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# Review of the Nexus between Trust and Respect in Entrepreneurs' Information-Seeking Behaviour

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**Abstract.** In an information-based society, having accurate and timely information can influence the success of entrepreneurs in their business. Often, due to limitations in their resources and capabilities, entrepreneurs rely on their social capital to satisfy their information need. Moreover, trust and respect are two fundamental factors that not only influence the information seeking behaviour (ISB) but also the inter-actions within the social capital of an entrepreneur. However, despite the significance and relevance of these concepts, there is a lack of systematic reviews regarding the nexus between trust and respect in entrepreneurs' ISB. Consequently, this study aimed to conduct a literature review on the ISB of entrepreneurs with an emphasis on the roles trust and respect play in their decision-making when viewed through the lens of social capital theory (SCT). The review findings indicated that both trust and respect influence entrepreneurs' ISB, especially in their decision-making in selecting their information sources. Entrepreneurs select information sources that they trust, respect and feel respected by in return. The influence of trust and respect in entrepreneurial information source selection is also related to the seeker's perception of the social cost/risk. Lastly, the review findings showed that when viewed through the lens of SCT, respect plays a key role in forming and nurturing trust within relationships. Based on the review findings, we also point out the gaps in the current entrepreneurship literature and suggest a number of themes for future research.

**Keywords:** Entrepreneurs · Entrepreneurship · Trust · Respect · Social Capital Theory · Information Seeking Behaviour.

## 1 Introduction

Entrepreneurship is widely recognised as one of the primary drivers of industrial dynamism, economic and social sustainability, and growth [1]. A vast majority of prior studies in entrepreneurship research have shown great interest in identifying the factors and conditions that influence the success or failure of a business. Information has been identified as one of the critical factors among those [e.g. 47]. The acquisition and effective use of information positively influence business strategies, operations and performance evaluation [68-70]. Information can be generated internally and externally. Internal information includes the knowledge and information accumulated within an enterprise, such as the incorporation of financial, technical and managerial

data. External information is information obtained from outside sources, such as information about the market price, product quality requirements, existing and potential customers, sources of finance, and innovations. Both internal and external information are essential for businesses to survive and develop [2, 68-70]. Friedman [3] highlighted the role of information in enabling entrepreneurs to make rational decisions, while Popovič et al. [4] elaborated on its importance in managerial decisions and organisational improvements. Entrepreneurs need information to help them overcome pressure, adapt to market changes and to develop their enterprises in the business world [5]. According to Mueller [6], entrepreneurs' information-seeking behaviour [hereinafter referred to as ISB] and the process they follow for gathering information have a significant impact on the outcomes of their decision-making and ultimately on their business success. However, despite the importance of ISB in the entrepreneurship context, the current literature lacks sufficient contributions on this particular phenomenon.

Often, due to the shortage of information infrastructure and resources, entrepreneurs tend to rely on their networks to access and obtain information. Their networks are based on personal relations, trust and reciprocity. Trust is a crucial factor in entrepreneurial activities, such as in promoting the company, transferring information, enhancing customer relationships, reducing transaction costs and especially for nurturing entrepreneurial networks to acquire resources, opportunities and cooperation. Moreover, the literature on information behaviour acknowledges the significance of trust in knowledge and information sharing among entrepreneurs [7]. According to Hislop [8], the lack of trust results in human withdrawal from the information-sharing process. Connaway [9] further conceded the importance of trust in human information-seeking and using-information behaviours [9]. In entrepreneurship study, although trust has been discussed, to the best of our knowledge, the effect of trust and the conditions under which trust works have not been sufficiently explored, especially from an entrepreneurs' information practices standpoint [e.g. 15, 72].

Furthermore, regarding the establishment of trust in interpersonal networks, many researchers have mentioned the role of respect in the trust-building process [10]. In spite of differences in values, trust and respect always act jointly in interpersonal relationships, as a person can only trust someone who he/she respects. Regarding entrepreneurship, Kuratko [11] emphasised that trust and respect are both crucial for entrepreneurs to achieve and maintain success for their enterprises and their personal careers. In some cultures, such as the Chinese and Japanese cultures, the showing of respect is critical to creating a good impression, and results in developing trust within a business relationship [12, 13]. In those cultures, respect is strongly correlated with trust and has been argued that it brings clear benefits to entrepreneurs [13]. This concept has been discussed in various academic disciplines, e.g. social and organisational psychology, leadership, nursing, ethics and education. Yet, it has not been sufficiently addressed in the entrepreneurship research.

