

# Paradigms and Frontiers in Entrepreneurship: A Systematic Literature Review

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**Abstract:** This paper presents a systematic literature review (SLR) of entrepreneurship and draws on empirical data to map its evolution over the last 125 years. Its primary objective is to synthesize the fragmented research literature into a comprehensive narrative, advancing beyond the scope of a typical bibliographic review. A Publish or Perish application was run on the most relevant scientific databases, yielding 6,078 papers with 4,918,303 citations, excluding patents and unpublished papers. In addition, 117 sources were drawn from the scholarly literature and used to underpin and augment the empirical findings of this study. The study identifies a number of paradigmatic phases in the study of entrepreneurship: little was written on the subject prior to 1950; a modest body of knowledge emerged in the 1960s and 1970s; the study of entrepreneurship was fully institutionalized in the 1980s and 1990s; and it rapidly expanded in the 2000s and 2010s. The study also examines the historical development of the field into the multifaceted discipline it has become, including research on emerging fields such as digital entrepreneurship, sustainable entrepreneurship, and social innovation. The article discusses the implications and offers suggestions for future research to further advance the discipline.

**Keywords:** Systematic Literature Review (SLR), Entrepreneurship, Bibliometric Analysis

## I. Introduction

Entrepreneurship is widely regarded as an important driver of economic growth, innovation, and social change. The academic field of entrepreneurship studies has a history spanning 126 years and draws on many disciplines such as economics, management, sociology, and organizational studies. As a multidisciplinary field of research, entrepreneurship studies have evolved into a vast body of knowledge. As a result of its multidisciplinary roots, knowledge development in entrepreneurship studies has become highly fragmented. Attempting to integrate knowledge and achieve a global understanding of entrepreneurship studies' past, present, and future is therefore a challenging task that calls for the application of specific research methods. A Systematic Literature Review (SLR) provides an opportunity to accomplish this. Unlike narrative reviews, an SLR has clearly defined inclusion and exclusion criteria that ensure the whole process is carried out with maximum transparency, reproducibility, and reliability. As argued by Denyer and Tranfield (2009), a systematic review can cumulatively synthesize the fragmented findings of individual studies to create the knowledge. Other researchers have further enhanced SLR methodology with new conceptual frameworks (Goyal & Kumar, 2020), best practices and guidelines (Prashar et al., 2020), and applications in different fields (Cheng et al., 2018; Singh & Walia, 2020).

The number of publications suggests that SLRs could offer opportunities across many research streams. In the area of negotiation and conflict management and leadership (Dias et al., 2023, 2023b), including business cycles (Dias et al., 2024), by synthesizing the existing literature on fintech and its innovative capacity (Teixeira et al., 2024), by applying the methodology used by Tello-Gamarra et al. (2022). Similarly, Zahoor and Al-Tabbaa (2020) summarized the existing literature on the determinants of inter-organizational collaboration and its impact on SMEs and thereby suggested possible opportunities for exploring the innovation capacity of SMEs using the SLR methodology. Besides summarizing the current state of research and identifying gaps and emerging trends in a particular field, SLRs also serve as a source for researchers to identify potential research areas for their future research agendas. This research is a literature review based on the

Systematic Literature Review (SLR) methodology, investigating the evolution of publications on entrepreneurship from 1900 to date. The main purpose of this research is to clarify the structure and evolution of the field of study, as well as the most influential papers, trends, and structural changes within it. The literature review process was developed to answer the following research questions: a. What is the evolution of entrepreneurship over the last 126 years? b. What are the most influential papers in the field of study? c. What are the gaps in the literature, and what are the trends from the articles included in the mapping? d. what gaps in the literature and themes of the mapped articles can be identified; and (d) how the main problems in entrepreneurship research were addressed in each decade, through which methodologies, and what principal results were achieved.

## II. Research Design

According to Denyer and Tranfield (2009), we conducted this paper using a systematic literature review (SLR). This procedure was selected because, apart from being widely used in the large amount of bibliometric studies carried out in the scientific literature (Cheng et al., 2018; Prashar et al., 2020; Singh & Walia, 2020), the systematic literature review allows us to collect, analyze and synthesize the scattered information that exists in the scientific literature, and that through this procedure we are able to achieve a profound and coherent knowledge of the research theme in question. The research design used in this paper is explained in the next sub-sections.

### II.1 Objectives

The present study aims to visualize the evolution of knowledge in entrepreneurship over 126 years, from 1900 to 2026. For this purpose, publications, citations (excluding patents), and references were analyzed according to the guidelines and recommendations provided by Goyal and Kumar (2020). The objectives of this study have the following sub-objectives as indicated by Zahoor and Al-Tabbaa (2020). Identify the leading journals in the field of entrepreneurship. Identify the most cited papers in the literature and apply citation network and cluster analysis to investigate the emerging trends in the subject. Conduct a critical review of the trends in the research carried out in the field of entrepreneurship and identify the gaps and methodologies for each decade. Table 1 summarizes the main study objectives and the preliminary bibliometric indicators obtained from the corresponding publications and citations within the target publication set.

