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Full Length Research Paper

Online business registration at a glance: A study of Congo-Brazzaville entrepreneurs in Cape Town

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Even though God has ordained migration which has changed human history, rationalism, capitalism, liberalisation and technological innovation are central driving forces of globalization, and have positively impacted on global migration. Regardless of their entrepreneurial engagement, the presence of immigrants, including those from Congo-Brazzaville in South Africa, is often associated with an increasing unemployment rate; therefore, Congolese immigrants have become easy targets of blame for everything that has gone wrong in Cape Town. Therefore, the current authors believe that technological innovation, namely e-commerce could enable Congo-Brazzaville immigrant entrepreneurs, who are often accused of taking South African jobs, to plan for returning home. The main objective of this study was to analyse the benefits of online business registration for Congo-Brazzaville immigrant entrepreneurs in Cape Town. In order to obtain a clearer idea, the study focused on the junction of two strands, namely online company registration from both inductive and deductive perspectives. This paper utilised both qualitative and quantitative research methods. For research purposes, a self-administered questionnaire was utilised. The research target population included Congo-Brazzaville immigrant entrepreneurs in Cape Town, which is where the study was conducted. The purposeful sampling method was utilised with a sample size $N = 116$. The samples were sought from the general population of Congolese immigrant entrepreneurs who are also members of the Congolese Association of Cape Town.

Key words: Center for business and administrative procedures (CFBAP), CFE, Congo-Brazzaville, e-commerce, online business registration, Cape Town.

INTRODUCTION

Various authors have enumerated key drivers of global immigration, but have often ignored the supreme mandate of God. Ukpere (2010) argues that Zoroastrianism and Buddhism were of the first religions to provide a slight hint of globalism during the fifth and sixth centuries and, later on, rationalistic global consciousness was also reflected in the building of the pyramids in Egypt. Furthermore, he states that the Jews were the first to provide a transparent expression of a global community that united their diaspora (Ukpere, 2010). God

has ordained migration (Ukpere, 2010) and migrations have positively altered human history (Esperanza, 2011). Ukpere (2010) weighted two strands of migration by citing Scholte's (2000) position, which states that rationalism, technological innovation and capitalism are major forces in the process of globalisation. Conversely, the anti-globalists' (Kirkbride, 2001) position is that capitalism, liberalisation and Third World debt are the central driving forces of globalization, which have also spurred global immigration. Regardless of the positive aspects of immigration and entrepreneurial prospects and initiatives of immigrants, the presence of Congolese immigrants in South Africa is often perceived with resentment amongst the indigenous, as they regard them as job takers and a

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source of increasing unemployment. Hence, Congo-Brazzaville immigrants have become easy targets of blame for everything that has gone wrong in Cape Town (Mahony, 2010). Therefore, the current authors believe that technological innovation, namely e-commerce could enable Congo-Brazzaville immigrant entrepreneurs who are often accused of taking South African jobs to plan to resettle at home.

The Internet has created a 'borderless' virtual business platform where suppliers, customers, competitors and network partners can freely interact without experiencing pre-defined channels on the value chain. Members of the same business network or of different networks can bypass traditional interaction patterns and form virtual value chains in most developed and some developing countries (Graham, 2011). Although, traditional business registration in Congo-Brazzaville has been widely touted as a key element for Congolese SMMEs' support, empirical evidence suggests that both Congolese entrepreneurial activities and poverty alleviation have a functional relationship with online business registration, which has been claimed by Congo-Brazzaville immigrant entrepreneurs. Early findings of this paper reveal that 84.5% of Congolese immigrant entrepreneurs believe that online business registration in Congo-Brazzaville will improve supply chain management; 82.8% believe that online company registration will increase businesses' profits; and 94% of them completed higher education. Furthermore, 94.8% of Congolese immigrant entrepreneurs answered *yes* to expand their business in Brazzaville, and 85.3% of them believe that the potential Centre for Business and Administrative Procedures' (CFBAP) e-commerce website will attract them to expand business activities in Brazzaville. It is, therefore, in the interest of CFBAP to implement an e-commerce website in order to attract Congolese immigrant entrepreneurs' businesses in Congo-Brazzaville. If sufficient attention is not paid to the necessity of implementing an e-commerce website at CFBAP, Congo-Brazzaville immigrant entrepreneurs will not secure a source of income back home. Therefore, the high cost of living in Congo-Brazzaville will create hindrances for Congolese immigrants to return home, which may compromise the country's human resources.