Considering the literature gap, this paper presents results from an extensive re-view of the relevant literature, with a specific focus on the significance and relevance of trust and respect in entrepreneurs' information-seeking behaviours. While performing the literature search, social capital theory (hereafter referred to as SCT) [14] was used as a theoretical lens to investigate the nexus between trust and respect in entrepreneurs' ISB. This theory emphasises how the quality of social resources available within an

individual's social network affects his/her success and achievements. Moreover, it has been argued in SCT that an individual's social capital facilitates the individual's behaviour, such as the exchange of information, sharing of capital and reduction of risk [47]. Through their social capital, an entrepreneur can obtain business contacts and advisors that are essential for them performing entrepreneurial activities [47]. Prior studies have acknowledged the merit of other theoretical frame-works, such as resource-based view (RBV) theory [48], in entrepreneurship research. However, as social capital entails interpersonal relationships and the resources embedded in such relationships, we made an explicit choice to use SCT in this paper. Social capital theory allows conceptualising trust and respect and helps to understand how these work and affect entrepreneurs' ISB. SCT provides an understanding of the structural and relational dimensions of information-seeking behaviour [14]. Moreover, this theory helps to study the effect of social structures on information access and its flow. By determining the relationship between information seekers and information sources, in addition to the social position of the information source, the theory provides a framework for monitoring the information behaviours, i.e. information-source preferences.

The main objectives of this study are twofold: (i) to perform an extensive review of the literature to understand the significance and relevance of trust and respect in entrepreneurs' ISB through the lens of SCT, and (ii) to provide the literature review results regarding entrepreneurs' ISB and to suggest themes for future research in this line of research. Based on the above discussions, the following re-search questions were formulated:

- What is the current state-of-the-art research regarding the role of trust and respect in entrepreneurs' ISB?
- What are the roles of trust and respect and how do they influence entrepreneurs' ISB when viewed through the lens of SCT?

We expect the results of this review paper to contribute to the field of knowledge of information-behaviour studies and entrepreneurship research. In particular, this research, by devoting its focus to an emerging and yet growing stream of research, aimed to provide new insights on the role of trust in the success of entrepreneurs while tackling how respect strengthens it. These two concepts have been studied individually in some depth, but have not been studied together within entrepreneurship studies or in information-behaviour studies.

In the following, we provide an overview of the core concepts, including trust, respect, social capital theory and information-seeking behaviours. Then we present a discussion on the role of trust and respect in entrepreneurs' ISB and their interplay when viewed through the lens of SCT. Finally, we provide some conclusions to re-mark on the important findings from our research and, based on those, we recommend some themes for future research agenda.

## **2 Definitions of the Concepts**

### **2.1 Trust**

Trust has been conceptualised and defined through multiple dimensions in different scientific domains. Prominently, the definitions of trust still maintain its effectiveness

and relevance in the current research [15]. Of the many views on trust, for example, psychologists perceive trust as an individual trait or as a psychological state where a person accept uncertainties [16]. From a sociological perspective, trust is a form of social cohesion for the nature of interpersonal relationships [17]. For social psychologists, trust is a psychological condition whereby a person is willing to be vulnerable because he/she has a positive expectation of another's motives and/or conduct [18]. Moreover, economists see trust through a rationale in which a person evaluates the possibility of an event based on its alignment with agency theory [19]. In this review paper, we use Sabel's definition of trust. According to Sabel [20], trust refers to the faith and high hope one holds in others that they will not exploit any adverse selection, moral hazard or any other vulnerability. In other words, each member of a trustful relationship sacrifices his/her short-run benefit and self-interest for joint goals or longer-term objectives. Trust is often analysed through three main disciplines: cognitive, emotional and intentional behaviour [21, 22]. The cognitive aspect indicates a belief or an expression of it that the trustor holds towards a trustee, while the emotional aspect relates to the feeling of security, both physically and psychologically. Finally, the intentional behaviour aspect reflects the trustor's reliance on the trustee's words and actions. This reliance is determined by the level of trust among the parties.

