

E-ISSN: 3108-4176

APSSHS

Academic Publications of Social Sciences and Humanities Studies

2026, Volume 7, Issue 1, Page No: 69-79

Available online at: <https://apsshs.com/>

Annals of Organizational Culture, Leadership and External Engagement Journal

Mapping Transnational Diaspora Entrepreneurship Research: Insights from a Hybrid Literature Review and Topic Modeling Analysis

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Abstract

A substantial number of individuals migrate from their home countries and establish new enterprises in foreign contexts. This increasingly studied phenomenon, known as transnational diaspora entrepreneurship, has attracted growing academic attention. The objective of this paper is to systematically review this topic by identifying gaps in the existing literature and underscoring the need for additional research in this expanding area of inquiry. This study integrates a conventional literature review strategy with an innovative topic modeling technique. The manual review enables inductive identification of key themes, while topic modeling extracts the dominant thematic structures in the research corpus. The results highlight several key observations. First, diaspora entrepreneurs can be grouped according to clear differences in their entrepreneurial behavior and activities. Second, the majority of existing studies rely on case-based methodologies, indicating a need for more empirical quantitative research. Third, despite the absence of a universally accepted definition of transnational diaspora entrepreneurship, it is characterized by several unique features that set it apart from other forms of entrepreneurship. Lastly, multiple conceptual approaches to transnational diaspora entrepreneurship are identified and synthesized based on entrepreneurs' lived experiences, identities, and spatial contexts. This research contributes to the literature by applying natural language processing techniques to a dataset of academic abstracts, thereby offering a broad mapping of dominant research themes in diaspora entrepreneurship. It also emphasizes the need for more quantitative studies to capture better the structural patterns and broader impacts of this phenomenon. Overall, the study highlights the complexity and potential value of diaspora entrepreneurial activity, providing a foundation for future academic work.

Keywords: Topic modeling, Literature review, Transnational diaspora entrepreneurship, Migrant entrepreneurship

How to cite this article: Okafor C, Bello A. Mapping Transnational Diaspora Entrepreneurship Research: Insights from a Hybrid Literature Review and Topic Modeling Analysis. Ann Organ Cult Leadersh Extern Engagem J. 2026;7(1):69-79. <https://doi.org/10.51847/H3bokVG9hv>

Received: 12 January 2026; **Revised:** 29 March 2026; **Accepted:** 05 April 2026

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Introduction

Entrepreneurial activity has increasingly moved beyond geographically defined boundaries, generating globalized markets in which diaspora populations identify and exploit new business opportunities. The concept of transnational diaspora entrepreneurship (TDE) refers to a process in which individuals relocate from one country to another while maintaining ongoing business relationships with both their country of origin (COO) and country of residence (COR) [1]. In many cases, these entrepreneurs operate across multiple markets, drawing on transnational networks and resources to establish and sustain businesses in more than one national context simultaneously [1]. TDE is not confined to highly skilled migrants; it also includes low-skilled migrants who engage in entrepreneurial activities often aimed at supporting households and communities in their COO. Such individuals may transfer remittances, invest in property, or launch small enterprises in their home countries, using income generated abroad to produce socioeconomic benefits in their COO [2]. In practical terms, TDE



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contributes to economic development and innovation by functioning as a bridge between countries, enabling the circulation of resources, market access, knowledge, and information across borders [3]. Through such cross-border entrepreneurial engagement, diaspora entrepreneurs influence the socioeconomic transformation of both their COO and COR.

Research on diaspora entrepreneurship and its effects on origin and host countries remains relatively limited. Scholars have characterized TDE as “an emergent field of study” [1] and “an emerging stream of research” [4]. More recent work has begun to analyze transnational immigrant entrepreneurship through an ecosystem lens [5] and to construct theoretical frameworks for understanding the phenomenon [6]. However, the literature remains dominated by qualitative case studies and review-based research, underscoring the need for more rigorous quantitative investigations. Existing reviews tend to focus on isolated aspects of TDE rather than providing a comprehensive overview of the field. Moreover, research on diaspora entrepreneurship remains fragmented across disciplinary boundaries [4], reinforcing the need for further studies on how diaspora networks shape international business and entrepreneurial processes.

