefront of identifying strategies to highlight the value of networks. With the advent of digitization and globalization, this field of research has become of great importance to all stakeholders. They discussed how entrepreneurs use personal and professional relationships to overcome the different challenges of starting and running a business. Networks affect the entrepreneurial process by facilitating resource flows, knowledge exchange, and opportunity identification. Furthermore, networks serve as vehicles for resource exchange, information sharing, and opportunity discovery, thereby having a fundamental impact on the entrepreneurial process (Hoang & Antoncic, 2003). Naturally, the strategic use of networks can significantly influence venture performance and resilience. Entrepreneurs that leverage their extensive networks typically improve their innovativeness, access to new markets, and performance significantly. According to Vissa (2011), an entrepreneur who not only has a large network but also uses it to generate and realize value will be able to create and realize value. Furthermore, considering globalization, networks are no longer limited to the bounds of local or national regions. Most importantly, international networks, particularly those provided by digital platforms, allow access to the global economy and a variety of resources that were previously unavailable to company owners. This is reinforced by Coviello and Munro's (1997) research, which demonstrated how small enterprises may leverage international networks to accelerate the development of their market presence abroad. As a result, understanding the nature and behavior of these networks is critical to creating theoretical and practical entrepreneurial applications, especially to immigrant entrepreneurs in foreign countries. Prior literature has extensively explored the role of networks in entrepreneurship, particularly in the international context with respect to resource acquisition, innovation, and market expansion. However, there is limited knowledge accessible about how overseas entrepreneurs, particularly those from Germany, leverage these networks in the United States. This research aims to fill this gap by identifying the crucial success factors that enabled German businesses to flourish in the US market.

Research on network-based entrepreneurship suggests that founders rarely work alone. However, the interactions between mentors, peers, investors, consumers, and a variety of other stakeholders help shape the entrepreneurial experience.

The following section of the literature review will attempt to integrate the large body of research on networks in entrepreneurship, with a focus on how networks influence outcomes in entrepreneurship such as new venture formation, growth, innovation, and global expansion.

1.2 Problem Statement & Research Question

Despite the growing attention on the role of networks in entrepreneurship, there is still a lack of research on how international entrepreneurs establish and leverage professional networks to facilitate the growth and success of their startups in the United States. Prior research has primarily focused on the general benefits of networking without delving into the specific strategies used by international entrepreneurs in the U.S. market. This oversight is significant, given the unique challenges these entrepreneurs face, such as navigating cultural differences, regulatory barriers, and diverse market dynamics (Hagen et al., 2014).

The primary question is how international entrepreneurs build and utilize their networks to overcome such challenges and achieve business success within the foreign market.

Networking processes can be conceptualized through different stages, including the establishment of connections, leveraging such relationships for resources and knowledge, and the preservation of these networks over time. Studies by Hoang and Antoncic (2003) and Yli-Renko, Autio, and Sapienza (2001) found that such networks are valuable not just for making the initial market entry but for growing and penetrating foreign markets over a period. Therefore, it is crucial to understand the intrinsic and extrinsic challenges international entrepreneurs face, as well as the ways to overcome them. Potential differences might be attributed to cultural adaptation, regulatory adherence, access to local market expertise, and the usage of digital networking platforms (Agwu & Onwuegbuzie, 2018; Samara & Terzian, 2020). One expectation is that entrepreneurs with strong and diversified networks can operate more successfully through the intricacies of the U.S. market. However, they would still need to overcome the associated issues of trust and legitimacy formation in a foreign environment. On the other hand, entrepreneurs who struggle to build strong networks, may find it harder to acquire important resources and support that would be critical for their success (Vissa, 2011).

By investigating how international entrepreneurs establish and leverage professional networks in the United States, this study aims to fill the existing gap in the literature. The focus will be on identifying critical success factors and strategies that contribute to the effective use of

networks, offering valuable insights for policymakers, practitioners, and academics interested in international entrepreneurship.

Research question: How do international entrepreneurs establish and leverage professional networks in the United States to facilitate the growth and success of their startups?

The purpose of this research is to provide evidence on the networking strategies used by international entrepreneurs and how these strategies impact the success of international entrepreneurs in the U.S. market. It will explore the processes of how a professional network is constructed, used, and sustained, while at the same time highlighting the challenges and opportunities faced by international entrepreneurs. The study takes on a comparative approach, to understand the differences in networking strategies and their relative effectiveness at facilitating entrepreneurial growth and success (Zahra, Ireland, & Hitt, 2000).

1.3 Managerial and Academic Relevance

First, this study provides entrepreneurial insights on how German entrepreneurs in the United States build and use professional networks to accelerate the growth of their firms. The research not only elaborates on the challenges that entrepreneurs must confront while establishing and sustaining a network in a foreign market, but it also gives some practical advice for how to go about the networking process. In practice, this research can assist entrepreneurs identify the major factors that influence their networking success. By identifying and emphasizing such problems, as well as the benefits and drawbacks of various networking approaches, the research will enable entrepreneurs to save time and resources by avoiding strategies that are unsuccessful or even harmful to their company success. Ultimately, international entrepreneurs will be better educated and supported in exploiting professional networks to help their business expand and thrive in the United States market.

Second, this paper addresses a gap in the existing academic literature on international entrepreneurship and network theory. It concentrates on the disparity in the existing research by focusing on the specific networking strategies employed by German entrepreneurs in the U.S. context. Future scholars will have a better opportunity to investigate the difficulties and possibilities that these entrepreneurs face.

This study's novel approach, which focuses on understanding the formation and use of professional networks, provides a new perspective for future academics studying international

entrepreneurship. Additionally, this study advances the understanding of how networks form and contribute to entrepreneurial success in a variety of cultural and legal contexts.

Finally, this study offers the theoretical advancements by including concepts from network theory and international business, to better comprehend the role and impact of networks in diverse environments. By examining the role of digital and online networking platforms, the study also opens new avenues for research into the impact of technology on entrepreneurial networking strategies.

1.4 Dissertation Outline

After this introduction chapter, chapter two consists of a literature review about the significance of networks in entrepreneurship within the context of international business. The third chapter delves into the specific context of the United States, aiming to provide an overview of the country's business culture, legal and economic environments, and the role of specific networks in entrepreneurial success. This study uses a qualitative approach in the form of expert interviews. In chapter four, this methodology is explained in detail. In chapter five, the interview results are analyzed. Finally, chapter six includes the discussion and conclusion, covering the main findings, the limitations, and proposals for future studies.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW & THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 Entrepreneurship and the Importance of Building Networks

2.2 Definition and Relevance

2.2.1 Definition Entrepreneurship within the Context of international Business

Some researchers view entrepreneurship as a process of successful organization, while others define it as a process of building mindset and skills (Diandra & Azmy, 2020). In essence, entrepreneurship is about the identification, evaluation, and exploitation of opportunities to create future goods and services (Shane & Venkataraman, 2000). It is done with the aim of creating job opportunities that lead to economic development (Barot, 2015; Hessels, 2019). To accomplish this, entrepreneurs need to employ labor resources with technical skills, in addition to managerial talents (Barot, 2015; Chang et al., 2015).

As we move across diverse cultural, economic, and regulatory landscapes, the entrepreneurial process becomes more complicated and disparate. In an international context, further dimensions come into play (Lerner & Schoar, 2010). International entrepreneurship transcends the exporting of goods and services and is a process of orchestrating innovative ventures across national borders, usually requiring an entrepreneur to innovate and adapt business models to diverse markets (Knight & Cavusgil, 2004). This type of entrepreneurship is also crucial in stimulating global economic integration while innovative products and services are introduced across the world, thus eliciting international trade and investment (Zahra & George, 2002). Hence, it can be safely assumed that given the complexities of international entrepreneurship, an in-depth knowledge of the global business environment is indispensable. A basic requirement of international entrepreneurship is the ability to administrate various skills across borders. Challenges of the entrepreneurs, who venture beyond domestic boundaries, include foreign regulatory environments, diverse consumer behaviors, and operational risk

management of the firm across different countries (McDougall & Oviatt, 2000). When it comes to market penetration, an entrepreneur may face cultural as well as regulatory barriers. Dealing with such barriers can be challenging, but networking can help to mitigate the gaps with local knowledge and insights into culture, which can ensure a smoother transition for penetration and integration into the market, be it for a new business or a new subsidiary in a foreign country (Manolova, Brush, Edelman, & Greene, 2002).

To enable the organization to achieve success in such an international environment, networking plays a role in acquiring and attracting the required resources, knowledge, and partnerships. Moreover, networking is not only about business connections, but also about the development of strategic relationships with stakeholders that range from suppliers to customers, competitors, government agencies, non-governmental organizations, and others across various countries (Etemad, Wright, & Dana, 2001).

These networks serve as crucial conduits for information, resources, and support that ease the way in which entrepreneurs can identify and consequently pursue international opportunities (Ellis, 2011). International entrepreneurs who network, receive access to relevant information about foreign markets. This includes consumer trends, changes in regulation, and competitive dynamics required for making well-informed decisions about both entry into and expansion in a particular market (Johanson & Vahlne, 2009). International entrepreneurs can thus be seen to depend on their networks in identifying business opportunities and competitive advantages. By connecting with diversified groups of people and organizations, entrepreneurs can have access to a wide range of ideas, technologies, and business models that facilitate innovation. (Autio, Sapienza & Almeida, 2000). This exposure to diverse perspectives can lead to innovative solutions to business challenges that would enable an entrepreneur to create differentiated products and services on the global market (Zahra, Ireland, & Hitt, 2000). Additionally, as stated in 1992 by Burt through the theory of structural holes, if an entrepreneur manages to bridge the gaps between disconnected networks, they can access diverse resources, and facilitate innovation and competitive advantage. By acting as a bridge, entrepreneurs can control the flow of information and resources. This positioning makes them indispensable connectors and thereby enhances their resource acquisition capabilities (Burt, 1992). Networks may also create access to new opportunities by connecting entrepreneurs to potential partners, customers, and investors who are otherwise beyond reach (Mort & Weerawardena, 2006). In addition, networks can provide an entrepreneurs with information on local business practices,

negotiation styles, and even legal requirements. Overall, this reduces the risks and costs associated with international expansion (Kiss, Danis, & Cavusgil, 2012).

2.2.2 Theoretical Background on entrepreneurial Traits

According to Aldrich and Zimmer (1986), the concept of social networks is a relatively new paradigm within the scope of entrepreneurship studies, having emerged largely as a criticism and revision of previously dominant ideas. Entrepreneurship has been generally dominated by three types of traditional theories: those focusing on personality traits, those focusing on socio-cultural backgrounds, and those focusing on economic factors (Aldrich & Zimmer, 1986).

Trait-based theories argue that the specific bunch of inborn personal traits predispose certain individuals to successful entrepreneurship. Previous studies have identified certain frequently recognized qualities. The first personality attribute, extensively studied by McClelland (1961) and further researched by Singh (1989), is the need for achievement, referring to what encourages people to set and reach difficult goals, the hallmark of entrepreneurial ambition. According to Brockhaus (1980b), the attribute of high-risk propensity is equally important. Entrepreneurs who possess this trait never avoid situations of loss, instead they transform them into situations that result in high rewards. Third, according to several studies by Brockhaus (1975, 1980a, 1980b), an internal locus of control is also highly associated with risk-taking. Those who have a well-defined internal locus of control think that their actions provide them a lot of power or influence over the situation, which is important given the chaotic and uncertain conditions that many entrepreneurs experience.

Beyond these core traits, some other traits can also be attributed to the profile of an entrepreneur. Ambition is frequently associated with success and leadership in a certain sector, while aggressiveness is defined as boldness in the pursuit of commercial possibilities or conquering a challenge. Emotional stability allows an entrepreneur to remain calm and think clearly under stress. Most importantly, self-assurance helps entrepreneurs overcome the inevitable failures and rejections. Competitiveness is what makes an entrepreneur want to become much better than their competitors and to keep on innovating. Another important characteristic is a tolerance for stress since the route of entrepreneurship is packed with high-pressure moments and the chance of failure. Punctuality and dependability build trust with partners, investors, and customers, which is important for the success of business as well. Independence and a sense of autonomy are crucial since most of the time, the entrepreneur must do things for themselves rather than rely on the advice of others. Finally, leadership skills are

not just about taking risks, but also about encouraging a team to work toward a common goal (Singh 1989; Hornaday & About 1971; De Carlo & Lyons 1979; Komives 1972). These traits have been identified at different stages of the entrepreneurial journey, sometimes at the commencement, and sometimes even after business establishment. This variation leaves some critical questions on whether these traits are a cause or a result of entrepreneurial success, while some studies suggest that this may be a bidirectional relationship (Foss, 1989).

Moving beyond individual traits, socio-cultural theories examine how entrepreneurial activity is influenced by the larger social and cultural contexts. These theories suggest that some groups are structurally predisposed to be successful entrepreneurs because they possess a set of cultural values, norms, and religious beliefs that encourage business activities (Aldrich & Zimmer, 1986). Among these characteristics is a focus on hard work and personal responsibility. Cultures that value hard work and personal accountability tend to cultivate a work ethic that is extremely beneficial to corporate success. Furthermore, the emphasis on individualism in some cultures fosters an environment in which personal initiative and independence are highly prized; these are critical characteristics for commercial success (Calza, Cannavale & Nadali, 2020).

Another equally essential value is appreciation or respect for other successful entrepreneurs. Societies that value entrepreneurial achievement and raise the stature of successful entrepreneurs not only encourage others to do the same, but also serve as role models for aspiring entrepreneurs. This cultural admiration can lead to more entrepreneurial activity as individuals want to emulate these outstanding people (Urbanová & Dundelová, 2013). Additionally, community support is another critical factor that also minimizes corporate risks. This may be in the form of communal efforts to assist local businesses, which would foster a climate of support for future entrepreneurial ventures. Similarly, a supportive attitude toward sharing or borrowing manufacturing equipment may reduce entry barriers for new businesses who would otherwise have to make significant initial expenditures (Bwisa & Ndolo, 2011).