In business relationships, trust reflects a strong belief and expectation in only positive outcomes [15]. In business activities, the trustor is reliant on the trustee's words to fulfil his/her obligation in a business exchange [23]. Additionally, trust also acts as a governance factor for a business owner to overcome uncertainty or to reduce the potential risks existing in a commercial transaction [24]. In a trustful relationship, business owners and entrepreneurs expect their partners to act based on their interest too, or at least to consider those interests. Although, they might be uncertain about how satisfied they will be with the end-results, they still need to have confidence that they will not be disappointed. Those expectations are based on the attributions that the trustor places on the trustee with regard to their trustworthiness [25]. Trustworthiness is defined as the attributes that the trustor uses in the evaluation process to decide if someone is trustworthy or not. The level of trustworthiness is shown through three characteristics: benevolence, competence and integrity.

Benevolence refers to the extent to which a trustee is believed that he/she is determined (willingly) to do good for the trustor. Competence considers one's ability to serve the trustor's interests. Integrity refers to temporal continuity, in which one's readiness and capacity to serve another's interests do not change or stop over time or require supervision. In other words, a person is trustworthy when he/she shows consistency (integrity) in proving his/her willingness (benevolence) and ability (competence) to fulfil the trustor's interests ethically [26]. The trustworthiness of a business partner is shown through his/her personal characteristics, past behaviour and emotions, such as demonstrated honesty, loyalty, sympathy and empathy [27]. It can also be derived from the referral from a community or organisation, i.e. ethnic groups, professions, networks, firms, associations or whole industries in the form of recommendations [20], reputation and image [28]. Particularly in the business world, trust is also gained from the security of political, legal or economic frameworks, as well as the norms, values and codes of conduct inherent within society [15]. Often, entrepreneurs recognise trust through a personal evaluation of the losses and gains in a relationship (calculative trust) [19] or the social interaction (relational trust) [29].



## 2.2 Respect

Respect can be shown in various forms, including from expressing an attitude, a feeling, to following a norm, a duty, an entitlement, a recognition and a principle [30]. In this paper, respect refers to a relationship in which a subject (respector) properly responds to the object (respectee) [31]. Respect is often considered object generated rather than wholly subject generated, as the act of respect is owed to, called for, deserved, elicited or claimed by the object [30]. This way of viewing respect allows distinguishing it from other feelings, such as fear, sadness or excitement, as they originate wholly from the subject. This can be explained by 'a deontic experience' [32], which makes respect a must-manner in many situations [33]. Respect is not simply a fundamental moral emotion, but also an effective response to the other as a rational agent. Respect also regards behavioural components. Through appropriate behaviours, the respector shows his/her conduct, thoughts and feelings towards others or things. Appropriate behaviours include engaging and restricting the response in certain ways, which considers it being suitable, exemplary or indebted to a particular object. The performance of respect can vary from supporting, complimenting, obeying, not violating or interfering, and caring [30]. For further clarification, Darwall [34] introduced two kinds of respect: (i) recognition respect and (ii) appraisal respect. The former respect is the intention to evaluate and give due consideration regarding an object, and thus to adjust one's personal behaviours accordingly. The object of recognition respect is often related to laws, dangerous issues, other's feelings, social institutions or persons in diverse contexts; whereas, the latter respect refers to a positive attitude towards a person because of his/her personal characteristics or achievements.

For entrepreneurs, respect often appears in the list of useful advice that emphasises the importance of entrepreneurs to show and earn respect. However, this concept has been given less attention in academic studies. Researchers, in general, have underestimated this domain when addressing the factors that influence entrepreneurial success or failure. The current literature mostly discusses the role of respect in cross-cultural business [12-37]. To illustrate; for example, Jeanne and Tyree [37] view respect as a key to successfully forming business relationships in Middle Eastern and South Asian cultures. Specifically, managers from these cultures favour doing business with those who respect their values. Respect, thus, supports the flow of relationships and interpersonal interactions. This view has been further elaborated by other researchers [12, 36] through studies in different Asian cultures, such as Japanese and Chinese. However, it should be noted that, respect is one of the most basic human manners and is the basis for every sustainable relationship, not just in business activities. As such, entrepreneurs need to show respect to their business partners to increase their chance of success in negotiation, transaction, sustaining their business relationships or expansion of their network. Furthermore, respect is frequently mentioned in leadership and organisational studies. According to those studies, respect positively influences the effectiveness of teamwork, organisational communication and job satisfaction. Hess [38] further added that entrepreneurs as leaders need to show respect to their followers to motivate their contribution and commitment to the enterprise.