Migration continues globally for a range of economic, social, and political reasons, contributing to the formation of expanding diaspora populations that origin countries can leverage for development initiatives across multiple domains, including entrepreneurship. This creates a clear need for a structured review of the literature to organize the diverse and often inconsistent terminology used across studies and disciplines, as well as to develop a classification system for the various forms of cross-border entrepreneurial activities initiated by diaspora communities. Given that TDE is still a relatively young research area requiring further scholarly development, deeper investigation into the role and influence of diaspora networks in international business and entrepreneurship is necessary.

In this study, we employ a dual-method approach to review the literature on TDE, aiming to consolidate existing knowledge and identify future research trajectories. First, a traditional systematic review is conducted through keyword-based searches of peer-reviewed journal articles, followed by manual coding. Second, this approach is complemented by a computational technique. Specifically, natural language processing is applied to a corpus of TDE-related article abstracts to uncover latent thematic structures within the literature. Topic modeling is a well-established methodological tool that has demonstrated effectiveness in various research domains [7, 8]. One advantage of computational methods is their ability to reduce subjectivity compared to manual coding performed by researchers. By integrating both approaches, several dominant themes were identified from the dataset, which subsequently informed the structure of the review. Four main findings emerged. First, the literature employs multiple overlapping terms to describe TDE. Second, there is a clear shortage of quantitative studies. Third, criteria are proposed for identifying whether an entrepreneurial activity qualifies as TDE. Finally, a typology is introduced to classify TDE based on the geographic distribution of markets involved. Overall, this study organizes and synthesizes the existing body of literature on TDE while proposing a conceptual framework for its classification.

Materials and Methods

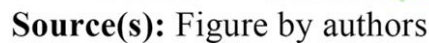
Traditional literature search and review

The literature search on transnational diaspora entrepreneurship (TDE) was initiated using the “Academic Search Premier” database accessed via the first author’s university library. The keyword applied in the search process was “diaspora entrepreneurship.” The term “diaspora entrepreneurship” was intentionally selected over “transnational diaspora entrepreneurship” because it yielded a broader set of results, ensuring comprehensive coverage of relevant articles in the database. The search was restricted to peer-reviewed journal articles published in English between 2003 and 2023. This time frame was chosen to capture contemporary research developments over the last two decades. The search produced 58 articles, all of which were deemed relevant following manual screening by the researchers.

Through this initial search, one influential article was identified: Who is doing “transnational diaspora entrepreneurship”? Understanding formal identity and status [9]. This article is considered foundational in the field of TDE due to its focus on formal identity and status among individuals engaged in transnational entrepreneurial activities. It examines immigrant entrepreneurship and new venture creation that leverage cross-border advantages and capabilities. The study contributes to understanding how hybrid and heterogeneous entrepreneurial strategies emerge within evolving diaspora settings, highlighting the reproduction of social collectivity as a core element of diaspora entrepreneurship [9]. To ensure more comprehensive coverage of the relevant literature, we expanded the dataset to include studies on this key work. Accordingly, www.connectedpapers.com was used to expand the search network, with [9] serving as the central linkage point for identifying related TDE studies. This process yielded 41 additional articles. The publication years ranged from 1999 to 2022, with a noticeable gap between 1999 and 2010. After assessing relevance and removing duplicates from the initial dataset, 23 articles were retained for analysis.

Together, the two search strategies produced a final corpus of 81 articles. For subsequent analysis, abstracts from 80 of these papers were extracted into a single text file, as one article lacked an abstract.

The main objective of natural language processing (NLP) is to automate coding procedures and provide a systematic and less biased analytical approach. The first step was to construct a word cloud (**Figure 1**) to represent the most frequently occurring terms in the corpus visually.



It is expected that the terms “transnational,” “diaspora,” and “entrepreneurship” appear frequently across the abstracts. Another frequently occurring term is “business,” likely because many of the papers focus on business activities themselves. Geographic references such as China and Africa also appear prominently, which may be due to case-study-based research conducted in these regions. The term “development” is also commonly observed, reflecting the role of diaspora businesses in contributing to economic development in their countries of origin.

