

Cross-Border Practice through the Lenses of Transformative Learning and Uses-and-Gratifications: An Empirical Study of Macao Entrepreneurs in the Guangdong–Hong Kong–Macao Greater Bay Area

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Abstract: The Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area positions Macao as an intermediary between mainland China and Portuguese speaking countries, and the coordination of formal institutions and social networks reduces cross border costs. Existing research privileges structure over process and lacks an explanation of how entrepreneurs translate external conditions into capabilities and sustained intention. Drawing on semi structured interviews and thematic analysis with ten Macao entrepreneurs who have cross border experience, this study advances two mechanisms. Situated internalization, comprising situational triggering and capability consolidation, explains how practice is reflected upon and sedimented as organizational knowledge. Motivation sustainment, comprising motivation matching and satisfaction assessment, explains how platform satisfaction is converted into sustained cross border operating intention. Together the mechanisms trace a causal chain linking learning and platform use and provide process indicators that are observable, comparable, and testable. The study operationalizes the alignment of policy and social networks into an actionable framework and offers empirical support and design levers for platform governance and for embedding entrepreneurial learning in practice.

Keywords: Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area; Macao Entrepreneurs; Transformative Learning; Uses and Gratifications Theory; Cross Border Entrepreneurship

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1.Introduction

The Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area positions Macao as a key intermediary between mainland China and Portuguese speaking countries. Institutional arrangements such as CEPA, the Hengqin Cooperation Zone, and the China Portugal business platform combine to create an institutional lever for cross border flows of factors. Within this configuration, Macao entrepreneurs rely on frequent shuttling and cross border network collaboration to link raw material origins in

Portuguese speaking countries with the large capacity markets of the mainland, forming a practice logic of institutional push plus network safeguard. Formal and informal institutions reinforce one another, encompassing hard arrangements in investment and finance as well as soft norms rooted in multicultural kinship and local customs. Together they reduce the transaction costs of opportunity recognition and resource integration and expand the feasible boundary of cross border operations. The materials you provided indicate that Macao entrepreneurs, drawing on One country two systems, the China Portugal platform, and Greater Bay Area policies, develop transnational ventures under the dual assurance of institutions and networks. This pathway has become stable, observable, and reproducible.

However, existing research remains largely at the structural level of institutions, networks, and outcomes and has not revealed how entrepreneurial actors translate external conditions into sustained capability growth and organizational learning. This process calls for Transformative learning to portray the chain of situated participation, reflective integration, capability consolidation, and re contextualization and to identify which institutional and network triggers set these learning events in motion. At the same time, the cross border information ecology lacks a systematic model grounded in uses and gratifications theory that explains why entrepreneurs move among government portals, forums, trade promotion events, and chamber based communities, what types of gratifications they seek in each venue, how these experiences shape trust and decision making, and how they affect local embeddedness and operational sustainability. Filling these two mechanism lines can translate the macro logic of institutional alignment and network embedding into micro level process variables that are observable, comparable, and verifiable, thereby strengthening explanatory power and practical operability.

1.2 Research Objectives & Questions

This study advances two research objectives and questions, each directly testable through semi structured interviews. RO1 is to explain, through Transformative learning, how Macao entrepreneurs convert Greater Bay Area institutions and network resources into internal capabilities. RO2 is to explain, through uses and gratifications theory, how entrepreneurs primary motivations for using policy platforms influence their sustained intention to operate across borders. RQ1: how Macao entrepreneurs complete the learning conversion from practice and reflection to capability internalization in real business contexts? RQ2: how entrepreneurs primary motivations on policy platforms influence their sustained cross border operating intention? Methodologically, the study employs semi structured interviews and theoretical sampling, enrolling ten Macao entrepreneurs with cross border experience. We collect evidence on learning events and media use around key institutional and network nodes and conduct cross case comparisons to ensure saturation and robustness of conclusions.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Institutional and Relational Embedding and the Mechanism of Internal Growth

Existing scholarship has outlined the structural logic of Macao entrepreneurs' cross border practice ^[1]. On the one hand, formal arrangements such as CEPA, the Hengqin Cooperation Zone, and the China Portugal business platform provide hard channels for tariffs, investment, and customs clearance, thereby lowering entry costs for cross border sourcing and market linkage ^[2]. On the other hand, informal institutions and relational networks including multicultural kinship, Portuguese language proficiency, religious communities, and overseas Chinese associations serve as soft guarantees that mitigate uncertainty in execution and competition through reciprocity and trust ^[3]. Combined, these forces form a normalized pattern of institutional push with network safeguard.

