Received: 24 September 2024 | Revised: 28 July 2025 | Accepted: 22 August 2025 | Published online: 18 September 2025

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Journal of Comprehensive Business Administration Research
2025, Vol. 00(00) 1–6
DOI: 10.47852/bonviewJCBAR52024420

BON VIEW PUBLISHING

Cultural Catalysts: Unraveling the Nexus Between Culture, Innovation, and Entrepreneurship in Contemporary Societies

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Abstract: Innovation and entrepreneurial spirit are the bedrock of today's economy. There has been a lot of study on the monetary components of innovation and entrepreneurship, but much less on the cultural factors that influence them. The existing body of research on the relationship between culture and innovation and entrepreneurship largely views culture as a limiting element that impedes and delays the generation of new ideas. This is particularly valid in the case of creative and enterprising economic activities. We hope to raise awareness of the important role that culture plays in creative and entrepreneurial pursuits through this special issue, a phenomenon we refer to as "cultural entrepreneurship." Moreover, we contend that to elucidate the symbolic meaning systems used by entrepreneurs as instruments in their quest for innovation, scholars should embrace a broader understanding of culture. We explore how these modern cultural perspectives are used by the essays in this special issue to further the creation of an interesting academic agenda. These papers use a variety of empirical situations and methodologies to provide new and thought-provoking discoveries about cultural entrepreneurship. We propose research issues and possible future directions based on these contributions.

Keywords: innovation, creativity, entrepreneurship spirit, cultural entrepreneurship

1. Introduction

A broad, multidisciplinary field of research at the center of the contemporary global economy is innovation and entrepreneurship [1]. Yet, management and organizational studies frequently overlook or undervalue the part that culture plays in promoting these significant societal processes [2]. Nevertheless, the Cultural Revolution in the humanities and social sciences has stoked debates about the ways in which culture affects creativity and entrepreneurship [3]. This research incorporates theoretical approaches to culture that highlight cultural components such as borders, institutional logics, schemas, scripts, and values [4]; narratives, vocabularies, discourse, and framing [5–7]; identity, categories, and practices [8–10]; and material objects, visuals, and images [11–13]. The work has been dispersed, and these diverse contributions have not yet been combined into a more cohesive and cumulative study program, despite the hopeful recent advancements.

This special issue of Innovation: Organization & Management aims to highlight cultural perspectives on innovation and entrepreneurship while promoting enhanced dialogue among experts in these fields. We assert that the moment is opportune to amalgamate many cultural viewpoints on innovation and entrepreneurship to foster a more comprehensive discourse on the importance of cultural processes [14]. This is particularly significant because economic theories like the "individual-opportunity nexus" used by [15] and the discussion surrounding opportunity creation and discovery [16] are increasingly dominating scholarship on innovation and entrepreneurial dynamics. While promoting instrumental action, these theories tend to underestimate the significance of context and culture, respectively. Below is a summary of current viewpoints on culture and their relevance to research on entrepreneurship and creativity. The articles in the special issue are analyzed, emphasizing their contribution to our comprehension of innovation and entrepreneurship from a cultural standpoint. Lastly, we use the knowledge, reasoning, and conclusions from these papers to make recommendations for future directions for the study of culture, innovation, and entrepreneurship.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Modern perspectives on culture and its effects on entrepreneurship and innovation

Many academics still view culture as a restrictive system of norms, despite the fact that contemporary conceptualizations and studies of culture are varied [1]. According to this theory, culture is a collection of universal standards and value systems that are internalized by people's psyches [17]. This limited perspective

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on culture is widespread in economics and in academic work that prioritizes rational decision-making [18]. This outdated understanding of culture is also pervasive in popular methods of innovation and entrepreneurship that make use of [19] research to legitimize assertions about national entrepreneurial cultures.

