

## Images of Entrepreneurs – Research Results

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This paper starts with an introduction to and exploration of entrepreneurship. It further explains the theoretical basis of metaphors used in understanding entrepreneurship with entrepreneurs as the phenomena. This paper takes a new approach to examining the definitions of entrepreneurs, distinguishing between entrepreneurs and non-entrepreneurs. This research gives us insight into understanding the phenomena of entrepreneurship, through the lens of images of entrepreneurs that exist among both entrepreneurs and non-entrepreneurs. An exploratory analysis of entrepreneurial metaphors and concepts is conducted to achieve this goal. In a qualitative analysis of entrepreneurial concepts, respondents defined the word 'entrepreneur' with suggested conceptual equivalents. In an analysis of metaphors, respondents explained why they see entrepreneurs through such lenses. The sample consisted of 124 respondents.

**Keywords:** metaphors, entrepreneurship, metaphors of entrepreneurs, images of entrepreneurs.

## Obrazy przedsiębiorców – wyniki badań własnych

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Niniejszy artykuł rozpoczyna się od wprowadzenia oraz eksploracji zjawiska przedsiębiorczości. W dalszej części wyjaśnia podstawy teoretyczne metafory stosowanej w rozumieniu przedsiębiorczości. Artykuł podejmuje nowe, metaforyczne, a więc kognitywne podejście do zbadania definicji przedsiębiorcy, z rozróżnieniem przedsiębiorców i osób niebędących przedsiębiorcami. To badanie umożliwia wgląd w rozumienie zjawiska przedsiębiorczości przez pryzmat obrazów, a dokładniej metafor przedsiębiorców, które istnieją zarówno wśród przedsiębiorców, jak i osób niebędących przedsiębiorcami. Aby osiągnąć założony cel, przeprowadzono badanie jakościowe i ilościowe. W badaniu jakościowym respondenci definiowali słowo „przedsiębiorca” za pomocą koncepcyjnych ekwiwalentów i wyjaśniali, dlaczego respondenci używają danych metafor do określenia przedsiębiorców. Badanie ilościowe stanowiła ankieta. Próba składała się ze 124 respondentów.

**Słowa kluczowe:** metafora, przedsiębiorczość, metafory przedsiębiorców, obrazy przedsiębiorców.

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## 1. Introduction

Entrepreneurs all around the world have continuously helped improve the global economy. They have done this by creating new products and services, creating jobs, and by giving back to their communities. The importance of entrepreneurship in the global economy cannot be overemphasized (Chmielecki, 2013b; Carland, Carland and Stewart, 2015). The perception of entrepreneurs is more influenced by the media than science. Unlike what we are made to believe by the media, entrepreneurs do not go into business for the sole purpose of making profits. Different entrepreneurs have different motivations for going into business. It is, then, important that not all entrepreneurs be seen with the same eye. There are individual differences between them, and so they should be given appropriate support. Entrepreneurship has always been at the heart of an economy's dynamics. Entrepreneurship continues to gain momentum as a significant and relevant research field (Glinka, 2008). The perceived image of entrepreneurs is often founded in media rhetoric, rather than data-driven scientific enquiry. However, as with images of the media, there may be some misconceptions. The research goal of our study is to identify the metaphors of entrepreneurs present among entrepreneurs and non-entrepreneurs. The authors decided to carry out both qualitative and quantitative research.

## 2. Entrepreneurship

The study of entrepreneurship has helped us answer questions such as: What happens when entrepreneurs take action? What motivates them into taking action? What is their approach to taking action? (Stevenson and Jarillo, 1990). How do they spot opportunity in creating goods and services? How is it that other people cannot spot opportunities like they do? What actions do they take in exploiting opportunities? (Shane and Venkataraman, 2000). Our knowledge of the definitions of entrepreneurs is very limited. Different studies have been carried out on individuals, geographical regions and firms. No theory has been put forward for carrying out this study, and this has led to approximations which are based on fragmented reasoning, casuistry, and anecdotes.

