

# THE EFFECTS OF MOTIVATION AS A START-UP FACTOR ON BUSINESS PERFORMANCE

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## Abstract

The study examined the relationship between entrepreneurial motivation and business performance using 500 SMEs in Gauteng province, South Africa. A questionnaire was used to collect data from 500 SME owners. The findings from the survey were modelled through a categorical regression model with business performance as the dependent variable. The level of significance of eight variables out of the twelve variables suggests that motivation be classified as the strongest predictor of business performance. These findings, depicting the magnitude of the business environment in the study area, clearly confirm the positive impact of motivation on business performance.

**Keywords:** Motivation, Business Performance, SME, Entrepreneurship

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## 1. Introduction

The topic of motivation in the entrepreneurship literature evolves along a path which is similar to that of the organisational psychology field. From an organisational psychology perspective, theories of motivation have evolved from static, content-oriented theories (Cambell, 1992:23). Content theories search for the specific things within individuals that initiate, direct, sustain and stop behaviour, while process theories explain how behaviour is initiated, directed, sustained and stopped. Motivation has been defined as the purpose or psychological cause of action (Casrud and Brannback, 2011). In the past, reasons for starting a business have been considered to be economic, but recent insight has emerged in the area of social entrepreneurship pointing strongly to the existence of other motives for a person to create a business. Social gains are the primary motivators (Casrud and Brannback, 2011).

Organisational psychology research was focused on developing and testing content theories of motivation during the 1950s and 1960s. For over 30 years, psychologists accepted Cambell's (1992:24) explanation that behaviour results from the interaction between the person and the situation, which is a dynamic process (Carsrud & Brannback, 2009:145). Carsrud and Brannback (2009:146) propose two closely-related explanations of entrepreneurial motivation: the push theory and the pull theory.

South Africa's low ranking in terms of global competitiveness is a source of national concern. This means that South Africa has the smallest proportion

of entrepreneurs compared with other developing countries. This is a problem in a country where entrepreneurial ventures account for one-third of total employment. The unemployment rate in post-apartheid South Africa remains extremely high, with unemployment especially among black South Africans worsening since 1994 (GEM 2011). With the increase in unemployment, which is in part due to the apartheid legacy, current government policies are increasingly being questioned. The GEM (2010) reported South Africa as ranking 110th out of 135 countries in terms of the unemployment rate.

Deshpande, Grinstein, Kim and Ofek (2013) postulate that, despite the considerable role the small businesses play, there is still a significant proportion of entrepreneurial businesses that fail after only a few years of existence. Estimates range from about half of all new businesses failing within the first four years from start-up, to three-quarters disappearing within five years, and it has been assessed that up to nine out of ten entrepreneurial ideas backed by venture capital fail to survive in the marketplace.

It is therefore necessary to understand how the entrepreneurial start-up factor (motivation) affects business performance; in other words, there is a need to find out to what extent the entrepreneurial start-up factor (motivation) affects the performance of a business.

The aim of this article is to shed light on the existing situation in South Africa in terms of entrepreneurship in order to establish the effect of motivation on business performance. The major question that arose from the research is: Does

motivation have an impact on the performance of a business?

This article is structured in the following manner: section 1 presents the research background, research problems and the aim of the study. The next section, section 2, presents a literature review on motivation and business performance. The section further elaborates on the constructs used in this study and outlines proposed hypotheses. Section 3 presents the research methodology, and, finally, section 4 concludes the article with a discussion of the findings.

## **2 Literature review**

### **2.1 Motivation**

Studies indicate that because the behaviour of a number of entrepreneurs is not based on a secure sense of self-esteem and identity, the enterprise becomes a highly emotionally-charged entity. It seems that many of these people are unable to function in structured situations. Many entrepreneurs counteract feelings of low self-esteem, inferiority and helplessness through excessive control and activity and narcissistic behaviour. Self-belief does not necessarily ensure success, but self-disbelief assuredly spawns failure (Urban, 2004).