Finally, expert advice is another indispensable factor. Cultures that value knowledge dissemination and mentorship provide vital advice to aspiring entrepreneurs as they navigate various complicated challenges connected with beginning and sustaining a firm (Gustaffson, 1985; Geertz, 1963). Studies have also examined how societal norms and restrictions influence entrepreneurial activity. Local support, for example, may be crucial in overcoming bureaucratic or social barriers. Moreover, in some cases societal limitations may dictate whether entrepreneurial activity is socially acceptable or feasible (Barth, 1972; Fleming, 1979).

The impact of ethnicity and group membership on entrepreneurship, particularly among immigrant populations, has also been a focus among researchers. According to research, Korean immigrants in most major U.S. cities and Indian immigrants in the United Kingdom rely on their community networks and cultural characteristics to run successful businesses (Light, 1972; Aldrich et al, 1983). As a result, these findings suggest that immigrant groups will have distinct entrepreneurial advantages such as strong community ties and a strong work ethic, which might help them in their entrepreneurial endeavors.

Lastly, economic theories have historically minimized the relevance of entrepreneurship, sometimes treating it as an exogenous factor within broadly defined models of economic growth. Such treatment has sparked intense debate among economists and academics over the appropriate approach to entrepreneurship, which is inextricably related to economic dynamics (Hirschman, 1958; Dedekam, 1977; Kent, 1982). Critics believe that traditional economic models are inherently faulty because they tend to undervalue the role of entrepreneurs in economic systems. Casson (1991) disputed these classic economic assumptions, particularly the core concept that information is abundant and symmetrically available to all market players. The researcher compares such assumptions with the realities of the problems that entrepreneurs face daily, such as severely limited access to vital market and industry data, which can cripple an entrepreneur's capacity to make good decisions and create strategies. Another flaw in classic economic theories is that they disregard the impact of social settings on entrepreneurial activity. According to Coleman (1988), economic models frequently fail to account for the reality that entrepreneurs operate in social networks that provide both resources and opportunities, as well as limitations and expectations that determine the outcome of entrepreneurial activity. Naturally, traditional economic perspectives offered alternatives. In contrast to these traditional economic views, Joseph Schumpeter (1934) placed a considerable emphasis on the role of the entrepreneur in economic development. His research combines economic, psychological, and social elements to create a more comprehensive picture of the entrepreneurial function. According to Schumpeter, this theory encourages entrepreneurs to think creatively and innovatively rather than just profitably. A process he saw as critical to industrial and economic progress (Oakley, 1990). This viewpoint marked a shift from considering entrepreneurship only in terms of risk and profit to understanding it as a fundamental driver of economic transformation. Mark Granovetter (1985) also identified a weakness in the economic approach to entrepreneurship, the common tendency in economic theories to over atomize or over socialize the importance of social variables. He claimed that, whereas conventional economic

theories represent the entrepreneur as a lone calculator of self-interest, they ignore the far richer tapestry of social relationships that profoundly impact entrepreneurial action. Social theories, on the other hand, are more likely to swing far too far in the opposite direction, implying that entrepreneurs are a product of their social circumstances while downplaying the human agency and inventive potential that distinguish successful entrepreneurial ventures (Bandura, 2006).

2.3 Network Establishment

2.3.1 Definition Networks and Network Analysis

Coleman (1988) suggested that social networks are an inherent component of an entrepreneur's social capital. According to Burt (1997), social capital is a result of human interaction and the structure of relationships between individuals or organizations. This is a key topic for understanding how future entrepreneurs might make the greatest use of their social networks to optimize their earnings.

Social network, as described by Mitchell (1962), "may be specified as a specific set of linkages among a defined set of persons," implying that it has a clear, ordered structure of interactions that goes well beyond short-lived contacts. What distinguishes these links as members of someone's social network is a degree of permanency; one does not consider himself to have grown to know someone based on a quick, short-lived meeting with them. Networks are therefore described as persistent social relationships, with corresponding structural elements that contribute to eliciting socially important actions among network players (Greve & Foss, 1990).

Social network analysis may be approached from two main perspectives: the holistic network view and the ego-centered network view. A holistic network analysis gives insight into the network's overall structure and connectivity, demonstrating how groups are interconnected and how information or resources might move on a large scale. On the other hand, ego-centered network analysis examines the network from the perspective of a certain individual inside the network; this individual is known as the ego. This does not require comprehensive data on the whole network, but rather concentrates on the direct and indirect relationships accessible to the individual of interest. This is the most valuable approach for understanding personal influence and the function of the immediate social environment in an individual's actions (Aldrich & Zimmer, 1986).

Redundancy and density are two fundamental concepts that are frequently addressed in the context of an ego-centered network. The two notions are significant because they provide crucial information about the workings of the network in which this ego is positioned. The former refers to the overlap in an ego's interactions. In other words, if there are many contacts, the network becomes very redundant. This means that the ego may get the same piece of information or resource from many sources. Such redundancy may be beneficial in terms of ensuring dependable resource access, but it may also be detrimental to the system's effectiveness and efficiency. Density measures network tightness by comparing existing links to the maximum number of feasible ties within an ego's network section. High-density networks are densely interwoven, and members are likely to be connected to one another. Such proximity can facilitate quick, rapid, and effective communication and resource sharing, but it is likely to come at the price of idea homogeneity and limited exposure to different external sources. Advanced density metrics consider the degree of proximity among linkages, which can vary greatly in strength (Aldrich & Zimmer, 1986).

The examination of dyads provides further assistance in assessing the network's relationships. Such a dyadic analysis aids in comprehending the multiple relationships that exist in the network for individual pairings. Each dyadic relationship may be evaluated using a variety of criteria, including strong and multiple connections between nodes. The strength of a dyadic relationship is determined by several qualitative elements, including the intensity of friendship, its depth, level of trust, frequency of interaction, and the connection's overall longevity. All these qualities would probably strengthen the connection, indicating a possibility for exchange and support in a partnership (Granovetter, 1973; Krackhardt, 1992).

The central elements in social network theory are nodes and relationships or links (see figure 1) (Jenssen, 1999). Together, these two parts form the network structure (Paasche et al., 1993).

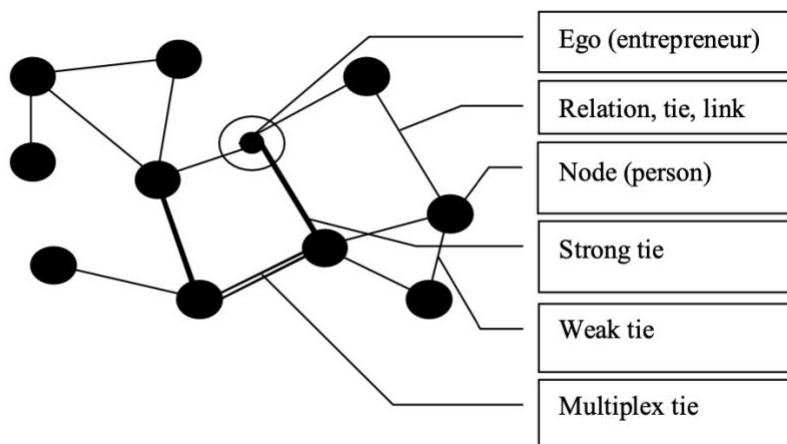


Figure 1: Jensen's Nodes and Links in Network Perspective

The figure depicts strong ties (indicating strong relationships) as a thick line and weak ties as a narrow line. Multiplicity is drawn in Figure 1 as two parallel lines. Multiplicity indicates the number of different relationships between two persons, while also referring to the different ways in which two people interact—for example, as friends, coworkers, and relatives—which adds layers to their contact. It also suggests that diversity of jobs will provide encounters with additional layers of connectedness and collaboration (Jenssen, 1999).

On an individual level, elements such as the number of relationships an entrepreneur has, also known as degree centrality or network size, contribute to determining an entrepreneur's social standing (Scott, 1991). The significance of social networks in entrepreneurship has become increasingly recognized during the last few decades. These networks are seen as foundational to entrepreneurial success because they embed the entrepreneur within a matrix of ongoing social relationships that facilitate or restrict access to resources and opportunities (Aldrich & Zimmer, 1986).

Johannisson (1988) went one step further in his conceptual development of social networks. He emphasized their effectiveness in both originating or selecting a company concept and organizing business operations, arguing that acting professionally within social networks enables an entrepreneur to access financial and material resources. Furthermore, the networks may improve the entrepreneur's cognitive and emotional resources, as well as his self-confidence, which is required for participation in entrepreneurial activities (Johannisson, 1988). According to Johannisson, businesses emerge as intermediaries within a network or as outdated methods of leveraging network resources.

As a result, the ability to establish and sustain personal networks may be the essence of the entrepreneurial network; hence, this makes the social network perspective particularly valuable. Although Aldrich and Zimmer (1986) argue that the social network perspective makes other analytical perspectives obsolete, the social network perspective's growing prominence is most likely due to its ability to integrate and extend existing insights, whether psychological or sociological, about the nature of entrepreneurship. Johannisson (1986) agreed with this viewpoint and goes on to say that the social network approach successfully bridges both micro and macro levels of analysis, as well as reconciling deterministic and voluntaristic theories, by providing an extensive framework of explanation that describes the great diversity in the behaviors of individuals within the same cultural and psychological milieu.

This review delves into three main parts—network structure, network content, and network governance—to examine how networks operate and what it means for entrepreneurs.

2.3.2 Importance of networks for resource acquisition, knowledge exchange, and market access.

The right resources are needed for entrepreneurial success, especially for those entrepreneurs who operate their businesses in an international environment. The required resources are diverse and can range from human talent to financial capital or technological assets. It is safe to say that the acquisition of resources for both opportunity and necessity better enables the entrepreneur to exploit market opportunities. Networking enables entrepreneurs to acquire the right resources by connecting them with the right people in their search for the necessary resources (Foss, 1994). Entrepreneurship: The impact of human capital, a social network, and business resources on start-up. Aldrich and Zimmer (1986) also confirmed that networks provide entrepreneurs with social capital, which compensates for the resource constraints that many new ventures face.

As defined by Nahapiet and Ghoshal (1998), the social capital inherent in networks is the sum of the actual and potential resources embedded within. Apparently, social capital can act as a bridge to critical resources that are otherwise inaccessible. This enables entrepreneurs to leverage their network ties to secure investments, partnerships, and human resources. However, the quality of network relationships also plays a huge role in resource acquisition. Yli-Renko, Autio, and Tontti (2002) elaborate how networks contribute to the acquisition of resources through relational embeddedness. Seemingly the strength and quality of network relationships can significantly impact the flow of resources to the entrepreneur. Naturally, strong, and trust-

based relationships facilitate access to more valuable and diverse resources. Therefore, relational embeddedness aids in overcoming the initial resource constraints and supports the venture's growth and international expansion efforts for entrepreneurs. Additionally, Granovetter's (1985) concept of the strength of weak ties highlights the value of broad networks, suggesting that weak ties, or acquaintances, are more likely to provide new opportunities and access to resources than strong ties, or close relationships. This is because weak ties connect us to a wider range of networks, thereby broadening our access to resources that are not available in our immediate circle (Granovetter, 1985).

Next to the acquisition of resources, knowledge exchange is also an important aspect to consider when discussing the importance of networks. The information that entrepreneurs need and can obtain is quite diverse. It can range from local market insights and operational best practices to tacit knowledge obtained through experiments. According to Polanyi (1966) tacit knowledge is intuitive, nonverbalized, and unarticulated knowledge, therefore it is difficult to communicate. Having the ability to exchange information should decrease the time and expenses related to acquiring knowledge in new markets. This could perhaps accelerate and improve decision-making. The researchers Inkpen and Tsang (2005) emphasize the significance of network connections in facilitating the exchange of tacit information, which is frequently ingrained in cultural norms and local market practices.

Social interactions are crucial for international entrepreneurs who want to adapt their business models and plans to suit the conditions of the local environment. The concept of absorptive capacity, as introduced by Cohen and Levinthal (1990), shows that companies have the capability to recognize the value of new information, incorporate it, and apply it to their business endeavors. Networks have the potential to enhance a company's capacity to acquire new knowledge by granting access to a wide range of external information sources, thereby fostering innovation and adaptability (Cohen & Levinthal, 1990). Entrepreneurs typically gain insights into trends, consumer preferences, and technological advancements through collaboration with partners, suppliers, consumers, and competitors. Simultaneously, learning through networks involves not only the acquisition of existing information but also working together to create entirely new knowledge. In their study, Egbetokun, Savin, and Wyrwich (2020) delve into the concept of collaborative innovation in networks. They examine how entrepreneurs can work together with various entities such as companies, academic institutes, and competitors to collectively generate new ideas and solutions. This cooperative approach

accelerates the process of generating innovative ideas and solutions, and at the same time, enhances the business's ability to adjust to market changes and technological disruptions.

Before dealing with resource acquisition and the exchange of information, entrepreneurs need to get access to the new market they try to tackle. This can be challenging since entry barriers to unfamiliar markets can be high, even though the market opportunity is already identified. Entrepreneurs are, in this case, challenged to establish legitimacy and trust in those new markets. Ellis (2000) pointed out that networks can significantly reduce the "liability of foreignness" by providing entrepreneurs with local market knowledge, introductions to key stakeholders, and insights into regulatory requirements. Reducing this liability should be particularly valuable in markets with high entry barriers where local knowledge is critical for business success. The social capital can be derived from the network of relationships and plays an important role in overcoming market entry barriers (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998). Therefore, in theory, social capital should ease the path to market entry through for example introductions to key stakeholders, endorsements from local authorities, and collaborations with local firms.

