

METAPHORS OF ORGANIZATIONAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP PRE- AND POST-COVID COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS CONDUCTED AMONG POLISH MANAGERS

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Objective: The objective of this article is to identify intrapreneurship metaphors and answer the question whether Covid-19 changed the way organizational entrepreneurship is understood.

Research Design & Methods: Author decided to run both qualitative and quantitative research. In the first part managers were asked to give their metaphorical expressions on paper. The next step was to prepare a questionnaire. This questionnaire was run among two groups of managers pre and post Covid-19.

Findings: Results suggest that Covid-19 changed the way organizational entrepreneurship is understood.

Implications & Recommendations: The empirical findings serve as a starting point for further in-depth research in this area. It is recommended that in order to gain a complete picture of the issues underlying the results, both further qualitative and quantitative research on a bigger sample should be undertaken.

Contribution & Value Added: The originality of this work lies in comparing how intrapreneurship is viewed through the lens of metaphor pre and post covid-19, and how covid-19 changed understanding of intrapreneurship.

With regards to the research limitation, it must be highlighted that it was a pilot study and the results cannot be generalized.

Keywords: Metaphors of intrapreneurship, entrepreneurship, metaphors, research, entrepreneurship education, Poland.

Category of the paper: Research.

1. Introduction

The business environment is becoming increasingly complex and dynamic, making it difficult for firms worldwide to achieve growth, profitability, and competitiveness. The pressures of a globalized economy compounded the challenge of attaining these objectives. Mergers, acquisitions, and joint ventures are common strategies used to expand firms; however, creating growth within the organization remains a difficult task. To maintain competitive

advantage, corporate entrepreneurship is anticipated to become a vital aspect for companies worldwide. Therefore it is an important topic in management and economic discourse. The novelty of this article lies in comparing intrapreneurship metaphors before and after Covid-19.

The objective of this article is to identify intrapreneurship metaphors and answer the question whether Covid-19 changed the way intrapreneurship is understood that is whether there is a significant difference in choice of intrapreneurship metaphors before and after Covid-19?

This paper is divided into three main sections. First, the literature is discussed and special attention is paid to metaphors in economic discourse. The second part briefly presents the methodological assumptions of the study. Finally, the article elaborates on these results.

2. Literature review

Entrepreneurship has long been a driving force in the economy and continues to gain importance as a significant and relevant area of study. To stimulate entrepreneurship in various countries, policymakers are partnering with CEOs and company owners seeking entrepreneurial employees (Chmielecki, 2013). The popularity of start-up firms in high-technology industries, the expansion of venture capital financing, the success of regional clusters such as Silicon Valley, and the rise of crowdfunding have all contributed to this focus on entrepreneurship. Although management scholars and social scientists have studied metaphors of entrepreneurship, there is a lack of literature on this subject in the Polish context. Because culture plays a role in shaping entrepreneurship, different nations have unique concepts of entrepreneurs and entrepreneurship.

A detailed typology of entrepreneurship was proposed by Wach (2015), who tried to combine both economic and business studies, which resulted in distinguishing four primary and three secondary functions of entrepreneurship (Figure 1).

