

Growth Management Priorities in Service- and Technology-Based Micro-Enterprises in Sparsely Populated Areas

Matti Muhos

University of Oulu, Finland
matti.muho@oulu.fi

Kai Hänninen

University of Oulu, Finland
kai.hanninen@oulu.fi

Kati Vehmas

University of Lapland, Finland
kati.vehmas@ulapland.fi

Martti Saarela

University of Oulu, Finland
martti.saarela@oulu.fi

Abstract

Micro-sized enterprises are the most common type of firm within the European Union, accounting for 93.2% of all enterprises. The aim of this study was to clarify managerial priorities that owner–managers have perceived critical and targeted during the growth of micro-sized enterprises in a sparsely populated area (SPA). This retrospective multiple case study reached this aim by investigating owner–managers’ experiences from the early growth process and by reflecting on these experiences through the meta-analytical management priority framework. The contextual management priorities were visited from the perspectives of service- and technology-based micro-enterprises in SPAs. The owner–managers of service- and tech-based micros paid primary attention to three shared priorities: human resources, the development and delivery of services/products and organisational design, but in a different order and with context-specific characteristics. In service-based firms, owner–managers’ primary attention was on human resource management; meanwhile, the attention of owner–managers was primarily on the development and delivery of products/technology.

Keywords: Growth, growth management, management priorities, service-based business, technology-based business, micro-enterprise, sparsely populated area