Tuschke, Sanders, and Hernandez (2014) also provided evidence that international companies might benefit from networks by increasing their legitimacy and reputation in new markets. The scientists discussed the concept of institutional legitimacy, where ventures gain acceptance and trust through their affiliations with reputable organizations and key industry players within their networks (Tuschke, Sanders & Hernandez, 2014). Gaining the trust of local consumers, partners, and authorities is crucial for gaining traction in the market and for expanding operations across borders. Finally, successful market penetration relies on adapting goods and services to local requirements and preferences. To achieve this, international entrepreneurs should make use of networks as channels for market intelligence to gain the necessary local insights.

2.3.3 Network Structure: Describe the configuration of these networks, including density, diversity, and strength of ties.

The way social structures function and how they steer entrepreneurial activity is important in terms of a network perspective of entrepreneurship. The complex interrelationships between the network's participants have a significant impact on resource allocation and, as a result, new venture success. The number of ties the entrepreneur has, or network size, is a key indicator of networks' facilitative potential in resource access. Aldrich and Reese (1993) and Hansen and Witkowski (1995) discovered that network size enables an entrepreneur to access key resources.

Vissa and Chacar (2009) expanded on the value of network size at the team and organizational levels, claiming that a firm's alliance portfolio is an essential proxy for network size and a valuable resource acquisition tool. However, Wassmer (2010) and Vassolo et al. (2004) observe that the advantages of increasing network size might plateau owing to duplication, emphasizing the importance of cautious planned network construction.

Centrality, on the other hand, considers all types of connectivity in an actor's network resource access and control capabilities, including the network's strategic position within a complex picture of access to resources and information on the inside of the network from a central location. This translates into significantly increased access to resources and information and is shown by Granovetter's (1973) idea of weak ties and the potential of linkages that the entrepreneur's local network does not access. The justification for these relationships is that they may serve as gateways to additional information and opportunities. Similarly, Burt's (1992) idea of structural holes is all about bridging structural gaps in the network so that entrepreneurs may obtain access to a broader range of nonredundant resources and information. Baum et al. (2000) demonstrate how enterprises may reduce competitive overlap and maximize network value by fostering collaboration with intermediaries across an industrial value chain. In this case, they are better positioned to benefit from a higher level of complementarity. Evald et al. (2006) investigated how personal networks use weak ties in practice, focusing on their function in promoting monetary rather than relational interactions. As argued by Bae et al. (2011), this is even more supported since worldwide alliances, particularly across larger geographical regions, have encouraged the flow of ideas and expertise, resulting in the formation of new enterprises. Entrepreneurial learning and performance can be measured using the idea of network brokerage, which considers the density and diversity of network interactions. This is why research suggests that networks with low density and high variability are better equipped to attract new ideas and resources, emphasizing the need of purposefully developing diverse and vast networks.

The idea of structured holes, developed by Burt in 1992, explains the lack of links between nodes in a network, giving unique opportunities for players with the ability to bridge structural gaps. Bridging structural voids entails connecting previously unconnected nodes, so providing pathways for the transmission of information and other resources. As Burt (1992) argued, actors benefit the most from this form of bridging because it improves their capacity to identify and capitalize on new chances by exposing them to a variety of nonredundant connections.

Krackhardt (1995) then expanded on the power and influence that individuals in these bridge roles obtain, highlighting the strategic value of molding the entire network. The requirement for improved entrepreneurial organization performance drives firms to leverage brokerage partnerships to promote learning and enhance internal skills.

Baum et al. (2000) and Zaheer and McEvily (1999) showed how organizations may learn to successfully handle brokerage relationships in their networks, resulting in innovation and growth. The approach involves integrating direct and indirect links to capture the overall structure of the network's cross-cutting linkages. This method emphasizes the variety and complexities of network interaction for entrepreneurial enterprises. Researchers have utilized indicators like as network density and contact heterogeneity to assist analyze a company's strategic position within the network for implementing brokerage.

These findings are congruent with those of Burt and Raider (2000) and Zaheer and McEvily (1999), who found that fewer linked networks may allow for greater innovation-generating possibilities due to the function that low network density plays in promoting the introduction of new resources. Baum et al. (2000), Hara and Kanai (1994), Silverman and Baum (2002), and Zhao and Aram (1995) all stressed the importance of heterogeneity among network contacts in providing access to a diverse range of resources and information. To challenge the network's homogeneity, entrepreneurs might boost variety while decreasing density by immersing themselves in other types of organizations (Davis et al., 2006). This strategy may be expanded to improve the entrepreneur's access to fresh market insights and opportunities, hence increasing the possibility of acquiring unique resources. Since it is difficult to obtain complete data on network links, several approaches to quantifying network diversity have been developed, including the position generator methodology.

This approach is also utilized by Batjargal (2006), Davis et al. (2006), and Mosey and Wright (2007) to analyze the extent of variability in network content along the stated functional or occupational variants. Kirkels and Duysters (2010) employed snowball sampling approaches to derive brokerage connections inside networks, demonstrating how research methodologies may respond to challenges such as data collection limits. This discussion highlights the crucial significance of strategic network positioning in supporting entrepreneurial success by addressing the processes via which network structure effects resource flows and performance.

2.3.4 Network Content: Discuss the types of resources exchanged within these networks, including information, financial capital, and social support.

In the entrepreneurial environment, it is often necessary to establish partnerships with firms to have access to certain resources. The concept of network content analyzes this web of interactions by diving into the specifics of these exchanges. It refers to the content that is exchanged through this web of relationships. This theory exemplifies the role of networks in giving financial resources to entrepreneurs, which include angel and venture capital investments, as well as other types of resources like operational assistance and competitive intelligence. A founder's network is more than just a source of funding; it also provides information and guidance, which are critical for any entrepreneur. According to Freeman (1999) and further explored by Shane and Cable (2002) in their examination of the role of networks in securing venture funding, engaging with venture capitalists and professional service firms through these networks opens doors to valuable talent and market insights. In general, entrepreneurs rely heavily on information-gathering processes and idea generation, which are the result of social connections' interaction in networks, to uncover and, eventually, exploit business opportunities. Anderson, Dodd, and Jack (2005) and Ozgen and Baron (2007) indicated that social interactions play a fundamental role in finding opportunities, whereas networks play a substantial part in gathering information for international growth efforts. Tang (2011) and Ellis (2000) have also stressed the importance of network ties in increasing a firm's knowledge of experience and facilitating a better grasp of foreign markets. Additionally, networks might provide access to intangible assets (Allee, 2002). For example, entrepreneurs receive emotional support through network links, which increases their willingness to take risks. This is seen as a critical aspect in maintaining organizational dedication and success (Gimeno, Folta, Cooper, & Woo, 1997). The two parts of such transactions, namely the role-based and emotive aspects, increase the quality and intensity of the relationship with the system (Brüderl & Preisendörfer, 1998).

In addition, it is worth considering how a professional network can benefit people that are trying to start a venture and are in the process of transitioning into being an entrepreneur. An individual's network enables the launch of new businesses by modeling and shaping an individual's entrepreneurial identity to fit social expectations (Hoang & Gimeno, 2010). Research by Nicolaou and Birley (2003) showed that people would be inclined towards entrepreneurial job opportunities and venture creation if many positive relationships extend beyond their structural holes or weak ties. Kacperczyk (2013) and Nanda & Sorenson (2010)

stated that the role models in networks had an impact on entrepreneurial transitions, which is consistent with this idea. Noting differences across various national settings, Klyver, Hindle, and Meyer (2008) provide additional validation of the influence of entrepreneurial networks on venture initiation.

On the other hand, some research has focused on the limitations of networks. Certain connections can unintentionally keep people in their present jobs and make it harder for them to become entrepreneurs (Kreiser et al., 2013; Hoang & Gimeno, 2010). This shows that a full and balanced networking strategy is necessary. This strategy should foster adaptability and support how entrepreneurial transitions in complex networks work.

Networks further transfer reputational value as a way of communicating to other members of the network and potential resource owners. Since the entrepreneurial environment is characterized by high degrees of uncertainty and volatility, such signals represent a heuristic for the attractiveness of a business and attract potential investors and strategic partners (Deeds et al., 1997; Elfring & Hulsink, 2003). According to Higgins and Gulati (2003) and Stuart et al. (1999), entrepreneurs use these networks to legitimize their businesses and lower the perceived risks. Many studies have shown that networks are instrumental in helping firms to grow and penetrate new markets, especially at a time when market conditions are unpredictable. This also demonstrates the rather complex relationship that appears to thrive between networks and entrepreneurial success (Gulati & Higgins, 2003; Ozmel, Reuer, & Gulati, 2013).

2.3.5 Network Governance: Explore how these networks are regulated and maintained, focusing on trust, reciprocity, and mutual benefits.

Entrepreneurial network governance refers to any processes that underpin and facilitate the interchange and coordination of resources among network participants. Naturally, trust is the foundation for any resource exchange and cooperation. Larson (1992) and Lorenzoni and Lipparini (1999) underlined the critical significance of trust in providing higher-quality and more efficient interactions within a network. They also stated that trust-based interactions promote efficient and consistent resource flow. This notion is supported by a wide range of researchers who refer to "implicit and open-ended contracts," which are naturally supported by social mechanisms such as power, influence, the threat of ostracism, and reputational damage (Brass, 1984; Krackhardt, 1990; Thorelli, 1986; Jones et al., 1997; Portes & Sensenbrenner, 1998). Social contracts and trust appear to provide visible benefits to network orchestration when contrasted with more bureaucratic or market-based coordination (Jarillo, 1988; Lipparini

& Lorenzoni, 1993). Elements of governance, such as these, are frequently believed to deliver significant cost savings by reducing the need for formal supervision and enabling more flexible and supple coordinating methods (Starr & MacMillan, 1990; Jones et al., 1997; Thorelli, 1986). Furthermore, trust based on belief in a partner's dependability and adherence to agreements is expected to lower the transaction costs of monitoring and negotiating reciprocity in complex-task and time-pressured situations (Pruitt, 1981; Das and Teng, 1998; Powell, 1990; Uzzi, 1997). However, trust influences the density and quality of exchange linkages, particularly information sharing and the possibility of knowledge spillovers within geographically limited clusters (Hite, 2003; Lorenzoni and Lipparini, 1999; Saxenian, 1991). The interactions found in this example, as well as in Uzzi's (1997) qualitative research, stretch the boundaries of information transmission beyond transactional details to innovativeness and interfirm collaboration (Häusler et al., 1994).

An entrepreneurial network requires a lot of management based on social contracts and trust, yet formal contracts are also necessary. However, these legal procedures cannot be implemented unless the various types of governance arrangements are established. The complexities of contract provisions, as well as the strategic significance of ownership in equity agreements, point to a more nuanced balance of trust and formal governance systems (Robinson & Stuart, 2007). Firms with a greater level of mutual trust are more likely to form strategic alliances rather than equity-based ones, emphasizing the strategic role of trust in determining contractual complexity and coordination costs (Reuer et al., 2006). For example, family enterprises with high levels of organizational social capital are more likely to have significant ownership stakes in projects begun by outsiders (Zahra, 2010). This shows that these arrangements promote learning, opportunity awareness, and growth via weak relationships. Furthermore, this conclusion is consistent with Parmigiani and Rivera-Santos (2011) proposal for future study in corporate governance addressing their strategic goals, namely the likelihood that governance tools are employed to assist businesses' exploration/exploitation interests. This is because new entrants and small enterprises frequently find themselves in circumstances where they have limited bargaining power and, as a result, are interested in negotiating contract terms that benefit them. Adegbesan and Higgins (2010) investigated the factors of heightened bargaining power—relative scarcity, greater complementarity, and negotiating ability—and how these affect contractual terms in favor of new enterprises. The bargaining position of these small businesses is strengthened by alliances with other small businesses by forming associations, as these associations can then negotiate better terms on their behalf, reducing

contract termination rates by franchisors, non-compete periods, and contract lengths (Argyres & Bercovitz, 2013). In this context, smaller enterprises within the entrepreneurial ecosystem might serve as useful examples of how network governance mechanisms can be strategically exploited to level the playing field. On the other hand, the involvement of enterprises in creating wealth may only be beneficial to them if specific conditions are met, such as negotiated claims, contractual requirements, and monitoring and liquidation rights (Kaplan & Strömberg, 2003). This is especially true in the entrepreneurial area, which is widely seen as dynamic and unpredictable. Furthermore, research in contract design integrating relational and structural aspects is critical for deducing bargaining power and value capture in networks, as firms engage in frequent negotiations with partners (Ryall & Sampson, 2009).

2.3.6 Networks and Resources

In general, research on the importance of social networks in entrepreneurship assumes that these networks are significant primarily because they provide access to necessary resources at the start-up stage. This relationship between social networks and resource access is also related to resource dependence theory, which was initially articulated by Thompson (1967) and considerably extended by Pfeffer and Salancik (1978). This theory states that open systems, such as organizations, rely on the environment in a variety of ways, including crucial resources required for input supply and an outlet for product distribution. The primary assumption behind resource dependence theory is that companies must minimize uncertainty by gaining control over vital resources (Greve, 1995).

Teece (1986) analyzed the significance of complementary assets in the commercialization of innovations, arguing that it is not specific technical or business know-how that is required, but rather the ability to rely on the assistance of many other additional resources. Whether it is the distribution networks or complementary technology, complementary assets are required to launch a new business. In such circumstances, social networks may be quite useful for acquiring access to critical resources. They may facilitate the process of obtaining necessary partnerships or, in fact, assist in the emergence of a new business idea by, for example, connecting crucial contact individuals with entrepreneurs who have or know where they can obtain such vital resources.

