

Entrepreneurship in golden years – Creative opportunity or not

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

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

1 Introduction

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

and studies that examine for example on older age people entrepreneurship and/or older age people who actually become self-employed or start a business at an older age.

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

The aim of this paper is to take part the older age entrepreneurship discussion and related policy opportunities for supporting entrepreneurship in golden years (older age entrepreneurship) by answering the questions, why older people want to become entrepreneurs? Especially, we are interested of the meanings that person by themselves upraise to be important when planning to be an entrepreneur. What kind of factors influence on the opportunity recognition and exploitation when the older people want to start own business? We are interested of the process of starting a new business, especially factors that have impact on the start-up process in the older age. Finally, how in practice the older people entrepreneurship and business start-up initiatives could be supported? We are interested to find out if there are any needs for fostering entrepreneurship in golden age from the perspective of older age nascent entrepreneurs. The paper proceeds as follows: first, we examine some former studies related to the topic of research questions; thereafter, the methodology and data are explained; then the results are analysed and interpreted; and finally the conclusions and implications are presented.

2 Theoretical framework and former studies

Most European and develop countries including Finland has ageing population and in the future this trend seems to strongly continue. During the next decade a large amount of people are going to be retired in Finland (Statistics Finland, 2011). This could indicate that there is an opportunity to

increase the share of older people in working population because the retired people are often in good health to continue work, and moreover work can be good for older age people health (Kristjuhan, 2008). In Finland the age group of 55-74 years old people is the only age group where the share of entrepreneurs has been increased during 21st century. In this age group the share of entrepreneurs has been increased from five per cent to eight per cent. Furthermore, in the whole entrepreneur population in Finland the older age entrepreneurs share have increased from 10 per cent to 14 per cent (Järnefelt, 2011). However, the increase of older age entrepreneurship is not always based on positive opportunity sometimes it could be also the only option to avoid poverty trap and unemployment (Curran and Blackburn, 2001).

2.1 Why older people want to become entrepreneurs?

Explanations of why older people want to become entrepreneurs are driven from several theoretical backgrounds such as economic, individual characteristics and resources, psychological, socio-cultural, societal (contextual) views. Economic reasoning often point out the wealth creation as the main motivator to be self-employed (start own business). This thinking is based on the idea of rational actor which tries to increase economic wealth and one option to do this is the opportunity that self-employment and/or start own business offers. In line with this economic reasoning is that the main motive to be an entrepreneur is a reliable and steady stream of income which is required to support the person established lifestyle (Kautonen, 2008). However, some researchers argue that self-employment at the older age is not explained only by personal wealth and income factors (Singh and DeNoble, 2003).

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

Individual characteristics such as personal health has been emphasised to be some of the important motives to be self-employed in older age. Entrepreneurship could be seeing as an

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

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

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

Socio-cultural theories such as the theory of planned behaviour (TPB) (Ajzen, 1988; 1991) combines psychological and socio-cultural theories in order to explain and predict overall human behaviour and therefore, can be utilized also e.g. in explaining and predicting older age self-employed and business start-up initiatives. According to Kautonen et al. (2011) it could be argued that entrepreneurial behaviour is intentional and intention is the immediate antecedent of behaviour. The TPB (Ajzen, 1988; 1991) emphasise that intentions are explained by three conceptually independent factors such as 1) attitude toward the behaviour (the degree to which a human being has a favourable or unfavourable evaluation or appraisal of the behaviour in question), 2) the subjective norm (social pressure to perform or not to perform intended behaviour) and 3)

behavioural control (the perceived ease for difficulty of performing the behaviour). These elements together explain the person intention to be or not be an entrepreneur.

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

2.2 What kind of factors influence on the opportunity recognition and exploitation in older age?

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

(2004) emphasise that older age entrepreneurs sometimes see their business ventures as a supplementary form of income rather than principal wealth generator.

Older age may foster the ability to recognize and exploit the opportunities in a successful way. Blackburn et al. (1999) detect that older people are more likely to have the experience and assets for business ownership than younger age groups. Parker (2001) argues that older entrepreneurs have also better access to capital than younger entrepreneurs. Several studies reports (Cressy and Storey, 1995) that the survival rates of established businesses are in group of older age entrepreneurs (+50 years old) higher than younger age start-ups. These findings could indicate that there exist age related differences of survival rates of new businesses. However, Kautonen (2008) detected no performance differences between prime age (18-50) and older entrepreneurs (50+). There is a need of further empirical studies in order to understand the new business creation phenomenon of older age.

