

Ellis, Peter

Article

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To find a standard format that measures the activities of a Micro, Small or Medium Business Entity. A Pitch

Peter Ellis ^{a,1}

^a *University of Queensland, Australia*

Abstract: This pitch is a proposed strategy for my current research which is to identify, examine and understand the essential elements that identify Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) as unique identities within the field of business management. I shall be using the format developed by Faff (2015b) for novice pitchers and (Faff, 2015a), which establishes the academic existence of the template tool. Using this tool I am discussing the motivation and puzzle, followed by introducing the idea, data and tools that are used. I then explain what is new and the benefit of the use of the new data, finally presenting a conclusion that offers the contribution and other considerations. The Pitch is a direct result of completing a course set out by Professor Faff RBUS6914 “The (Academic) research Process”

Keywords: Pitching research; Definition of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) studies; Business stability within size parameter; Comparative studies; Decision making

JEL Codes: M19

1. Introduction

Agreements on acceptable definitions of MSMEs have proved elusive, 50 separate definitions were found in 75 countries. Also 700 definitions were presented to a Congressional Committee in the United States of America.

¹ *Corresponding author:* Department of Business Management, University of Queensland, St Lucia Campus Brisbane Australia; email address: p.ellis@business.uq.edu.au

A variety of criteria have been used in an effort to find universal definitions of MSMEs including total worth; relative size within an industry; number of employees; value of products produced/sold; annual sales or receipts and net worth. Areas of consensus relate to relative size in terms of influence within a firm's macro-environment.

Most of the research on MSMEs have explicitly or implicitly identified that they focused their dissertation on the MSME market for analysis, either simply using the term MSME or identifying the local criterion before considering the focus of their research interest. Alternatively they may use a definition such as:

“MSMEs are generally defined as those firms with fewer than 500 employees in the US and fewer than 250 employees in the European Union” (Pett & Wolff, 2012)

Using these generalisations appears to be an attempt to assume all MSMEs are the same in structure and required management systems. Whilst using a single acronym to associate all entities that are smaller than large or corporate entities however, the acronym itself breaks the entities into three groups, those being micro, small and medium. Business having identifiable size headings, suggests there is a significant difference in perhaps the structure, management systems, HR activity, stockholder expectations, or market expectations etc. in some way as a consequence of businesses being different sizes. If there was not, then why would they not just be called Smaller Entities? What is generally the case, is that the expression SME or MSME is constantly used as a one size fits all.

Yet with no acceptable single identifiable analysis for each of the sized entities, using the acronym diverts focus from the fact that there is currently no precise means of differentiating between business size and the importance and implications of that difference. The question is this, why do some serious researchers mention the anomaly and move on as if it is not important?

The remainder if this Pitch is set out as follows. Section 2 shows the goal of the pitch, identifying where it is different from earlier papers and the focus of its structure, followed by the completed Pitch template as proposed by Faff (2015a, 2015b). Section 3 is where I offer my personal reflections on the pitch writing, followed by a Mickey Mouse view of the pitch. Finally section 4 is the conclusion.

2. The Pitch

The goal of this pitch is to introduce the idea that an international generic distinction that identifies, qualifies and delimitates the fundamental elements of each of the entity types is not only necessary, but also feasible for research

purposes as set out in Table 1. It is the wish of this researcher to develop a greater understanding of the current research methodology to identify the individual elements of MSMEs and share research conclusions using a generic identification that is aimed at those specific targets.

The benefit of differentiating clearly the activities within the several levels of business structures that may be used by researchers is that conclusions would be able to be replicated and evidence will be standardised. Through the use of a matrix that will commence development in this pitch, further research will then focus on Micro, Small or Medium Entities individually, rather than MSMEs as a single group.

2.1 Identification of entity structure

Whether the entity is a Micro, Small or Medium Enterprise, the key element is that there is an owner, or team of owners, whilst larger organisations have boards of directors.

In order to understand the business elements within the entity, this pitch will look at a number of aspects to identify the size and activity required to be carried out. It has been shown that the current definition using the number of staff and turnover are not standard (Mintzberg, 1979), they will not be used as elements of the matrix.

1. Governance

a) Activities of the owner, b) Structure / governance

2. HR Management

c) HR Management, d) Owner Strategy, e) How flexible is the entity within the market?

3. Market placement

f) How does the entity address its market? g) What is the entity's Market activity?