Within the last 10 years we have learned a lot about the circumstances that have prompted young people to depend on chance when seeking to improve their life. Insufficient education, a lack of meaningful employment opportunities, and a lack of avenue in exploring their inherent talents have all contributed to pushing youths to the margins of the society. The result is poverty. On that basis, different learning approaches have been put forward to connect education with skill, thus providing succour to the youth, especially to those most at risk. This approach has helped stir confidence

and high self-esteem among youths, and this has helped them in pursuing their goals and also empowered them to deal with socio-economic changes (Bruyat and Julien, 2000; Kirzner, 2015).

In recent years, it has become increasingly difficult to accurately predict the economic fortunes of most countries (Coviello and Jones, 2004). Most companies want to do business and keep their running costs very low. This has led to movements of capital across national borders, in search of higher returns. Residents of communities find themselves moving with employment opportunities in a bid to improve their lives. The paradigm of the 20<sup>th</sup> century has lost its place in the face of the modern paradigm of an entrepreneurial society. This is a society in which creativity is rewarded and innovation greatly encouraged. As a matter of fact, economic observers have come to the consensus that an entrepreneurial spirit can help communities stay afloat during difficult economic conditions. Even though entrepreneurship has been given the face of business creation, with the media creating the inspirational figure of entrepreneurs (an individual who can build a big business empire out of nothing while enriching him or herself), the true definition of entrepreneurship goes beyond this. Entrepreneurs are individuals with great ideas, who can take on the opportunity to create value that will benefit their community. They try to meet the needs of people by designing new products and services in an efficient way. They ride with change, look for gaps in the market, have a clear vision, use the available resources efficiently, see breakthroughs where others see obstacles, and are willing to take risks at all times.

Since time immemorial, entrepreneurs have contributed to the development of their community, using their problem-solving skills and resilience to stimulate the growth of their communities. They are agents of growth and progress. Even though the impact of entrepreneurship is mostly felt in the private sector, it is equally a major driving force in social organizations and government. Entrepreneurial spirit is reflected in creativity, the ability to spot opportunities, resilience and a strong sense of vision. As the economic stance of the global economy continues to change, these skills are becoming very valuable. As a matter of fact, there is a clarion call for everyone to engage in the entrepreneurial spirit, as it will help enhance their career and help them overcome life's challenges.

The culture of most communities is influenced by the number of entrepreneurs within it. Due to cultural and personal differences, the level of entrepreneurship among individuals differs a lot. If a community accords more importance to heads of organizations and experts, entrepreneurship will be greatly discouraged. But a community that recognizes self-made individuals will have lots of entrepreneurs.

The importance of entrepreneurship to any economy cannot be over-emphasized, and its importance can be expressed in the following ways:

- taking advantage of business opportunities,

- establishment of new enterprises while making existing ones more dynamic,
- stimulating the economy to make progress through job creation, community development and innovation.

An entrepreneur is an individual who spots opportunities and either sources capital to exploit the opportunity or sells the idea to someone else. The CEO of a large business organization can also be regarded as an entrepreneur in this sense. The responsibility of a CEO goes beyond managing or controlling the activities of the business he or she manages, and extends to his or her ability to manage change. What this means is that a CEO must be able to strengthen the company's network, spot new business opportunities, and re-invent the firm. The shareholders and managers of a company are some of the key stakeholders whose efforts are needed to make the firm achieve progress.

Entrepreneurship involves spotting, assessing and taking advantage of business opportunities with the end product being the creation of new products and services which can be used to meet gaps in the market (Shane and Venkataraman, 2000). Such opportunities are often unexpected but of great value. Business opportunities are often created when there is a disparity between the ideas of market agents, or when inputs need to be converted to outputs (Brown, Davidsson and Wiklund, 2001). Entrepreneurship theories are often based on the diversity of beliefs concerning the value of resources (Alvarez and Busenitz, 2001, p. 756). Reynolds (Reynolds, 2005) theorized that the entrepreneurial function is basically the spotting of business opportunities, which often leads to the creation of new firms. As there is no place where opportunities can be bought, it is then the duty of an entrepreneur to consistently seek ways of exploiting existent opportunities. One big challenge that entrepreneurs often encounter is the difficulty of protecting their ideas, especially when they have yet to be patented or copyrighted. The entrepreneurial factor is an important element that needs to be taken into consideration whenever entrepreneurship is discussed (Kuratko, 2016). Other relevant factors include entrepreneurial initiative, entrepreneurial behaviour and entrepreneurial spirit. The entrepreneurial spirit being a new concept is different from other production factors, such as capital, labour, and land. It is influenced by the financial reward an entrepreneur has in pursuing any business opportunity (Audretsch, Castrogiovanni, Ribeiro and Roig, 2005). It is the motivating factor that drives an entrepreneur in creating a new enterprise. Entrepreneurial behaviour is often reflected in risk-taking and pro-activeness (Miller, 1983). This is basically a combination of Schumpeter's theory of an innovative entrepreneur (1934, 1942), Knight's theory (1921) of an entrepreneur that embraces uncertainty in taking risks, and an entrepreneur who utilizes innovation and creativity in creating new opportunities. An entrepreneur understands that there are lapses in the market, and therefore takes the initiative in improving upon these lapses