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

Weber and Schaper (2004) upraised several factors that may impede and/or increase opportunity recognition and exploitation. Factors that impede opportunity recognition and exploitation were defined as failing health with lower productivity and energy levels and lower education levels. Factors that increase opportunity recognition and exploitation were technical knowledge and management experience. Factors that may have both impeding and /or increasing effects of opportunity recognition and exploitation were defined industry experience and the point in the family life-cycle of which the business venture begins. Further, life experience and personal networks showed to decrease the knowledge gaps and lack of formal education within older people. Some authors have also emphasised that strong personal formal and informal networks such as

family support assist the start-up process (Birley, 1985). Moreover, gender view may have also explanatory power in older people entrepreneurship (Weber and Schaper, 2004). Curran and Blackburn (2001) discovered that reasons for not to be self-employed are considered several things such as uncertainty of income streams, older age people may feel too old to start a business of their own, lack of job security and too high risks related to self-employment and/or starting own business.

2.3 How in practice the older people entrepreneurship and start-up initiatives could be supported?

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

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

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

needs for supporting older age nascent entrepreneurs and active entrepreneurs. This information is highly needed in order to have empirical support for policy initiatives focused on older age entrepreneurship.

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

1. Why older people want to become entrepreneurs?

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

2. What kind of factors influence on the opportunity recognition and exploitation in older age?

- life-style entrepreneurs (Weber and Schaper, 2004)
- performance including also growth, innovation, survival aspects (Cressy and Storey, 1995; Blackburn et al., 1999; Peters, Storey and Cressy, 1999)
- factors that support and/or prevent business opportunity recognition and exploitation (Singh and DeNoble, 2003; Weber and Schaper, 2004)

3. How in practice the older people entrepreneurship and start-up initiatives could be supported?

- institutional and cultural influence (Kyrö et., 2012)
- portfolio of several instruments (Kautonen et al., 2011)
- focus group thinking (Curran and Blackburn, 2001)

This design was applied in themed interviews and in the building of thematic constructs. In addition to the above framework, for the interviewees were asked of their own perceptions of what older age entrepreneurship means for them and if there is exist needs that could be fulfilled by supporting the older age people self-employed and business start-up initiatives.

3 Methodology and data

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

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

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

As was mentioned earlier, the primary data for the study were collected through interviews. The above framework for the theme interviews was applied and exploited to analyse the results of the study. The interviews were carried out from 13-21 March 2012, in the office of Aalto-

University, School of Economics, Small Business Center in Mikkeli, Finland. All the interviewees were nascent entrepreneurs or thinking to be self-employed (established own business) in near future. The interviews were recorded and transcribed accurately. The text was classified accordingly and the content was analysed. Created thematic constructs are based on the focus themes derived from prior theoretical backgrounds and empirical studies including the findings of study interviews.

4 Results

4.1 Why older people want to become entrepreneurs?

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

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

and person D (threat of unemployment-increased earnings- increased social inclusion-self-fulfilment- opportunities to exploit recognized business ideas).

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

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

Job retrenchment (person A, B and C) and restructuring (person D) were discovered to be societal factors that have influence to find new perspective(s) for these persons. Also Weber and Schaper (2004) find out that in U.K. economic situation and in diverse sectors change such as job retrenchment was the single most common reason for starting a business in older age. Other societal factors were age discrimination (person A and B), less attractive pension and welfare arrangements (person A and D). Socio-cultural factors that were found to influence on why older entrepreneurs want to become entrepreneurs were age norm, positive attitudes towards self-employment. This finding support Kautonen et al., (2011) results that positive age norm in the region increase directly older age people intentions to be self-employed and/or start own business. In the following figure 1 is presented the first construct of combined theory driven factors and interview findings explaining why older age people want to become entrepreneurs. Bolded text in the boxes presents new findings compared to prior findings/understanding.

