

What influences the entrepreneurial intention in Romania?

Identification of the main determinants using classification trees

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Abstract: *The present study focused on investigating entrepreneurial intention in Romania using a technique specific to the field of data mining, respectively classification trees. The main idea of the study is to identify the probabilities of an individual being classified as a potential entrepreneur, having as a starting point a series of socio-demographic characteristics, but also perceptions, beliefs and opinions on issues related to training, experience and skills. The analysis takes into account some perceptions of the institutional support that authorities can provide to the entrepreneurial ecosystem. After analyzing 1522 responses to a questionnaire, it was concluded on the one hand that most respondents are not attracted to the idea of launching their own businesses, while potential entrepreneurs are characterized by a high confidence in their skills, in turn know individuals who have become entrepreneurs, these evidence being in line with other studies in the field, these aspects characterizing other groups of individuals and other societies. The*

low importance of the variables that describe age, gender and fear of failure in building the model implies that in Romania these characteristics do not significantly influence the decision of individuals to become entrepreneurs.

Keywords: entrepreneurial intention, classification trees, GEM database, self-confidence,
JEL Classification: C38, C82, L26, M13

Introduction

Identified and practiced more and more often in recent years, with technological evolution, increased flexibility, but also benefiting from significant improvements in transport or communication infrastructure, entrepreneurship has become an activity of great interest to many individuals. Practiced either out of passion and desire to materialize innovative ideas or simply as an alternative to the professions and occupations of many individuals, it has become a real contributor to economic growth and increased social welfare. But what precedes innovation and effective involvement in entrepreneurship is actually the intention, the individual interest in engaging in such activities. Entrepreneurs are the ones who innovate (Marinescu, et al., 2017; Toma, Marinescu and Gradinaru, 2017; Toma, Marinescu and Dogaru, 2017) and create jobs, but what are the factors that push individuals to become entrepreneurs?

The objective of this study is to identify the main causes that stimulate Romanians to choose to launch their own businesses. In this sense, this paper will analyze the influence of entrepreneurial attitudes and skills in Romania. It will be investigated whether those who have such skills and perceptions can necessarily become entrepreneurs, using the method of classification trees. It will also be aimed at making a comparison of the situation in Romania with other records and evidences provided by the scientific literature. This paper is structured as follows. The first part will present a brief review of the literature, and then, in the second part, the working methodology and the variables and data involved in the analysis will be presented. The study will continue with the highlighting of the results and the presentation of the main conclusions.

Literature review

The idea of entrepreneurial intent can describe the transposition of attitudes, beliefs and judgments of an individual focused on launching and developing a new organization (Bird, 1989). Kailer (2019) describes entrepreneurial intent as a commitment and behavior undertaken in the direction of the physical development of a company, business or startup.

Ajzen (1991) in The Theory of Planned Behavior points out that the intention to act in a certain directive is determined by a series of aspects related to the perceived control, attitudes and different norms and rules. According to this, the individual perceptions, the more they are focused towards a certain goal, the more likely it is for the individual to achieve the goal.

In recent years, the concepts of entrepreneurship and entrepreneur have become increasingly popular. More and more individuals decide every year to start their own companies, to

set up their own businesses. The development of entrepreneurship has attracted the attention of researchers, the subject becoming one of great interest in the literature, most studies trying to identify the main factors that push individuals to get involved in entrepreneurial activities. These factors are analyzed in detail, being divided into possible socio-demographic determinants, in determinants that synthesize the educational and professional training of individuals engaged in such activities, but also in factors related to attitudes, beliefs and perceptions.

Most research focuses on the self-confidence of individuals and their beliefs that they are endowed with the knowledge and experience necessary to run businesses. This factor has been identified as significant in explaining entrepreneurial intent. Wei et. al (2020) also emphasizes that confidence in these skills stimulates and contributes to the manifestation of a behavior oriented towards creation and innovation.

Jiménez et al. (2015) focuses on the link between the educational training of individuals and the development of entrepreneurial activities. Their study exposes a significant contribution of the graduated educational level on what they call "formal entrepreneurship". The idea is that graduates of the tertiary educational cycle have much better polished cognitive skills compared to those who do not pursue higher education. Acquiring them is essential when it comes to identifying and exploiting business opportunities. At the same time, they conclude that training in academia has a negative influence on informal entrepreneurship, which involves operating companies in an unregulated environment.