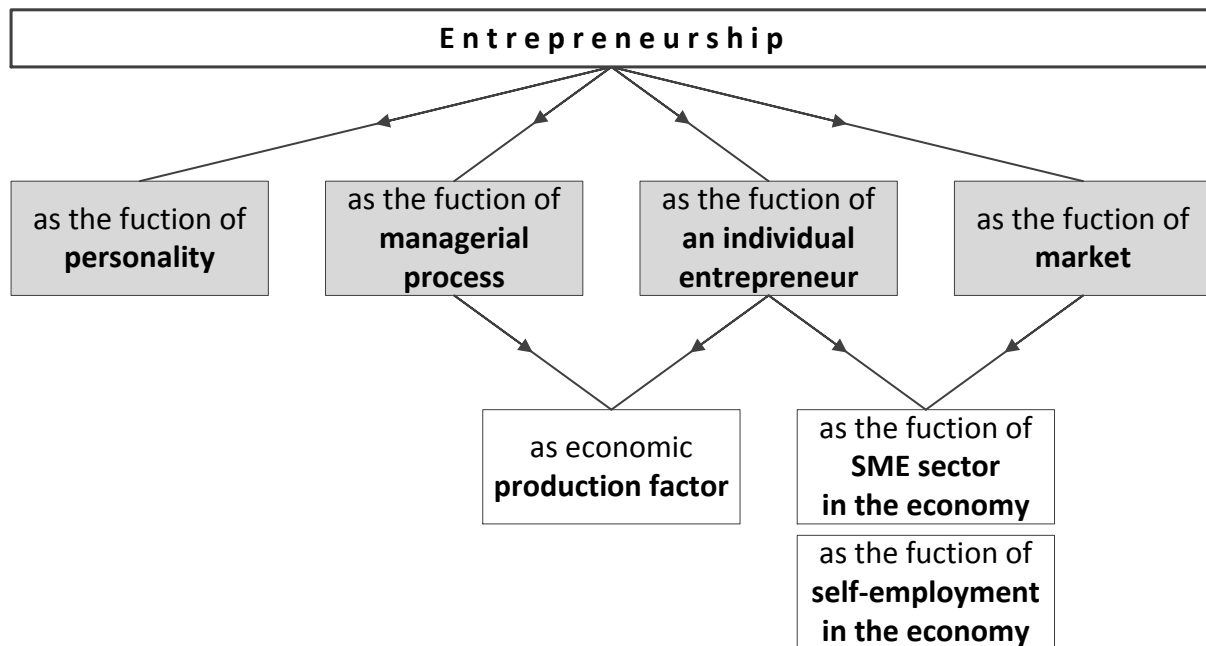


Figure 1. Basic functions of entrepreneurship in economics and business studies.

Source: Wach, 2015, p. 14.

Table 1.

Entrepreneurship concepts

Author	The concept of entrepreneurship
R.W. Griffin (Griffin, 1996, pp. 730-731)	The process of organizing and running a business and taking the risk involved and performing an active role in management.
St.P. Robbins D.A. DeCenzo (Robbins, DeCenzo 2002, 104)	The process of initiating business start up, organizing the necessary resources and take risks in pursuit of the prize.
R.D. Hisrich M.P. Peters (Hisrich, Peters, 1992, p. 10)	The process of creating something different, because of its value in the framework of which necessary time and effort is devoted to achieve this goal, assuming the accompanying financial, psychological and social risk, and expecting obtaining financial rewards and personal satisfaction.
B. Piasecki (Piasecki, 2001, p. 25).	Entrepreneurship is the process: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ which includes the action taken for the analysis of opportunities of start and development (or just development) of the venture, its financing and the possibility of meeting the effects of such action; ▪ which can take many different forms and shapes, including initiation of a venture, creativity and innovation in developing new products or services, managing an existing venture in such a way that it develops quickly and continuously, seeking financial and material supply sources for potentially growing number of ventures, accepting risk in the development of new or expansion of existing ventures (these elements are the part of the entrepreneurial process, although not all of them must participate in each activity).
F.L. Frey (Frey, 1993, pp. 27-28)	Starting a venture and (or) its growth, which occurs through the use of innovation, by management assuming the risk.
J. Penc (Penc, 1997, p. 335)	The behavior of a person or organization that relies on seeking and applying new solutions, which require more energy, initiative and resourcefulness and the ability to estimate the necessary effort and possible benefits available under existing constraints and opportunities, and the willingness to take risk and responsibility for their decisions and actions.

Cont. table 1.

