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Framing ideas for new venture resources acquisition in crises: An fsQCA analysis

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ABSTRACT

How should new venture ideas be framed in order to acquire human resources and gain support in times of crisis characterized by struggling or failing institutions and governmental organizations? To answer this question, we analyze 316 new venture ideas aimed at alleviating the COVID-19 crisis in 11 countries. We investigate different linguistic framing configurations and test their persuasive power for human resource acquisition. Our fuzzy-set qualitative comparative analysis (fsQCA) and linguistic analysis reveal that a "common enemy framing" is crucial for obtaining resources in crisis contexts. Non-profit venture ideas, specifically, may acquire resources via two additional paths: adding positive emotional content or using an entrepreneurial hustle framing with concrete calls to action. Our findings provide novel insights into entrepreneurial resource acquisition and idea framing during crises.

1. Introduction

"A company is only as good as its people and how excited they are about creating." - Elon Musk

Besides obtaining financial investments, the acquisition of human resources such as co-founders, employees, mentors or board members is a critical first step for many entrepreneurs in the ideation stages of their venture (Cardon and Stevens, 2004; Zott and Huy, 2007). Human capital is a fundamental asset for new ventures, strongly linked to survival and growth (Agarwal et al., 2016; Unger et al., 2011). Hence, attracting talented individuals and supporters is crucial for new ventures. However, entrepreneurs typically face challenges in convincing potential supporters to commit their time, effort, and intellect at an early stage of the venture, due to the "liability of newness": the venture often has little or no track record, no obvious asset value, and no profitability to show (Brush et al., 2001; Greer et al., 2016; Mayson and Barrett, 2006). In this context, how entrepreneurs communicate about their ventures is crucial in terms of convincing potential employees and partners (Bird and Schjoedt, 2009). This challenge of communicating persuasively in the process of resource acquisition becomes even more daunting for entrepreneurs active in times of crisis and those who try to advance crisis relief solutions. This is due to the urgency with which the entrepreneurs have to act in order to develop their solution and make it available, and the practical or psychological limitations imposed by the crisis situation (e.g., lack of infrastructure or, in the COVID-19

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crisis, social distancing).

Although initially a healthcare crisis, the current COVID-19 pandemic has affected the global economy and every aspect of human life as we know it. In such catastrophic times, when public institutions and governmental organizations fail or are overwhelmed, the importance of independent entrepreneurial ventures for providing crisis solutions is paramount. Although recent entrepreneurship research has begun to investigate how new entrepreneurial ideas emerge in crisis situations (Bacq et al., 2020; Nelson and Lima, 2020; Williams and Shepherd, 2018, 2021), we lack knowledge about how entrepreneurs can persuasively advocate for their crisis solution ideas in order to acquire resources. The objective of this study is to understand how entrepreneurial ideas can be best linguistically framed to gain human capital resources in times of crisis. To answer this question, we rely upon data from venture ideas developed during Startup Weekends that took place during the first peak of the COVID-19 crisis in April 2020. We focus on language, because it is a key component and a reliable indicator of persuasive power. By means of a software-assisted linguistic analysis of 316 initial new venture idea descriptions from 11 countries, we shed light on different framing paths by which entrepreneurs can acquire human resources from the community for their crisis solution ideas.

2. Framing new venture ideas for resource acquisition

"The goal is to provide inspiring information that moves people to action." - Guy Kawasaki

Lately, scholars have begun to focus on how entrepreneurs in early-stage ventures can acquire resources from key stakeholders, such as employees, customers, and investors, as well as gain support from important information intermediaries (the media, public opinion leaders) by using strategic communication tools such as verbal framing or storytelling (Clarke et al., 2019; Garud et al., 2014; Liubertė and Dimov, 2021 ; Wry and Lounsbury, 2013). Such communication strategies are likely to help entrepreneurs acquire resources, especially when they help portray the new initiative in a positive manner or signal a recognizable frame of reference for a new, previously unfamiliar idea that external resource providers can easily relate to, grasp, and eventually back (Aldrich and Fiol, 1994). Frames are defined as "mentally stored clusters of ideas that guide individuals' processing of information" (Entman, 1993, p. 53). Imbuing discourse with more accessible and more legitimate schemata and constructing and translating meaning is at the core of framing appeals to potential collaborators (Goffman, 1974; Walder, 2009). Through framing, entrepreneurial communication can reduce uncertainty by packaging information about the new venture idea and the venture in a more meaningful way (Lounsbury and Glynn, 2001) and embedding the new idea in a familiar or desirable structure (Cornelissen and Clarke, 2010). Framing encourages stakeholders to generate their own interpretations (Garud et al., 2014), such that they "are likely to gain confidence in the viability of those possibilities and in others' ability to make them a reality" (Bartel and Garud, 2009: 112).