However, this framework largely remains at the level of external conditions and business outcomes and offers few process oriented accounts or testable mediating chains that show how entrepreneurial actors convert institutional and network resources into sustained capability growth and organizational learning ^[4]. While the literature notes frequent travel between Portuguese speaking countries and the mainland and the use of associations and government channels to resolve compliance and execution issues, it does not answer how learning occurs, why it occurs, or how it is consolidated as organizational knowledge ^[5].

From the perspective of Transformative learning, cross border entrepreneurship can be understood as a practice based process of situation, reflection, internalization, and re contextualization ^[6]. Real tasks trigger reflection, which leads to the internalization of a sense of rules and cross cultural negotiation capacity, followed by application and optimization in new

settings, and finally sedimentation into organizational processes and capability structures^[7]. The Macao case offers fertile ground for this chain. Institutional platforms and facilitation provide entry points for learning situations, while collaboration and friction within networks stimulate reflection and re contextualization. Yet prior studies have not systematized these learning events into operational process indicators, nor have they compared pathway differences across industries and destinations^[8].

Addressing this gap requires proposing and testing a micro process model guided by Transformative learning that explains how external institutions and networks are converted into internal capabilities and organizational learning through practice^[9]. It also calls for cross case comparison to trace stage specific features and variants along the learning chain, thereby bridging the disconnect between structural description and subjective growth. On this basis, the first research question is both theoretically necessary and empirically feasible^[10]. It elucidates the internal mechanism by which institutions and networks take effect and provides observable and verifiable mediating paths for assessing the sustainability of cross border operations^[11].

2.2 Information Ecology and the Pattern of Motives, Gratifications, and Consequences

A second salient gap lies in the insufficient dynamical explanation at the level of the information ecology^[12]. Evidence shows that entrepreneurs move between formal channels such as government portals, forums, trade promotion events, and the China Portugal platform and informal channels such as chambers and associations, hometown and interpersonal networks, and instant messaging groups to accomplish distinct tasks that include opportunity identification, compliance confirmation, partner matching, and rapid problem solving^[13]. Official platforms are often used to obtain institutional confirmation of what can be done and to secure market entry, whereas associations and local ties are used to learn how to proceed and to mitigate risks^[14].

Yet much of the literature describes this only as channel complementarity and lacks mechanism based modeling anchored in uses and gratifications theory^[15]. It remains unclear what primary motives drive the use of different channels, how corresponding types of gratifications are distinguished, how the motive gratification linkage shapes the evaluation of information quality and the formation of trust, and how these in turn affect local embeddedness and sustained willingness to operate^[16]. These questions have not been systematically explained or tested.

Modeling is especially necessary in the Macao context. Institutional platforms provide high certainty in rules and matching at the initial stage of cross border activity, but their ability to sustain entrepreneurial intention depends largely on whether platform interactions satisfy core motives such as opportunity visibility, procedural certainty, matching efficiency, and pathway accessibility^[17]. Informal networks offer flexibility and responsiveness, but the gratifications they deliver tend to emphasize emotional support and quick fixes, which may not reliably build intertemporal trust or compliance certainty^[18]. While existing texts offer vivid examples of market development through platforms and risk mitigation through association backed guarantees, they have not elevated these into an analytical framework of motive, use, gratification, and consequence, nor have they identified which motives are the key drivers of sustained operating intention across firm life cycles and destination contexts^[19].

It is therefore necessary to reconstruct the mechanism of the cross border information ecology through uses and gratifications theory^[20]. This reconstruction begins with primary usage motives, clarifies the target orientation and gratification types of platform interactions, and links them to outcome variables, especially sustained cross border operating intention^[21]. Such a model can explain why entrepreneurs continue or withdraw from a given policy platform and can inform actionable improvements in platform governance and service design^[22]. Consequently, the second research question emerges as a direct and necessary inquiry^[23]. It narrows the analytical focus to the main chain connecting formal channels, core motives, and behavioral consequences, avoids conflating formal and informal channels, improves model identifiability, and can be tested through semi structured interviews that collect linked evidence on motive statements, usage trajectories, perceived gratifications, and action intentions.

3. Methods

3.1 Semi-structured interviews

This study addresses two process-oriented research questions that are strongly actor centered. Both require narration

of individual experience, contextual judgment, and the display of reflective mechanisms, which cannot be adequately captured with closed-ended scales. Semi structured interviews keep the inquiry focused while preserving narrative space to trace learning event chains, platform interaction chains, and the details and turning points of motives, gratifications, and consequences. In the Macao context, cross-border practice relies on the coupling of institutional leverage and network safeguards. Such mechanisms are best reconstructed through first-person accounts that reveal how they operate in practice, making semi structured interviews a highly congruent approach.