J. Timmons (Timmons, 1990, p. 5)	The process of creating or identifying opportunities and using them despite of their current resources (...). It is an creative act of an entrepreneur who finds in him and devotes enough energy to initiate and build a company or organization, rather than just observe, analyze and describe it.
N. Churchill (Churchill, 1983, p. 27)	The process of discovery and development of capabilities to create new value through innovation, acquisition of necessary resources and managing the process of value creation.
J.A. Schumpeter (Schumpeter, 1960, p. 60)	Recognising opportunities for implementation of ventures that are profitable and risk-taking to implement them.
W. Adamczyk (Adamczyk, 1996, p. 23)	An organized sequential process oriented under certain circumstances at using innovative idea in order to generate benefits in the market.
S. Sudoł (Sudoł, 2002, p. 33)	Feature (way of behaving) of entrepreneurs and companies, that means the willingness and ability to undertake and solve creative and innovative new problems, while taking into consideration its risks, the ability to use the available opportunities and flexibility to adapt to changing conditions.
T. Kraśnicka (Kraśnicka, 1999, p. 98)	Entrepreneurship is an activity that stands out by: activity and dynamism, innovation, looking for changes and reacting to them, perceiving opportunities and their use, regardless of the resources (at the moment), willingness to take risks, which main motive is to multiply the capital.

Source: Sułkowski, 2012.

As Sułkowski (2012) states, the aspects of entrepreneurship highlighted in many of the definitions are as follows:

1. Entrepreneurship involves engaging in innovative and creative market activities or initiating organizational changes, including technological and organizational innovations.
2. It encompasses taking risks in business or tolerating uncertainty with the aim of developing a venture, reflecting a willingness to act under uncertainty.
3. Flexibility with regard to strategy and market activities, as well as the willingness to change and exhibit intra-organizational flexibility, are key aspects of entrepreneurship.
4. Entrepreneurship involves the exploration and exploitation of opportunities inherent in an organization's environment as well as the unique competitive advantages derived from organizational resources.
5. Entrepreneurial characteristics such as innovation, creativity, willingness to take risks, and propensity for change are all part of entrepreneurial personality.

“Intrapreneurship” is entrepreneurship that occurs within a corporation (Antoncic, Hisrich, 2003). The term was coined by Pinchot & Pinchot (1978) and these entrepreneurs were referred to as “intra-corporate entrepreneurs” or “intrapreneurs”. Corporations quickly realized the benefits of harnessing the entrepreneurial drive within their organizations and began to capitalize on the potential of their human resources. Pinchot (1985) described “intrapreneurs” as creative thinkers who are directly responsible for the creation of innovation within a corporation. Initiatives by an organization’s employees to take on new business activities are referred to as “intrapreneurship”. Although intrapreneurship is similar to corporate entrepreneurship, it is a different concept (Antoncic, Hisrich, 2003; Sharma, Chrisman, 1999). Corporate entrepreneurship is typically categorized by organizational levels and is a top-down process in which management cultivates initiatives in the workforce to develop innovative new

businesses. On the other hand, intrapreneurship refers to proactive bottom-up initiatives taken by employees at the individual level.

Corporate entrepreneurship encompasses two interconnected aspects: innovation and corporate venturing as well as renewal initiatives aimed at bolstering a company's competitive edge and risk tolerance (Guth, Ginsberg, 1990).

According to Narayanan et al. (2009), corporate venturing encompasses a set of processes and steps that are involved in creating and integrating new businesses into a company's overall business portfolio. Sharma and Chrisman (1999) suggest that corporate venturing can be divided into internal and external components. Internal corporate venturing involves creating new businesses that are typically housed within the company's existing structure. Kuratko (2007) explains that pre-existing organizational structures may accommodate these new ventures, or that new organizational entities may be established within the corporate structure. On the other hand, external corporate venturing involves investments in early stage businesses created by external parties such as Corporate Venture Capital (CVC), licensing, acquisitions, and joint ventures.