Increased attention in numerous studies is given to identifying the importance and significance of an individual's gender when it comes to engaging in entrepreneurial activities. The conclusions in this field are vast, the evidence being that in certain situations the gender of the respondent can significantly contribute to his involvement in entrepreneurial activities. Davidson et. al (2010) found that the involvement of women in the entrepreneurial process is significantly lower than that of men. Brush et. al (2019) points out that the entrepreneurial environment is one that seems to strongly disadvantage women, entrepreneurial career being seen as a stereotype, the general perception being that entrepreneurship is also intended for men. Shinnar, et. al (2012) observe in this sense that men as opposed to women are characterized by more courage, independence, strength, and the desire to engage in activities that can be considered risky.

Mei, et. al (2020) undertook a study targeting a group of students from China, enrolled in seven university programs, the method of collecting their answers being that of applying questionnaires. The conclusions drawn by them are that entrepreneurial courses in universities show a significant influence on young people, their interest in these activities being much more pronounced, entrepreneurship education also contributing to increasing the self-efficacy of individuals.

A factor identified as significant in the manifestation of the preference for the entrepreneurial path is the problem and the difficulty of finding a job. This is revealed in the study of Fatoki (2010), which analyzed the responses of 701 students who stated that the fear of becoming unemployed after graduation gives them the prospect of becoming entrepreneurs.

Among the factors carefully studied by researchers is the fear of individuals facing potential failures. Camelo-Ordaz (2016) identifies an inverse link between the fear of failure of individuals

and the willingness to engage in entrepreneurial activities. The more an individual fears the experience of failure, the lower his probability of taking the risk of starting a business.

Nowadays, entrepreneurship represents an increasingly common sphere of activity, being viewed with great interest and being an element that contributes to the economic development of societies. Starting new businesses by entrepreneurs has the effect of creating new jobs for other individuals, ensuring greater labor mobility. On the other hand, the establishment of new companies contributes to the permanent change and adjustment of the markets, opens the horizons of innovation and increases the market competition.

The beneficial effects of entrepreneurial activities on economies are visible, but there is a need for permanent support and stimulation of the authorities given to the entrepreneurial environment (Sperber and Linder, 2019). Excessive regulations discourage entrepreneurs, thus increasing the costs of setting up and operating their own businesses. The bureaucracy as well as the complex, unclear and constantly changing legislation decreases the motivation and interest of entrepreneurs, the operation of the activity in such an environment being a turbulent one. Failure among companies is common, especially in the first years of activity, the data showing that on average, 50% of start-ups manage to remain on the market after the first five years of activity.

Research methodology and data

2.1 Methodology

The analysis performed in this paper will be based on the use of the classification tree methodology. Classification trees represent structural mappings of binary decisions that lead to an interpretation about the class of an object (in the present study the objects are represented by the respondents to the questionnaire).

The application of this method leads to the construction of classification trees in the situation where the work variables are categorical and to decision trees in the case of analyzes that involves numerical variables. Previously mentioned, the purpose of this study is to identify the determining factors of expressing entrepreneurial intention in Romania, the variables used being categorical, which requires the application of classification trees.

The classification process involves the construction of a tree that in the root node will contain all the observations from the data set, its growth being recursive. For each node of the tree it will be analyzed and decided if the respective node can be a leaf node or if the observations contained in that node can be grouped using other characteristics. In this case, the construction of the tree will involve the grouping of respondents in different nodes, according to the answers recorded following the application of the questionnaire.

For each node X there will be the possibility of splitting it into LX (left node) and RX (right node). This splitting will be made according to the following criteria:

$$P(LX)r(LX) + P(RX)r(RX) < P(X)r(X) \quad [1]$$

$$P(X) = \sum_{i=1}^2 \pi_i n_{iX} / n_i \quad [2]$$

where

$P(X)$ – the probability associated to X node (the probability that an observation is part of the X node)

$r(X)$ – the risk associated with the X node (risk of misclassification)

π_i – the probability associated to each class

n_{iX} – the number of observations in the X node that is part of the i class

n_i – the number of sample observations included in the i class

In order to identify the risk associated with a node, the following elements will be defined:

$L(i,j)$ – the matrix of the incorrect classification of the observations from the i class to j class

$t(X)$ – class associated to X class in case of being a terminal node

$$r(x) = \sum_{i=1}^2 p(i|X)L(i, t(X)) \tag{3}$$

The development of the entire classification process aims to reduce as much as possible the heterogeneity in each node of the tree. This heterogeneity is measured using the Gini index. It will be denoted by $P(\omega_j)$ the proportion of observations in the j class. The Gini index is calculated for the X node using the following relationship:

$$I(X) = \sum_{i \neq j} P(\omega_i)P(\omega_j) \tag{4}$$

2.2 Data and collection sources

In order to assess the interest for entrepreneurship at the level of Romania, a series of variables considered relevant in relation to the literature review were selected.

The description of the ten indicators used in the analysis can be consulted in Table no. 1. The source of data collection is the database provided by Global Entrepreneurship Monitor, this organization being the main provider of statistics in the field of entrepreneurship. A number of 2002 responses were collected for Romania. The collected indicators analyze socio-demographic details, but also aspects related to the occupational and educational situation of the respondents, perceptions and beliefs both regarding their own abilities and business opportunities or the support given to the entrepreneurial environment by the authorities. The analysis is performed within this paper using the RStudio software. The last column in Table no. 1 represents the values calculated for Cronbach’s alpha coefficient. It measures the internal consistency or reliability for the measurement scales used. We notice that the recorded values are in all cases above 0.8, which indicates a good consistency of data and increased reliability.

Table no 1. Description of the variables

No.	Variable	Description	Cronbach's Alpha
1	GEMHHINC	Categorical variable describing the household income level of the respondent: low income ("L33"), average income ("M33"), high income ("U33")	0.921
2	GEMWORK3	Categorical variable describing the individuals' occupational status: (1) Full-time or part-time employed; (2) Searching a job; (3) Student or retired	0.904
3	GEMEDUC	The education level of the respondent - a categorical variable with 5 levels: "1" - secondary school, "2" - up to 10 classes, "3" - high school, "4" - post-secondary school, "5" - higher studies.	0.899
4	suskil	The perception of individuals about possessing entrepreneurial skills - binary categorical variable	0.901
5	fearfail	The variable expresses the respondent's position on the following question "Do you consider that fear of failure is an obstacle to opening a business?"	0.887
6	age	Respondents' age	0.907
7	knowent	Categorical variable with 2 levels: "Yes" (if the respondent states that he has knowledge about someone that started a business in the last two years) and "No", otherwise.	
8	gender	Gender of the respondent	0.887
9	opport	Perception regarding the existence of business opportunities in the respondents' area. A categorical variable with two levels "Yes" and "No".	0.880
10	easystart	The respondent's perception of the ease a business can be started in that country	0.828

Source: GEM monitor and authors' own research

3. Results and discussion

This section aims to analyze the entrepreneurial intention in Romania starting from a set of indicators provided by the GEM organization. Therefore, considering the variables discussed in the previous section, we will analyze what are the factors that can convince Romanians to choose to launch their own business.

Figure no. 1. Number of new businesses launched annually between 2010 and 2018

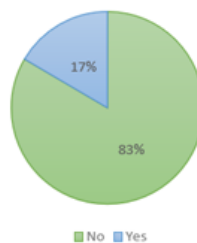


Source: Authors' own research

The previous figure highlights the number of new businesses launched in Romania in the period 2010-2018. It can be seen according to the graph that since 2014 the number of newly established enterprises has increased considerably, from approximately 56.3 thousand in 2014 to 94.2 thousand in 2018. Therefore, these data confirm that in Romania the entrepreneurial interest and intention have developed significant in recent years. Next, the reasons that lead Romanians in the direction of entrepreneurship will be investigated.

Figure no. 2. Distribution of answers regarding entrepreneurial intention

Are you, alone or with other, currently trying to start a new business, including any self-employment or selling any goods or services to others?



Source: Authors' own research

In Romania, 2002 individuals were interviewed who expressed their opinion on the intention to set up their own company in the next period. The data set also included N / A type values, so after eliminating these values we will rely on 1522 answers. The situation of these answers can be consulted in Figure no. 2. As shown, most of the respondents do not see the possibility of entrepreneurship in the immediate future, 83% of respondents say they do not consider such an opportunity.