3.2 Sample size and scope

The study combines theoretical sampling with the principle of information power. Given clear research foci and a relatively homogeneous population, and given our plan to obtain full event-chain narratives through high-quality, extended interviews, we judge a total of ten participants to be sufficient to reach saturation and enable pathway comparison within a limited sample. Prior interview research in the Macao setting has covered larger samples of about thirty participants, which informs our sampling frame. Building on that foundation, the present study pivots to fine-grained mechanism tracing and pathway comparison, hence a smaller but deeper sample strategy to achieve thick description (Shown in Table 1).

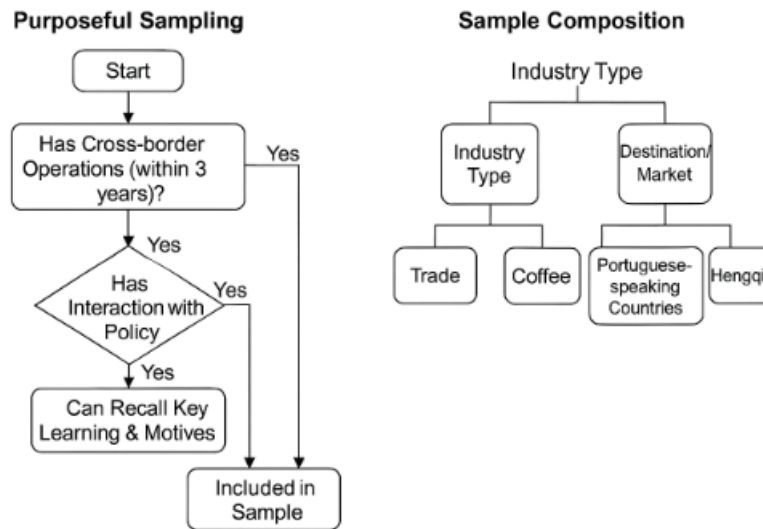
Table 1. Profile of ten Macao entrepreneurs' positions

Age	Industry	Pseudonym	Gender	Rationale for selection
42	Import–export trade Portuguese agricultural products	E01	Male	In the past three years connected Brazilian coffee beans to mainland roasting plants through the China–Portugal business platform and can recount a learning chain of regulatory confirmation, customs coordination, and quality traceability.
36	Food and beverage coffee chain	E02	Female	Opened a cross-border outlet in Hengqin and joined trade promotion events. Platform use is driven mainly by market entry and procedural certainty and allows comparison of formal platforms with chamber-based information.
49	Cold-chain logistics and warehousing	E03	Male	Leveraged CEPA customs facilitation to expand distribution in the Pearl River Delta and is active in industry associations and instant-messaging groups with clear cases of rapid problem solving and process consolidation.
33	Cross-border e-commerce Portuguese cosmetics	E04	Female	Uses government portals and trade fairs to obtain certification pathways, then relies on hometown networks for channel rollout. Can clearly narrate changes in motive, gratification, and intention.
41	Cultural tourism and convention services	E05	Female	Repeatedly participated in Hengqin roadshows and matching sessions. Focuses on matching efficiency and pathway accessibility and can provide traces of platform interaction and trust formation.
29	Cultural and creative design co-branding	E06	Female	Entered mainland retail chains through association resources and experienced a re-contextualized learning process of style localization, contract compliance, and post-event review.
45	Medical device agency	E07	Male	Uses both government technical filing platforms and industry forums and can compare credibility rules across information sources and their impact on decisions.
38	Education and corporate services	E08	Female	Provides compliance training in the mainland for firms from Portuguese speaking countries. Frequent shuttling has produced internalization of a sense of rules and negotiation capacity and enables cross-case comparison.
52	Environmental materials and engineering	E09	Male	Entered Greater Bay Area projects via green procurement policies of industrial parks. Motives center on opportunity visibility and policy interfacing and can speak to mechanisms that raise sustained operating intention.
35	Digital marketing and cross-border brand operations	E10	Female	Acquires clients through trade fairs and chambers and uses instant-messaging groups for after-sales and risk control. Can clearly distinguish gratifications of emotional support versus compliance certainty.

3.3 Inclusion criteria and composition

Purposeful sampling targets Macao entrepreneurs with cross-border operating experience and actual interaction with policy platforms. Inclusion criteria are as follows. First, documented cross-border operation or collaboration within the past three years. Second, at least one interaction with a policy platform such as the China–Portugal business platform, trade fairs, or park services. Third, the ability to recall key learning events and platform-use motives. The sample composition emphasizes variation in industry for example trade, coffee, services, destination Portuguese speaking countries or Hengqin, and firm stage entry, expansion, or stabilization to ensure comparability and representativeness (Shown in Figure 1).