Hybrid approach to literature review

Results and Discussion

Finding #1: different terminologies used to describe TDE

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migratory backgrounds and their descendants who build business ventures that operate across both their country of origin (COO) and country of residence (COR).

Despite this definition, there is still no stable or universally shared understanding of the phenomenon across entrepreneurial contexts involving COO, COR, or multi-market operations. In broad terms, it refers to individuals or groups who have left their COO—either voluntarily or out of necessity—and who engage in business creation across national borders. Prior qualitative studies have observed that similar behavioral patterns appear across different actor groups, yet these are labeled with a variety of closely related, sometimes interchangeable terms. “In current studies, however, the categories of transnational, international, and ethnic entrepreneurs often overlap. These different research traditions have only recently begun to communicate with one another, and the interdisciplinary field of transnational migrant entrepreneurship is starting to become more unified” [11].

Suggests that the label ‘diaspora entrepreneurs’ is particularly appropriate for entrepreneurial activity that is ongoing and long-term rather than temporary [4]. In many contexts, diaspora populations are increasingly perceived as strategic assets for national development, given their contributions to economic and social progress in their countries of origin [12] characterizes diaspora entrepreneurs as individuals who frequently pursue broader economic, social, and political change in their COO. Historically, such migrants have tended to move from developing or emerging economies toward more advanced economies in search of better opportunities. However, when movement occurs in the opposite direction—from developed to emerging economies—the resulting entrepreneurship is often interpreted as necessity-driven rather than opportunity-driven, as [13] shows.

Several scholars define transnational entrepreneurship as business activity conducted across national borders by individuals who maintain embeddedness in at least two distinct social and economic environments [1]. This form of entrepreneurship is strongly linked to maintaining both formal and informal ties across at least two markets, typically the COO and COR. “These connections within two separate nations allow for enhanced social capital, overseas contacts with access to new markets with investment finance or human capital through shared culture” [14]. Existing literature commonly identifies four assumptions associated with transnational entrepreneurship: “(1) regular movement between home and host countries, (2) simultaneous business engagement across both contexts, (3) strong embeddedness in institutional structures of both environments, and (4) a high level of educational attainment among migrants” [11]. In contrast, other studies refer to transnational migrant entrepreneurs as relatively recent migrants who operate businesses in both origin and destination countries [15].

Additional terminology differentiates entrepreneurs based on ethnic or minority status to highlight subtle distinctions among groups. Immigrant entrepreneurship refers to first-generation migrants who establish businesses in their host country, with emphasis on their immigrant or minority identity [15-17]. argue that due to the economic and social importance of this phenomenon, it facilitates interconnected development among individuals, cultural groups, and markets (pp. 248–9). A related concept is migrant entrepreneurship. Ethnic entrepreneurship typically refers to second-generation individuals or broader social groups, often concentrated in geographically or socially bounded communities [15].

Return migrant entrepreneurs are individuals who previously emigrated but later return to their country of origin to pursue business opportunities [18]. The term international entrepreneurship is also used in this literature, and various explanations of entrepreneurial behavior are offered. [19] argue that diaspora international entrepreneurship is shaped not only by altruistic motives, recognition needs, and opportunity structures, but also by the extent to which the home country is welcoming, institutionally supportive, and receptive to immigrants. Successfully operating across two distinct, often contrasting markets requires strong networks both domestically and internationally [20]. The following table (**Table 1**) summarizes commonly used terminology.

Table 1. A list of definitions related to TDE.

Terminology for identification	Characteristics
Transnational entrepreneur	(1) Has migrated from one country to another, (2) Sustains and uses social networks and resources across national borders, and (3) Operates business activities within this cross-national environment [1, 15].
Diaspora entrepreneur	Individuals who create businesses while drawing on diaspora networks, typically referring to second-generation and later migrants [15, 21, 22].
Transnational diaspora entrepreneur	Migrants and their descendants who engage in entrepreneurial activities that connect both their country of origin and their country of residence [10].
Immigrant entrepreneur	A person born abroad who establishes a business in the host country and intends to settle there permanently [15]
Migrant entrepreneur	A foreign-born individual who relocates to another country for at least 12 months and starts a business there [23, 24].
Return migrant entrepreneur	An individual who has lived abroad and subsequently goes back to their home country to pursue entrepreneurial opportunities [18].

