

Writing with authority: establishing definitions

Business

Tan, Caroline Swee Lin (2007). *Sources of competitive advantage for emerging fast growth small-to-medium enterprises: the role of business orientation, marketing capabilities, customer value and firm performance*. PhD thesis, Management, RMIT University.



Caroline Tan (2007:10-11) needs to establish what she means by fast growth so that readers have a clear definition in mind as they read her thesis.

1. In paragraph 1 what is the intention of each sentence? Make notes in the column provided.
2. In paragraph 2, Tan's voice is very strong. What two clear steps does she take? Look for the linking words and underline them.

Para	Text	Comment
Para 1	There is no commonly accepted definition for the term fast-growth. In some cases the descriptions 'fast', 'high', and 'rapid-growth' have been used interchangeably such as in Fischer et al. (1997). Counter to this, Cooney and Malinen (2004) regarded fast and high growth as essentially different, as fast growth implies rapidity of growth as opposed to high growth which refers to the quantum of growth.	
Para 2	Nevertheless, a review of the literature indicates that even though researchers treat the various adjectives that define growth differently, they are in fact describing a similar phenomenon, that is, exceptional sales turnover (more than 20%) and/or employment growth (more than 80%) over a period of at least three years. For example, in terms of annual sales turnover, Nicholls-Nixon (2005) considered firms to be high-growing when these enterprises experience an annual sale expansion of 20% or more over a four year period. Autio, Arenius and Wallenius (2000) referred to <i>gazelles</i> as firms increasing sales by at least 50% for three consecutive years. Others (such as Barringer & Jones, 2002; Barringer, Jones & Neubaum, 2005) take it a step further, by classifying rapid growth companies as those with three-year compound annual growth rates of 80% or higher.	



Answer key

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Para 1	There is no commonly accepted definition for the term fast-growth. In some cases the descriptions 'fast', 'high', and 'rapid-growth' have been used interchangeably such as in Fischer et al. (1997). Counter to this , Cooney and Malinen (2004) regarded fast and high growth as essentially different, as fast growth implies rapidity of growth as opposed to high growth which refers to the quantum of growth.	Topic sentence <i>Tan analyses the lit. overall</i> Supporting evidence 1 Supporting evidence 2
Para 2	Nevertheless , a review of the literature indicates that even though researchers treat the various adjectives that define growth differently, they are in fact describing a similar phenomenon, that is , exceptional sales turnover (more than 20%) and/or employment growth (more than 80%) over a period of at least three years. For example , in terms of annual sales turnover, Nicholls-Nixon (2005) considered firms to be high-growing when these enterprises experience an annual sale expansion of 20% or more over a four year period. Autio, Arenius and Wallenius (2000) referred to <i>gazelles</i> as firms increasing sales by at least 50% for three consecutive years. Others (such as Barringer & Jones, 2002; Barringer, Jones & Neubaum, 2005) take it a step further , by classifying rapid growth companies as those with three-year compound annual growth rates of 80% or higher.	<i>Tan synthesises the literature to create a clearer definition</i> Topic sentence Examples/ evidence to support her interpretation. Note how the definition 'grows' with each citation.