During the COVID-19 crisis, communicating persuasively in the process of resource acquisition has become even more difficult. Among others, this is due to the social distancing imposition typical of this health crisis: many countries around the globe have been in various lockdowns throughout 2020–2022, with governments instructing or commanding people to stay at home and avoid social interactions. In the absence of face-to-face interaction, online communication emphasizes written information that entrepreneurs share about their ideas. The framing of the idea and the linguistic style, therefore, becomes a key source of information. Other factors, such as the background or personality of the entrepreneur, become less important. Indeed, language is generally central in persuasion, to signal and transmit values, beliefs, symbolism, and emotions to the people one is trying to convince (Sparks et al., 1998), and it becomes even more crucial in the absence of face-to-face communication.

Successfully framing a new venture idea for resource acquisition requires the accomplishment of two interdependent framing tasks: establishment of a clear rationale for action and the alignment of the framing to the context (Luhmann, 1996). A rationale can be based on (1) a problem focus (i.e. the identification of a problem, including the attribution of blame and causality); (2) a solution focus (i.e. the proposal of solutions); or (3) a motivational focus (i.e. a call for urgent action) (Snow and Benford, 1988). The clarity and concreteness of the language used in these frames is important for the persuasiveness of new proposals. The effectiveness of different framing strategies, then, depends on successful frame alignment processes between the new venture idea proposal and important dimensions of the context (Snow et al., 1986). In particular, the proposed framing has to have centrality, that is, it has to be coherent with larger belief systems (Ostrom, 1990), and it has to be relevant to the realities of resource providers and emerge at the right point in time (Snow and Benford, 1988). Based on these insights from framing theory (Benford and Snow, 2000; Luhmann, 1996), we develop different linguistic framing configurations of four framing rationales (negative framing, positive framing, entrepreneurial hustle framing, concreteness) and two context boundary conditions (social norm alignment and market urgency) that are likely to play a role in helping entrepreneurs acquire human resources, thereby permitting them to develop and contribute their crisis solution.

3. Framing rationales: negative, positive, entrepreneurial hustle and concreteness framing

The successful framing of a crisis solution idea as an attractive opportunity for entrepreneurial resource providers can focus either on the problem or on the solution (Snow and Benford, 1988). A negative, problem-focused framing is based on stimulating negative emotions is likely to lead to approval of crisis solution ideas from the side of resource providers by creating emotional energy for enacting the idea (Barberá-Tomás et al., 2019). Conversely, in the case of a positive, solution-focused framing, the crisis solution idea will be framed in terms of opportunity. Such a framing elicits positive emotions but is likely to be an equally effective means of facilitating crisis solution idea enactment (Eyerman, 2005; Polletta and Jasper, 2001). Both of these frames can be effective in acquiring resources, yet their effect is likely to differ depending on the circumstances.

According to social movement theory, a rationale for a crisis solution proposal can be based on motivational framing, in which the entrepreneur calls for urgent action and uses a call to arms (Snow and Benford, 1988). Such a framing is fitting for an unparalleled

crisis such as the COVID-19 pandemic, which requires immediate responses that utilize innovative and potentially unconventional approaches (Bacq et al., 2020). Entrepreneurial hustle has been defined as entrepreneurs' urgent, unorthodox actions that are intended to address immediate challenges and opportunities under conditions of uncertainty (Fisher et al., 2020). Crisis solution ideas that are described in terms of "entrepreneurial hustle" are likely to have a powerful motivational effect and thus stimulate human resource providers and increase their participation levels (Benford and Snow, 2000). Resource providers are more likely to recognize the intended usefulness of such proposals and believe they have a higher chance of being implemented in the fight against the crisis, in our case the COVID-19 pandemic.