Ethnic entrepreneur	A broader category than diaspora entrepreneurs, including second-generation individuals or wider ethnic subgroups within society, often residing in community enclaves [15]
International entrepreneur	Entrepreneurs engaged in business activities across more than one market or country [19].

Source(s): Table by authors

Finding #2: New research area

Current scholarship on diaspora entrepreneurial activity is largely dominated by qualitative approaches, especially case studies and narrative-based literature reviews [15], drawing on earlier work by [25], note that “relatively rare quantitative research on transnational entrepreneurship has indicated that the share of immigrants involved in transnational entrepreneurship might be substantial, as it ranges from 37.5 to 78.5% of immigrant entrepreneurs – depending on the location and the ethnic group surveyed.”

Diaspora entrepreneurship develops within the context of global migration flows, the expansion of emerging economies, and migrants’ intentions to maintain economic and social linkages between countries of origin and destination. Despite increasing migration and entrepreneurial activity among diaspora populations, rigorous quantitative investigation remains limited. Much of the existing literature is grounded in case-based studies of individual entrepreneurs, emphasizing the complexity of operating across different institutional environments and markets. The evidence suggests that there is no single standardized profile of transnational diaspora entrepreneurs. Instead, a shared characteristic is their need to sustain livelihoods for themselves and their families, often leveraging familiar institutional settings from their countries of origin and leveraging diaspora-based networks. Migrants typically relocate to more developed economies with advanced markets; however, some entrepreneurs operate across developed economies or enter less developed emerging markets, often motivated by opportunity-seeking behavior.

Case-based research has been particularly useful in explaining the motivations behind engagement in TDE [26] argue that a combination of financial and emotional drivers shapes entrepreneurial behavior among migrants. Focusing on Indian diaspora entrepreneurs in the United States, they highlight motivations such as perceived market inefficiencies, lower operational costs, access to skilled labor, and the strategic exploitation of time-zone differences between home and host countries [26]. Ethnic affiliations among migrant entrepreneurs also facilitate the identification and exploitation of opportunities rooted in shared nationality or migration background [27] Through sustained engagement with both home and host contexts, transnational diaspora entrepreneurs effectively link two national environments based on shared relational ties.

Existing case study literature offers a broad overview of the field, documenting transnational diaspora entrepreneurs across a wide range of countries. Multiple nations often call upon these actors to contribute through technological know-how, financial capital, and social resources that help reduce barriers and enhance developmental opportunities. Through extensive formal and informal networks, diaspora entrepreneurs establish new ventures, maintain family businesses, or build cross-border enterprises that draw on resources and partnerships distributed across several countries. Whether considering Vietnamese entrepreneurs in the UK service sector, diaspora actors leveraging global family networks, or Uzbek entrepreneurs drawing on diverse transnational ties in emerging markets, recurring patterns can be observed [13, 14]. A consistent theme across qualitative research is the central role of both formal and informal networks.

Literature review studies contribute by mapping transnational dynamics in global business and connecting related research streams within similar theoretical traditions [28] describes diaspora networks as largely unseen yet influential actors in international business who actively shape the development of transnational entrepreneurship. Such reviews not only synthesize existing findings but also outline future research directions in a field that has significant implications for global economic development [29] analyzed 155 articles published in four languages since 2009. They identified five key research directions: (1) the advantages of transnational migrant entrepreneurship for business performance, (2) determinants influencing entry into transnational migrant entrepreneurship, (3) migrant transnational networking structures, (4) economic effects on both origin and destination countries, and (5) the role of local environments in enabling or constraining entrepreneurial success. Similarly [24], identified 373 relevant articles spanning 1900 to 2019, drawing from 123 journals across eight disciplines, including anthropology, area studies, economics, entrepreneurship, ethnic studies, demography, general management and strategy, and international business.

Overall, the combination of case studies and literature reviews provides valuable insight into diaspora and migrant entrepreneurial activity across borders, while simultaneously revealing a clear need for more quantitative research. According to the World Bank, global remittances sent by diaspora populations are expected to reach 630 billion dollars in 2022 [30]. These financial flows support development initiatives and social services, while also encouraging entrepreneurial activity across multiple sectors. A more systematic classification of diaspora entrepreneurs—based on migration trajectories, motivations, and business locations—would help clarify this expanding phenomenon and further highlight the necessity for broader empirical investigation.

