

Conceptual insights into the diverse pathways in migrant entrepreneurship

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ABSTRACT

Objective: The objective of the article is to conceptualize and systematize the most relevant dimensions and issues of migrant entrepreneurship based on the literature review.

Research Design & Methods: In the article, we applied a narrative literature review. We identified relevant publications by indicating keywords that allowed for the selection of publications relating to the examined problem. We assumed an 11-year research period (2013-2023) and selected the Scopus database for the articles selection.

Findings: The study revealed that although there are similarities among various categories of migrant entrepreneurs, they also display notable differences in their preceding circumstances, variables contributing to their success, and characteristics that moderate their outcomes. The study recognises and conceptualises diverse migration motivation (forced, voluntary, or next generation), and dominant embeddedness (home country, host country or international embeddedness) as factors impacting the key characteristics of migrant entrepreneurship types.

Implications & Recommendations: The article suggests that customised assistance programmes are essential for various categories of migrant entrepreneurs, considering their distinct motivations and integration into the community. The recommendation is to develop focused programmes that target the individual issues encountered by each group, promoting both their assimilation and global economic growth.

Contribution & Value Added: The significance and merit of this article reside in its comprehensive review of several categories of migrant entrepreneurship including transnational, diaspora, ethnic, refugee, and returnee entrepreneurs. It helps to develop a more nuanced understanding of these entrepreneurs. This framework facilitates the identification of various entrepreneurial trajectories and the distinct obstacles and prospects encountered by diverse migrant communities.

Article type: literature review

Keywords: immigrant entrepreneurship; transnational entrepreneurship; diaspora entrepreneurship; ethnic entrepreneurship; refugee entrepreneurship; returnee entrepreneurship

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INTRODUCTION

In recent years, entrepreneurial activities undertaken by people with a migrant background in the host country referred to as migrant entrepreneurship, have attracted increasing attention from researchers and practitioners (Sinkovics & Reuber, 2021; Brzozowski, 2019). The escalation of migration and its diversity (van Mol & Valk, 2016; Castles & Miller, 2003) contributes to reflection on various dimensions of migration and its motives. Migrants are often identified with voluntary economic-based motives of international mobility, but nowadays forced migration has been increasing, either due to the political situation or unacceptable living conditions. In turn, this raised the question of whether different categories of migrants can undertake entrepreneurial activities and what differences exist between these groups of migrants in the context of their entrepreneurship. Migrant entrepreneurship is not uniform,

as it may differ, in migration motives, specific culture, individual values, desires, and beliefs. All these dimensions translate into differences in migrant entrepreneurship.

The objective of the article is to conceptualize and systematize the most relevant dimensions and issues of migrant entrepreneurship based on the literature review. We decided to answer the following research questions:

- RQ1:** What are the features that shape the diversity of migrant entrepreneurship forms (transnational, diaspora, ethnic, refugee, and returnee) discussed in the literature?
- RQ2:** What are the key challenges and opportunities faced by migrant entrepreneurs across various categories (transnational, diaspora, ethnic, refugee, and returnee) discussed in the literature, and how do they navigate these to achieve entrepreneurial success?

We aimed to identify the main themes regarding migrant entrepreneurship already existing in the literature. Thus, we used a narrative literature review, which is a selective review technique intended to identify and summarize prior knowledge. A narrative review of the literature on the dimensions and types of migrant entrepreneurship is important for three main reasons. Firstly, the exponential development of migrant entrepreneurship research observed in recent years makes it an appropriate time to summarize the current state of knowledge on this subject in the context of the identified subcategories developed within the framework of migrant entrepreneurship research. Moreover, there is some blurring and overlapping of terms, *e.g.* ethnic entrepreneurship, diaspora entrepreneurship, and refugee entrepreneurship, which is not entirely correct. In our approach, we make quite precise demarcation, which is intended to enable a better understanding of the theoretical approaches used to study different types of migrant entrepreneurship. Secondly, considering the scale of the migration process and the need to include migrants in the economic life of the hosting countries and returnees in their home countries, it is particularly important to identify important aspects regarding the specificity of individual migrant groups and their entrepreneurial orientation. This is particularly important for decision-makers, who will be more conscious and effective in creating migration and entrepreneurship policies at the same time. Thirdly, the conclusions from the research may also be useful for migrant entrepreneurs themselves, local entrepreneurs who can potentially cooperate and the public authorities aimed at supporting migrant entrepreneurs. By identifying individual migrant groups, it is possible to capture their invaluable specificity, which may facilitate better use of their resources to develop entrepreneurship. Taking all this into account, we would like this study to contribute to the development of research, policy, and economic practice.