CONCEPTUAL BACKGROUND

Despite being attracted to South Africa, Congo-Brazzaville immigrant entrepreneurs have now realised the need to invest back home in Congo-Brazzaville owing to certain reasons, namely xenophobia, a lack of access to resources, political uncertainty in South Africa, relative political stability in Congo-Brazzaville and a high crime rate, including armed robbery, rape, child abuse, prostitution, pick-pocketing, shop-lifting, car hijacking and hijacking of cash-in-transit vehicles, which were the most frequently cited reasons for professional South African

citizens emigrating to other countries (South Africa Survey, 2007/2008).

According to Ukpere (2009), currently, the South African Correctional Services have complained of congested jails around the country owing to rising levels of crime within the country. Considering the saying that *an idle mind is a devil's workshop* (Ukpere, 2009), less fortunate South Africans who are victims of delayed political promises vent their anger on Black foreigners by looting their belongings, which is a practice commonly known as xenophobia. However, instead of promoting foreign Black SMMEs' initiatives, the South African government, has not only placed South Africans first, but has also adopted a double-edged immigration policy, which is based on the 1998 legislation of the Refugee Act and the 2002 Immigration Act, which appeared ineffective for Black African migrants, including Congo-Brazzaville immigrant entrepreneurs. The inefficiency of the aforementioned policies, which have failed most Black African immigrants, resonates Charles Darwin's wise words: "if the misery of our poor be caused not by the laws of nature, but by our institutions, great is our sin" (Ukpere, 2009).

A report, which was released by the Paris-based International Federation for Human Rights stated that South Africa's immigration policy is still like that of the previous governments' in terms of the harassment of so-called illegal immigrants (South African Survey, 2007/2008). Furthermore, the report criticised the policy, which has criminalised immigration and fuelled xenophobia. In addition, South Africa's immigration policy remains focused on security concerns and population control. This approach is based on the premise that considerable numbers of economic migrants intend to enter into South Africa and should be classified either under the Immigration Act (IA) of 2002 or the Refugee Act (RA) of 1998. The former is for people who come to work, start a business, or study, while the latter is for people who have fled to South Africa because of political circumstances in their own countries (South Africa Survey, 2007/2008).

Early findings of this paper reveal that a majority of Black foreigners classified under both the IA and the RA who sought a better life in South Africa had difficulty obtaining legal status even though one-third of them possessed education or skills that are much needed in South Africa. Therefore, the South African double-edged immigration policy, which has made it impossible for a majority of Black foreigners to fully access available resources in South Africa, has also forced Congolese immigrant entrepreneurs to invest back home in Brazzaville. At a leadership level of the country, the power tussle during the election that brought President Jacob Zuma to power, which also coincided with the xenophobic attack, caused a sharp increase in the number of affluent Congo-Brazzaville immigrants looking to go back home for good, either before the 2010 Soccer World Cup or soon after. Finally, the last 2009

presidential election in Congo-Brazzaville, which re-elected president Sassou to power, did not raise any concern, violence or opposition protest. This tendency attracted companies such as Warid Telecom, MTN South Africa and several others to invest in Brazzaville (Forum des Jeunes Entreprises du Congo, 2010).

RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

In developed countries dynamic arguments for the existence of SMMEs have been stressed in terms of their innovative capacities and, potentially, that they merge to create larger firms. In contrast, Congolese immigrant entrepreneurs' SMMEs are increasingly taking the role of primary vehicles for the creation of employment and income generation through self-employment and, therefore, are among tools, which enable poverty alleviation in South Africa. In addition, Congolese SMMEs in Cape Town operate in the retail and services sectors. However, owing to their characteristics, which include size of the capital investment, number of employees, turnover, management style, market share and various hindrances of immigration policies, Congolese immigrant entrepreneurs agree that business expansion in Brazzaville, which creates domestic linkages with other SMMEs in Congo-Brazzaville in terms of diversification strategies, becomes imperative for business survival (United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, 2001). From the above, the current authors note that business expansion through e-commerce technologies will enable Congolese immigrants' SMMEs to save on supply chain management costs. Therefore, the rapidly accelerating rate of technological innovation has forced Congolese immigrant entrepreneurs to demand a business-to-business (B2B) e-commerce website at CFBAP, which should enable online business service. B2B e-commerce, which is fully automated in South Africa, is still not applicable in Congo-Brazzaville.