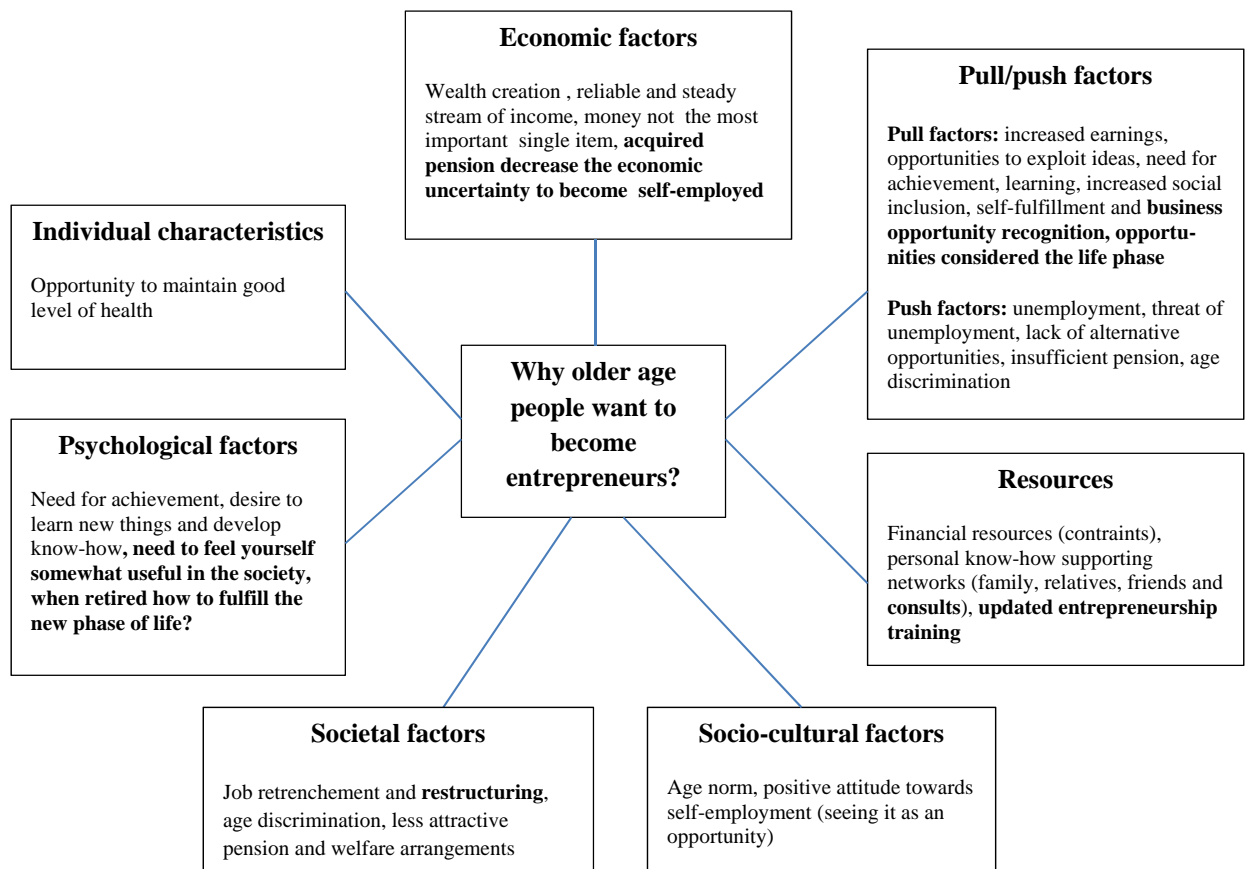


Figure 1. Combined theory driven factors and interview findings explaining why older age people want to become entrepreneurs

4.2 What kind of factors influence on the opportunity recognition and exploitation in older age?

The results of this study emphasise that older age people are more willingness to look for stable and profitable business opportunities that fit with the person established lifestyle (see e.g. Weber and Schaper, 2004) than innovative high growth initiatives of their businesses. Self-employment is more important than providing new jobs for other people. These results are in line with recent findings of innovative growing firms (Heimonen, 2012). Entrepreneurship and business related term success is defined by the persons as subjective evaluation of overall situation of person life where entrepreneurship and business success are understand as a part of complex life of person.

