Ghazal Zalkat

Ghazal Zalkat, an agricultural engineer, had a master's degree in horticulture from Damascus University, Syria, in 2014. Since 2018, she has worked as a research assistant in innovation management and entrepreneurship at the Engineering and Innovation Department, School of Business, Innovation, and Sustainability at Halmstad University, Sweden. During her Ph.D., she worked on multidisciplinary research projects and EU projects, which gave her the opportunity to interact with entrepreneurs, immigrants, and different organizations in order to design and implement innovative programs and tools that support innovation, entrepreneurship, and socioeconomic integration. Her doctoral thesis explores the riveting intersection of immigration and business development, unraveling the multifaceted challenges and promising opportunities that define the journey of immigrant entrepreneurs in the host countries.
Immigrant Entrepreneurship In Sweden: Challenges And Opportunities Related To Business Development

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Immigrant Entrepreneurship In Sweden: Challenges And Opportunities Related To Business Development
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Halmstad University Dissertations no. 112
ISBN 978-91-89587-38-0 (printed)
Publisher: Halmstad University Press, 2024 | www.hh.se/hup

Cover design
Kamar Almahayni and Hadil Alkhedr.
The concept and initial sketch of the cover were designed by my best friend, the agriculture engineer Kamar Almahayni, Turkey.
The graphical illustration of the cover is designed by the artist Hadil Alkhedr, Halmstad, Sweden.
To all the people behind my success: My family, friends, supervisors, and colleagues.
Acknowledgments

Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) said: “Who does not thank people is not thankful to God.”

So, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to all individuals and organizations whose support and guidance have been invaluable throughout my doctoral journey.

First, I would like to express my deepest appreciation to my best supervisors, Henrik Barth and Pia Ulvenblad.

Henrik, I would never have achieved this success without you. You taught me a lot, not just how to be a good researcher but also how to be a better person. Since we met for the first time, you believed in me, and you always guided me in the right way. You always had a plan, and I always trusted your plan. Thank you, Henrik!

Pia Ulvenblad, your kindness and enthusiasm added a pleasant touch to my journey. Your support and insights were the music that fueled my progress. You always surprised me with your knowledge and competencies.

To my family: Dear Mom, your patience and calmness during the challenging times of my bad mood and attitude are beyond measure. I am not just thankful but also sorry for the hardships you experienced. Your endless support is my strength. Ahmad, you have been my backbone, and I know you always will be. Thank you for being a constant source of support for me. Dad, I am grateful for the traits I inherited from you, such as your stubbornness and determination. These helped me achieve my goals in life. It seems these traits run in our genes, Dad!

To my colleagues and friends at the School of Business, Innovation and Sustainability, Kalyani Pillalamarri, Deycy Sanchez, Luis Irgang, Maya Hoveskog, Fawzi Halila, Joakim Tell, Fabio Gama, Fazle Rahi, Eugenia Vico, Olga Rauhut Kompaniets, Lina Lundgren, Thomas Magnusson, Leif Nordin, Senad
Osmanovic, Magnus Holmén, Slobodanka Arsenic, Jennie Wagnemark, Anna Thorberg, Anna-Lena Magnusson, Jimmy Lönn, Christa Amnell, Manoella Antonieta, and anyone I may have unintentionally omitted, thank you for always letting your doors open for me. Your advice, help, support, and friendship have been precious, and they have meant a lot to me. I am grateful for each of you being a part of this journey. Additionally, special thanks to Catherine Legrand, the Dean of our School, for being supportive and understanding most of the time.

I owe a big thanks to Jonas Gabrielsson, a true inspiration and role model for the successful professor, teacher, researcher, and person I aspire to become.

I extend my appreciation to my thesis opponent Monder Ram, and committee members, Maria Elo, Jörg Freiling, and Natalia Vershinina, for their constructive feedback, insightful suggestions, and dedication to ensuring the rigor and quality of my research.

To my friends and family in Syria, though miles apart, your prayers, wishes, and support were felt every step of the way. I love you, and I miss you all.

To the PLOUTOS project team, the competitor of my PhD journey, I have learned a lot from you even though it was challenging and stressful to be part of a big project and do my PhD. Thank you for accompanying me on my journey.

I would also like to express my gratitude to everyone I have met or contacted during this journey in conferences, courses, meetings, and workshops. Your valuable insight and feedback have led me in the right direction.

Last but not least, I will never forget to thank all the immigrant entrepreneurs and members of organizations who generously dedicated their valuable time to contribute to my research. This thesis would not have been possible without your invaluable contribution."

Finally, I want to acknowledge the financial support provided by Halmstad University, AMIF, and the EU fund, which made this journey possible.

Always and forever, I thank God for everything I had, have, and will have in the future, “Alhamdulilla.

Halmstad, Sweden, April 2024.
Ghazal Zalkat
At the heart of immigrants' entrepreneurial landscape, a compelling narrative unfolds as this thesis explores the riveting intersection of immigration and business development, unraveling the multifaceted challenges and promising opportunities that define the journey of immigrant entrepreneurs in the host countries. Unveiling a narrative transcending borders, it navigates the diverse landscapes where immigrant entrepreneurs navigate their unique paths to success or failure. In pursuing dreams, immigrant entrepreneurs turn challenges into stepping stones, transforming the unknown into a canvas for innovation and resilience. It was not just a geographic shift but a leap of faith, an entrepreneurial adventure where every challenge became an opportunity to redefine possibilities and contribute to the host country.

Ghazal Zalkat
Abstract

**Background:** At a time of continued volatility and uncertainty, there is a growing need to tackle the numerous political-social challenges and embrace the opportunities presented by demographic shifts caused by mass immigration. The migration crisis, which peaked in the European Union during 2015 and 2016, with over a million immigrants, has sparked renewed discussions among scholars, politicians, and the public about the costs and benefits of immigration. Recently, more immigrants have turned to entrepreneurship to overcome exclusion from employment and create upward social mobility and social integration. However, certain groups of immigrants, particularly refugee and female refugees, are not adequately represented and under-researched. Additionally, there is insufficient research on their business development, which remains largely unstudied. The existing literature tends to focus on specific aspects of entrepreneurial business development, disregarding the potential influence of individual and contextual factors when combined. This results in a limited understanding of the phenomenon, which leaves the field with no coherent framework or adequate knowledge outcomes. Moreover, the lack of theoretical research on specific groups of immigrant entrepreneurs is partly due to the limited empirical research and fragmented theories.

**Purpose:** This thesis aims to contribute to the development of theory and to enrich the empirical studies regarding this diverse and heterogeneous phenomenon. Specifically, the main purpose of this thesis is to provide a comprehensive understanding of immigrant entrepreneurship, with a special focus on refugee and female entrepreneurs’ perceptions in rural and digital contexts. Ultimately, this thesis develops a conceptual framework that can be applied in future research. This conceptual framework highlights the diversity, multidimensionality, and dynamic of the immigrant entrepreneurship phenomenon.

**Methodology:** To fulfill the overall purpose of this thesis, a mixed methods approach integrating qualitative and quantitative research methods is employed to study the immigrant entrepreneurship phenomenon using in-depth interviews and a comparative case study through surveys. This thesis examines how specific groups of immigrant entrepreneurs perceive challenges and opportunities during
their business development in specific contexts at three levels. At the micro-individual level, this thesis presents case studies of female refugee entrepreneurs and refugee entrepreneurs. At the meso-business level, this thesis examines challenges and opportunities for immigrant entrepreneurs in specific contexts (e.g., rural areas and the agri-food sector) and emerging technologies (e.g., digitalization). At the macro-environmental level, this thesis presents a comparative case study studying the impact of institutional differences on refugee entrepreneurship in different geographic locations, Sweden and Germany.

**Findings:** The findings emphasize that immigrant entrepreneurs are heterogeneous groups who perceive opportunities and challenges differently at different levels during business development based on their intersectional identities. Refugee entrepreneurs strategically leverage specific contexts, such as the agri-food industry, rural areas, or the digital landscape, to start their businesses, yet these contexts pose unique challenges. Additionally, this thesis offers an understanding of the start-up, growth, and exit phases. For instance, the exit phase, often overlooked, reveals crucial insights into reasons behind exiting the business, ranging from market unfamiliarity to the desire for industry switches after gaining valuable entrepreneurial experience. Moreover, digital technologies have emerged as a valuable tool, offering semi-anonymity advantages to female immigrant entrepreneurs. Notably, differences between refugee entrepreneurs in Sweden and Germany are uncovered, with varied motivations influenced by distinct market structures, educational offerings, and government policies. This thesis concludes by proposing an integrative multilevel conceptual framework that considers immigrant entrepreneurs' perspectives within particular contexts.

**Implications:** This thesis enriches the theoretical, empirical, and methodological foundation of immigrant entrepreneurship research by presenting an integrative, multilevel framework that combines mixed embeddedness with intersectionality. The proposed conceptual framework contributes to a better understanding of the heterogeneous nature of the immigrant entrepreneurship phenomenon via the integration of the various dimensions. In particular, the integration of intersectionality helps address the gender gap and migratory status, which is often overlooked in mixed embeddedness approaches. The conceptual framework also has practical implications for multiple stakeholders, including immigrants and host countries. It suggests policies and guidelines tailored to the intersectional identities of immigrant entrepreneurs, thereby fostering socioeconomic integration and combating exclusion, particularly among refugee and female entrepreneurs.

**Keywords:** Immigrant Entrepreneurship, Female, Refugees, Mixed Embeddedness, Business Development, Entrepreneurial Process, Intersectionality.
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1 Introduction

This thesis focuses on challenges and opportunities for immigrant entrepreneurs. This chapter begins with an introduction that highlights the focus and relevance of the study, from the global level to the national level. A detailed overview of the research problem identifies the research gaps, followed by the research question. This chapter concludes with the main contributions of the research and an outline of the thesis.

1.1 Background – The Focus and Relevance of The Study

The migration crisis that peaked in the European Union in 2015 and 2016 created an urgent need to address the numerous challenges associated with mass migration in EU countries (Ahad & Banulescu-Bogdan, 2019). A record 1.3 million immigrants arrived during this time (Apap & Radjenovic, 2019; Ahad & Banulescu-Bogdan, 2019; Eurostat, 2016), presenting challenges and opportunities for society and individuals alike. The mass influx of immigrants poses challenges, particularly in the realm of integration—socially, culturally, and economically (Apap & Radjenovic, 2019; Almontaser & Baumann, 2017).

Immigrants are a diverse and heterogeneous population who migrate for different reasons, coming from other ethnic groups, countries of origin, and genders. They expand the pool of skills, knowledge, and ideas, which in turn become valuable assets for economic development (Kašperová et al., 2022; Karlsson et al., 2019; Rodríguez-Pose & von Berlepsch, 2018; Huggins & Thompson, 2015; Antonelli et al., 2011). This diverse context of migration may boost entrepreneurial orientation and create a competitive advantage in the host countries (Audretsch et al., 2021). As such, the innovation systems in the host countries can benefit from immigrants’ presence and activities (Gao et al., 2021; Malerba & Ferreira, 2021; Nathan, 2015; Marchand & Siegel, 2014).

At the global level, immigrant entrepreneurship plays a crucial role in advancing many of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Immigrant entrepreneurs
often create businesses that generate employment opportunities, reducing poverty in the host and home countries, contributing to SDG 1: No Poverty. In SDG 5 Gender Equality, immigrant and refugee female entrepreneurs, in particular, contribute to gender equality by challenging traditional roles and promoting women's economic empowerment. Addressing SDG 8, Decent Work and Economic Growth, immigrant entrepreneurs drive economic development by initiating businesses, generating employment, and fostering innovation within host countries. Entrepreneurship further aligns with SDG 10, Reduced Inequality, by assisting immigrants in overcoming socioeconomic barriers and contributing to a more equitable society. Within SDG 9 Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure, immigrant entrepreneurs bring diverse perspectives and innovative ideas, advancing technological progress and economic development. Moreover, regarding SDG 11 Sustainable Cities and Communities, immigrant entrepreneurs contribute to urban development, establishing businesses that support the growth and sustainability of cities. In SDG 13 Climate Action, some immigrant entrepreneurs also focus on sustainable practices, contributing to environmental conservation through eco-friendly business models. Finally, regarding SDG 16 Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions, immigrant entrepreneurs foster social cohesion by actively participating in community development, promoting intercultural understanding, and creating inclusive environments (Sousa, 2019).

Zooming at the European level, the European Commission recognizes the potential of entrepreneurship, mainly immigrant entrepreneurship, to stimulate economic growth and reduce labor market shortages (European Commission, 2016), which aligns with Schumpeter (1934). Immigrants tend to identify opportunities that may be overlooked by the established business community, allowing them to introduce innovative solutions that capitalize on available potential (Korede et al., 2023; Ensign & Robinson, 2011; Kirzner, 1973).

At the national level, Sweden has been a favored European destination for immigrants since 2015 (Eurostat, 2019). In 2016, over 163,000 immigrants arrived in Sweden, and many of them turned their business ideas into successful ventures to deal with social exclusion and labor market discrimination (Evansluong et al., 2019). Sweden’s inclusive entrepreneurship policies aim to provide equal opportunities for all groups, including those who often face obstacles in starting a business, such as women, youth, seniors, immigrants, the unemployed, and the disabled (OECD, 2020). Despite these efforts, studies conducted in Sweden indicate that disparities exist between immigrant and native-born entrepreneurs, as well as between various immigrant groups (Hammarstedt & Miao, 2020; Andersson & Hammarstedt, 2012). Hence, immigrant entrepreneurs experience different challenges and opportunities than other entrepreneurs (Ram et al., 2017; Kuratko et al., 2015) and even among immigrants from different groups (Heis & Dannecker, 2022; OECD, 2019a; Rashid, 2018; Cortes, 2004).
Entrepreneurship promotes social and economic equity, including empowerment and emancipation (Welter et al., 2017). The field of entrepreneurship has evolved into a mature discipline notable for its heterogeneous mixture of entrepreneurial actors, actions, and contexts today (Dy & MacNeil, 2023). However, current immigrant entrepreneurship research has paid limited attention to this heterogeneous nature that tends to place gender, migratory status, and location at the periphery of the research.

The entrepreneurship field has evolved in a fragmented and random manner. It was initially developed by adapting theoretical and conceptual frameworks from multiple disciplines such as sociology, psychology, anthropology, marketing, management, finance, organizational behavior, and engineering (Kuratko et al., 2015). “There is no one type of entrepreneurship. No one best way. No ideal context. No ideal type of entrepreneur. Differences matter, and, if we actually believe this, then, we need to be looking for where, when, and why those differences matter most. And, we need to pay attention to our language: does it extend to such variety, differences, and heterogeneity?” (Welter et al., 2017: p 318).

As such, embracing an exploratory mindset is crucial for observing, assessing, and understanding the full range and richness of differences and variations that flourish around us, thereby enhancing our comprehension of the full spectrum of entrepreneurship phenomena (Welter et al., 2017) and develop a more integrated and complete picture. Consequently, this thesis focuses on immigrant entrepreneurship, particularly among specific groups such as refugees and females who are not adequately represented and under-researched in unique contexts such as rural areas, the agri-food sector, and digitalization. Thus, this study provides valuable insights to enhance the theoretical and empirical understanding of the entrepreneurship phenomenon.

Accordingly, to tackle costs and maximize the gains of immigrant entrepreneurship in the host countries, this thesis studies how immigrant entrepreneurs perceive challenges and opportunities at individual, business, and environmental levels during their business development (Murnieks et al., 2019) while considering the impact of their diverse, intersectional identities (Heis & Dannecker, 2022; Crenshaw, 1991). This thesis gives a voice to immigrant entrepreneurs instead of listening to the discussions about them and their needs from others (David et al., 2022; Vershinina & Discua Cruz, 2021). Thus, this thesis examines immigrant entrepreneurs’ perceptions and emphasizes the importance of studying specific groups of immigrants, such as refugees and female refugees, in particular contexts.
1.2 Previous Research

The increased global immigration has resulted in an extensive body of research on various aspects of immigrant entrepreneurship. However, the generalization and homogenization of the immigrants that dominated the literature ignore the fact that entrepreneurship is a gendered and ethnicized phenomenon (Heis & Dannecker, 2022; Vershinina & Rodgers, 2020; Vershinina & Rodgers, 2019; Zapata-Barrero & Yalaz, 2018; Welter et al., 2017; Romero & Valdez, 2016).

The existing theories on immigrant entrepreneurship seem insufficient in explaining specific empirical manifestations of immigrant entrepreneurship (Kloosterman & Rath, 2018). Focusing solely on a particular aspect of immigrant entrepreneurs would obscure crucial differences and neglect an essential aspect of the puzzle. Kloosterman and Rath (2018) emphasized the significance of economic and political factors in explaining the patterns and trajectories of immigrant entrepreneurs. They advocated for an interactionist approach, drawing on earlier works (Kloosterman & Rath, 2018; Kloosterman, 2010; Kloosterman et al., 1999), which underscores the role of the individual in conjunction with economic and political influences. Ongoing efforts call for introducing novel elements, with particular attention to the time dimension. In this context, time refers to the various phases of the entrepreneurial process, acknowledging that entrepreneurs may shift positions on the axes as they accumulate strategic resources.

Additionally, insufficient research focus has been paid to the variations among certain immigrant entrepreneur groups (Duan, 2022; Dabić et al., 2020). As a result, the research on immigrant entrepreneurs presents fragmented claims, often emphasizing individual characteristics. Holistic perspectives of immigrant entrepreneurs are neglected (Duan, 2022; Neumann, 2021; Aliaga-Isla & Rialp, 2013). Moreover, existing theories and approaches in immigrant and refugee entrepreneurship often overlook intersectional identities such as gender, migratory status, ethnicity, class, religion, and disability (Şimşek, 2021; Dabić et al., 2020; Zapata-Barrero & Yalaz, 2018; Ram et al., 2017). This leads to insufficient attention to the intersectional identities within the immigrant entrepreneur groups. For instance, many studies provide insufficient demographic information about their sample populations or generalize their findings from a nearly homogenous sample population, thereby ignoring the intersectional identities (Dy & Agwunobi, 2018).
1.3 Research Problem and Research Question

Immigrants are diverse and heterogeneous groups who differ in economic participation in the host countries (OECD, 2019a; Kazlou, 2019; Rashid, 2018; Ram et al., 2013; Cortes, 2004). They discover opportunities differently at any point in time (Shane & Venkataraman, 2000; Shane, 2003; Kirzner, 1973). In addition, they experience a variety of challenges that may hinder their business development, so they hardly reach high levels of entrepreneurial performance (Jones et al., 2019), and low-value industrial sectors become immigrant-dependent (Kemeny, 2017; Jones et al., 2014; Nathan, 2012; Hart & Acs, 2011; Kloosterman, 2010).

Consequently, to understand this diverse phenomenon, it is crucial to consider migratory status and gender perspectives (Ram et al., 2017; Ram et al., 2013). However, certain groups of immigrants, such as refugees and females, are not adequately represented and under-researched in the prior research (Abebe, 2023; Elo et al., 2023; Yeshi et al., 2022; Brieger & Gielnik, 2021; Heilbrunn et al., 2018). Furthermore, individual and contextual factors influencing these groups have not been systematically examined.