Conventional wisdom on innovation and entrepreneurship has paid little attention to the cultural shift in the humanities and social sciences throughout the last few decades. Current theories of culture place a strong emphasis on how symbolic meaning systems influence actors' behavior and show how these systems can both enable and limit actors in order for them to accomplish their strategic objectives. The concept of culture as a "tool kit" has been explicitly utilized in this field of endeavor [20]. Furthermore, it is informed by communication theories of institutions [21], practice theory [22], and further cultural analysis strands that indigenize different factors, including logics and legitimacy "as themselves culturally constructed" [23]. Apart from positivist, functionalist, and determinist approaches to national cultures, several additional perspectives have also gained popularity [24]. Reference [25] describes a popular approach to culture that is relational and constructivist in nature.

In a nutshell, studies on cultural entrepreneurship show how modern cultural studies can refocus economic theories and practices on the interpretive and meaning-making processes that drive innovation and entrepreneurship, rather than on the egocentric and quantitative methods that have long been considered standard [26]. A study on cultural entrepreneurship is an example of how this can be done. So, rather than viewing culture as an external impediment, modern cultural approaches emphasize understanding how organizations and entrepreneurs use and draw from cultural resources in more strategic and pragmatic ways [7], as well as how these resources are interpreted. This fresh viewpoint on culture has the potential to revolutionize our understanding of innovation and entrepreneurship by highlighting both the ways in which culture supports and restricts the kinds of innovations that actors can pursue and the ways in which it can be an enabler for new technological developments and business venture creation. Research on cultural entrepreneurship, for example, has emphasized how entrepreneurs create identity stories that will appeal to important audiences and facilitate the legitimation of new ventures [19, 27], how collective storytelling can legitimize new market categories [28], and how storytelling itself changes as an entrepreneurial journey unfolds [29]. Researchers have also demonstrated how labels [30], vocabularies [31], and metaphors and analogies [32] can be used as innovative tools to construct meaning around organizational innovations and entrepreneurial endeavors.

In summary, emerging perspectives on culture view innovators and entrepreneurs as "skilled cultural operators" who imaginatively use a variety of cultural resources to further an entrepreneurial objective, as opposed to cultural dopes. Additionally, studies have started to look into how cultural components are created and applied in different contexts [19]. Therefore, the goal of this special issue is to encourage a deeper and more synthetic discussion on the cultural dynamics of innovation and entrepreneurship by highlighting the ways in which various perspectives complement one another, even though there are still significant differences between contemporary approaches to culture and action [33].

2.2. Contents of this special edition

We have compiled an interesting collection of papers that show how modern cultural techniques can be used to learn more about innovative and entrepreneurial processes. These publications add to our conceptual and multi-level understandings of cultural entrepreneurship by drawing on a range of fascinating empirical contexts. All of the pieces work together to both expand upon and question existing research, which in turn prompts and demands new perspectives. Here we give you the rundown of all the articles that made it into this special issue.

Using a case study of craft-based stores in India and the competing logics of the craft and market, she demonstrates how design may give previously unknown and undervalued handmade goods a new story and significance. By drawing attention to the role of materiality in legitimation processes, Morales thereby contributes to the growing body of literature on cultural entrepreneurship. Design, in her view, is a tangible expression of narrative, giving goods the significance and character traits that let people see and appreciate their monetary worth.

An integral part of the question "Who is more likely to walk the talk?" is a cultural perspective on personal entrepreneurial behavior. The symbolic control of aspirations to start a business according to gender and employment status, as proposed by [16]. This research uses individual-level data from the international Global Entrepreneurship Monitor project to demonstrate how cultural legitimacy modifies the well-established correlation between self-efficacy and entrepreneurial behavior. To theorize the effects of loose coupling and symbolic management on individual entrepreneurship, [34] consult the literature on cultural entrepreneurship and institutional entrepreneurship. Their research shows that people in the workforce and those with jobs are more prone to symbolically manage their entrepreneurial ambitions to start new enterprises and loosely pair their words and deeds than women and the jobless are. By emphasizing the ways in which institutional entrepreneurs might strategically align with established cultural understandings through framings, the study highlights their role in shaping organizational change.