As mentioned above, the attributes of the language used in framing are also important. Idea concreteness—the extent to which the words and explanation used in a message provide details and contextualization of information (Pan et al., 2017)—is an important attribute of the language used in framing. According to construal level theory (Trope and Liberman, 2010), the level of concreteness with which an idea is framed influences evaluative responses and behavioral intention responses to that idea. Moreover, it has been proven that crisis solution ideas framed in concrete language are likely to be more persuasive and to receive particularly favorable reactions when information asymmetry and uncertainty are present (Larrimore et al., 2011; Toma & D'Angelo, 2015). These conditions are likely to be present in an entrepreneurial context, and even more so in times of crisis.

4. Context: social norm alignment and market urgency in times of crisis

In order to be convincing, the framing of an idea has to be central to, or coherent with larger belief systems of resource providers. Indeed, previous work shows that the success of new initiatives is determined by others' preferences and social norms (Ostrom, 1990). Social norms play an important role in resource providers' decisions regarding approval and support of crisis solution ideas. Even in a crisis context, prospective entrepreneurs are subject to the norms of the market (Devece et al., 2016). These norms are manifested in the standard practices of businesses and are, in most industries, based on the central logic of profit maximization (Pache and Santos, 2013). Most businesses follow social norms and, consequently, a specific business sector is homogenized, which also uniformizes people's expectations from a business that is active in a low or a high profit maximization sector. Despite the fact that crises bring about urgent, large-scale societal problems and generally stimulate social and collective motives in people (Lunn et al., 2020), not all crisis solution ideas are aimed at industries with a low profit maximization norm. Consequently, a crisis solution idea might benefit from different framing depending on the profit maximization norms of the industry in which the entrepreneur operates. As an example, an entrepreneur developing a crisis relief solution for vulnerable populations such as disabled people (a sector with lower profit maximization norms) might benefit from a different idea framing than one proposing a solution for social distancing in the retail sector (a sector with higher profit maximization norms). Failing to align the idea framing with the resource providers' expectations about a business operating in a low/high profit maximization sector might lead to failure in acquiring resources.

Acquiring resources for a crisis solution idea also depends on how relevant the proposal is to the realities of resource providers and whether it emerges at the right point of time (Snow and Benford, 1988). Thus, it is important to understand how well the proposal is aligned with the urgency with which crisis solutions are needed. The COVID-19 crisis did not emerge simultaneously across all nations. While some countries experienced an initial peak in April 2020 (e.g., Italy, the UK, Canada), with overwhelmed healthcare systems and hundreds of daily deaths, other parts of the world were more sheltered from this first pandemic wave (e.g., Sri Lanka, Greece, Romania). Thus, the local public and resource providers' perceived need for urgent action and immediate crisis solutions is highly likely to have been different across nations. This different "market pull" is likely to influence how ready individuals are to commit their human capital to the new venture idea. A particular idea framing might function better depending on the crisis urgency in a specific area.

5. Methods

Soon after the Covid-19 outbreak, several online start-up events were spontaneously organized locally and internationally. Entrepreneurs from diverse backgrounds were brought together with support organizations to collaborate and work towards quickly building ventures as business solutions to the unfolding crisis (Bacq et al., 2020; Bertello et al., 2021). One of these events was the online global Startup Weekend series, which took place online in 54 different countries in April 2020. The 54-h virtual event series united inventors, innovators and developers on a country level to work on solutions to the economical and societal challenges that emerged due to COVID-19. All events had the same format, and participation was free of charge. Interested nascent or actual entrepreneurs registered online, indicating whether they already have a business idea they would like to develop during the event or not. It was possible to participate in the event without submitting an idea, by joining another idea. Ahead of the event, participants with a business idea submitted their venture idea in the form of an online written description in a standardized format, including problem, solution, and short description. Participants were also asked to choose a category for their idea. Categories included health, vulnerable populations, small business, entertainment, education, and community. A jury selected and published the most promising proposals. At the start of the event (Friday), participants without a venture idea joined others' ideas based on the initial written idea descriptions by the idea owners and formed teams around the ideas. Over the next two days, each team jointly worked to further develop the initial ideas. On Sunday evening, 10 teams from each country were selected to present their business ideas to a local jury of angel investors and experienced entrepreneurs that used unified rating criteria to select the three best ideas in each country.