Although it is essential to study the heterogeneity of immigrant communities at the micro level (individual), it is essential to consider other levels, such as the meso level (business/market) and the macro level (environment/institution) that are linked to immigrants’ perceptions (Duan, 2022). It is unlikely that entrepreneurship can be explained solely by referring to the characteristics of certain people regardless of the situations in which they find themselves (Langevang et al., 2015; Shane & Venkataraman, 2000). What applies in some contexts could differ in other conditions depending on individual, regional, and institutional factors (Kone et al., 2020). Migration's economic impact varies depending on the scale or context being analyzed (Rauhut et al., 2023). However, theories that attempt to explain the immigrant entrepreneurship phenomenon either focus on the specific characteristics of immigrants or rely on the institutional and cultural environment of the host country (Peroni et al., 2016). Thus, the field lacks a coherent analytical framework, which makes it difficult to examine and study the challenges and opportunities of different groups of immigrant entrepreneurs. Therefore, this gap in the research fails to provide a holistic understanding of immigrant entrepreneurs' perceptions across multilevel dimensions (individual, business, and environment) (Duna, 2022; Dabić et al., 2020; Dileo & Pereiro, 2019; Aliaga-Isla & Rialp, 2013; Welter, 2011; Shepherd, 2011), potentially leading to problematic knowledge attributing success and failure primarily to individuals (Dy & Agwunobi, 2018; Pathak et al., 2013).
Furthermore, existing studies focus on specific phases of the entrepreneurial process rather than examinations of the entire business development (Brzozowski, 2017; Peroni et al., 2016). This results in the absence of a holistic framework that can be used to understand the multidimensional and dynamic nature of immigrant entrepreneurship. (Dabić et al., 2020; Ram et al., 2017). This observation aligns with Shane's (2003) observation concerning the absence of a cohesive conceptual framework for entrepreneurship, caused by researchers' tendency to focus exclusively on specific aspects of the entrepreneurial process without systematically considering the interconnections among these elements. Additionally, Gartner (1985) advocated for the integration of the factors (individual, organizational, environmental, and process-related) that comprise the entirety of each new business creation and that recognize entrepreneurship as a multidimensional phenomenon (Honig, 2020; Dabić et al., 2020).

This thesis adopts a multi-level theoretical framework to address these research gaps, integrating mixed embeddedness and intersectionality. While mixed embeddedness is a dominant approach in immigrant entrepreneurship research (Kloosterman & Rath, 2018; Ram et al., 2017; Kloosterman & Rath, 2001; Kloosterman et al., 1999), incorporating an intersectionality perspective helps explore various entrepreneurial populations in depth (Dy & MacNeil, 2023) by analyzing how multiple factors and identities intersect to shape immigrant entrepreneurs' business development (Dy & Agwunobi, 2018; Wang & Warn, 2018; Ram et al., 2017). This inclusive approach aims to explain immigrant entrepreneurship among diverse groups, including refugees and female immigrants/refugees.

Mixed embeddedness is an analytical framework that can investigate the interaction of the various factors that shape different entrepreneurial outcomes. It combines economic and political environments, policies and social institutions, and individual preconditions such as social and human capital (Kloosterman & Rath, 2018; Kloosterman & Rath, 2001; Kloosterman et al., 1999), which allows considering the multilevel on which entrepreneurship becomes an option for immigrants (Heis & Dannecker, 2022; Kloosterman et al., 1999). At the same time, intersectionality provides a flexible theoretical framework that can be applied to examine marginalized or underrepresented entrepreneurial populations to understand their business development within particular business sectors, genders, and contexts (Dy & MacNeil, 2023; Dy & Agwunobi, 2018; Forson, 2013). Thus, discover how they construct their entrepreneurial identities in potentially hostile environments (Dy & Agwunobi, 2018; Essers et al., 2010). Intersectionality demonstrates how discrimination, such as racism, sexism, and others, creates patterns that impact individuals’ everyday challenges and opportunities. The structures and hierarchies based on intersectional identities can affect their access to resources, networks, and opportunities (Heis & Dannecker, 2022; Dy et al., 2017;
Barrett & Vershinina, 2017; Crenshaw, 1991). Therefore, all these intersectional identities are linked together to form immigrant entrepreneurship opportunities and challenges such as access to economic resources and social support, relationships with the community, customers, other business owners, firms, and associations (Romero & Valdez, 2016).

However, the mixed embeddedness does not explicitly indicate the role of immigrants’ intersectional identities. Thus, the mixed embeddedness model would benefit from an intersectionality perspective (Wang & Warn, 2018). Moreover, integrating mixed embeddedness and intersectionality helps to analyze the interplay of various factors and identities that shape immigrants' business development (Dy & Agwunobi, 2018). Consequently, creating an inclusive approach may explain immigrant entrepreneurship among certain groups of immigrant entrepreneurs with different intersectional identities, such as refugees and female immigrants/refugees.

In summary, the research problem concerns the need for a comprehensive understanding of immigrant entrepreneurship. It considers immigrant perceptions about their business development at the micro, meso, and macro levels and acknowledges the influence of intersectional identities. Thus, this thesis aims to develop a comprehensive study of the immigrant entrepreneurship phenomenon by focusing on specific groups of immigrant entrepreneurs in particular contexts. This thesis addresses gender perspective and migratory status (intersectionality) in studying immigrant entrepreneurs in particular contexts to explain immigrant entrepreneurship regarding refugees and female entrepreneurs and eliminate any exclusion among those groups. In addition, studying specific groups in particular contexts may contribute to expanding and generalizing theories “analytic generalization” (Polit & Beck, 2010). Consequently, this thesis theorizes and enriches the empirical studies of this dynamic, diverse, and heterogeneous phenomenon.

To achieve the overall aim, the thesis includes five studies built on each other, which helps to achieve the overall purpose by answering the following research question: How do immigrant entrepreneurs perceive challenges and opportunities related to their business development? This question guides the study of immigrant entrepreneurship through various phases, contexts, and intersectional identities, contributing to a more nuanced and comprehensive study of this multifaceted phenomenon. Each appended paper contributes to answering the overall research question (Figure 1).
1.4 Contributions of The Thesis

This thesis addresses the multidimensional nature of immigrant entrepreneurship, presenting a comprehensive analysis through multilevel and intersectional perspectives. This thesis identifies challenges and opportunities immigrant entrepreneurs perceive during their business development by answering the research question. Then, it categorizes those challenges and opportunities in three dimensions: mixed embeddedness, intersectionality, and entrepreneurial process in a conceptual framework.

By integrating mixed embeddedness with intersectionality, a conceptual framework is presented, offering a nuanced understanding of how specific groups of immigrants perceive opportunities and challenges differently during their business development. Thus, the thesis advances the field by considering individual and contextual effects.

In demonstrating the empirical contributions of this research, specific examples highlight the varied entrepreneurial business development based on intersectional identities. For instance, refugees choose particular sectors, such as agricultural business, because rural community networks seem more welcoming than urban
communities. Meanwhile, female refugee entrepreneurs choose to work in a digital context, which helps them foster their integration within the host country market due to the semi-anonymity that digital platforms offer them, minimizing the impact of their intersectional identity of gender stereotyping and refugee status. Furthermore, the country context also plays a critical role in shaping immigrant entrepreneurs’ perceptions of the environmental factors affecting business development.

Theoretical contributions extend beyond addressing research questions and influencing the immigrant entrepreneurship discourse in several ways. This thesis contributes to the foundational theories of immigrant entrepreneurship, particularly addressing the limited theoretical understanding of specific groups, such as refugees, with a gender perspective. It advocates for systematically exploring immigrant entrepreneurship by accounting for the effects of intersecting identities, such as gender, race, and migratory status. Moreover, the conceptual framework presented in this thesis demonstrates the interplay between immigrant entrepreneurs’ perceptions of challenges and opportunities related to multilevel dimensions, intersectional identities, and entrepreneurial phases. This integrated approach provides holistic and contextual insights into immigrant entrepreneurship research, opening new areas for development. This study refines and extends the mixed embeddedness and intersectionality approaches, presenting a conceptual framework applicable to diverse groups of immigrant entrepreneurs that can be transferred to other similar contexts. Thus, this conceptual framework can be used as a tool for future comparative analyses of immigrant entrepreneurship, contributing to the concretization of the intersectional nature of immigrant entrepreneurship.

Furthermore, the practical implications of this research extend beyond academic discourse, offering concrete guidance and a deeper insight into the complex and dynamic nature of immigrant entrepreneurship processes. These insights hold practical significance for policymakers and researchers, offering valuable contributions toward the success and integration of immigrant entrepreneurs. By adopting and implementing these valuable insights, stakeholders can work towards creating a more inclusive and supportive environment for diverse groups within the immigrant entrepreneurship landscape. Policymakers can utilize the insights from this research to tailor integration policies specifically targeting the unique characteristics of various groups of immigrant entrepreneurs. Thus, examining the intersectional identities influencing business development enables the formulation of targeted and effective policy. For instance, policymakers can develop better initiatives addressing gender stereotyping challenges that female refugee entrepreneurs experience in digital contexts.
Moreover, the thesis focuses on the meso and macro levels of the business/market and environmental/institutional context. This highlights the imperative for policymakers to strategically allocate resources, creating an environment conducive to immigrant entrepreneurs' success while considering individual and contextual factors. Resource allocation should be informed by a comprehensive understanding of the complexities, as interpreted by this research.

In summary, this thesis not only responds to the posed research questions but also lays a foundation for further exploration within the field of immigrant entrepreneurship. It opens new avenues for research inquiries and practical initiatives, emphasizing the dynamic interplay of micro, meso, and macro factors. The insights from this study offer actionable guidance for policymakers and researchers, steering the trajectory toward a more supportive and inclusive landscape for immigrant entrepreneurship.

### 1.5 Central Concepts

This section provides definitions and descriptions of the central concepts used in this thesis (Table 1).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concept</th>
<th>Definitions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mixed Embeddedness</td>
<td>The mixed embeddedness approach is an analytical framework designed to examine the complex interplay of factors influencing immigrant entrepreneurship. It integrates economic and political environments, policies and social institutions, and individual attributes, including social and human capital (Heis &amp; Dannecker, 2022; Kloosterman &amp; Rath, 2018; Ram et al., 2013; Kloosterman &amp; Rath, 2001; Kloosterman et al., 1999). Mixed embeddedness is “a concept or research convention that organizes the efforts of researchers and, simultaneously, allows for multiple interpretations - it is non-deterministic” (Dabić et al., 2020).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Intersectionality**

Intersectionality, according to Crenshaw's (1989) definition, is “a metaphor for understanding the ways that multiple forms of inequality sometimes compound themselves and create obstacles that often are not understood among conventional ways of thinking.”

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**Entrepreneurial Process**

The entrepreneurial process is a sequence of definable phases and has been described as a ‘Venture Lifecycle’ – that is, a journey and not just an act (Zaheer et al., 2019; Dileo & Pereiro, 2019; McMullen & Dimov, 2013).

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### 1.6 Outline of The Thesis

This paper-based dissertation includes five appended papers focusing on the immigrant entrepreneurship phenomenon. Each paper contributes to the overall question and aim of this research.

Chapter 1 is an introductory chapter that introduces the background information about the study's focus and relevance. It offers a brief overview of previous research, identifying research gaps and formulating the overall research question. This chapter concludes by presenting the main contributions of this thesis.

Chapter 2 highlights the relevant literature and ends with a theoretical framework. This chapter begins by introducing immigrant entrepreneurs and innovation and then examines the current state of the literature on immigrant entrepreneurship. It explores existing research on immigrant entrepreneurship, specifically in rural areas, refugee entrepreneurship, and female immigrant/refugee entrepreneurship. Finally, this chapter presents the theoretical framework, which is mainly built upon (i) intersectionality, (ii) mixed embeddedness approach, and (iii) entrepreneurial process.

Chapter 3 outlines the methods employed in this thesis. It begins with the ontological and epistemological positions and then describes the research process with details of each appended paper. Sampling, data collection, and data analysis are also presented. Then, trustworthiness, generalization, and transferability are
discussed. Finally, this chapter ends with a discussion regarding the research's ethical considerations and papers' contributions to the thesis.

Chapter 4 summarizes the five appended papers and demonstrates how each paper contributes to the overall purpose of the thesis. The structure includes an overview of each paper, introducing author statements, purposes, methods, findings, originality, and contributions to the dissertation.

Chapter 5 provides a discussion and contributions of the thesis. This chapter presents the main findings of the research, followed by the overall theoretical, empirical, and methodological contributions. Finally, the conceptual framework with all its dimensions is introduced.

Chapter 6 synthesizes the conclusions drawn from the research, presenting general, theoretical, and empirical insights. Implications for practice and policymakers are outlined, along with the practical implications of the proposed conceptual framework. This chapter also outlines future research avenues and acknowledges the limitations encountered during the research process and within the research context.
2 Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

This chapter reviews the previous research regarding immigrant entrepreneurs and innovation, refugee entrepreneurship, immigrant entrepreneurship in rural areas, and female immigrant entrepreneurship. Then, a theoretical framework is presented, including intersectionality, mixed embeddedness approach, and entrepreneurial process.

2.1 Immigrant Entrepreneurship and Its Contribution to Innovation in Host Countries

Immigrant entrepreneurship is vital in fostering economic development within host countries (Rath & Swagerman, 2015). They contribute to host-country economic development (Rath & Swagerman, 2015) through entrepreneurship, innovation, and trade (Desiderio & Mestres-Domènech, 2011), which in turn contributes to social-economic integration, increasing the quality of life and creation of jobs in the local scale and international scale (Hammarstedt & Miao, 2019; Sahin et al., 2009). Their migrant background is positively related to innovation level, but this relation could be weakened by the less supportive environment and in times of uncertainty (Kašperová et al., 2022; Gao et al., 2021).

Immigrant entrepreneurs are widely recognized for their contribution to increased innovation within host countries (Malerba & Ferreira, 2021; Marchand & Siegel, 2014). By entering specific sectors and discovering new markets, they bring a wealth of cultural diversity, varied mindsets, and unique experiences to the entrepreneurial ecosystem (Rashid, 2020; OECD/European Union, 2019; Nathan, 2015; Rath & Swagerman, 2015). Immigrants tend to be innovative and engage in innovative activities related to new products, production techniques, and R&D (Krol, 2021; Brown et al., 2020; Hunt & Gauthier-Loiselle, 2010). They provide new ideas for potential products and better ways to produce existing ones, which
can result in increased creative destruction (Khanna & Lee, 2018). Immigrant entrepreneurs can promote their businesses by leveraging existing resources to meet market demands and create value (Rahman, 2018; Nelson & Winter, 1982; Schumpeter, 1934). Immigrant entrepreneurs apply various innovative strategies to reach more clients and enter new and rewarding markets (e.g., product, process, marketing, sales, distribution, integration, and cooperation) (Rahman et al., 2021; Schumpeter, 1934).

Using the cultural background as a competitive advantage enables immigrant entrepreneurs to navigate markets more easily, often outpacing their native counterparts (Gao et al., 2021). They prefer innovative solutions to face the challenges produced by uncertain environments (Nathan & Lee, 2013; Chaganti et al., 2008).

Immigrant entrepreneurs can identify market demand in the host countries and leverage their human capital to create innovative opportunities (Harima et al., 2021). Their migration experience can be a source of their innovative business ideas, individual characteristics development, and contextual opportunity identification (Bosetti et al., 2015). With a strong drive for achievement, they are more likely than other members of society to exploit opportunities and become entrepreneurs (Shane & Venkataraman, 2000). For instance, in 2020, immigrants started 20% of the new businesses in Sweden, and these businesses are considered the primary source of immigrant entrepreneurs’ income (Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth, 2018).

Despite the recognition of the entrepreneurial capacity of immigrants, there exists a gap in the literature about innovation among immigrant entrepreneurs (Bolzani & Scandura, 2023; Harima et al., 2021; Brown et al., 2020; Kerr & Kerr, 2020; Alvarado, 2018; Bosetti et al., 2015; Betts et al., 2015; Aldrich & Waldinger, 1990).

To fully understand the relationship between innovation and entrepreneurship, a nuanced exploration of immigrant entrepreneurs' innovation over time and contextual boundaries is essential (Alvarado, 2018; Autio et al., 2014), with mixed embeddedness offering a valuable lens for examining these processes (Alvarado, 2018). Studying innovation among immigrant entrepreneurs requires analyzing three building blocks, according to Alvarado (2018), the attributes of the innovation itself, the social context in which it was introduced, and the network channels used for that purpose. Such innovation involves implementing a business idea rooted in the entrepreneur's migratory experience and related life experiences (Alvarado, 2018). Research has shown that innovation among immigrant entrepreneurs is closely linked to their human, social, and cultural capital (Zhang & Zhang, 2016; Betts et al., 2015; Bosetti et al., 2015). As a result, they may draw
upon their home country's experiences or develop new ideas for the social context of their host country.

Moreover, exploring immigrant entrepreneurs' intersectional identities provides further insights into their ability to adapt and innovate in response to challenges within the host country context. For instance, refugees who face unique challenges related to legal status and institutional knowledge (Alrawadieh et al., 2018) exhibit inventiveness in overcoming these challenges (Abebe, 2023; Ram et al., 2022). Rethinking intersectional identities becomes imperative for creating an enabling environment that fosters innovation among immigrants.

Thus, this chapter highlights the entrepreneurial potential in various immigrant groups, citing examples such as immigrants in rural areas as a driver for job creation and innovation (Barth & Zalkat, 2021; Barth & Zalkat, 2019; Newbery et al., 2017; Carson & Carson, 2018; Newbery & Bosworth, 2014). Additionally, female immigrant entrepreneurs are portrayed as adaptive innovators, utilizing digitalization to overcome challenges associated with gender stereotyping and migrant status (Zalkat, 2024).

Accordingly, this thesis enriches the understanding of the diverse immigrant entrepreneurship phenomenon from an innovative perspective, specifically highlighting the role of immigrant entrepreneurs in the economic growth of host countries (European Commission, 2016; Nathan, 2015).

2.2 Immigrant Entrepreneurship and Heterogeneity

The considerable heterogeneity among different immigrant groups arises from varying human and social capital resources, diverse government policies, distinctive positions within the stratified labor market, and exposure to anti-immigrant sentiments or racial discrimination (Romero & Valdez, 2016). For instance, the entrepreneurial activities of refugee entrepreneurs, compelled by forced immigration, markedly differ from those of economic immigrants, influencing their modes and rates of economic participation in the host country (Abebe, 2023; Ye-shi et al., 2022; Becker & Ferrara, 2019; OECD, 2019a; Heilbrunn et al., 2018; Rashid, 2018; Cortes, 2004). These differences impact immigrants’ economic decision-making, particularly their entrepreneurial activities (Cortes, 2004).

The significance of immigrant intersectional identities is multifaceted, entwining ethnicized and racialized dimensions, spatial location, class, and gender in historically specific ways (Heis & Dannecker, 2022). These axes of oppression have different impacts and are constructed on the individual, group, and systemic
levels, and they depend on one’s location within the matrix of domination (Collins, 1990).

The OECD area hosts over 34 million "missing entrepreneurs," encompassing disadvantaged or under-represented social groups such as women, youth, seniors, the unemployed, immigrants, and people with disabilities (OECD/European Commission, 2023).

Thus, this thesis focuses on groups of immigrant entrepreneurs who represent a crucial human-economic asset that needs to be realized and has not received enough attention both practically and theoretically. Hence, three groups of immigrant entrepreneurs have been chosen for this thesis:

- refugee entrepreneurs,
- immigrant entrepreneurs in rural areas
- female immigrant entrepreneurs

This strategic oversampling holds theoretical and practical contributions, providing insights and knowledge of immigrant entrepreneurship within varied contextual landscapes (Baker & Welter, 2020). The intentional selection of these groups seeks to unravel nuanced insights into the complexities of immigrant entrepreneurial business development, thereby contributing new insights to the existing body of literature.