### **2.3 Information-Seeking Behaviour**

In the contemporary and information-based society of today, people seek and make use of information in various formats on a daily basis. Research on information-seeking behaviour (ISB) shows how people search, locate and use information to afford their desired information need or to fill a gap in their knowledge. This includes how people make choices regarding where and how to find information, as well as the way they reflect or act based on the information they obtain [39]. Information-seeking behaviour research allows exploring a set of actions, emotions and attitudes that a person goes through in order to obtain the needed information [40]. According to Wilson [41], ISB refers to human behaviour in relation to the sources and channels of information, including both active and passive information seeking and information use. In other words, it encompasses ISB through interpersonal communication as well as in the passive reception of information; for example, from reading a newspaper, watching TV or surfing the Internet without any intention to acquire specific information. Case [40] argued that ISB covers the entirety of both intentional/unintentional information, as well as purposeful non-search-related behaviour, such as avoiding information.

All businesses need timely, accurate and relevant information for their various business activities. The information needs of entrepreneurs vary over time, according to the stage of the entrepreneurial lifecycle. For instance, the needs of enterprises prior to start-up, or during the start-up phase, will differ from those that are in the growth and expansion phase or for businesses that are in danger of imminent collapse. All these business situations differ in their need for information and in the urgency of that need. Entrepreneur's need for information and their information landscape are thus always emerging and changing. Thus, the need for information makes entrepreneurs seek information in a professional way and on a daily basis. That is why an understanding of entrepreneurs' information-seeking behaviour is essential in relation to understanding the nexus between trust and respect in entrepreneurship. By studying ISB, we can learn how entrepreneurs conceptualise their information needs, the process of selecting the information sources, and their preferences towards the omni-channel of information retrieval. The results of this ISB study can serve as a framework for designing and developing information packages, as well as information services that can directly contribute to entrepreneurial success.

## **3 The Role of Trust and Respect in Entrepreneurs' Information-Seeking Behaviour**

Entrepreneurs rely on their networks when seeking information and affirm social relationships as their preferred sources for business information [42]. As such, it can be assumed that trust forms the foundation of social relationships, and binds people to benevolent and reciprocal interactions. These interactions in social relationships lead to the success of the relational exchange of information. Moreover, the nature of the entrepreneurial environment is often unstable, hazardous and lacks the resources for making only rational choices. Thus, entrepreneurs sometimes need to rely on trust to create a sense of safety for their decisions and actions [15]. In their ISB, entrepreneurs



intentionally consider the strength of their social relationships (i.e. trust) when choosing their information sources, and the selected ones are those that they trust.

Furthermore, digitalisation has shifted the nature of ISB and has reduced the barriers of time and space. Information can be broadcast, at least partially, so it can be easily monitored and accessed through multiple sources and channels. In the digital world, trust is an essential determinant for many aspects of enterprises, especially small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), including their information processes and communication technology (ICT) adoption [43]. Some researchers have also highlighted the role of trust in adopting e-government and e-entrepreneurship [44, 45]. According to the authors, one of the reasons for some entrepreneurs' refusal to make use of the Internet is due to their lack of trust in the security and reliability of systems and legal frameworks. Trust is often discussed through three modes: institution-based, characteristic-based and process-based trust. The characteristic-based dimension refers to managerial competence and the organisational support of information technology. Meanwhile, institution-based trust refers to individual perceptions of the institutional environment, including the structures, regulations and legislation that make an environment feel safe and trustworthy. Finally, process-based trust concerns the accumulation of trust over time. Trust also connects with the perceived risk in influencing a user's decision to adopt ICT. In other words, users might refuse to adopt ICT if they have unpleasant feelings about it, such as uncertainty, anxiety, conflict, psychological discomfort and/or cognitive dissonance [46].

