

Young Chinese Entrepreneurs in Australia

Migrant Networks in a New Land

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Abstract: The study explores the phenomenon of young migrant Chinese entrepreneurs in Brisbane, Australia and the various ways in which they use networks to advance their business interests. While the concept of networking is an integral component of the Chinese way of doing business for Chinese entrepreneurs in Asian countries, the highly regulated business environment in Australia poses many challenges and restrictions to Chinese network reliance. The notions of 'entrepreneur', 'network' and 'entrepreneurial networks' are discussed before examining these concepts in the Chinese in Asia context. The study utilised personal interviews and questionnaires with a group of six migrant Chinese entrepreneurs in Australia, all below 40 years of age. It was found that the three entrepreneurs who did not have any networks in Brisbane before their arrival found it relatively easy to purchase franchises and begin business operations immediately, without the need for pre-existing networks. The three participants who did have pre-existing network contacts in Brisbane started up private businesses with the extensive assistance of their Chinese community networks. The implications of this study on business migration issues are discussed.

Keywords: Entrepreneur, Networks, Entrepreneurial networks, Migrant Chinese entrepreneurs

Introduction

THE ENTREPRENEURIAL NETWORKS of overseas Chinese (*huaqiao* or *huayi*) have been well documented (Hayley, Tan & Hayley, 1998; Redding, 1995; Haley & Haley, 1998). These networks emerged most notably within migrant Chinese communities throughout the Pacific Rim during the late 19th and early 20th centuries (Redding, 1996). The significant economic power of *huaqiao* businesses and other business networks in South-East Asia have also been recognised in the literature (Yeung, 1999) and are considered to be integral to ethnic Chinese entrepreneurial success (Hayley, Tan & Hayley, 1998). The global expansion of these networks is, accordingly, integrally linked to ethnic Chinese migration trends (Yeung, 1999). Australia, in particular, became a primary destination for ethnic Chinese migration as the *White Australia* policy was abolished in the 1960's and 1970's. The *White Australia* policy had previously restricted and reduced Australia's ethnic Chinese population during the first half of the 20th century (Inglis, 1999). Political uncertainty throughout Asia during the late 20th century was a major impetus for ethnic Chinese to migrate to Australia, with a desire to provide children with greater opportunities in education and a perceived better lifestyle (Inglis, 1999). Many of these ethnic Chinese business people have migrated

as entrepreneurs under the *Business Migration Program*. The existence of the Chinese-speaking business networks have been intensified by a number of factors, including language barriers and a lack of familiarity with the Australian business environment and ways of doing business (Anderson & Saunders, 1999). Many migrants find it difficult to operate their businesses successfully due to Australia's smaller population base and to their perceptions of an intimidating government regulatory framework (Anderson & Saunders, 1999). Some Chinese entrepreneurs are considered 'reluctant entrepreneurs' because they have started small businesses only because their professional qualifications are not accepted in Australia (Kee, 1998).

Small businesses are referred to by the Australian government as "the backbone of the country" and represent 97% of all businesses in the State of Queensland (www.sd.qld.gov.au/dsdweb/docs). An independent working group, supported by the Prime Minister of Australia's Science, Engineering and Innovation Council (PMSEIC, 2002) Secretariat prepared a discussion paper that addressed how to unleash Australia's entrepreneurial potential. The underlying strength in the Australian economy, coupled with general economic reforms to foster business growth and entrepreneurial activity, has provided a suitable economic environment to facilit-



ate the success of high-growth start-up companies (PMSEIC, 2002). The Australian government has recognised that in addition to a strong economy, other elements necessary for entrepreneurial success are the development of world-class competitive innovations and technology, the ready availability of equity capital, and appropriate management skills (PMSEIC, 2002). In particular, the Prime Minister supported strongly the establishment of a National Entrepreneurial Mentoring Group to raise the profile and recognise the value of entrepreneurship to the Australian economy (PMSEIC, 2002). The national government has also supported the growth of productive diversity, where ethnic, cultural, and gender diversity amongst employees is utilised to improve business productivity in organisations (Cope & Kalantzis, 1997). To be successful, however, these initiatives require adaptation to Australia's various migrant communities, including the Chinese community.