This thesis focuses on specific groups of immigrant entrepreneurs, such as refugees and females, who have been relatively ignored in immigrant entrepreneurship research and political discourse to enrich and contribute to immigrant entrepreneurship literature and to make it more inclusive. This thesis responds to the fact that those ignored groups of immigrant entrepreneurs present a potential value that may be squandered through the context or circumstances in which they live and work (Baker & Welter, 2020).

### 2.2.1 Refugee Entrepreneurship

The arrival of many refugees created grave concerns in many European Union countries (Almontaser & Baumann, 2017). This resulted in renewed discussions among politicians, scholars, and the public on the costs and benefits of immigration (Abebe, 2023; Abebe, 2019; Naimo, 2016). Countries like Sweden and Germany have adopted generous migration policies for refugees (OECD, 2020; 2019b), and the period between 2011 and 2016 witnessed a massive flow of refugees, mainly coming from Syria, with approximately one million Syrians
seeking asylum (Konle-Seidl, 2018; UNHCR, 2017). This group of refugees represents a critical human capital that needs to be fully realized (Hugo, 2014).

Entrepreneurship emerges as a potential avenue for refugees to foster a sense of social belonging and identity in new communities (Alrawadieh et al., 2018), contributing to economic and social benefits for refugees and host countries (OECD, 2019b). However, refugee entrepreneurship in developed countries is distinct, shaped by refugees’ unique human and social capital compared to other groups of immigrants (Dabić et al., 2020). Refugees are more likely to become entrepreneurs than other groups of immigrant and native-born counterparts, attributed to either a lack of employment opportunities or the entrepreneurial culture and ambition that they bring with them (Kone et al., 2020; Kerr & Kerr, 2017; Levent & Nijkamp, 2009). For instance, Syrian refugees have a rich history of entrepreneurial activity and a high level of self-employment (Haddad et al., 2010). Hence, examining differences among refugees’ capital, migration history, and other institutional contextual factors could contribute to the literature in this area (Dabić et al., 2020).

Despite the potential economic contributions of refugee entrepreneurship, it has been notably neglected in academic research, resulting in limited empirical evidence and a reliance on general immigrant entrepreneurship studies (Abebe, 2023; Embiricos, 2020; Freiling & Harima, 2019). This research gap not only leaves decision-makers seeking guidance in general immigrant entrepreneurship research (Desai et al., 2021; Naudé et al., 2017; Ruist, 2015; Bevelander, 2011) but also fails to acknowledge the distinct challenges and complexities faced by refugee entrepreneurs due to their forced migration situations (Abebe, 2023; Ram et al., 2022; Yeshi et al., 2022; Heilbrunn et al., 2018).

It is noteworthy that the distinction between economic (voluntary) immigrants and refugee (involuntary) immigrants often needs to be clarified (Lee & Nerghes, 2018; Sajjad, 2018; Sasse & Thielemann, 2005). Part of the problem lies in the broad definition of immigrant as any person who has been outside the country of birth or of citizenship for 12 months or longer (Lee & Nerghes, 2018; Sajjad, 2018; Sasse & Thielemann, 2005). Thus, economic immigrants, refugees, and family immigrants all fall within the exact definition. However, the crux of the issue lies in the motivation for leaving the country of origin, whether involuntary or voluntary (King & Lulle, 2016).

While immigrants of all groups often experience similar entrepreneurial challenges and barriers, the experiences of refugee immigrants who are forced to leave their countries may differ from those of voluntary immigrants (Abebe, 2023; Kone et al., 2020; OECD, 2019a; Becker & Ferrara, 2019; Johnson & Shaw, 2019). The reasons and the forced nature of their mobility can shape their
entrepreneurial activity (Desai et al., 2021; Rashid, 2018; Cortes, 2004). For example, they are more likely to have experienced psychological trauma before and during the migration experience (Wauters & Lambrecht, 2008). In addition, they face higher and harder-to-overcome challenges to entrepreneurship than other immigrant groups (Abebe, 2023; Ram et al., 2022; Embiricos, 2020; Alrawadieh et al., 2018; Wauters & Lambrecht, 2008) due to resource constraints (Roth et al., 2012; Bevelander, 2011; Connor, 2010; Wauters & Lambrecht, 2008). They have left behind all their assets and networks (Andersson & Jutvik, 2018).

Drawing upon the embeddedness concept, refugees’ (dis)embedding processes in the host countries enable or constrain their access to entrepreneurial resources from the perspective of institutional obstacles per se and through the interactions between refugees and the institutional structure (Harima, 2021). Thus, they face more difficulty obtaining credit as well as navigating bureaucracy and formal procedures than voluntary immigrants (Naudé et al., 2017). The likelihood of failure in refugee entrepreneurship is heightened due to barriers like lack of knowledge, language skills, and the complexity of host countries’ business rules and regulations (Rashid, 2018; Rath & Swagerman, 2015).

Refugees have different social and demographic characteristics compared to other groups of immigrant entrepreneurs (Abebe, 2023; Abebe, 2019), shaped by their various intersectional identities (e.g., refugee status, race, religion, ethnicity, nationality, language, and socio-economic class) (Motalebi & Martin-Shields, 2023; Ekoh & Okoye, 2022; Fiske & Giotis, 2021; Carastathis et al., 2018; Bemak & Chung, 2014). The intersectionality of multiple refugee identities restricts their freedom and shapes the development and utilization of their entrepreneurial skills (Dagar, 2023). The heterogeneous intersections in refugees create many challenges that can disrupt their ability and approach to entrepreneurship (Refai et al., 2024; Refai et al., 2018), highlighting the relevance of constrained historical, temporal, spatial, institutional, and social contexts throughout their business development (Refai & McElwee, 2023). Separate analyses of refugee entrepreneurs are therefore justified by the additional challenges and barriers they encounter in establishing their businesses (Dabić et al., 2020; Wauters & Lambrecht, 2006). These challenges can be categorized at different levels (Abebe, 2023; Chliova et al., 2019). Thus, refugees should not be homogenized within entrepreneurship policy (Refai et al., 2024).

Additionally, refugees’ intersectional identities shape and inform their entrepreneurial motivations (Schreurs, 2022; Barrett & Vershinina, 2017). Refugee entrepreneurs have different motivations, skills, and sources of investment capital, human and social capital (Dabić et al., 2020; Bizri, 2017; Roth et al., 2012; Wauters & Lambrecht, 2006; 2008). They are motivated to start new businesses by opportunities and resources in their institutional, economic, cultural, and social
environments (Rashid, 2023). Within the context of reception, government policies make a vast difference between groups of immigrants in the same host country (Romero & Valdez, 2016). However, studies on the impact of the heterogeneity of country-level (institutional level) on entrepreneurs, although previously conducted for entrepreneurship in general, are limited. This is also true for studies of refugee entrepreneurship (Desai et al., 2021). Thus, there is a need to address refugees’ choices and economic behavior in different institutional contexts, including governance frameworks that impact their economic engagement (Desai et al., 2021).

This advocates for a deeper exploration of refugee entrepreneurship in different contexts, offering valuable insights for policymakers and researchers alike. For instance, rural areas and agribusiness can be interesting contexts for studying how this context impacts business development.

### 2.2.2 Immigrant Entrepreneurship in Rural Areas

International migration can serve as a driver toward new opportunities for rural areas, offering diverse and sustainable solutions across various dimensions (FAO, 2018a; FAO, 2018b; Kordel et al., 2018; Nori, 2017; Findlay & McCollum, 2013; Kasimis, 2010; Kasimis et al., 2010) benefiting both immigrants and rural communities (Bloem, 2014). The EU Action Plan on Integration and Inclusion (European Commission 2020) and the EU’s Long-Term Vision for Rural Areas (European Commission 2021) support the inclusion and integration of immigrants and refugees in rural areas. However, immigrant entrepreneurship scholarship generally focuses on metropolitan cities, ignoring rural areas (Rauhut et al., 2023; Honig, 2020). Thus, immigrants in rural areas deserve special academic and political attention (Laine et al., 2023).

Immigrants represent a potential solution for the economic and demographic consequences of depopulation (Collantes et al., 2014) by addressing labor shortages, thus contributing to the development of rural areas (Eimermann, 2016). Although immigrants often prefer to settle down in cities, their increasing presence in rural areas, integral to the overall population (Stenbacka, 2012), enriches these areas' social and cultural fabric. This demographic shift also plays a pivotal role in the agricultural sector in certain countries, serving as the backbone of agricultural production (FAO, 2018a).

Additionally, rural areas are increasingly recognized as suitable resettlement locations for refugees, leveraging social and cultural resources to facilitate their integration into the host country's social and economic life (Vogiazides & Mondani, 2019). Host countries are actively promoting immigration settlement in
rural areas, particularly for individuals with an agricultural background or an interest in agricultural activities, aligning with the lifestyle of rural areas (Bloem, 2014).

This discussion is particularly relevant for European agriculture, where rurality is considered “a dynamic entrepreneurial resource” (Stathopoulou et al., 2004) and the agricultural sector has become more market-oriented and entrepreneurial approaches through the Common Agricultural Policy (Giannakis & Bruggeman, 2015). For instance, rural entrepreneurship plays a crucial role in the socioeconomic integration of rural areas in Sweden (Eimermann, 2016), with immigrants in Nordic countries, including Sweden, making substantial contributions to local economies and population growth (Eimermann, 2016).

Immigration’s economic consequences are influenced by space, place, and location (Rauhut et al., 2023; Elo et al., 2022). Examining rural areas as a case, the nature of rural areas, “their rurality,” creates challenges to entrepreneurship when technical and distribution resources are not as up-to-date as in urban areas (Barth & Zalkat, 2021; Clausen, 2020). Moreover, the rural context may present sociocultural barriers to immigrant entrepreneurship because of the different cultural norms associated with immigrant entrepreneurs regarding services and products (Hack-Polay et al., 2021). However, these different cultures could be a double-edged sword and do not necessarily represent challenges when immigrant entrepreneurs use their social and cultural capital as resources and break out of the ethnic market to embrace diversity (Hack-Polay et al., 2021; Brzozowski, 2017; Cruickshank & Dupuis, 2015). Furthermore, immigrant entrepreneurs have to decrease over-reliance on their previous entrepreneurship experience in their home country, whose contexts may contrast with that of the host country (Hack-Polay et al., 2021).

Immigrants face complexities related to government programs, public procurement processes, informal systems of social exclusion, prejudice (Evansluong & Ramirez Pasillas, 2019; Kordestani et al., 2017), and a lack of various support resources, coupled with domestic resistance to ethnic products (Barth & Zalkat, 2020). It could also be argued that rural settings' living, and work conditions postulate qualifications such as a driving license, which is unnecessary in urban areas (Barth & Zalkat, 2020).

However, rural settings have challenges and opportunities for immigrants and refugee entrepreneurs (Barth & Zalkat, 2021). There are various migration motives to the Swedish rural areas, ranging from quality of life to cross-border and marriage migration (Hedberg & Haandrikman, 2014). Rural areas provide a higher degree of freedom and a stronger sense of community, which is one of the reasons why some immigrants choose to settle outside a large city (Vogiazides &
Mondani, 2019). With the support of rural communities, immigrant entrepreneurs may successfully create and exploit entrepreneurial opportunities, thereby contributing to the local economy (Munkejord, 2017). Designing a particular entrepreneurship policy for rural areas is important to enhance their participation and modernize their industrial structure (Eliasson & Westlund, 2013).

When evaluating immigrants' contributions to socioeconomic development in rural areas, demographic characteristics assume significance, necessitating consideration of the heterogeneity and diversity within immigrant groups (Hedlund et al., 2017; Hedberg & Haandrikman, 2014). Particularly, refugee entrepreneurs require heightened attention to discern fundamental trends in refugee entrepreneurship (Barth & Zalkat, 2021; Desai et al., 2021).

### 2.2.3 Female Immigrant Entrepreneurship

In recent years, the engagement of female immigrants in entrepreneurial activities in Sweden and other EU countries has witnessed a decline, marked by fewer and more constrained initiatives compared to previous decades (Tillväxtverket & EU kommissionen, 2021). This trend is particularly pronounced among female immigrant groups in Sweden, where they are underrepresented in entrepreneurial endeavors (OECD, 2020). Notably, most immigrant entrepreneurs in Sweden are male, constituting 10.8% of the total population, while their female counterparts make up only 5.8% (Global Entrepreneurship Monitor, 2020). About 30% of the total companies in Sweden are predominantly operated by female immigrants and mainly provide personal services such as beauty care, body therapy, healthcare/nursing, and education. Conversely, a limited number of women are involved in the ownership or operation of construction and transport companies (SCB, 2017). Despite a substantial increase in the number of employees at companies operated by foreign-born women in Sweden from 2006 to 2016, the percentage of female immigrant entrepreneurs decreased from 7.8% to 4.8% between 2010 and 2020, contrasting with the relatively stable percentage among native-born women entrepreneurs during the same period (SCB, 2021).

However, starting a new business in developed countries like Sweden does not eliminate or reduce the risk of business failure. The environmental and institutional context combined with racial and gender barriers poses challenges to initiating and surviving new and small businesses in Sweden (Pettersson & Hedberg, 2013). This can be particularly pronounced for female immigrant entrepreneurs, who encounter more challenges than male immigrants upon entering the Swedish labor market (Bevelander & Irastorza, 2014). For example, they are confined to feminized jobs in Sweden due to highly segregated labor market characteristics that pose ethnic and gender barriers (Yeröz, 2019). Despite being part of
entrepreneurship policy discussions, female immigrant entrepreneurs often find themselves excluded from these dialogues at the local implementation level (Webster, 2020) and marginalized in the broader entrepreneurship discourse (Verduijn & Essers, 2013).

Furthermore, research on immigrant entrepreneurship generally lacks a gender perspective (Brieger & Gielnik, 2021), overlooking distinctions between female and male immigrant entrepreneurs (Romero & Valdez, 2016). Despite a limited number of studies confirming a gender gap in immigrant entrepreneurship, female immigrant entrepreneurial activities remain insufficiently addressed within the academic discipline (Brieger & Gielnik, 2021). Consequently, examining the influence of gender, ethnicity, religion, legal status, and socio-cultural factors on female entrepreneurs remains limited (Luca & Ambrosini, 2019; Kurian, 2014). There is an opportunity for theory development and empirical investigations into female entrepreneurial activities within the broader entrepreneurship research field (Carter et al., 2015). Accordingly, a deeper exploration of gender differences is warranted to gain insights into the immigrant entrepreneurship phenomenon (Chreim et al., 2018), necessitating increased gender awareness in female entrepreneurship literature to enrich the field of female entrepreneurship research (Yousafzai et al., 2019).

Female immigrants encounter additional challenges and compounded discrimination due to multiple dimensions of their intersecting identity: migratory status, gender, race, religion, ethnicity, socioeconomic class, etc. (Dagar, 2023; Adeeko & Treanor, 2022; Dryjanska, 2020; Şimşek, 2021; Yeröz, 2019; UNHCR, 2016). Their multiple identities become relevant in various situations and at different times (Dagar, 2023), presenting opportunities and challenges (Romero & Valdez, 2016; Wingfield & Taylor, 2016). Thus, intersectionality has recently been employed to study female entrepreneurship experience in migration and conflict contexts (Paz & Kook, 2020; Unangst & Crea, 2020).

In addition, gender differences are not solely derived from individual characteristics but are also shaped by the contexts where entrepreneurs operate their businesses (De Vita et al., 2014). Female immigrant entrepreneurs exhibit historically and culturally conditioned responses that influence the relationship between entrepreneurial resources and context-specific structural powers and aspects (Yeröz, 2019). Existing female entrepreneurship research predominantly focuses on the relationship between general conditions and arrangements in the overall entrepreneurial environment, encompassing both male and female entrepreneurs, rather than on the embedded context (Yousafzai et al., 2019). Thus, it is important to link female immigrant and their entrepreneurship to the entrepreneurial host context and business environment (Aman et al., 2022).
Female immigrant entrepreneurs' entrepreneurial activities differ from those of their native-born counterparts (Zybura et al., 2018). Females often face limitations in their choice of entrepreneurial activity due to various personal, social, and economic factors (Sebastian, 2015). For example, their entrepreneurial motivations are influenced by a mix of psychological, economic, and social factors (Wahlgrén & Virtanen, 2015). However, a systematic investigation into individual and contextual factors affecting the gender gap in immigrant entrepreneurship remains limited (Brieger & Gielnik, 2021).

Therefore, a study exploring female entrepreneurs' perceptions of environmental factors, including societal, economic, political, and institutional/legal regulations, can provide a more nuanced understanding of the factors that either restrict or facilitate entrepreneurship (Yousafzai et al., 2019; Fayolle et al., 2015). A balanced exploration of different perspectives on female entrepreneurship is essential to comprehend how female immigrant entrepreneurs perceive challenges and opportunities during business development. The experiences of female immigrant entrepreneurship should be contextualized (Tlaiss, 2019) using a multilevel analytical framework (Yousafzai et al., 2019). Future research in this domain might explore the impact of legal and institutional environments (Azmat & Fujimoto, 2016).

2.3 Theoretical Framework

The immigrant entrepreneurship phenomenon has been approached through various theories and methodologies; however, a cohesive framework has not yet been presented. Consequently, there is a gap in understanding the challenges and opportunities encountered by various immigrant entrepreneurs. Thus, this thesis employs the theoretical lenses of mixed embeddedness and intersectionality to interpret the findings across all appended papers to address this issue (see Figure 2). By adopting intersectionality and mixed embeddedness, this thesis provides a nuanced understanding of immigrant entrepreneurship (Desai et al., 2021; Anwar & Daniel, 2017).

Integrating these two theoretical frameworks offers distinct perspectives and insights that, when combined, illuminate the complexities and multilevel/multidimensional nature of immigrant entrepreneurship (Duan, 2022; Honig, 2020; Dabić et al., 2020). For instance, Wang and Warn (2018) propose an investigation into the intersection of race, gender, and class within the context of mixed embeddedness. Scott and Hussain (2019) emphasize the importance of intersectional approaches, building on the call by Ram et al. (2017) in immigrant
entrepreneurship research. Thus, employing intersectionality and mixed embeddedness together supports the overarching research aim.

**Figure 2:** Immigrants entrepreneurship theoretical framework

This interdisciplinary approach is crucial in offering a more comprehensive explanation of the immigrant entrepreneurship phenomenon, allowing for a deeper understanding of its complexities (Duan, 2022; Honig, 2020). Through this theoretical framework integration, the research aims to contribute to the broader knowledge of immigrant entrepreneurship and enhance the dialogue surrounding the business development of distinct immigrant groups.

### 2.3.1 Intersectionality

Intersectionality, as defined by Crenshaw (1989), serves as a metaphor to comprehend the intricate ways in which multiple forms of inequality intersect and compound, creating obstacles that conventional ways of thinking often fail to acknowledge. This concept recognizes that various personal characteristics intersect with systems and structures, collectively shaping an individual's experience (Loden & Rosener, 1990). All aspects of a person’s life are considered intersectional, producing and reproducing social realities (Dagar, 2023; Collins, 2019; Gopaldas, 2013). Intersectionality can be a foundational starting point for
conceptualizing the complex interactions of social structures and structural inequality and power relationships within entrepreneurship research. Hence, employed as a theoretical lens for inequalities study, intersectionality would catalyze advancing theoretical perspectives (Dy & MacNeil, 2023). Intersectionality offers insights into how different identity forms, such as gender, race, religion, migratory status, caste, ethnicity, nation, ability, and age, interact on multiple levels to shape complex social inequalities (Dy & MacNeil, 2023; Collins, 2019; 2015; Dy et al., 2014). This perspective enhances the understanding of specific groups of immigrant entrepreneurs (Webster & Zhang, 2020; Dy & Agwunobi, 2018; Valdez, 2016; Crenshaw, 1991).