*Table 1 Research objectives and preliminary results*

Timeline	Entrepreneurship	
	Publications	Citations
1900-1949	0	0
1950-1969	13	77.884
1970-1979	17	64.479
1980-1989	98	249.314
1990-1999	424	723.864
2000-2009	2.793	2.466.870
2010-2026	2.733	1.335.892
<b>Total</b>	<b>6.078</b>	<b>4.918.303</b>

Source: Publish or Perish (Harzing, 2007)

### II.2 Search Strategy

Based on a literature review search, 6,078 references with 4,918,303 citations were found. It is important to note that patents have been excluded. All the data was analyzed using the Publish or Perish software (Harzing, 2007) version 8.0 for the whole period from 1900 to date. The search was conducted in both English and Portuguese, as most scientific publications are in English. The databases used in this study are Scopus, Google Scholar, Crossref, and Semantic Scholar. These databases are selected because they are highly related to the academic environment and are the most frequently used by scientists. The studies were selected in function of the following criteria: - To be written in English or Portuguese languages - To have been published in any year between 1900 and 2026 - To be journal articles (excluding patents) that

are related to the subject of entrepreneurship - The exclusion criteria were: editorials; letter to the editor; book reviews; non-academic publications; duplicated studies; full text availability.

**II.3 Screening and Selection Process**

The screening was conducted in a well-organized and transparent manner to assess the adequacy and reliability of the sources included in the current SLR. All relevant literature corresponding to the records identified in the initial search was checked to exclude duplicates and records out of place. This iterative process involved multiple rounds of searches, with emerging themes identified through citation and text network analysis. These themes were then used as input for subsequent searches to capture past and present developments in entrepreneurship research.

**II.4 Data Analysis**

Data were analyzed using bibliometric methods, i.e., citation analysis, publication patterns, and content analysis. By tracing the dynamics of research, as well as the contribution of individual authors, journals, etc., and by analyzing the application of research methodologies over the years, we identified the main trends and developments of the field of social entrepreneurship over the past five decades and noticed a growing diversification into new fields such as digital entrepreneurship, sustainable entrepreneurship, and social innovation. Figure 1 summarizes the entire research design, organized by sections, as follows:

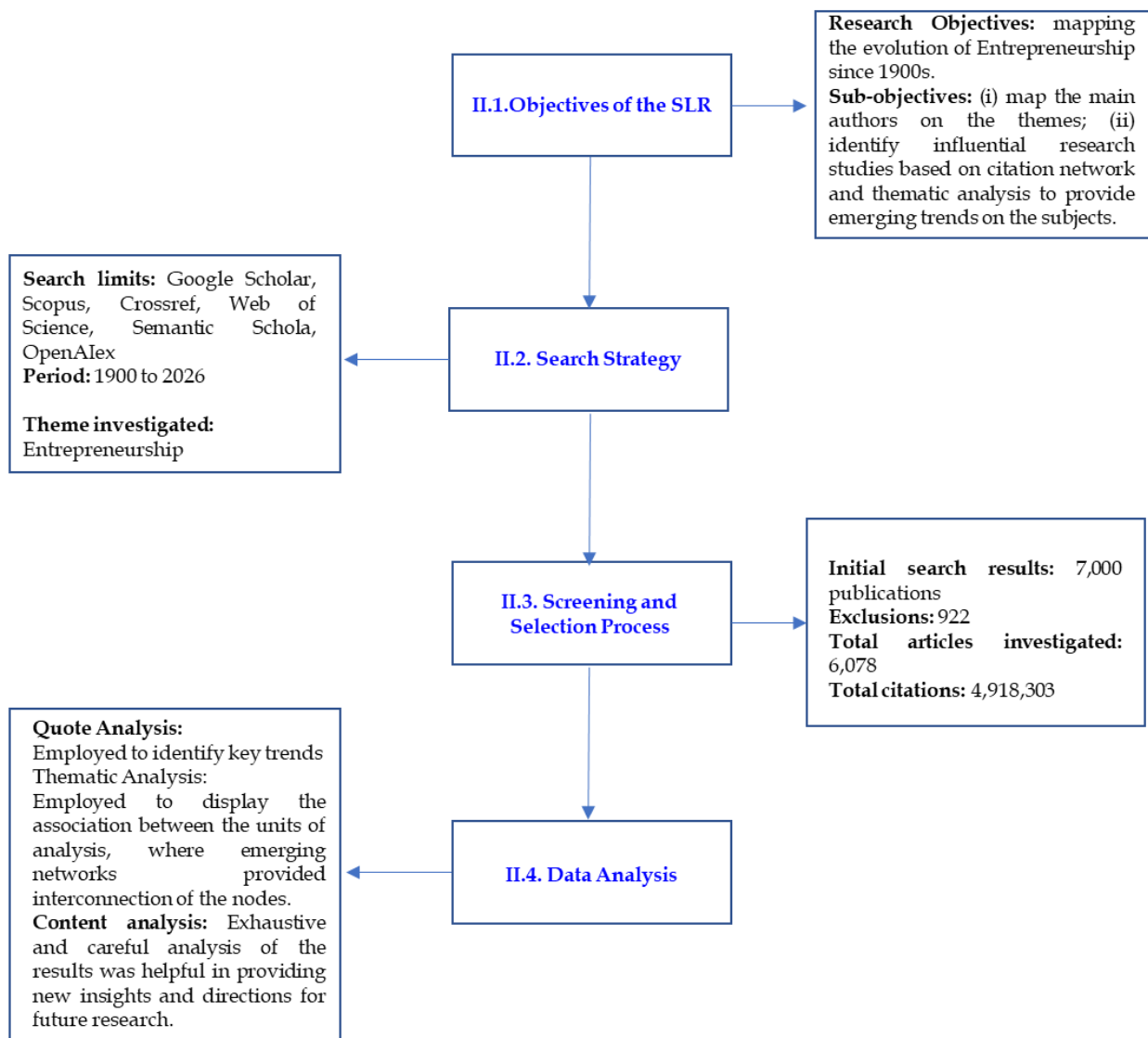


Figure 1 Research design. Source: adapted from Zahoor & Al-Tabbaa (2020).