The article consists of three sections. Firstly, we will elaborate on the methodological assumptions by explaining how our narrative literature review was prepared. Secondly, we will systematize and discuss the various dimensions of migrant entrepreneurship such as (i) transnational entrepreneurship, (ii) diaspora entrepreneurship, (iii) ethnic entrepreneurship, (iv) refugee entrepreneurship, and (v) returnee entrepreneurship. Thirdly, we will present discussion and conclusions.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

To answer the research questions, we conducted a literature review. Literature reviews are distinct from original articles because they do not present novel facts. Instead, their objective is to assess existing publications and provide the most dependable information presently accessible (Paré *et al.*, 2015).

Among the several types of literature review explored in the entrepreneurship field of research (Wach, 2020; Zadeh, 2022), we used the narrative literature review (Wach & Głodowska, 2022), as we aimed to summarise and synthesise the most relevant topics in the entrepreneurial activities of migrants. The study utilised a methodology of narrative literature review, which assumes the identification of the current knowledge to map the field (Psoinos, 2018) rather than its generalisation (Paré *et al.*, 2015; Juntunen & Lehenkari, 2021; Kafetzopoulos, 2022). A narrative literature review is a comprehensive and impartial analysis of the current knowledge on a specific topic, aimed at building theory, through the iterative and non-structured process of conducting the review with careful consideration

and discernment (Juntunen & Lehenkari, 2021). This research method is used in social sciences, including business and management (Juntunen & Lehenkari, 2021; Kafetzopoulos, 2022; Zonneveld *et al.*, 2021; Mukherji & Bhatnagar, 2022), and migration (Psoinos, 2018; Van Holen *et al.*, 2020). Our choice of the review method followed also the opinion that a narrative review should be used to interpret a large and diverse body of literature with different authors approaching the topic (Zonneveld *et al.*, 2021), as the diverse types of migrant entrepreneurship.

In this study, a thorough examination of existing literature related to migrant entrepreneurship and desk research was undertaken to provide a conceptual framework. The research queries and theoretical framework were developed by a thorough analysis of pertinent literature and desk research, given that the topic is relatively novel in the realm of economics and business. Based on the Scopus database, we identified articles using the following keywords: 'migrant entrepreneurship,' 'transnational entrepreneurship,' 'diaspora entrepreneurship,' 'ethnic entrepreneurship,' 'refugee entrepreneurship,' and 'returnee entrepreneurship.' Each of these keywords was used for independent search. The search was done within articles' titles, abstracts and keywords. The selection criteria were related to three disciplines: (1) social sciences, (2) business, management and accounting, (3) and economics, econometrics and finance. We limited the literature review by selecting only articles published in English in the years 2013-2023.

The choice of Scopus as the database of the articles was motivated by the analysis of the most prestigious journals, instead of investigating the platforms of publishers. As the majority of journals are indexed both in Web of Science and Scopus, we chose only one database. We also limit the years of publications to the last 10 years, to be able to identify the most currently published articles to analyse the state-of-the art in the field of migrant entrepreneurship (Table 1).

Table 1. Results of the search process, articles published in English in the years 2013-2023

Keywords	All disciplines	Social sciences	Business, management and accounting	Economics, econometrics and finance
Migrant entrepreneurship	555	326	219	170
Transnational entrepreneurship	294	198	113	75
Diaspora entrepreneurship	129	60	66	40
Ethnic entrepreneurship	531	270	263	161
Refugee entrepreneurship	159	79	78	45
Returnee entrepreneurship	84	35	46	21

Source: own study.

Having identified the articles, first, we analysed their titles and abstracts. Then, we selected about 60 articles as the most representative ones focusing on core aspects of each of the pathways of migrant entrepreneurship. Next, based on them, we followed with the analytical work to recognise the topics of research on entrepreneurship among migrants.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT

Migrant Entrepreneurship

Migration (both immigration and emigration) is part of the economy and its history dates back to ancient times. Migration has been present in the history of Europe permanently, especially when we discuss the Old and the New World (van Mol & Valk, 2016). The 20th century has been commonly referred to as 'the age of migration' (Castles & Miller, 2003). Currently, we have been experiencing intensive migrations in Europe.