Moreover, intersectionality considers the broader social structural context in which all immigrant groups are embedded. Thus, to study differences among immigrant groups, we need to consider the social spaces created by the intersection of legal state, gender, race, class, etc., as these social location aspects indicate social inequality and reflect power relations (Şimşek, 2021; Romero & Valdez, 2016). As such, intersectionality is adopted in this study as an analytical framework (Dy et al., 2017; Dy et al., 2014; Crenshaw, 1991) to demonstrate the interconnectedness of social positions: gender, race, class, nativity, migratory status, and to examine the links among social, cultural, and political contexts (Şimşek, 2021; Dy & Agwunobi, 2018; Romero & Valdez, 2016; Bastia, 2014; Anthias, 2013; Anthias, 2012; Valdez, 2011; Anthias, 2008).

Intersectionality serves as an appropriate theoretical lens, analytical strategy, and methodological approach providing new perspectives on the social phenomenon (Collins, 2015; Dy et al., 2014) by analyzing and discussing privileges emanating from intersecting social positions of gender, race, and ethnicity (Murzacheva et al., 2019; Wang & Warn, 2018; Dy et al., 2017; Gill & Larson, 2014). Furthermore, the intersectionality can be extended to highlight the intersecting role of place-based effects (Gill & Larson, 2014). However, it is a complex approach in terms of social characteristics (e.g., race, gender, and social class) or situational characteristics (entrepreneur vs. immigrant/social or healthcare worker) (Scott & Hussain, 2019).

The intersectionality concept aligns with the mixed embeddedness, where individuals are positioned geographically in a specific locale, providing a distinct social and economic context that, in turn, presents specific opportunities and challenges for entrepreneurial activity (Ram et al., 2008; Jack & Anderson, 2002; Dacin et al., 1999; Granovetter, 1985). For example, the local level, combined with individual determinants and border macroeconomic influences, determines the availability of entrepreneurial capital (including human capital) and limits access to specific opportunities (Kloosterman, 2010).
When combined with mixed embeddedness, intersectionality enriches the knowledge of the social, cultural, religious, and racial structures that have an integrated effect on immigrants' and refugees’ opportunities and challenges. By engaging intersectionality, this research argues for revising the mixed embeddedness, emphasizing the intersectionality of immigrant entrepreneurship at each phase of the entrepreneurial process during their business development.

2.3.2 Mixed Embeddedness

The Mixed Embeddedness model, developed to situate entrepreneurial minorities within their structural context, considers not only their embeddedness in social networks but also their embeddedness in the socio-economic and politico-institutional environment of the host country (Kloosterman & Rath, 2018; Ram et al., 2013; Kloosterman et al., 1999). This model matches opportunities with resources in a framework to analyze immigrant entrepreneurship across three levels of study: the micro level of the individual (resources and various forms of social, financial, and cultural/human capital); the meso level of the local opportunity structure (including market characteristics and products/services demand); and the macro-environment/institutional level of the host country (encompassing the societal, economic, political, and institutional dimensions) (Kogut & Mejri, 2021; Bagwell, 2018; Barberis & Solano, 2018; Meister & Mauer, 2018; Ram et al., 2017; Kloosterman, 2010). Dabić et al. (2020) defined mixed embeddedness as “a concept or research convention that organizes the efforts of researchers and, simultaneously, allows for multiple interpretations - it is non-deterministic.”

This thesis builds upon Mixed Embeddedness, acknowledging the intersectionality of entrepreneurial activity within changing sociocultural frameworks. Taking a broader perspective, it considers an entrepreneur’s social location (Refai & McElwee, 2023; Villares-Varela et al., 2018; Kloosterman & Rath, 2018; Ram et al., 2017; Kloosterman, 2010; Kloosterman & Rath, 2001; Kloosterman et al., 1999). Thus, this approach enables the study of certain groups of immigrant entrepreneurs through intersections with contexts characterized by increased challenges, including individual, spatial, institutional, and social contexts within which immigrants are embedded, illustrating how those contexts both provide opportunities and challenges for immigrant entrepreneurship (Refai & McElwee, 2023; Welter, 2011).

According to the institutional theory, entrepreneurial activity is embedded in a country's economic incentives, legal environment, and socio-cultural context (De Vita et al., 2014; Bruton et al., 2010). By emphasizing the importance of the context, diverse realities emerge within and across different immigrant sub-social groups. The context represents the external environment related to a phenomenon
that enables or hinders it (Welter, 2011). In other words, the context serves as stimuli in the external environment (Mowday & Sutton, 1993) that can offer individuals entrepreneurial opportunities and set boundaries for their actions (Welter, 2011; Welter & Smallbone, 2008). The environmental dimension takes different forms, including government policies and procedures, socioeconomic conditions, and financial assistance (Kašperová et al., 2022; Fuentelsaz et al., 2015). The entrepreneurial environment is shaped by culture (Kreiser et al., 2010), social factors (Stephan & Uhlaner, 2010), economy (Wagner & Sternberg, 2004), political factors (Muhammad et al., 2016) as well as financial conditions, education and research milieu, and critical infrastructures. Variations in the environmental context impact various individual characteristics of entrepreneurs (Motoyama & Desai, 2021; Rashid et al., 2020; Middermann & Rashid, 2019; Felício et al., 2016). Environmental-related motivations largely determine entrepreneurial activity at the country level (Velilla & Ortega, 2017; Peren Arin et al., 2015; Thai & Turkina, 2014; García, 2014). Thus, entrepreneurship and the context constantly change (Fletcher & Selden, 2016).

However, the mixed embeddedness neglects the entrepreneurial process (Högberg & Mitchell, 2022; Kazlou, 2019; Kloosterman & Rath, 2018; Ram et al., 2017; Kloosterman & Rath, 2001; Kloosterman et al., 1999) and it overlooks immigrants’ intersectional identities (Heis & Dannecker, 2022; Högberg & Mitchell, 2022; Ram et al., 2017). The mixed embeddedness approach fails to address how the gendered, class-specific, and racialized agency produces a given opportunity structure (Heis & Dannecker, 2022; Kloosterman, 2010; Kloosterman & Rath, 2001). Thus, the mixed embeddedness requires further elaboration and operationalization (Heis & Dannecker, 2022; Barberis & Solano, 2018). Although some studies have used Mixed Embeddedness to examine the gender gap in immigrant entrepreneurship (Brieger & Gielnik, 2021; Anwar & Daniel, 2017; Ram et al., 2017), this thesis argues for a revision of the Mixed Embeddedness to address the intersectionality of immigrant entrepreneurship and extends the mixed embeddedness to explain the entire entrepreneurial process during the business development of immigrant entrepreneurs. This creates a more inclusive approach to explaining immigrant entrepreneurship among certain groups of immigrant entrepreneurs, including refugees and female immigrants/refugees.

2.3.3 Business Development and Entrepreneurial Process

Entrepreneurship is a process by which individuals develop their businesses over time in a logical progression (Murnieks et al., 2019; McMullen & Dimov, 2013) from opportunity recognition to a start-up business to harvesting the rewards of hard work to sustainable success or exit (Global Entrepreneurship Monitor, 2019; Van Horne et al., 2016). Described as a ‘Venture Lifecycle,’ this sequence of
definable phases represents a journey rather than a singular act at the individual and contextual levels (Zaheer et al., 2019; Dileo & Pereiro, 2019; Kuratko et al., 2015; McMullen & Dimov, 2013). While scholars recognize the potential for future research analyzing the entrepreneurial process and focus on sub-categories like exit and entrepreneurial failure, there remains a scarcity of studies examining the entrepreneurial phases comprehensively (Dileo & Pereiro, 2019; Kuckertz & Prochotta, 2018; van der Zwan & Thurik, 2017; Brixy et al., 2012; van der Zwan et al., 2010). Moreover, this research focuses on one phase of entrepreneurs’ business development (Högberg & Mitchell, 2022; Murnieks et al., 2019). This deficiency has hindered the development of a holistic framework to comprehend immigrant entrepreneurs’ perceptions during their business development (Murnieks et al., 2019; Moroz & Hindle, 2012).

Entrepreneurs encounter legitimacy thresholds, different resource needs, and different resource acquisition challenges during different phases throughout their business development, making it essential to consider each stage individually (Murnieks et al., 2019; McKnight & Zietsma, 2018; Fisher et al., 2016; Quinn & Cameron, 1983). What is relevant or essential in certain entrepreneurial phases may not be in other phases (Galanakis & Giourka, 2017; Brixy et al., 2012). Factors such as education, family support, and social networks play distinct roles in different phases. For example, while education may be crucial for established entrepreneurs, family support holds more significance during the start-up phase (Azmat & Fujimo, 2016; Verheul et al., 2011; Evald et al., 2006). In addition, factors like the decision to become an entrepreneur influence all the entrepreneurial phases, while the institutional environment plays a pivotal role during the start-up phase, which highlights the complexity of the entrepreneurial process (Dileo & Pereiro, 2019; Kazlou, 2019; Klyver et al., 2013).

Immigrant entrepreneurship is a multidimensional and dynamic phenomenon (Dabić et al., 2020; Ram et al., 2017; Aldrich & Waldinger, 1990), urging researchers to undertake meaningful and relevant studies reflecting its complexity (Dabić et al., 2020). It is yet not clear why and how various groups of immigrants respond differently to changing opportunity structures during different entrepreneurial phases (Kazlou, 2019) due to limited studies on how immigrant entrepreneurs evolve and grow over time during their business development (Dabić et al., 2020; Brzozowski, 2017; Peroni et al., 2016). This requires tracking immigrant entrepreneurs through different phases (McKnight & Zietsma, 2018; Fisher et al., 2016), with a particular emphasis on in-depth analyses to unravel the reasons for entrepreneurial failures and devise potential solutions (Kuckertz & Prochotta, 2018; Galanakis & Giourka, 2017). Accordingly, a holistic framework of the entrepreneurial phases, including failure/exit reasons, becomes necessary for identifying and implementing effective remedies (Datta et al., 2018; Brzozowski, 2017).
3 Research Methods

This chapter presents the method used in this thesis. It starts with ontological and epistemological position, and then the research process is described with details from each appended paper. After this, sampling, data collection, and data analysis are presented. Next, trustworthiness, generalization, and transferability are discussed. Finally, this chapter ends with a discussion regarding the research's ethical considerations and papers' contributions to the thesis.

3.1 Ontological and Epistemological Position

This study is positioned within an interpretive framework, giving voice to immigrant entrepreneurs to study their business development (Dabić et al., 2020; Dana & Dana, 2005). It aims to develop a comprehensive study of the immigrant entrepreneurship phenomenon by examining how certain groups of immigrant entrepreneurs perceive challenges and opportunities during their business development in diverse contexts. Throughout this research, I established a subjective and interactive relationship with the research's participants, guided by the belief that reality is socially constructed (Duan, 2022; Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). In addition, I tried to make the obscure more prominent and to create meaning. This study addressed the “how” question aligning with an ontological position, recognizing reality as shaped by multiple factors, including social, economic, cultural, and gender considerations.

This paradigm was used to analyze challenges and opportunities influencing entrepreneurs of varying backgrounds. Accordingly, a qualitative research method was adopted following a constructivist or interpretive approach since entrepreneurs make their decisions subjectively, and entrepreneurial motivation, processes, and business performance correlate with culture.

Epistemologically, this research aligns with interpretivism, acknowledging that knowledge is context-dependent and subjective. From an interpretivism perspective, I understood and explained the research phenomenon from an individual’s perspective and the interaction between the individuals and their contexts in a
holistic approach. This emphasized the importance of understanding the nuanced perspectives of immigrant entrepreneurs. Thus, a qualitative research approach was mainly used in this thesis to address the real-world problems and phenomena (Carminati, 2018), which was an appropriate methodology to achieve a nuanced understanding of immigrant entrepreneurs’ business development (Marshall, 1996; Patton, 1990) and advance theoretical development (Dabić et al., 2020).

Through qualitative open-ended interviews and thematic interpretation of data (Creswell, 2012), three levels of analysis (individual, business/market, and institutional) were examined, offering a holistic approach to studying immigrant entrepreneurs' perspectives during their business development (Berglund & Wigren, 2014).

Semi-structured, in-depth interviews aligned with a constructivist or interpretive perspective have been proven effective in examining entrepreneurs' business development. Traditional and contemporary research techniques were employed to collect and analyze data, ensuring a comprehensive examination of the studied phenomenon (Galanakis & Giourka, 2017; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Bryman et al., 2008).

Although the studied phenomenon was unquantifiable (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017), a complementary quantitative study was undertaken to generalize (Dana & Dana, 2005; Aliaga-Isla & Rialp, 2013). Combining qualitative and quantitative studies, this mixed-method approach has recently become more common in immigrant entrepreneurship research (Duan, 2022; Dabić et al., 2020; Dy & Agwunobi, 2018). It contributed with generalizations and deep insights into the field (Dabić et al., 2020).

In summary, this research adopted a constructivist ontological position, acknowledging the socially constructed nature of immigrant entrepreneurs' business development. Epistemologically, it aligned with interpretivism, recognizing the subjectivity natural in understanding this phenomenon. Furthermore, integrating a quantitative approach in this study aligned with a pragmatic approach, drawing on the strengths of both qualitative and quantitative approaches and allowing for a holistic and nuanced exploration of the challenges and opportunities immigrant entrepreneurs perceive during their business development. Thus, the choice of a mixed methods design reflected the belief in the utility of diverse research approaches for a comprehensive understanding of the research question and that best served the research objectives. Accordingly, this thesis adopts a pragmatic approach, which is a new paradigm for immigrant entrepreneurship research (Duan, 2022).
3.2 Research Process

This thesis has developed over time as a response to the cumulative knowledge gained by findings from each appended paper. It combines qualitative and quantitative studies in a pragmatic approach where I used different methods: interviews, surveys, secondary data, etc.

The initial motivation for this research arose from a green innovation project at Halmstad University, which sought to address the challenges faced by rural areas grappling with population aging, population decline, and important economic and demographic changes over the past thirty years (Hedlund & Lundholm, 2015). Specifically, the project aimed to integrate immigrants who arrived in Sweden after the 2015 migration crisis into the agricultural industry. These immigrants have been identified as “demographic refill” (Hedberg & Haandrikman, 2014) and as a potential source of economic development due to their skills, external networks, and market connections (Carson et al., 2016; Eimermann, 2016; Hedberg et al., 2012), and thus supporting them may help successfully create and exploit entrepreneurial opportunities, and, through the entrepreneurship processes, may help rebuild these communities (Munkejor, 2017).

Accordingly, my supervisor Henrik Barth and I conducted a series of studies examining the business development of forced immigrants, especially those who came to Sweden after the migration crisis in 2015, in the agri-food industry and rural areas.

Paper I provides an overview of the factors that motivate immigrants and refugees to become entrepreneurs in Sweden's agri-food industry, as well as the value they bring to this sector. This paper was presented at the Economic Science for Rural Development Conference, where it got unexpected attention and very positive feedback. The widespread interest in this particular research topic highlights the growing need for in-depth studies on immigrant groups in such industries as agri-food.

The insights and feedback from this paper paved the way for subsequent works, which focus on challenges and opportunities perceived by immigrant entrepreneurs during their business development and which strategies they applied to eliminate or overcome these challenges.

Thus, Paper II focuses explicitly on the early phases of business development, where the newness of the venture poses a risk to its existence and survival. This paper explored how immigrant entrepreneurs perceive challenges in the early phase of the host country’s economic, social, and political environment and how they coped with them. This research covered two years of immigrant business,
identifying the challenges posed by the liability of newness and the strategies/actions they adopted to overcome those challenges.

The result showed that those who recognized the challenges posed by the liability of newness in the start-up phase could better overcome these challenges. In contrast, entrepreneurs who failed to recognize the severity of those challenges or were unable to manage them effectively exited their businesses. Ultimately, this paper highlights the importance of effective support systems in the early phase of immigrant entrepreneurs’ business development. Although this paper showed the importance of the early phase of the entrepreneurial process, it is equally crucial to consider the growth and exit phases during the business development.

Accordingly, Paper III examines how immigrant entrepreneurship evolves over different entrepreneurial phases by examining and comparing immigrant entrepreneurs’ businesses in three entrepreneurial phases: start-up, growth, and exit. Although it is not a longitudinal study per se, it provides valuable insights about immigrant entrepreneurs in each entrepreneurial phase. Paper III presents an analytic model that analyses the impact of rurality during all phases of business development (the start-up, growth, and exit phases) while also providing insights into success and exit factors for refugee entrepreneurs.

All the first three papers adopted a qualitative approach, conducting semi-structured, in-depth interviews, collecting secondary data, and tracking immigrants during different entrepreneurial phases to understand their business development comprehensively.

Consequently, it became clear that there is a need to understand the challenges and opportunities immigrant entrepreneurs face at various levels after reviewing the results and findings of the first three papers. Thus, to address this issue, paper IV conducted a comparative case study at the national level, focusing on Sweden and Germany. These two EU countries have received the highest numbers of refugees in the EU since the refugee crisis in 2015 (POMEPS Studies 25, 2017) and have implemented generous migration policies for refugees. Both countries realized the valuable contribution of refugee entrepreneurs to their labor markets (OECD, 2019a; Rashid, 2018). However, there is heterogeneity in immigration and refugee development outcomes in both countries (Naudé et al., 2017). This can be attributed to differences in labor market policies, legal and financial institutions, and laws and regulations that directly and indirectly impact the economic activities of refugee entrepreneurs (Desai et al., 2021). Paper IV conducted a comparative case study, where quantitative data was collected directly from refugee entrepreneurs through surveys (Obschonka et al., 2018; Wauters & Lambrecht, 2006), and the themes were derived from previous studies (Rashid, 2023). Such studies are crucial for new settings, such as different countries and...
communities (Rashid, 2023; Alrawadieh et al., 2018). These kinds of comparative studies that examine the influence of country-level heterogeneity on entrepreneurs are scarce, especially when it comes to specific groups of immigrants “refugee entrepreneurs” (Desai et al., 2021). The existing studies are limited to simple, descriptive quantitative characteristics (Heilbrunn & Iannone, 2020; Abebe, 2019; Glinka, 2018). However, when these differences are examined in developed country contexts, considering migration backgrounds and other environmental factors, it makes a valuable contribution to the literature on immigrant entrepreneurship, particularly in the case of refugee entrepreneurship (Dabić et al., 2020). Additionally, the results of the comparative study have the potential to inspire political action and cross-country learning.

Paper IV caught the attention to female refugee entrepreneurs who dominated the Swedish sampling. However, research indicates that immigrant entrepreneurship is predominantly male-centered and lacks a gender perspective (Brieger & Gielnik, 2021). The mechanisms by which gender particularly impacts and shapes refugee entrepreneurship motivation are still unclear. Thus, paper V focuses on the business development of female refugee entrepreneurs to explore their perspectives on the challenges and opportunities in Sweden. Female immigrant entrepreneurs are a minority group, and their potential contribution to the host countries could go untapped due to their circumstances or the context of work and life. Despite having higher levels of education, the proportion of female immigrant entrepreneurs in Sweden has diminished since 2020, while the number of native-born women entrepreneurs in Sweden has essentially remained consistent (SCB 2021) (Webster & Haandrikman, 2017). Paper V adopted a qualitative research approach to study how female refugee entrepreneurs in Sweden perceived and experienced digitalization in their businesses. This paper conducted 16 in-depth, semi-structured interviews with participants, supplemented by data from the businesses’ websites, social media platforms, and the Swedish website “allabolag.se.” Female refugees experience additional challenges and double discrimination due to their intersecting identities.