Furthermore, as mentioned, corporate entrepreneurship can encompass activities that enhance a corporation's ability to compete and take risks, which may or may not involve the addition of new businesses. Morris et al. (2008) and Kuratko and Audretsch (2009) define this aspect of corporate entrepreneurship as strategic entrepreneurship. It has also been defined as the identification and exploitation of opportunities while simultaneously creating and sustaining competitive advantage (Ireland et al., 2003).

These activities may involve strategic renewal, domain redefinition, sustained regeneration, business model reconstruction, and organizational rejuvenation (Covin, Miles, 1999). However, Dess et al. (2003) focused only on the first four of these in their review. Corporate entrepreneurship activities can take place at various levels, including the corporate, division (business), functional, spin-out venture, or project levels (Zahra, 1991). However, previous corporate venture research has primarily focused on the parent corporation level rather than on the venture unit or spin-out level (Narayanan et al., 2009).

Our language is rich in metaphors, as Cornelissen (2002) demonstrated. Furthermore, metaphors are prevalent in the business and organizational worlds. Metaphors are not only decorative elements; they are common, recurring, and pervasive aspects of communication. Various researchers have reported different results regarding the frequency of metaphor usage.

Table 2.*Findings on the frequency of use of metaphors by different authors*

Author(s)	Frequency in metaphor
Steen et al. (Steen, Dorst, Herrmann, Kaal, Krennmayr, Pasma, 2010, pp. 765-796)	13.6% of all lexical units in the corpus can be classified as being related to metaphor.
Gibbs (Gibbs, 1994)	5.7 metaphors per minute of speech.
Whalen et al. (Whalen, Paxmen, Gill, 2009, pp. 263-280)	3.69 nonliteral statements in past-oriented e-mails (average of 284,90 words) and 2.11 in future-oriented e-mails (average of 221,02 words).
Andriessen (Andriessen, 2006, pp. 93-110)	At least 95% of all statements about either knowledge or intellectual capital are based on metaphor.

Source: Wittink, RELIABLE METAPHOR ANALYSIS IN ORGANIZATIONAL RESEARCH, Towards a dual, dynamic approach, VU University Amsterdam, <http://dSPACE.uvu.vu.nl/>

Metaphors are implied comparisons that combine the two concepts. “Metaphor occurs when a unit of discourse is used to refer unconventionally to an object, process or concept, or colligates in an unconventional way. And when this unconventional act of reference or colligation is understood on the basis of similarity, matching or analogy involving the conventional referent or colligates of the unit and the actual unconventional referent or colligates” (Goatly, 1997, p. 8). Dickins, for instance, defines metaphors as “A figure of speech in which a word or phrase is used in a non-basic sense, this non-basic sense suggesting a likeness or analogy [...] with another more basic sense of the same word or phrase” (Dickins, 2005, p. 228). According to Deignan “A metaphor is a word or expression that is used to talk about an entity or quality other than that referred to by its core, or most basic meaning. This non-core use expresses a perceived relationship with the core meaning of the word, and in many cases between two semantic fields” (Deignan, 2005, p. 34).

3. Research methodology

The research goal of this exploratory study was to identify whether Covid-19 has changed the way intrapreneurship is perceived and understood. This study focuses on the metaphors of intrapreneurship. Qualitative and quantitative research procedures were employed. There were two stages of investigation (pre- and post-pandemic). The author reached entrepreneurs in late 2018 and 2024.

The author reached the managers with whom he conducts in-house trainings; therefore, it was not a random sample. Therefore, the results presented herein are not representative.

Table 3.
Research methods used in this study

Research metod	Stage	Type of research	Research sample
Desk research	Pre-covid	Qualitative	-
IDI	Pre-covid	Qualitative	112
Questionnaire	Pre-covid	Quantitatie	183
Questionnaire	Post-covid	Quantitatie	195

Source: Own study.

4. Results and discussion

In the qualitative part of the study, the author addressed 112 managers.

In the first stage, managers were asked to create metaphors of their own accord. They were encouraged to follow their first instincts in forming lexical associations depicting the essential characteristics of intrapreneurship. As far as sex was concerned, the group was diversified, as 61% of the respondents were female and 39% were male.