**III. Findings and Analysis**

The following sections provide the key findings obtained from the systematic literature review. They combine bibliometric indicators and thematic synthesis to understand the evolution of the field of entrepreneurship over time, analyze the dominant current themes in research on this subject, and identify the methodologies and techniques used.

**III.1 Bibliometric Analysis**

A bibliometric analysis was applied to publications on entrepreneurship to investigate the citation structure and the relations among publications. The methodology is widely applied in order to evaluate the scientific production of researchers and research organizations, as well as to gain insight into the evolution of a research field, through the provision of indicators for the effective management of research activities (Braun et al., 2006; Georghiou, 1995; Garfield, 2006). Bibliometric study on applied entrepreneurship as a developing field in a growing area of knowledge. During the period 1892-2019, on a sample of 6,078 papers and 4,918,303 citations, it is found that until the mid-20th century, with rare exceptions, the field of entrepreneurship has been a marginal and niche area of research; it has experienced an increasing trend in terms of citations since the 1980s and 1990s, especially exponential growth since the 2000s and 2010s. This study analyses the institutionalization of the field of entrepreneurship and the rapid diversification of research within it, which has been progressing towards more specific areas such as digital entrepreneurship, sustainability, and social innovation. These citation networks were derived from the analysis in this paper. The most cited papers act as the “geographical hubs” that enable citations across time, while the new clusters emerge as a function of the changing needs of different eras. Entrepreneurship as a field is dynamic and changes from one era to the next in response to major structural shifts in the economy, technology, and society. In the following sections, we will analyze the bibliometric indicators for this publication. We will do it by analyzing the distribution of publications and citations by time, the main authors and institutions that have contributed to this journal, as well as the keywords that allow us to characterize the field of study and to respond to the research questions that have been formulated: - The evolution of the theme of entrepreneurship in the journal *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice* during the 126 years of publication, - The most influential and relevant works that have been published, - The gaps and shortcomings that must be addressed, - The main problems solved in each decade by method and findings.

Table 2 illustrates the total number of publications on entrepreneurship. Table 3 depicts the results from the citations, as follows:

*Table 2 total number of publications of Entrepreneurship*

Publications Entrepreneurship							
Período	Google Scholar	WoS	OpenALex	Crossref	Scopus	Semantic Scholar	Total
1900-1949	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
1950-1969	2	0	3	1	0	7	13
1970-1979	2	0	8	0	0	7	17
1980-1989	6	3	34	2	3	50	98
1990-1999	81	35	128	18	23	139	424
2000-2009	432	789	390	122	589	471	2.793
2010-2026	465	326	435	856	325	326	2.733
<b>Total</b>	<b>988</b>	<b>1.153</b>	<b>998</b>	<b>999</b>	<b>940</b>	<b>1.000</b>	<b>6.078</b>

Table 3 total number of publications of Entrepreneurship

Período	Citations Entrepreneurship						Total
	Google Scholar	WoS	OpenAlex	Crossref	Scopus	Semantic Scholar	
1900-1949	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
1950-1969	2.587	0	37.268	0	0	38.029	77.884
1970-1979	1.182	0	51.740	0	0	11.557	64.479
1980-1989	11.736	23.564	129.572	0	24.654	59.788	249.314
1990-1999	199.552	50.958	266.122	13	60.764	146.455	723.864
2000-2009	524.240	496.857	422.496	2.386	581.506	439.385	2.466.870
2010-2026	312.236	251.362	287.766	6.383	240.321	237.824	1.335.892
<b>Total</b>	<b>1.051.533</b>	<b>822.741</b>	<b>1.194.964</b>	<b>8.782</b>	<b>907.245</b>	<b>933.038</b>	<b>4.918.303</b>

III.2 Trend Analysis

The trends identified in this study are more clearly visible in the visualizations of publications and citations, as well as in the co-occurrence of author keywords. This publication figure presents an overview of the trends in entrepreneurship research identified over 126 years, including their magnitude, direction, and diversity. Figure 2 illustrates the number of publications on entrepreneurship per year from 1900 to 2026. The curve in Figure 2 shows a gradual, almost linear increase in the number of publications on entrepreneurship up to the middle of the twentieth century. The sharp increase in publications from around 1980 signals the full academic recognition of the field of entrepreneurship, which had then developed into a proper academic discipline with dedicated journals and research centers. The exponential increase in publications from the 2000s to the 2010s may indicate the globalization of the field and its expansion into new areas such as e-business, entrepreneurship, sustainable development, and social entrepreneurship.