In South Africa, businesses rely on computer technology in almost every area of the corporate life cycle (Pillai, 2010). Reliance on high-speed digital computers is so complete that South African commerce would come to a sudden stop if computers were removed from business cycles (Importance of Computers from 1946 to date, 2010). As a result, technologies were introduced at the South African Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), enabling business people to register their businesses online. According to Vogt et al. (2003), e-commerce can reduce transaction-level costs, improve time-scale and reduce errors. The authors further argue that e-commerce will redesign CFBAP's interface and that of its partners. Sources of delay in offline business registration processes at CFBAP will be corrected, while redundancy and unnecessary delays will be improved (Vogt et al., 2003). Congolese immigrants' perceived online business registration benefits include areas of finance,

management, marketing, and logistics and being a part of the Congo-Brazzaville economy. Finance has been identified as the most important factor, which determines the survival, growth and expansion of Congolese immigrants' businesses in Cape Town. The first role of e-commerce for Congolese immigrant entrepreneurs in finance is to increase the speed of financial operations between Congo-Brazzaville and South Africa (United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, 2001; Lipsky, 2007). Based on the preceding discussion, the current authors have hypothesised that:

H₁: Increased speed of financial operations is positively related to Congolese immigrant entrepreneurs' business expansion in Brazzaville.

H₂: Online company registration will contribute to job creation, poverty alleviation and the country's economic growth.

Online VAT declaration is another benefit of e-commerce for Congolese immigrant entrepreneurs (Clear Books, 2010). Hence, the authors assume that:

H₃: CFBAP's e-commerce website will enable fast online VAT payment.

In addition, Congolese immigrants' businesses will increase visibility via a CFBAP e-commerce website by using various technologies, namely website page landing, Google Pay per Click (PPC) and banner (E-commerce Juice, 2010; Ahmed, 2010; Maksimovic, 2010). Due to the fact that a majority of Congolese immigrant entrepreneurs' SMMEs face challenges related to poor resources at different levels, including finance and management, to overcome these managerial challenges with the aid of the Internet and its use for commercial purposes, the current authors hypothesised that:

H₄: CFBAP's e-commerce website will improve Congolese immigrant entrepreneurs' business marketing functions.

Furthermore, managerial benefits of online business registration at the CFBAP's website will strengthen business relationships amongst Congo-Brazzaville SMMEs (United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, 2001). SMMEs in Congo-Brazzaville also suffer from management constraints that lower their resilience to risk and prevent them from growing and attaining economies of scale. E-commerce adoption at CFBAP will enable Congolese immigrant entrepreneurs to overcome management constraints related to customs declaration and the bureaucratic process of business environment-related permit applications. Moreover, financial and accounting records within some Congolese SMMEs are rarely in place, and where they are available, their accuracy is usually doubtful. In instances where

bank loans are provided, they are mostly granted to the most organised and profitable SMMEs. Considering that in Congo-Brazzaville SMMEs' bank loans are of a short duration owing to the inflation rate and SMMEs' general characteristics, it may be difficult for borrowers to secure collateral and realise high returns to finance repayments. Hence, it was proposed that:

H₅: Online business registration at CFBAP will improve Congolese SMMEs' administration.

Furthermore, some SMMEs in Congo-Brazzaville employ less than five people, mostly family members who are not legally registered with the *Onemo*: the Congo-Brazzaville Labour Department. Not surprisingly, such SMMEs in Congo-Brazzaville apply simple and relatively backward technology in production and, therefore, the quality of their products is likely to be poor. Such SMMEs suffer from limited market access and face fierce competition from many local producers (United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, 2001). Hence, the authors propose that:

H₆: B2B e-commerce adoption at CFBAP will generate a culture of Life Long Learning (LLL) amongst employees.

Although, shipping costs can increase the cost of many products that Congolese immigrants may purchase via e-commerce and add substantially to the final price, distribution costs will be significantly reduced for some Congolese immigrants' products and services, namely financial services, business registration, software, and travel, which are important segments of brick-and-mortar commerce in Congo-Brazzaville (OECD, 1999; Stock et al., 2001). Indeed, e-commerce will reduce the internal costs of many transactions of Congolese entrepreneurs and change the cost structure that dictates Congolese immigrants' businesses relationships with other businesses (Seddon, 1997; OECD, 1999). In addition, e-commerce will have impact intermediaries (Seddon, 1997) who help producers sell to distributors such as wholesalers and retailers (OECD, 1999; McDaniel and Terblanche, 2004). From the preceding discussion, the authors imply that:

H₇: B2B e-commerce adoption at CFBAP will improve Congolese SMMEs' supply chain management.