Regarding respect and its importance, one can argue that respect and showing respect are vital in all business behaviours, as respect forms the basis of all relationships in entrepreneurial activities. The act of respect concerns supporting professional development, showing appreciation, collaboration and caring for others. Respect involves emotional support, appraisal and affirmation, and it strengthens social ties and ensures the information flow [49]. Respect increases the feeling of belonging; thus, a lack of respect would lead to a person's isolation and withdrawal from social interaction. Consequently, in the business environment, the lack of respect would hinder people from sharing their information and knowledge. The showing of respect is not only essential in face-to-face settings, but also in online environments. In the digital information realm, respect also refers to personal data privacy and its governance [50]. Moreover, the role of respect in entrepreneurs' ISB is displayed through its correlation with trust. Respect is a premise of trust. When individuals feel respected, their brains will instantly generate an increased level of the neurotransmitters serotonin and oxytocin, which are associated with a sense of pleasure, trust and belonging [51]. Additionally, Ross and Parks [52] pointed out that the showing of respect results in the evolvement of true caring/cared for social relationships, which further enhances trust between the parties. Additionally, respect is a core determinant of a safety culture [53]. This type of culture refers to an environment with high levels of mutual trust, collaboration and personal and institutional accountability.

#### **4 The Nexus between Trust, Respect and Information-Seeking Behaviour through Social Capital Theory**

Social capital theory (SCT) is expressly rooted in the notion of trusts, norms and informal networks, in which it recognises social ties as valuable resources and powerful means for economic advancement [54]. According to the SCT, social resources are available in personal networks. They can be either in a tangible form, i.e. financial capital, public spaces, private property, or in an intangible form, i.e. social status, human and cultural capital, collaboration, information, reputation, credibility, access to networks, and social and environmental responsibility. The theory suggests that people must form and invest in building strong social ties in their networks and inter-personal relationships in order to obtain social resources, thus receiving rewards like collaboration or economic and social benefits. Social ties are valuable and powerful means of achieving economic enhancement [55] and refer to the interpersonal bonds, which are essential for sharing information, knowledge, emotions and experiences. Social ties can be shown as weak or strong ties [56, 71]. On the one hand, strong ties refer to the close social relationships that one has with others, such as family, friends or colleagues. Members in strong social ties tend to communicate more often and share a great deal of trust in the relationship. Weak ties, on the other hand, are social contacts with whom an individual tends to have a looser connection, such as acquaintances or a stranger with a common background. This looseness may be due to the short duration of the relationship, infrequent interaction or a personal feeling of a lack of closeness [56]. Johnson [14] pointed out that social relationships provide an individual with a better possibility to attain relevant and valuable information to meet their needs.

Trust is a critical driving force in SCT as behaviours within social networks will be more efficient when the trust is high [55, 57]. Trust is the premise for social capital, as it helps forming relationships, societies, partnerships and mutual commitment, all characterising the social capital. Trust reflects the bonds (strong ties) within a social relationship [15]. The degree of trust determines the level of interpersonal interaction within the social network. With trust present, people are more confident in predicting and expecting others' actions, and thus they are more open to act in the relationship. For entrepreneurs, trust, as a relational form of social capital, is imperative to overcome risky business behaviours [58-59]. The process of entrepreneurship frequently relies on unfamiliar and dysfunctional socio-economic ties [58]. Trust, in this case, transforms complicated and structured transactional relations into fluid and informal relationships. Especially in ISB, entrepreneurs often seek information from those they hold strong social ties with or in other words, with people whom they have established trust and respect. Therefore, they habitually develop and rely on their informal networks, and these are trusted sources of business information, advice and learning [42]. The role of trust in encouraging and facilitating the flow of business information has been widely recognised in previous studies [e.g. 14, 60-61]. People are more willing to give and receive information when trust exists. In entrepreneurial activities, trust is an instrument that supports the feeling of safety (social cos/risk) while reducing the feeling of uncertainty in certain business circumstances, i.e. the absence of a contract, an incomplete contract or the lack of a guarantee [62, 75].

In terms of the role of respect in entrepreneurs' ISB and especially when viewed through the lens of SCT, it can be argued that respect develops and maintains the social capital of an entrepreneur by helping them form and sustain trust within their social relationships. It also creates good harmony between information seekers and information providers during the information-exchange process [49, 53]. In addition, respect also encompasses the social cost and risk entrepreneurs face when seeking information. The social cost/risk is an individual natural avoidance of embarrassment, the loss of face or the revelation of incompetence, while thriving to achieve social benefits [73, 74]. Respect is a fundamental social manner that entrepreneurs need to feel when approaching and selecting an information source [63]. Silver [64] also revealed that people refuse to ask for information when they sense neglect, or in other words, disrespect. Furthermore, showing respect can significantly influence the enrichment of the entrepreneurial network and its expansion. It contributes to developing and maintaining the social capital of an entrepreneur, which in return grants her/him a greater and better choice of information sources. A respectful manner creates a positive impression of the entrepreneur, which can help her/him also approach new relationships from different social and professional backgrounds through referrals [65]. A large network is useful for entrepreneurs to access wider information through a variety of sources, thus opening the door for greater business opportunities [66].