The exploratory research presented here investigates the issues, theories, paradigms and processes associated with the phenomena of overseas Chinese entrepreneurial networks. First, the concepts and theories of entrepreneurialism and entrepreneurial networks are examined and defined, followed by an exploration of overseas Chinese entrepreneurial networks in general. While this research investigates the phenomena of overseas Chinese entrepreneurial networks in Brisbane, Australia, literature in this area is greatly limited. As part of a larger exploratory study, this present investigation is guided by the three research questions of: 1) What types of networks exist for overseas Chinese entrepreneurs living and operating in Brisbane, Australia? 2) How are these networks developed? and 3) How are these networks utilised?

Entrepreneurialism

A foundational force behind the initiation and progression of any economy is the ability of individuals or groups to continually seek out and seize upon enterprise market activities that fulfil the wants and needs of populations through innovation and uniqueness (Harper, 2003). Effective entrepreneurs use available resources to develop new businesses, markets, products, processes, production and management techniques, and organisational forms to enhance their own wealth, along with the wealth of the economies in which they operate (Harper, 2003). Kirzner (1973, 1979, 2000) attributes the entrepreneurial ability, of discovering and finding utilisations for new resources, as a fundamental basis by which economies are built. Through being alert to market opportunities, they use boldness, impulses, and hunches as the building blocks to make decisions about which opportunities to investigate (Kirzner,

1979). Romer (1993) builds on Kirzner's notion of resource utilisation and contends that the most valuable resource utilised by entrepreneurs is the intangible and near limitless resource of their own creative ideas. Without new ideas and new knowledge, innovation is unlikely and subject only to chance (Romer, 1993; Kirzner, 1979). Economic advancement is, therefore, highly reliant on the ability of entrepreneurial groups and individuals to utilise the resources of their ideas in the development of business opportunities.

Entrepreneurialism, therefore, involves the utilisation of the largely limitless resource of ideas, as they relate to the discovery of potentially profitable business opportunities. Using the intuitive attributes of boldness, impulses, and hunches, entrepreneurs seek to take profitable advantage of economic, market conditions. Through a disposition of continual alertness to the surprise discovery of business opportunities, the entrepreneur is able to recognise and take advantage of market conditions and situations that are unknown and missed by those who do not possess the attributes of entrepreneurialism. An investigation into the networks of entrepreneurs follows.

Entrepreneurial Networks

Network analysis theories study the relational data between agents, in terms of their contacts, ties, group attachments, and connections with each other (Scott, 2000). Through an interpretive process, network analysis examines the meanings, motives, definitions and typologies of these related agents (Scott, 2000). Relational linkages in network analysis possess collective meanings as opposed to individual meanings, as networks necessarily involve dyadic systems of two or more agents. These systems are further linked, through one or more of the agents, to other network systems that are, in turn, linked in various ways to countless other systems (Scott, 2000). The mapping of these relationships, in the context of overseas Chinese entrepreneurial relationship systems, is the focus of this present study.

As new and ambiguous business ventures often lack legitimacy in the business community, until proven viable, entrepreneurs must rely on their network of social resources for support (Starr & MacMillan, 1990). Nohria and Eccles (1992) contend that only a close, personal, social connection is potent enough to support the entrepreneurial needs of supplying resources and providing meaningful encouragement for continued alertness in the midst of start-up ambiguity. Such networks, in the personal entrepreneurial context, are divided into three interdependent categories of information networks, exchange networks, and networks of influence (Johannisson, 2000). Information networks exist as part of both

exchange and influence networks, by providing the systems by which information is disseminated (Johannisson, 2000). Exchange networks involve the specific carrying of information in terms of business transactions, while creating mutual dependencies and influences between agents (Johannisson, 2000). Finally, influence networks carry both solicited and unsolicited information, with varying degrees of intensity, across all networks (Johannisson, 2000). These networks reflect the personality and drives of the entrepreneur, support the sense-making of the personal and venture-promoting life of the entrepreneur, and act as an extension of the entrepreneur's overall personal and business reach (Johannisson, 2000). A review of overseas Chinese entrepreneurial networks follows.