However, customer care improvement will be another benefit of B2B e-commerce adoption for Congolese immigrants' businesses in Congo-Brazzaville. In today's Knowledge Based Economy (KBE), which is dominated by sophisticated products and services, after-sales services is a major cost for many Congolese SMMEs. Traditionally, Congolese SMMEs place service personnel in the field to visit clients and obtain feedback about products and services' performance (OECD, 1999).

Based on the preceding discussion, the current authors propose that:

H₈: Online business registration in Congo-Brazzaville will enable Congolese SMMEs to improve customer relationship management.

Furthermore, a survey conducted by Šumak et al. (2009) concerning the role of e-commerce in the economies of various countries indicates that, compared to "traditional" commerce, e-commerce raises some expectations at a national level, including increased productivity, reduced costs for producers and consumers and increased accessibility (Bharati et al., 2006). According to Šumak et al. (2009), e-commerce adoption in Congo-Brazzaville will have various positive impacts on the economy, which include increased marketplace economic interactivity, an increased catalytic ICT role, increased economic openness of technology, while it will also alter time importance in the country's economy for sustainable development (OECD, 1999). Traditionally, 80% of businesses in Congo-Brazzaville have been established in the cities of Brazzaville and Pointe-Noire, which are close and located in the south of the country (Forum des Jeunes Entreprises, 2010). However, adoption of e-commerce will replace traditional distribution channels, create new products and market development, connect all Congolese cities to the rest of the world, globalise the Congo-Brazzaville economy, and replace *brain drain* with *brain gain*, in respect of higher-skilled workers. In addition, there will be a shift in the role of Congo-Brazzaville consumers, who will be increasingly implicated as partners in product design and creation, which will enable consumers to conduct transactions around the clock. Hence, the current authors propose that:

H₉: E-commerce adoption at CFBAP is positively related to the country's economic growth.

However, Machiavelli (Stair, 1986) asserts that there are challenges related to e-commerce adoption in Congo-Brazzaville owing to its newness and states that "*there is nothing more difficult to plan, more doubtful of success, nor more dangerous to manage than the creation of a new system.*"

From the preceding discussion, and owing to the country's MDG policy, Congolese immigrant entrepreneurs should contain e-commerce related challenges, namely culture (Javalgi, 2004), IT infrastructure (Furnell et al., 2008; Gemini, 2006), security and privacy (Liebermann and Stashevsky, 2002; Gemini, 2006; Furnell et al. (2008), illiteracy, organisation (Bester, 2006; Remenyi and Sherwood-Smith, 1999), fraud (Byers et al., 2004; Pathak, 2004; Kuchinskas, 2005) and public policy (Javalgi, 2004) based on the fact that CFBAP policy-makers would not invest 100 percent in an e-commerce website that might be used by too few people. Hence,

Table 1. Summary of hypotheses testing.

| Hypothesis | Relationship | Correlation | Directions | Results |
|------------|---|-------------|------------|----------|
| 1 | Increased speed of financial operations → Congolese immigrant entrepreneurs' business expansion in Brazzaville. | 1 | + | Accepted |
| 2 | Online company registration → Job creation, poverty alleviation and the country's economic growth. | 1 | + | Accepted |
| 3 | Potential CFBAP's e-commerce website → Online VAT payment. | 1 | + | Accepted |
| 4 | Potential CFBAP's e-commerce website → Congolese immigrant entrepreneurs' business marketing function. | 1 | + | Accepted |
| 5 | Online business registration at CFBAP → Congolese SMMEs' administration. | 1 | + | Accepted |
| 6 | B2B e-commerce adoption at CFBAP generates → employees' LLL culture. | 1 | + | Accepted |
| 7 | B2B e-commerce adoption at CFBAP Congolese → SMMEs' supply chain management. | 1 | + | Accepted |
| 8 | Online business registration in Congo-Brazzaville → improves customer relationship management. | 1 | + | Accepted |
| 9 | E-commerce adoption at CFBAP → The country's economic prosperity. | 1 | + | Accepted |
| 10 | E-commerce users' readiness → Positively influences potential e-commerce providers' intention to offer a B2B website. | 1 | + | Accepted |

the authors propose that:

H₁₀: E-commerce users' readiness will positively influence potential e-commerce providers' intentions to offer a B2B website.