Commercially-oriented entrepreneurs work to earn money, power, prestige and status. Entrepreneurs have the same motivations as anyone else for fulfilling their needs and wants in the world. They do not necessarily possess motivation that is distinct from that of other people, but it is rather how they use those motivations that help to determine the ultimate success or failure of their ventures. McClelland (in Carsrud & Brannback, 2009) sums up the role of motives, values and skills as factors that determine what people do in their lives.

### ***Intrinsic and extrinsic motivation***

Two forms of motivation are intrinsic motivation and extrinsic motivation. It comes internally from the emotional high one feels when launching a company, or externally from the admiration of society or money received from the venture. Intrinsic motivation refers to a personal interest in the task – for example, achievement motivation like self-development and self-actualisation – and extrinsic motivation refers to an external reward for certain behaviour (Carsrud & Brannback, 2009). Carsrud and Brannback (2009) identify three inherent psychological needs that are necessary for self-motivation and personality integration. They are the need for competence, the need for relatedness and the need for autonomy. One's need for success is another way of looking at the need for achievement where one tries to match some standard of excellence. Carsrud and Brannback (2009) highlight the fact that entrepreneurial motivation may be learned from or influenced by

successful entrepreneurs who are role models in the family. And the person's behaviour and motivation depend on his or her cognition of the environment and his or her interaction within it.

Theoretically, people with a strong desire to succeed should be more likely to exploit entrepreneurial opportunities and perform better than those with a weaker desire to succeed (Poon, Ainuddin and Junit, 2006). McClelland (1965) pointed out that in the entrepreneurship arena, there is evidence that the achievement motive predisposes people to engage in entrepreneurial activities and that it is more pronounced among entrepreneurs than non-entrepreneurs. This has been shown to predict entrepreneurial performance (growth in number of employees, sales and annual income) in a study undertaken in Western countries by Miner, Smith and Bracker (1994:626). Thus, this study suggests that:

There is a positive significant relationship between motivation to start a business and business performance: H01.

### **2.2 Business performance**

Examining the performance of small and medium enterprises can be problematic, especially when objective measures of performance are not available. Cooper and Gascon (1992) highlight the individual factors influencing performance as being experience, education and occupation of parents, gender, race, age, and the entrepreneur's goals. In addition, other studies highlight financial measures, and yet others highlight what are normally termed "non-financial measures". Some studies suggest that a combination of financial and non-financial measures offers a more comprehensive evaluation of a firm's performance (Li, Huang & Tsai 2009), as financial measures alone may not provide an accurate assessment of business performance. Subjective, non-financial measures include indicators such as perceived market share, perceived sales growth, customer satisfaction, loyalty and brand equity (Li et al. 2009). Murphy, Trailer and Hill (1996) examined 51 published entrepreneurial studies using performance as the dependent variable and found that the most commonly considered dimensions of performance were related to efficiency, growth and profit. Efficiency comprises some financial measures like return on investment and return on equity; growth focuses on the increase in sales, employees or market share; and profit includes return on sales and net profit margin.

It is always difficult to examine the performance of SMMEs (small, medium and micro enterprises), especially when objective measures of performance are not publicly available. Collection of financial data like sales revenue and net profit through surveys often results in "item non-response" owing to business owners' reluctance to disclose this type of information (Hallak, Assaker & O'Connor, 2012).

Therefore, the study suggests that: H01 There is a significant, positive relationship between motivation to start a business and business performance (H01a: my business income; H01b: my business profit; H01c: my market share; H01d: my return on investment; H01e: number of employees; H01f: product line).

### 3. Methodology

The population of the study is in small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in the retail sector in Gauteng province of South Africa. The Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) estimates the population of SMEs in retail to be approximately 15 000 SMEs (South Africa, 2009). Dockel & Legthelm (2005:56) and Strydom & Tustin (2003) highlighted the fact that demographic characteristics of the SME population are not accurately known in South Africa, thus this study uses another method to estimate the population.

Therefore the researcher uses the brabys.com populations of SMEs in Gauteng since this organisation contains a register of reliable and leading role players in the industry. The population size of brabys.com is 10 000 SMEs in the retail industry. The study population was therefore based on 10 000 SMEs.