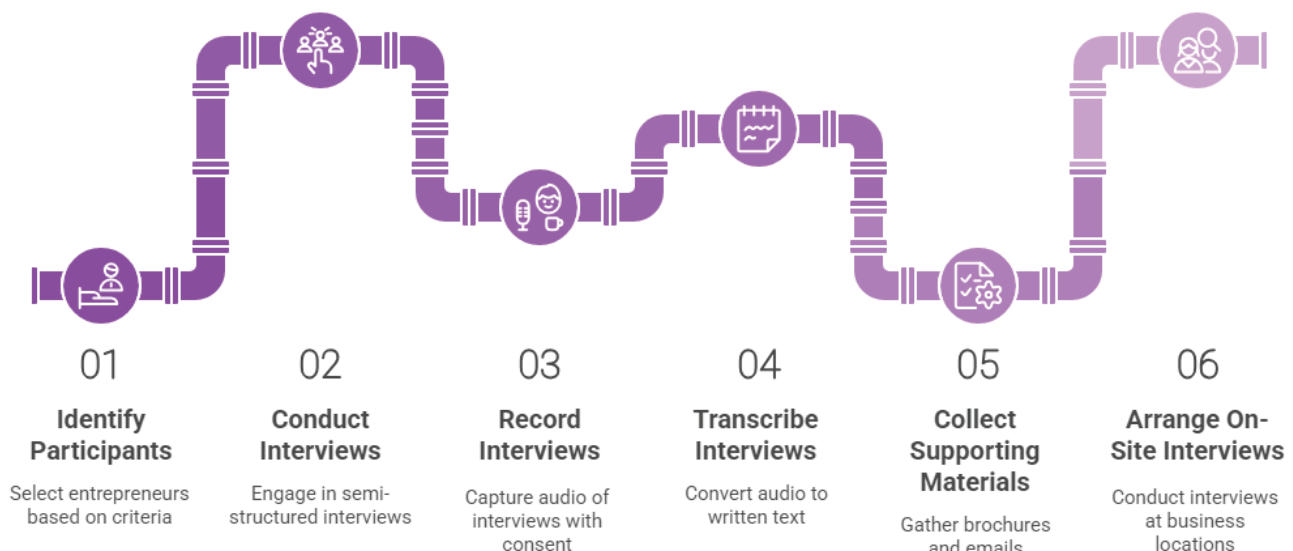
Figure 1. Sample Selection and Composition of Macao Entrepreneurs



3.4 Data collection

Data were gathered through semi structured in-depth interviews of sixty to ninety minutes per participant, conducted primarily in Cantonese and Mandarin with Portuguese added when appropriate. Interviews followed two main threads. The first examined practice, reflection, and capability internalization. The second examined platform motives and the transformation of intention. We emphasized source tracing of key events and detailed post-event reviews. With consent, all interviews were audio recorded and transcribed. When available, activity brochures and platform emails were collected as supporting materials. Whenever possible, interviews were arranged on site at business operations or immediately after platform activities to enhance contextual authenticity and fidelity (Shown in Figure 2).

Figure 2. Data Collection Process for Macao Entrepreneurs



3.5 Data analysis

We employed thematic analysis, following a layered path from codes to subthemes to themes. First, interview texts were read in full and open initial coding was conducted to identify keywords related to learning behavior, media motives, and policy use. Second, similar or repeated codes were grouped into subthemes and iteratively refined against the theoretical framework. Finally, subthemes were abstracted into core themes to produce explanatory conclusions, summarized in Table 2. Two researchers independently completed the first round of coding and jointly confirmed the thematic structure to ensure analytic rigor and theoretical alignment.

