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**BEING THE REVIEW OF THE ARTICLE TITLED “I
CAN DO THAT ALONE ... OR NOT? HOW IDEA
GENERATORS JUGGLE BETWEEN THE PROS
AND CONS OF TEAMWORK”**

by

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Article Review

SOURCE: The details of the article under review is below thus:

Deichmann, D. & Jensen, M., 2017. I can do that alone ... or not? How idea generators juggle between the pros and cons of teamwork. *Strategic Management Journal*, 39(1), pp. 458 - 475.

Introduction

Generating ideas is central to successful entrepreneurship as well as intrapreneurship in global business world (Jyh-Rong, 2014; Lee & Farh, 2019). This stance is supported by many a researcher (Siemens, 2015; Thayer, et al., 2018; van Dam, et al., 2019). While the merit of collaborating on this very important exercise is well documented, sadly, few people engaged in it which is a conundrum to practical business world as well as a research gap in extant literatures. This article, "I can do that alone ... or not? How idea generators juggle between the pros and cons of teamwork", seeks to fill this void by using the trade-off behind the merit and demerit of generating ideas alone or with team members to explain the said phenomenon. The zeal, or lack-off, for a collaborative work to generate needed business ideas led to Dirk Deichmann, an assistant professor of Rotterdam School of Management (RSM), and Michael Jensen, a fulltime professor of strategy at the University of Michigan's Ross School of Business, to embark on this research work which hypothesize on two important trade-offs thus:

- i. that of access to more resources and increased coordination; and
- ii. that of sharing the risk and sharing the resources.

These two, as with other components of the research write-up, would be looked at from various prisms like how the research was conducted, how it was conducted viz-a-viz previous similar research work and how it was conducted in relation to general research methodological principles which are detailed in the next section.

Critical Review and Reflection

As the writers rightly argued, the importance of collaborative group-think in idea generation cannot be over-emphasized. While Deichmann & Jensen (2017) listed the merits as including "tapping into diverse expertise and knowledge of other people to develop the idea and address potential weaknesses" and "overcoming [people's] initial resistance to adopt new ideas, others include enhanced productivity in less time at a period business innovative ideas are time-sensitive, 'group geniuses' which arise from intuitive and collective brilliance of the members, and the general increment in the likelihood of success of the idea(s) among others (Thayer, et al., 2018; van Dam, et al., 2019).

On the trade-off between more resources and increased coordination, the writers made many submissions, particularly two, which were submitted into two sub-hypotheses (hypothesis 1a and 1b in the report). The trade-off between sharing the risk and the reward follows similar pattern of having two sub-hypotheses. These were tested with the data collected from an innovation program of a multinational energy company which was referred to as “Enco” for anonymity. The use of case study approach, as was adopted in this research, is well documented in research works. Yin (2003, cited in, Njie & Asimiran, 2014) posited that a “case study is mostly suitable to when a ‘how’ or ‘why’ question is being asked regarding a contemporary set of events which the investigator has little or no control at all” The purpose of using this is to get in-depth analysis of the phenomenon under study, Njie & Asimiran (2014) concluded. This position of allowing in-depth research analysis which can have its root in positivist philosophical stance as adopted in this case study or in interpretivism is also supported by many a researchers (Gill & Johnson, 2010; Jyh-Rong, 2014; Njie & Asimiran, 2014; Saunders, et al., 2012). However, the trade-off for case study analysis is that results from studies involving a singular case (of a single company) could hardly be generalizable (Gill & Johnson, 2010; Saunders, et al., 2012)

More so, the categorization of successful and unsuccessful idea based on successfully passing the second screening is prone to errors and (un)conscious biases. Of course, the researchers argued that “the composition of the panel **should reduce** potential idea selection biases” (Deichmann & Jensen, 2017, p. 463 emphasis added), and despite the fact that the researchers did not show how this would be done but only stated this, there are two nuances here thus: one is from an inference deduced from the phrase “should reduce” which was used. This means, bias can’t be completely eroded and as such with a possibility of greatly affecting the selection and as such data used for the studies. Two is from looking from practical experiences and applying the lessons to this research work. Many ideas have been rejected by (potential) investors arguing that they are not good enough and/ or worthless. These are ideas which grew to become bigger and better than they would have imagined. Though, these are under different scenarios, the underlying principle remains the same that often times, many people (leaders, business managers and even senior academic researchers) could not see and agree with the idea generator(s) on some idea which nevertheless blossom. Practical examples of this abounds but this is even heightened by the fact that the process of selection is not really scientific but ‘opinion’ of expert which is susceptible to bias.

More importantly, the demographic data of the idea generators are not known. Could issues like gender have mediating role on the hypothesised points? When you consider that in the world over, minority ethnic groups, female founders and lots more in several dimensions of diversity have their ideas tossed away and not funded in relation to the majority group, this might give more credence to

this assertion of bias. Zipkin (2018), for instance, reported that out of \$85 billion venture capital funding in 2017, only 2.2% went to female founders and every year, women of colour even get less than 1%.

More so, while the research report was published recently, the data collected showed a somewhat longitudinal approach in which 12 years data of the company, Enco, was collected in 2008. Even at 2008, that's a ten years gap till when it was published. A ten years gap in which a lot has happened which could have a potential effect on the research and as well the research result. Say for instance, technological development and collaboration tools. During those times, the popular project management tool is Microsoft Project which is not just cumbersome to use but not fully collaborative. These days, there are lots of real-time online collaboration tools like Slack, Trello, Monday, Asana, Wrike, ProofHub, Invision which were all established and became popular in the 21st century. Could this have had effect on one of the submissions in the report that "Idea generators might ... be more likely to develop those ideas alone and avoid grappling **with the difficulties of coordinating, monitoring, and communicating with different team members**"? (Deichmann & Jensen, 2017, p. 461 emphasis added). This is left unseen as collaborating tools are now very advanced and easy to use.

Summary and Conclusion

Reviewing the article from the perspective of Saunders's research onion because of the logical ways it presented the research paradigms, one can easily say that the research philosophy follows a positivist research philosophy and a deductive research approach as was used by similar research work like Jyh-Rong (2014) and Lee & Farh (2019) among others. In order to answer the questions of "how" and "why" which is best suited for case study research according to Yin (2003, cited in, Njie & Asimiran, 2014), the research also follow same pattern and adopted a case study of Enco. The data in a 12 years range was however collected from Enco making it look longitudinal. These data were analysed using mono quantitative methods.

However, while this is a very detailed research work and a report with needed clarity, some issues of potential bias are enumerated above. More so, Saunders (2012) opined that while a case study allow you to conduct extensive research work, research findings from a single case is not entirely generalizable as it might not give true representation of the events. This was also supported by Bryman & Bell (2007) and Rovai et al. (2013).

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