As Suratno et al. [35] point out in their article "'When the creatures from the petting zoo spawn': Open discourse and a venture's legitimacy quest in crowd funding," entrepreneurs and their audiences engage to create the entrepreneurial process, which is an important but understudied facet of cultural entrepreneurship. Their research on two Kickstarter game projects demonstrates how new types of crowdfunding-based entrepreneurship necessitate a two-way conversation between projects and outside parties. During and after a crowd fundraising campaign, they discover that such dialogic procedures entail the negotiation of appropriate and recognized standards for the conduct of an enterprise. Transparency, faithfulness, and communality were the three standards that were negotiated around. They demonstrate how disobeying accepted standards can have far-reaching effects on a venture's legitimacy, whether it is achieved, maintained, or lost.

The "new media" industry in New York City is examined in "Generative Imitation, Strategic Distance, and Optimal Distinctiveness throughout the Growth, Decline, and Stabilization of Silicon Alley" and how it became known as "Silicon Alley" using cultural entrepreneurship concepts. They demonstrate how projective entrepreneurial narratives served as a cultural resource for aspiring entrepreneurs and laid the groundwork for the new field. Cultural resources that were formerly strong become useless as the number of new enterprise failures increases, forcing entrepreneurs to change their narratives. Reference [36] expands upon the research on optimal distinctiveness [7, 9] by identifying new narrative-discursive options for cultural entrepreneurs through innovative mechanisms of generative imitation and strategic distancing. They suggest that in stable fields, optimal distinctiveness tends to be the most effective strategy, while in volatile periods of growth and decline, other mechanisms may prove more adaptive.

A double-edged sword: Cultural entrepreneurship and the mobilization of morally tainted cultural resources is the title of a

controversial essay by [37]. The authors argue that we ought to be more mindful of how we use resources that others find ethically reprehensible. As an example, they cite the rapidly expanding "La Maña se sienta a la mesa" ("The Maía sits at the table") restaurant franchise in Spain. They say this cultural entrepreneurship is problematic because it may both win over supportive audiences and incite vocal critics. Entrepreneurs who use morally questionable cultural resources face backlash from audiences and questions about their legitimacy; this poses a number of issues, which they attempt to address by outlining a research agenda.

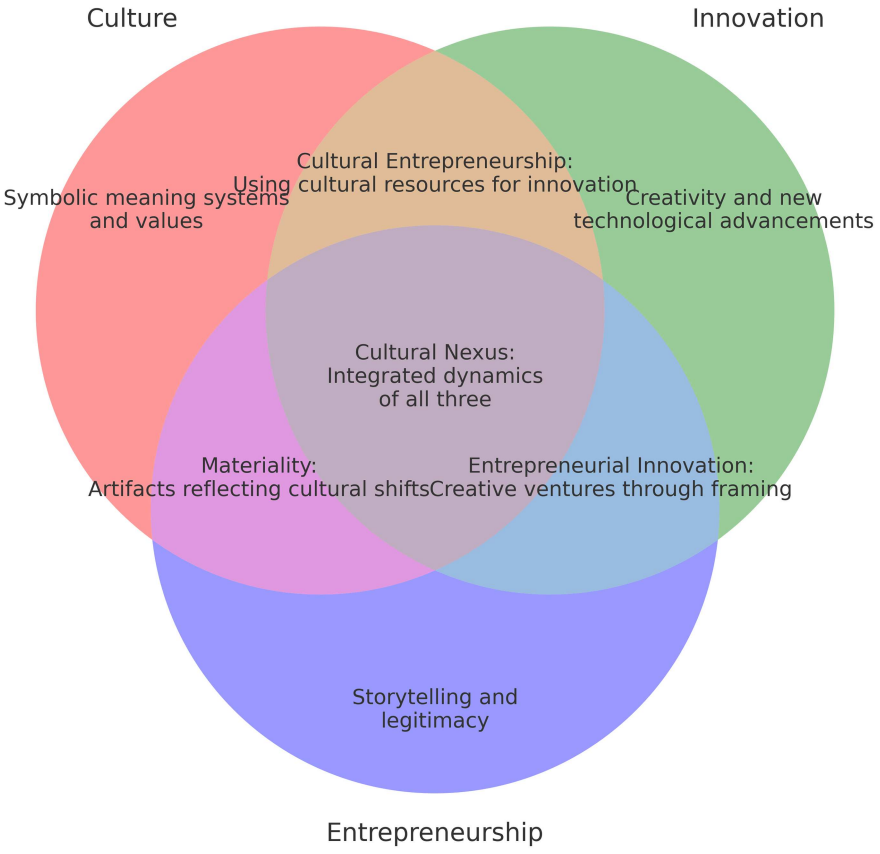
In summary, the essay "Venturing into the Cultural Future: Research Opportunities at the Nexus of Institutions, Innovation, and Impact," [3] makes their case that studying innovation should take institutions and impact into consideration. Using examples from Fortune's entrepreneurial stories, they draw attention to a need for further study into innovation in relation to systemic problems and game-changing policy shifts. Entrepreneurship, they argue, has allowed for what they call "cultural leapfrogging" in Estonia. In a broader sense, their goal is to position innovation as essentially a cultural process that necessitates both cultural entrepreneurship within firms and societal-level cultural transformation. Action and change on all scales, from the personal and the field to the social and the global, should be part of any cultural strategy for innovation and entrepreneurship. More theoretical and empirical focus on the effects of innovation at these levels is required, as they point out (see Figure 1).