Finding #3: Characteristics/criteria of the business being TDE

Diaspora entrepreneurial activities frequently generate business opportunities in both the country of origin (COO) and the country of residence (COR). The concept of mixed embeddedness has been used to explain this dual-context engagement, where social relations and commercial activities jointly enable entrepreneurs to operate across two national environments. Access to both formal and informal networks in home and host countries, often grounded in familiarity with cultural and market conditions, plays a central role in enabling these opportunities [31] found that within the COR, co-ethnic networks are essential for opportunity creation. In contrast [26], demonstrated that entrepreneurial activity in the home-country context depends on both personal and professional ethnic ties and prior experience. Collectively, these formal and informal relational structures facilitate opportunity formation across both COO and COR contexts. Prior research shows that many entrepreneurs maintain business operations spanning both environments [32] studied seven Nordic-origin entrepreneurs operating across Europe. They found that all engaged with multiple markets, including both COO and COR contexts, with several also supporting firms in their countries of origin from abroad.

Mixed embeddedness

Mixed embeddedness refers to the combined positioning of immigrant entrepreneurs who are simultaneously embedded in the social networks of immigrant communities, in the political and socioeconomic structures of their countries of origin, and in the social networks of their countries of residence [33]. Diaspora entrepreneurial activity is also shaped by push and pull dynamics, where push factors arise from adverse conditions in the home country that limit economic prospects. In contrast, pull factors relate to attractive opportunities in the host country that draw individuals into new markets [24].

Motivations

Identify poverty, unemployment, workplace discrimination, language difficulties, and low wage levels as push-related drivers that encourage entrepreneurial activity, arguing that livelihood generation is the primary motivation [16]. Notably, these same adverse conditions that stimulate immigrant, ethnic, and diaspora entrepreneurship closely resemble those that originally triggered migration decisions.”

Market orientation

Engagement with the country of residence (COR) varies depending on individual circumstances, network ties, and whether the entrepreneur is opportunity-driven or necessity-driven. Prior familiarity with specific markets has been shown to benefit certain groups, such as Indian technology professionals from the diaspora in Silicon Valley, California. However, reduced engagement with the country of origin (COO), often caused by prolonged residence abroad or frequent mobility, may weaken market knowledge and limit entrepreneurial effectiveness, particularly for returnee entrepreneurs attempting to reintegrate into their home market [26, 31]. Circular migration patterns, in which transnational diaspora entrepreneurs regularly move between COO and COR to sustain market knowledge and relational presence, may help mitigate challenges associated with operating across multiple national contexts [10].

Connectivity/diaspora

Entrepreneurial behavior within diaspora contexts varies significantly depending on the individual, market focus, and available opportunities. Many diaspora entrepreneurs identify business prospects through shared ethnic preferences, needs, and trust-based relationships within their host country [17], for example, examined Brazilian migrants in South Florida and found that entrepreneurial activity emerged around trust, familiarity, and demand within a close-knit Brazilian community, particularly in the used-car market and informal lending arrangements. Similarly [26], found that entry into transnational entrepreneurship depended on both professional and personal ethnic ties, as well as prior exposure to the Indian home market and technology sector, based on 30 interviews with Indian transnational entrepreneurs living abroad.

Transnational approach

Observed that younger transnational diaspora entrepreneurs tend to travel more frequently to their countries of origin [29]. In contrast, those with lower mobility often depend on trusted intermediaries or partners to maintain operations [31] present a case study of a returnee entrepreneur in Ghana who divides his time between Germany, where he resides for family-related reasons, and Ghana, where he manages a bakery originally established by his mother. Due to his limited physical presence, the enterprise depends heavily on his industry knowledge, personal background in the home country context, and trusted human resources.

Across the diverse dimensions of diaspora entrepreneurial activity, both shared and distinct behavioral patterns emerge, shaped by a combination of individual agency, network structures, and contextual market conditions.