Finally, a conceptual framework was created after analyzing the results from all five studies and thoroughly reviewing the relevant literature. This framework integrates the three levels of mixed embeddedness with intersectional identities and the three entrepreneurial phases: start-up, growth, and exit.

### 3.3 Sampling and Data Collection

This thesis employs a mixed methods approach, a methodology that has recently become more common in immigrant entrepreneurship research (Duan, 2022;
Dabić et al., 2020; Dy & Agwunobi, 2018). The research design covers qualitative and quantitative studies, combining conventional and contemporary research techniques for data collection and analysis across various studies (Galanakis & Giourka, 2017; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Bryman et al., 2008).

3.3.1 Sampling

Challenges emerged in identifying suitable candidates in all the studies because the target groups were hard-to-reach populations (Falcão et al., 2024; Chreim et al., 2018) and GDPR restrictions. In Sweden, due to GDPR constraints, initial attempts to collaborate with business incubators and migration integration projects were impeded. Consequently, we relied on personal networks (Bullough et al., 2014), snowball sampling (Williams & Krasniqi, 2018; Atkinson & Flint, 2001; McKenzie & Mistiaen, 2009), and virtual network sampling. Thus, virtual network sampling and snowball sampling have proven effective in these fragile and vulnerable settings and facilitated rapid identification and contact with potential participants over broad geographical areas (Abebe, 2023; Baltar & Brunet, 2012).

The use of virtual network sampling to recruit participants is a relatively new method that has yet to be widely adopted in business and economics research, unlike in public health research (Fenner et al., 2014; Baltar & Brunet, 2012). However, studies employing this technique have shown promise, particularly in hard-to-reach populations such as immigrants (Falcão et al., 2024; Abebe, 2023; Brickman-Bhutta, 2012). Virtual network sampling offers several advantages, including targeting specific candidates, expanding sample sizes, and improving the representativeness of non-probability samples (Galanakis & Giourka, 2017; Baltar & Brunet, 2012). Additionally, it is a cost-effective and efficient tool that can be combined with snowball sampling to further enhance the representativeness of results (Gelinas et al., 2017; Brickman-Bhutta, 2012). Unlike traditional methods employed in ethnic entrepreneurship research, virtual network sampling increases the sample size of minority groups, thereby reducing selection bias and improving the quality of collected data (Baltar & Brunet, 2012). Facebook and Instagram were used in the qualitative and quantitative studies, mitigating the risk of relying on a narrow set of social contacts (Abebe, 2023; Vershinina & Rodgers, 2020; Anwar & Daniel, 2016; Jones et al., 2014; Kayam & Hirsch, 2012; Wilson et al., 2012).

Despite the effectiveness of virtual network sampling, some technical limitations related to Facebook policies and regulations were encountered. Locked profiles and messages marked as spam posed challenges in reaching potential participants. This sampling technique raises some ethical issues related to the protection...
of participants’ information. However, ethical concerns regarding participants' information protection were addressed by ensuring participant anonymity (Gelinas et al., 2017; Baltar & Brunet, 2012) and informing them of the study's purpose.

In order to select potential candidates for papers I, II, III, and V, which were qualitative studies, we utilized Facebook as a tool. The first step was identifying the most popular Facebook groups for immigrants in Sweden, including refugees, female refugees, and immigrants. From there, we were able to identify candidates who aligned with the interests of our study, such as immigrants with experience starting or operating a business in the host country. Moreover, the participants who responded appeared more comfortable using this online format, which guaranteed their anonymity. This method was, therefore, appropriate for this research, which focused on hard-to-reach populations such as refugee and female refugee entrepreneurs.

For paper IV, a quantitative study, we also turned to social media to connect with potential participants in Sweden. With the prevalence of internet usage in daily life, professional, individual, family, and society, Facebook has proved to be an efficient and cost-effective way to reach a broad audience (Kayam & Hirsch, 2012; Wilson et al., 2012). The information about the research and a link to the survey were shared in Facebook groups. While this approach presented some risk of respondent-related common method bias (Kock et al., 2021), the participants were comfortable with the online format and appreciated its anonymity. These findings support previous research that suggests online surveys, such as those conducted through Facebook, may elicit more honest and unedited responses than face-to-face surveys (Kayam & Hirsch, 2012). The initial Swedish sample included 85 responses. After cleaning the data and removing non-Syrian entrepreneurs from the sample, we had 60 usable responses (c. 70% of responses received) for the study. For the data collection in Germany, a random sampling of entrepreneurs was identified by the LOK.STARTupCAMP International refugee entrepreneurship support organization's network was conducted. This organization is one of the largest and most well-known refugee integration support initiatives in Berlin. Accordingly, a more systematic sampling approach was possible in Germany due to the existence of relevant networks and institutions, although it was limited to the capital city of Berlin. From a list of 153 refugee entrepreneurs supported by the network, 65 Syrian refugee entrepreneurs responded to the questionnaire and were included in this study. The participants were contacted by personal email, WhatsApp messages, and in-person meetings at community networking events.

Finally, I acknowledge the potential bias as an immigrant; however, I emphasize that this background facilitated the establishment of trust with participants,
thereby mitigating language barriers and fostering open communication. Moreover, being an immigrant researcher provided me with an advantage in interpreting data to theorise about the immigrant entrepreneurship phenomenon. I had an opportunity to be close to my research and more objective in re-telling immigrant entrepreneurs' experiences (Vershinina & Discua Cruz, 2021).

3.3.2 Data Collection

In the qualitative studies (papers I, II, III, and V), semi-structured, in-depth interviews with immigrant entrepreneurs were conducted via telephone calls, online platforms, and on-site visits (workplace). Each interview followed an interview guide with open-ended questions that allowed authors to depart from the guide when topics of interest arose. The interview guide also included several questions about respondents’ demographic information such as their background, gender, education, family, languages, and previous work experience, etc., as well as information about their business such as type of the business, year of establishment, entrepreneurial phase, and average revenue, etc.

The interviews were conducted in the participants' mother languages (mainly Arabic) or Swedish, according to the participants' preferences. However, most participants felt more comfortable answering the questions in their first language than in Swedish. All the interviews were recorded and transcribed, and the interviews conducted in participants' mother languages were translated. Regarding ethical considerations, no actual participants' names were used, and all the interviews were identified by numbers. Moreover, all the participants were informed about the aim of the research and that their anonymity was guaranteed in all aspects of the research, including publications.

These interviews were supplemented by secondary data sources, including observations, notes, online documents, social media, and information from the Swedish website “allabolag.se,” which provides information about Swedish companies (e.g., financial statements, officers, credit information, addresses, and other information). Additionally, interviews with representatives from organizations supporting immigrants and entrepreneurs in Sweden were conducted to ensure data triangulation.

For the comparative case study (paper IV), quantitative data were collected through a survey created in Google Forms, administered in Arabic, Swedish, and English for refugee entrepreneurs in Sweden and Arabic and English for those in Germany. The survey was distributed electronically and in hard copy to individuals with similar backgrounds and reasons for migration in the same migration timespan in both countries. The participants were all Syrian citizens who left
Syria in 2015–2016 in the aftermath of the Syrian civil war, mostly crossing the Mediterranean to the European continent and continuing their journey to Western Europe before applying for asylum in Germany or Sweden.

3.4 Data Analysis

Since a mixed methods approach has been employed, several methods for data analysis, both qualitative and quantitative, have also been conducted.

In Papers I, II, III, and V, content analysis and thematic analyses were combined to interpret the interview data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The thematic interpretation of data was adopted, adding explicit value to the interpretations for enhanced comprehension (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). The focus on phenomenological characteristics added valuable insights to exploring immigrant entrepreneurship, particularly within interdisciplinary studies (Honig, 2020). Both content analysis and thematic analysis, when employed together, offer a nuanced understanding of the qualitative data, enriching the exploration of opportunities and challenges faced by immigrant entrepreneurs across different levels of analysis. Thematic analysis is a suitable methodology for analyzing qualitative data (Nowell et al., 2017), which requires dipping in and out of the data, searching for themes, and then coding (Braun et al., 2019).

During content analysis, the authors systematically and repeatedly read through the interview transcripts, identifying and coding specific content related to each paper's objectives. This coding process involved highlighting and categorizing excerpts that capture key concepts and recurring themes. Codes were generated by identifying recurring ideas, patterns, or concepts in the data. This initial coding process was conducted manually, with authors assigning labels to meaningful text segments. Codes were then grouped into broader themes that encapsulate overarching patterns within the data. These themes represented meaningful patterns or insights related to immigrant entrepreneurship, aligning with the research objectives. For example, opportunities and challenges were coded and categorized at three levels: micro-individual (individual), meso-business (local opportunity structure), and macro-environmental (host country - social, economic, political, and institutional environment).

The thematic analysis involved an iterative process of reviewing and refining themes. The authors continually revisited the data, ensuring that themes accurately represent the richness of the content and reflect the nuances of the immigrant entrepreneurial experience. Once themes were finalized, the authors interpreted the meaning of the research questions. Findings were then reported
coherently and structured, providing a narrative that captures the essence of the qualitative data.

The NVivo 11 software program was also utilized to categorize words, opinions, and sentences from the interviews, with frequently mentioned themes identified as crucial data (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015; Bryman et al., 2008). Using software such as NVivo 11 aided in managing the extensive textual data efficiently. The software allowed the authors to organize codes, track coding patterns, and visualize relationships between different themes, facilitating a more systematic and rigorous analysis.

In the quantitative paper IV, data was collected from Sweden and Germany through a survey employing a 42-item questionnaire developed by Rashid (2023). The paper analyzed the entrepreneurship motivations of 125 Syrian refugees in two host countries: 60 individuals in Sweden and 65 individuals in Germany. Eight motivational factors were compared and then categorized into two broad groups: environmental-related motivational factors relating to the individual’s perception of their (institutional) surroundings and person-related motivational factors relating to (psychological) human capital. Responses to the questionnaire were measured on a 7-point Likert scale (strongly agree to strongly disagree), with each factor validated by calculating Cronbach's α values. The test computed the correlations between different construct components, splitting data in two in every possible way and computing the correlation coefficient for each split. The average of these values was equivalent to Cronbach's alpha (Field, 2007). SPSS was used to analyze the survey data, following the methodology used by Middermann and Rashid (2019). Basic descriptive statistics were computed, followed by a Pearson Chi-Square test to assess potential demographic factors (i.e., gender and education level) between the Swedish and German samples. Then, a means comparison was conducted (Independent Sample T-Test) to compare the mean scores on the motivational factors – Swedish responses vs. German responses (Field, 2007). The tested variables largely showed a normal distribution, which justifies the employment of the Independent Sample T-Test. However, the sampling approach in Sweden was not traditionally random, leading to the possibility of some bias in the sample's normality. As a result, a non-parametric comparative analysis was conducted to validate the Sample T-Test findings. The results of the Mann-Whitney-U Test closely aligned with those of the Independent Sample T-Test, further supporting the results.

In conclusion, the data analysis in this study employs a mixed methods approach, combining both qualitative content analysis and thematic analysis with quantitative survey methodologies. The qualitative content analysis allows for a meticulous examination of interview data, revealing nuanced insights into immigrant entrepreneurship's micro-individual, meso-business, and macro-environmental
levels. The thematic analysis, conducted through iterative coding and theme development, provides a structured framework for interpreting the rich qualitative data, ensuring that recurring patterns and meaningful insights are captured carefully. Simultaneously, the quantitative survey data enhances the depth of understanding by quantifying motivational factors and exploring demographic variations between Swedish and German samples. The triangulation of these methodologies contributes to a holistic examination of immigrant entrepreneurship, enriching the interpretation of challenges and opportunities across diverse dimensions.

3.5 Trustworthiness, Generalization, and Transferability

This thesis adopts a mixed methods approach by including qualitative and quantitative studies, a methodology gaining prominence in contemporary immigrant entrepreneurship research (Duan, 2022; Dabić et al., 2020; Dy & Agwunobi, 2018). The research design employs a combination of conventional and contemporary research techniques for comprehensive data collection and analysis across various studies, which in turn help to examine the studied phenomena in-depth, but it concurrently entails a heightened level of complexity (Galanakis & Giourka, 2017; Green et al., 2015).

3.5.1 Trustworthiness

To improve validity and trustworthiness in this research, I adopted Guba's (1981) criteria: credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability, which align with the scholarly discourse on research quality (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017; Guba, 1981).

High-quality qualitative research needs to increase and test validity or trustworthiness, which leads to generalizability or transferability (Golafshani, 2003; Stenbacka, 2001; Johnson, 1997). Therefore, this research relies on triangulation to ensure trustworthiness criteria, such as credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability. Triangulation is typically a strategy used to enhance the validity and reliability of qualitative research by collecting data from diverse perspectives, using a variety of methods, and making use of a variety of sources (Golafshani, 2003; Creswell & Miller, 2000; Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2000; Barbour, 1998; Guba, 1981).
Following the definition proposed by Creswell and Miller (2000), triangulation involves seeking convergence among multiple sources of information, various methods, and data collection sources, both qualitative and quantitative, which were integrated into this research (Patton, 2002). Moreover, primary data from interviews with immigrant entrepreneurs and secondary data from sources such as representatives from organizations supporting immigrants and entrepreneurs in Sweden, social media platforms, websites, and annual tax reports were used. This process facilitated validation, cross-checking, and comparison of information (Healy & Perry, 2000). In addition, the virtual sampling method via Facebook enhanced sample representativeness from the hard-to-reach populations and increased the confidence level of the target group (Baltar & Brunet, 2012). Accordingly, data from other resources can compensate for any limitations in the data, thus increasing the validity and reliability of the results (Maarouf, 2019).

Furthermore, to ensure reliability and credibility, the appended papers included in this research have been either presented at scientific conferences and/or published in peer-reviewed journals and a book chapter.

Although the studied phenomenon is unquantifiable (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017), it reached a level where generalizing the knowledge was needed, so complementary quantitative research was the best way (Aliaga-Isla & Rialp, 2013; Dana & Dana, 2005). From a pragmatic approach, “what works,” the researcher is allowed to address the research questions no matter whether the questions are quantitative or qualitative (Duan, 2022; Maarouf, 2019; Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). Thus, mixed methods were adopted, which have become more common recently in immigrant entrepreneurship research (Duan, 2022; Dabić et al., 2020; Dy & Agwuobi, 2018), and this ended up with an overarching philosophy to achieve pluralistic empirical observation, measurement, and social and historical construction. Thus, this pragmatic approach is a new paradigm for immigrant entrepreneurship research (Duan, 2022). Consequently, this mixed methods approach contributes to immigrant entrepreneurship literature in general, particularly to intersectionality studies for which this thesis calls (Dy & Agwuobi, 2018).

3.5.2 Generalization and Transferability

This research was guided by conceptual demands and aimed to capture and scrutinize the studied phenomenon through reflection and inquiry. The ultimate goal was to contribute to analytic generalization (Polit & Beck, 2010; Patton, 2002; Firestone, 1993).

Qualitative studies in papers I, II, III, and V offer an in-depth analysis of immigrants' business development, aiming for theoretical generalizability or
transferability in the qualitative context (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This means that the findings from each study context can be transferred and used in similar contexts or immigrant populations (Stake, 2013), contributing to the development of theories.

In addition, all the papers in this thesis provide contextually detailed descriptions of the research setting, participants, and findings to enable readers to assess the study's relevance to their own context. They have also admitted all the limitations and specific conditions under which the findings may be applicable.

Furthermore, the proposed conceptual framework, produced through this thesis, holds potential applicability across various immigrant groups and contexts, enabling future researchers to make theoretically informed judgments about proximally similar contexts (Polit & Beck, 2010). The proposed conceptual framework is supposed to enrich and expand two widely used approaches to immigrant entrepreneurship research: mixed embeddedness and intersectionality.

Furthermore, content and thematic analysis techniques facilitated a systematic, replicable contextualized analysis, with findings applicable to broader contexts and various immigrant groups (Krippendorff, 2018). It helped to identify trends and themes across various contexts and groups of immigrants. In addition, including direct quotes in the results section further enhances inferential and analytic generalizability (Hays & McKibben, 2021).

Each paper alone focuses on a specific group of immigrants to provide an in-depth description. Then, I moved from particulars to broader constructs using an analytic generalization (Polit & Beck, 2010). The overarching thesis consolidates these results to build a conceptual framework with potential analytical generalization across immigrant populations in different contexts. This analytical approach, concentrating on critical and deviant cases such as females and refugees within the broader immigrant population, seeks to explore and extend existing theories of mixed embeddedness and intersectionality (Polit & Beck, 2010; Patton, 2002; Firestone, 1993).

In summary, trustworthiness, generalization, and transferability collectively contribute to the strength and relevance of research findings, ensuring that the research's outcomes are credible, applicable, and potentially informative across different contexts or immigrant populations.
3.6 Ethical Considerations

The utmost adherence to ethical considerations standards was upheld throughout the research process, ensuring that data collection procedures were ethically aligned with national and European regulations. The entire data collection process conformed to the Swedish Personal Data Act (SFS, 1998:204), the Personal Data Ordinance (SFS, 1998:1191), and relevant European regulations, including the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

Sensitive personal data, such as political views, religious or sexual orientation, or information that could harm participants' physical or mental well-being, were not collected. Participants were treated with utmost sensitivity and consideration, with due acknowledgment of their cultural backgrounds to prevent potential biases. In order to protect the privacy of participants, a stringent anonymization process was applied to all collected data, including interview transcripts and survey responses. Both electronic and hard-copy files were securely stored to uphold confidentiality.

During interviews, an environment conducive to open communication and support was cultivated, ensuring participants felt at ease sharing their experiences. The overarching aim of the research was to contribute positively to the understanding of immigrant entrepreneurship while remaining cautious about any unintended negative consequences. All participants received explicit information regarding the research's purpose, procedures, possible risks, and benefits. Assurance of voluntary participation and the freedom to withdraw from the study without facing adverse consequences was provided. Emphasis was placed on maintaining anonymity and confidentiality throughout the study. Additionally, an informed consent process that included written or oral confirmation was also implemented.

In summary, this research was conducted with a commitment to ethical considerations, placing importance on participant welfare, confidentiality, and the overall integrity of the research process.

3.7 Papers’ Contributions to The Thesis

The papers presented in this thesis make important contributions to understanding immigrant entrepreneurship (table 2). Paper I explores the business development of immigrant entrepreneurs in the agri-food sector, emphasizing the influence of personal characteristics and previous entrepreneurial experiences. It calls for developing an immigrant entrepreneurship model and advocates for further
qualitative studies to investigate challenges and opportunities in their business development. Paper II examines the challenges immigrant entrepreneurs face during the early phases of business development, identifying key issues related to the liability of newness and emphasizing the importance of a longitudinal perspective. Paper III focuses specifically on refugee entrepreneurs, presenting a model that analyzes the influences of rurality on their business development across start-up, growth, and exit phases. Paper IV conducts a cross-country survey comparing Syrian refugee entrepreneurs in Sweden and Germany, highlighting variations in motivations and factors influencing entrepreneurship, potentially attributed to diverse local integration policies. Lastly, paper V explores the digital context for female refugee entrepreneurs. It reveals how digital tools impact their integration, market access, and customer services, contributing to the refugee entrepreneurship and digital entrepreneurship literature from a gender perspective.