However, having assessed the aforementioned hypotheses, the current authors aimed to determine the relationships between the constructs, which would validate the hypotheses as illustrated in Table 1.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research utilised both qualitative and quantitative research methods. For research purposes, a self-administered questionnaire was distributed to the research population. The designed

questionnaire was divided into two sections, namely a demographic information section (1); and content-based questions in section (2). Demographic information comprised of variables such as gender, age, education and dependents, while content based questions focused on the benefits of online business registration in Brazzaville for Congo-Brazzaville immigrant entrepreneurs. The research target population included Congo-Brazzaville immigrant entrepreneurs who live in Cape Town, where the study was conducted. The purposeful sampling method was utilised, with a sample size N = 116 comprising Congo-Brazzaville immigrant entrepreneurs who were sought from the general population amongst Congolese immigrant entrepreneurs who are also members of the Congolese Association of Cape Town. The survey questions were translated from English into French and French into English by a sworn translator to aid respondents' understanding, as French is their first language. A pilot study was conducted among five Congolese immigrants, namely two workers and three businesspersons in Cape Town before distributing the questionnaire to larger population. For respondents' convenience, the researchers were involved

in the distribution of 116 questionnaires, and they were given a minimum of two weeks to complete the questionnaires before collection. Ethical considerations were also taken into account when collecting and analysing the data. The Congolese Association of Cape Town's members who participated in the survey were guaranteed anonymity, whilst confidentiality of information was also guaranteed. The main objective of this study was to analyse the benefits of online business registration for Congo-Brazzaville immigrant entrepreneurs in Cape Town. Therefore, the study focused on the junction of two strands, namely both inductive and deductive reasoning for online company registration purposes.

Lith (2011) states that inductive reasoning goes from the specific to the general, whereas deductive reasoning goes from the general to the specific. Careful scrutiny of inductive reasoning, which included various empirical factors such as respondents' gender, education level, business experience, business expansion, potential attraction to a CFBAP e-commerce website, profits, risks and e-commerce legislation in Congo-Brazzaville enabled the researcher to explain what the study entails. Furthermore, deductive reasoning, which included e-commerce and business expansion, Congolese immigrant entrepreneurs' education level e-commerce adoption and business expansion as well as e-commerce legislation in Congo-Brazzaville, equipped the researcher to address how the study would be conducted. Lith (2011) furthermore explains that inductive and deductive reasoning methods are best utilised when the researcher tries to describe an empirical problem based on "what" questions are addressed, "how" the solution to the problem will be implemented.

In addition, the benefits of online company registration for Congolese immigrant entrepreneurs, which is an empirical problem, was described according to "what", and resolved according to "how". From an interpretive point of view, the aforementioned reasoning enabled the researchers to make sense of statistics inferences based on relevant data, which was collected (New York Education, 2011). Furthermore, the originality of this research study is that it examines how Black African immigrant entrepreneurs can utilise e-commerce to plan to return home, which creates an opportunity for further constructive debate.

ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

In order to address the research problem that was identified, the researchers proceeded with e-commerce inductive and deductive reasoning. The researchers also made an earnest effort to discover the reasons that led to Congolese immigrant entrepreneurs, to demand for online business registration service at CFBAP, whilst being established in Cape Town.

Inductive reasoning statistical analysis

This inductive reasoning was based on the quantitative data that was collected, which enabled a more objective evaluation of research variables (List, 2005). In addition, various components depicted in Figure 1, namely business experience, respondents' intention to expand businesses in Brazzaville, potential attraction to a CFBAP e-commerce website, profits, supply chain management, e-commerce legislation in Congo-Brazzaville and respondents' Internet related risks, were further analysed. Based on the aforementioned online company registration theory building concept, various authors

including Thamarai et al. (2011) postulated that the increased deployment of e-commerce technology is modifying the crux of service encounters that formerly had a personal touch both in developed and developing economies based on the contextual benefits of online company registration. From the 116 respondents, 67% are male and 49% are female. This shows that male respondents were dominant in this sample.

In addition, 46.6% completed college and 47.4% completed university, which totals 94% of respondents (46.6 plus 47.4) who have higher education qualifications. Regarding business experience, 13.8% of respondents have been operating their businesses for less than 2 years, and 45.7% of respondents have operated their businesses for between 3 and 5 years. However, 35.3% of respondents spent between 6 and 8 years in business and, finally, 5.2% of respondents have been in business for 12 years or more. Moreover, 94.8% of respondents answered yes to expand their business in Brazzaville; whereas, 92% of respondents believe that Internet legislation should be adopted in Congo-Brazzaville in order to build trust among potential users and to guarantee online traffic on the potential CFBAP e-commerce website. Hence, most computer specialists, whether for fun or profit, invest in committing Internet crime. Regarding online risk and profits, 95.6% of respondents believe that the Internet is a risky environment, for business while 82.8% of them firmly believe that online company registration in Brazzaville will enable businesses to generate profits.