Finding #4: Typologies/models

Most existing research, particularly literature reviews and qualitative case-based studies, shows that entrepreneurs operating across national boundaries are classified in subtly different ways depending on context. These actors frequently run businesses across several countries, yet their activities are usually anchored in specific countries of origin (COO) and/or countries of residence (COR). A recurring pattern in diaspora communities is the effort to re-establish ties with the homeland through business activity, which often simultaneously leads to the discovery of opportunities in host markets through existing commercial linkages. “Therefore, diasporans are connected to multiple networks: COO networks, COR networks, and other diaspora networks. The multiplicity of diaspora network dimensions extends beyond dyadic transnationalism” [4].

Transnational Diaspora Entrepreneurs commonly maintain economic engagement in both origin and destination countries, effectively acting as connectors between the two systems. Their ability to operate across borders depends on business type, orientation toward home and host markets, and the strength of embedded networks. Through these linkages, they often channel resources, knowledge, or investment back toward their COO. Transnational social capital is therefore a central enabling factor, supporting operations that span multiple jurisdictions through layered interactions at macro, meso, and micro levels shaped by connectivity, organizational scale, regulatory conditions, growth opportunities, and access to both local and transnational resources [14].

Some migrants settle in a host country and build niche enterprises by incorporating goods or services from their COO into their business models. These ventures frequently rely on shared cultural familiarity within migrant communities, which enhances trust and comfort among co-ethnic consumers e.g., [34]. Others reverse this flow by identifying opportunities in their country of origin and re-entering these markets after gaining experience abroad [35]. This often reflects a pattern where activity originates in a developed economy and later expands into an emerging one. Success in such cases typically depends on well-developed formal and informal networks, familiarity with local conditions, and trusted relationships [10] note that TDEs often face difficulties navigating institutional and commercial environments, particularly when managing operations in emerging COOs while based in developed CORs. However, improvements in digital infrastructure and global connectivity are gradually reducing these barriers. As technological development advances, the need for physical mobility between countries is decreasing, and future research is expected to increasingly focus on digitally enabled transnational activity, especially in developing contexts [11].

The literature identifies several conceptual models based primarily on market orientation and whether entrepreneurial activity is concentrated in the host country, home country, both, or multiple markets.

(1) Operations are distributed across several markets, including both COO and COR [14] documents first-generation Vietnamese migrants in the UK who established travel agencies in Vietnam with support from relatives, expanding their business activities across three countries (UK, USA, and Vietnam), including supply chain arrangements necessary to sustain operations under financial constraints.

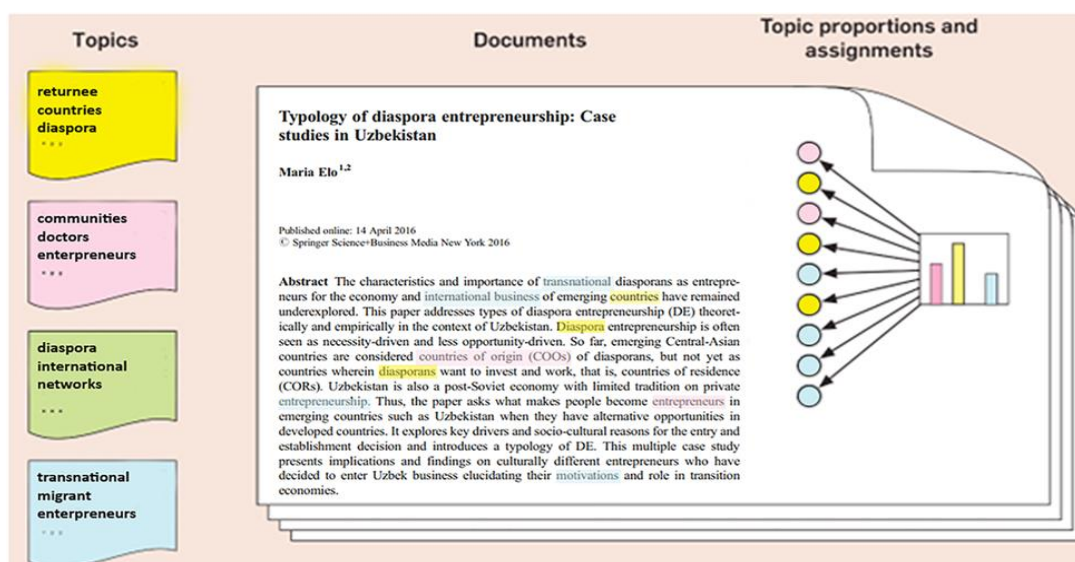
(2) Business formation in the COR after migration with subsequent linkages back to the COO [15] report that among 480 participants, 158 (33%) maintained active commercial ties with their COO. “The possibility of holding double citizenship visibly affects the stability of transnational entrepreneurship” [15].