Considering migrant entrepreneurship in the context of economic theory, we can assume that international migration is an integral part of international economics, and migrant entrepreneurship is a part of entrepreneurship. Going further, we can successfully assume that migrant entrepreneurship, especially its various dimensions, is an integral part of international entrepreneurship research or even international business studies (Sinkovics & Reuber, 2021). Migrant entrepreneurship has become a crucial focus of investigation in the wider field of entrepreneurship studies (Brzozowski, 2019). It ex-

plores the involvement of migrants in entrepreneurial endeavours and the impact of their distinct experiences and backgrounds on these activities. This overview offers a succinct analysis of the theoretical underpinnings and important research discoveries in this field, highlighting the substantial impact of migrant entrepreneurs on global entrepreneurship and economies (Egerova, 2021). Migrant entrepreneurship is a complex and diversified area of inquiry that is supported by strong theoretical frameworks and expanded by a wide range of empirical studies (Sinkovics, & Reuber, 2021).

Migrant entrepreneurs play a crucial role in promoting economic growth by spearheading innovation and facilitating economic integration. To fully use the potential of migrant entrepreneurship and ensure its contribution to equitable and sustainable economic growth, it is crucial to continue conducting research and implementing supportive policies (Bolzani, 2020). Research regularly demonstrates that migrant entrepreneurs make substantial contributions to the economies of host countries (Jones *et al.*, 2019). Entrepreneurs generate employment opportunities, foster creativity, and make significant contributions to the expansion of the economy. Research has indicated that firms owned by migrants frequently bring forth novel products and services, intensify competition, and contribute to the broadening of local economies. In addition, migrant entrepreneurs have a higher probability of hiring other migrants, so promoting the integration and economic progress of their communities.

Migrant entrepreneurs encounter a multitude of obstacles, despite their valuable contributions. These factors encompass restricted availability of funding, cultural and linguistic obstacles, and prejudice. Studies suggest that these barriers can hinder the expansion and long-term viability of businesses. Nevertheless, migrant entrepreneurs frequently demonstrate exceptional tenacity and adaptation, utilising inventive tactics to overcome these obstacles (Berntsen *et al.*, 2022).

Policy interventions are essential for providing significant support to migrant entrepreneurship. Effective policies encompass the provision of financial access, the provision of business training and mentorship programmes, and the facilitation of the recognition of international degrees and abilities (Denney *et al.*, 2023). Research highlights the significance of inclusive policies that specifically target the requirements of migrant entrepreneurs, facilitating their assimilation and achievement within the host economy (Zou *et al.*, 2023).

Table 2. Various types of migrant entrepreneurs and their basic definitions

Type	Definition
Conceptualizations based on the voluntariness of movement and the time horizon of residence in the host country	
Immigrant entrepreneur	A foreign-born individual (and their children) who establishes a business in the host country and is likely to remain in the host country permanently (Brzozowski <i>et al.</i> , 2017).
Migrant entrepreneur	A foreign-born individual who moves to another country for at least 12 months and establishes a business; can include within-country migrants (United Nations, 1998).
Refugee entrepreneur	A foreign-born individual who flees their country under threat moves to another country for at least 12 months and establishes a business there (Christensen <i>et al.</i> , 2020).
Return migrant entrepreneur ('returnee')	A domestic-born individual who lives abroad for a period and then moves back to their home country and establishes a business there (Bai <i>et al.</i> , 2018).
Conceptualizations based on ethnicity and access to co-ethnic networks	
Ethnic entrepreneur	An individual who establishes a business and belongs to an ethnic minority. This category extends beyond first and second-generation to include indigenous minorities (Barrett & Vershinina, 2017; Glinka, 2018).
Diaspora entrepreneur	An individual who establishes a business and has access to a diaspora network across multiple geographies. This category extends beyond the first and second generations (Brzozowski <i>et al.</i> , 2017; Elo <i>et al.</i> , 2019; Kurt <i>et al.</i> , 2020).
Conceptualization based on cross-border ability	
Transnational entrepreneur	An individual who (a) migrated from one country to another, b) can maintain and mobilize social networks and resources in a cross-national space, and (c) is conducting business in a cross-national context (Brzozowski <i>et al.</i> , 2017; Drori <i>et al.</i> , 2009).

Source: (Sinkovics & Reuber, 2021, p. 3).

Migrant entrepreneurship has its own various dimensions based on different classification criteria (Table 2). In this article, we focus, elaborate on and discuss the following five migrant entrepreneurship dimensions (i) transnational entrepreneurship, (ii) diaspora entrepreneurship, (iii) ethnic entrepreneurship, (iv) refugee entrepreneurship and (v) returnee entrepreneurship.