Finally, 85.3% of respondents believe that the potential CFBAP e-commerce website will attract them to expand business activities in Brazzaville. Furthermore, Congolese immigrant entrepreneurs harness the technological platform known as online company registration, which is being claimed at CFBAP, in order to gain a competitive advantage.

Deductive reasoning analysis

An overview of deductive reasoning statistical analysis, which is depicted in Figure 2, was used for this research. The reasoning proposed that from level 1 (conceptual) to level 2 (empirical), e-commerce adoption at CFBAP in Congo-Brazzaville could be correlated to business expansion (correlation 1), Congolese immigrant entrepreneurs' education (correlation 2) and Congo-Brazzaville's Internet legislation (correlation 3), as perceived by potential CFBAP's e-commerce users.

The rationale for this data was to determine the relationship between the potential CFBAP e-commerce website and Congolese immigrant entrepreneurs' business expansion in Brazzaville, their education level and Congo-Brazzaville's e-commerce legislation efficiency. Data analysis revealed that there is a correlation of +1 between the potential CFBAP e-commerce website and Congolese immigrant entrepreneurs' business

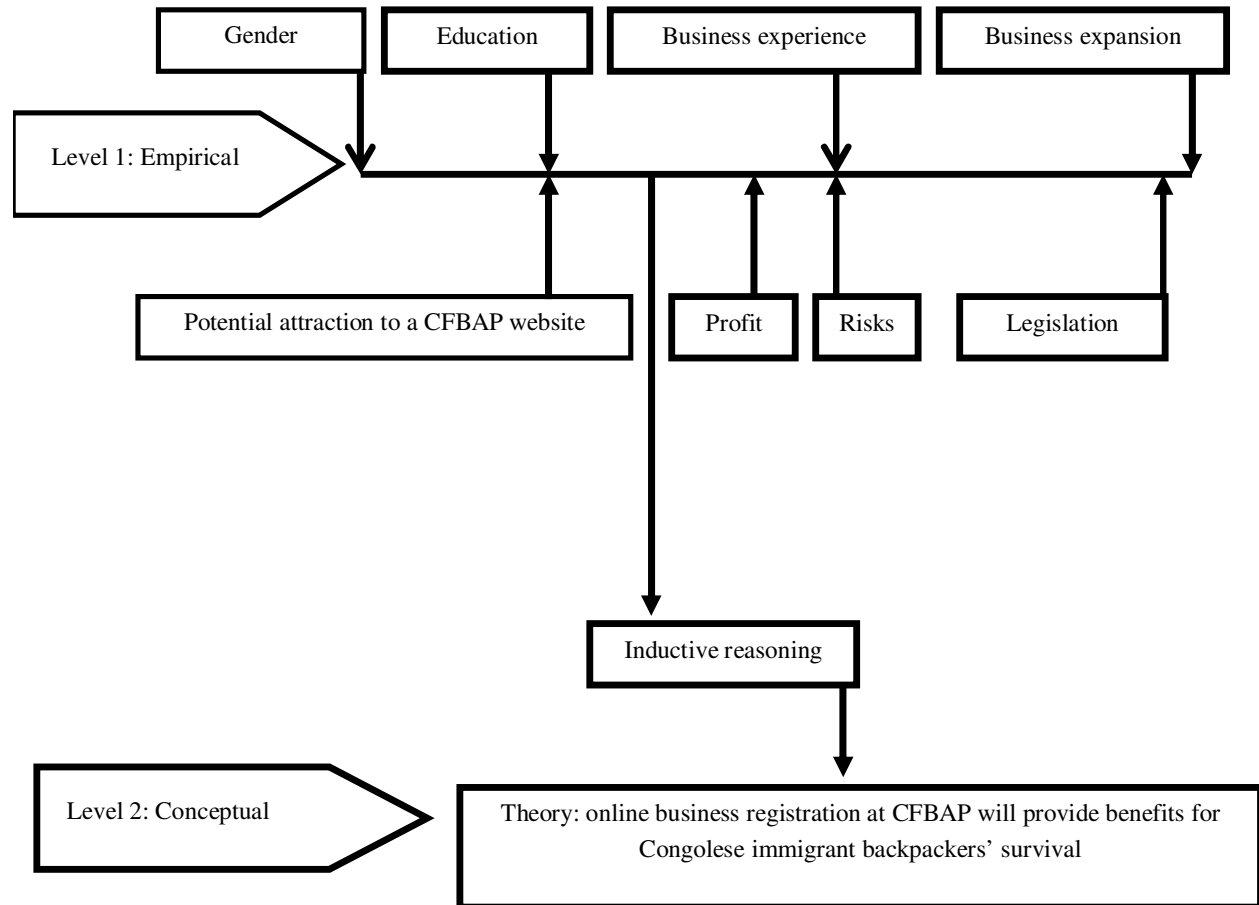


Figure 1. Online business registration inductive reasoning (Source: New York Education, 2010).

expansion, which indicates a perfect positive correlation; hence both variables move in the same direction together. Furthermore, there is a correlation of +1 between Congolese immigrant entrepreneurs' education level and their Internet skills, which indicates a perfect positive correlation, which means that both variables, again, move in the same direction together. Hence, data analysis reflected that there are opposite correlations