(3) Opportunity exploitation within the COO market [14] highlights Vietnam as a rapidly developing economy with a rising middle class, enabling diaspora entrepreneurs to leverage this transformation by opening businesses, such as nail salons and sushi restaurants, to meet new consumer demand. In general, migrants’ engagement with their COO depends heavily on personal attachment and prior migration experiences [36].

(4) Returnee migrant entrepreneurship. Emotional ties, national identity, financial incentives, and skills acquired abroad all influence how successfully return migrants perform. “The network usage of diaspora and returnee entrepreneurs varies to a large extent depending on the industry, personal background, and human capital” [31].

Finding #5: Topic clustering

This section illustrates the application of topic modeling to uncover meaningful structures within the collected set of research articles. Topic modeling is a commonly used technique in natural language processing that automatically detects hidden thematic patterns across document collections. It provides an exploratory framework for analyzing recurring themes in textual data. In this study, the Python GenSim library was employed for topic modeling. Specifically, latent Dirichlet allocation (LDA) was utilized due to its widespread adoption and established effectiveness, as it represents a validated computational approach for modeling semantic structures in text corpora [37]. The LDA algorithm initially identifies groups of words that frequently appear together in the dataset (referred to as topics) and subsequently assigns these word clusters to individual documents to represent the topic distribution. For a detailed explanation of LDA-based topic modeling [37]. An example of topic modeling output is shown in **Figure 2**.



Source(s): Figure by authors

Figure 2. Application of LDA to generate topic models from abstracts.

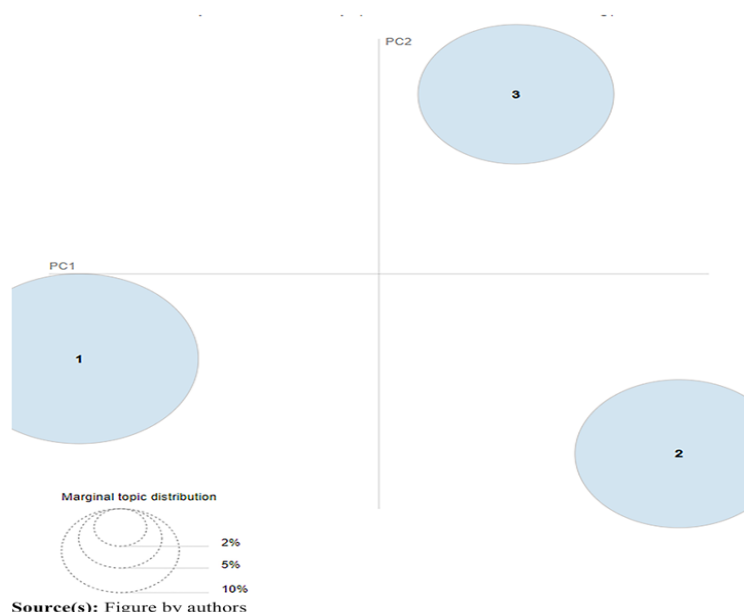
For instance, when applied to the selected abstracts within the TDE literature, the model detected that the following terms frequently co-occur across documents:

- Chinese, migrant, network, state, development, migration, social, new, economic, and ethnic.

Another identified cluster of co-occurring terms includes:

- State, network, migrant, economic, ethnic, country, development, new, social, and study.