Transnational Entrepreneurship

Transnationalism is associated with cross-border movements and relations, both social, economic or cultural ones, and therefore migrant entrepreneurs conducting international business activities are understood as transnational entrepreneurs (Sommer & Gamper, 2018). Most often, transnational entrepreneurs are those who migrate from their country of origin, run their companies in a country of residence based on business links between both countries (Aluko *et al.*, 2022; Brzozowski *et al.*, 2017), being embedded in multiple socio-economic contexts (Harima & Baron, 2020), at least of two countries (Veréb & Ferreira, 2018). Growing globalisation and international mobility of people contribute to the increase in exchanges between their countries of origin and residence (Von Bloh *et al.*, 2020). The development of digital technologies (Sufyan *et al.*, 2023), digital communication tools and the availability of travelling (Solano *et al.*, 2022) are enablers of cross-countries business operations of transnational entrepreneurs.

The connection between the home and host countries is a fundamental aspect of the business activities of transnational entrepreneurs who act within these dual social realms and multi-layer identification (Kabbara & Zucchella, 2023). Dual affiliation is the core characteristic of transnational entrepreneurs, which differentiates them from ethnic or international entrepreneurs (Sommer & Gamper, 2018). The ability to operate in the multiple embeddedness of countries and societies distinguishes transnational entrepreneurs from ethnic entrepreneurs, while migration experience – from international entrepreneurs (Sandoz *et al.*, 2022). In the narrow meaning, transnational entrepreneurship refers to regular cross-border business operations, while in the broad understanding – to occasional ones (Sommer & Gamper, 2018).

The migration journey enables transnational entrepreneurs to confront diverse institutional environments and develop distinctive human and social capital (Harima & Baron, 2020). Mixed embeddedness is an often-used approach to discuss the business activities of transnational entrepreneurs (Solano *et al.*, 2022) and highlight their experience in acting in a variety of social and institutional contexts (Yamamura & Lassalle, 2022). Dual presence in countries of origin and residence can potentially enable transnational entrepreneurs to benefit from networks and resources in both environments (Von Bloh *et al.*, 2020), contributing to their competitive advantage (Veréb & Ferreira, 2018). The propensity for transnational entrepreneurship is affected by factors such as length of residence, type of transnational ties and network size (Brzozowski *et al.*, 2017). The embeddedness in co-ethnic networks and prior entrepreneurial experience are also significant for transnational migrant entrepreneurs to overcome the liability of being an outsider in a host country (Aluko *et al.*, 2022).

Despite its lack of status as an independent research field (Harima & Baron, 2020; Yamamura & Lassalle, 2022), several research trends have been discovered in the study of transnational entrepreneurship as the identification of advantages and determinants of being a transnational entrepreneur, the role of transnational networks, the impact of transnational entrepreneurship on countries of origin and residence, and factors enabling success (Sandoz *et al.*, 2022).

Diaspora Entrepreneurship

The term diaspora has Greek origin and is applied to migrants and their descendants, who feel strongly and emotionally attached to their country of origin (Stoyanov *et al.*, 2018). Diaspora entrepreneurs are essentially migrants and their descendants who undertake entrepreneurial ventures based on their 'social collectively phenomenon,' *i.e.* the ability to sustain a sense of internal cohesion and relationship with 'a real or imagined homeland' (Adamson & Demetriou, 2007, p. 497). Although the term 'diaspora entrepreneurship' has been often used interchangeably with transnational, ethnic or refugee entrepreneurship, the phenomenon only partially overlaps with them whilst strongly focusing on the diasporan's multiple

affiliations to cultures and places (Syrett & Keles, 2022) often described as ‘multicultural hybridism’ (Shinnie *et al.*, 2021), their collective sense of belonging and timeframe (first and next generation diasporans).

Diasporans operate in a specific transnational space that stretches beyond the home and host country (Elo *et al.*, 2022). This means that they are not cross-border focused but internationally embedded features triggered by decades of migration and globalization effect. At the same time, diaspora entrepreneurship is not defined by the location of activities; entrepreneurs can operate locally but with the support of vast diaspora networks embedding the transnational space in the specificity of activities rather than their geographical scope (Stoyanov *et al.*, 2018). The fact the entrepreneurs stem from the diaspora community facilitates their market entry through networking effect as well as knowledge and resource sharing. Entrepreneurs often signal their multicultural belonging to ensure an identity-driven competitive edge. Communities also hold bridging capacities, *i.e.* they empower entrepreneurial initiatives in the local environments and similarly facilitate such undertakings for transnational entrepreneurs outside their host country.