Business venture opportunities are recognized and exploited as supplementary form of income (e.g. increasing the income streams with pension, persons A and D). Further, business opportunities are recognized as simultaneous opportunity to work and same time doing part-time self-

employment, or act as retired freelancer (persons C and D). These findings confirm the Weber and Schaper (2004) prior results that business ventures are seen as supplementary opportunity to form income than principal wealth generator. Moreover, following motives of business recognition and exploitation that considered the person lifestyle were emphasised:

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

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

Factors supporting:

- *Prior studies upraised factors such as life experience, personal networks, family support, assets for business ownership (e.g. equipment and capital no need for start-up investments), management experience and technical knowledge*
- *New factors compared to prior understanding in this study were showed to be industry know-how and experience, several business opportunity ideas, outside consultation help to develop further business idea and concepts, prior experience to establish a business, updating entrepreneurship course, hobby, enterprise allowance, understanding customer needs and requirements (existing market demand), diverse opportunities to be self-employed such as business partnership, change of generation, shared customer projects with existing entrepreneurs and firms, freelancer opportunity, good health condition*

Factors preventing:

- *Prior studies upraised factors such as uncertainty of income streams, failing health, negative stereotypes related to group of older age people*
- *New factors compared to prior understanding in this study were showed to be too strong appreciation culture of salaried work, the low amount of enterprise allowance (500-800 euros per month) compared high risk related to self-employment especially during the first years of start-up process*