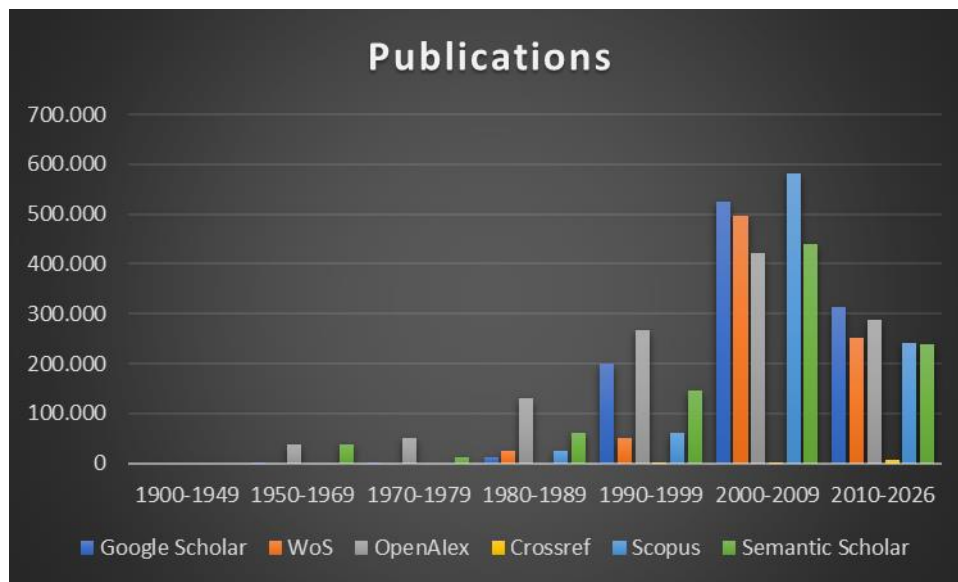


Figure 2 Publications on Entrepreneurship (1900 to 2026). Source: Citation metrics analysis using Publish or Perish (Harzing, 2007)

Figure 3 displays the citation developments for the same time period. As in the previous figures, it is clear that a paper published in a given year will be cited only by later papers. So that the first papers are cited very little, and citations increase strongly in the 1980s, as does the number of papers. The surge in citations in the 2000s may indicate that the field of entrepreneurship research has seen fundamental or very influential contributions in that decade and will provide the basis for future research. It may also indicate that the field of entrepreneurship research addresses important societal issues and that many highly cited papers contribute to discussions within the field on entrepreneurship, innovation, growth, and management.

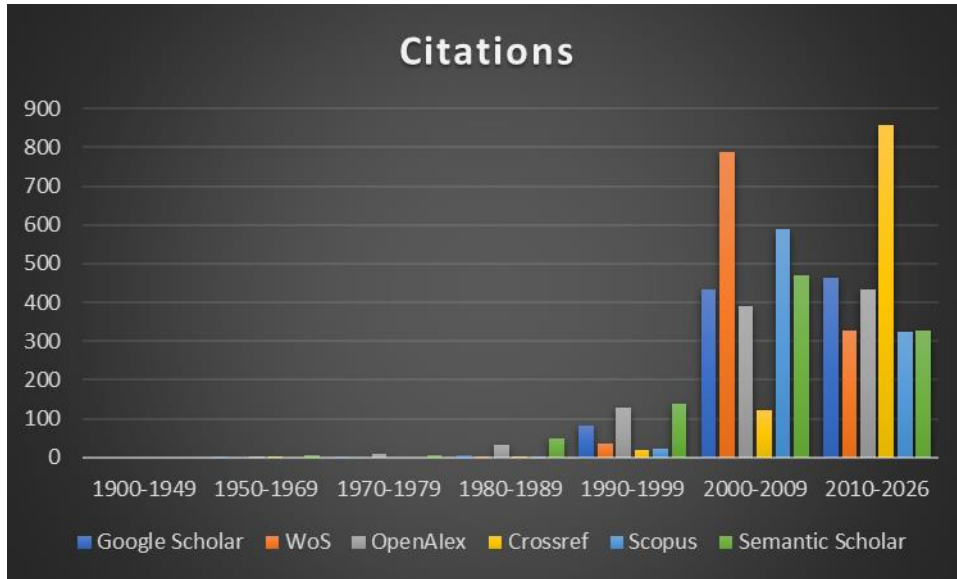


Figure 3 Citations on Entrepreneurship (1900 to 2026)  
 Source: Citation metrics analysis using Publish or Perish (Harzing, 2007)

Figure 4 shows the co-occurrence network of author keywords in VOSviewer 1.6.20, based on the method of van Eck & Waltman (2010). Clusters and links between clusters reflect the increasing diversification of research streams within the field of entrepreneurship. Many important keywords, such as innovation, small business, digital entrepreneurship, sustainability, and social entrepreneurship, are placed in the center of the network. The large number of links between the clusters indicates a high degree of interdisciplinarity, and the peripheral clusters may offer insights into emerging trends in future entrepreneurship research.