Probability sampling was used to ensure that each member of the SME population is given a known non-zero chance of selection. Simple random sampling was utilised to identify the respondents. This increased accuracy and precision of the sample was used in representing the characteristics of the population of SMEs in retail industry in that province.

According to Cooper and Schindler (2008:409), the sample size that is acceptable is 5% of the total population. Given this study's estimate of a population of 10 000, it means that the targeted sample was 500 respondents (that is,  $10\ 000 \times 0.05 = 500$  respondents).

A structured research instrument (a questionnaire) was used to collect data through self-administration interviews.

#### 3.1 Measures

The investigative questions were related to the following constructs:

##### 3.1.1 Motivation

The most familiar theories of individual motivation were formulated by the psychologist Abraham Maslow. Theories of human behaviour are based on careful observations and consequently theory and practice are usually closely related. Although theories can never predict behaviour with absolute certainty, because there are too many variables to take into account, they can provide one with a good indication

of how people might behave in various circumstances (Smith et al, 2007). Respondents were asked to state to what extent certain factors influenced them in starting a business. Different reasons motivating one to start a business were given, such as: to be my own boss, to prove I can do it, to have more money, to gain public recognition, to provide jobs for my family, to survive because I had no job, to work with people I like, to continue family tradition and to follow the example of the person whom I admire.

##### 3.1.2 Business performance

Murphy et al (1996) examined 51 published entrepreneurial studies using performance as the dependent variable and found that the most commonly considered dimensions of performance were related to efficiency, growth and profit. Efficiency comprises some financial measures like return on investment and return on equity; growth focuses on an increase in sales, employees or market share; and profit includes return on sales and net profit margin.

The independent variables used to quantify business performance are: my business income; my business profit; market share; return on investment; number of employees; and product line. Respondents were requested to rate the extent to which they agreed with the statements on business performance. A five-point Likert scale (strongly agree, agree, don't know, disagree and strongly disagree) was used for each of the six questions that were asked. The six items were aimed at determining the performance of the business.

The assumption was that there is a relationship between motivation and business performance. The researcher therefore wanted to see if this was true and to find out which factors affect business positively, and to what extent.

##### 3.1.3 Analysis

The statistical analysis makes use of a categorical regression model to facilitate the investigation of causal relationships in the data. This model was preferred over other categorical association measures such as chi-square, Cromer's V and Lambda, which would not allow the same level of analysis, especially with regard to causal relationships. Another reason for using the categorical regression model derives from the use of ordinal and nominal data in the model, and also that the dependent variable is dichotomous. The dependent variable is defined as the performance of a business with six categories, namely: my business income; my business profit; market share; return on income; number of employees; and product line. The alpha reliability of the scale was 0.63.

#### 4. Results

##### 4.1 My business income

There is a significant positive relationship that exists between motivation to start a business and business performance (H01a: my business income).

The results from the analysis of variance are depicted in table 1 below. These show that the model variance (1.840) is considerably higher than the error variance (0.966), indicating that the different predictors separately and conjointly succeeded in predicting business performance significantly at 95% level of certainty.

**Table 1.** ANOVA: my business income

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	31.286	17	1.840	1.905	.016
Residual	375.714	389	.966		
Total	407.000	406			

The regression coefficients obtained by estimating the full model are presented in table 2. Given that a total of 500 observations were used, the fairly large number of variables listed can be included in the regression to determine which ones are significant in determining business performance.

Some of the standardised coefficients with regard to “my business income” in table 2 below were found to present strong predictors of business performance. With regard to “my business income”,

some of the variables are above the 0.050 level of significance and can therefore be regarded as weak predictors of business performance. These include the following: to be my own boss; to gain public recognition; to continue family tradition and to follow the example of the person I admire. These factors are motivation factors in starting a business, but are not predictors of business performance.