Although social networks have been regarded essential in the entrepreneurial literature as a form of resource access, more recent research have advanced the incorporation of such interactions into resource dependence theory. Scholars such as Foss (1994) began their research

in the field by evaluating how the ties are linked, implying that it is possible to regulate the social network for resource acquisition. According to a resource dependence perspective, the success of entrepreneurial initiatives is frequently dependent on the capacity of such networks to provide timely and effective acquisition of necessary resources, which can assist an entrepreneur in dealing with the extremely unpredictable early phases of firm development.

Johannisson (1988) broadened the subject by applying resource dependence theory to a network-based approach in the context of entrepreneurial activity. According to him, while new companies specialize on core capabilities, they must manage a wide range of resources to sustain operations and development. He argued that the power and flexibility afforded by personal networks provide the entrepreneur with the ideal combination of characteristics when confronted with complex difficulties (Johannisson,1988). As a result of their strategic value, networks are used not only for resource acquisition, but also for resource management, ensuring that resources are utilized in a manner that contributes to the firm's strategic goals.

The asset parsimony idea is frequently mentioned in discussions about strategic management. Ansoff (1979) and other business strategy thinkers would emphasize the notion of purchasing the bare minimum of assets at the lowest feasible cost in order to effectively achieve corporate objectives. A personal network exemplifies that notion for entrepreneurs (Zhao & Aram, 1995), enabling access to resources for a fraction of the cost of acquisition. In addition, it is more adaptable than traditional procurement procedures.

Personal networks serve as a dynamic resource pool from which entrepreneurs can draw as needed, lowering overhead costs, and increasing flexibility in the face of changing market conditions. This type of strategic network exploitation might be especially beneficial for young companies, which must operate within strict budgetary limits.

Social networks and resources are highlighted in entrepreneurship studies because they broaden the discussion beyond the formal limits of a corporation. For example, access to information and resources through official channels may be prohibitively expensive unless you have personal relationships to people who work outside of the immediate commercial environment (Dubini and Aldrich 1991, p. 306). Building ties outside of an organization's official bounds can dramatically reduce time and expense limits, which may be especially useful to nascent firms with limited financial resources.

It should be noted, however, that the resource dependency perspective and the social network approach have distinct focuses. According to Johannisson (1986), the social network approach emphasizes reciprocity and mutual commitment in environmental links, whereas resource dependence theory focuses on resource control and management. This fundamental distinction highlights the unique contributions of each approach to the study of entrepreneurship.

2.4 The U.S. Context

In today's economic world, the United States remains a rich and vibrant environment for overseas entrepreneurs seeking to create and grow their businesses. This chapter focuses on the United States, with a review of the unique opportunities and difficulties that come with them. Networks are viewed as a type of social capital flow that provides a range of possibilities while also assisting the entrepreneur in accessing or navigating the threats of an unfamiliar business environment (Simen, 2013). These networks have now been formed to construct personal, business transactional, and informational frameworks that are critical in cultivating and realizing entrepreneurial success in a multicultural and competitive terrain such as the United States (Simen, 2013). It is therefore very important for international entrepreneurs to establish and make use of very good professional networks in the United States. The difference between success and failure is sometimes decided by the right connections and understanding of the market and regulatory landscape. As a result, it is critical for overseas entrepreneurs to successfully integrate into the existing network of investors, industry professionals, and other entrepreneurs. Collaborating with transnational entrepreneurs who have technological know-how, and an entrepreneurial mentality enables international entrepreneurs to fully benefit from technology breakthroughs and capitalize on market opportunities (Liu, 2017). These transnational entrepreneurs, who usually have huge international social capital, are important for rapid globalization of new business (Liu, 2017).

The usage of business incubators or professional associations is an important aspect of developing business relationship ties in the United States. This support includes money, mentoring, collaborative workplaces, and networking. Incubator or association assistance might take the shape of workplace resources or consultancy services, which assist companies in solidifying their business models and development strategy. Research has shown that personalized support from incubators and other forms of associations can accelerate the learning curve and strategic development of startups (Awonuga et al., 2024). In most cases, incubators combine governmental support with participation in the private sector; in other words, they

demonstrate the United States' collaborative ecosystem. Startups sponsored by such organizations tend to be more viable and sustainable (Awonuga et al., 2024).

Another important aspect that will be discussed is the usage of digital platforms for networking. Studies here have demonstrated that an international entrepreneur's relationship portfolio and expansion may be effectively managed through the active use of cyberspace (Sigfusson et al., 2012). Using digital tools, they can classify hundreds of contacts they might use in the future and retrieve them when required. This is how the foundation for company internationalization is established (Sigfusson et al., 2012).

In the U.S. market context, networking does not stop at the national level but expands beyond the national level to adopt a global perspective. International entrepreneurs have improved access to public information, which is beneficial for international operations, as well as a better awareness of their country's customer demands, which will strengthen worldwide networking (Vinogradov et al., 2016). In addition to the universal perspective, the ability to exploit transnational networking provides a competitive edge for rapid internationalization (Vinogradov et al., 2016). Networks can be an opportunity to navigate the U.S. market dynamics, potentially providing international entrepreneurs with a competitive advantage.

It is also important to learn how to navigate through the U.S. regulatory landscape. While the United States has a thriving startup environment, its regulatory requirements are also quite complicated. Business incubators, associations and networks usually provide some access to professionals who may assist with negotiating regulatory barriers, which are critical for market entrance and long-term success (Awonuga et al., 2024).

The following sections will go on to detail the U.S. entrepreneurial landscape, focusing on aspects that have an impact on the success of the international entrepreneur. This part will explore the business culture and practices of the U.S., the legal and economic environments, and the critical role of different networks in fostering entrepreneurial success. By examining these in more detail, it should be possible to gain a comprehensive understanding of the opportunities and challenges that international entrepreneurs face in the United States, as well as the strategies that such entrepreneurs may employ to successfully navigate and compete in that dynamic environment.

2.4.1 Differences in Business Culture and Practices between the German and the U.S. entrepreneurial Landscape

To better understand the usage and establishment of professional networks by entrepreneurs in the U.S., it is important to analyze the fundamental differences between Germany and the U.S. in business culture and practices. The United States is known for its high level of individualistic culture which promotes innovative and risk-taking behavior. The entrepreneurial culture in the United States places a lot of emphasis on individual achievement and independence. This reflects the country's broad cultural endorsement of individualism. Entrepreneurs in the United States are often driven by a desire for independence and a desire to build a network of flexible, opportunistic contacts (Grichnik, 2008). On the contrary, Germany is more collective, with a higher value placed on structured planning and risk mitigation. According to Hofstede (2001), entrepreneurs are often driven by a desire for independence and a desire to build a network of flexible, opportunistic contacts. German culture is centered on group dynamics, consensus-building, and the promotion of well-structured networks where relationships are built on trust and long-term ties. These characteristics are reflected in entrepreneurial behaviors and are influenced by national cultural characteristics, practices, values of "Do-it-Yourself" culture, and perfectionism that foster uncertainty avoidance and risk aversion (Aly & Galal-Edeen, 2020).



Figure 2 Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions - Germany vs. United States

To better understand the cultural differences of both countries, an in-depth analysis of Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions will provide further clarification.

Power Distance measures the extent to which less powerful members of organizations, accept and expect power to be distributed unequally. Individualism versus Collectivism assesses the integration of individuals into groups. Masculinity versus Femininity looks at the distribution of roles between genders. Uncertainty Avoidance measures the extent to which a society can tolerate uncertainty and ambiguity. Long-Term Orientation versus Short-Term Normative

Orientation reflects the focus of a culture on future rewards versus past and present values. Indulgence versus Restraint assesses the degree of freedom that societal norms give to citizens in fulfilling their human desires (Hofstede Insights, 2024).

Figure 2 shows the contrast in the cultural dimensions of the United States and Germany, especially regarding dimensions such as Individualism, Uncertainty Avoidance, and Indulgence.

First, the Power Distance in both countries is relatively low, which indicates the preference for egalitarianism and accessible interaction across corporate hierarchies. Yet, Germany has a slightly greater Power Distance, which would mean a business environment is more likely to have formal hierarchies and more focus on roles, protocols, and procedures. This formality in German networks frequently results in more controlled and consistent corporate relationships than the more informal and flexible American approach (Hofstede, 2023).

Furthermore, the United States scores very high in Individualism, which is reflected in the country's corporate culture of self-reliance and striving for individual success. It is reasonable to assume that U.S. entrepreneurs' network opportunistically, with the goal of establishing links that feed directly into their individual goals and responding quickly to new opportunities. Germany is more individualistic than the rest of the world, valuing long-term relationships and collective advantage. The chart indicates that German business relationships tend to be deep and stable, emphasizing loyalty and mutual support (Hofstede, 2023).

In both countries, the trend is towards Masculine values which include competitiveness and achievement. In the U.S., this is played out in highly energetic, and often aggressive, networking practices that will reward risk-taking and innovation. German networks, while quite competitive too, strike a better balance between career goals and personal life, therefore their style of networking is more measured and sustainability-focused (Hofstede, 2023).

When it comes to the Uncertainty Avoidance dimension, they differ significantly. Moderate scores, such as in the United States, indicate an approach to business that tolerates ambiguity and appreciates flexibility in ways that may encourage innovative forms of networking and entrepreneurial risk-taking. The high score on Uncertainty Avoidance in Germany on the other hand, indicates a cautious approach to business relationships, with networks relying on continual risk assessment and meticulous preparation (Hofstede, 2023).

Because the American society is geared toward short-term goals, it encourages extremely strong and closely knit networking, which, in certain situations, comes at the expense of long-term planning. Such an approach can result in rapid scaling of ventures but can also lead to a neglect of a long-term growth strategy. In contrast, the long-term orientation in German culture promotes very careful strategic planning in networking with a view toward durable business growth and solid market positioning (Hofstede, 2023).

Finally, American culture is indulgent, which contributes to the creation of a corporate atmosphere in which leisure and pleasure are not only tolerated, but also seen as essential to conducting business. Open and extensive social networks allow cultural influences to play an important role in the outcome of professional interactions. On the other side, Germany's restrained culture discourages immediate gratification of one's desires, leading to more formal environments in networking, where the professional and personal lives are kept separate (Hofstede, 2023).

The Silicon Valley adage that “failure is a stepping stone to success” captures the American mindset well. The American culture, which is more tolerant of risk and failure than the German culture, supports aggressive entrepreneurial ventures. This not only encourages risky entrepreneurial activities, but it also fosters a dynamic network environment in which short-term failures are disregarded in favor of long-term potential (Grichnik, 2008). The German business environment is inherently risk-averse, with failure carrying a significant stigma. This conservative approach always keeps the entrepreneurs on the run for a stable and reliable network connection which would ensure business security and slow development (Whitley & Windolf, 2003).

Naturally, the way networking is approached can also differ depending on the culture involved. In the U.S. networking is usually highly informal and relatively loose in terms of associational ties, but the payoff comes from the ability to obtain benefits from each other quickly. American entrepreneurs excel in using such networks to acquire fast access to a wide range of resources, including capital, strategic advice, and direct market access (Knoke et al., 1996). In contrast, the type of networking behavior that is described in Germany is far more formal and typically hierarchical. Further characteristics of German networks include their stability, formality, and their significant importance to the country's image and track record (Whitley & Windolf, 2003).

Additionally, certain differences can be identified in the way networks are utilized. U.S. entrepreneurs tend to use their networks strategically and primarily view them as a necessary tool for business innovation and market entry. Moreover, the high degree of innovation receptivity of the American market and the strong venture capital industry permit new venture growth at high speed through well-connected networks (Smith et al., 2013). In comparison, German entrepreneurs are more likely to take advantage of their networks for obtaining access to specialized knowledge and incremental innovation. Such networks would be necessary to reinforce existing market positions and to align strategic operations within well-defined industry norms (MacArthur, 2006).

Finally, the strong difference in networking styles and business practices should influence the way German entrepreneurs can successfully establish themselves in the US market. The adaptable and risk-tolerant American style can, on the one hand, serve as an opportunity but on the other hand, may present a challenge for German entrepreneurs getting accustomed to an entirely different business culture that contrasts sharply with the structured and risk-averse environment they are used to. Adaptation involves understanding and living the local business culture, building upon the existing networks, sometimes, strategically, to create new ones that might support business activity in a diverse environment. (Jackson & Wang, 2013).

2.4.2 Comparing the Legal and Economic Environments

When comparing startup ecosystems, the legal frameworks and economic situations in the United States and Germany might be regarded differently—each with its own set of advantages and disadvantages. It is important to consider these differences, because regulatory and economic variations between Germany and the US can significantly impact startup growth and networking (Weik, 2023).

Less regulated market systems in the United States foster an entrepreneurial and dynamic culture. This has traditionally been the kind of environment that Silicon Valley and its technology-focused markets feel most at ease in, with flexible state legislation and strong venture capital backing allowing for rapid, unconstrained expansion and development. The regulatory environment allows for necessary risk-taking within the fast-moving tech industry (Mazur, 2023). On the contrary, the German approach to the regulation of startups is more structured and relies on strong support mechanisms, such as co-working spaces, incubators, and strong ties with academic institutions. These factors are part of a larger framework meant to ensure thorough development and sustainability in the long term. However, the German system

is notably lacking in the kind of accelerator programs that are required in the American environment to fast-track the development of a firm in its early stages. The organized method may be supportive, but it is also limiting in a way that does not allow the agile networking critical for quick innovation and market penetration to occur (Geibel & Manickam, 2016).