Together, these papers offer a holistic insight into immigrant entrepreneurship, suggesting avenues for future research and emphasizing the need for nuanced models that consider intersectionality and diverse contextual factors.
**Table 2.** An overview of the appended papers and their contributions to the thesis (continue).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Paper title</th>
<th>Research questions</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Conclusions and contribution to the thesis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Paper I</strong>&lt;br&gt;Business values and motives of immigrant agricultural entrepreneurs in Sweden</td>
<td>Why do immigrants become entrepreneurs in the agri-food sector in Sweden? What business values do immigrant entrepreneurs in the agri-food sector in Sweden support?</td>
<td>Examine the immigrant entrepreneurship experience in the agri-food sector in Sweden.</td>
<td>Qualitative study&lt;br&gt;25 semi-structured, in-depth interviews. Content analysis.</td>
<td>This paper:&lt;br&gt;- provides an overview of the reasons why immigrants become entrepreneurs and how they exploit entrepreneurial opportunities in the agri-food sector.&lt;br&gt;- calls for a model for immigrant entrepreneurship and for more government reforms and policies aimed at supporting the immigrant entrepreneur.&lt;br&gt;The knowledge from this paper paved the way for papers two and three. Specific context “agri-food industry” and specific group of immigrants “refugees”.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<p>| <strong>Paper II</strong>&lt;br&gt;Immigrant Entrepreneurship in Sweden: The Liability of Newness | What challenges do immigrant entrepreneurs perceive during the early entrepreneurial phase, and what strategies are applied to eliminate or to overcome these challenges? Describes challenges in the immigrant entrepreneurial experience in the Swedish agri-food industry. Identifies the strategies and actions the immigrant entrepreneurs adopted and used to try to overcome those challenges. | Qualitative study&lt;br&gt;25 interviews with immigrant entrepreneurs Secondary data from various online sources. Content and thematic analysis. | This paper:&lt;br&gt;- identifies challenges posed by the liability of newness for immigrant entrepreneurs and the strategies they adopt to overcome these challenges.&lt;br&gt;- suggests a comparison study and proposes that immigrant entrepreneurship research would benefit from a comparative, interdisciplinary approach. Specific context “agri-food industry” and specific entrepreneurial phase “start-up phase”. |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Paper III</th>
<th>Refugee entrepreneurship in the agri-food industry: The Swedish experience</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>What are the motivations and challenges for refugee entrepreneurs in the start-up and growth phases of the entrepreneurial process?</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Why do refugee entrepreneurs survive in rural areas?</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>What causes refugee entrepreneurs to exit their rural businesses?</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Examines refugee entrepreneurship in rural areas in Sweden as evidenced in the agri-food industry.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content and thematic analysis.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This study:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| - finds that refugee entrepreneurs are motivated and challenged vari-
| ously as they start and operate their entrepreneurial activities. |
| - provides an analytical model that analyses the influences of rurality 
|  during the entrepreneurial process: the start-up, growth, and exit 
|  phases. |
| Specific context “rural areas” and specific group of immigrant “refugees”. |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Paper IV</th>
<th>Refugee entrepreneurship in Sweden and Germany: A comparative study of entrepreneurial motivations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>How does the motivation of refugees to become entrepreneurs differ between the countries of Sweden and Germany?</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This paper presents a descriptive and exploratory inquiry that compares motivations and the context in two countries, Sweden, and Germany. It provides an in-depth insight into motivation at the person-level and environmental levels.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quantitative study</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analyze the entrepreneurship motivations of 125 Syrian refugees in two host countries: 60 individuals in Sweden and 65 individuals in Germany.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basic descriptive statistics were computed by (SPSS)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This paper:</td>
<td></td>
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</table>
| - responds to the absence of a theoretical framework on entrepreneur-
| ship motivation that is suitable for host countries’ contexts. |
| - tests and extends newly constructed entrepreneurship motivation 
|  measures, comparing person-related factors and the perceptions of 
|  environmental-related factors for Syrian refugee entrepreneurs in 
|  Sweden and Germany. |
| - emphasizes the role of country context in shaping refugees’ percep-
|  tion of environmental factors that influence their entrepreneurial mo-
|  tivation. |
| - concludes that mechanisms in which gender particularly impacts 
|  and shapes immigrant entrepreneurship challenges and opportunities 
|  also remain unclear. It calls for future research on the topic. |
| Macro level and specific group of immigrant “refugees”. |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Paper V</th>
<th>Towards digital entrepreneurship: Opportunities and challenges for female refugee entrepreneurs in Sweden</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>How do female refugee entrepreneurs perceive their use of digital techniques for business in the host country?</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study how entrepreneurs seize business opportunities in an increasingly digitized context</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qualitative study: 16 semi-structured, in-depth interviews with female refugee entrepreneurs using digitization.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content and thematic analysis.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This paper</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| - presents an investigation of digital entrepreneurship among female 
|  refugees in Sweden by studying the opportunities and challenges for 
|  female refugee entrepreneurs as they digitize their businesses. |
| Immigrant entrepreneurs experience challenges and opportunities 
|  based on their intersectional identity (i.e., female refugees and migratory status) when they digitize their businesses. |
| Specific context “digital context” and specific group of immigrants “female refugees”. |
4 Summary of the Appended Papers

This chapter summarizes the five appended papers in this thesis. It demonstrates how each paper contributes to the overall purpose of the thesis. The structure includes an overview of each paper, introducing author statements, purposes, methods, findings, originality, and contributions to the dissertation.

4.1 Paper I

Title: “Business values and motives of immigrant agricultural entrepreneurs in Sweden.”

Authorship: Henrik Barth and Ghazal Zalkat


Credit author statement: I participated in all research process steps, including data collection from 25 semi-structured interviews, content analysis, and writing original draft preparation.

Keywords: Immigrant entrepreneurs, Agri-food sector, rural area, motivation factors, business value

Purpose: The agri-food sector in Sweden, as in much of Europe, faces dramatic pressure to promote entrepreneurship, especially in rural areas where population aging and population decline pose grave economic threats to local communities. One solution is the government policy supporting newly arrived immigrants' entrepreneurial ambitions. The policy is seen as doubly beneficial: support for rural areas and support for immigrants unprepared to enter the regular workforce. Immigrant entrepreneurship can potentially lessen the harmful effects of current socio-economic challenges. However, less is known about the immigrants who have settled in rural areas of Sweden, especially the immigrants who arrived in the last ten years as war refugees. More research is needed on how they have
contributed to the Swedish agri-food sector. Thus, this paper examines the immigrant entrepreneurship business development in the agri-food sector in Sweden.

**Design/methodology/approach:** A qualitative research approach is used to record and interpret the experiences of immigrant agricultural entrepreneurs in various rural areas of Sweden to study why they became entrepreneurs and their main business values. We conducted 25 semi-structured, in-depth interviews in which the open-ended questions allowed us to depart from the interview guide when topics of interest arose spontaneously. A purposeful sampling approach to select the respondent candidates and a snowball strategy with various social media and personal networks were used to identify possible respondents.

**Findings:** The results show that personal characteristics and previous entrepreneurship experience are the best predictors of business success. Immigrants choose self-employment in the agri-food sector area for three main reasons: inability to find full-time employment, financial and other support, and prior employment experience. Moreover, immigrant entrepreneurs strengthen a country’s cultural and food diversity by introducing new agri-food products, adding jobs, and opening markets.

**Originality/value:** This paper examines the immigrant entrepreneurship business development in the agri-food sector in Sweden. Thus, such contextualized studies on immigrant entrepreneurial motivations and outcomes can better inform various stakeholders.

**Contribution to the dissertation:** This paper provides an overview of immigrant entrepreneurs in a specific context, the “agri-food industry,” and emphasizes the need for more qualitative studies that examine the challenges and opportunities during their business development. This paper calls for more research to determine immigrant entrepreneurs’ contributions to the Swedish agri-food industry.

### 4.2 Paper II

**Title:** “Immigrant Entrepreneurship in Sweden: The Liability of Newness.”

**Authorship:** Henrik Barth and Ghazal Zalkat.

Credit author statement: I participated actively in the research process, with specific contributions to conceptualization, methodology, investigation, data collection, writing original draft preparation, and visualization.

Keywords: immigrant entrepreneurs, liability of newness, survivability, niche market, virtual embeddedness, previous experience

Purpose: Immigrant entrepreneurs face many challenges in the various early phases of their businesses’ existence. These challenges are often referred to as “the liability of newness.” While some of these challenges are common to all entrepreneurs, the immigrant entrepreneur has additional challenges. This article describes those challenges in the immigrant entrepreneurial experience in the Swedish agri-food industry.

Design/methodology/approach: A qualitative research design is used. Interviews were conducted with 25 immigrant entrepreneurs who planned a business, had started a business, or had exited a business. Various websites and tax reports provided secondary data.

Findings: The main challenges for immigrant entrepreneurship are the lack of various financial and other support resources, the lack of business networks, insufficient government assistance, domestic customer resistance to ethnic products, and the difficulty in hiring employees. In addition, this paper identifies the strategies and actions that immigrant entrepreneurs adopted and used to overcome these challenges. The following strategies and actions were identified: business support, virtual embeddedness, family and ethnic groups, entrepreneurial experience, and niche markets. The companies where the entrepreneurs recognized the gravity of those challenges early in their life cycle were more likely to survive beyond the start-up phase.

Originality/value: Focusing on the reasons behind the low survivability rate of immigrant entrepreneurship and the strategies they develop while confronting the liability of newness, this research can be an information resource for policymakers as they address the liability of newness for immigrant entrepreneurs. Thus, the findings have implications for business advisory services and policymakers involved in achieving immigrants' economic (and social-cultural) integration into their host countries. Immigrants planning to open businesses will find these strategies and actions of interest.

Contribution to the dissertation: This paper identifies challenges posed by the liability of newness for immigrant entrepreneurs and the strategies they adopt to overcome them. This paper suggests a comparison study and proposes that
immigrant entrepreneurship research would benefit from a comparative, interdisciplinary approach.

4.3 Paper III

Title: “Refugee entrepreneurship in the agri-food industry: The Swedish experience.”

Authorship: Henrik Barth and Ghazal Zalkat.


Credit author statement: I contributed to the development of the paper and took an active role in the research process, specifically addressing draft preparation, investigation of the empirical data collection, and visualization of analytical models and results.

Keywords: Refugee entrepreneurship, Agri-food industry, Entrepreneurial process, Immigrant, Integration.

Purpose: Following the recent mass migration of refugees to the European Union in 2015 and 2016, many EU countries took major steps to improve the refugees’ socio-economic integration. This study examines refugee entrepreneurship in rural areas in Sweden as evidenced in the agri-food industry. Entrepreneurship is often considered a sustainable activity that can promote refugees’ economic independence and social integration. The rural setting offers promising employment opportunities for refugees with agricultural backgrounds or interests.

Design/methodology/approach: Twenty-five in-depth, semi-structured interviews with refugees are used to examine refugee entrepreneurs’ experiences in the various phases of the entrepreneurial process, from start-up and growth to success/exit.

Findings: The study found that refugee entrepreneurs are motivated and challenged variously as they start and operate their entrepreneurial activities. For example, they are motivated by discovering niche markets, previous entrepreneurial experience, and family and government support availability. Challenges include legislative hurdles, management and technical problems, and insufficient
financial and other support. Rural settings have both challenges and opportunities for refugee entrepreneurs.

**Originality/value:** This study contributes to the knowledge of refugee entrepreneurs in rural settings by contextualizing the entrepreneurial process and visual representation of the entrepreneurial process in an analytical model. The study's results and analytic model help us examine the influence of various motivations and challenges in the start-up and growth entrepreneurial phases, thus offering insights that policymakers can use to promote and support refugee entrepreneurship. Furthermore, this study may be helpful for refugees planning to start a business in host countries as they can learn from others' experiences. Identifying commonalities and differences is a recommended strategy in business as in life.

**Contribution to the dissertation:** Based on an empirical study of 25 refugee entrepreneurs in southern Sweden, this paper presents a model that analyses rurality's influences on different entrepreneurial process phases: the start-up, growth, and exit phases. This study contributes with several main conclusions, such as rural settings present opportunities and challenges to refugee entrepreneurs. Refugees' businesses could succeed or exit because of many internal and external factors (i.e., manageable, and unmanageable).

### 4.4 Paper IV

**Title:** “Refugee entrepreneurship in Sweden and Germany: A comparative case study of entrepreneurial motivations.”

**Authorship:** Ghazal Zalkat, Henrik Barth, and Lubna Rashid


**Credit author statement:** This study has been conducted in collaboration with three researchers, including Swedish and German datasets. The data collection started in 2019, and the article has been developed over three years, including several paper revisions. During this writing and review process, I took a leading role and was active in the research data collection and writing steps.

**Keywords:** Refugee entrepreneurship, Entrepreneurial motivation, Migration, Socioeconomic integration, Sweden, Germany
**Purpose:** Refugee entrepreneurs may contribute to sustainable growth and development in host countries. However, comparative studies of refugee entrepreneurial motivations are scarce, particularly in the absence of a theoretical framework on entrepreneurship motivation that is suitable for such contexts. This research topic is increasingly interesting to scholars and policymakers working with refugee workforce integration, particularly in light of forecasted increases in global forced displacement over the next few years.

**Design/methodology/approach:** This paper tests and extends newly constructed entrepreneurship motivation measures, comparing person-related factors and the perceptions of environmental-related factors for Syrian refugee entrepreneurs in Sweden and Germany. We analyzed the entrepreneurship motivations of 125 Syrian refugees in two host countries: 60 in Sweden and 65 in Germany.

**Findings:** The results indicate that refugee entrepreneurs’ motivations differ between the two countries concerning market conditions, the educational environment, dissatisfaction, and know-how. However, refugee entrepreneurs in both countries have similar entrepreneurial ambitions and attitudes and are motivated by similar perceptions of social environments and cultural norms.

**Originality/value:** This paper identifies how governments could consider differences in entrepreneurship motivation to shape better and inform host countries’ programs and policies to improve refugee entrepreneurship and subsequent integration. This paper contributes to entrepreneurial policies and programs for better integration of refugees. As EU countries differ in their integration policies and institutional programs, analyses of their similarities and differences can highlight the key characteristics of refugee entrepreneurship in these countries. Such studies can help EU national governments learn how other EU countries have addressed the labor market integration of refugees and can be used as a reference in different global locations.

**Contribution to the dissertation:** This paper contributes with a comparative study of refugee entrepreneurial motivations in two host countries (Sweden and Germany), emphasizing the role of country context in shaping refugees’ perception of environmental factors that influence their entrepreneurial motivation. This study concluded that psychological person-level motivational factors did not differ between the refugees in both countries, which can be explained by their similar pre-migration backgrounds and experiences.
4.5 Paper V

**Title:** “Towards digital entrepreneurship: Opportunities and challenges for female refugee entrepreneurs in Sweden.”

**Authorship:** Ghazal Zalkat


**Credit author statement:** I am the paper's sole author and have conducted all the empirical studies and analyses.

**Keywords:** Female refugee entrepreneurs, digital entrepreneurship, digital tools, mixed embeddedness, intersectionality.

**Purpose:** Digital developments such as social media and the internet have affected most entrepreneurs, including female refugee entrepreneurs (FREs). This chapter examines digital entrepreneurship among female refugees in Sweden by adopting mixed embeddedness and intersectionality. This chapter analyzes the opportunities and challenges for FREs as they digitize their businesses.

**Design/methodology/approach:** Qualitative research was used to study how FREs in Sweden perceived and experienced using DTs in their businesses. Sixteen semi-structured, in-depth interviews were conducted from January 2022 to March 2022. The interview data were supplemented with some notes taken during the interviews, with data from the businesses’ websites and social media platforms and data from a Swedish website, “allabolag.se,” that provides information on Swedish companies.

**Findings:** The data from in-depth interviews show that their use of digital tools (DTs) promotes greater integration with the host country’s market, helps increase their market access, and supports their ability to provide customer services. However, the increased business digitalization can also create work challenges, such as the stress from work-life imbalance and unethical online behaviors.

**Originality/value:** This study provides FRE’s perspectives on challenges and opportunities related to DTs from macro, meso, and micro levels, which are intimately connected. In addition, it has implications for policymakers who wish to support FREs as they use DTs to create, market, and distribute their products and services. This will help policymakers design appropriate solutions aided by DTs
for disadvantaged groups of entrepreneurs who experience challenges and opportunities based on their intersectional identity as females and refugees.

**Contribution to the dissertation:** This paper contributes to refugee and digital entrepreneurship literature from a gender perspective, an area of entrepreneurship research requiring more attention. By adopting a mixed embeddedness approach together with intersectionality, this study provides female refugee entrepreneurs’ perspectives about challenges and opportunities related to the use of digitalization from macro, meso, and micro levels. This study concludes that the intersection of gender and refugee status impacts the challenges and opportunities experienced by female refugee entrepreneurs.
5 Discussion and Contributions

This chapter starts with a general discussion presenting previous research and empirical findings. Then, it introduces the overall theoretical, empirical, and methodological contributions. Finally, it presents the conceptual framework.

5.1 Discussion and Empirical Findings

This study combines empirical findings and knowledge of the literature on immigrant entrepreneurship and develops a conceptual framework and suggestions for enhancing immigrant businesses.

The generalizations and homogenization of immigrants dominate the literature and ignore that immigrant entrepreneurship is a gendered and ethnicized phenomenon (Heis & Dannecker, 2022; Zapata-Barrero & Yalaz, 2018; Welter et al., 2017; Romero & Valdez, 2016). Thus, there is insufficient attention to the bigger picture of specific groups of immigrant entrepreneurs, resulting in fragmented claims and emphasis on individual characteristics, neglecting holistic perspectives (Duan, 2022; Neumann, 2021; Dabić et al., 2020; Aliaga-Isla & Rialp, 2013).

Immigrants perceive opportunities differently over time and encounter challenges hindering business development (Jones et al., 2019). To understand this phenomenon, considering the migratory status and gender perspectives is crucial (Ram et al., 2017; Ram et al., 2013). However, certain groups like refugees and females remain underexplored (Abebe, 2023; Brieger & Gielnik, 2021; Yeshi et al., 2022; Heilbrunn et al., 2018), and the individual and contextual factors are not systematically examined. Existing theories and approaches often overlook intersectional identities such as gender, migratory status, ethnicity, class, religion, and disability (Dabić et al., 2020; Zapata-Barrero & Yalaz, 2018; Ram et al., 2017), leading to insufficient attention to the intersectional identities within the immigrant entrepreneur groups.
While studying immigrant communities at the individual level is essential, it is crucial to consider the meso (business/market) and macro (environment/institution) levels linked to immigrants' perceptions (Duan, 2022). Individual characteristics can't solely explain entrepreneurship; context matters (Kone et al., 2020; Langevang et al., 2015). Migration's economic impact varies based on the analyzed scale or context (Rauhut et al., 2023). Existing theories either focus on immigrant characteristics or host country environments, lacking a coherent analytical framework (Peroni et al., 2016).

Moreover, studies tend to focus on specific phases rather than the entire business development (Brzozowski, 2017; Peroni et al., 2016), leaving a gap in comprehending immigrant entrepreneurship's multidimensional and dynamic nature (Dabić et al., 2020; Ram et al., 2017). Integrating various variables is crucial for a comprehensive understanding (Dabić et al., 2020; Honig, 2020), as each variable delineates only one facet of the phenomenon and cannot be widely understood in isolation (Gartner, 1985).