Diaspora entrepreneurship and especially transnational diaspora entrepreneurship is highly defined by its context: the legal status of the migrants, heritage and diaspora generations, scope of the activities and customer focus (mainstream vs. ethnic customer), location of the business activity (Gurău *et al.*, 2020). With the increasingly volatile geopolitical situation globally, the meaning of the diaspora entrepreneurship with its ‘flows and re-inflows of (...) capital and spatiotemporally connected venturing’ (Elo *et al.*, 2022, p. 9) is bound to gain significance. It has interdisciplinary angles, including international business, migration policies, political economy and regional development elements.

Ethnic Entrepreneurship

Ethnicity is important in immigrant entrepreneurship. It is related to the identity of immigrants, which connects them with the community in similar features of culture, tradition, language, origin, or race. Ethnicity determines the specificity of the group, co-creating strong bonds between its members and, in a way, creating a community of ‘one’s own’ (Orozco, 2021). Ethnic minorities in the host country create market opportunities through the preservation of the culture and traditions of the country of origin, as well as the existing demand for community-specific goods (Moro *et al.*, 2023). It often happens that in many areas of meeting their needs, ethnic communities in the host country are served by representatives of a given ethnic group, which is undoubtedly influenced by the ease of establishing contacts among a given group, knowledge of preferences, and a kind of hermeticity (Jugert *et al.*, 2022). The conceptualization of ethnic entrepreneurship is quite diverse. For example, following Valdez (2016) or Honig (2020), it can be defined very generally as running a business in the host country by a member of the ethnic group or establishing businesses by immigrants in the countries where they settled and introducing their products and services from distant countries. Ethnic entrepreneurship is defined in more detail by Margaça and Rodrigues (2023) as a business activity conducted by people of different ethnic, cultural, and religious origins. The authors point to the unfavourable conditions of the host country from the perspective of the migrating ethnic minority, such as cultural differences, language barriers, discrimination, and social exclusion, as the main concept pushing people to pursue entrepreneurship.

It follows that there are two factors behind ethnic entrepreneurship: 1) necessity-driven, which pushes people to engage in entrepreneurial activities due to discrimination in the labour market, and 2) opportunity-driven, which encourages entrepreneurial activities dedicated to a given ethnic group. Verver *et al.* (2019) characterize ethnic entrepreneurship as dependent and low-value. Ethnic companies have a range of influence on the local minority market, usually defined based on ethnic origin (ethnic enclave). This creates the need to rely on customers and employees from the same ethnic group. The most popular and obvious examples of economic activity of ethnic entrepreneurs are the catering industry, but it can also be the fashion industry, cosmetics industry, etc. An important feature, however, is the direct connection with the country of origin, because ethnic entrepreneurs generate rent based on the knowledge of their tastes and preferences, customers but also access to original products and know-how. Another feature of ethnic entrepreneurship is its hermetic nature, which is manifested, for example, in the fact that they create jobs for themselves and their native population.

Ethnic entrepreneurship is largely based on the foundations of solidarity, loyalty, and trust (Rath & Schutiens, 2019; Margaça & Rodrigues, 2023).

Research on ethnic entrepreneurship is moving toward understanding the context of ethnic entrepreneurship and comparative studies of different ethnic groups. Moreover, attention is focused on creating various types of incentives for entrepreneurial activities among ethnic minorities and the survival mechanisms of the companies they establish (Rath & Schutiens, 2019).

Refugee Entrepreneurship

Refugee entrepreneurship is gaining increasing interest among researchers as a separate research trend alongside immigrant entrepreneurship. This involves escalating forced migration for political reasons. A refugee is a person who is outside their country of nationality or permanent residence and has a reasonable fear of being persecuted on the grounds of race, religion, nationality, membership of a social group, or political opinion in their country of origin (UNHCR, 2024). Therefore, it is clear that refugee migrants differ from voluntary migrants primarily in the motivation behind their mobility to host countries (Bizri, 2017). Voluntary immigrants move to new countries in search of new opportunities and, above all, the desire to improve their standard of living. In turn, refugees forcefully move to new host countries to survive in life-threatening situations, and their main motivation is the life safety of themselves and their families (Zehra & Usmani, 2021). This motivation also differentiates other factors in the mobility of voluntary and involuntary immigrants, such as their legal status. Voluntary immigrants can move to another country or return to their homeland, while refugees most often apply for asylum, and their freedom of movement is limited until their legal status is legalized. The receiving country also takes responsibility for refugees by granting them social rights and benefits, which is not due to voluntary immigrants (Crawley & Skleparis, 2018). The traumatic experiences of refugees are also of fundamental importance, as they constitute an additional challenge for them in integrating with the environment of the host country (Shneikat & Alrawadieh, 2019).