Overseas Chinese Entrepreneurial Networks

While the focus of this study is to investigate the phenomena of overseas Chinese entrepreneurial networks in Australia, the literature in this area is limited. The study, therefore, explores the literature identifying the characteristics of overseas Chinese entrepreneurial networks in general, and more specifically in Western contexts, where the literature makes such a distinction. 'Overseas Chinese entrepreneurs,' in the context of this study, are defined broadly as those individuals of ethnic Chinese culture and origin, including those from historically established Chinese communities within Asia, who are currently living and pursuing various business interests in other parts of the world. 'Overseas Chinese entrepreneurial networks' are the personal relationships used by overseas Chinese entrepreneurs to advance their business efforts. These relationships can include business owners and managers, government officials, professionals, academics, private investors, friends, family and anyone else who may be of benefit to the entrepreneur's interests (Haley, Tan & Haley, 1998). Through securing a position in a network, the entrepreneur can build and improve their status and bargaining power amongst network agents (Buttery & Wong, 1999; Hutchings & Murray, 2001).

Haley, Tan and Haley (1998) identify five categories, upon which Chinese business networks are built: Clan groupings, according to family surname; Locality groupings, determined by regional origin in China; Dialect groupings, based on dialect or sub-dialects spoken; Guild groupings, based on craft practiced; and Trust groupings, according to prior experience or character recommendation. Though these groupings are overlapping and interrelated, Charan (1991, p. 49) contends that trust networks, in particular, are the most critical of the networks, as these relationships provide a forum from which

entrepreneurs can "talk openly, candidly, and emotionally without fear, to enrich the quality of their decisions."

Fei (1992) outlines five dominant characteristics inherent in each type of overseas Chinese network. Firstly, they are discontinuous and independent, where membership in one type of network does not imply membership in another type of network, unless one's trustworthiness can be established from one group to another. Secondly, Chinese overseas networks are hierarchical and dyadic, where each member of the network has access to each of the other members, with higher stature individuals having dominant roles in relationships (Fei, 1992). Higher stature, in this instance, refers to any of the Confucian hierarchical relationships that include age, professional status, familial position and any other dominant / submissive tie (Fei, 1992). Thirdly, these networks emphasise uprightness, wherein membership is based on a proven record of trustworthy and consistently reliable behaviour, with considerable time and effort invested in determining the upright appropriateness of a potential inductee (Fei, 1992). Included in uprightness is the reciprocity of favours, wherein trust is formed through the proving of one's dependability, in terms of adherence to relational obligations (Fei, 1992). In business contexts, uprightness can also involve one's credit rating (Kiong & Kee, 1998). Fourthly, these networks view morality as contextual, where network agents act in a more upright manner within networks that include equals or superiors and that have been in operation for a longer period of time, as opposed to those that are relatively new, composed primarily of subordinates (Fei, 1992). As goodwill and strong relationships are tied to individuals and not to titled positions or organisations, strong network ties can only be expected between individuals who have proven their trustworthiness to each other over time (Haley, Tan & Haley, 1998). Network agents also act more uprightly in relationships that offer some type of mutual gain, with non-productive ties failing to warrant strong commitment (Haley, Tan & Haley, 1998). Fifthly, such networks have flexible boundaries that commonly change with internal and external environmental circumstances, where agent status within networks can shift according to the degree of uprightness that they demonstrate to the other network members (Haley, Tan & Haley, 1998; Fei, 1992). Maintaining uprightness, therefore, is of great concern to network members who desire to remain active network participants.