through the use of innovation. Entrepreneurial initiative extends to taking risks, creating opportunities, and innovating upon existing products and services. Finally, the entrepreneurial spirit extends to searching, exploration and innovation, as compared to exploitation of business opportunities, which is exclusive to managers (Glinka and Gudkova, 2011).

Drucker (1985)	“Entrepreneurship is an act of innovation that involves endowing existing resources with new wealth-producing capacity”	Act of innovation Endowing existing resources with new wealth-producing capacity
Stevenson (1985)	“Entrepreneurship is a process by which individuals pursue and exploit opportunities irrespective of the resources they currently control”	Pursuing and exploiting opportunities
Venkataraman (1997)	“Entrepreneurship is about how, by whom, and with what consequences opportunities to bring future goods and services into existence are discovered, created and exploited”	Discovering, creating and exploiting opportunities Bringing new goods or services to market

Tab. 1. Chosen definitions of entrepreneurship. Source: own study.

It is for this reason that different theories have been put forward in a bid to explain entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurship can be summarized as follows: the spotting of business opportunities and a willingness to take advantage of them, sourcing all necessary inputs, and drafting strategies needed to optimize the opportunities (Eckhardt and Shane, 2003). Entrepreneurship has also been defined as “a process through which an enterprising individual pursues an opportunity either for themselves or on behalf of their organization” (Stevenson and Jarillo, 1990, p. 23). Observers are of the view that if business owners and managers of companies were to exhibit the behaviour of an entrepreneur, most companies would make greater progress (Lee and Peterson, 2000).

To this end, there exist three ideas which can be used in explaining the activities of an entrepreneur. Firstly, the entrepreneur is viewed as an individual. This means that the actions of an entrepreneur, such as a willingness to embrace uncertainty (Kihlstrom and Laffont, 1979) and a willingness to take risks while pursuing an opportunity (McClelland, 1961), are considered on an individual basis. This is what sets the entrepreneur apart from other members of society. The second idea lays emphasis on environmental and economic factors, such as changes in technology and market dynamics (Tushman and Anderson, 1986), which influence the activity of entrepreneurs. Other factors include demographics, market structure and the dynamics of an industry (Acs and Audretsch, 1990). The third idea takes into account the function of the institution and values of the

societies. This idea is not exclusive (Eckhardt and Shane, 2003, p. 2), given the fact that the activities of the entrepreneur do not occur spontaneously, but are dependent on changes in demographics, technology and the environment.

In the world of entrepreneurship, differences exist between a business man, individual entrepreneur, corporate entrepreneur and business associate. Some common terms used in describing entrepreneurship include corporate venturing, strategic renewal, corporate entrepreneurship, intra-preneurship and internal corporate entrepreneurship.

### 3. The Significance of Using Metaphors

Metaphor usage touches on a large aspect of knowledge, as it describes how figures are viewed in different approaches, and is comprised of allegories and symbols used in creating imagery (Parker, 2012; Morgan, 1997). A total review of this theory cannot be made in a single page. Notwithstanding this, this paper will only be considering some of the basics facts about metaphors. A metaphor uses a scheme of referring to unfamiliar content so that it appears familiar. This is another way of bringing abstract things to life, a conceptual means of artistically representing the unknown without making them look different from reality. Metaphoric phrases force one to believe something that is not real, by reflecting a different but clearer view of the thought they represent. In this way, any viewer can easily comprehend and interpret the context.