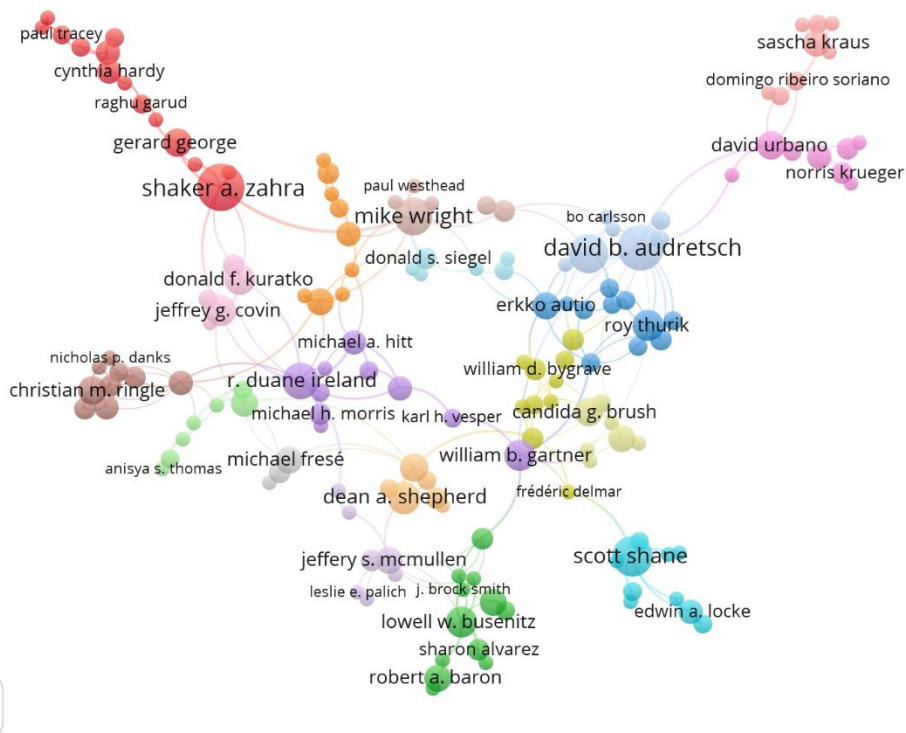


Figure 4 Co-occurrence Network of Author Keywords.  
 Source: VOSviewer (version 1.6.20). Adapted from van Eck and Waltman (2010)

The two plots above are combined into this picture of the evolution of ideas in entrepreneurship. The publications and citations of papers in the plot give us a sense of the field's stability and the quantitative progress it has achieved, while the keyword network in the right plot shows the diverse topics covered in the field of entrepreneurship and its dynamic adaptability. Through the visualization, we can obtain direct evidence to support the research findings to answer the three research questions in this study: (i) The evolution of entrepreneurship in the past 126 years; (ii) The influential papers, research areas and authors that support the development of the field of study of entrepreneurship; (iii) The research gaps and the corresponding methods or frameworks adopted by scholars to address the fundamental issues of entrepreneurship.

**III.4 Thematic Analysis**

This bibliometric and content analysis revealed the great diversity of the interdisciplinary research field of entrepreneurship research. The diversity of entrepreneurial research topics over time forms groups of themes that are closely linked to the development of the research field itself and in the surrounding society, technology, and institutional environment. The research field, which initially was fragmented and comprised dispersed research areas, has matured and become more diverse, and has also adopted new research areas such as migration, sustainability, digitalization, and theory development. Summary Table: Themes, attributes, and exemplar papers. The following Table 4 summarizes the four major themes derived from the literature review, their attributes, and the papers that exemplify each.

Table 4 Main Themes in Entrepreneurship Research

Theme	Focus	Representative References	Key Insights
Institutionalization & Historical Evolution	Emergence, consolidation, and diversification of entrepreneurship as a discipline	Amburgey et al. (1993); Aronson (2019); Busenitz & Barney (1997); Larson (2000); Ma (2001); Silver (1994)	Entrepreneurship evolved from marginal, descriptive studies into a recognized academic field, with institutional legitimacy and dedicated journals.
Migration & Returnee Entrepreneurship	Role of networks, social capital, and institutional contexts in migrant and returnee ventures	Lin et al. (2019); Wahba (2015); Vandor & Franke (2016); Gruenhagen (2021); Williams et al. (2022); Vlase & Croitoru (2019); von Reichert et al. (2014); Ren & Wang (2025); Aliaga-Isla & Rialp (2013); Morgan et al. (2018)	Migration experience shapes entrepreneurial outcomes; returnees leverage global knowledge but face reintegration challenges in local ecosystems.
Sustainability & Social Innovation	Green entrepreneurship, sustainable practices, and social impact ventures	Bergset & Fichter (2015); Gasbarro et al. (2018); Haldar (2019); Landoni (2023); Dasgupta (2023); de Klerk et al. (2023); Saha et al. (2023); Zahoor & Al-Tabbaa (2020); Zhao et al. (2024); Zhou et al. (2024); Zhu et al. (2021, 2023)	Entrepreneurship increasingly addresses environmental and social challenges, embedding sustainability into business models and innovation strategies.
Digitalization & Technological Transformation	Digital entrepreneurship, fintech, internet-based ventures, and platform ecosystems	Alerasoul et al. (2022); Tello-Gamarra et al. (2022); Xia et al. (2020); Xue et al. (2023); Liang et al. (2021); Tran & Truong (2022); Xi et al. (2024); Yin et al. (2021)	Digital technologies reshape opportunity recognition, resource acquisition, and global entrepreneurial ecosystems, enabling new venture models.
Theoretical Paradigms & Methodological Advances	Competing theories and systematic review methodologies	Sarasvathy (2001); Alvarez & Barney (2007); Janssen & Moors (2013); Shane & Nicolaou (2015); Baron (2008); Puffer et al. (2010); Wahba & Zenou (2012); Wang & Yang (2013); Denyer & Tranfield (2009); Goyal & Kumar (2020); Prashar et al. (2020); Stam & van de Ven (2021); Sinkovics & Reuber (2021); Thomas & Inkpen (2013); Schafer & Henn (2018); Zweig et al. (2021); Wu et al. (2022, 2023a, 2023b)	Multiple paradigms coexist (effectuation, discovery, institutional theory). Systematic reviews, bibliometrics, and meta-analyses integrate fragmented knowledge and set future research agendas.