**Table 2.** Regression coefficients indicating the significance of motivation variables with regard to business performance (my business income)

	Standardised Coefficients		df	F	Sig.
	Beta	Bootstrap (1000) Estimate of Std. Error			
To be my own boss	-.060	.100	1	.356	.551
To prove I can do it	.077	.097	1	.634	.007
To have more money	.162	.069	2	5.496	.004
To gain public recognition	.057	.086	3	.432	.731
To provide jobs for family members	-.187	.056	2	11.080	.000
To survive because I had no job	-.121	.057	2	4.442	.012
To work with people I like	.067	.123	2	.292	.017
To continue family tradition	.072	.099	2	.531	.588
To follow the example of the person I admire	.039	.085	2	.213	.808

With regard to “my business income”, some of the variables are above the 0.050 level of significance and can therefore be regarded as weak predictors of business performance. Only five (to prove I can do it; to have more money; to provide jobs for family members; to survive because I had no job and to work with people I like) are predictors of business performance with a significance level of 0.007; 0,004; 0,000; 0,012; 0,017 respectively. The hypothesis (H01a) is accepted for these variables.

##### 4.2 My business profit

There is a significant positive relationship that exists between motivation to start a business and business performance (H01c: my business profit).

Table 4 shows the regression coefficients indicating the significance of variables relating to “my business profit”.

With regard to “my business profit”, some variables affect business performance. The significance level of some of the variables is above

the 0.05% level of significance. There are no strong predictors of business performance.

**Table 3.** ANOVA: my business profit

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	33.549	18	1.864	1.937	.012
Residual	372.451	387	.962		
Total	406.000	405			

Table 4 below shows the regression coefficients indicating the significance of variables relating to “my business profit”.

With regard to “my business profit”, some variables affect business performance. The

significance level of some of the variables is above the 0.05% level of significance. There are not strong predictors of business performance.

**Table 4.** Regression coefficients indicating the significance of motivation variables to business performance

	Standardised Coefficients		df	F	Sig.
	Beta	Bootstrap (1000) Estimate of Std. Error			
To be my own boss	.028	.099	1	.079	.778
To prove I can do it	.045	.092	2	.244	.784
To have more money	.129	.074	2	3.090	.047
To gain public recognition	.027	.087	3	.097	.962
To provide jobs for family members	-.198	.061	2	10.681	.000
To survive because I had no job	-.114	.060	2	3.684	.026
To work with people I like	.114	.090	2	1.613	.001
To continue family tradition	.062	.085	2	.531	.589
To follow the example of the person I admire	.082	.075	2	1.194	.004

Table 4 shows the regression coefficients indicating the significance of motivation variables to business performance.

With regard to “my business profit”, some of the variables are above the 0.050 level of significance and can therefore be regarded as weak predictors of business performance but only five (to have more money; to provide jobs for family members; to survive because I had no job; to work with people I like; to follow the example of the person I admire) are predictors of business performance with a significance level of 0.047; 0.000; 0.026; 0.001 and

0.004 respectively. The hypothesis (H01b) is accepted for these variables.

#### 4.3 My market share

There is a significant positive relationship exists between motivation to start a business and business performance (H01c: my market share).

With regard to “my market share” some variables affect business performance positively. The significance level of some of the variables falls above the 0.05% level of significance. In that case they are not strong predictors of business performance.

**Table 5.** ANOVA: my market share

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	33.480	16	2.092	2.184	.005
Residual	376.520	393	.958		
Total	410.000	409			

The results from the analysis of variance are depicted in table 5. These show that the model variance (2.092) is considerably higher than the error variance (0.958), indicating that the different predictors separately and conjointly succeeded in

predicting business performance significantly at a 95% level of certainty.

With regard to “my market share”, some of the variables are above the 0.050 level of significance and can therefore be regarded as weak predictors of business performance but only five are positive.

**Table 6.** Regression coefficients indicating the significance of motivation variables to business performance

	Standardised Coefficients		df	F	Sig.
	Beta	Bootstrap (1000) Estimate of Std. Error			
To be my own boss	.066	.089	1	.561	.454
To prove I can do it	.075	.087	2	.746	.475
To have more money	.081	.131	2	.384	.681
To gain public recognition	-.084	.103	2	.664	.515
To provide jobs for family members	-.145	.067	2	4.635	.010
To survive because I had no job	-.149	.068	1	4.760	.030
To work with people I like	.114	.069	2	2.707	.068
To continue family tradition	.077	.088	1	.780	.018
To follow the example of the person I admire	.083	.073	3	1.282	.008

Table 6 above shows the regression coefficients indicating the significance of motivation variables to business performance.