Metaphors connect every side of our reasoning together, and this is normally apparent during the processing of information in our head. A metaphor describes how we perceive things and how they are utilized, which helps in understanding key frameworks and terminologies (Chmielecki, 2013c). One significant thing about using metaphors is that they make comprehension painless and there is no particular method for their usage, as they can blend into just about any sentence. The greatest writers use metaphors in their works to describe the beauty of words. Metaphor usage nowadays has become overly contagious, both in meaning and discursion, because they link our interests to the words on paper to make the word more communicable to people. Common words are usually not enough to convey the raw truth, especially when trying to portray how deep a thought is. It all rotates back to realizing that one can do a lot to vent descriptions through the use of metaphor in writing.

A discourse has been proposed on how metaphor runs human perception and construal analysis, and how it has developed our insight and line of thinking in managing our ambitions and goals. This can also be an easy way of connecting our experiences and our vision, coupled with the imaginations we create and how they can be brought to light. Metaphor



is knotted within the circle of our feelings, views and actions. It paints a visible picture of the imaginary life, and explains how these words can be used to enhance knowledge and affect our thinking and environment.

It is true that our language exposes reality and nature, showing the likeness of acts and existence, but metaphor makes this social precept more assertive and artistic. It keeps drawing the mind to a broad region of embracing more than it can perceive. We can also modify our observations and moderate our behavioural tempo.

Some functional aspects of metaphor that touch a chord in visualizing things are Catachreses, which perform better in narrating designs and accidents, especially with rhetoric. Using parables or puns to portray thoughts can also lighten a notion and enhance understanding of it, especially when trying to relate a story or experience.

Using metaphors is like using a mechanized system – you must understand the good and the bad sides, and decide whether they suit the purpose for which they are being used. Metaphor aids understanding because it breaks down the complexity of terms into a distinct model, sculpting every word and meaning for conceptual simplicity.

Looking at existence and survival, humans are always drawn to abstract beings which they believe to be responsible for their sustainability. This is an ultimate concept that we fail to refer to as a metaphor; the great dependency of man on a god he has not seen, but believes to be even more real than other real things. Some might argue that they will not fall victim to merging their believe system with the idea of being metaphorical, and that not falling into this trap would require high criticality and skilful management of words.

## 4. Methodology

The purpose of this paper is to explore the metaphoric portrayal of entrepreneurs and entrepreneurship among entrepreneurs and non-entrepreneurs. Using data drawn from both qualitative (IDI) and quantitative (CAWI) studies, we find a consistent pattern of entrepreneurs portrayed as fighters, creators and risk-takers.

The paper's aim is to answer several research questions on the perception of entrepreneurs in Poland:

RQ1 What are the prevalent metaphors of entrepreneurs?

RQ2 What are the differences in perception between entrepreneurs and non-entrepreneurs?

A critical review of the existing literature has been undertaken to develop a full understanding of and insight into metaphors of entrepreneurs. This research was a multistep process which used a combination of research methods (see Tab. 2).

Research phase	Research tool	Type of research	Sample size
1	Desk research	Qualitative	–
2	IDI	Qualitative	24
3	CAWI	Quantitative	124

Tab. 2. Research methods. Source: own study.

Both IDIs and CAWIs were conducted among Polish entrepreneurs and non-entrepreneurs, to determine the perceptions and experiences of being an entrepreneur. The authors developed a questionnaire based on constructs derived from both in-depth interviews (IDIs) and their literature review.

The majority of ‘non-entrepreneur’ respondents (64%) work for companies employing less than 50 employees. The majority of ‘entrepreneur’ respondents (92%) run companies employing less than 10 employees.

Metaphors	Non-entrepreneurs		Entrepreneurs	
	Mean	Std. Dev.	Mean	Std. Dev.
Creator	3.87	0.86	4.23	0.82
Traveller	2.60	0.81	2.93	1.20
Fighter	3.57	1.28	4.43	0.57
Bus driver	2.83	0.99	3.40	1.28
Army commander	3.40	0.86	3.57	1.22
Risk-taker	3.97	1.07	4.17	0.65
Gardener	2.37	0.81	2.77	1.30
Survivalist	1.97	0.85	2.37	1.27
Fire fighter	1.27	0.45	1.63	0.72

Tab. 3. CAWI – research results. Source: own study.