**III.5 Chronological Gaps and Methodological Responses in Entrepreneurship Research**

The timeline highlights the specific challenges and knowledge gaps that scholars sought to address in developing their new theories, frameworks, and methodologies. From the early descriptive case studies of the early 20th century to the highly advanced methods of today, such as advanced bibliometric mapping and systematic reviews, this part of the

timeline documents the tremendous progress made in the field. Table 5 summarizes the challenges, research gaps, and methodological responses in entrepreneurship research, as follows:

Table 5 Chronological Gaps and Methodological Responses in Entrepreneurship Research (1900–2026)

Decade	Main Gaps Identified	How They Were Addressed	Methodologies Used	Reference
1980–1989	Weak institutionalization; few dedicated journals	Creation of specialized outlets, recognition of entrepreneurship as a field	Bibliometric surveys, institutional analysis	Wu (1983)
1990–1999	Limited paradigmatic clarity; entrepreneurship still marginal in management research	Institutional theory applied; focus on networks, social capital, and industry creation	Network analysis, qualitative case studies	Aldrich & Fiol (1994); Baron (2008); Busenitz & Barney (1997); Puffer et al. (2010); Wahba & Zenou (2012); Wang & Yang (2013); Aldrich & Fiol (1994); Amburgey et al. (1993); Reichert (1993); Silver (1994)
2000–2009	Fragmentation of theories (causation vs. effectuation, discovery vs. creation)	Development of paradigms: effectuation, discovery/creation	Conceptual frameworks, experimental designs, longitudinal studies	Alvarez & Barney (2007); Baker & Nelson (2005); Carter et al. (2003); Sarasvathy (2001); Shane & Venkataraman (2000); Ma (2001); Larson (2000);
2010–2019	Need to integrate sustainability and migration; persistent fragmentation	Expansion into sustainable entrepreneurship, migrant/returnee entrepreneurship, entrepreneurial ecosystems	Systematic literature reviews (SLRs), bibliometrics, case studies	Bergset & Fichter (2015); Gasbarro et al. (2018); Gruenhagen (2021); Halldar (2019); Janssen & Moors (2013); Lin et al. (2019); Mayer et al. (2015); Morgan et al. (2018); Pidduck et al. (2023); Sinkovics & Reuber (2021); Siam & van de Ven (2021); Vandro & Franke (2016); Wahba (2015); Shane & Nicolaou (2015); Aronson (2019); Martinez et al. (2011); von Reichert et al. (2014);
2020–2026	Integration with sustainability, migration, digitalization, and public policy	Consolidation of methodologies; focus on returnee entrepreneurship, sustainability-driven ventures, inter-organizational collaboration	Meta-analysis, advanced bibliometrics, mixed-methods, big data analytics, network mapping (VOSviewer)	Dasgupta (2023); Khokhawala & Iyer (2022); Landoni (2023); Liang et al. (2021); Ren & Wang (2025); Sabar & Pagis (2015); Saha et al. (2023); Schafer & Henn (2018); Shen et al. (2023, 2024); Tello-Gamarrá et al. (2022); Thomas & Inkpen (2013); Tran & Truong (2022); Vlasse & Croitoru (2019); Wang et al. (2022); Wassink (2020); Wassink & Hagan (2018); Williams et al. (2022); Wu (1983); Wu et al. (2022, 2023a, 2023b); Xi et al. (2024); Xia et al. (2020); Xue et al. (2023); Yin et al. (2021); Zahoor & Al-Tabbaa (2020); Zhao et al. (2024); Zhou et al. (2024); Zhu et al. (2021); Zhu et al. (2023); Zweg et al. (2021)

Table 5 summarizes the evolution of the field of entrepreneurship research over the course of more than a century. During the first half of the 20th century, the entrepreneurial field of study was characterized by largely narrative and empirical work focusing on small business and entrepreneurial activities, such as self-employment, based on historical case studies and rudimentary statistical analysis. During the period 1950–1960, the major challenge in the field was the lack of legitimacy of entrepreneurship as a scholarly domain, which was addressed by linking the study of entrepreneurship to economics and sociology, respectively, through research streams that utilized theories of occupational choice and labor market analyses. Organizational ecology and the liability of newness constituted a new paradigm in the 1970s, in response to scattered, unsatisfactory case studies and the underdevelopment of theory. Entrepreneurship, as we know it today, began to emerge as a legitimate discipline in the 1980s, alongside the development of journals and institutional analyses. The discipline of entrepreneurship was still evolving towards full-fledged status in the 1990s, when the paradigm began to shift towards networks, social capital, and institutional theory. Qualitative case studies and network analysis have contributed to greater clarity and consistency in the paradigm.

Looking back, the 2000s were split into two theoretical streams in the entrepreneurship field, mainly debating causation and effectuation, or at least between the discovery and creation streams. Scholars have addressed these debates by developing new theories while also improving methodologies, such as experiments and longitudinal studies, with the aim of advancing the discussion and developing more refined theories that could put an end to these paradigmatic debates. Since 2010, entrepreneurship as a field has taken on many new challenges. Many scholars have increased their research on sustainability, migration, and digitalization, and it seems that the field has a lot to take in. At the same time, the field is being challenged by many of the same issues. Finally, new methodologies have emerged, including systematic literature reviews, new bibliometric approaches, meta-analyses, mixed-methods approaches, big data analytics, and many other innovative research tools and approaches. Research in the field of entrepreneurship has also given rise to several new streams, including, amongst others, a large number of scholars contributing to the development of the fields of fintech and sustainable entrepreneurship. From Table 5, we observe the field's evolutionary history in entrepreneurship research. The general pattern in the table is a cycle in which authors first identify a literature gap, then develop a new theory to address it, and finally introduce new methods to study the phenomenon they seek to explore. The field has evolved from largely a descriptive research field to a fully-fledged multidisciplinary academic discipline characterized by rigorous research methods, pluralist theories, and engagement with many developments in the real world. The narrative of the field's evolution will serve as the lens through which we can evaluate its current state and anticipate future challenges.