The online format of the events was an ideal setting for our study, as the absence of face-to-face interaction about the idea with the idea owner meant that the written idea description was the main source of information based on which potential human resource providers could judge the idea. The linguistic style of the idea description therefore played a dominant role in the online start-up events. To capture the global nature of the crisis, we collected data from several Startup Weekend events covering various

countries from all main geographical areas. To maximize comparability between events and ensure we could analyze the idea descriptions in their original language, we focused on events that were held solely in English. In total, we gathered data on 328 ideas from 11 countries. Due to missing information in 12 cases, we rendered a final sample of 316. The ideas covered a wide range of broader themes: 43.7% (138) were related to health, 21.5% (68) to small business, 11.4% (36) to education, 10.8% (34) to vulnerable populations, 10.1% (32) to community, and 2.5% (8) to entertainment. Of the idea-owning entrepreneurs, 68% (215) were male and 32% (101) were female.

We used fsQCA to analyze the relationship between the causal conditions (i.e., negative and positive framing, entrepreneurial hustle framing, concreteness framing, low profit maximization norm, market urgency) and the outcome (human resource acquisition). Existing theories do not offer reasoning for how the proposed independent variables interact to influence the dependent variable. The fsQCA method, increasingly adopted in entrepreneurship research (Douglas et al., 2020; Kier and McMullen, 2020), is a useful tool in trying to answer this question. The software used for the analysis was fsQCA 2.5 (Ragin and Davey, 2014). Since the fsQCA method requires calibration of all conditions and outcomes, we followed the procedure established by Ragin (2008) and transformed the scales to take values from 0.0 (full non-membership to category) to 1.0 (full membership to category). The values that were used to determine the membership levels are: $\geq$ 0.90 for full membership, $\leq$ 0.10 for full non-membership, and 0.5 for the cross-over point. We transformed and calibrated all continuous variables to fuzzy values (except Low Profit Maximization and Market Urgency, which are binary variables and were transformed into crisp values, with 1 for full membership, and 0 for full non-membership). Table 1 expresses the values assigned to each condition and outcome as a result of the calibration procedure.

In our analysis, we consider lexical semantics as a way to craft linguistically based frames as organic systems of meaning (Vicari, 2010). We use the Linguistic Inquiry and Word Count (LIWC) software (Tausczik and Pennebaker, 2010) and utilize dictionaries from LIWC, DICTION, and Harvard. To investigate alignment with resource providers' expectations, we relied on objective measures of crisis urgency in the country and degree of profit maximization norms in the industry.

Human Resource Acquisition. We measured human resource acquisition with a categorical variable where "0" means that the idea did not attract human resources (i.e. form a team around it) and was disregarded for further development during the startup weekend (194 teams), "1" means the idea attracted human resources (i.e. a team was formed around it) and it was developed until the end of the startup weekend (92 teams), and "2" means that the idea was among the three winners of the startup weekend in each country (30 teams) and the respective teams were awarded access to an accelerator program.[2]

Positive and Negative Framing. To measure positive and negative framing of the idea, we followed Pan et al. (2017) and used LIWC dictionaries for positive content and negative content. We chose this measure in line with previous literature suggesting that emotions can serve a framing function, such that "repeated pairing of certain emotions with particular ideas or events shapes the way in which one interprets and responds to those events" (Nabi, 2003, p. 227). We normalized both lexical category scores before entering them into the analysis.

Entrepreneurial Hustle Framing. Entrepreneurial hustle is defined as entrepreneur's urgent, unorthodox actions that are intended to be useful in addressing immediate challenges and opportunities under conditions of uncertainty (Fisher et al., 2020). To measure urgency of actions we used lexicons for *present focus* (LIWC), *velocity* (Harvard dictionary sub-category), the change process category *begin* (Harvard), and *locomotion* self-regulatory mode (LIWC). To measure unorthodox action, we used lexicons for *aggression* (a DICTION dictionary embracing human competition and forceful action) and *risk focus* (LIWC dictionary referencing to dangers, concerns, things to avoid). We normalized each lexical category score and summed the normalized scores to arrive at an entrepreneurial hustle index. Higher values indicate higher entrepreneurial hustle in the venture idea description.