Moreover, to assess the nexus between trust and respect through the lens of SCT, one must understand that respect and trust positively and jointly influence entrepreneurs' ISB, especially regarding their preference for the information sources. According to social capital theory and in the context of entrepreneurship, respect forms and enhances trust within social relationships, while trust enables the flow of information. Together, they reduce the social cost/risk that occurs during the information-acquisition and information-sharing processes. The information seekers choose a certain information source because they believe that the source has the information they need. Additionally, they have confidence in their ability to understand and accurately interpret the information. More importantly, the information seekers trust that the information providers are willing to give entire and honest information to the seekers without inappropriate judgment or behaviours. As such, from the information providers' perspective, information seekers are more open to those with whom they feel comfortable. In other words, information providers are more confident to place their trust in those who show appreciation and respect to them.

## **5 Conclusion**

This paper provides an overview of the literature highlighting the importance of trust and respect in entrepreneurs' information-seeking behaviours. We affirm the vital role of information for entrepreneurs throughout all stages of their careers, from their entrepreneurial intentions to their entrepreneurial growth and expansion. The nexus between trust and respect and their impact in entrepreneurial success have been seldom discussed in the entrepreneurship research, thus giving rise to its relevance to be pursued in academic research [2, 3]. Consequently, through an extensive review of the literature, we found that both trust and respect play crucial roles in the formation of entrepreneurs' information-seeking behaviour. When viewed through the lens of social

capital theory, the review findings indicated that an understanding of entrepreneurs' information-seeking behaviours could contribute to the implementation of a supportive information environment for entrepreneurship. The current literature, however, underestimates the significance of ISB in entrepreneurial success and, more importantly, ignores the nexus between trust and respect in various entrepreneurial activities. This paper thus raises the awareness of academia in this research domain.

This review paper contributes to the literature by showing how trust and respect influence entrepreneurs' ISB, especially their preference for information sources; thus calling for further research and inviting researchers to conduct more research on this topic. The literature review results show that trust and respect are critical factors for entrepreneurs to build and advance various social relationships. These relationships can then be considered as social capital for entrepreneurs and as sources for their information needs [54]. Trust encourages entrepreneurs to overcome their uncertainty and their shortage of resources for making rational choices; whereas, respect is a basic social manner that makes social interactions (i.e. information exchange) fluid. This review paper further demonstrated that trust and respect not only influence entrepreneurs' information-seeking behaviours in the traditional business context, but also in the high-tech environment of digital information, digital devices and digital platforms [44-48]. Especially in the modern era when information is abundant due to the advancement of the Internet and ICT, entrepreneurs could easily enter the era of "fake news", making them sceptical with all the information that comes to them [67]. Trust then becomes an important determinant in nurturing and facilitating the level of participation and an ethical sharing behaviour for information through online communities. Information seekers are more confident in their information evaluation when they have trust in the information providers.

Furthermore, this review paper demonstrated the importance of social capital theory in entrepreneurial activities, particularly from the ISB perspectives. Within the SCT framework, trust is found to have both relevance and the importance in strengthening social relationships. When viewed through the lens of SCT, we found that both trust and respect affect the entrepreneurial sources selections as well as the perception of the social cost/risk. Our literature review findings showed that trust acts as an entrepreneurial shield to protect entrepreneurs from the negative consequences of their social interactions. In addition, we found that respect reduces the sense of the social cost/risk by generating a comfortable and supportive environment for entrepreneurs. Trust and respect further help entrepreneurs to select the rightful information sources for achieving a better quantity and quality. Therefore, we assume that maintaining trust at any cost will naturally bring benefits to firms and their operations. In an entrepreneurship context, most activities are reciprocating, and trust is accumulated through time and experience. Therefore, it is essential for entrepreneurs to act as trustworthy regardless of their role – either as information seekers or as information providers. Inappropriate behaviours or attitudes can cause the entrepreneurs unfavourable consequences, like a loss of trust or respect. Therefore, it is useful for them to pay attention to their behaviour both online and offline to protect and develop their personal and organisational images.