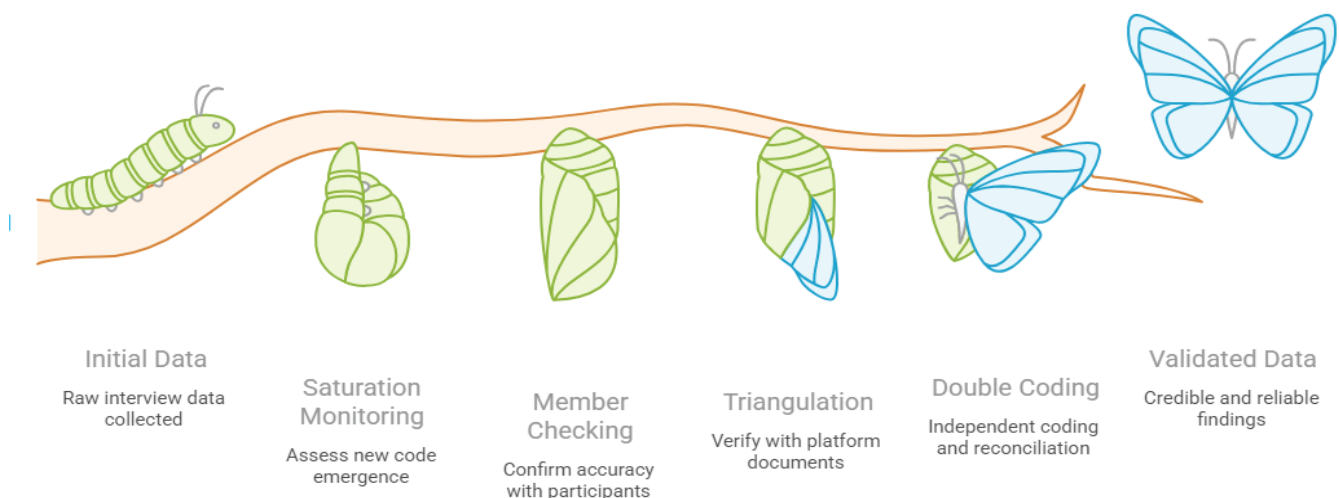
Table 2. Thematic Structure

Theme	Subtheme	Codes
Situational internalization	Situational triggers	Institutional nodes; Cross cultural friction; Task reframing; Peer benchmarking; Dual domain comparison; Immediate review
	Capability consolidation	Rules moved to the front; Negotiation scripts; SOP standardization; Role segmentation; Knowledge transmission; Re contextualization
Motivation sustainment	Motivation matching	Opportunity visibility; Procedural certainty; Matching efficiency; Risk mitigation; Knowledge updating; Relationship expansion
	Satisfaction assessment	Information verifiability; Cross checking; Cost reduction; Response based trust; Local embeddedness; Sustained intention

3.5 Trustworthiness and credibility checks

To ensure credibility, we undertook several validation steps. First, saturation monitoring began after the eighth interview to assess the emergence of new codes. Second, member checking was conducted by returning interview summaries to participants for accuracy confirmation. Third, interview content was triangulated with platform documents and policy texts. Fourth, a subset of cases was double coded independently and reconciled to produce a unified codebook. Detailed audit trails and analytic reflections were maintained throughout to ensure transparency and replicability (Shown in Figure 3).

Figure 2. Ensuring Credibility



4. Findings and Discussion

4.1 Situated internalization

This study advances situated internalization as the focused answer to RQ1. Situated internalization means turning on site problems into capabilities. When entrepreneurs confront bottlenecks in real business such as unclear procedures or ineffective communication, they immediately record causes and remedies and hold short review meetings. They then codify the approach into checklists and workflows that specify sequences, responsible persons, and contingencies. When similar situations recur, they execute by the checklist and fine tune based on results. Over time, these practices move from individual experience to

shared team capability that can be replicated and taught. In real contexts, practice is fixed through reflection and ultimately becomes a stable capability, thereby addressing the first research question. Transformative learning posits that learning is not external transmission but inner growth triggered by the actor's re understanding of tasks and relations in specific situations. The greater the complexity of practice, the more likely it is to trigger reflection and meaning making, which consolidates a sense of rules, negotiation capacity, and process awareness. Facing dual domains and cross cultural collaboration, Macao entrepreneurs use institutional facilitation and network resources as entry points and translate repeated real tasks into reusable knowledge units and action scripts. Situated internalization therefore explains how, in real business settings, entrepreneurs convert practice and reflection into capability internalization and grounds this in two observable subthemes, situational triggers and capability consolidation.

Situational triggers. This subtheme describes how learning is initiated as external environments ignite inner reflection and problem framing. First, institutional nodes. Confronted with rigid requirements such as customs rules, admission catalogues, and tax benefit lists, entrepreneurs reframe task boundaries and clarify goals and pathways in terms of what can be done and how to do it, establishing an institution anchored starting point for learning. Second, cross cultural friction. Differences in language, religious prohibitions, and customary etiquette generate tension in communication and execution. Such tension forces actors to recalibrate their understanding of others and of rules in action. Reflection targets not only errors but also the scope conditions of existing knowledge. Third, task reframing. When original plans meet execution or resource constraints, actors decompose goals, reset priorities, and reallocate resources, shifting learning toward strategy redesign. Fourth, peer benchmarking. Through close observation in park activities, association exchanges, and trade fairs, actors convert external benchmarks into reference systems that calibrate their own processes and capability gaps. Fifth, dual domain comparison. Moving between origin countries and mainland markets, entrepreneurs distill transferable rules and adaptable practices through environmental contrasts. Sixth, immediate review. Around discrete nodes such as a negotiation, a customs declaration, or a shelf placement, actors conduct rapid after action reviews, record key cues and failure points, and abstract experience into simplified operational takeaways. Together these six triggers form a conduit from external events to inner reflection and ensure that learning is driven by the scene rather than by post hoc sentiment. From the vantage point of Transformative learning, such task centered reflection is generative because it directly reshapes the actor's understanding of context and meaning, thereby supplying the material and clues for subsequent capability sedimentation. To align mechanism and evidence, we cite an illustrative account:

"On our first shipment of Brazilian beans to the Pearl River Delta we were held at animal and plant inspection. That night I reorganized the customs checklist into three tasks and completed the documents one by one the next day. Since then, whenever a bottleneck appears I note the trigger and the remedy on site, hold a ten minute review back at the office, assign the form and the owner, and the same problem rarely recurs." (Participant E01, male, 42, import and export trade)

Capability consolidation. This subtheme explains how reflection sediments into stable and reusable organizational capability. First, rules brought to the front. Entrepreneurs move compliance requirements to the beginning of decisions so that every resource allocation carries an institutional and risk awareness, which reduces trial and error. Second, negotiation scripts. Effective expressions, clarification routines, and concession boundaries formed in multi scene negotiations and multi party communication are standardized as phrases and step prompts, making cross cultural collaboration trainable. Third, SOP standardization. Around the critical moves of critical tasks, steps, required materials, acceptance points, and contingency plans are written into operating guides and iterated after each execution so that processes update with changing environments. Fourth, role segmentation. Tasks are decomposed into duties and authorization boundaries, with front stage interaction supported by back office functions, ensuring that personal experience converts into institutionalized team coordination. Fifth, knowledge transmission. Rules, scripts, and SOPs are embedded in training and manuals and circulated through peer coaching and case reviews so that knowledge does not remain with a few key individuals. Sixth, re contextualization. Consolidated capabilities are tested in new countries, new parks, and new channels through small scale trials to assess transferability and boundary conditions, with new evidence fed back to rules and processes. Transformative learning emphasizes the inner conversion from experience to meaning and then the social placement of knowledge through collective

and institutional embedding. Capability consolidation is the organizational manifestation of this mechanism, turning learning from individual narrative into organizational memory and continuous improvement. To show the mapping from mechanism to evidence, we cite a typical account:

“We move compliance checks before quotation and run a self checklist. If it cannot pass we do not take the order. All negotiations follow standard scripts from needs clarification to concession boundaries. Each step is written into the SOP and reviewed monthly. Newly identified risks and practices go straight into the training manual. New hires can run the process independently within two weeks, and provincial rollouts are faster.” (Participant E07, male, 45, medical device agency)

Placing situational triggers alongside capability consolidation yields a full picture of situated internalization. Real tasks supply stimuli. Actors frame problems and construct meaning within context, with institutional nodes, cross cultural friction, task reframing, peer benchmarking, dual domain comparison, and immediate review continually supplying extractable experiential material. Through rules brought to the front, negotiation scripts, SOP standardization, role segmentation, knowledge transmission, and re contextualization, this experience sediments as structured capability. The process answers not only how learning occurs but why it endures. First, inputs arise from high contextual complexity, which disciplines reflection with real constraints. Second, outputs enter organizational rules and process systems, which enable replication and diffusion. Third, learning cycles gain continual external validation through re contextualization, allowing capabilities to evolve with their environments. Situated internalization thus directly resolves RQ1 by translating the abstract statement from practice and reflection to internalized capability into observable, comparable, and verifiable process units. Within the framework of Transformative learning, it presents a full growth trajectory from situational participation to meaning generation to organizational placement and provides a clear and actionable evidentiary structure for explaining capability formation among Macao entrepreneurs in real business settings. It also yields mediating variables and assessment indicators for evaluating the sustainability of cross border operations, including the depth of rules brought to the front, the coverage of negotiation scripts, the frequency of SOP iteration, the penetration of knowledge transmission, and the robustness of re contextualization loops, all of which can be examined through combined quantitative and qualitative tracking across cases and over time.