3. Personal reflections on learning to write a pitch

I was fortunate to have stumbled across Faff's course on writing a pitch for a Journal very early on in my PhD program. The course was excellent and I am really pleased that I had the opportunity to attend. The content was well planned with opportunities for the participants to develop their Post Graduate skills towards having their work published. The final part of the course was to attend a pitching competition and evaluate the participants. I found the benefit of attending the

competition was not only to listen and see what was expected of the participants, but I also hoped that by watching the competition, I could decide what was required for me to participate in 2016 or 2017 and was very impressed by the general quality and preparation of the contributors and this paper is a part of that pitch event. In addition there was a respectable number of staff and students in the audience showing the importance that students consider this program to be for now and the future.

With regard to the Pitching course, Faff (2015b) originally focussed on quantitative research, which suited most but not all students. A number of students attending the course were more interested in the qualitative or mixed quantitative / qualitative research and have incorporated adjustments to Faff's (2015b) standard plan, offering opportunities to pitch with a qualitative skew to their research.

I am at the very beginning of my PhD research and this letter paper captures a "real" pitch that has resulted from my initial examination of the area in which I am researching, that is to identify, examine and understand the essential elements that offer taxonomy for MSMEs as unique identities within the field of business management. On my initial reading of international papers and journals, I found it is accepted there is no standard, global definition to examine the difference between the entities of micro, small or medium firms. One research paper found 50 separate definitions from 75 countries. Also a report from the USA found that 700 definitions were presented to a Congressional Committee. As a result it appeared to me that a useful starting point would be to set out those parameters before taking the next step to research the required changes between entities of different size.

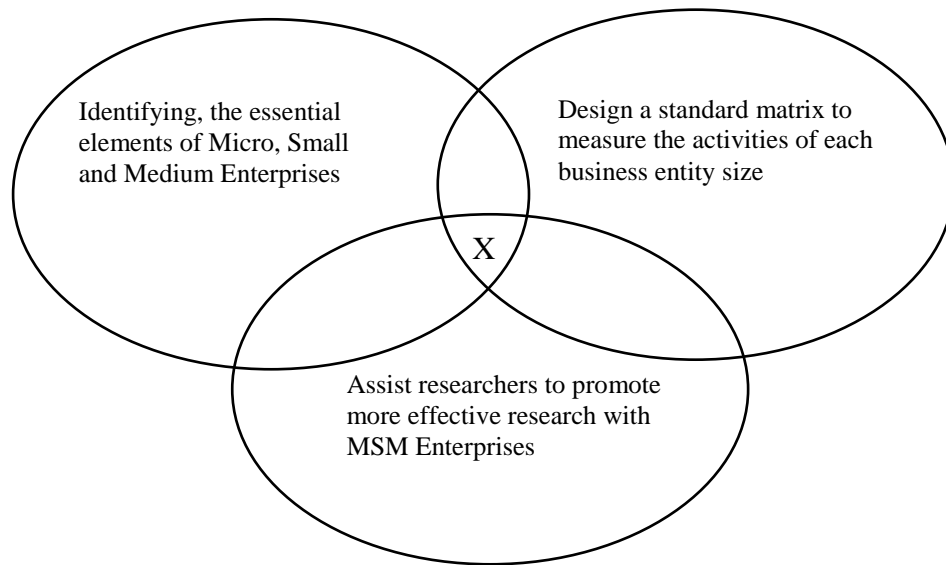
Both of Faff's papers (2015a, 2015b) are useful to complete this paper and the more I examine them, what is required becomes clear. In particular, I like the ordered manner in which the plan is set. By following each aspect, it is possible to have a model from which to set out a standard format that should offer an opportunity to achieve publication of articles. For the full paper, I shall adopt the best practice for conducting a literature review as outlined by Short (2009).

What have I learned from writing this, my first pitch? I have been told that academic writing have the facts placed in order with the conclusion as a consequence of the facts. The logical methodology as set out in the Faff papers have shown a standard academic system to follow and it is this method that I am following and from which I am benefitting for my future work, including setting out a theoretical framework and a simplified 'Mickey mouse' depiction of the pitch.