2.3. In the direction of a cultural, innovative, and entrepreneurial agenda

This special issue expands upon the papers and their individual contributions, posing further significant concerns for the direction of future research in the field and advancing our knowledge of cultural entrepreneurship. The link between culture, materiality, and innovation is one of the questions that the papers in this special issue examine. According to [38], innovations are by their very nature both cultural and material. Nevertheless, the articles in this issue demonstrate how little research has been done on how culture influences the development of new material forms and how it is embedded in technological artifacts. For instance, our knowledge of how technology product esthetics both reflect and generate new cultural understandings is still limited [39–41]. Therefore, additional in-depth studies of the connection between sociocultural perceptions and technological product esthetics may be conducted in the future. As [8] notes, reading the expanding body of research on the design and creative industries may be quite beneficial in this area [7, 27, 42]. Reference [43] contends that additional research is necessary to demonstrate the connection between cultural shift and societal impact, particularly significant social innovations intended to solve issues that affect the bottom of the social pyramid.

Second, a number of studies in the field of cultural entrepreneurship have looked at the strategic use of discourse by entrepreneurs [27]. However, there are still a number of areas that

Figure 1
A Venn diagram illustrating the nexus of culture, innovation, and entrepreneurship



need more research. More research is required, for example, to determine how successful business tactics that complement or contrast with valorized cultural resources relate to each other. Certain resources may be a double-edged sword, as [42] provocatively points out, and we must be aware of the importance of values and moral judgment. Reference [19] highlights the need for more process-based assessments of cultural entrepreneurship in light of temporal fluctuations in the effectiveness of cultural resources. Furthermore, we require a deeper comprehension of the management of success versus failure and the interpretation of good and negative results [44].