In order to establish the factors that can explain the agreement or disagreement of Romanians regarding the transition to entrepreneurship, this study will be based on the method of classification trees. We will try to divide the respondents into two categories, namely the category of potential entrepreneurs and the category of non-entrepreneurs.

The analysis will initially involve partitioning the data set as follows: a training set will be used that will contain approximately 80% of the collected observations and a test set that will include the remaining 20% of the observations. With the help of the `rpart()` function implemented in RStudio we will try to build a first classification tree.

Table no 2. Building the classification tree using the `rpart()` function ()

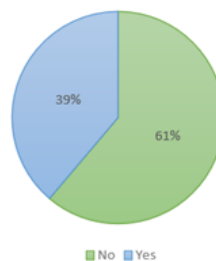
Node number 1	1217 observations	
Predicted class	No expected loss = 0.18 P(node)=1	
Class counts	1009	208
Probabilities	0.829	0.171

Source: Authors' own research

All 1217 observations in the training set are concentrated in the root node, the construction of a tree being impossible initially, due to the fact that the imbalance in the responses of individuals is pronounced. Most respondents say they are not interested in launching their own business in the near future. The situation of the answers of the interviewed persons, presented in Figure no. 2, but also the impossibility of building the tree indicates the fact that the class of potential entrepreneurs is poorly represented. 82.9% of the 1217 respondents do not consider launching a business in the next period. To balance the answers, in order to build the classification tree, we will use the ROSE package and function in RStudio. This function offers the possibility to rebalance the two classes by creating artificial units. Following the application of the resampling technique, the distribution of answers changes considerably, the proportion of positive answers being 39% compared to 17% in the initial situation. Applying this function to the data set indicates a slight balancing of the two samples.

Figure no. 3. Distribution of responses following the resampling technique

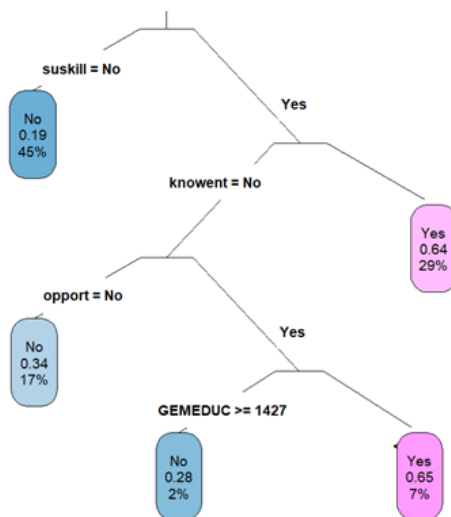
Distribution of answers following the balancing of the data set



Source: Authors' own research

The use of balanced samples should allow the construction of the classification tree. Estimating the model will lead to the construction of the tree in the following figure. Each node corresponds to three elements, namely: the predicted class, the probability of the second class (the class of potential entrepreneurs), as well as the percentage of the total observations assigned to that node.

Figure no. 4. Graphical representation of the tree



Source: Authors' own research

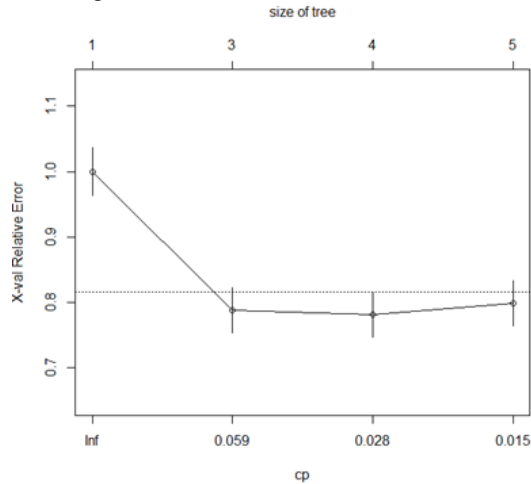
According to the estimated classifier, the individuals who consider that they do not have competencies and abilities that would allow them to start their own business, were assigned to the category of non-entrepreneurs. There is a 19% probability that individuals who do not have such skills will fall into the second category of entrepreneurs. On the other hand, respondents who are convinced that they are able to start their own business were assigned to the class of potential entrepreneurs, with a probability of 64%.