Table 1. Completed 1-page pitch template on MSMEs

Pitcher's Name	Peter Ellis	FoR category	MSMEs	Date Completed	18 December 2015
(A) Working Title	Pitching a new 'Business Size' Matrix				
(B) Basic Research Question	What is a standard matrix to measure the activities of a business entity?				
(C) Key paper(s)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Henry Mintzberg, (1979) The Structuring of Organizations. McGill University 2. Short, J. (2009). The Art of Writing a Review Article. <i>Journal of Management</i>, 5(6), 1312 - 1317. 3. Ucbasaran, D., Shepherd, D. A., Lockett, A., & Lyon, S. J. (2013). Life After Business Failure: The Process and Consequences of Business Failure for Entrepreneurs. <i>Journal of Management</i>, 39(1), 163-202. 				
(D) Motivation/ Puzzle	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To identify, examine and understand the essential elements that identify Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) as unique identities within the field of business management. 2. There is no information outlining how an entity changes its structure as it grows 3. researchers of MSMEs have no guidelines to their research in entities smaller than corporates 4. This offers a gap in business research that can be examined to benefit Micro, Small, Medium and Large entities. <p>Puzzle: How can a researcher, identify the elements of a Micro, Small or medium Entity for research if there are no identifiable guidelines</p>				
THREE	Three core aspects of any empirical research project i.e. the "IDioTs" guide				
(E) Idea?	<p>It would be useful if there was a standard matrix to measure the activities of an entity and ensure that the owner/manager is controlling the business within its size or developing it for future growth.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Business size range <p>The two most common ways of defining MSMEs are by annual turnover or the number of employees (or a combination of the two)</p> <p>This information is inadequate for business statistics, and do not enable banks, accountants or business mentors to assess the business structure to ascertain if the entrepreneur is managing the entity or structuring it for future growth.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Considering the use of qualitative methods and triangulated data collection techniques, with a clearly articulated method can offer a solution. Thus connecting the data and the research questions, and linking data sources to findings. Using a standard template skewed towards qualitative research, would assist to demonstrate methodological rigor, in order to enhance the analytical defensibility of this research. ▪ Based on the arguments above, the idea is to adapt the current, limited information to enable its more effective use for qualitative research pitches. 				

Pitcher's Name	Peter Ellis	FoR category	MSMEs	Date Completed	18 December 2015
(F) Data?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Data will be collected from firms based in Queensland, surveying about 100 entities and four case studies of entities endeavouring to transcend from a small to medium sized entity, relating to the matrix cells, to gather both quantitative and qualitative data. The information gathered will be used to ascertain the business 'size' through the survey and also any information showing negative aspects of the entity's structure and procedures. It is anticipated that the data will exhibit adequate variation to give good quality and reliable data for this paper. 				
(G) Tools?	<p>Interpretive studies do not require prior theoretical framing.</p> <p>However, the study will aggregate responses from participants in order to identify adaptations required to the current quantitative guide in order to enable the production of a supplementary guide for qualitative researcher.</p> <p>The data will be planned to show that the qualitative data is being gathered from significant data model.</p>				
TWO	Two key questions				
(H) What's New?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The matrix will augment the current research focus of the ABS. This will make it suitable for both quantitative as well as qualitative research purposes, enabling its use for a broader range of future research. 				
(I) So What?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Providing the matrix to supplement the ABS existing information, will relieve the constraints of the current definition. In addition it will assist researchers to promote more effective research with MSM enterprises. Future researchers will be able to track and derive their own theoretical contribution, thus avoiding the risk of superimposing existing theories onto data collection, before actually knowing what the data holds 				
ONE	One bottom line				
(J) Contribution?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> This matrix offers the ability for business owners to understand what they are supposed to be doing and if they are acting in accordance with the size of their business. In addition it offers banks and accountants and ascertain if their client is working within the confines of the business matrix relating to their size Finally, this offer researchers the opportunity to examine more aspects of MSM enterprises. 				
(K) Other Considerations	<p>Is Collaboration needed/desirable? Collaboration is required for external surveys and case studies to be carried out</p> <p>Target: MSM enterprises are the target for the surveys and studies and their cooperation is essential.</p> <p>Risk: The research is initially investigative and there is no risk, as the questionnaire will be devised to access information. There will be no consequences of to the survey.; no competitor risk; no risk of "obsolescence". Other risks? No serious threat expected in execution? Is the scope appropriate? Yes</p>				



4. Conclusion

In this pitch, I have addressed the following question: What are the elements that identify a standard, global, provable, repeatable concept that can be used to research beneficial useful and acceptable new ideas that can take the research of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises forward into the future.

The use of a standard platform highlights the opportunity of focussing research directly on specific elements of business, specifically where research may now focus specifically on one area without generalisations and also to enable studies that can assist entities understand the what, why, when, how, where and who of their activities and how to know where to focus their energy.

Building on insights from the schematic model, I shall develop a research agenda for each area of the MSMEs. My aim, through providing a clear research agenda, is not to constrain future research in the area of MSMEs but simply to offer some suggestions to encourage more research on this important topic and in doing so, further unravel some of the mystery surrounding enterprises that are not yet large of corporate (Ucbasaran *et al.*, 2013).

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