Conceptually, we can explain refugee entrepreneurship as entrepreneurial activities undertaken in a new host country by people who have been forcibly displaced from their country of origin due to war, conflict, or persecution (Khademi *et al.*, 2023). According to Abebe (2022), a refugee entrepreneur is a self-employed person forcibly displaced from their home country who starts or continues entrepreneurial activity in the market of the host country. According to Abebe's (2022) definition, a refugee entrepreneur is a person who has already been an entrepreneur in their home country and continues to operate in the host country. Research by Alexandre *et al.* (2019) also attests that refugees with prior entrepreneurial experience are more likely to become entrepreneurs in the host country. However, the main part of the research focuses on the aspect of refugee entrepreneurship as one of the possibilities of including them in the economic system of the host country and the labour market. Hosting countries face critical challenges in integrating arriving refugee populations, and entrepreneurship may be perceived as an alternative career path for them (Pesch & Ipek, 2023).

In a retrospective approach, Abebe (2022) distinguishes four phases of research on refugee entrepreneurship, reflecting the research context, trends, and studied populations: 1) 1985-1995: defining the specificity of refugee entrepreneurship as a different category from immigrant entrepreneurship, researched refugee processes was related to the Second World War, the war in Vietnam and the collapse of the Soviet Union, 2) 1995-2005: research on ethnic differences in the area of self-employment between groups of refugees from Southeast Asia, 3) 2005-2015: research on multi-faceted constraints standing in the way of entrepreneurial activities of refugees in host countries on the example of refugees from Africa, 4) 2015-present, is a definite intensification of involuntary migration processes, analysis of cultural and structural factors determining the entrepreneurship of refugees mainly from Syria, and more recently also from Afghanistan and Venezuela, Ukraine (Abebe, 2022).

In the latest research, the authors focus on verifying the relationship between personality traits and refugees' entrepreneurial intentions and adaptive abilities in the host country. According to Khademi *et al.* (2023), self-efficacy and resilience are the key factors of entrepreneurial awareness. In turn, Barth and Zalkat (2021) point to factors such as previous experience in entrepreneurship, access

to niche markets, and the availability of support from the family and the government of the host country. It should be noted, however, that the situation of refugees varies greatly in individual host countries and thus determines their entrepreneurship (*e.g.* refugees from Syria versus refugees from Ukraine) and differentiates their entrepreneurship factors. Research provides noticeable differences between refugee entrepreneurs living in and outside refugee camps. Outside the camps, entrepreneurs can use many factors: their identity, multilingualism, and social capital, which are not available to those living in the camps. These differences are important for coping with difficult situations and affect the entrepreneurship of refugees (Khademi *et al.*, 2023).

Returnee Entrepreneurship

There is a growing number of people who come back to their home countries after immigration due to education or work (Lin *et al.*, 2019). The reverse migration, known also as ‘reversed brain drain,’ ‘brain gain’ or ‘reverse flow,’ is investigated in the context of entrepreneurship, as some returnees explore their overseas knowledge and skills in establishing their own companies (Gruenhagen, 2019; Li, 2020).

Returnee entrepreneurs are individuals who establish ventures in their countries of origin after returning following a minimum of two years of work or education abroad (Li, 2020; Lin *et al.*, 2019; Yi *et al.*, 2021). Typically, they migrate from less developed to more developed countries to gain education, training, or work experience, and then, they exploit international experience to start new businesses (Bai *et al.*, 2021). Thus, returnee entrepreneurs are recognized for their contribution to the economic and technological development of their home countries through the transfer of knowledge (Yi *et al.*, 2021). Overseas education of returnees, often in advanced technology, their international business knowledge and experience, and maintaining contact with networks from the countries of education can support bottom-up entrepreneurship in home countries (Hajdari *et al.*, 2023; Li, 2020). Returnee entrepreneurs are more inclined than others to internationalise their ventures, their ethnic and non-ethnic overseas ties influence the speed and the diversity of foreign market entrance (Li, 2020; Li *et al.*, 2022).