Having established the types and some of the characteristics of overseas Chinese entrepreneurial networks, an exploration of the contextual environments in which these networks operate is needed in order to gain a deeper understanding of their func-

tionality. The prominence of Chinese entrepreneurial activity in South-East Asia is aided, in part, by what is known as the 'information void' (Haley, Tan & Haley, 1998). As market information is not readily available to all competitors, due to poor information transfer infrastructures in many South-East Asian countries, alert entrepreneurs with well established networks can obtain and monopolise timely and little known information from network members, which can assist them in making business decisions to take advantage of market opportunities (Haley, Tan & Haley, 1998). In Western countries, such as Australia, where market information can be simultaneously available to all competitors, due to firmly established information and communication infrastructures, this advantage is less prominent (Haley, Tan & Haley, 1998). The Chinese entrepreneurs, who rely heavily on the quality and quantity of the information provided through their network ties, can also lose advantage in Western countries, due to misinterpretations of market information (Haley, Tan & Haley, 1998; Cheng & Vriens, 1996, 1997). In Asian countries, the Chinese entrepreneurs depend upon their intimate knowledge of the Asian markets, industries, governments and styles of doing business, while in the West they require time to develop such strategic competencies (Haley, Tan & Haley, 1998; Cheng & Vriens, 1996, 1997). These competencies are, however, being developed in the heirs of the entrepreneurs, who benefit both from having a Western business education and from the mentoring provided by their entrepreneurial Chinese seniors (Haley, Tan & Haley, 1998).

Through an exploration of entrepreneurialism, entrepreneurial networks and overseas Chinese entrepreneurial networks, the aim of this literature study is to provide a deeper understanding of networks, in the context of overseas Chinese entrepreneurs. While a substantial gap exists of literature investigating overseas Chinese entrepreneurial networks in Australia, the present study offers an insight into the foundational elements of overseas Chinese entrepreneurial network systems and structures, as they relate to operations in both Asian and Western nations in general.

Method

As part of a larger study on the entrepreneurial networks of overseas Chinese, the present study involved recent face-to-face, semi-structured, directed interviews with six Asian-born, male, Chinese entre-

preneurs, presently living and conducting entrepreneurial activities in Brisbane, Australia. The interview questions were developed to reflect the issues presented in the research questions, as influenced by the relevant themes that emerged from the literature. Interviews were conducted and transcribed entirely in English. Each participant was given the opportunity to use Mandarin or English during the interviews and all chose to use English. Initially, the entrepreneurs were contacted through referrals and formal introductions provided by members of the Chinese business community in Brisbane. Along with being asked to provide demographic details, all participants of the larger study were posed the same ten questions, designed to gain a deeper insight into the issues of Chinese entrepreneurial networks in Brisbane. The present study focuses on two of the network related questions in particular: 1) *How did you start this type of business;* and 2) *What types of network relationships help you in your business?*

The transcribed interviews were analysed using a grounded theory approach, whereby the rich data was coded and compared in order to gain a deeper insight and understanding into the phenomena of overseas Chinese entrepreneurial networks in Brisbane (Parry, 2003). A merging of axial codes from across the data allowed for the inductive development of themes and core ideas (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Incorporating a grounded theory approach allows the theory to develop from the participants themselves, in relation to their processes, interactions and experiences within the context of being overseas Chinese entrepreneurs in Brisbane.

Sample

A snowball, purposive sample was used in this study. Each participant is an Australian citizen, under 40 years of age, who owns and operates his own business, based in Brisbane. Brisbane, with an estimated population of 1,733,200 in 2003 (<http://www.abs.gov.au>), has an Asian-born resident-count representing approximately 16.2% of the general population (BCC, 2004). Five of the participants came to Australia as young teenagers with their parents and subsequently attained Bachelor's degrees from Universities within Queensland, Australia. One of the participants acquired his education in Singapore and came to Australia in his early twenties. The six entrepreneurs' demographic details follow (see Table 1).