Further, networking is observed to play a critical role in the success and growth of startups about access to resources, mentorship, and investment opportunities. For example, in the United States, a highly flexible networking model, both legislative and economic, encourages connections that will be critical in winning venture financing and potentially strategic collaborations. Such openness not only promotes rapid adaptation but also improves entrepreneurs' capacity to develop and grow quickly (Palagashvili, 2021). In comparison, German startups are more likely to gain access to a structured support system but are subject to greater bureaucratic hurdles that could stiffen and decrease the spontaneity and dynamics of the networking process. In fact, the emphasis on formality in networking environments such as trade shows or universities may limit exposure to other potential entrepreneurial ideas and spontaneous cooperative ventures that would otherwise be obvious in more open regulatory environments, such as the United States. This means that German companies develop more slowly at first and will need more time to attain the same degree of innovation as their American counterparts (Dopfer et al., 2015). In general, research has shown that startup accelerators influence, as open environments, startups' innovative performance within the regulatory and economic frameworks of Germany and the US. Del Sarto et al. (2021) highlighted that accelerators can enhance innovation through more favorable regulatory conditions.

The economic environment in these countries has a distinct impact on entrepreneurs' networking methods. The economic environment in the United States necessitates a somewhat aggressive approach to company growth, with extensive networking that can yield great opportunities and quick scaling. The abundant availability of venture funding in the US market enables firms to expand very quickly. This, of course, is very important because the first escalator of the startup ecosystem is the ability for one to innovate, expand and compete on an international level. Investment hubs like Silicon Valley and New York City, indicate that the US is dedicated to creating an environment rife with the growth of startups. The flexible regulatory environment combined with economic factors enhances this further, which lets startups pivot and innovate without getting involved in extensive bureaucratic hurdles (Mazur, 2023).

Germany's conservative economic environment encourages a more cautious approach to networking, prioritizing sustainable development and long-term relationships over American-style rapid scaling (Kim & Hwang, 2023). Germany can be a nurturing ground for startups due to its structured economic environment, which provides high stability and a rich set of supportive mechanisms. Much like the European Union, the German government invests a lot in programs to support startups by means of grants, subsidies, and partnership with well-established corporations. This happens mainly in areas that the German economy is well known for such as engineering and manufacturing. They are designed to take at least some of the risk out of entrepreneurship and encourage more systematic patterns of growth. (Geibel & Manickam, 2016)

When it comes to economic policies, both countries also express their cultural attitude toward entrepreneurship. Economic policy in the U.S. tends to be more market oriented. There exists an expectation that market-driven solutions will be pursued with speed to encourage growth, while market correction can be sudden at times. German policies tend to emphasize sustainability and caution and in general, provide a more risk-averse approach toward economic development. This can somewhat slow innovation, but it also offers a safety net for startups, which might reduce fear of failure among entrepreneurs (Palagashvili, 2021).

2.4.3 Role of Specific Networks in Entrepreneurial Success

2.4.3.1 Professional Associations and Trade Groups

Key professional associations and trade groups within the United States can act as a support system for the German entrepreneur. They can provide the necessary platform for networking, exchange of knowledge, and helping to maneuver the business environment. Brüderl and Preisendörfer (1998) concluded that network support, such as associations, can significantly increase the likelihood of survival and growth for newly established businesses. First, key organizations that specifically support German entrepreneurs were examined. There are three types of associations, which help German entrepreneurs establish themselves in the United States: (a) German American Chamber of Commerce (GACC), (b) American Chamber of Commerce in Germany, (c) German American Business Association (GABA).

- a. The GACC plays the role of a critically important bridge for German entrepreneurs to the American market. The organization helps members through networking events, workshops, and business match-making sessions. They also offer mentorship programs, and a variety of business contacts. The organization is an important

conduit for German entrepreneurs who are trying to understand and enter the U.S. marketplace (Pistrui et al., 2000).

- b. American Chamber of Commerce in Germany promotes a deeper awareness of US-German business relationships and supports its members as an important point of reference for information on market dynamics and regulatory frameworks. Additionally, networking events, industry-specific working groups, and business conferences are common platforms provided to support exchange and collaboration. (Wegner & Padula, 2010)
- c. GABA creates a dynamic network that seeks to support German entrepreneurs through many different programs, including investor meetings, entrepreneurial talks, and sector-specific discussions. Their initiatives seek to create a more recognized and operational environment for German businesses in the US market (Schmude, Welter, & Heumann, 2008).

These organizations can contribute to a better business environment, in particular through the provision of a range of services supporting growth and entrepreneurial interaction. The importance of these networks in supporting entrepreneurial activities is underscored in studies by Schmude, Welter, and Heumann (2008), who noted the role of institutional support in enhancing all types of business practices.

Organizations such as the GACC play a highly helpful and resourceful role in assisting firms through foreign markets to develop cross-industry collaboration. (Wegner & Padula, 2010). Some chambers of commerce are also known for their lobbying of responsible practice of business by their members. This advocacy might increase the reputation and reliability of businesses to assure its long-term sustainability. According to Braendle, Rahdari, and Dehkordi (2016), chambers play an important role in promoting responsible business conduct by fostering responsible business operations, which have a high probability of leading to long-term growth. Business organizations can significantly enhance the sustainability of business operations due to their full and active involvement in ethical business conduct. Furthermore, platforms like e.g., the GACC, can be the basis on which business relationships can be built between German and American firms. This can act as important support for the German firms wanting to expand or get a foothold in the U.S. market (Mayer, 2000). Finally, organizations such as the NFIB or

NASE can provide structured networking and resource opportunities that can help the entrepreneur with market entry and scalability issues. This assistance is crucial in helping small firms navigate regulatory frameworks and capitalize on growth prospects (Fritsch, 2016).

2.4.3.2 Online and Digital Networking Platforms

For German entrepreneurs in the United States, digital networking can offer enormous advantages through platforms such as LinkedIn and AngelList. They can help with overcoming geographic and cultural barriers and might enable integration into local company ecosystems and possible investor networks. The research of Bursuk et al. (2016) supported this thesis on the operational necessity of online networks in startups. For example, these platforms are important not just for networking, but also for the startups' survival and operational success. In fact, in many ways, they do a lot of the work, particularly when it comes to connecting individuals with others in the startup community. In the following sections, the two main start-up professional networking sites, LinkedIn and AngelList, will be discussed, detailing their influence on the success of German entrepreneurs in the U.S.

Founded in 2003, LinkedIn is a professional networking service that allows registered members to create work-based profiles. It links job seekers to potential employers and professionals to employers as well as colleagues with industry leaders (LinkedIn, 2024).

AngelList is a social network launched in 2010 for the startup community. It connects startups with investors and potential employees. It facilitates investment and recruiting, helping new companies raise capital and attract investors looking for new opportunities (AngelList, 2024).

As explained by Cardona (2018), LinkedIn and AngelList actively help open windows in the informal venture capital market. Both platforms empower entrepreneurs by providing access to a greater set of investors and business angels. In this respect, they play a significant role in early-stage funding and can be important for the survival and growth of a startup. Further underlining their importance, Gkliati (2016) researched how AngelList emulates the features of LinkedIn, including a set of filters that enable companies to seek out their ideal investors. This is one way in which good design underpins the user experience because entrepreneurs will be well versed with the LinkedIn interface and can use AngelList with great ease and familiarity. Finding the right investor can be determined by the platform's design (Gkliati, 2016). Y. Zhang (2020) took this debate a step further by investigating how these digital platforms, specifically AngelList, became pioneering models of entrepreneurial finance. Apparently, these platforms

change the way how entrepreneurs work with lead investors or venture capitalists, as they transform the role of digital networking in traditional financial interactions.

For German entrepreneurs, sites like as LinkedIn and AngelList can level the playing field. They can provide them with almost equal access to resources and networks that would otherwise be unavailable due to their outsider status in the United States—if not more (Bursuk et al., 2016). Taking it a step further, Pasquini, Robiolo & Allende (2019) shed light on the topic of entrepreneurial success in terms of network impact. Their research on the matching procedures of entrepreneurial financing networks on AngelList revealed how indispensable such digital platforms are in fostering investor-startup contact, which enhances the efficiency of the investment process (Pasquini et al., 2019). This increased reach is especially an advantage for German entrepreneurs, who may lack social capital in comparison to their local counterparts in the U.S.

Finally, Elenurm (2021) argued that online platforms are becoming success conditions for entrepreneurial self-realization, particularly the shift in priorities that these online platforms bring to entrepreneurial strategies. According to Elenurm the strategic use of LinkedIn and industry-specific social networks, such as AngelList, is a must-have skill for personal and company development. This is especially important for German entrepreneurs that must adapt to the extremely competitive and diversified business climate in the United States.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

Examining how German entrepreneurs create and leverage their professional networks in the United States to ensure the growth and profitability of their business, this thesis adopts a qualitative approach. The goal of this qualitative study is to learn about the participants' experiences, perspectives, and methods. Given the exploratory character of the research, a qualitative method is particularly suitable, as it enables an understanding of all the complex and nuanced dynamics involved in networking in a foreign market (Abu-Bakar & Yusuf, 2020).

This study employs semi-structured expert interviews as the primary method for obtaining in-depth qualitative data rich in detail and subtlety from the respondents. The flexibility of semi-structured interview allows for a great deal of freedom in the interview process and provides valuable insight into the networking processes and issues that these entrepreneurs confront (Arasti, Panahi, & Zarei, 2012).

The data gathered from the interviews were analyzed inductively. The inductive approach, as described by Thomas (2006), emphasizes condensing extensive qualitative data into a brief, summary format, which is ideal for handling the detailed insights expected from expert interviews with international entrepreneurs (Thomas, 2006). Patterns and themes were extracted immediately from the data, with no predefined classifications or theoretical perspectives. That being said, the data analysis process took the following steps: transcription of all interviews, open coding to identify key concepts and categories, grouping similar codes into larger themes, and continuously refining these themes to ensure they do justice to the data and are relevant to the research question. Inductive analysis is particularly beneficial for investigating novel phenomena because it allows facts to speak for themselves, revealing underlying patterns and meanings.

Ethical considerations are a fundamental aspect of this research. The participants were informed of the study's goal, and their prior consent was acquired. At all times, confidentiality and anonymity were guaranteed. The data was securely saved and not used for any other purpose than this study.

While the qualitative technique allows for in-depth insights into the subject, it is also prone to a number of limitations. Relying on self-reported data might introduce biases that could undermine the conclusions, and the findings may not be generalizable to all international

entrepreneurs. Purposive sampling might also hinder generalizability. However, the data obtained through the expert interviews will be beneficial for future academic research and for practical applications in the field of international entrepreneurship.

3.2 Data Collection

The data was collected via semi-structured expert interviews with 15 German expert entrepreneurs who have successfully started businesses in various industries in the United States. Purposive sampling was applied to the selection of participants who could present important, abundant, and appropriate information in relation to the research question. Some selection criteria included successful German entrepreneurs with start-ups in the United States; representation from various industries to avoid industry specificity in the findings; and entrepreneurs at different stages of their business life cycles to determine the differences in networking strategies.

Semi-structured interviews are particularly effective when speaking to an expert only once, as they combine structured and open-ended questions and make sure that the interview retains flexibility and consistency (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006). The interviews were conducted from the 15.04.2024 to 15.05.2024. Each interview lasted approximately 30 to 45 minutes and was conducted either in person or via video conferencing tools. The interviews were recorded and later transcribed verbatim to reduce mistakes throughout the data analysis process.

3.3 Development of Questionnaire

The interviews were guided by a previously designed interview protocol in a way that the most relevant aspects with respect to networking strategies could be explored. The protocol included a clear set of instructions and questions, in order to collect qualitative and comparative data (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006). The questions covered essential themes such as initial network establishment, network utilization, challenges and barriers, digital networking, and its influence on business success

3.4 Data Analysis

Through iterative analysis and refinement, six dimensions were finalized as the most significant for inclusion in the study. As already mentioned, the analysis of the data followed an inductive approach. This allowed themes and patterns to emerge directly from the data rather than imposing preconceived categories.

The initial phase involved a thorough review of all interview transcripts. During this stage, open coding was applied to identify preliminary themes and concepts. Each interview transcript was read multiple times to ensure a deep understanding of the content. Codes were assigned to segments of text that represented distinct ideas or concepts relevant to the research question.

From the initial open coding, seven preliminary dimensions were identified: Networking Strategies and Approaches, Cultural Adaptation and Integration, Resource and Knowledge Exchange, Trust and Relationship Building, Professional Support Systems, Challenges and Overcoming Barriers, and Recruitment and Talent Acquisition. These dimensions represented broad categories that encapsulated various strategies and challenges faced by the entrepreneurs.

In the subsequent phase, axial coding was employed to refine these dimensions. This involved examining the relationships between the codes and grouping them into more coherent themes. The aim was to ensure that each dimension was distinct and captured a specific aspect of the networking strategies and approaches used by the entrepreneurs.

Through this process, it became evident that some dimensions overlapped significantly. For instance, the themes related to "Recruitment and Talent Acquisition" were closely tied to "Professional Support Systems" and "Resource and Knowledge Exchange." As a result, it was decided to integrate the relevant themes from "Recruitment and Talent Acquisition" into these two dimensions to avoid redundancy and enhance the clarity of the findings.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS & FINDINGS

4.1 Networking Strategies and Approaches

One key finding from the expert interviews was the different strategies entrepreneurs adapted, to establish and grow their networks in the U.S. The strategic engagement and adaptation, when it comes to networking, can be significantly different in the U.S. in comparison to Germany. The following strategies should enable entrepreneurs to build and leverage their networks more effectively.

One strategy used by German entrepreneurs is the utilization of online platforms, such as LinkedIn, to build and expand professional networks. Interviewee C stated that the utilization of LinkedIn is essential: "*If you're serious about the US, you need to use LinkedIn. You need to connect with all the people you meet, whether that's at a trade show, at a networking event, or even just during a sales call*" (Interviewee C). This sentiment is supported by Interviewee B who specifically emphasized the importance of LinkedIn as a great tool for personalized introductions and its ability to extend network reach. Such platforms provide an area for continuous engagement and knowledge-sharing, which plays an important role in staying in the loop of the ongoing trends and opportunities in the industry.