The international experience and knowledge gained in advanced economies are the main advantages of returnee entrepreneurs. However, they also encounter the changes in social and institutional changes in their home countries during the time of their migration (Bai *et al.*, 2021). The potential contribution of returnee entrepreneurs to their countries of origin is reduced by returnee liability (Mreji & Barnard, 2021; Yi *et al.*, 2021), occurring during the process of reintegration. The liability of returnees is created due to their absence and is related to the necessity to relearn the new conditions of operating in their countries of origin (Bai *et al.*, 2021). Returnee liability is explained by institutional and interpersonal factors (Mreji & Barnard, 2021). From the institutional perspective, they experience uncertainty due to leaving host countries with more advanced institutions, and coming back to home countries with weaker institutions (Bai *et al.*, 2021). From an interpersonal perspective, they struggle with access to local networks, confusing expectations or cultural friction after returning (Mreji & Barnard, 2021).

One of the key aspects of successful returnee entrepreneurship is the recontextualisation of knowledge gained abroad, as returnees gain knowledge in the context of host countries, they need to adjust it to the context of their home country (Tran & Truong, 2022). The spillover of explicit and tacit knowledge contributes to the innovation performance of returnee ventures (Yi *et al.*, 2021). Next, returnee entrepreneurs also overcome the returnee liability by collaborating with local partners and gaining legitimacy with the support of local business incubators (Gruenhagen, 2019).

Moreover, there is a significant difference between voluntary returnees and forced returnees, who were pushed to return due to changes in the political situation in host countries. Voluntary returnees are typically motivated to pursue entrepreneurship mainly due to nostalgic or altruistic reasons, often with support from migration capital, while, forced returnees are often driven by regrets, limited options, and prejudices, supported by tacit capital (Amare & Honig, 2023).

DISCUSSION

The study at hand has been motivated by an insufficient in-depth review of academic work focusing on migrant entrepreneurs, even though they play a significant role in global business and impact international trade. The goal was to comprehensively review research from different fields related to migrant entrepreneurship to develop a comprehensive guide delineating similarities and differences among the most commonly encountered types of migrants and their entrepreneurial activities.

To answer research question RQ1 about the factors which shape the diversity of migrant entrepreneurship forms (transnational, diaspora, ethnic, refugee, and returnee), we conceptualized them as the matrix of both motivations and embeddedness. The specificity of each group of migrant entrepreneurs lies in the intersection of their motivation to migrate (voluntary, forced, and next-generation migrants), and their self-perception (embeddedness in their home country, host country or international one). An attempt to visualise the findings is presented in Figure 1. Even though to some extent the types of migrant entrepreneurs we have studied overlap, they also vary as far as their antecedents, success factors, and moderators are concerned.

The refugee entrepreneurs are those who experienced forced migration and thus, those experiences shaped their entrepreneurial mindset. They are often driven by the negative push factors that include individual-, institutional- and market-related antecedents. If the migration is voluntary or the entrepreneurs are next-generation migrants, the array of motivators is much wider and can include both push and pull factors. At the same time, the ‘embeddedness’ of the migrant entrepreneurs also differs. Returnee entrepreneurs and partially transnational entrepreneurs tend to be home-country embedded whilst refugee, ethnic, and also some transnational entrepreneurs are more host-country embedded. Both groups – ‘host or home-country embedded’ focus mostly on two countries, emphasizing the relationship between the country of origin of the migrants and the country they reside in now. However, the diaspora entrepreneurs are defined as internationally-embedded which highlights the strength of the networking and ecosystem created by the diasporans. They are not limited to the home and host country but support international expansion. While the migration motivation of returnee and diaspora entrepreneurs might be diversified, their core characteristics are not related to motivation but the embeddedness of their entrepreneurial activities in their home country or internationally. All these characteristics allowed us to answer the research question RQ2 about key challenges and opportunities faced by migrant entrepreneurs across various categories.