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

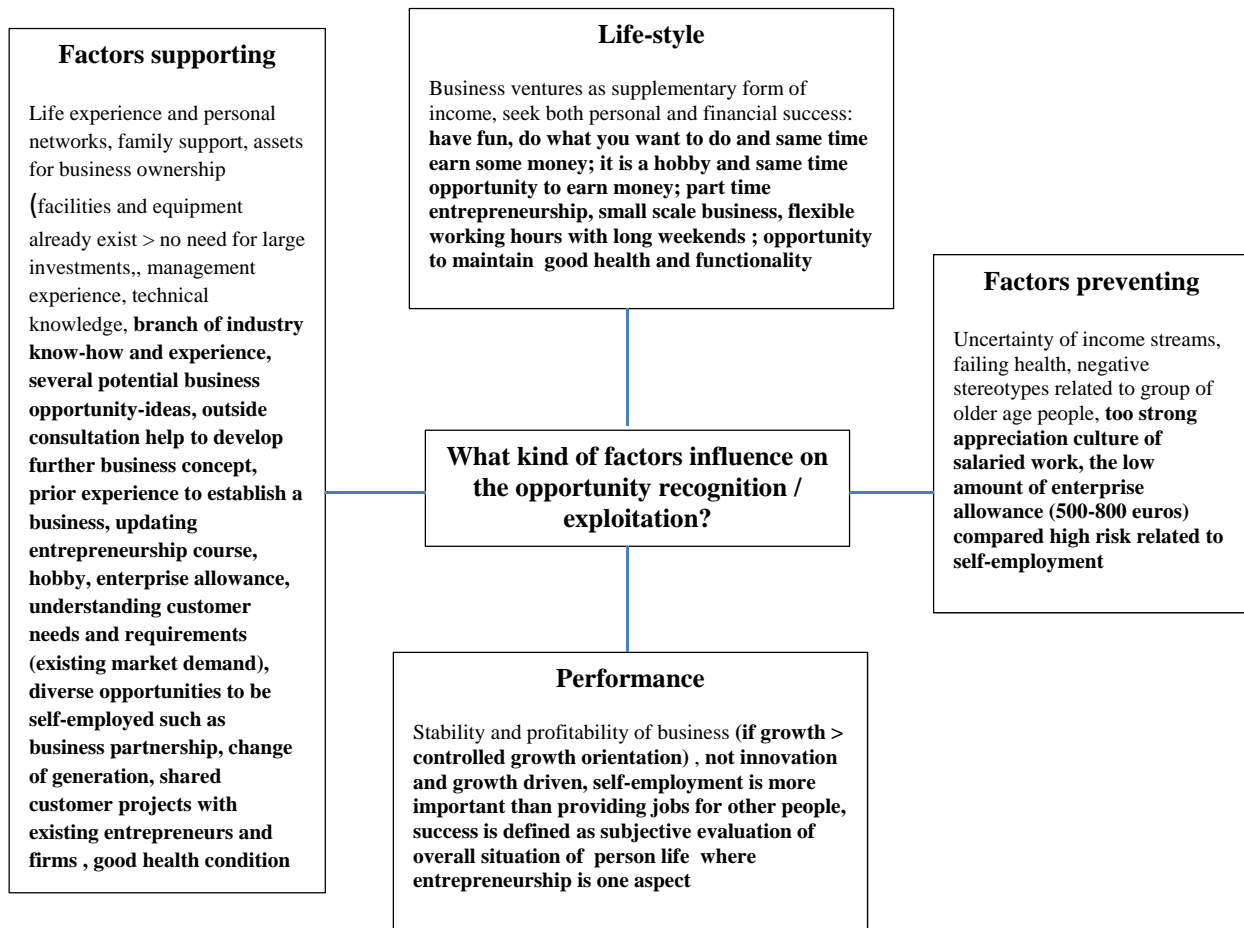


Figure 2. *Factors influencing business opportunity recognition and exploitation of older age nascent entrepreneurs*

4.3 How in practice the older people entrepreneurship and start-up initiatives could be supported?

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

Curran and Blackburn (2001) showed in their study in U.K. that especially older age people who are in working life may be possible actors especially are motivated and have willingness to

start a business of their own and/or there is decreased amount of factors that may prevent the self-employed initiatives compared already retired persons or unemployed older age people. In this study we find out that also some of the people who are unemployed or are under threat of unemployment in older age may have strong intentions to be self-employed. Therefore, in future focus group(s) thinking when supporting older age people entrepreneurship initiatives have to acknowledge the diversity of groups older age people and actions planned have to be derived based on contextual factors including person related opportunities and life-situation.

Both institutional and cultural items were showed to be influential (all interviewed persons) in order to support the older age people entrepreneurship and start-up initiatives. The study findings are in line with Kyrö et al., (2012) report of Senior Entrepreneurship in Finland. If the goal is to support the older age people incentives to work or be self-employed the focus has to be also on the development of system flexibility towards older age people (e.g. self-employed person's pension costs, taxation and other benefits). In Finland it seems that employment laws need to be changed in order to support both work and self-employment initiatives (including part-time work/entrepreneurship) especially, in the case of unemployment of older age without the fear of punishments (person A). Something has to be done also with public awareness of positive possibilities/opportunities in society. Moreover, negative age discrimination especially in working life seems to be a cultural driver for seeing self-employment as a real and some cases the only choice to continue working in older age.

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

- need for social, peer support networks/relationships
- updating training/education
- start-up centers for older age people
- seminar/events fostering older age entrepreneurship and upraise the positive public awareness of the importance of the phenomenon
- innovative R&D projects focused developing diverse themes of older age entrepreneurship