4.2 Motivation sustainment

This study advances motivation sustainment as the focused response to RQ2. Uses and gratifications theory holds that users enter a media environment with specific motives to seek gratifications, and the degree of gratification subsequently shapes continued choice and stickiness. In the policy platform context, entrepreneurs are not abstract recipients of policy but actors who enter the platform with concrete problems. They do so to see opportunities, confirm procedures, match partners efficiently, reduce risks, update knowledge, and expand relationships. When a platform delivers sustained gratifications on these dimensions, entrepreneurs incorporate it into their routine decision making and execution. What begins as usefulness becomes reliability, and platform interaction is integrated into the same planning cycle as cross border operations, generating stable revisits and long term proclivities. Motivation sustainment directly addresses the second research question because it links the starting point and the end point of platform use into a testable causal sequence that takes specific motives as inputs, satisfaction assessment as process control, and sustained intention as the output. Once the platform consistently delivers on key dimensions such as opportunity visibility and procedural certainty, behavior shifts from a single trial to repeated use and durable commitment. Intention is thereby strengthened and becomes predictable, which clarifies how platform motives shape sustained cross border operating intention. In short, motivation sustainment joins why entrepreneurs use a platform with whether they continue. When gratifications are delivered at the corresponding points, entrepreneurs save time and effort and feel assured, return for the next round, and over time become more reliant and more willing to operate in the Greater Bay Area. When key motives are not satisfied, intention declines and attention shifts to other channels. This clear pathway of motive, matching, gratification, and revisit also identifies concrete targets for platform improvement.

Motivation matching. This subtheme answers why entrepreneurs use platforms and how platform functions align with their goals. Opportunity visibility is an entry motive as entrepreneurs filter vast information for leads that match their categories and regions; fair schedules and project announcements reduce search costs and delineate a clear space of possibility. Procedural certainty is a safety motive; service windows and material checklists move compliance requirements to the

project design stage and prevent costly rework. Matching efficiency is a resource motive; structured roadshows and park based brokerage compress negotiation rounds and rapidly convene viable parties. Risk mitigation is a safeguard motive; credit endorsement by chambers and compliance consulting convert uncertainty into manageable boundary conditions. Knowledge updating is a growth motive; focused training and case repositories supply the latest versions of industry rules and operational templates and keep teams learning. Relationship expansion is a development motive; local associations and instant messaging groups open entry points into local networks and create weak ties that can be mobilized. The six motives can drive entry on their own or in combination, for example opportunity visibility with matching efficiency or procedural certainty with risk mitigation. The crux of uses and gratifications theory is the degree of alignment between goals and supply. When motives are accurately identified and promptly met by platform functions, first use tends to become a positive experience that lays the groundwork for subsequent satisfaction and trust. An illustrative testimony follows: "I first look at opportunity visibility on the platform. Fair schedules and project announcements narrow the direction and save a great deal of trial and error. Before handling procedures I check for procedural certainty and work step by step through the checklist provided at the service window, which avoids detours. Matching efficiency on the day of the roadshow is also crucial. Three rounds of meetings were enough to lock in two suitable partners. A park officer then followed up, which freed my time for solution work. It felt controllable and less labor intensive." (Participant E05, female, 41, cultural tourism and convention services)

Satisfaction assessment. This subtheme explains how entrepreneurs judge platform usefulness and how that judgment translates into behavioral tendencies. Information verifiability is the first threshold; sources that are explicit and traceable enable an initial trust. Cross checking is a robustness mechanism; entrepreneurs compare announcements, reputational accounts, and samples for consistency and thereby attenuate information noise. Cost reduction is a felt indicator; noticeable declines in processing, communication, and time costs are remembered and incorporated into subsequent planning. Response based trust is a core variable; speed of response and problem resolution rates constitute perceptible dimensions of service quality that shape the immediate experience and the probability of a second entry. Local embeddedness is a structural outcome; the emergence of local collaborations, the normalization of regular travel, and the taking of association roles convert individual use into an organizational change in network position. Sustained intention is a composite outcome; when stable positive feedback is obtained on the five foregoing dimensions, the platform is upgraded from a one time tool to a routine mechanism and revisits and scope expansion follow. Uses and gratifications theory highlights the downstream effects of gratification. Each element of satisfaction assessment both tests and reinforces motivation matching, and together they form a continuous chain from first use to long term use. An illustrative testimony follows: "To judge whether a platform is useful I first check information verifiability, with a source and a contact, and then I do cross checking. Announcements, reputational accounts, and samples must align. Once these pass, processing and communication costs drop markedly. When a bottleneck appears, the officer replies the same day with an alternative path. My response based trust builds step by step. After deals landed I joined a local association, travel became routine, and my sustained intention increased." (Participant E10, female, 35, digital marketing and cross border brand operations)