Lastly, the review results showed that there is scarce research in both the entrepreneurship and information-seeking behaviour literature focusing predominantly on the nexus between trust and respect. While explaining its concept, we disclosed that

respect is an instrument that nurtures trust within relationship formation and in fostering the extension of social capital for entrepreneurs. On a more practical level, the literature review results implicated that both information seekers and information providers need to pay attention and to perform respectfully throughout their entrepreneurial communications and interactions. Respect is an essential social skill for entrepreneurs to obtain information and to expand their information network. Whereas for information providers, e.g. governments or entrepreneurial organisations, respect is necessary to attract, facilitate and maintain the use of their services. In the digital world, the showing of respect not only covers interpersonal interactions but also concerns maintaining user privacy, data security and the honesty of the information, thus making users feel comfortable and safe while sharing or asking for information on the Internet. This review of the literature also has some practical implications. For example, the findings suggest that information providers need to spend time and effort in relationship building with their users at the very beginning of the initial stage. However, we found that there is a gap in the extant literature; thus, suggesting a number of avenues for future research.

## **6 Future Research Agenda**

This research thoroughly reviewed the prior studies that had investigated the role of trust and respect in entrepreneurs' information-seeking behaviours. However, it seems that the research regarding this topic is fragmented when considering the field of entrepreneurship. Additionally, most of the literature only pays attention to the benefits of trust in relation to social networks, rather than investigating it from an entrepreneurial activities perspective, such as regarding information-seeking behaviours and information-source preferences. Our review findings also revealed that information-seeking behaviour is a sub-concern rather than the main focus of the entrepreneurship literature. This gap in the literature suggests that scholars should develop and pursue this topic empirically. We suggest that researchers interested in this topic should take the initiative in their future research to examine how trust influences the information-seeking behaviours of entrepreneurs, such as their preferences towards the information sources, their ignorance, and their intention to use digital tools to search for information on the Internet.

Furthermore, entrepreneurs' roles in their social networks and their information-seeking behaviours can be interchangeable. They can act as a trustee, a respectee and as an information source. Therefore, we suggest further studies should concentrate on how entrepreneurs build and maintain their trustworthiness and respect in terms of their interpersonal and virtual relationships through social media. In the modern era of an abundance of information and where the spread of fake news in digital networks and over the Internet can lead to an absence of trust, trustworthiness has become a critical issue for enterprises, thus, raising the question of how to trigger the recovery of trust. Moreover, we suggest future research could investigate how to create and maintain a respectful/safe environment for sharing and exchanging information online. This could be examined through a study that focuses on the roles that governmental agencies, service providers and digital platform administrators play.

We also recommend that future studies should investigate the downside of trust in information-seeking behaviours [15, 35, 75, 76]. For instance, looking into issues such as overtrust, mistrust and distrust problems, and examining the possible consequences of these on a business, and alternative solutions for how to avoid these issues. In such a research endeavour, we suggest that researchers pay attention to what could potentially happen to entrepreneurs' ISB when they overtrust, mistrust or distrust their information sources. Moreover, despite the fact that digital information sources are becoming increasingly popular for entrepreneurs and entrepreneurial activities, trust is an essential factor in the adoption or resistance of such sources. Therefore, researchers would benefit from exploring how trust influences entrepreneurial intentions and the usage behaviour of digital information sources. Future research should continue to develop the theoretical framework to study the role of trust in ICT adoption in relation to entrepreneurs' ISB. Additionally, it is essential to draw investigations on what affects trust in entrepreneurs' ISB, i.e. culture, personal traits, risk perception and the role of security, privacy.

Furthermore, the entrepreneurship literature seems to neglect the proper study of respect. The role of respect in the entrepreneurship context is only recognised in cross-culture studies for entrepreneurship and organisational performance. However, it is rarely mentioned in the information-seeking behaviour literature what role respect plays in the decision of an entrepreneur in selecting information sources. Our literature review results indicated that the discussion regarding respect is quite narrow and insufficient. Scholars often consider it as fundamental for building trust but fail to monitor its independent effects on relationship formation. The absence of respect in entrepreneurship research and information-behaviour study hereby opens a broad scope of subjects for future research. For instance, future research could investigate the role that respect plays in building social capital in different contexts (nations, regions, industry, tradition/online environment). Finally, we call for future research on the positive and negative sides of respect in terms of entrepreneurship through both quantitative and qualitative approaches.

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