Concreteness Framing. Following Pan et al. (2017), we included six LIWC word categories for our concreteness measure: verbs, adjectives, numbers, nonspecific quantifiers, past-focused, and future-focused. We then normalized each lexical category score, summed the normalized scores of concreteness (i.e., verbs, numbers and past-focused words) and subtracted the normalized scores of abstractness (i.e., adjectives, nonspecific quantifiers, and future-focused words). The higher the value, the more concrete the used language is.

Profit Maximization Norms. Two of this study's co-authors independently categorized the six predetermined idea categories (vulnerable populations, community, small businesses, entertainment, health, education) as either high or low profit maximization. There was almost complete agreement between the two raters. Differences were clarified in order to obtain an agreement between the raters. Thereafter, the "small business", "entertainment", "health", and "education" categories were classified as high profit maximization sectors, while "vulnerable populations" and "community" were classified as low profit maximization sectors. This classification is in line with the literature (e.g. Hansmann, 1980; Malani and David, 2008; Steinberg, 2006; Terjesen et al., 2012). For fsQCA purposes, we use a binary variable to categorize the ideas that target low profit maximization sectors (1) versus high profit maximization sectors (0), by using the idea category information that the idea owners submitted with their initial idea descriptions.

Market urgency. To measure how strongly a country was affected by the pandemic, we took the day with the highest number of new infections (from the beginning of the pandemic to April 24th, 2020, when the Startup Weekends took place) and divided that number by the number of inhabitants. We collected this data from each of the 11 countries (John Hopkins Coronavirus Resource

[2] Towards the end of the event, 10 of the ideas from each country that had gathered a team and that were worked on were selected by the organizers to be pitched in front of judges. Note that these 10 ideas were selected on the basis of the initial idea description. In this final stage, a video pitch took place in a video call format where each of the 10 entrepreneurs from each country showed slides and made a verbal pitch. In each country, out of these 10 video pitches, three were selected as winners by the jury. Only these three winners from each country were announced publicly. Since we did not gain access to the video pitching, nor received information about which the 10 selected ideas were, we relied on information about the three winners when we constructed our value "2" dependent variable.

Table 1
Descriptive statistics and calibration of measures.

	Descriptives				Fuzzy set calibration		
	Mean	S.D.	Min	Max	Full in	Cross-over	Full out
Human Resource Acquisition	0.48	0.66	0	2	1	0.40	0
Negative Framing	0.05	0.08	0	1	0.14	0.03	0
Positive Framing	0.10	0.12	0	1	0.26	0.07	0
Entrep. Hustle Framing	0.73	0.36	0	2.36	1.17	0.69	0
Concreteness Framing	0.08	0.10	0	1	0.20	0.06	0
Low Profit Maximization	0.20	0.46	0	1	1	Na	0
Market Urgency	0.59	0.49	0	1	1	Na	0

Center).

6. Analysis and results

We first analyzed the necessary conditions that must be present in every configuration for the outcome to happen. Conditions are necessary when consistency values are higher than 0.9. The results in Table 2 show that there is no necessary condition for the presence of human resource acquisition (highest consistency value is 0.6 for entrepreneurial hustle framing and highest coverage value is 0.52 for negative framing). This means that there is no one specific characteristic that is necessary for human resource acquisition.

Next, we conducted a sufficiency analysis using a truth table to obtain the possible configurations (or combination of conditions) that explain the outcome of human resource acquisition. The solution consistency is above 0.75, which qualifies it for further analysis (Berg-Schlosser et al., 2012). Pearson correlations between all the variables from the study are displayed in Table 3. Table 4 shows the results of our fsQCA analysis, for both the intermediate and parsimonious solutions. In this analysis, we discuss the three configurations that result in human resource acquisition. These configurations are organized based on raw coverage and consistency criteria. All three configurations are above 0.75. We focus on raw coverage as a way to rank the configurations, because higher coverage values indicate greater empirical relevance. We discuss the configurations in the Discussion.