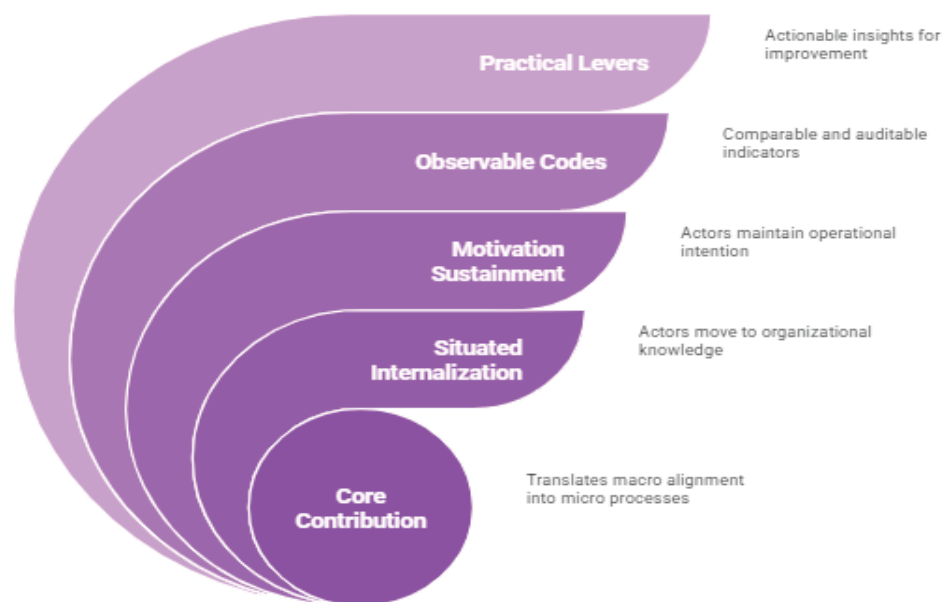
Connecting motivation matching with satisfaction assessment reveals the full passage from motives to intention. Entrepreneurs enter with motives that include opportunity visibility, procedural certainty, matching efficiency, risk mitigation, knowledge updating, and relationship expansion. If the platform delivers high quality and high efficiency support in the corresponding dimensions, the first interaction yields positive gratification. Information verifiability and cross checking convert gratification into cognitive trust that can be evidenced. Cost reduction and response based trust convert gratification into experiential trust that can be felt. Local embeddedness externalizes gratification into observable shifts in network position. The accumulation of these forms of trust and position ultimately appears as elevated sustained intention in the form of platform revisits and increased investment. This mechanism explains how a platform moves from one time assistance to a long term operational fulcrum and why firms at different stages display different levels of sustainment. When motivation matching is off target or satisfaction assessment turns negative, sustained intention declines rapidly and entrepreneurs look to informal networks to compensate. When the platform delivers stable gratifications on key motives, especially procedural

certainty and matching efficiency, sustained intention rises and hardens into habitual choice. As a practical contribution, motivation sustainment offers a uses and gratifications based mechanism that goes beyond static descriptions of channel complementarity and translates into platform side improvement metrics such as precision push rates for opportunity information, executability of material checklists, conversion rates for matching, response timeliness of compliance consulting, update frequency of training content, and collaboration conversion after association linkage. Continuous optimization on these metrics enables a shift from one time satisfaction to sustained engagement and materially increases entrepreneurs' willingness to operate across borders and the depth of their local embeddedness.

5. Research Contributions

The core contribution of this study is to translate the macro alignment of institutions and network embeddedness into verifiable micro processes through a qualitative approach. Drawing on semi structured interviews and thematic analysis with ten entrepreneurs, I propose and substantiate two mechanistic concepts. Situated internalization explains how actors, in real business settings, move from practice and reflection to organizational knowledge through situational triggers and capability consolidation. Motivation sustainment explains how actors, on policy platforms, progress from motivation matching and satisfaction assessment to a stable intention to continue operating. Both mechanisms are operationalized into observable codes and linked evidence, yielding process indicators that are comparable and auditable. In doing so, the study connects why an approach works with how it can be improved and provides actionable theoretical explanation and practical levers for entrepreneurial learning and platform governance (Shown in Figure 4).

Figure 4. Research Contributions in Entrepreneurship



Conclusion

Situated in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area, this study advances and substantiates two operational micro mechanisms based on semi structured interviews and thematic analysis with ten Macao entrepreneurs. The first is situated internalization, which emphasizes capability consolidation generated from real operations beginning with situational triggers and immediate reviews and continuing through rules brought to the front, negotiation scripts, and SOPs. It explains how practice is transformed into organizational knowledge. The second is motivation sustainment, which emphasizes that entrepreneurs enter policy platforms with motives such as opportunity visibility and procedural certainty, then evaluate gratifications through information verifiability and cross checking, thereby building response based trust and local embeddedness and ultimately strengthening sustained cross border operating intention. The study concretizes the broader narrative of coordination between policy and social networks into observable processes and helps fill the process oriented gap in existing research.

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No

Conflict of Interests

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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