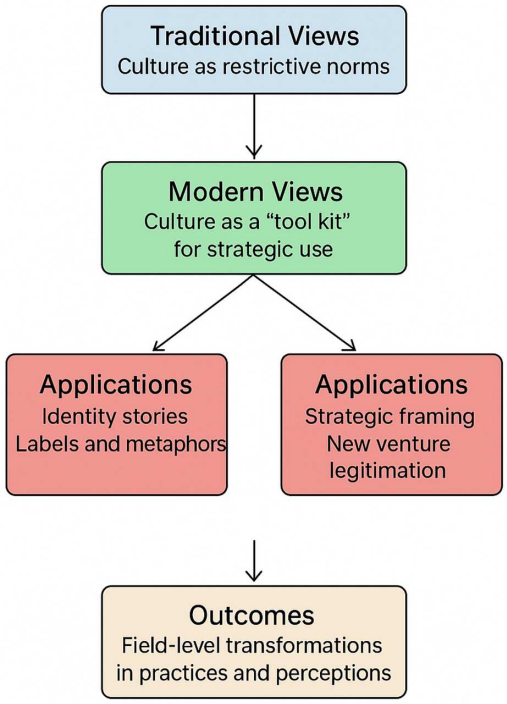
In addition, research has looked at how business owners use a variety of language constructs to give their goods and market categories [45]. The studies that deal with labels, vocabularies, analogies, and metaphors, however, are both isolated and overlapping, raising issues regarding the interaction and function of various linguistic constructions in the creation of meaning. Additionally, a large portion of discourse research has taken a biased approach, emphasizing either the strategic communication abilities of entrepreneurs or the corresponding effects that they are assumed to have [8, 10] or the widely accepted cultural norms that are used by evaluators such as investors or other stakeholders to evaluate innovative and entrepreneurial endeavors.

Reference [11] serves as a helpful reminder that social standing influences how cultural resources are used and understood. This suggests that researching cultural entrepreneurship within the framework of institutional fields may help us understand it better [12]. Our understanding of individual actions of entrepreneurship could benefit from the addition and positioning of new structuralism mapping approaches for field meaning systems [15, 46]. Third, [8] noted in their review paper that there was a decrease in the usage of terminology like "participants" and "workers," indicating a loss of concern in intensive procedures. The anthropologists Marcel Mauss and Bronislav Malinowski's ethnographies serve as the historical foundation for cultural studies. The goal of these studies was to "unravel cultural insiders" (i.e., their participants) perspectives on how they interpret various facets and manifestations of the communal and somatic environments in which they live and work [11, 13, 46]. We think that further research on cultural entrepreneurship could benefit from going back to these origins and using anthropological techniques to investigate how practices and meanings within specific communities are changing and follow their "internal logics."

However, adhering to the long-standing institutional tradition and supported by [15], a cultural approach necessitates that individual acts of innovation and entrepreneurship be firmly rooted in their setting. Observing, for example, the circumstances in which an entrepreneur uses specific labels and language to position the company or its products may provide insight into the settings and exchanges where labeling and meaning building take place. In terms of materiality, ethnographers should investigate further how specific locations, spaces, and things both constrain and give resources for action. In line with our earlier claims, we think it's helpful to take field analytical methods into account when placing these cultural entrepreneurship-related processes in their appropriate contexts [46]. Studies of this kind would link micro and macro issues and offer insightful information about how cultural resources are constructed and used.

All things considered, the essays included in this special issue demonstrate the need of a fresh cultural perspective on innovation and entrepreneurship. Culture is central to this kind of analysis, which uses it as a conceptual framework to describe and explain innovative and entrepreneurial processes and results at different levels of analysis, as well as an empirical tool to interpret innovative and entrepreneurial activities as they are observed. As the essays in this special issue demonstrate, the cultural entrepreneurship agenda first surfaced some years ago [47] and is rapidly taking center stage in entrepreneurship and innovation studies. It is our aim that reading the papers collected here will stimulate the reader's curiosity and lead to further research in this area of study. Figure 2 shows the flowchart of these impacts.

Figure 2
A flowchart summarizing cultural perspectives on innovation and entrepreneurship



Ethical Statement

This study does not contain any studies with human or animal subjects performed by any of the authors.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest to this work.

Data Availability Statement

Data sharing is not applicable to this article as no new data were created or analyzed in this study.

Author Contribution Statement

Shahid Hussain: Conceptualization, Methodology, Software, Formal analysis, Data curation, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing, Supervision, Project administration. **Saad ur Rehman:** Validation, Investigation, Resources, Visualization.

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How to Cite: Hussain, S., & Rehman, S. (2025). Cultural Catalysts: Unraveling the Nexus Between Culture, Innovation, and Entrepreneurship in Contemporary Societies. *Journal of Comprehensive Business Administration Research*. https://doi.org/10.47852/bonviewJCBAR52024420