Following methodological recommendations in the literature (e.g., Douglas et al., 2020; Greckhamer et al., 2018), we performed a robustness check of the results by adjusting the threshold levels up and down to check the sensitivity of the results to the calibration parameters and to ensure our analysis is not overly sensitive to the specification of our set thresholds. Specifically, we calibrated the variables above and below our set thresholds of 90th, 50th, and 10th percentile by using the 85th, 50th, and 10th percentile, as well as the 95th, 50th, and 5th percentile as alternatives. We noted no significant changes in the configurations; the interpretation of the results remains unchanged.

7. Discussion

First, the most dominant idea framing configuration suggests that the presence of a negative framing is a sufficient and powerful tool for an idea to acquire human resources in times of crisis. Because of its expression, we call this configuration the "*Unite to Fight the Common Enemy*" framing. Using strong negative emotions that draw attention to the problem appears to be a powerful tool in promoting a cause and getting support. This finding is consistent with the theory of the common enemy (Grossman, 1995; Murray and Meyers, 1999), which suggests that enemy making is a natural and crucial factor for surviving and thriving in extreme situations such as crises or wars. Framing a crisis solution idea in a negative way functions by constructing a common enemy (the COVID-19 pandemic) and can serve to direct action and energy toward this common threat (Merskin, 2004), thereby generating approval and support for the idea by human resource providers.

We name our second influential configuration the "*Non-Profits, Be Positive*" framing. If the crisis solution is aimed at a sector with a

Table 2
Analysis of necessary conditions.

	Presence of the outcome (Human Resource Acquisition)	
	Consistency	Coverage
Negative Framing	0.5354	0.5189
Positive Framing	0.5715	0.4733
Entrepreneurial Hustle Framing	0.6019	0.4440
Concreteness Framing	0.5047	0.4170
Low profit maximization	0.1758	0.3386
Market Urgency	0.4890	0.3283
~ Negative Framing	0.5692	0.3913
~ Positive Framing	0.5352	0.4186
~ Entrepreneurial Hustle Framing	0.5029	0.4449
~ Concreteness Framing	0.5996	0.4700
~ Low profit maximization	0.8241	0.4190
~ Market Urgency	0.5169	0.5093

Table 3
Correlations.

	Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6
1	Human Resource Acquisition						
2	Entrepreneurial hustle framing	.02					
3	Positive framing	–.03	.08				
4	Negative framing	.06	.25	.04			
5	Concreteness framing	–.12	–.18	–.15	–.10		
6	Market urgency	–.18	.09	–.03	.01	–.07	
7	Profit maximization norms	–.09	–.01	.13	.16	–.05	.08

Notes. N = 316. All correlations |0.12| and above are significant at 0.05 or below (two-tailed).

Table 4
Solutions for the presence of human resource acquisition.

Presence of the outcome (Human Resource Acquisition)			
Configuration name	*1*	*2*	*3*
Negative Framing	●	●	●
Positive Framing	◯	●	○
Entrepreneurial Hustle Framing	◯		●
Concreteness Framing	◯	◯	●
Low profit maximization	○	●	●
Market Urgency	○	○	○
Raw coverage	0.0620	0.0382	0.0174
Unique coverage	0.0620	0.0300	0.0093
Consistency	0.7521	0.8248	0.8571
Solution coverage	0.1095		
Solution consistency	0.7769		

Note: Following both Ragin (2008) and Fiss (2011), the solutions have been grouped with regard to their 'core' structures, where: ● black circles indicate the presence of the condition; ○white circles indicate the absence of the condition; ●◯ large circles indicate a core condition (i.e. it appears in both the parsimonious and the intermediate solution); ●○ small circles indicate that the condition only appears in the intermediate solution; and blank cells indicate that the particular causal condition is not relevant within that solution configuration.

low profit maximization norm, a negative framing of the crisis solution idea can lead to human resource acquisition if it is combined with a positive framing. This is likely because, when the crisis solution targets a low profit maximization sector (such as vulnerable populations or community welfare), an idea benefits from a high emotional content (both negative and positive) and from a relief to the tension built by negative framing surrounding the problem. Specifically, relying on a positive framing in addition to a negative one is likely to connect the target audience of human resource providers to an emerging collective identity by promoting hope in the efficacy of collective action (Barberá-Tomás et al., 2019). These results are in line with research underlining the importance of emotional framing (both positive and negative) as a key component of gaining support, especially in the social entrepreneurship context (Aminzade and McAdam, 2002; Goodwin et al., 2001).