The average age of the respondents was 37 years, and the average number of years of employment among respondents was 12.4.

The metaphors were grouped into several clusters based on their semantic properties (Table 3).

Table 4.
The content analysis of the metaphors of entrepreneurship among surveyed managers

Metaphor for Intrapreneurship	Explanation
Gardening	Intrapreneurship is like gardening, where the intrapreneur nurtures and cultivates ideas (seeds) within a company (soil), providing them with resources (water and sunlight) to grow into successful innovations (plants).
Navigating unknown territories	This metaphor illustrates intrapreneurs as explorers, navigating uncharted areas within a company to discover new opportunities, solve unseen problems, and create value in innovative ways, much like discovering new lands.
Rebuilding a ship while sailing it	Intrapreneurship involves developing new projects and initiatives within an organization while adapting to changes and challenges, akin to building and improving a ship in the midst of a voyage.
Conducting an orchestra	An intrapreneur, like a conductor, harmonizes various elements within a company (instruments) to produce something beautiful and cohesive, orchestrating resources, teams, and processes to achieve innovative outcomes.
Redesigning a house	This metaphor sees intrapreneurs as architects working within the confines of an existing building, innovatively redesigning and repurposing spaces without altering the foundational structure, creating new value within pre-established limits.
Excavating precious resources	Intrapreneurs act like miners, digging deep within an organization to find hidden resources or ideas that can be transformed into valuable assets or products, much like extracting precious metals from the earth.
Igniting a spark	This metaphor suggests that intrapreneurship ignites a spark within the organization, generating warmth and light that spreads, symbolizing the initiation and propagation of innovative ideas that energize and illuminate the company's path.

Cont. table 4.

Waging a battle	Intrapreneurship can be likened to waging a battle or strategic campaign within a competitive battlefield, where intrapreneurs must navigate internal and external challenges, employ tactical maneuvers, and forge alliances to secure victories for their innovative projects, echoing the dynamics of military strategy in pursuit of corporate innovation.
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Source: Own study.

The second stage was divided into two separate sub-stages. Pre-pandemic substage and post-pandemic substage.

In the pre-pandemic stage, the research group comprised 183 managers. Respondents were asked to choose one metaphor that best described the concept of intrapreneurship. With regard to gender, 58% of the respondents were female and 42% were male.

The average age of the respondents was 36 years, and the average number of years of employment among respondents was 10.8.

In the post-pandemic stage, the research group comprised 195 managers. Respondents were asked to choose one metaphor that best described the concept of intrapreneurship. As far sex Regarding gender, 54% of the respondents were female and 46% were male.

The average age of the respondents was 38 years, and the average number of years of employment among respondents was 12.2.

The results of this study are presented in Table 4.

Table 5.

Chosen metaphors of intrapreneurship among surveyed managers

Metaphor	Before COVID-19	After COVID-19
Gardening	34	12
Navigating unknown territories	16	23
Rebuilding a ship while sailing it	12	34
Conducting an orchestra	44	12
Redesigning a house	22	36
Exacavating precious resources	34	12
Igniting a spark	9	32
Waging a battle	12	34
Total number of respondents	183	195

Source: Own study.

“Gardening” and “excavating for precious resources” both saw a significant decrease in preference, each dropping by about 12.43 percentage points. “Rebuilding a ship while sailing it” and “waging a battle” showed notable increases in preference, each by approximately 10.88 percentage points. “Conducting an orchestra” experienced the largest decrease in preference, by about 17.89 percentage points. “Redesigning a house” and “Igniting a spark” both saw significant increases in preference, by 6.44 and 11.49 percentage points, respectively.

“Navigating” unknown territories had a modest increase in preference, by about 3.05 percentage points.

These shifts indicate changes in intrapreneurship metaphor preferences before and after COVID, likely reflecting the impact of the pandemic on internal innovation and entrepreneurship within organizations.