#### **IV. Discussion**

The main purpose of this study is to analyze the evolution of research on entrepreneurship, identify the main ideas that characterize these approaches, and explore the methods employed. Employing a bibliometric approach and thematic synthesis, the results suggest that the discipline of entrepreneurship has evolved from an initial, descriptive, multidisciplinary phase into a mature discipline with pluralistic and sophisticated characteristics. First, we summarize the background issues that have been referred to throughout the preceding chapters. They are now in perspective, and we are in a position to raise and address the research questions. These questions are vital for the study as they link the subject matter of history, the salience of the themes emerging from history, and the nature of the contributions made to the important issues in the subject. They provide a basis for interpreting the study's results in terms of the subject's achievements, the problems and issues that remain to be resolved, and the areas into which future research should move. We start by answering the four research questions, as follows:

##### **RQ1: How has entrepreneurship research evolved over time?**

Then, as now, the field of entrepreneurship research started out as a positive, descriptive, and story-based field dating back to the early 20th century. Today, however, many decades of research later, the field has grown into a fully-fledged academic discipline. With the emergence of the first journals and university centers in the 1980s and 1990s, entrepreneurship research began to gain academic credibility and respect. Later, in the 2000s, the field of entrepreneurship research continued and engaged in debates over the two theories of causation vs. effectuation and the question of whether the role of the entrepreneur is one of discovery or creation. Since 2010, the field of entrepreneurship has continued to grow, incorporating new themes and research areas such as sustainability, migration, and digitalization. In conjunction with this, during the same period, progress has also been achieved in methodology, not least in research synthesis, using, for example, systematic reviews and bibliometric analysis. Thus, we have today a fully-fledged academic discipline which is moving in an increasingly interdisciplinary direction.

**RQ2: What are the main thematic clusters shaping entrepreneurship research today?**

The analysis found five dominant clusters of scientific production: institutionalization and historical evolution of the field; migration and returnee entrepreneurship; sustainability and social innovation; digitalization and technological transformation; and, finally, theoretical frameworks and methodologies. These results validate that the field of entrepreneurship research has reached the maturity and pluralism needed to efficiently address the major global socio-economic challenges of our times, while permanently evolving in a dynamic, interdisciplinary, and pluralistic fashion.

**RQ3: Which methodological approaches have been most influential in addressing gaps?**

Evolution of Research Methods and the Broadening of Entrepreneurship as a Field of Study. The evolution of the research methods employed by entrepreneurship researchers is intertwined with the broadening of the field of study. In the first decades of entrepreneurship research, primarily descriptive studies and theories of occupational choice were employed. The research methods of the 1970s and 1980s included emerging fields such as organizational ecology and institutional and bibliometric studies. The research methods of the 1990s included qualitative case studies and network analysis. In the 2000s, the research methods employed by entrepreneurship researchers started to include more conceptual frameworks, experiments, and longitudinal studies. Since 2010, the core of the research methods used by entrepreneurship researchers has included systematic literature reviews, meta-analysis, advanced bibliometric methods, mixed-methods research, and big data analytics. With these new methods, it has become possible to synthesize the highly fragmented research literature and, at the same time, to develop new fields of study, such as fintech and sustainable entrepreneurship.

**RQ4: What gaps remain and how can future research address them?**

Meta-Theories & Future Directions of Entrepreneurship Research. On the one hand, significant progress has been achieved in the field. On the other hand, fragmentation is still apparent across almost all levels, from paradigms down to subfields such as the effectuation theory, the discovery vs. creation perspective, and institutional theory. Moreover, although sustainability, migration, and digitalization have become important topics in the entrepreneurship literature, none has yet evolved into an integrative research stream. To address these challenges, we call for the development of meta-theories that can link the different research streams, the application of longitudinal cross-cultural designs, and more advanced, sophisticated methods that enable a closer relationship between theory and practice.

**V. Implications**

The answers to the research questions that we presented in the preceding sub-section are meaningful for advancing the understanding of the historical development and the thematic diversification of the field of entrepreneurship research. They also carry several implications for scholars, practitioners, and policymakers. From a more theoretical perspective, our results clearly suggest the need for greater integration across theories within the field. While diverse theories (such as effectuation, discovery versus creation, and institutional theory) contribute to the field's pluralism, the coexistence of multiple paradigms and theories poses a challenge. Therefore, more advanced meta-theories should be developed, and scholars should continue to apply approaches like systematic reviews, bibliometric mapping, and longitudinal designs. Greater academic integration within the field of entrepreneurship may reinforce the discipline's position within management and benefit other management and social sciences. The fact that the research has been spread across more varied fields, such as sustainability, migration, and digitalization, underscores that societal challenges will be tackled through entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurs will have to carry out their activities in a climate where, for instance, climate change, technology development, and migration are real and unavoidable facts. This research provides knowledge for the design of business development training, business support services, and innovation regions in a context of many uncertain factors, yet also great opportunities created by changing circumstances. Entrepreneurship policy-making should take into account the complexity of entrepreneurship as a dynamic phenomenon that affects labor markets, migration, and environmental change. Therefore, for the development of entrepreneurial ecosystems, entrepreneurial policies based solely on financial instruments are no longer sufficient and should be complemented by other measures, such as environmental sustainability, the use of new information and communication technologies, and the reinsertion of returning entrepreneurs. This study conducts a bibliometric and thematic analysis of the policy area of 'entrepreneurship and work conditions' with the aim of providing policymakers with relevant, up-to-date knowledge of the new challenges faced by entrepreneurship in Europe and enabling them to develop forward-looking policies that support the sustainable development of entrepreneurial ecosystems. The conclusions presented in this volume make a seminal contribution to entrepreneurship research and are highly relevant to society. It is our conviction that research on entrepreneurship that links theory, practice, and policy will remain a significant engine for knowledge development and sustainable progress in the 21st century.