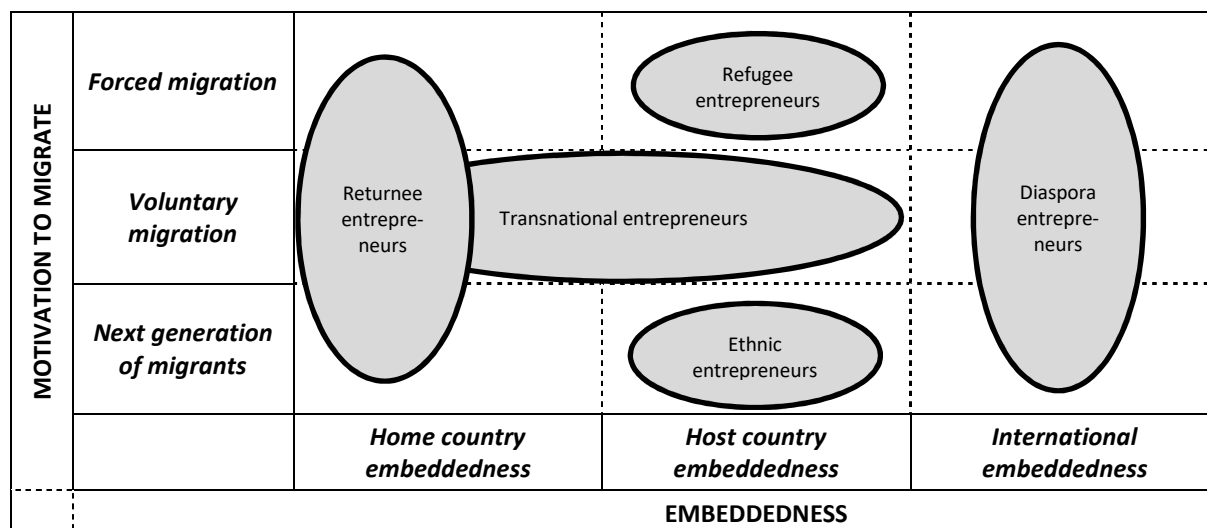


Figure 1. The classification of migrant entrepreneurs based on their migration motivation and dominant embeddedness in entrepreneurial activities

Source: own elaboration.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the literature review, we recognised the main types of migrant entrepreneurs and their specific contexts. The findings presented in the article underscore the intricate and diverse characteristics of migrant entrepreneurship, emphasising the significance of examining different categories of migrant entrepreneurs and their distinct experiences and circumstances while researching their entrepreneurial endeavours. Based on the economic activities of migrant entrepreneurs, we discussed the differences and similarities among transnational, diaspora, ethnic, refugee, and returnee entrepreneurs. As all of them were migrant entrepreneurs, they shared the experience of living, establishing and running their own company in the multi-country context. However, they also differed in the variety of contexts of entrepreneurial activity, which proves the heterogeneity of migrant entrepreneurship.

The research limitations of this review article encompass potential biases in the selection of studies examined, which may not thoroughly encompass all pertinent aspects of migrant entrepreneurship. Furthermore, the categorization and conclusions are derived from current research, which may not include the latest empirical evidence and nuanced perspectives from the dynamic global migration and entrepreneurial environments.

The novelty of the article and the contribution to the field is the recognition and conceptualisation of the matrix of diverse migrant motivation (forced, voluntary, or next generation), and dominant embeddedness (home country, host country or international embeddedness), which impact the main features of migrant entrepreneurship types. This article's contribution and value are derived from its comprehensive review and classification of migrant entrepreneurial activity. The article gives an advanced assessment of the motivations, success factors, and embeddedness of several categories of migrant entrepreneurs (transnational, diaspora, ethnic, refugee, and returnee). This framework helps to recognise the various entrepreneurial pathways as well as the specific challenges and opportunities that different migrant groups face, providing valuable insights for researchers, policymakers, and practitioners seeking to support and leverage migrant entrepreneurship for economic development.

As for the implications, we argue that specialised assistance policies are critical for various sorts of migrant entrepreneurs, considering their incentives and embeddedness. It advises developing focused programmes that address unique issues experienced by each group, promoting both integration and worldwide commercial expansion.

Further studies in the area of migrant entrepreneurship should prioritise the implementation of contemporary empirical research to accurately capture present trends and dynamics, especially in consideration of recent worldwide developments (war in Ukraine, conflict in Israel and the Gaza Strip). Longitudinal studies are crucial for comprehending the enduring prosperity and viability of firms established by diverse categories of migrant entrepreneurs. Furthermore, it is necessary to conduct comparative evaluations across different nations and regions (e.g. Central Europe) to determine how diverse socioeconomic, cultural, and policy settings impact migrant entrepreneurship. This will aid in the development of more efficient support structures. Moreover, in further studies, scholars can analyse the changes in trends in diverse pathways of migrant entrepreneurship.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

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