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

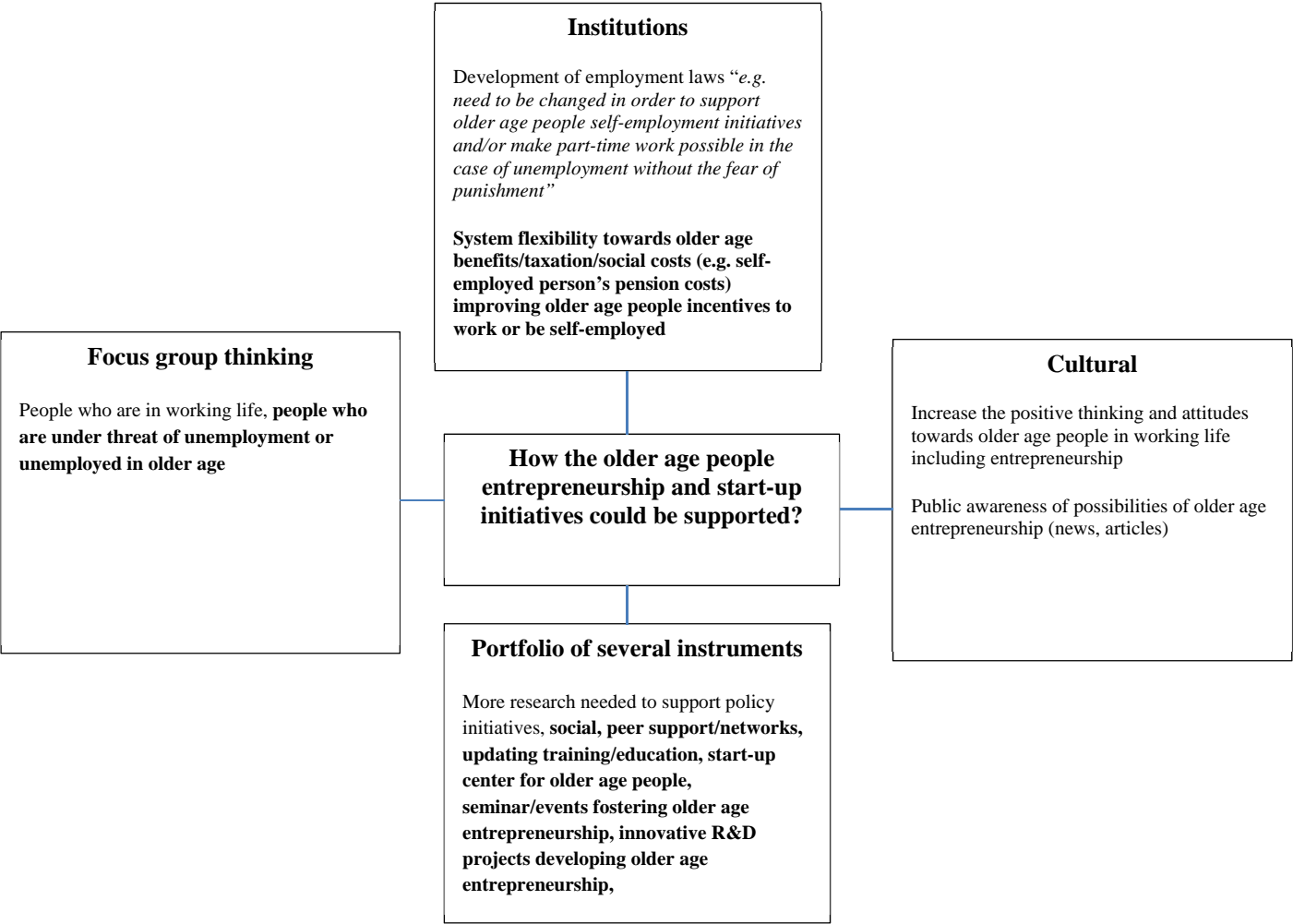


Figure 3. *Items supporting the older people entrepreneurship and start-up initiatives*

5 Conclusions

In this study, we have analysed the subjective constructs of four older age people who have upraised the intentions to be self-employed in the near future or have already established own firm. Our analysis focuses on the motives to become self-employed, factors that influence on opportunity recognition and exploitation. Moreover, we develop further the prior understanding and items influencing of older age people entrepreneurship.

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

Life-style, performance and factors supporting and/or preventing the opportunity recognition and exploitation were analysed more detailed. Based on our results it seems that both personal and financial successes are important. Self-employment is seeing as an opportunity for both full- and part-time actions. Stability and profitability of business and flexibility, happiness, self-fulfilment and opportunity to maintain good health and functionality seems to be more desired than innovation driven growth motives of exploiting business opportunities. Self-employment is more important than providing new jobs for other people. The results of this study confirm the prior findings of Weber and Schaper (2004).

Singh and DeNoble (2003), Kautonen (2011) and Weber and Schaper (2004) findings that uncertainty of income streams and negative stereotypes (age norm) and failing health were also factors that prevent the possible opportunity recognition and /or exploitation of an business opportunity with this study interviewed persons. One new perspective according to this study is the strong culture of appreciation of salaried work which has prohibited entrepreneurial intentions to

become self-employed. Several factors supporting opportunity recognition and/or exploitation were acknowledged such as life-experience, personal networks, family support, assets for business ownership, management knowledge, technical experience (see e.g. Singh and DeNoble, 2003, Weber and Schaper, 2004). This study pointed out also several other factors such as branch of industry know-how and experience, several business opportunity ideas, outside consultation help to improve business idea, updating training course of entrepreneurship, hobby, enterprise allowance, understanding of customer needs, diverse opportunities to be self-employed and good health condition.

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

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

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Appendix

Background information on the interviewees and their business initiatives

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