## **VI. Research Limitations**

This study provides a systematic literature review on the evolution of the field of entrepreneurship based on a thorough bibliometric and thematic analysis. It, however, has its own set of restrictions. While the databases used for the bibliometric analysis are the most reliable and widely used, they each have specific limitations. It can thus be argued that many other publications may not be included in these databases. For example, many publications in non-English languages or in local journals that are not widely available internationally may not be included in these databases. Second, the temporal division of the analysis is appropriate for making visible the evolution of particular schools of thought, but it obscures the complexity of that history. Some schools, paradigms, or themes are not restricted to a single decade, and their evolution is not always confined to a particular time span, level of intensity, or pattern. Third, the approach here is based on keyword co-occurrence and bibliometric mapping, and it is good for showing the presence of clusters but not so good for determining whether a theory is the subject of detailed debate or whether a methodology has been developed in great detail. This is a limitation of this approach, and qualitative approaches, such as reading a series of key papers in depth or ethnographically exploring the practices and communities of scholars engaged in the research, may complement it usefully. To the extent possible, this thematic synthesis has been constructed from the author's interpretation of the included papers. Alternative ways of organizing the clusters of findings could have been selected, and greater or lesser weight could have been assigned to each identified paradigm. Subjectivity, as in any literature review, should be mitigated by cross-checking and by the use of other review approaches. This set of constraints is not meant to invalidate our research. On the contrary, they open the door to a number of possible and potentially very interesting studies. Future studies might, for example, use a different set of databases, source more languages, or even combine the bibliometric approach with qualitative methods to provide a more complete, multidimensional picture of research in entrepreneurship.

## **VII. Conclusion**

In conclusion, this study examined the evolution of research on entrepreneurship, identify the field's central issues, and assess the methods and methodologies employed. Research and Research-based Education in Entrepreneurship is a discipline that has undergone significant change, evolving into a multidisciplinary and global field. The analysis of the research questions confirms this. The thematic clusters of the articles demonstrate the discipline's adaptability to society's changing needs. At the same time, the methods used in the articles indicate a higher level of professionalism and research-based education. The entrepreneurial discipline, however, remains fragmented across different research paradigms and fields of study, and emerging fields are not yet integrated into it. The discipline has not yet reached the level of a coherent theoretical framework. Our field is dynamic, pluralistic, and evolving, and it evolves with and reflects the changing society around it. This paper provides a snapshot of our field at this point in time and identifies potential avenues for future research, including the need for more integrative and dynamic research frameworks and methodologies that enable a multifaceted understanding of phenomena, such as longitudinal research designs and cross-cultural studies. In addition, there is scope for studying new phenomena, including sustainability, digital business, and migration. Synthesizing theories, practices, and policies in a rapidly changing world is crucial to the future of our field and to entrepreneurship's contribution to 21st-century socio-economic progress. The answers to our research questions place the focal points of current entrepreneurship research in a historical perspective and look ahead to the future. Yet, the fragmentation across paradigms also points to the need for future integration across the field of entrepreneurship research. However, one should keep in mind that this research has several important limitations. First, the AEA dataset only pertains to start-ups in the US. Moreover, the fact that we chose to analyze a specific set of factors is somewhat arbitrary. This calls for a broader range of research that covers more countries, has a more diverse methodology, and analyzes other issues in start-up dynamics. Entrepreneurship research is at a crossroads. While it is easy to look back and consider the progress made, we believe it is more important to look around and ahead. Entrepreneurship research has demonstrated its vitality, yet it has also shown its capacity for adaptation and growth. We believe that the diversity of approaches and high standards of research are a source of strength, as is the active engagement of scholars with practice and policy.

## **VIII. Future Research**

As an aftermath of the results and discussions in this paper, a number of avenues can be pursued in further studies. One immediate suggestion is to broaden the scope of bibliometric studies to include more regional journals and non-English publications. The fact that most studies have focused only on leading English journals like JEB and JMR means that the vast majority of non-English journals have not yet been properly assessed. This bias towards a selected group of leading scientists can be avoided by expanding the scope of journals assessed. Second, it is important to move beyond the current decade-bound empirical framework and to expand the temporal horizon to longer periods with more periods in common. In this way, it may be possible to fully trace out the unfolding of a paradigm over time. Third, there is a need for further methodological innovation. While systematic literature reviews and bibliometric mapping have advanced our

understanding of entrepreneurial clusters and innovation paradigms, there is scope for qualitative research in this area. An ethnographic exploration of entrepreneurial clusters as networks of ecosystems, or case studies focusing on the mechanisms that produce innovation paradigms, are a few examples of how such research may enhance our understanding of entrepreneurial clusters and the concept of paradigms.

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