of +1 and -1 between Congolese immigrant entrepreneurs' online business expansion in Brazzaville and Congo-Brazzaville e-commerce's legislation reliability, which indicates imperfect causation, which means that both variables do not move in the same direction together. The result of the analysis is discussed subsequently.

DISCUSSION

The business connotation of online company registration and supply chain management imply that the CFBAP e-commerce website will enable Congolese immigrant entrepreneurs to attract new customers, select suppliers, reduce operating costs, and declare both VAT and

customs electronically; which, in turn, is positively related to businesses' profit. However, Congolese immigrant entrepreneurs require legal insurance so that electronic transactions, which are conducted on the CFBAP e-commerce website, are safe, whilst collective data is kept private. However, experienced, Congolese immigrant entrepreneurs are aware that a lack of innovation can hamper business expansion in Brazzaville unless steps are taken at the right time to shore up the underlying technology, which is online business registration (Sidhu, 2011). Furthermore, this interpretation leads to formulation of the following hypotheses: overall attitude towards business expansion in Brazzaville is positively influenced by Congolese immigrant entrepreneurs' attitude towards the potential CFBAP e-commerce website, which should offer online business registration. In order to project CFBAP as a tech savvy governmental agency and to enable a point of parity, the Congo-Brazzaville Ministry of Communication should promulgate e-commerce application standard directories in which data integration, information access and data specification in the state agency should be regulated. Furthermore, the Congo-Brazzaville Ministry of Finance