With regard to “my market share”, some variables are above the 0.050 level of significance and can therefore be regarded as weak predictors of business performance but only five (to provide jobs for family members; to survive because I had no job; to work with people I like; to continue family tradition; to follow the example of the person I admire) are predictors of business performance with a significance level of 0.010; 0.030; 0.068; 0.018 and

0.008 respectively. The hypothesis (H01c) is accepted for these variables.

#### 4.4 My return on investment

There is a significant positive relationship between motivation to start a business and business performance (H01d: my return on investment).

With regard to “my return on investment” some variables affect business performance. The significance level of some of the variables falls above the 0.05% level of significance.

**Table 7.** ANOVA: My return on investment

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	36.604	19	1.927	2.015	.007
Residual	360.396	377	.956		
Total	397.000	396			

The results from the analysis of variance are depicted in table 7. These show that the model variance (1.927) is considerably higher than the error variance (0.956), indicating that the different predictors separately and conjointly succeeded in

predicting business performance significantly at a 95% level of certainty.

With regard to “my return on investment”, few variables are above the 0.050 level of significance and can therefore be regarded as weak predictors of business performance.

**Table 8.** Regression coefficients indicating the significance of motivation variables to business performance.

	Standardised Coefficients		df	F	Sig.
	Beta	Bootstrap (1000) Estimate of Std. Error			
To be my own boss	.135	.084	1	2.596	.008
To prove I can do it	.068	.098	1	.475	.491
To have more money	.134	.067	2	3.988	.019
To gain public recognition	-.076	.078	3	.947	.018
To provide jobs for family members	-.108	.070	3	2.379	.019
To survive because I had no job	-.095	.061	3	2.413	.006
To work with people I like	.135	.074	2	3.380	.035
To continue family tradition	.026	.088	1	.085	.771
To follow the example of the person I admire	.098	.103	3	.903	.440

With regard to “my return on investment”, three variables are above the 0.050 level of significance and can therefore be regarded as weak predictors of business performance, but about six variables, (to be my own boss; to have more money; to gain public recognition; to provide jobs for family members; to survive because I had no job; to work with people I like) are predictors of business performance with a significance level of 0.008; 0.019; 0,018; 0.019; 0.006 and 0,035 respectively. The hypothesis (H01d) is accepted for these variables.

#### 4.5 Number of employees

There is a significant positive relationship between motivation to start a business and business performance (H01e: number of employees).

With regard to “number of employees” some variables affect business performance. The significance level of some of the variables falls above the 0.05% level of significance. They are not strong predictors of business performance

**Table 9.** ANOVA: number of employees

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	23.955	17	1.409	1.431	.118
Residual	389.045	395	.985		
Total	413.000	412			

The results from the analysis of variance are depicted in table 9. These show that the model variance (1.409) is considerably higher than the error variance (0.985), indicating that the different predictors separately and conjointly succeeded in

predicting business performance significantly at a 95% level of certainty.

With regard to “number of employees”, some variables are below the 0.050 level of significance and can therefore be regarded as good predictors of business performance.

**Table 10.** Regression coefficients indicating the significance of motivation variables to business performance

	Standardised Coefficients		df	F	Sig.
	Beta	Bootstrap (1000) Estimate of Std. Error			
To be my own boss	-.055	.101	3	.295	.029
To prove I can do it	.091	.086	2	1.125	.026
To have more money	.163	.072	3	5.181	.002
To gain public recognition	.061	.104	2	.345	.708
To provide jobs for family members	-.060	.109	1	.303	.582
To survive because I had no job	.042	.097	2	.189	.827
To work with people I like	-.092	.100	2	.845	.430
To continue family tradition	.094	.097	1	.932	.035
To follow the example of the person I admire	.045	.107	1	.179	.672

Variables that are above the 0.050 level of significance are regarded as weak predictors of business performance while variables below 0.050 are regarded as good predictors of business performance.