As we can see from the table above, the three most common metaphors among both (surprisingly) entrepreneurs and non-entrepreneurs are fighter, risk-taker and creator. Below, we are going to present what really stands behind those metaphors. Let us start with the metaphor of fighter.

The wars fought on a battlefield are no different than those fought in business. They are just bloodless but just as fierce.

[R7] “Owning a successful business is not an easy task, it requires loads of focus and determination in order to achieve this. It is the same with fighters who are successful because they work hard daily in improving their techniques, they also judiciously watch what they eat and they never stop aiming for perfection when it comes to their profession.”



Nowadays, being successful requires one to constantly update their skills and strategies.

[R11] “You have to learn the newest techniques and information about your industry. It requires a lot of effort, but it eventually pays off.”

Improving oneself should be an obsession to strive for. It might not be a physical obsession like fighters have, but a mental one.

[R23] “Some fans might take out their frustrations through the media or other forums, this happens in the world of fighting.”

[R8] “Whether your press is good or bad, never listen. There is a popular saying that a team is neither as bad as they look in a loss nor as good as they look in a win, which is true and can be applied to real life.”

Fighters are recognized in the same way as entrepreneurs, in dealing with various types of pressure on a daily basis.

Today, for an entrepreneur, this issue would not be unusual because most businesses have various competitors who sometimes may say something about your business that is not true. They do all this in order to pull down your success. Do not be worried, this sort of hate shows that they see you as strong competition. Build yourself up and that energy, no matter what, will help you rise to success.

Take time to carefully strategize and map out a plan after observing your competitors’ weaknesses. Champion fighters do their research and take time to plan their line of attack. For you to win, you must set out a well thought-out plan. Success does not come cheap, so draw a battle plan today.

Freedom and independence are the two main qualities of a fighter. Having complete confidence in yourself as an individual is very important in all aspects of your life.

[R1] “The entrepreneur is a fighter, he never gives up! As an entrepreneur, you push yourself harder into achieving success.”

Entrepreneurs surmount all boundaries and barriers, dream big and work hard towards achieving their goals.

[R14] “Fighters never give up, they enjoy calling the shots. A fighter won’t consider how much he is making in a year, as long as he’s doing it on his terms.”

[R9] “They hate being tied down, they’d rather work for their money, no matter how small. They’re constantly searching for opportunities to better themselves.”

The next metaphor is that of the creator. There are certain steps taken by entrepreneurs when they create new ventures. They imagine the opportunities for a novel enterprise, after which they refine their ideas, then justify their ventures to investors and other important entities in order to gain legitimacy and support.

[R16] “They seek resources to develop and make their ideas a reality because they do not only identify business opportunities.”

[R19] “Entrepreneurs do not only respond to changes, but also create change in the business environment.”

[R5] “The blend of knowledge and creativity helps actualize entrepreneurial visions.”

[R3] “They develop series of activities that create and add value to the economy.”

[R2] “Following established operating procedures is different from creating them.”

With a blend of personal ambition and entrepreneurial energies, this leads to the establishment of ventures. What entrepreneurship entails is the ability to possess subjective visions about a venture and allocate the resources to actualize those entrepreneurial visions.

Risk-taker was the third most common metaphor for entrepreneurs.

All entrepreneurs put their careers at stake when they go after a new enterprise. They bear the risk in all aspects of their business, the personal, financial and management risk. And most entrepreneurs, as well as managers, are all concerned about the risk of losing all they have invested. An entrepreneur bears the risk if the business enterprise turns out to be unsuccessful.

[R12] “An entrepreneur risks all he has and more, everything is at stake, his financial, social, psychic, economic well-being and his relationships and future. He bears all the consequences that result from an unsuccessful business including the financial obligation, at the same time risking his future.”