In addition, given the splitting of the classification tree, we notice that these individuals also know other entrepreneurs. 17% of respondents are assigned to the category of non-entrepreneurs, representing individuals who, although they consider themselves ready to become entrepreneurs given their abilities, do not know other entrepreneurs and do not perceive it as appropriate to launch a new business. 7% of the surveyed individuals are people prepared for the entrepreneurial path, who, although they do not know other entrepreneurs, perceive the launch of a new business as an opportune one and who have graduated higher education. These individuals were assigned to the class of entrepreneurs with a probability of 65%.

Having already built a classification tree, the next step is to determine its proper size. The optimal size will be identified using the cross-validation technique, which involves splitting the available units of the analyzed data set into two subsamples, one of the samples being used for

estimation and the other for validation. In the case of trees, the method involves dividing the initial sample into 10 equal subsamples, the estimate being made in turn on each of them, each of which will be removed. The test is performed on the removed sample. The results of cross-validation can be further consulted using the graphical method.

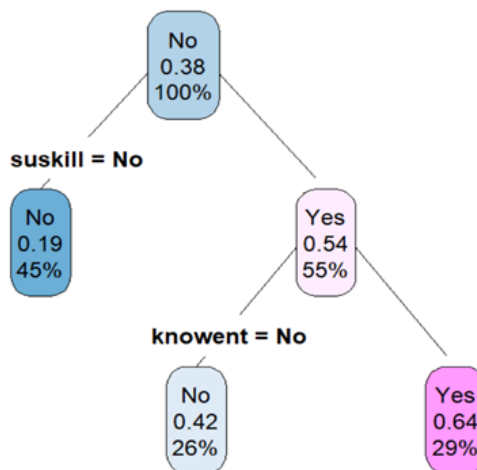
Figure no. 5. Cross-validation results



Source: Authors' own research

Based on the previous graph, it is necessary to choose the complexity parameter (cp). We will select the first value for cp where the curve falls below the dotted line, in this case the complexity parameter being equal to 0.059. The final tree constructed using the prune() function and the identified value of the complexity parameter is represented in the following figure.

Figure no. 6. Graphical representation of the final classification tree



Source: Authors' own research

Figure no. 6 shows the tree built after applying the `prune()` function. Pruning is the process of removing leaves and branches to improve the performance of the classification tree. It is noted that in the root node can be found all the observations used in the analysis. The respondents can be included in the second class, of the future entrepreneurs with a probability of 38%. Next, the nodes are divided considering the perception of having entrepreneurial skills and the knowledge by the respondents of other individuals who have become entrepreneurs.

The distribution in classes can be interpreted as follows: 45% of the Romanians surveyed were classified as not representing potential entrepreneurs, these being people who consider that they do not have the necessary training to start businesses. However, with a probability of 19%, they could be in the second class of future entrepreneurs. 29% of the respondents represent potential entrepreneurs, in that they consider that they have skills and experience typical of entrepreneurs and also know other entrepreneurs.

Table no 3. The importance of the variables

No.	Variable	Importance
1	suskill	53
2	knowent	20
3	GEMWORK3	7
4	GEMEDUC	6
5	gender	6
6	GEMHHINC	5
7	age9c	1
8	fearfail	1
9	opport	-
10	easystart	-