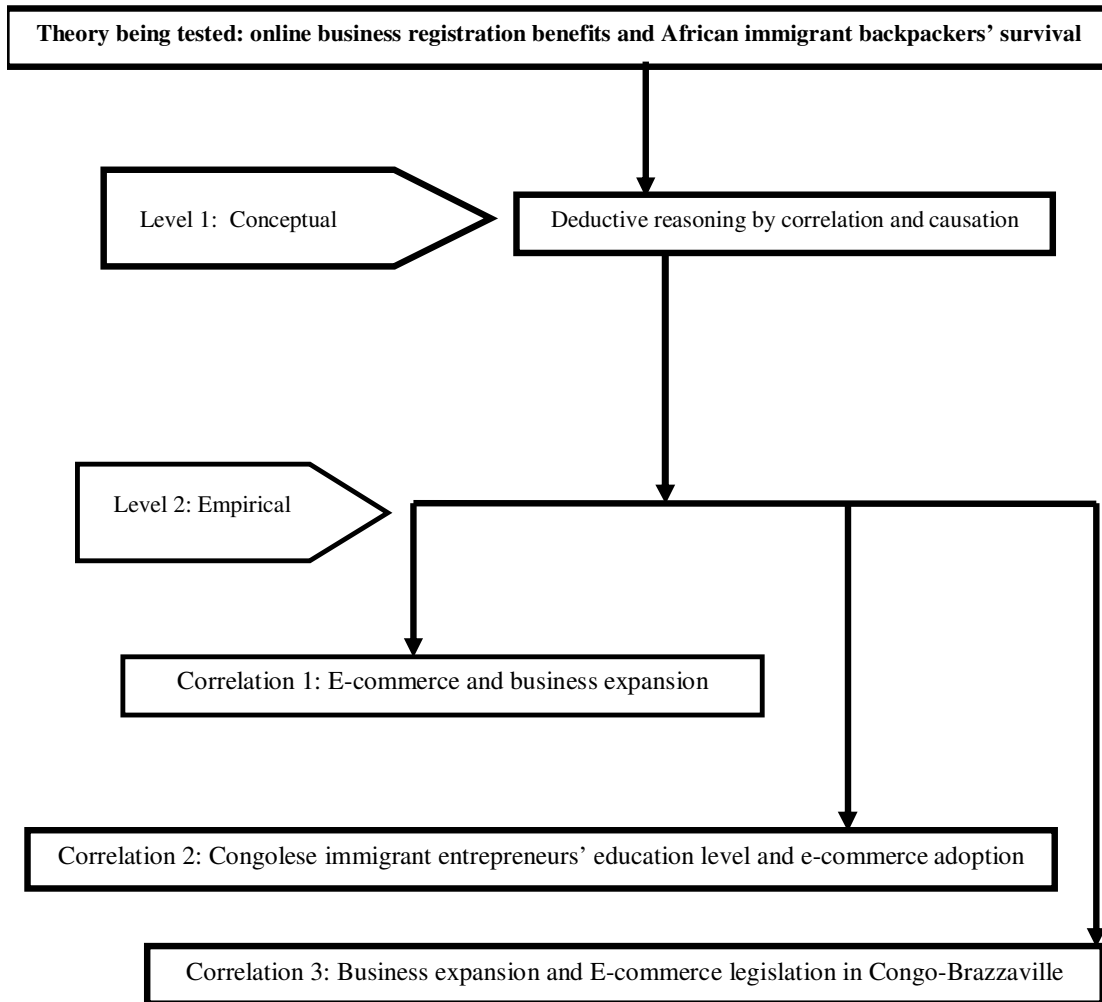


Figure 2. Online business registration deductive reasoning (Source: New York Education, 2010).

and *Banque des Etats de l'Afrique Centrale* (BEAC): Bank of Central African States should promulgate legal e-commerce texts, which guide businesses to unanimously use IT standards that are applicable to the sectors of card payment, and inter-bank international transfer, including e-customs declarations. Finally, the Congo-Brazzaville Ministry of Industry and Trade should establish and promulgate the national technical regulation on EDI to issue a certificate of origin, which will apply to all national agencies and enable them to issue an electronic certificate of origin (eCoSys) when all e-commerce transactions will be conducted (Nguyen, 2008).

Conclusions

Congoese immigrant entrepreneurs have become aware of the fact that a lack of innovation can hamper business expansion in Brazzaville. Therefore, steps should be taken to shore up the underlying technology such as

online business registration through B2B e-commerce. Online VAT declaration is one of the benefits of e-commerce for Congoese immigrant entrepreneurs and, e-commerce websites is a catalyst of fast online VAT payment. Congoese immigrants' businesses will certainly increase visibility via a CFBAP e-commerce website by using various technologies, such as website page landing, Google Pay Per Click (PPC), etcetera. E-commerce adoption at CFBAP will enable Congoese immigrant entrepreneurs to overcome management constraints related to customs declaration and the bureaucratic process of business, as far as permit applications are concerned. In other words, online business registration at CFBAP will improve Congoese SMMEs' administration. Since there will be training on how to utilise the new online technologies, it will generate a culture of Life Long Learning (LLL) amongst employees at CFBAP. More than that, B2B e-commerce will significantly reduce distribution cost of some Congoese immigrants' products and services, such as finance,

business registration, software and travel, which are important elements of commerce. Indeed, e-commerce will reduce the internal costs of various transactions of Congolese entrepreneurs and change the cost structure that dictates Congolese immigrants' businesses relationships with other businesses. Hence, B2B e-commerce adoption at CFBAP will improve Congolese SMMEs' supply chain management. In addition, customer care improvement will be another benefit of B2B e-commerce adoption by Congolese immigrants' businesses in Congo-Brazzaville. Traditionally, Congolese SMMEs place service personnel in the field to visit clients and obtain feedback about products and services' performance. However, in today's knowledge based economy (KBE), which is dominated by sophisticated products and services, after-sales services can be provided online at a reduced cost of operation. Therefore, online business operation by small businesses will certainly increase the speed of financial and marketing operations, which will positively enhance Congolese immigrant entrepreneurs' business expansion to Congo-Brazzaville. Business expansion is indeed potent for job creation, poverty alleviation and economic growth of any nation including Congo-Brazzaville.

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