The effectiveness of LinkedIn in the U.S. market also contrasts with other networking options that are more well-known among German entrepreneurs. Interviewee C commented that a highly optimized LinkedIn profile, with some strategic involvement in relevant groups, can be a great value-added tool for one's networking efforts. This does not only complement paper-traditional methods of networking, but it also ensures that entrepreneurs are able to reach a larger network of people if they choose to scale their businesses.

On the other hand, the platform AngelList has not been mentioned by any interviewee, which shows that its relevance is negligible.

German entrepreneurs use various strategies, including hosting and event organization. Events create an environment in which the entrepreneur gets to interact with potential clients, partners, and investors. Interviewee D reviewed the experience of being a host of a networking event during a trade fair. "*You should do networking events with your customers together. It accelerated our business in every aspect. I have now in May, our second own event, like networking event during a trade show*" (Interviewee D). Since the host or hostess selects their invitees, they can ensure that the whole event is tailored to serve their business interests. This

selective approach to networking activities is supposed to add value to all business stakeholders while guaranteeing that contacts are both relevant and productive.

Some interviewees resorted to tactics such as monthly dinner events. Interviewee J described such events as opportunities where the entrepreneurs could bring in people of different groups, including venture capitalists, experts, and other founders for dinner. *"I do a monthly dinner. I bring between 10 and 20 people together. It's always different people. Typically, the composition is venture capitalists and experts, and maybe other founders."* (Interviewee J). These gatherings make sure that there is a strong community feeling and offer opportunities for collaboration and support. Furthermore, the events also help in maintaining and strengthening existing relations while also creating new ones.

This strategy of event organization has also stepped into the field of virtual formats, which have gained increased relevance. Interviewee M mentioned, *"Also, speaking slots, speaking sessions for like virtual events, webinars or conferences. We were able to grow faster because of that."*

It is possible to reach professional audiences and even establish contacts with potential business clients by organizing virtual networking events, webinars, and online conferences. These types of events allow hosts to reach a global audience and to connect with people which might not be available for any physical format.

Finally, a strong presence at industry events is crucial for establishing and leveraging professional networks. Several interviewees mentioned the benefits of attending key trade shows and conventions. Interviewee A emphasized, *"I think part of it are key events like major trade shows where you either have a presence with a booth or you just go and buy a ticket and connect with people"* (Interviewee A). This allows entrepreneurs to meet industry professionals and potential partners who may help them on business related issues or gain visibility for their business.

Interviewee J agreed that one way to help with building a network in the early stages is attending conventions. *"Especially in the beginning, it's probably the most important part to go to conventions, to meet a lot of people, to just go out there and introduce yourself"* (Interviewee J). Entrepreneurs can quickly build a large network thanks to the numerous interactions that such events generate. This network can then be used for several business needs, from gaining insights about the market to connecting with interested investors and clients.

4.2 Cultural Adaptation and Integration

Another important aspect for German entrepreneurs is to understand and respect the cultural differences to build and commercially exploit professional networks in the U.S. Several interviewees emphasized the significance of cultural adaptation. Interviewee A noted, "*Cultural, yeah, when your American customers or your American team members tell you that you are too German. You've got to ease up a little bit. That's helping to overcome the culture*" (Interviewee A). This highlights the fact that German entrepreneurs must be flexible and change their ways of communication and business practices to fit in with the American business environment.

Additionally, one interviewee stated that American business practices require a more flexible and open approach compared to the highly structured and process-oriented methods in Germany (Interviewee J). This flexibility may allow individuals to form better relationships while also adapting to the business environment in the United States. As one entrepreneur highlighted, "*The biggest issue is, as a German, going into the US thinking, I already know everything... especially in sales, and there are enormous differences in networking*" (Interviewee C). The existing procedural differences that have culminated between German and American business practices require a specialized approach. Germans are usually known for their process-oriented mindset, while Americans often prioritize results (Interviewee G). One interviewee reported that in the U.S., the outcome is what counts but in Germany, the procedure is just as important (Interviewee F). Understanding these facts allows German entrepreneurs to match their strategies with American expectations, which has a boosting effect on networking efficacy.

One entrepreneur summarized, "*Germans are very process-oriented. We want to do everything right and in a certain order... Americans are very result-oriented*" (Interviewee C).

Several interviewees also mentioned the importance of attending intercultural training sessions (Interviewee C; Interviewee J; Interviewee M). One entrepreneur mentioned that most German companies do not take the cultural challenges that come with doing business in America seriously, consequently all German entrepreneurs are advised to think about intercultural training and coaching (Interviewee D). Proactivity in this regard might act as a guard against the perils and pitfalls that will cripple their networking efforts. Another interviewee said, "*I recommend to any German who wants to do business in the U.S. to attend an intercultural training, coaching.*" (Interviewee C). Additionally, interviewees also mentioned the importance of adapting to the local business etiquette and to be aware of local practices or conventions

(Interviewee O; Interviewee M). Apparently, taking a course on American business etiquette can help with the integration and is crucial for making a good first impression and creating trust in business relationships. (Interviewee O).

It is also important to adjust communication styles and business practices in this regard. German professionals tend to be very straightforward and efficient in their communication, which can be perceived to be a little too blunt or harsh by some Americans (Interviewee J). One entrepreneur said that in sales meetings, being extremely direct usually does not lead to successful outcomes (Interviewee K). Therefore, learning to soften their approach and be more adaptable will build more effective relationships. One interviewee noted, "*You need to be flexible and adapt your communication style to build better relationships*" (Interviewee K).

Success in networking revolves around understanding the social nuances linked with American business culture. In high-end business circles, being part of the "in-crowd" or the hype differentiates you and gets you worthwhile connections (Interviewee E). One respondent pointed out that being a part of the high-end bubble in the United States is advantageous since people in this group are more amiable and friendly toward networking. This social adaptation is vital in doing business in the U.S.

Another important strategic aspect is the preparation and customization of interactions. Interviewees emphasized the importance of conducting research and preparing for business interactions in the U.S. environment (Interviewee C; Interviewee G; Interviewee O).

This involves learning cultural and business expectations specific to different regions and industries within the U.S. For instance, one interviewee observed that the ability to interact with various groups of people, such as understanding the unique business culture of Mormons in Utah, was crucial to effective networking (Interviewee C). This entrepreneur also stated, "*When German entrepreneurs or companies come here, have meetings with clients or partners, I always recommend that they prepare, check where they are going, what is common there.*" (Interviewee C).

In practice, German entrepreneurs frequently use their initial contacts to build a larger network. One interviewee described how their relationship with a bank led to introductions to lawyers, real estate agents and other key business contacts (Interviewee H). Furthermore, another entrepreneur highlighted that to effectively leverage a network, it is important to find someone who is well anchored in the local scene who may introduce one to others (Interviewee G). "*Look*

for who is from your university or who is from your LinkedIn network and is living in the US and reach out to them like you did to me" (Interviewee G).

Finally, another participant emphasized the importance of relationship building through personalized engagements (Interviewee J). Several entrepreneurs indicated that warm introductions have more value than cold ones, especially when it comes down to emails and online platforms (Interviewee G; Interviewee J; Interviewee G; Interviewee L). Additionally, one interviewee stated that warm introductions are also the preferred way of interacting on industry and networking events (Interviewee N). *"It's always better to have warm intros than this walking up there and, you know, just giving your business card"* (Interviewee N).

4.3 Resource and Knowledge Exchange

One of the key findings, frequently mentioned in the interviews, are the strategies and actions taken to gain access to certain resources, market insights and best practices. German entrepreneurs stress how important it is to exchange these types of resources and information, to establish a presence in the U.S. market (Interviewee B; Interviewee F; Interviewee J). Interviewee B mentioned to receive financial resources and market insights, building local relationships is essential. Another participant, Interviewee F, stressed the role of networking in acquiring highly talented employees. *"Another area where networking helps is in the area of recruiting. To attract top people, highly talented people, of course, it's very important to have a great local network"* (Interviewee F), which further highlights how instrumental networks are to acquire the necessary human resources for business growth.

Interviewee B also indicated a need to associate with a variety of professionals, including lawyers and accountants, to build an effective support system. This involves expanding your network into different functional areas within the business ecosystem and is essential in contributing to the business growth and success (Interviewee B). This indirect professional support allows German entrepreneurs to deal appropriately with the complexities arising from the U.S. market. Besides direct interactions, German entrepreneurs also indirectly exchange knowledge and practices. Industry conferences and workshops, mostly organized through network connections, serve to keep entrepreneurs informed of market trends and innovative business strategies (Interviewee N). According to Interviewee N, these kinds of events provide updates of the latest industry practices that can be adapted and applied to their businesses.

The access to essential resources is another aspect supported by professional networks. Several German entrepreneurs find that their networks often facilitate the provision of necessary key resources for the business and market development in the U.S. (Interviewee F, Interviewee B, Interviewee N). Interviewee F stated that their established network allowed them to hire highly qualified employees. *"To attract top people, highly talented people, of course, we leveraged the network we created"* (Interviewee F). Furthermore, funding opportunities within networks enable entrepreneurs to link up with potential investors or venture capitalists willing to offer support to their businesses. Interviewee B elaborated that the combination of reaching out to investors within and outside their network set them up to create a financial foundation for their business. This kind of proactive networking is useful for securing financial resources that fuel the growth and innovation of businesses.

Navigating the legal framework and jurisdiction in the U.S., can be another challenge for foreign entrepreneurs. Interviewee N shared, *"That's where a network can help you. When it comes to the legal framework and the differences in the American legislation, American administration and so on, a network is necessary to save resources and time"* (Interviewee N).

To ensure that business operations are in accordance with the local regulations and standards, knowledge is a necessity that can be a deciding factor.

Another aspect worth considering is that networks can find the logistical and infrastructural support, which is crucial to operating a business. Interviewee D highlighted that their network facilitated introductions to important service providers and partners who assisted them in moving into the U.S. market quickly. Logistical support can range from office space provisions to setting up distribution channels, which can consequently minimize operational challenges.

Finally, the exchange of resources within these networks can also be in the form of business or operational advice. Multiple participants benefitted from insights into market entry and business development strategies (Interviewee B; Interviewee F; Interviewee J). Interviewee B pointed out that advice about how to navigate the U.S. business landscape, accelerated their growth in all aspects.

4.4 Trust and Relationship Building

Another finding, highlighted by the participants of this research, is the critical role of fostering trust and building strong relationships. Trust is the central base of any professional relationship, and with German entrepreneurs, it tends to start by demonstrating reliability and consistency.

Being able to rely on a network in critical situations was described by Interviewee A as essential. *“If you encounter any issues in delivering services, which we have had too many times to count, you can always call someone who can help you out last minute, regardless of the difficulty you're facing. But this only works, because we know and trust each other. We have had our backs for a while and we know we can rely on each other”* (Interviewee L).

This view is shared by Interviewee O, who pointed out that network reliability is the most influential way to withstand the challenges implicated by supply chain concerns. *“Whenever we faced a critical issue with our supply chain, we could always count on our network to provide solutions and help. It's this reliability that has built a strong foundation of trust between us and saved us from failing multiple times”* (Interviewee O). Such experiences reveal how continued support in a network can create a reliable foundation in which an entrepreneur can count on his network to ensure stability and growth in their business.

Additionally, other interviewees indicated that this trust is built upon regular and reliable communication within the network (Interviewee K, Interviewee L). Consistent interaction through meetings, updates, and follow-ups is the way to develop these relationships and ensure the network remains strong and supportive. This frequent interaction instills dependability and accountability towards each other and is associated with critical trust-building measures.

Interviewee J also affirmed the role of reliability, mentioning, *“Without my network, I would not be very useful in the US. And by that, I mean my network gives me access to experts and interacting with experts. And this is built upon mutual trust and respect”* (Interviewee J).

The assurance of always being able to turn their network for expertise, confers a significant level of trust and confidence in the network's support system.

Another factor in building trust within professional networks is mutual support. This exchange, where members of professional networks support each other, can be expressed as a sort of symbiosis. Interviewee O illustrated this relationship by sharing a recruiting experience. *“Attracting top talent became much easier when we leveraged our network. Colleagues within the network recommended highly skilled professionals, and in return, we offered them advice and support on all kinds of issues on their end”* (Interviewee O).

This mutual support can also be experienced through activities that are conducted collaboratively, such as marketing and business development. As interviewee L stated *“We*

often collaborate on marketing campaigns and share leads within our network. This mutual assistance not only helps our businesses grow but also strengthens the trust we have in one another" (Interviewee L). Such collaborations reiterate the need for a supportive network where resources and opportunities are shared, encouraging collective success in return.

Additionally, other participants suggested that this mutual support extends to many areas of doing business (Interviewee N, Interviewee M). For instance, most entrepreneurs consult with their peers about legal issues, market entry strategies, and how to overcome regulatory challenges. Therefore, the shared experience and general knowledge available in the network become an important resource for navigating in the U.S. market. The exchange of support builds a culture of trust and cooperation, which a long-term relationship is based on.

Insights from Interviewee F indicate that being involved in elite business councils and professional groups can hasten the process of building trust. By entering into such networks, entrepreneurs receive high-level counsel and resources that secure immediate support for urgent needs but also enhances reputational trust and credibility among the business community.

Finally, Interviewee G discussed how personal connections in the network are often being used as a channel for mutual support and to establish new desired relationships. *"But at the end of the day, it's best if you use the three-handshake method. Which basically says that through three people, so you know one person that knows another person that knows another person, you can even get to the president of the US"* (Interviewee G).

4.5 Professional Support Systems

Through the expert interviews, it became evident that entrepreneurs often leverage their professional support systems to succeed with their startups. Three main situations were identified, in which support systems often played a paramount role.

One benefit of having strong professional support is the ability to subdue crises and solve immediate problems accordingly. For example, Interviewee A illustrated how *"If you have failure in any kind of providing services, you pick up the phone and there is always somebody that has the right connection, no matter what squeeze you're in. That's why I say it's literally everything, whether it's finding new customers, whether it's finding the right partners for the service or whether it's finding the right manufacturers"* (Interviewee A).