[R17] “This is why it is advisable for any entrepreneur to carefully consider the risks involved in a business before venturing into anything. Create a business proposal and include a well-analysed business plan, carefully considering the risk before venturing into an enterprise.”

[R22] “Entrepreneurial risk is a decision. For an entrepreneur to start a business, he must understand the potential risk involved before establishing his enterprise.”

[R24] “Entrepreneurship involves taking risk, but it also involves carefully looking for other means to avoid taking unnecessary risks and, at the same time, achieving growth and taking available opportunities.”

The perceived consequences of failure, the general risk-taking propensity of a potential entrepreneur and the perceived probability of failure for a specific venture are the main components of entrepreneurial risks.

Cultural values serve as a filter for the degree to which a society considers certain images of entrepreneurs as prevalent. Moreover, numerous authors have emphasized the importance of understanding the impact of cultural norms on entrepreneurship. Several researchers acknowledge the importance of the cultural context for career decisions made by entrepreneurs (e.g. Flores, Robitschek, Celebi, Andersen and Hoang, 2010; Leong, 2010).

Metaphors of entrepreneurs are under the influence of certain well-established patterns and stereotypes in the Polish culture. There were numerous negative metaphors indicating struggling and risk taking. “Exploiting other people” or “taking advantage of employees” were just a few examples of metaphors with negative, cynical or downgrading undertones.

However, findings illustrate the change in the perception of entrepreneurship among both groups in Poland. Although we expected in our intro-

ductory research that most of the metaphors would reflect competition (“fighter”) and risk (“risk taker”), we may observe many optimistic metaphors. According to this perception, entrepreneurs are oftentimes viewed as “creators” with strong influence over their own life and success. They themselves build a path to the future they want. This metaphor is very often associated with good and innovative ideas, creativity, freshness and breaking stereotypes.

It is also worth remembering that when entrepreneurs lack proper analogies to give because of a lack of experience in that industry, they face a clear sense-making imperative and can therefore be forced to draw meaning from entrenched idiomatic words or expressions that they will metaphorically extend to the new venture situation, as a way of creating understanding. Lacking directly related experiences and observations, entrepreneurs will reduce the use of metaphors due to their language preferences, and due to the pressure of adapting to a limited inventory of conversational units and ever-changing situations that require idiomatic expression (Chmielecki and Sułkowski, 2016).

Therefore, depending on the entrepreneur’s past experience in the field, they can use specific analogies or metaphors in their communications to give a structure some understanding, and thus increase predictability. Linking their communication to past experiences with the same venture can be analogically thought of as a way of strengthening trust in a venture in a novel industry, hence creating predictability (Chmielecki and Sułkowski, 2016).

## 5. Limitations

This study covers a broad range of topics, including entrepreneurship and metaphors. It was therefore necessary to give just a general insight into each of these areas. This article does not cover the whole range of metaphors of entrepreneurs. The three most popular metaphors for entrepreneurs were introduced, but the remaining metaphors were not examined.

## 6. Conclusion

Metaphors have penetrated into reality, trying to harmonize every aspect of our experience and actions. Metaphor as a mode of thought is not the same as metonymy; it does not just try to identify a precept, but creates the precept and expands the comprehension of it. The superlative account of words in their usage and the ways they complement our thoughts show why metaphors are basically used for creativity.

Metaphor is not just a tool for transferring understanding; it goes beyond separating what happens in us and around us, and is also a mode of conduct (Chmielecki, 2013a). It educates our mind about behaviour, ethics and values.

Using metaphors to shade characters directly elucidates an impression of thought that will not need further illustrations. For instance, “she is a wolf in sheep’s clothing” – looking at this metaphor, it does not require further words to produce an understanding of the feature of deceit in that person. This is the miracle metaphor performs in our language.

Metaphor equally affects the deep sphere of our relationships with others, how people perceive us and the mind-set we build around entrepreneurs and entrepreneurship. Our experiences and roles produce images in others and transfer a different initiative. These initiatives are responsible for how people relate to the concept of entrepreneurship. In a raw sense, we transfer ideas, life-styles and morals to others on a daily basis in the same way they transmit theirs to us. However, as we engage in different ideologies we unconsciously draw others into subscribing to those ideologies, especially by relating to them, writing about them or acting.

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