International Review of Entrepreneurship 7 (1): 5-6.

Special Issue: E-Commerce/Web 2.0 and Entrepreneurship: Where Next? Editorial

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Entrepreneurship is integral to E-Commerce with many dominant Internet firms still relatively young. After the collapse of the dot com bubble e-commerce has become an established aspect of business and many entrepreneurial firms have emerged. This makes a look at E-Commerce Entrepreneurship highly topical. Added to this the Web 2.0 phenomena, which has seen the growth of blogging, social networking and video sharing websites, is worthy of further examination.

I am delighted to be the Guest Editor of this Special Issue of the *International Journal of Entrepreneurship Education*, which brings together a range of perspectives; writers from around from the world; from different subject disciplines; from academia and industry. The writers have made excellent contributions which help to develop understanding of this emerging and evolving field.

In the first paper, Pitt et al see Web 2.0 as “not so much about new technologies as it is about new ways of using the internet and its associated technologies”. They analyse the opportunities and issues for entrepreneurs in the Web 2 sphere using the U-Space, a fascinating construct they developed in 2002. The paper offers many insights and connections between the three interlinked areas of the Special Issue; E-Commerce, Web 2.0 and Entrepreneurship. They conclude that the U-Space offers a better lens of analysis than the nebulous Web 2.0 concept.

In the second paper Robert Hendershott argues that funding models need to be reassessed in the light of Web 2.0. The associated concept of Cloud Computing, whereby technology resources can be bought and accessed from remote servers, has reduced entry costs with the result that “budding” businesses can be sold by entrepreneurs relatively early. This also has implications for venture capital as it challenges the long term basis of such investment. The paper offers an effective framework in which to understand major developments in e-commerce, for example, the acquisitions by major Internet players Google, Microsoft and Yahoo and Amazon’s Elastic Compute Cloud.

In the third paper there is another contribution from Pitt et al (separate co-authors) which looks at the open source phenomenon, an important topic in its own right and a prominent part of Web 2.0. OS describes the situation whereby products (usually but not always software) are made available free, and users can share the source code, which they improve. The paper illustrates the OS movement using the vehicle of the Global Text Project, which has created free textbooks and therefore offers opportunities for lower cost materials in the developing world. The Global Text Project is analysed from a number of perspectives and also provides an interesting insight into social entrepreneurship.

In the fourth paper Gandy, coming from a practitioner perspective, looks at the failure of 1st generation start-up Internet Banking. He makes the point that although for technology and branding reasons separate Internet banks were an attractive option in the early days of e-commerce, start-up Internet banks faced powerful opponents. The established industry had high switching costs with its current account customers reinforced by a preference for multi-channel banking.

In the fifth paper Reid explores the topical subject of Open Innovation. He places this within the context of Corporate Entrepreneurship and offers suggestions as to how it can be facilitated. A key point made is that the Web 2.0 era has enabled greater participation from outside the organisation and can be harnessed to stimulate innovation.

In the final paper Laffey considers Web 2.0 from the perspective of the dot com boom. The dot com boom saw a broad base of firms whilst Web 2.0 is focused on content websites, and software providers. The focus on content enables a parallel to be drawn with Web 1.0 content websites, the lack of clear revenue models. Ironically, after the wide condemnation of dot com firms with no clear revenue streams, the Web 2.0 era would produce more firms which relied either on advertising, or in the case of Twitter, had no revenue streams. A major difference has been the lack of Web 2.0 IPOs with none in the United States; the main form of exit opportunity has been through the acquisitions of Google, Yahoo and Microsoft, a point made by Hendershott in his paper in the Special Issue.

In sum, each paper makes a valued contribution to expanding knowledge in this area and identifying areas for future research. Finally, thanks go to the reviewers for the Special Issue, who provided the authors with constructive and timely feedback