Third, the results suggest that if the crisis solution is aimed at a sector with a low profit maximization norm, a negative framing of the crisis solution idea can lead to resource acquisition if it is combined with an entrepreneurial hustle framing, as long as the idea is described in concrete language. We call this configuration the "*Non-Profits, Be Clear in Urgent and Unorthodox Actions"* framing. In this case, the tension created by the problem-focused, negative framing of the idea is being complemented by an urgent, resourceful, and unconventional call to action that can bring relief. Such an entrepreneurial hustle framing is likely to stimulate action readiness towards solving the portrayed problem by the human resource providers, thus increasing chances of resource acquisition. However, the success of an unconventional entrepreneurial hustle framing is dependent on the presence of concreteness in order for the idea to be accepted by potential supporters as an immediate, doable solution, despite its nonconformity.

Interestingly, the degree of urgency of the crisis solution does not appear to be relevant for resource acquisition in any of the configurations. A reason for this might be the fact that, due to globalization and the international nature of COVID-19, the extent of the crisis and the urgency with which solutions are needed is perceived similarly across nations.

8. Contributions

First, we contribute to the broader literature on resource acquisition in entrepreneurship (Martens et al., 2007; Wry and Lounsbury, 2013; Zott and Huy, 2007) by pinpointing the linguistic characteristics of new venture ideas that are successful in acquiring entrepreneurial resources. In particular, we develop different linguistic framing configurations and test their persuasive power for human resource acquisition. Second, we contribute to the literature on entrepreneurial rhetoric and framing (Cornelissen and Clarke, 2010; Lounsbury and Glynn, 2001; Navis and Glynn, 2011) by uncovering the function and effectiveness of different forms of language framing across entrepreneurial communicative interactions in situations of crisis. Expanding previous efforts, our results uncover unconventional frames as an alternative, but equally successful way of framing entrepreneurial initiatives. Moreover, we acknowledge that it is not one framing alone, but the combination of several framings and frame alignment processes used simultaneously that are

important for the new initiatives to attain resources. The idea of using various frames simultaneously has not been advanced in previous literature. Third, our study contributes by bringing the common enemy framework into entrepreneurship research. The common enemy framework has been successfully studied and used in neighboring fields such as sociology, psychology, and economics to investigate cooperation, persuasion, or group interactions (De Jaegher and Hoyer, 2012). The results of this study open new lines of research inquiry into the effectiveness of the common-enemy effect in management research.

9. Limitations and suggestions for future research

Our study contains some limitations that provide opportunities for future research. First, we were unable to access data on the video pitches that the three finalists from each country performed. Thus, we relied on the only publicly available information, that is, their written idea description. Second, we captured human resource acquisition during a Startup Weekend event. While this context is relevant to capture the effect of initial idea framing, we encourage researchers to study how reframing (i.e., changing the framing of the idea) influences resource acquisition over longer time spans. The configurations revealed in this study are a starting point for future work on successfully framing new initiatives in times of crisis. We invite future research to add to our results by investigating the dynamic relation between framing of new venture ideas and other factors, such as institutional context, availability of niches and opportunity structures, and collective identity formation.

Author statement

Silvia Stroe: Conceptualization, Methodology and formal analysis, Data curation, Writing – original draft, Writing – reviewing and editing. **Charlotta Siren**: Conceptualization, Methodology and formal analysis, Data curation, Writing – original draft, Writing – reviewing and editing. **Vinit Parida**: Methodology and formal analysis, Data curation. **Joakim Wincent**: Conceptualization, Writing – original draft, Writing – reviewing and editing.

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Declaration of competing interest

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