Other participants support this claim by giving similar examples. According to Interviewee J: *“In our situation, we had a U.S.-wide distribution, so you have to deliver goods from A to B and then there are instances, like when it comes to trucking, you lose a contract or you lose trucks, and the network helps you to find solutions and backups right away.”* (Interviewee J). This provides further evidence of the practical benefits of having a network that can provide on-the-fly solutions in times of need. Other participants have also recounted similar experiences where their networks came to their support in securing critical resources or, incidentally, to find fast resolutions of operational logistical concerns. *“We faced a critical issue with our supply chain, and our network was instrumental in providing immediate solutions. This reliability has built a strong foundation of trust between us and saved us from failing multiple times over.”* (Interviewee E).

As mentioned in the theoretical section, certain organizations, such as the German American Chamber of Commerce offer great support for the German entrepreneur in the U.S. For instance, Interviewee K explained some of the value you can receive by joining such organizations. *“I joined a couple of clubs, social clubs amongst which was The German American Chamber of Commerce. And then there's the German American Business Chamber, which is a good way to start. This not only helped me to expand my network but also to receive a lot of support in the beginning which saved me valuable time and resources”* (Interviewee K).

Similarly, Interviewee C highlighted the strategic advantage of being a member in these institutions: *“When company wants to build a subsidiary or send someone abroad or someone wants to open a company or startup in the U.S., I can highly recommend reaching out to the American German Chamber of Commerce, because they can provide that network and they can point them in the right direction.”* (Interviewee C). Such organizations offer a suitably structured network that provides required resources, guidance, and the possibility of establishing critical business ties. Other interviewees have confirmed that institutional networks can facilitate access to exclusive events, expert advice, and entrepreneurs who share similar thoughts (Interviewee N; Interviewee K). Interviewee B supported this view by stating that *“Through the support of institutions like the Chamber of Commerce, we could access a wealth of resources and attend exclusive events that were key to our business growth in the beginning”* (Interviewee B). These connections can ease the transition entrance into the U.S. market, since they are able to provide ongoing support as the business develops.

Another important element in professional support systems is mentorship. More experienced professionals can provide insights, guidance, and encouragement to new entrepreneurs trying to establish themselves in the market. Interviewee B recounted his experience receiving guidance from a mentor: *"So for example, one of our investors and mentors has built a company in Washington DC himself and he connected us to his legal team and the lawyers that he used to work with in Washington DC. He connected us to his accountants and a lot of people in Washington DC which really helped us to start the business down there much, much faster than we could have ever done ourselves"* (Interviewee B). Additionally, Interviewee E explained how having an institutional mentor was the key to receiving essential resources such as funding: *"I mean, through the network that was coincidentally being created through Antler and Launch House, we definitely achieved the funding and received more resources and support than we ever would have without their support. Because they were hyping each other up. They were hyping us up"* (Interviewee E). Such relationships can not only provide strategic advice and resources but also moral support and motivation.

Additionally, according to Interviewee L, mentorship can also ensure the avoidance of common pitfalls. *"So our networking efforts dramatically increased the speed at which we're able to do business and there was a lot of success and value that our network provided to us indirectly or directly. It is important to have access to those kind of mentors that can speak from their own personal experiences so that you can avoid to make the same mistakes"* (Interviewee L). The experience and lessons passed on by mentors, help new entrepreneurs handle obstacles more effectively and allow them to make more informed decisions. Other participants also highlighted the importance of having access to mentorship, stating that they benefitted a lot from advice on market entry strategies, product development, and scaling operations (Interviewee I; Interviewee J; Interviewee K).

4.6 Challenges and Overcoming Barriers

A major insight from the expert interviews was the different ways and strategies German entrepreneurs used to overcome barriers and challenges in the U.S. market. When entering a new market, it is important to have strategies in place to navigate the cultural differences, overcome regulatory and legal hurdles, and establish a local presence.

Cultural differences between Germany and the U.S. often represent great barriers to entrepreneurs. For instance, certain difficulties can arise because of the process-oriented nature of Germans versus the result-oriented approach of Americans. Interviewee C stated that:

“Germans are very process-oriented. We want to do everything right and in a certain order and Americans are very result-oriented. The result is what is important, only the outcome matters, but not so much the process on how you got there. It is very important to keep this in mind, since the difference in nature affects almost everything from sales to operations in general” (Interviewee C). This aspect can impact business interactions and negotiations as well.

Furthermore, Interviewee B noted the more direct communication style when it comes to feedback in Germany compared to the U.S. “I think people in Germany are more direct in the way they share feedback with one another. So when I moved to the US, I remember very well, that one of the managers I was working with at that point on one of my first startups told me that I need to share feedback differently than I did in the beginning. In the U.S. it is usually packaged. People in the U.S. obviously also tell you when you're not doing a great job, but it usually starts with, hey, you're doing all these amazing things, before they tell you the truth” (Interviewee B). Therefore, adapting the communication style is critical for networking and relationship-building in the U.S. Other interviewees have also highlighted the importance of understanding and adapting to the American culture to successfully build a network (Interviewee J; Interviewee O; Interviewee D). For example, Interviewee D noted that Americans are more demanding concerning business interactions and the process of making decisions, which requires Germans to be more flexible and open-minded.

German entrepreneurs also find it difficult to get accustomed to and navigate through the regulatory and legal landscape of the U.S. As Interviewee A pointed out, “*You run into issues, for example certifications, and often there are changes of regulations and if you're not always on top of things, they might pass you, right? You might not even realize that something is outdated on the level of certifications or maybe in my case with import regulations and so on*” (Interviewee A). Staying up-to-date and compliant with such regulations is critical and having the right network support in this regard can be a deciding factor. Interviewee F highlighted the role of networks in overcoming these obstacles. “*Of course, when it comes to the legal framework and the differences in the American legislation, American administration and so on, a network can help you. If you don't have it you will lose out on a ton of resources and waste valuable time*” (Interviewee F). A professional network can provide experts that give advice about legal issues, which ensures that entrepreneurs know the changes likely to occur in the business regulatory environment.

Other participants underscored the value of institutional support in maneuvering around such difficulties. Interviewee B narrated how their network introduced them to their current legal and accounting advisers, which helped them solve regulatory issues at the beginning. *“When we started our business in Washington DC. in the U.S., it also helped us again build deeper relationships relatively quickly because we had a common connection. So, the legal team that we were working with down there and our accountants that we had, they immediately felt like old friends. Because again, when we met them, we met them together with our angel investor who flew down there together with us. This was a game changer, because we got treated amazingly, and they helped us solve many regulatory issues as well”* (Interviewee B).

When German entrepreneurs penetrate the U.S. market in the beginning, they also need to establish a local presence for them to be trusted and credible. Interviewee L stated that face-to-face interactions and having a local showroom or office can make a huge impact. *“We’ve realized that having a physical presence made a significant difference. Not only did it give us credibility, but it also made it easier to connect with potential clients and partners who prefer face-to-face meetings”* (Interviewee L). A physical presence can not only be proof against initial skepticism but can also help to strengthen business relationships. Interviewee D recounted a similar experience: *“When we have a customer visit, we try to invite them for lunch or dinner, to be on a more personal level and talk to them. We invite them into our office and try to be as transparent as possible. You don’t have this that much in Germany I would say”* (Interviewee D). This goes back to being part of the local community and joining in social gatherings, which would make a startup more easily identifiable and acceptable. Other interviewees also underscored the importance of having face-to-face interactions to establish a local presence (Interviewee E; Interviewee K; Interviewee M). Finally, Interviewee I added that *“to really get established in the US market, I found that attending local meetups and getting involved in community events was crucial. It helped us build a network, find partners, and get our brand recognized. We quickly became part of that local ecosystem by being present and talking to everyone”* (Interviewee I).

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION

5.1. Summary of Key Findings and Interpretation of Results

The results of this study highlight the importance of networking strategies and approaches for German entrepreneurs in the United States. Key findings indicate that leveraging online platforms, hosting and organizing events, and actively participating in industry events are sound strategies that have been proven to work by the participants of this research.

These findings highlight the multi-dimensional nature of effective networking. Among the tools used to create and maintain networks, online platforms, particularly LinkedIn, seem to serve as one of the key instruments. German entrepreneurs use such platforms to find potential customers, partners, and mentors, which greatly boost visibility and credibility to their respective businesses. This has further been powered by lots of events both virtually and physically that are organized and hosted. Events both virtually and physically that are organized and hosted serve as powerful mechanisms for engagement. These events provide a structured environment for entrepreneurs to express what they're thinking, exchange knowledge, and build connections. The strategy of organizing events also extends to virtual formats, which have become increasingly relevant. Virtual networking events, webinars, and online conferences act as an alternative source of information exchange with industry colleagues and potentially new clients. These types of events prove to work exceptionally well for addressing a global audience, and hence enable making connections that would not have been possible without a physical setting. Active participation in industry events further enriches the networking experience. This way, entrepreneurs attending conferences, tradeshows, or seminars gain better access to a broader network of industry professionals. All these interactions are important in order to receive information about industry trends, learn from other people's experiences, and discover new business opportunities.

Additionally, this study indicates how vital it is for German entrepreneurs to adapt themselves culturally while striving to establish themselves in the U.S. Those who manage to blend into American business culture usually have an easier time joining professional networks. This cultural adaptation involves embracing American business norms, such as individualism, risk-taking, and informal communication styles. Entrepreneurs reported that adapting to these differences created stronger relationships with American partners, clients or investors. It also led to smoother business operations and gaining market acceptance quicker.

One effective way to integrating into American business culture is through hosting or participating in formal and informal gatherings. These events present opportunities for people to learn local business practices which can make them more culturally competent. Additionally, it was realized that language skills are necessary when trying to integrate into a new culture successfully. Entrepreneurs who spent time on improving their English and understanding how Americans communicate could navigate through the business landscape more easily and built trust with different stakeholders.

Furthermore, the study emphasizes how important it is for German entrepreneurs operating in the United States to share resources and knowledge. Entrepreneurs pointed out the crucial need for accessing specific resources such as financial capital, mentorship, and market know-how to improve business operations. The results show that using both formal and informal networks is necessary to get these resources, which are crucial for dealing with the competitive American market. The research also highlighted structured environments like professional associations as important for these exchanges.

The findings highlight how sharing resources and knowledge is crucial for entrepreneurs to succeed. German entrepreneurs often struggle to get the right market information and resources in a new market. But by joining professional associations, they can access vital information and resources they might not get otherwise. These networks help with financial resources, operational advice, and market knowledge, making it easier to make informed decisions and planning. Structured networks like professional associations offer chances to get resources and exchange knowledge. They help entrepreneurs link up with possible investors, partners, and mentors, while building up their resources and know-how. Informal networks, like personal connections and social networks, are just as important. They give on-the-spot advice and support, creating a feeling of community and shared experience among entrepreneurs.

Trust emerged as a key feature in professional relationships as participants stated how crucial it was to show consistency and reliability. Entrepreneurs shared that being able to rely on their network during critical times was key to continue with business operations. For this reason, constant and dependable communication among the network would help nurture this kind of trustworthiness and emerged as a key factor. In addition, mutual support where network members share resources and opportunities within the network was seen as the basic foundation upon which trust can be established or maintained.

The results show that building trust and relationships is very important for German entrepreneurs who want to be successful in the U.S. market. Network interactions that are reliable and regular build a solid base that entrepreneurs can depend on to secure company growth and stability. Entrepreneurs who know they can always rely on their network for help and advice have a lot of trust in the network's ability to help them through tough times. Supporting each other within the network makes these connections even stronger. The exchange of resources, advice, and opportunities creates a mutually beneficial setting where members work together to achieve collective success. This mutual help for each other is especially noteworthy in activities such as hiring the talented people, running marketing efforts, and dealing with regulatory issues. Entrepreneurs can get past problems and improve their businesses by using these helpful ties. Regular and credible communication is also very important in creating and sustaining trust. Continuous interaction creates reliance and responsibility within members of the network through meetings, updates, and follow-ups. This constant communication not only maintains the strength and helpfulness of the network but also keeps entrepreneurs informed at all times which ensures they are never disconnected or uninformed.

Next the results have underlined the significance of structured support systems which incorporate mentorship programs as well as formal industry associations. These systems provide tools such as financial resources, expert advice and networking platforms among others that are necessary for propelling startups to success.

Being part of a professional support system, mentorship entails invaluable insights of the U.S market which enables entrepreneurs to handle challenges and take advantage of opportunities. Depending on the unique needs of the entrepreneur, individual coaching has the ability to greatly influence the outcomes of the venture thereby providing strategic as well as practical advice. Formal associations and industry groups are important for networking, sharing information and advocacy. German entrepreneurs can learn about the latest developments in their sector, changes in the law and market opportunities that are necessary for strategic planning and decision-making as well.

Lastly, the study identifies various key challenges experienced by German entrepreneurs while operating in the USA. Entrepreneurs observed that to thrive and succeed, one must understand the local business practices and create alliances based on trust.

According to the results, German entrepreneurs faced cultural differences as one of the largest barriers. A flexible, open, and less formal approach should be adopted in the American business environment as opposed to the structured and process-oriented German context. It is important that these cultural subtleties are put into consideration, in order to have effective communication and to create strong professional ties.

US regulatory challenges pose another major obstacle due to complicated legal and economic frameworks. Entrepreneurs must follow various legal frameworks and doing so successfully often requires leveraging professional networks to access legal expertise and regulatory advice. This guarantees compliance and mitigates risks associated with legal pitfalls.

The study also highlights important hurdles associated with market entry, such as building a local presence and obtaining market trust. Getting local endorsements and making strategic partnerships are common ways to build credibility and trust in the local market. Working with local businesses and industry associations can help you get more attention and acceptance.