To summarize, immigrant entrepreneurs research lacks a comprehensive understanding of immigrant entrepreneurs across multilevel dimensions and over time (Duna, 2022; Dabić et al., 2020; Dileo & Pereiro, 2019; Aliaga-Isla & Rialp, 2013; Welter, 2011). Accordingly, this thesis addresses the need for a holistic and multidimensionality approach to examine the complexity and dynamic nature of the immigrant entrepreneurship phenomenon (Duan, 2022; Dabić et al., 2020; Ram et al., 2017; Kuratko et al., 2015; Aldrich & Waldinger, 1990). Thus, this thesis examines specific groups of immigrant entrepreneurs from multiple dimensions and acknowledges the impact of individual and contextual factors.

The findings generally emphasize that immigrant entrepreneurs are heterogeneous groups who perceive opportunities and challenges differently at the individual, business (industry, market, organization), and environmental (social, economic, political) levels based on their intersectional identities during business development. Immigrant entrepreneurs are influenced by various personal attributes such as education, work experience, age, legal status, language skills, migratory status, etc., as well as the host country's market and environment, including financial support, labor market, consumers, suppliers, professional services, social reception, regulation, political context, and co-ethnic community characteristics. These findings align with current knowledge (Heis & Dannecker, 2022; Duan et al., 2021; Kazlou, 2019; Ram et al., 2017; Evansluong, 2016; Barrett & Vershinina, 2017).

Specifically, paper I examines the business development of immigrant entrepreneurs in the agri-food sector in Sweden by conducting 25 interviews focusing on the reasons for entering the agri-food sector and the business values they
contribute. This result reveals that immigrant entrepreneurs are influenced by their personal characteristics and previous entrepreneurship experience. Immigrant entrepreneurs strengthen a country’s economy and food culture by introducing new agri-food products. Based on these findings, this paper calls for an immigrant entrepreneurship model and emphasizes the need for more qualitative studies examining the challenges and opportunities during their business development. This paper chooses this particular context as immigrant entrepreneurship potentially mitigates the harmful effects of current socio-economic challenges in agri-food and rural areas. However, there is limited information about immigrants who have settled in rural areas, especially those who arrived in the past decade as forced immigrants, such as refugees. Therefore, more research is required to determine their contributions to the Swedish agri-food industry.

Paper II digs deeper into the current literature research. It focuses on challenges that immigrant entrepreneurs perceive during the early phases of their business development and how they cope with these challenges. The literature review of this paper shows that the immigrant entrepreneurship field lacks comprehensive studies addressing the challenges that immigrant entrepreneurs face in their host countries. Thus, through qualitative research, this paper identifies key challenges related to the liability of newness: resources, relationships, and environment. Moreover, as the study covered two years, it concludes that immigrant entrepreneurs who recognized the challenges posed by the liability of newness in the start-up phase could better overcome these challenges in the later phases. Virtual embeddedness was one of the strategies immigrant entrepreneurs adopted to overcome those challenges. This paper realizes the significance of the heterogeneous nature of immigrant populations. In addition, it calls for a longitudinal perspective to identify the challenges that immigrant entrepreneurs overcome during their business development. It also suggests a broader comparative, interdisciplinary research approach in which immigrant entrepreneurship is studied in various countries, which leads to the study of immigrant entrepreneurship from a macro-environmental level and analysis of national immigrant entrepreneurship policies.

Therefore, paper III examines “refugee entrepreneurs’ business development, as a specific group of immigrants, in three phases of their business development: start-up and growth to success/exit. Responding to the call for an immigrant entrepreneurship model from paper one, this paper presents a model that analyses the influences of rurality on refugee entrepreneurship during those three phases. In addition, the findings of this paper contribute to the very limited literature about the exit phase (Brzozowski, 2017) by studying failed and exit businesses. Instead of conducting a longitudinal study, twenty-five refugee entrepreneurs were chosen in three entrepreneurial phases to examine the challenges and motivations in each phase. Five of those entrepreneurs were in the exit phase, so this
paper could identify the reasons behind exiting their business, which vary from unfamiliarity with the Swedish market and lack of business planning and technical skills to more specific reasons related to rurality, such as the weather and the lack of available farmland.

Responding to the call for comparative research, paper IV conducts a survey to study refugee entrepreneurship at the cross-country level. This paper compares person-related factors and the perceptions of environmental-related factors for Syrian refugee entrepreneurs in Sweden and Germany. The survey shows that their motivations differ between the two countries concerning market conditions, the educational environment, dissatisfaction, and know-how. Diverse local refugee integration policies, encompassing qualification systems, employment criteria, and political frameworks, may account for the observed variations. German governmental and social initiatives appear more effective in fostering and supporting refugee entrepreneurship than in Sweden. However, it is important to note that this interpretation is a speculative explanation based on our analysis, lacking direct evidence. In addition, refugee entrepreneurs in both countries have similar levels of entrepreneurial ambition and attitude and are motivated by similar perceptions of social environments and cultural norms. This may be attributed to the similar background and the exact reason for migration in the same migration timespan of both studied samples. Moreover, this paper concludes that the gender impact remains unclear, which calls for future research on the topic.

Accordingly, paper V focuses on female refugee entrepreneurs in the digital context. The data from in-depth interviews show that female refugees’ use of digital tools promotes their integration with the host country’s market, increases their market access, and supports their ability to provide customer services. However, the increased business digitalization creates work challenges, such as the stress from work-life imbalance and unethical online behaviors. Through the adoption of the mixed embeddedness approach with intersectionality, this study contributes to refugee entrepreneurship literature and digital entrepreneurship literature from a gender perspective.

After conducting this mixed-method research, the findings and conclusions highlight the heterogeneous and dynamic nature of the immigrant entrepreneurship phenomenon, and each paper contributes to the bigger picture of different groups of immigrant entrepreneurs in particular contexts. Ultimately, this thesis proposes an integrative multilevel conceptual framework that considers immigrant entrepreneurs' perspectives at the individual, market characteristics, and social/environmental levels during their business development within particular contexts.
5.2 Theoretical, Empirical, and Methodological Contributions

Theoretically, this thesis contributes to the field of immigrant entrepreneurship by expanding and generalizing two widely used approaches: mixed embeddedness and intersectionality. By integrating these approaches into a single conceptual framework, this thesis provides a multi-dimensional, holistic approach that focuses on specific groups of immigrant entrepreneurs in different contexts. Based on this approach, perceived challenges and opportunities are classified into three levels (micro individual, meso business/market, macro-environmental) and three entrepreneurial phases (start-up, growth, and exit). This approach enriches the mixed embeddedness framework by introducing modifications relevant to specific groups of immigrants with different intersectional identities, such as gender and migratory status, and by providing a dynamic perspective across different entrepreneurial phases.

Empirically, this thesis fills a gap in the immigrant entrepreneurship literature by offering empirical evidence from studying specific groups of immigrant entrepreneurs in particular contexts. First, it studies refugee entrepreneurs' challenges and opportunities in rural areas and the agri-food industry from multilevel perspectives. Second, it provides an overview of female refugee entrepreneurs' perspectives while utilizing digital techniques during business development. This selective choice of the main target group under study contributes to a comprehensive overview of the immigrant entrepreneurs’ phenomenon. Lastly, the comparative study between Sweden and Germany provides valuable insights into how institutional differences influence refugee entrepreneurship.

In rural areas and Agri-business, this thesis makes a valuable contribution by examining the role of rurality in immigrant business development (Rauhut et al., 2023). Paper I highlights the unique role played by immigrant agricultural entrepreneurs in the agri-food value chain. Their primary objective is to fulfill the demand for Middle Eastern food and other products while preserving their traditional cultures. Moreover, they aim to expand their niche market into the broader Swedish agri-food market. By innovatively producing and growing Arabic bread, cheese, and special vegetable crops, they have added value to the Swedish agri-food sector. These entrepreneurs have capitalized on the opportunity for product differentiation and recognized the significance of "value creation." This involves generating new value by utilizing distinctive production characteristics and traditional resources. In addition, paper III examines the challenges, motivations, and strategies immigrant entrepreneurs perceive related to their business development in rural areas. It presents an analytic model of the refugee entrepreneurial process in the rural setting, allowing us to analyze the influences of rurality on
the various phases of the entrepreneurial process, including start-up, growth, and exit phases. Accordingly, by studying the evolving of immigrant entrepreneurship during the business development process, we gain a comprehensive understanding of the challenges and opportunities immigrant entrepreneurs face.

Moreover, this thesis offers empirical insights into a specific demographic and setting: female refugee entrepreneurs operating in a digital context. Paper V studies the potential opportunities and challenges these entrepreneurs face while they digitize their businesses. Ultimately, the research indicates that using digital tools by female refugee entrepreneurs can promote their integration with the local market, expand their customer base, and support their ability to provide customer services. Nevertheless, this shift to a digital context can also introduce new challenges, such as work-life balance stress and unethical online behaviors.

Methodologically, this thesis contributes to the research in different ways. It provides an alternative approach to traditional longitudinal studies by analyzing immigrant entrepreneurs at different entrepreneurial phases: start-up, growth, and exit phases. Additionally, it supports innovative sampling methods like virtual network sampling for studying hard-to-reach populations, addressing challenges efficiently and inexpensively while maintaining environmental friendliness and participant anonymity.

In summary, this thesis enriches the theoretical, empirical, and methodological foundation of immigrant entrepreneurship research, presenting an integrative multilevel framework that contributes to understanding immigrant entrepreneurs’ business development across different dimensions and contexts.

5.3 Conceptual Framework

In pursuit of answering the research question regarding how immigrant entrepreneurs perceive challenges and opportunities related to their business development, this thesis develops a conceptual framework that combines mixed embeddedness with intersectionality. Thus, a comprehensive understanding of the immigrant entrepreneurship phenomenon is developed through studying the business development of specific groups of immigrant entrepreneurs in particular contexts.

The thesis first explores the main influence of intersectional identities on immigrant entrepreneurship and then theorizes about context as a border condition that strengthens or weakens the effect of intersectional identities on immigrant entrepreneurship during different entrepreneurial phases.
The developed conceptual framework (see Figure 3) adopts a multidimensional approach to examine the immigrant entrepreneurial phenomenon by analytically and systematically subdividing entrepreneurs' perspectives across different entrepreneurial phases and through the lens of intersectionality at three levels of the mixed embeddedness: macro, meso, and micro (Kloosterman & Rath, 2018; Collins, 2015; Welter, 2011; Kloosterman, 2010; Kloosterman & Rath, 2001; Kloosterman et al., 1999; Crenshaw, 1991). Thus, this conceptual framework allows for multiple interpretations and explanations of how immigrant entrepreneurs face challenges and opportunities differently throughout their business development at each entrepreneurial phase (e.g., start-up, growth, and exit) based on their intersectional identities and context.

Figure 3: Conceptual framework
Furthermore, this conceptual framework was developed with a theoretical perspective, aiming to enable future research to make theoretically informed judgments about which contexts are most proximally similar. Therefore, this research studies explicitly specific groups of immigrants in particular contexts to expand and generalize theories through "analytic generalization" (Polit & Beck, 2010; Patton, 2002; Firestone, 1993). The goal was to present a framework that is abstract and conceptual.

Consequently, the mixed-embedded approach was extended to eliminate any exclusions among specific groups of immigrant entrepreneurs, particularly refugees and female entrepreneurs. In contributing to mixed embeddedness, this conceptual framework considers the three phases of the entrepreneurial process among homogeneous groups of immigrants, namely refugees and female refugee entrepreneurs. Thus, this thesis argues for a revision of mixed embeddedness to address the intersectional identities of immigrant entrepreneurship at each entrepreneurial phase, ultimately advocating for a more inclusive approach.

In conclusion, this thesis introduces a conceptual framework and integrates theoretical perspectives with empirical findings, enriching the discourse on immigrant entrepreneurship. Furthermore, this conceptual framework represents an important step toward developing fundamental theories that help explain and predict immigrant entrepreneurial activity.

The conceptual framework is built based on the findings from the appended papers included in this thesis and completed by the extant literature and theories. Accordingly, the conceptual framework consists of three blocks (i.e., intersectionality, mixed embeddedness, and entrepreneurial process), and it proposes multiple dimensions in each block. All the challenges and opportunities defined in the appended papers (Zalkat, 2024; Barth & Zalkat, 2023; Barth & Zalkat, 2021; Barth & Zalkat, 2020; Barth & Zalkat, 2019) are categorized into three dimensions: mixed embeddedness, intersectionality, and entrepreneurial process. These three dimensions together formulate the proposed conceptual framework for this research (see Figure 4 and Appendix 1):
**Figure 4:** Immigrant Entrepreneurship Conceptual Framework Dimensions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mixed Embeddedness</th>
<th>Micro</th>
<th>Meso</th>
<th>Macro</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Entrepreneurial phases</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Start-up phase</td>
<td>Personal Characteristics</td>
<td>Ethnic Enclaves</td>
<td>National Policies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Social Networks</td>
<td>Business Networks</td>
<td>Economic Conditions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Growth phase</td>
<td>Skills and Knowledge</td>
<td>Community Organizations</td>
<td>Legal Frameworks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exit phase</td>
<td>Perceptions and Stereotypes</td>
<td>Industry and market</td>
<td>Cultural Norms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Resilience and Coping Mechanisms</td>
<td>Access to Resources</td>
<td>Institutional Support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Work-Life Balance</td>
<td>Market Opportunities</td>
<td>Internationalization</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 5.3.1 Mixed embeddedness

Mixed embeddedness operates at three levels: macro, meso, and micro (Högberg & Mitchell, 2022; Kloosterman & Rath, 2018; Ram et al., 2017; Kloosterman & Rath, 2001; Kloosterman et al., 1999). Each level of the proposed conceptual framework provides insights from immigrant entrepreneurs' perceptions during their business development that have been identified in the appended papers (Zalkat, 2024; Barth & Zalkat, 2023; Barth & Zalkat, 2021; Barth & Zalkat, 2020; Barth & Zalkat, 2019) and completed by the extant literature and theories (Figure 4).

**Micro Level:** This level introduces immigrant entrepreneurs’ individual characteristics that impact the opportunities and challenges encountered by immigrant entrepreneurs during their business development:

- **Personal Characteristics:** Individual attributes, such as education, prior work experience, and entrepreneurial skills.
• **Social Networks:** Personal and professional networks are critical in providing immigrant entrepreneurs access to information, resources, and support.

• **Skills and Knowledge:** The skills and knowledge immigrants bring from their home country or through education and training in the host country can shape their entrepreneurial ventures.

**Meso Level:** This level presents business and market characteristics that produce challenges and opportunities during immigrant entrepreneurs' business development:

• **Ethnic Enclaves:** Immigrant entrepreneurs often cluster in specific geographic areas, creating ethnic enclaves where they share cultural ties, language, and support networks.

• **Business Networks:** Business associations and networks facilitate information exchange, market access, and collective action among immigrant entrepreneurs.

• **Community Organizations:** Social and community organizations within immigrant communities can provide support, mentorship, and access to resources for aspiring entrepreneurs.

• **Industry and market:** Immigrant entrepreneurs choose a specific industry and market where they find a niche market.

**Macro Level:** This level introduces environmental and institutional factors that influence the opportunities and challenges faced by immigrant entrepreneurs during their business development:

• **National Policies:** Government policies regarding immigration, labor markets, small business support, and diversity and inclusion/integration initiatives.

• **Economic Conditions:** Economic factors like the overall state of the economy, industry trends, and access to capital and financial resources.

• **Legal Frameworks:** Immigration laws, regulations around business registration, and intellectual property protection.

• **Cultural Norms:** Societal attitudes towards immigrants and entrepreneurship, as well as cultural practices within immigrant communities.
5.3.2 Intersectionality

Intersectionality includes different forms of identities (gender, race, religion, legal status, migratory status, caste, ethnicity, nation, ability, and age) that interact on multiple levels to shape complex social inequalities (Collins, 2019; 2015). By applying intersectionality, this block defines challenges and opportunities immigrant entrepreneurs perceive during their business development based on their intersectional identities (Zalkat, 2024; Barth & Zalkat, 2021; Barth & Zalkat, 2020; Dy et al., 2017; Collins, 2015; Crenshaw, 1991) (Figure 4). Intersectionality impacts the opportunities and challenges encountered by immigrant entrepreneurs during their business development through:

- **Access to Resources**: Intersectionality can influence immigrant entrepreneurs’ access to financial capital, networks, and business opportunities. For example, women from specific ethnic backgrounds may encounter barriers in accessing funding due to both gender and racial biases.

- **Market Opportunities**: Intersectionality can influence the types of businesses that immigrant entrepreneurs choose to start and the sector they enter. Their unique identities and cultural backgrounds may lead to niche market opportunities or specific product offerings.

- **Perceptions and Stereotypes**: Immigrant entrepreneurs may face stereotypes and preconceived perceptions based on their intersectional identities. These perceptions can impact how they are perceived by customers, suppliers, investors, and other stakeholders.

- **Networking**: Social networks are essential for immigrant entrepreneurs, but intersectionality can shape the composition and effectiveness of these networks. Entrepreneurs from different intersectional identities may form networks based on shared experiences and cultural affinities.

- **Institutional Support**: Intersectionality affects the extent to which immigrant entrepreneurs receive support from institutional bodies and government programs. Some immigrant entrepreneurs may face barriers due to the lack of representation or cultural sensitivity in support services.

- **Resilience and Coping Mechanisms**: Immigrant entrepreneurs may develop unique coping mechanisms and strategies to navigate the challenges posed by their intersecting identities. Their resilience and adaptability can influence their success in entrepreneurship.

- **Work-Life Balance**: The intersection of family responsibilities and entrepreneurial activities can create distinct challenges for immigrant
entrepreneurs. Balancing cultural expectations with business demands may require innovative approaches.

- **Internationalization**: Intersectionality may influence the expansion of immigrant entrepreneurs into global markets. The interplay of identities and cultural contexts can affect market entry and acceptance in different regions.

### 5.3.3 Entrepreneurial process

Immigrant entrepreneurship is a multidimensional and dynamic phenomenon (Dabić et al., 2020; Ram et al., 2017; Aldrich & Waldinger, 1990). In this conceptual framework, the entrepreneurial process was broken into three phases (Figure 5). The first begins with an intention that leads to a “start-up phase.” The second is the development of an established business “growth phase,” and the third is when the business discontinuation in some form “exit phase” (Global Entrepreneurship Monitor, 2019; Murnieks et al., 2019). Each entrepreneurial phase in the proposed conceptual framework provides insights from immigrant entrepreneurs’ perceptions that have been identified in the appended papers 2 and 3 (Barth & Zalkat, 2021; Barth & Zalkat, 2020) and completed by the extant literature and theories (Figure 4).

![Figure 5: Entrepreneurial process (inspired by appended papers II- III)](image-url)
• **Start-up phase:** This phase includes individual characteristics that can influence an immigrant’s ability to identify and pursue entrepreneurial opportunities, social networks that provide access to information, resources, and support for immigrant entrepreneurs, and skills and knowledge that shape their entrepreneurial ventures. In addition, factors from the meso level, such as ethnic enclaves, business networks, community organizations, markets, and industry associations, impact immigrant entrepreneurs' business development during the start-up phase. Finally, contextual factors such as national policies impact the opportunities and challenges immigrant entrepreneurs face, as well as economic conditions that influence immigrants’ entrepreneurial decisions. Legal frameworks that affect immigrants’ ability to start businesses and cultural norms that can shape the types of businesses immigrants choose to start.