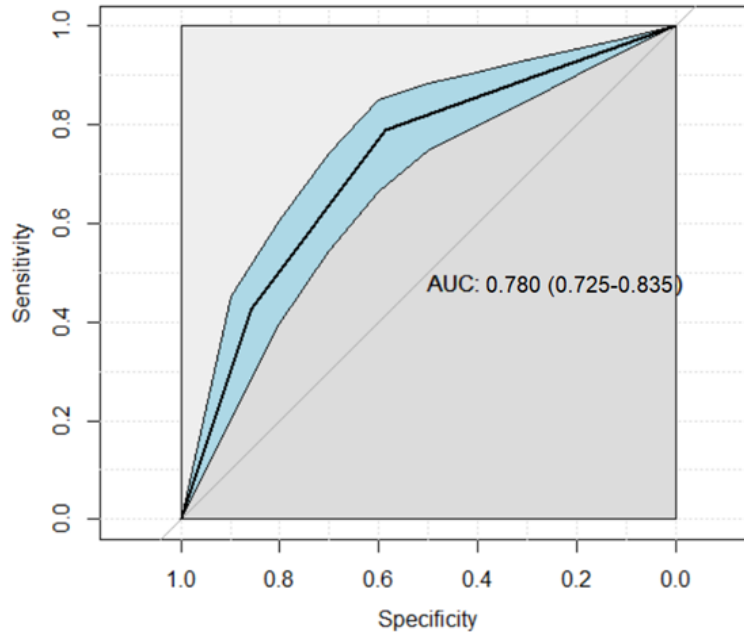
Source: Authors' own research

The predictor variables can be consulted in the previous table according to their importance in defining the belonging of an observation to a certain class. In the case of Romanian respondents, the decision-makers for their inclusion in the class of entrepreneurs or non-entrepreneurs are in principle related to their own perception regarding the possession of skills or experience necessary to start their own business. Also, an important role is played by the respondent's knowledge of an entrepreneur who has launched a business in the last two years.

The occupational status and completed level of education, as well as the gender and income category of the respondents seem to matter to a similar extent in the comments. The estimated values for the importance of these variables are close. Age but also the fear of failure have a weak explanatory power in Romania, by approaching the method of classification trees. The agreement or disagreement regarding the business opportunities in the respective country or the ease with which an individual can open a business do not constitute explanatory factors for the classification of the individuals in the two entrepreneurial or non-entrepreneurial groups.

The accuracy of the constructed binary classifier will be further studied using the measurement of the area under the ROC curve (Receiver Operating Characteristic). On the two axes in the graph shown in the following figure, there are two measures, namely sensitivity and specificity. True positive rate represents the proportion of correctly predicted observations as positive out of the total positive observations, while false positive rate indicates the proportion of negative responses but which were still included in the class of positive ones.

Figure no. 7. Accuracy of the estimated classifier



Source: Authors' own research

For an estimated classifier, its performance is as good as the ROC curve is directed to the upper left corner on a graph similar to the one in Figure no. 7. The classifier represented by the diagonal drawn in the graph exposes a random classifier. For the classification tree built in our study, we notice that the area under the ROC curve registers a value of 0.780 which indicates a very good performance and a good prediction ability.

Conclusions

The growing interest of individuals in the direction of practicing entrepreneurship, as well as the contribution to economic growth has got the attention of many researchers and scholars on this subject. Globally, every year, more and more individuals turn to entrepreneurship and take the commitment and involvement to launch, develop and produce value within the companies founded by themselves. The latest statistics provided by the GEM organization indicate in mid-2020 that there are approximately 582 million entrepreneurs worldwide. Bringing a benefit on the labor market, by creating new jobs, entrepreneurship proves to be an activity that is not only for the benefit of the individual who practices it, but also on the people he works with, people who engage in the same activities.

The present paper considered the classification of Romanians into two groups, potential entrepreneurs and non-entrepreneurs. Using the answers collected to a questionnaire launched

by the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor and applying the classification tree method, an attempt was made to identify the causes that push Romanians to launch their own businesses. The classification tree method applied to the 1522 observations revealed that non-entrepreneurs are generally individuals who do not consider themselves to have specific skills, experience and knowledge of entrepreneurs. Also, in the class of non-entrepreneurs were included individuals who, although they perceive that they have the necessary skills to run a business, do not know other entrepreneurs and have not completed studies in higher education. 29% of the respondents included in the class of entrepreneurs are people who, beyond the fact that they trust their own skills, they know in their turn other individuals who have started different businesses and also have pursued higher education. Considering the importance of the variables in the classification process, we can conclude that at the level of Romania the factors that can justify the choice of entrepreneurship are the respondents' own confidence regarding their training and experience and the knowledge of other entrepreneurs. At the opposite pole is the vision regarding the business launch opportunities and the ease with which a business can be started in Romania. Although in Romania these factors do not significantly influence the entrepreneurial intention, in other societies this aspect weighs much more, the individuals taking into account in a much greater proportion the existing regulations and opportunities in their entrepreneurial ecosystem.

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