The Chi-square test for intrapreneurship metaphor preferences before and after COVID produced the following results:

Chi-square statistic: 77.61.

p-value: < 0.05.

Degrees of freedom: 7.

Expected frequencies: An array showing the expected frequencies under the assumption of no association between time period and metaphor preference.

Given the extremely small p-value, I rejected the null hypothesis, indicating that there is a statistically significant difference in intrapreneurship metaphor preferences before and after COVID-19. This suggests that the pandemic has significantly influenced how individuals within organizations conceptualize intrapreneurship, reflecting perhaps shifts in priorities, challenges, and opportunities for innovation within these organizations during and after the pandemic.

The statistically significant shift in intrapreneurship metaphor preferences before and after COVID-19, as indicated by the Chi-square test, can be attributed to several factors influenced by the pandemic's global impact. Understanding why these shifts occurred involves considering the broader context of how organizations and their employees adapted to the challenges posed by COVID-19.

Below are some key factors that could explain these changes:

1. Increased Need for Innovation and Adaptability

The pandemic has forced organizations to rethink their operations, business models, and products/services. Metaphors that suggest flexibility, creativity, and resilience, such as "building a ship while sailing," might have become more popular because they capture the essence of navigating through uncertainty and continuous change.

2. Remote Work and Digital Transformation

The rapid acceleration of digital transformation and the shift to remote work have altered the dynamics of organizational innovation. Metaphors that resonate with virtual collaboration, digital innovation, and agility could have seen increased preference, reflecting new ways of working and the importance of technology in enabling intrapreneurship.

3. Focus on Resilience and Crisis Management

The crisis highlighted the importance of resilience at both the individual and organizational levels. Metaphors that embody overcoming challenges, such as "Waging a campaign," might have gained favor as they reflect proactive and strategic responses to the pandemic's challenges.

4. Changing Organizational Priorities

Organizations may have shifted their priorities to focus more on sustainability, employee well-being, and community support. This could explain a shift away from metaphors that emphasize control and precision, like "Conducting an orchestra", towards those that emphasize care, growth, and adaptation.

5. Empowerment and Autonomy

With the decentralization necessitated by remote work, there might have been a greater emphasis on empowering employees to take the initiative and act as intrapreneurs. Metaphors that suggest autonomy, exploration, and pioneering can resonate in such environments.

6. Psychological Impact of the Pandemic

The collective experience of navigating the pandemic could have led to a shift in how individuals conceptualize their roles within organizations. There may have been greater identification with metaphors that speak to resilience, adaptation, and collective effort in the face of adversity.

5. Conclusion

The shift in intrapreneurship metaphor preferences is likely a reflection of the complex interplay between changing work environments, organizational strategies, and individual psychological responses to the pandemic. These changes underscore the evolving nature of intrapreneurship as organizations and their members adapted to the unprecedented challenges posed by COVID-19. We must also stress that metaphors evolve. For instance, until very recently the information superhighway was a metaphor for the internet. But the word 'cyberspace' has now taken over (Barta-Smith, Hathaway, 1999, pp. 253-265).

Metaphors have a significant impact on how we comprehend business and related concepts, as well as the nuances of the various metaphors utilized in economic discourse. This influence extends to our choice of metaphors, as they shape the way we think and perceive the world. Gartner (1993, p. 231) emphasized that "the words we employ in discussing entrepreneurship have a direct influence on our capacity to contemplate this concept". Consequently, our thoughts and the discourse surrounding intrapreneurship can be transformed, ultimately leading to actions that promote entrepreneurial endeavors and impact culture by fostering entrepreneurial mindsets in organizational circles.

The main research limitation is the non-representativeness of the sample as well as the small sample ($n = 183$ at the first stage and $n = 195$ at the second stage). The results presented in the article are very preliminary and further investigations in this field are needed. It seems necessary to conduct in-depth interviews to include more explaining variables.

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