• **Growth phase:** This phase includes individual characteristics that can influence an immigrant’s ability to drive and develop their business, social networks that provide access to information, resources, and support for immigrant entrepreneurs, and skills and knowledge that manage their entrepreneurial ventures. In addition, legal frameworks affect immigrants’ ability to operate businesses, and cultural norms shape the types of businesses immigrants choose for their entrepreneurial strategies.

• **Exit phase:** This phase includes individual characteristics, business and market commitments, and characteristics, economic conditions that influence immigrants’ entrepreneurial success and decisions, and cultural norms that can challenge immigrants to choose to exit.
6 Conclusions and Implications

The last chapter of this thesis starts with a general conclusion and then summarizes the theoretical and empirical conclusion. After that, the implications for practice and policymakers are presented. In addition, implications of the proposed conceptual framework are introduced. Finally, this chapter ends with limitations and future research avenues.

By answering the research question, this thesis examines immigrant entrepreneurs’ perceptions and emphasizes the importance of studying specific groups of immigrants, such as refugees and female refugees, in particular contexts.

Looking at the current literature on this topic, a holistic approach toward specific groups of immigrant entrepreneurs is still missing (Duna, 2022; Högberg & Mitchell, 2022; Murnieks et al., 2019; Aliaga-Isla & Rialp, 2013). Researchers tend to focus on singular aspects of entrepreneurial business development, disregarding the influence of contextual factors. This results in a fragmented understanding and insufficiently studied phenomenon, which requires further exploration and a coherent framework.

Particularly, refugees, distinguished by their unique mobility reasons, processes, and nature (Cortes, 2004), face challenges influenced by labor market regulations and legal frameworks at the macro-level, posing challenges to their business development. Their intersectional identity directs them toward specific industries, such as agriculture, driven by rural community networks that seem more welcoming than urban communities. However, the challenges of “rurality,” including limited technical resources and farmland, can impede refugee entrepreneurship (Barth & Zalkat, 2021).

Another case from paper V indicates that the intersection of gender and refugee status shapes the challenges and opportunities experienced by female refugee entrepreneurs in utilizing digital tools. Despite the potential for digital platforms to mitigate gender stereotyping and refugee-related discrimination, challenges such as a lack of technical skills, unethical online behavior, and the complexities of online marketing persist. Female refugee entrepreneurs highlighted the potential
of using digital tools to foster the integration of their businesses within the market of their host country as they could minimize the impact of their intersectional identity of gender stereotyping and refugee status. The semi-anonymity that digital platforms offer creates a great opportunity for them to integrate into the host country’s market, increase their market access, and support the ability to provide customers with their services and products without experiencing discrimination related to their intersectional identity.

Furthermore, the thesis argues that immigrant entrepreneurship is a multidimensional and dynamic phenomenon. Thus, by framing entrepreneurship as a process, the research highlights the opportunities and challenges at different entrepreneurial phases. For instance, paper II reveals that during the start-up phase, challenges may include the liability of newness, lack of financial resources, insufficient government assistance, and resistance to ethnic products. Similarly, refugee entrepreneurs in paper three in the start-up phase were challenged by start-up capital (e.g., finance, land, or place), poor business knowledge, and lack of credentials and language competency. While in paper V, female refugee entrepreneurs are influenced mostly by personal and societal factors.

In contrast, the growth phase introduces new challenges related to business and market factors. Immigrant entrepreneurs acquire more business confidence and greater entrepreneurial experience in the growth phase. However, they face challenges in growing their businesses and expanding their markets and customer base. Refugee entrepreneurs in the growth phase in paper three can't handle the competitive forces, consumer tastes, economic conditions, and the rules and regulations that govern how they produce, market, and sell their products and services.

However, the exit phase is notably absent from most immigrant entrepreneurship research, prompting a call for increased focus on failed businesses (Brzozowski, 2017). Accordingly, this thesis adds value to the research by studying the exit phase and identifying the failure/exit reasons in paper III.

Lastly, the comparative study between Sweden and Germany provides valuable insights into how institutional differences influence refugee entrepreneurship. The survey in paper IV reveals that German governmental and social efforts have facilitated more successful refugee entrepreneurship than Sweden, showcasing the importance of institutional contexts. The results show that refugee entrepreneurs in Germany were more motivated by market structures and educational offerings, had more know-how, and were less prone to negative motivation resulting from experiencing dissatisfaction (e.g., discrimination or lack of opportunities) compared with Sweden-based refugee entrepreneurs.
In conclusion, the thesis produces a multidimensional conceptual framework demonstrating the interplay between immigrant entrepreneurs' intersectional identities and their perceptions across individual, business, and environmental levels over time. By addressing the gaps in theoretical discussions, particularly by integrating mixed embeddedness with intersectionality, this research contributes to a more holistic understanding of immigrant entrepreneurship. Consequently, this study argues that immigrant entrepreneurs' perceptions of opportunities and challenges are complexly linked to their intersectional identities, shaping their business development in the host country.

6.1 Empirical Conclusions

More specifically, the empirical conclusions of this thesis are summarized in the following points:

- Challenges and opportunities that immigrant entrepreneurs experience are often related to their individual characteristics, business and market characteristics, and the environmental and institutional context. Moreover, those challenges and opportunities differ during each entrepreneurial phase and are based on immigrant entrepreneurs’ intersectional identities.
- The thesis reveals how immigrant entrepreneurs can take advantage of specific contexts (agri-food industry, rural areas, and digital context) to start their businesses. However, those contexts may provide additional challenges related to immigrant entrepreneurs’ intersectional identities.
- Refugee entrepreneurs in Sweden differ from those in Germany concerning certain person-related and environmental factors related to their entrepreneurship motivation. Germany-based refugee entrepreneurs were more motivated by market structures and educational offerings, had more know-how, and were less prone to negative motivation resulting from experiencing dissatisfaction (e.g., due to discrimination or lack of opportunities) compared with Sweden-based refugee entrepreneurs. The reason could be that local refugee integration policies widely differ concerning qualification systems, employment requirements, and political structures. German governmental and social efforts have had greater success in facilitating and supporting refugee entrepreneurship in comparison with Sweden. However, this inference is merely a potential explanation for the results not directly evidenced by our analysis.
- This thesis provides an overview of refugee entrepreneurship in specific contexts: the agri-food industry and rural areas. Paper III presents an analytical model that helps to explain the impact of various opportunities
and challenges in the start-up, growth, and exit entrepreneurial phases from a rurality perspective. Which, in turn, advances the practical knowledge of why immigrant entrepreneurs choose a particular industry.

- The exit phase is an important phase to be studied during business development as it provides insightful perspectives about the reason behind exiting the business, which varies from unfamiliarity with the market, lack of business planning, financial problems, and technical skills to the willingness to switch to other market or industry after building a good knowledge from the first entrepreneurial experience.

- Digital technologies offer a semi-anonymity advantage to specific fragile and vulnerable groups of entrepreneurs.

- Using digital technologies among immigrant entrepreneurs opens new discussions for multidisciplinary research (e.g., digitalization).

- The proposed conceptual framework will benefit future research by guiding the identification of relevant research questions, theories, and methods, thereby enhancing the quality of research in the field.

6.2 Theoretical Conclusions

In this section, the theoretical conclusions are presented:

- This thesis advances immigrant entrepreneurship by integrating two prominent approaches, mixed embeddedness and intersectionality, into a cohesive conceptual framework. Thus, by synthesizing different dimensions, this research aims to enhance the explanatory power of these approaches in studying specific immigrant entrepreneur groups within contexts. Moreover, this comprehensive, multidimensional, and integrated approach fills a gap in the mixed embeddedness, which tends to overlook the role of intersectional identities, such as gender and migratory status.

- Immigrant entrepreneurs’ intersectional identities play a critical role in business development in various contexts. This thesis highlights the importance of deepening the knowledge of intersectionality to explain the immigrant entrepreneurship phenomenon.

- The entrepreneurial process concept has been added to the proposed conceptual framework, which is neglected in the mixed embeddedness approach. The immigrant entrepreneurship phenomenon is a continuous process where immigrant entrepreneurs evolve and grow differently over time. Thus, various groups of immigrants respond differently to changing opportunities and challenges during different entrepreneurial phases.

- This thesis contributes theoretically to the big picture of the heterogeneous immigrant entrepreneurship phenomenon with an integrative
multidimensional study that shows the complexity and dynamic of the interaction of many influential dimensions.

- This thesis enriches the theoretical foundations of immigrant entrepreneurship research by systematically exploring immigrant entrepreneurial contexts and examining the effects of intersecting identities on business and environmental contexts related to business development.

6.3 Implications for Practice

In practical terms, this thesis provides the knowledge and understanding of immigrant entrepreneurs’ business development to multiple stakeholders, including immigrants and host countries, such as policymakers, advisors, consulters, business incubators, and even entrepreneurs themselves. Thus, support and services can be aligned with different phases of the entrepreneurial process and based on immigrants’ intersectional identities. Consequently, this can contribute to better social-economic inclusion and combat exclusion among refugees and female entrepreneurs.

Furthermore, this thesis emphasizes the role of immigrant entrepreneurship in contributing to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Immigrant entrepreneurs create businesses that generate employment opportunities, thereby reducing poverty, contributing to economic growth, and reducing inequality in the host countries. More specifically, entrepreneurship among female immigrants and female refugees contributes to gender equality.

Such contextualized research informs a wide variety of stakeholders. For example, different groups of immigrants planning to start a business in host countries can learn from others' experiences. In addition, lessons and implications can be used and tested for the evolving Ukraine refugee crisis. This becomes especially crucial considering the proposed increases in forced global displacement over the next few years. In this context, the previous migration crisis has provided many lessons about immigrant entrepreneurship and how different factors can play an important role in fostering entrepreneurial challenges and opportunities. Hopefully, the studies addressed here provide insights into the importance of fostering entrepreneurial motivation in the early stage of the immigration process as one of several facilitators of refugee workforce integration. In addition, this thesis highlights the important contribution of immigrant entrepreneurship in marginalized contexts such as rural areas.
6.4 Implications for Policymakers

The research findings contribute with important implications for policymakers at national, regional, and local levels, advocating for the formulation and implementation of policies to foster immigrant entrepreneurship. Moreover, the conceptual framework presented in this study is a valuable tool for public policy, offering strategic insights into specific areas where concerted efforts should be concentrated to encourage and support immigrant entrepreneurs effectively.

The nuanced insights from this research can help policymakers design targeted interventions for specific groups of immigrant entrepreneurs, particularly refugees, female immigrants/refugees, and those in rural areas. As the research underscores, an essential consideration for policymakers is the integration of gender-sensitive strategies. Formulating inclusive policies that account for gender dynamics is imperative to promoting the participation and success of immigrant and refugee women in entrepreneurship. Lessons derived from this research contribute to advancing growth, innovation, and value creation goals among specific groups of immigrant entrepreneurs, fostering a more inclusive entrepreneurial landscape. For example, digital technologies offer a way to mitigate female immigrant entrepreneurs' challenges, such as discrimination. However, utilizing these tools can also present other challenges regarding lacking digital skills. Recognizing these possibilities and challenges can be advantageous for female immigrant entrepreneurs and policymakers who aim to support immigrants' cultural and economic integration. Thus, policymakers are encouraged to develop targeted solutions that promote the use of digital technologies, including education and guidelines specifically geared towards marginalized groups of entrepreneurs with intersecting identities.

Moreover, this thesis provides actionable policy recommendations to address market failures and offers guidance to national, regional, and local governments. It underscores the necessity for policies adopting a long-term perspective on integration procedures, recognizing the multifaceted challenges and opportunities immigrant entrepreneurs encounter across different entrepreneurial phases. Thus, it offers the needed support at each phase of immigrant entrepreneurs' business development. In addition, the comparative study contributes valuable lessons for governments keen on learning from the experiences of their counterparts in fostering immigrant integration and entrepreneurship.

In conclusion, the implications for policymakers extend beyond mere recommendations to encompass strategic insights, actionable guidance, and a nuanced understanding of the diverse needs and challenges immigrant entrepreneurs face. This research advocates for a comprehensive, inclusive, and forward-looking
policy approach to foster immigrant entrepreneurship, contributing to the broader goals of economic growth, innovation, and social inclusion.

6.5 Implications of the Conceptual Framework

More specifically, this section presents the proposed conceptual framework implications:

- It provides a comprehensive and nuanced insight into immigrant entrepreneurship.
- This conceptual framework can be adapted and refined based on specific research focus and context.
- Future research can use this conceptual framework to organize data, conduct analysis, and present findings to illustrate the interconnections between mixed embeddedness, intersectionality, and entrepreneurial phases in immigrant entrepreneurship.
- This conceptual framework contributes to immigrant entrepreneurship research by recognizing the many important factors that compose immigrant entrepreneurship, thereby advancing the quality of empirical and theoretical work in the field.
- It can be used to study immigrant entrepreneurs’ motivation, challenges, opportunities, and strategies in any context and for immigrants with different intersectional identities.
- Policymakers can use this framework to develop more inclusive and responsive policies and design support systems adjusted to the specific challenges and opportunities faced by certain groups of immigrant entrepreneurs based on their various intersecting identities (e.g., gender, race, class) during their business development.

6.6 Limitations and Future Research Avenues

Building upon the groundwork laid by this research, several avenues for future inquiry emerge, each contributing to the ongoing development of knowledge within the immigrant entrepreneurship field. A multidisciplinary approach is advocated, extending into the realm of digitalization, to comprehensively explore how digital technologies can act as catalysts for immigrant entrepreneurs in overcoming challenges related to business development. Future studies can focus on the mechanisms through which digital tools facilitate market access, operational efficiency, and entrepreneurial success for diverse immigrant groups.
Furthermore, this thesis calls for expanding research endeavors to include cross-country studies of institutional variances and immigrant integration initiatives. A critical next step involves fostering transborder collaboration, allowing host countries to exchange insights, lessons learned, and success stories. By engaging in comparative analyses, researchers can illuminate the nuanced impact of institutional structures on immigrant entrepreneurship, thus providing a more holistic understanding of the factors influencing entrepreneurial success in various national contexts.

The evolving Ukraine refugee crisis presents a unique opportunity for future research to test and apply the lessons and implications derived from this study. Investigating Ukrainian refugees' entrepreneurial motivations and challenges can contribute timely insights, potentially informing responsive policies and interventions tailored to this specific group.

In summary, future research should hold multidisciplinary perspectives, examine the implications of digitalization, conduct cross-country assessments, and explore variations in challenges and opportunities among immigrant entrepreneurs with distinct migratory statuses and genders. Such inquiries will contribute to a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of immigrant entrepreneurship, facilitating the development of effective policies, interventions, and support systems in diverse global contexts.

However, acknowledging the limitations of the study is crucial. This thesis suggests studying the relations among the main dimensions of the conceptual framework, requiring quantitative research that can examine and measure the interrelations between different factors influencing immigrant entrepreneurs' business development. Thus, the future may further develop this framework by examining the relationships among its key elements.

Moreover, this thesis explains the research phenomenon from an individual's perspective and the interaction between the individuals and their contexts, focusing on immigrants' perspectives. However, exploring different perspectives on immigrant entrepreneurship is needed for future studies. Thus, future research may provide an overview of other actors and stakeholders at different levels of the entrepreneurial process. In addition, this research provides "snapshots" of immigrant businesses in the different phases, but it did not follow a longitudinal study per se. Accordingly, it might be worth conducting a longitudinal study.

Other limitations related to the homogeneous nature of the target groups, primarily from Arabic countries, call for future research that explores immigrants from non-Arabic countries, encouraging more comparison studies of immigrant/non-immigrant and female/male to understand differences and similarities. However,
this studied group is also highly diverse regarding education, family status, and business/work experience. Future research endeavors should also focus on investigating the specific challenges and opportunities immigrants face in different contexts, considering variations in migratory statuses and genders. For example, examining how refugees with cultural differences between their origin and host culture navigate entrepreneurial challenges can offer valuable insights. Comparisons between groups with diverse cultural backgrounds, such as Syrians and Ukrainians in Europe, can shed light on the influence of cultural congruence on entrepreneurial experiences.

Additionally, the adopted mixed methods approach is a new paradigm for entrepreneurship research (Duan, 2022; Dabić et al., 2020; Dy & Agwunobi, 2018). However, immigrant entrepreneurship research has recently encouraged this approach. This approach provides deeper insights into the field and for generalization (Dabić et al., 2020). GDPR restrictions on accessing relevant cases, particularly in refugee entrepreneurship, present a limitation that future research endeavors should address. Lastly, the potential biases associated with labels such as "refugee" warrant careful consideration and ethical sensitivity in future studies.

In conclusion, this thesis contributes to both theoretical and practical dimensions of immigrant entrepreneurship research. By expanding existing approaches, this research highlights the complexities and dynamic nature of the immigrant entrepreneurship phenomenon, provides a novel conceptual framework, and offers insights for policy and practice. Moreover, the identified limitations underscore avenues for future research, ensuring the continual development of knowledge in this critical field.
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Appendix
Appendix 1: Immigrant entrepreneurship detailed conceptual framework with dimensions and examples.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phases</th>
<th>Mixed Embeddedness</th>
<th>Intersectionality</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Star-up phase</strong></td>
<td><strong>Micro</strong></td>
<td><strong>Meso</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Individual characteristics</strong> (education, capital, skills, knowledge, entrepreneurial experiences, etc.): influence an immigrant’s ability to identify and pursue entrepreneurial opportunities.</td>
<td>Ethnic enclaves</td>
<td>National policies: impact the opportunities and challenges faced by immigrant entrepreneurs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Social networks</strong> (families, friends, ethnic communities): provide access to information, resources, and support for immigrant entrepreneurs.</td>
<td>Community organizations: provide support, mentorship, and access to resources for aspiring entrepreneurs.</td>
<td>Economic conditions: influence immigrants’ entrepreneurial decisions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Skills and Knowledge</strong>: shape their entrepreneurial activities.</td>
<td>Business networks: provide access to information, resources, and support for immigrant entrepreneurs.</td>
<td>Legal frameworks: affect immigrants’ ability to start businesses.</td>
</tr>
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<td>Cultural norms: can shape the types of businesses immigrants choose to start.</td>
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<td>Phases</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Micro</td>
<td>Meso</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Growth phase</td>
<td>Social networks (families, friends, ethnic communities): provide access to information, resources, and support for immigrant entrepreneurs.</td>
<td>Business networks: help immigrant entrepreneurs to extend their business and success. Community organizations: provide support, mentorship, and access to resources for aspiring entrepreneurs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Skills and Knowledge: shape their entrepreneurial activities.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exit phase</td>
<td>Skills and Knowledge: lack of entrepreneurial and technical skills.</td>
<td>Business networks: lack of business network can force immigrants to exit. Markets and industry: a specific industry and market can provide more challenges and force immigrants to exit.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Ghazal Zalkat

Ghazal Zalkat, an agricultural engineer, had a master's degree in horticulture from Damascus University, Syria, in 2014. Since 2018, she has worked as a research assistant in innovation management and entrepreneurship at the Engineering and Innovation Department, School of Business, Innovation, and Sustainability at Halmstad University, Sweden. During her Ph.D., she worked on multidisciplinary research projects and EU projects, which gave her the opportunity to interact with entrepreneurs, immigrants, and different organizations in order to design and implement innovative programs and tools that support innovation, entrepreneurship, and socioeconomic integration. Her doctoral thesis explores the riveting intersection of immigration and business development, unraveling the multifaceted challenges and promising opportunities that define the journey of immigrant entrepreneurs in the host countries.

School of Business, Innovation and Sustainability

ISBN: 978-91-89587-38-0 (printed)
Halmstad University Dissertations, 2024