Table 1: Sample Demographics

Character Name	Business Type	Age	Education	Number of Employees	Years in Business	Country of Birth
Tim	Convenience Store Franchise	26-30	Bachelor Management	1-5	5-10	Taiwan
James	Advertising & Design	26-30	Bachelor Visual Arts	1-5	2-5	Taiwan
Simon	Computer Gaming Design	26-30	Bachelor IT	20-50	2-5	Taiwan
Rex	Post Office Franchise	31-35	Bachelor Accounting	1-5	2-5	Papua New Guinea
Andrew	Fast Food Franchise	36-40	Diploma Hospitality	5-20	2-5	Singapore
Paul	Building & Construction	26-30	Bachelor Finance	5-20	2-5	Taiwan

Results of Interview Study

Throughout the interviews, common themes emerge, as the participants describe their network experiences and processes associated with being Chinese entrepreneurs in Brisbane. Important to the participants' notion of business networks includes an evolved categorisation of networks as being either *personal* or *business* related. Their *personal networks* include fathers, brothers, uncles, friends and University teachers, while their *business networks* are divided into local, regional, national and international sectors that include industry competitors, franchise corporate leaders, employees and customers. Also, the participants highlight the need for *trust* and *reliability* within their networks. An analysis of these findings follows.

Networks

Repeatedly, the importance of having reliable networks was cited as being very relevant to each of the participant entrepreneurs. When asked, 'how did you start this type of business?' three of the entrepreneurs referred to specific friends and relatives within their personal networks as being instrumental in introducing them to the purchase of their businesses.

My brother was working here before, long time before we took over. (Tim- Convenience Store franchise)

I was talking about this with one of my uncles... and went into the Post Office together with my uncle. (Rex – Post Office franchise)

I was introduced by a friend. (Andrew – Fast Food franchise)

Notably, these three entrepreneurs purchased existing franchises, while the other three started businesses that were dependent upon the participants' unique

skills and experiences. Simon, Paul and James, in response to 'how' they started their business, refer to concepts of profit seeking, opportunities to provide high-demand products, and it being a natural progression from their schooling. Though these responses may seem more attuned to 'why' they started their businesses, it is interesting that they do not mention any particular network contact as being relevant to their business start-up. For the franchise owners, the network individuals who introduced them to their franchise opportunities were highly regarded and aptly credited. This emerging difference between the franchise purchasers and the independent business owners is explored further with a deeper inquiry into the networks that they use in order to keep their businesses functioning.

When asked the question of 'what types of network relationships help you in your business?' the differences between the franchisees and the independent business owners became more pronounced. The franchise owners' initial responses indicated that networks were not very important to the operation of their businesses:

In this kind of business you don't really need contacts. Because it's more of retail, there is no need to rely too much on personal contacts. (Rex – Post Office franchise)

Because we joined as a franchise, we don't worry about such things, the supplier and those sorts of things. (Tim- Convenience Store franchise)

There is no need for network relationships. (Andrew – Fast Food franchise)

Further explanation of the franchisees' answers, however, reveals the extent to which networks are involved in the running of their businesses. Andrew says of Fast food that the franchise corporation takes

care of all operational, supply and support needs and that everything to do with the business is *taken care of*. Being new to Australia, he wanted a business *where the brand was already established, so it would be easy to set up in a new country*. Likewise, Tim reports that the Convenience Store franchise head office takes care of all his supply and operational needs and says that *the franchise system is a lot easier... you don't have too much control [because] the system is already there*. Though they state that networks are not important for them because the franchise corporations look after all of their business needs, they have each become part of a large business network, through purchasing a piece of a corporate franchise, thereby benefiting directly from firmly established relationships. While they may not be cognisant of their network involvement, their business operations are a part of the larger corporate network.