With regard to “number of employees”, some variables are below the 0.050 level of significance and can therefore be regarded as good predictors of business performance and they are: “to be my own boss; to prove I can do it; to have more money; to continue family tradition”. These are predictors of business performance with a significance level of 0.029; 0.026; 0.002 and 0.035 respectively. The hypothesis (H01e) is accepted for these variables.

#### 4.6 Product lines

There is a significant positive relationship between motivation to start a business and business performance (H01f: product lines).

With regard to “product lines” some variables affect business performance. The significance level of some of the variables falls above the 0.05% level of significance.

Table 12 below shows the regression coefficients indicating the significance of variables relating to “product lines”.

With regard to “product lines” some variables affect business performance positively. The significance level of some of the variables falls above the 0.05% level of significance. There are no strong predictors of business performance.

**Table 11.** ANOVA: product line

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	24.938	13	1.918	1.972	.022
Residual	388.062	399	.973		
Total	413.000	412			

The results from the analysis of variance are depicted in table 11. These show that the model variance (1.918) is considerably higher than the error variance (0.973), indicating that the different predictors separately and conjointly succeeded in predicting business performance significantly at a 95% level of certainty.

With regard to “product lines”, some variables are above the 0.050 level of significance and can therefore be regarded as weak predictors of business performance and some are below 0.050 and are regarded as strong predictors of business performance.

**Table 12.** Regression coefficients indicating the significance of motivation variables to business performance

	Standardised Coefficients		df	F	Sig.
	Beta	Bootstrap (1000) Estimate of Std. Error			
To be my own boss	.045	.103	1	.189	.664
To prove I can do it	.086	.091	1	.880	.049
To have more money	.059	.074	2	.653	.521
To gain public recognition	-.048	.101	1	.228	.633
To provide jobs for family members	-.113	.067	3	2.873	.036
To survive because I had no job	-.058	.086	1	.445	.505
To work with people I like	-.108	.126	2	.736	.480
To continue family tradition	.135	.099	1	1.843	.015
To follow the example of the person I admire	.098	.071	1	1.911	.038

Some variables are above the 0.050 level of significance and can therefore be regarded as weak predictors of business performance, but only four (to prove I can do it; to provide jobs for family members; to continue family tradition and to follow the example of the person I admire) are predictors of business performance with a significance level of 0.049; 0.036;

0.015 and 0.038 respectively. The hypothesis (H01f) is accepted for these variables.

These findings, depicting the magnitude of the business environment in the study area, clearly confirm the positive impact of motivation on business performance. This conclusion enlightens the first research question, namely, the possible positive



impacts of motivation on business performance. The variables relating to this phenomenon are the best predictors of business performance. The strong predictive value of motivation as independent variables of business performance confirms that these factors should be present in the individual entrepreneur for the business to perform better. It is clear from the tables above that other variables do not impact the business performance at all.

## 5. Conclusion

As indicated above, some motivation factors are not predictors of business performance. The following factors were found to be predictors of business performance: to be my own boss; to prove I can do it; to have more money; to provide jobs for family members; to continue family tradition and to follow the example of the person I admire. The rest of the factors were found to be weak predictors of business performance, therefore they should be taken out of the factors that predict business performance. The study done by Radipere (2013) finds that there is a significant correlation between motivation to start a business and business performance.

McClelland (1965) pointed out that in the entrepreneurship arena, there is evidence that the achievement motive predisposes people to engage in entrepreneurial activities and that it is more pronounced among entrepreneurs than non-entrepreneurs. This has been shown to predict entrepreneurial performance (growth in number of employees, sales and annual income) in a study undertaken in Western countries by Miner, Smith and Bracker (1994:626).

Certain factors found to be good predictors of business performance are other variables as highlighted in the findings and discussion above, while other factors are found not to be predictors of business performance.

The level of significance of 8 out of the 12 independent variables suggests that motivation be classified as the strongest predictor of business performance.

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