The key to overcoming these obstacles is creating trust and building relationships. Trust and mutual support develop through consistent and dependable interactions within networks. To keep trust-based relationships strong, it's important to communicate often and fulfil commitments.

5.2 Practical Recommendations

Based on the results regarding networking strategies and approaches, some practical recommendations can be given. First, entrepreneurs should actively use platforms like LinkedIn to build and maintain their professional networks. This includes regularly updating profiles, engaging with content, and participating in relevant groups. Consequently, this can enhance their online presence and attract potential business contacts. Second, hosting both virtual and physical events can provide valuable networking opportunities. Entrepreneurs should consider organizing webinars, workshops, and meetups to connect with their audience. Additionally, attending industry-specific events can help them stay updated on market trends and expand their professional network. Third, networking should be viewed as an ongoing process. Entrepreneurs should seek continuous learning opportunities through participation in conferences and industry events. This will not only keep them informed about the latest developments in their field but also help them forge new connections. Finally, entrepreneurs should strive to build a diverse network that includes industry peers, potential clients, mentors,

and investors. A varied network can provide different perspectives, support, and opportunities for collaboration.

According to the findings, various practical recommendations can be given to German entrepreneurs who aim to adapt and integrate themselves into the American business culture. First, entrepreneurs should undergo cultural training to understand fine points about local customs, communication styles and business etiquette. Second, attending local industry events, social gatherings and community activities will help them familiarize themselves with the culture and form important connections. Third, improving their English language proficiency and understanding how Americans communicate can enhance interactions with local stakeholders. Fourth, find mentors who are well-versed with the American business environment can provide advice and support for managing cultural differences. Finally, entrepreneurs need to embrace flexibility by adjusting their ways of doing business in line with local expectations if they want to successfully integrate.

Based on the results, some practical recommendations for German entrepreneurs wanting to leverage resources and knowledge in the U.S. can be made. First, entrepreneurs should join industry groups and professional associations. These groups provide access to funding, mentorship, and industry know-how. Second, it is important to build informal networks. Entrepreneurs should engage with other entrepreneurs, go to social events, and leverage community activities to make connections that can offer both emotional support and practical advice. Third, entrepreneurs should keep learning and acquiring knowledge through workshops, seminars, and trainings to stay up-to-date on industry practices and trends. Finally, a collaborative approach to resource and knowledge exchange is essential. It helps to build a culture of mutual support and growth among peers and partners.

Considering these results, a number of practical recommendations may be offered to German entrepreneurs in the U.S. who want to establish and leverage trust within their professional networks. First, it is important for entrepreneurs to keep their promises and demonstrate reliability when dealing with network members. This includes meeting commitments, providing timely updates, and being dependable in times of need. Second, regular communication which includes meetings, updates, follow-ups etc., should not be abandoned since it is important for building trust. Third, creating an environment where individuals share resources and opportunities equally can foster trust among network partners. Entrepreneurs should actively seek to assist and collaborate with their peers, creating a symbiotic environment. Fourth,

utilizing personal connections within the network to establish new relationships and support existing ones is crucial. The three-handshake approach is one viable method used by entrepreneurs when trying to grow their networks build trust through trusted introductions. Also, joining industry boards or business councils at a national or international level may help to improve reputational trust and credibility among peers. Such organizations often provide valuable resources which support faster trust building processes.

Building upon the findings, practical recommendations for German entrepreneurs who intend to make use of the support systems available in the U.S. can be made. First, it is necessary for entrepreneurs to find professional associations corresponding to their sphere of activity as well as their specific business objectives. Such organizations provide various resources and may greatly accelerate company growth. Second, identifying and engaging with experienced mentors can give them important advice and assistance. Entrepreneurs should look for mentors who have been successful in the same industry sector and know the American market very well. Third, industry groups and professional associations can provide networking opportunities and access to industry-specific knowledge. Such organizations also host conferences and seminars that can assist the entrepreneur's understanding of the market. Fourth, digital platforms and online communities are also useful tools for providing support to entrepreneurs. Entrepreneurs should engage on these portals to network and to access resources.

Based on these findings, German entrepreneurs who wish to create and utilize professional networks within the U.S. have a number of practical recommendations to consider. First, they need to invest in cultural training to understand American business and communication styles. Adapting to local customs and expectations will enhance relationship building and improve business interactions. Second, it is advisable to connect with local legal and regulatory experts who are knowledgeable about the legal landscape in the U.S. since it can be complex. Third, establishing partnerships with local companies and industry associations can help with market entry efforts. In the local market, these partnerships provide credibility and endorsements. Finally, communication that is regular and transparent within professional networks is paramount for building trust. For strong, trust-based relationships, entrepreneurs should prioritize being reliable and consistent in how they interact with others.

5.3 Suggestions for Future Research

First, future research could further explore the impact of different networking strategies on startup success in various industries. Longitudinal studies could provide deeper insights into how networking efforts evolve over time and their long-term effects on business growth. Additionally, comparative studies between German entrepreneurs and entrepreneurs from other countries could highlight unique challenges and strategies. It is important to provide a broader understanding of global networking practices by studying different countries.

Second, future studies should investigate the impact of cultural adjustment on the success of international entrepreneurs in the long run. Longitudinal studies may demonstrate changes in these strategies and their effects on business performance. Comparative studies between entrepreneurs from different cultural contexts could identify challenges and strategies to deal with them, thus providing a broader perspective of cultural adaptation within worldwide entrepreneurship. Additionally, understanding the role of digital technologies in cultural integration could be beneficial. Understanding how technology can serve as a bridge between different cultures and support entrepreneurs in their adaptation efforts would offer valuable insights for practitioners and academics.

Third, future research should examine the impact of resource and knowledge exchange on the success of international entrepreneurs over time. Longitudinal studies can provide insight into the evolution of these variables over time and their impact on performance. Furthermore, comparative research with entrepreneurs from different cultures can reveal unique challenges and successful strategies, providing a broader understanding of global entrepreneurial behavior. The role of digital channels in exchanging resources and knowledge can also be valuable. It could provide useful insights for practitioners and scholars to understand how technology can enhance this transformation and help entrepreneurs adapt and grow in foreign markets.

Fourth, future research should look into how building trust and relationships affects the long-term success of foreign entrepreneurs in the future. Longitudinal studies could show how these relationships change over time and how they affect the success of international entrepreneurs. Comparative studies between entrepreneurs from different cultures could also show the unique challenges they face and the strategies that work for them, giving a better idea of how entrepreneurs around the world operate. Understanding how digital platforms can help build trust and relationships could also be beneficial. Both practitioners and researchers would benefit

from learning more about how technology can help with these efforts and make networks more reliable.

Fifth, future research should explore how professional support systems have a long-term influence on the success of entrepreneurs worldwide. Longitudinal research would show the way these kinds of support systems are changing and their lasting effects on companies' performance. Additionally, doing comparative studies among various cultural settings may point out different challenges and successful strategies used, hence providing a broader understanding on global entrepreneurship. It would also be worthwhile to investigate the part played by technology in improving such systems. Analyzing the contribution of digital tools and platforms in supporting networking, mentorship and resource mobilization could give some practical insights. Moreover, support systems can be tailored more effectively if we considered the requirements of specific industries, which would ensure that they would be able to meet the needs of different sectors adequately.

Lastly, future research should look into how adapting to a new culture affects the long-term success of international entrepreneurs. To better understand the effects of continuous cultural integration on company expansion and network efficacy, longitudinal studies are warranted. Furthermore, studies that compare different industries could shed light on sector-specific difficulties and strategies, providing a more complex picture of entrepreneurial success in different settings. Researchers could also look into how digital networking platforms help entrepreneurs get into new markets and build trust. Entrepreneurs working in diverse environments would benefit greatly from understanding how technology can aid networking efforts and facilitate global trust-building. Lastly, to gain a better grasp of international entrepreneurship, it would be beneficial to study the unique challenges faced by entrepreneurs from diverse cultural backgrounds. This could help further the understanding of how these entrepreneurs navigated the U.S. market.

5.4 Limitations & Conclusion

Although this study provides valuable insights into the ways that German entrepreneurs build and use professional networks in the U.S., there are some limitations that need to be acknowledged.

First, the sample size and sampling criteria may not be fully representative of the wide array of German entrepreneurs. This study is based on 15 expert interviews with German entrepreneurs

who have founded start-ups in the United States. This may not capture the full variety of experiences and strategies used by international entrepreneurs from other countries, industries, and stages of business development.

Second, the research methodology primarily depends on qualitative data from semi-structured interviews. While this is a way to dig deep into individual experiences and reflections, there could also be elements of subjective bias. While inductive analysis applied to build themes and identify patterns in the interview data is systematic, to some extent, it does not entirely exclude the researcher's bias. Besides, collecting information from entrepreneurs through self-reported data may sometimes contain biased or incomplete information, especially on sensitive or competitive strategies.

Another limitation is the narrow focus on the U.S. The country's unique cultural, economic, and regulatory environment creates challenges in generalizing the findings to other geographical contexts. For example, the opportunities and challenges that international entrepreneurs face in their networking while working in other countries are highly likely to be different.

The cross-sectional nature of this research is another constraint. Since the data is captured at one point in time, the study does not take into account the dynamic and evolving nature of professional networks and entrepreneurial strategies. Longitudinal studies would be useful to understand how the networks change and develop over time and how this influences entrepreneurial success.

Future research should address such limitations by involving a broader sample size and diversity in order to look into a broader range of international entrepreneurs from various regions and industries. Furthermore, incorporating both qualitative and quantitative methods may result in a more thorough knowledge of networking strategies and their success. This could be done through surveys or longitudinal studies that measure the impact of networking on business performance and how that evolves over time.

Next, the role that digital and online networking platforms play demand a more in-depth analysis. This could provide additional insights into contemporary networking strategies. The world of technology is ever changing, therefore, understanding how digital tools further or hinder networking efforts should be of concern to both practitioners and scholars alike.

Finally, focusing on the interaction of different factors, such as cultural adaptation, regulatory compliance, access to local market knowledge, and network strategies, could provide a more holistic view of international entrepreneurship. Therefore, a more in-depth investigation of these factors with the assistance of methodologies such as experiments or case studies would bring out the essence of causal relationships and practical applications.

This study contributes toward a better understanding of the professional networking strategies that international entrepreneurs utilize in the United States, but the potential of further research remains far from being exhausted. Future studies should go on to provide greater detail and more generalizable findings on the complex aspects of international entrepreneurial networking.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Interview Questionnaire

Welcome and thank you for your time.

I am a Master student at ESCP writing about the following research question:

- a) Does a US professional network influence the success (or mitigate the probability of failure) for European/German entrepreneurs?
- b) "How do European/German entrepreneurs establish and leverage professional networks in the United States to facilitate the growth and success of their startups?"

Background Information

1. Could you provide a brief overview of your background, where you are from and what type of professional experience you have?
2. Can you briefly describe your entrepreneurial venture in the US, including your industry, main products or services, and the year of establishment?
3. What motivated you to expand or start your business in the US market?

Building and Utilizing US Networks

4. How did you initially establish your professional network in the US? (Prompt: events, platforms, introductions)
5. Can you briefly describe the composition of your US network? (e.g., entrepreneurs, investors, industry experts)
6. What strategies have you employed to grow and maintain your US professional network?

Impact of US Networks on Entrepreneurial Success

7. Can you share how networking has played a role in your entrepreneurial journey, particularly in relation to your success and challenges? Please describe these instances. Have there been moments when your US network significantly mitigated challenges or potential failures? Please describe these instances.

8. In what ways has your network contributed to overcoming cultural, regulatory, or market entry challenges in the US?
9. Can you share an example where strategic networking (e.g., targeting specific individuals or organizations) led to a significant opportunity or breakthrough for your business?

Cultural and Operational Insights

10. How have cultural differences between the US and Europe/Germany affected your networking strategies or business operations?
(Can you share insights or examples of how US market dynamics have shaped your approach to entrepreneurship and networking?)

Resources and Support Through Networks

11. What types of support and resources have you accessed through your US network? (Prompt: financial, advisory, partnerships)
12. How do these resources compare to those you've received from networks in Europe/Germany, in terms of quality and impact on your business?

Reflections and Future Plans

13. Reflecting on your experiences, how critical do you believe a US professional network is for the success of European/German entrepreneurs in the US?
14. How did you begin to establish your professional network in the US? Were there specific strategies or platforms that were particularly useful?
15. Looking back, is there anything you would have done differently in building and leveraging your professional network in the US?
16. Are there any strategies or advice you would offer to new European/German entrepreneurs aiming to build a US professional network?

Additional Questions:

How do you establish and maintain trust within your professional network?

Could you describe a situation where the diversity or strength of your network ties significantly impacted your business decisions or opportunities?

Long-term Vision and Network Evolution

How do you see your US network evolving as your business grows? Are there specific types of connections or expertise you aim to add to your network in the future?

Reflecting on your journey, how has the value you provide and receive within your network changed since you first entered the US market?

Appendix 2: Interview Analysis Table

Second-Order Themes	Aggregated Dimensions
Active Participation in Industry Events	Networking Strategies and Approaches
Leveraging Online Platforms	
Hosting and Organizing Events	
Understanding and Respecting Cultural Differences	Cultural Adaptation and Integration
Adapting Communication Styles and Business Practices	
Preparing and Customizing Interactions	
Exchange of Market Insights and Best Practices	Resource and Knowledge Exchange
Provision of Essential Resources	
Building Trust through Reliability and Consistency	Trust and Relationship Building
Establishing Trust through Mutual Support	
Crisis Management and Immediate Problem-Solving	Professional Support Systems
Leveraging Institutional Support	
Mentorship and Guidance from Experienced Professionals	
Navigating Cultural Differences	Challenges and Overcoming Barriers
Overcoming Regulatory and Legal Hurdles	
Establishing a Local Presence	

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