The independent business owners, conversely, all indicate that an active involvement with their personal and business networks is necessary for the sustainability and growth of their businesses. They also highly stress the issue of establishing and nurturing attitudes of *trust* within their network relationships, in order to enhance their business positions:

We never do any advertising...so a lot comes from networking. We spend a lot of time going out with agency people. It's all about knowing the person, building a relationship [and] gaining people's trust so that they will give you the job. We'd also rather get referrals from clients. (James – Design and advertising)

Taking a look at how different businesses operate helps give me ideas on how I can improve my own. Building a friendship with these different businesses is good ...because when a rush job is needed, they are there to help speed things up. Goodwill is very important. (Paul – Building and construction contracting)

James and Paul, in contrast to the franchise owners, need to find, develop and nurture their own networks in order to keep their companies sustained and informed of opportunities for growth. Simon, with his game development company, likewise states that he has a *very good* network both inside and outside of Australia. Similar to Paul, Simon also has network associations with his local industry competitors:

We are actually helping each other in business instead of competing with each other because all our market is in USA or Europe. If we don't work together, we have less chance of selling our product to the US. (Simon – Computer gaming development).

Besides identifying his international customer network affiliates, Simon also explains how he is a member of the gaming industry's Game Developers Association of Australia and the Queensland Game Developers Association, of whose members he says, *all these people help each other*. Simon's total associations, therefore, include local, state, national and international affiliations that are both guild and trust-based (Haley, Tan & Haley, 1998; Charan, 1991). None of the participants had any relationship with the clan-based family networks that characterise the overseas Chinese business networks throughout South-East Asia (Redding, 1995). The business relationships of the independent business owners, however, all include guild networks of information, exchange, and influence, whereby information is transferred in ways that affect their business operations and opportunities for growth (Johannisson, 2000). This differs from the franchisees whose franchise corporate headquarters deal with all exchange network matters. A further analysis of the network structures of both the independent business and franchise owning entrepreneurs follows.

Network Structures

A clear distinction has emerged between the franchise owning entrepreneurs and the independent business owners. The franchisees have essentially purchased an established and functioning network when they took ownership of their particular franchise units. Their roles in their franchise networks are to care for the individual business outlets for which they are directly responsible. Apart from in-store diligence, according to corporate guidelines, their involvement in the franchise network is negligible. Their business network involvement is limited to their dealing with employees, local customers and franchise corporate representatives. Their personal networks, which include family members and friends, are primarily mentioned as having an influence only during the initial stages of their franchise ownership. These relationships are credited with providing introductions to the franchise opportunities and of giving advice and moral guidance. In the instance of Rex and the Post Office franchise, his parents were his financiers and his uncle the one who introduced him to the business. Tim was introduced to the Convenience Store franchise through his brother and Andrew was introduced to the Fast-food franchise by way of a friend. While Rex's father and uncle are also in the Post Office business, their entrepreneurial personal network functionality with Rex is limited by the corporate restrictions of the Post Office.

For the franchise owners to grow as entrepreneurs within the franchise system, they are limited to purchasing additional franchise business units. Though they may have guild network associations with other

franchise owners or clan associations with family members who are in the same business, the relevance of these associations in the economic advancement of the entrepreneur is minimal. The requirement for these associations to be trust-based is also minimised, as the corporate franchise structure ensures that all business needs are fulfilled according to corporate standards such that additional relationships for ensuring business functionality are not required. The franchise owners have no opportunities to express entrepreneurial business growth through the use of networking and creative innovation because of the rigid structures of the corporate franchise systems. Their reliance on the franchise corporations to deal with all possible business and industry concerns for their businesses, therefore, relinquishes them from the requirement to develop their own industry networks. The only networks they require to maintain their businesses are the business networks that include their employees, customers and franchise corporate agents.

While the independent business owners need to continually maintain their personal and business networks in order to keep their businesses functioning and growing, they also need to maintain their industry networks, which involve customers, suppliers, competitors, partners, guild associations, and industry regulators. As with the franchise owners, the independent business owners need to care for their personal networks of family members and friends, along with their business networks of employees and customers. However, they have the added responsibility of developing and nurturing industry networks in order to deal with issues of competition, supplies, alliances, associations, non-local customers, and regulatory concerns.

