

When Passions Collide: Passion Convergence in Entrepreneurial Teams

Marilyn A. Uy
Nanyang Technological University

Gabriel Henry Jacob
Nanyang Technological University and Asian Pastoral Institute

Michael M. Gielnik
Leuphana University of Lüneburg

Michael Frese
Asia School of Business, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, Leuphana
University of Lüneburg, and National University of Singapore

Tony Antonio, Daniel Martomanggolo Wonohadidjojo, and Christina
Universitas Ciputra Surabaya

Extant research on passion is replete with individual-level studies. Although team-level studies have emerged, these empirical studies have adopted a static approach. We pivot from the predominant static focus on passion by examining passion convergence, or the dynamic pattern of increasing similarity in passion among members of a team. Drawing on multilevel theory of emergence in teams and using the novel consensus emergence model approach, we theorize the phenomenon of passion convergence and focus on how within-team experiences of progress and setback shape passion convergence. We also analyze the impact of passion convergence on team performance. Data from 314 individuals nested in 82 new venture teams indicate that experiencing team progress facilitated passion convergence, whereas experiencing team setbacks did not have a significant impact on passion convergence. Results also suggest that teams with members converging on a high level of passion positively predicted team performance. We discuss the theoretical and practical significance of our study.

Keywords: passion convergence, team progress, team setback, team performance, consensus emergence model

Often described as the “fire in the belly that makes the improbable possible,” *passion* has been touted as the most evident phenomenon of the entrepreneurial process (Smilor, 1997, p. 342).

 Marilyn A. Uy, Division of Strategy, International Business, and Entrepreneurship, Nanyang Business School, Nanyang Technological University; Gabriel Henry Jacob, Division of Strategy, International Business, and Entrepreneurship, Nanyang Business School, Nanyang Technological University and Asian Pastoral Institute; Michael M. Gielnik, Institute of Strategic HR Management, Leuphana University of Lüneburg; Michael Frese, Asia School of Business, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, Institute of Strategic HR Management, Leuphana University of Lüneburg, and Department of Management of Organisation, National University of Singapore; Tony Antonio and Daniel Martomanggolo Wonohadidjojo, Informatics, Universitas Ciputra Surabaya; Christina, International Business Management, Universitas Ciputra Surabaya.

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Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Marilyn A. Uy, Division of Strategy, International Business, and Entrepreneurship, Nanyang Business School, Nanyang Technological University, 50 Nanyang Avenue, Singapore 639798, Singapore. E-mail: muy@ntu.edu.sg

Passion, which reflects people’s intense positive feelings for a domain or target activity that is personally important, highly valued, or central to their identity (Cardon, Wincent, Singh, & Drnovsek, 2009; Vallerand et al., 2003), plays a pivotal role in entrepreneurship, specifically in facilitating the acquisition of resources for developing businesses (Baum & Locke, 2004; Baum, Locke, & Smith, 2001), influencing venture funding decision process (Chen, Yao, & Kotha, 2009; Mittens, Sudek, & Cardon, 2012), stimulating venture-directed effort and persistence (Cardon & Kirk, 2015; Murnieks, Mosakowski, & Cardon, 2014), and improving chances of crowdfunding success (Davis, Hmieleski, Webb, & Coombs, 2017; Li, Chen, Kotha, & Fisher, 2017). Taken together, these studies substantiate the functional importance of passion.

Given the significance of passion in entrepreneurship, scholars sought to unravel the nature of passion, that is, whether it is fixed or subject to changes over time. Empirical evidence reveal that passion is a dynamic construct that fluctuates over time (Collwaert, Anseel, Crommelinck, De Beuckelaer, & Vermeire, 2016; Gielnik, Spitzmuller, Schmitt, Klemann, & Frese, 2015; Lex, Gielnik, Spitzmuller, Jacob, & Frese, 2020). Although extant research has deepened our understanding of passion dynamics, passion studies have largely focused on the individual level; limited empirical attention has been given to the dynamics of passion at the team level. Notwithstanding the contributions of a couple of empirical studies on passion at the team level that surfaced in