The franchise entrepreneurs have utilised their personal networks in the early stages of their franchise ownership to get started in their businesses through obtaining information about the opportunities, being given personal and business advice, and receiving initial financing. Some of their personal and business networks overlap, as in the Post Office, where Rex works directly with his uncle in the franchise unit. From the early stages, all of the franchise owners have been closely reliant on the franchise corporations, which are a major part of each of their business networks. Unless they are working in the business with individuals from their personal networks, once their franchise operation becomes established, the only network they require is their business network. Conversely, the independent business owners require all three of the overlapping personal, business, and industry networks in order to maintain the regular functionality and entrepreneurial growth of their companies.

Conclusion

The aim of this study is to explore the phenomena of overseas Chinese entrepreneurial networks in Brisbane, Australia, as guided by the three research questions designed to discover what types of networks exist for the sample population and how these networks are developed and utilised. The participants all alertly utilise their personal networks of family and friends for ideas, advice, and financial assistance during the initial stages of each of their businesses. A notable distinction, however, arises between the entrepreneurs, as the differences between those who own franchises and those who own independent businesses, becomes pronounced. In terms of entrepreneurialism, the opportunities for utilising creative innovation for developing business growth is restricted amongst the franchise owners by the rigidity of the corporate franchise regulatory structures of which they are associated. The independent business owners are not restricted by such constraints.

The network structures between the two groups also differ. The independent business owners need to continually develop and maintain the overlapping personal, business, and industry networks to ensure the growth and profitability of their companies, whereas the franchise owners only need to maintain their business networks, within the context of their individual business units, once their franchise has been purchased and is beyond the initial stages. Both types of entrepreneurial ownership, furthermore, have their own unique characteristic benefits, which can be linked to the needs of the individual business owners. Most notably, each franchise owner has purchased a business and industry network with the purchase of their individual franchise. The franchise corporations take care of most business and all industry network needs of each franchisee. The franchisees' only need to care for the business needs within their own business units and the larger corporation looks after all other concerns. The advantage of this type of arrangement is that an entrepreneur can invest in a franchise without having to first develop personal, business, and industry networks to support such a venture. This is an ideal situation for individuals who are new to a region or country and who want to invest in a business without spending the considerable amounts of time that could be needed to establish a new enterprise. The independent business owners, conversely, need to personally care for all of their own interrelated personal, business, and industry networks. The advantage for the independent business owners, however, is that their opportunities for growth are not limited by overarching corporate bodies. They are instead free to utilise their own creative abilities for developing innovative ideas for enhancing their own business growth and profitability. They are also free to alertly utilise their

various networks to seize upon any type of opportunity that they feel may enhance the profitability or expansion of their businesses.

Depending on the needs of the individual entrepreneur, both franchise and independent business ventures have their advantages. While independent ownership provides more autonomy, control and a greater potential for increased profitability and growth, it also comes with more ambiguity, uncertainty and risk. Furthermore, independent ownership requires the continual development and care of personal, business, and industry relationships. Franchise ownership provides more security, less risk, business support, and predictability, but it also provides less of an opportunity for growth and increased profitability. Most importantly, franchise ownership for entrepreneurs only requires the care of personal and some aspects of business networks, as the remaining elements of the business networks and all industry

networks are maintained by the franchise corporations.

Future studies

The distinctions drawn between the independent business and franchise-owning entrepreneurs could benefit from further exploratory and longitudinal studies to investigate issues of success, generational difference, gender distinctions, and the characteristics of networks over time. The concepts of creative entrepreneurial work-related outlets and enjoyment of work could also benefit from additional deeper investigation. Such studies could benefit individual investors, researchers, franchisers, entrepreneurs, and government bodies interested in the economic impact of overseas Chinese entrepreneurs and their network structures in Australia and abroad.

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