Based on these outputs, it is possible to interpret these clusters as representing different dimensions of transnational diaspora entrepreneurship. It should be emphasized that the LDA model itself generates topics in numerical form, and that the researcher assigns meaning to these topics. Moreover, human intervention is required to set key model parameters. One such decision concerns the number of topics to generate, which, in this study, was determined empirically to achieve an appropriate separation in the inter-topic distance visualization (**Figure 3**). Another important parameter in the LDA model is alpha. Since LDA allows individual words to belong to multiple topics, alpha controls the expected distribution of topics across documents. It determines whether documents are likely to contain many topics or only a few dominant ones. The parameter can either be automatically optimized or manually specified. Given the relatively small dataset and for analytical clarity, alpha was set to 1 manually. This choice reflects the prior assumption that most topics are likely to appear across most abstracts. Setting alpha to 1 provides a balanced configuration, avoiding excessive concentration of topics in a few documents ($\alpha < 1$) or overly dispersed topic representation across all documents ($\alpha > 1$).



Source(s): Figure by authors

Figure 3. Inter-topic distance map for the TDE corpus.

To visualize the topic structure, we used the Python library pyLDAvis [38], which represents topics as circles in a two-dimensional space. The positioning of each circle is determined by calculating pairwise distances between topics and applying multidimensional scaling to project these relationships into two dimensions. The size of each circle reflects the relative prominence of the topic within the corpus, and topics are ordered from most to least prevalent.

An additional output of pyLDAvis is the ranked list of terms associated with each topic based on a relevance measure. This relevance metric is adjustable [38] found that a value of 0.6 provides the most interpretable results, and this setting was therefore adopted in the present analysis.

From the intertopic distance map (**Figure 3**), it is evident that the model distinguishes multiple distinct thematic areas within the dataset. Notably, the terms “migrant” and “networks” appear as shared elements across all three topics (**Table 2**). Similarly, the terms “state” and “development” appear across all topics (**Table 2**), suggesting that the literature consistently links state involvement and development processes to diaspora entrepreneurial activity. At the same time, clear thematic distinctions are observable. For example, topic 1 is more strongly associated with the Chinese context, whereas topic 3 is more closely related to African contexts (**Table 2**).

Table 2. Top ten terms for the three topics identified by LDA.

Topic 1	Topic 2	Topic 3
China-related	Government	Networks
Migrant	Networks	Migrant
Networks	Migrant	Africa-related
Government	Economic	Government
Development	Ethnicity	Development
Migration	Nation	Social
Social	Development	Economic
Emerging	Emerging	Migration
Economic	Social	Immigrant
Ethnic	Research	Emerging

Source(s): Table by authors

With continuous increases in global migration and the emergence of entrepreneurial opportunities, international markets are witnessing a steady expansion of diaspora entrepreneurial participation. The economic relevance of this population group is growing globally as individuals relocate and generate or identify new business opportunities. Both home and host countries increasingly recognize the value created by diaspora-driven market activities that foster new ventures. This expansion is driven by a wide range of factors, including individual creativity, personal motivations, geographic positioning in either home or host contexts, and the responsiveness of surrounding markets. Diaspora engagement worldwide continues to rise in parallel with increasing needs in countries of origin. Remittance flows have reached historically high levels annually, reflecting both social and economic demands that are met through diaspora populations whose entrepreneurial activities span multiple borders and diverse market environments.

From the first two findings, it becomes evident that two key limitations characterize the existing TDE literature. First, there is a lack of consistency in terminology, with multiple labels often used interchangeably to describe similar phenomena or overlapping entrepreneurial identities. Although TDE research is emerging with diverse definitions and expressions, many underlying concepts remain closely aligned. Second, the dominant methodological approach in current studies is qualitative, particularly case studies and literature reviews, highlighting a pressing need for more robust empirical and quantitative research. Recognizing these gaps, findings #3 and #4 were developed to structure the conceptual landscape of TDE. Their purpose is to support future researchers in better understanding how to classify a business as TDE and to clarify the different types of TDE documented in the literature. The identified models also illustrate the diverse trajectories followed by entrepreneurs operating across international boundaries.

Diaspora entrepreneurs function as intermediaries between countries of origin and residence, drawing on ethnic ties and mixed embeddedness to operate within and across multiple market environments. Their motivations combine both financial incentives and emotional or identity-based drivers, while market orientation plays a central role in shaping entrepreneurial activity. Overall, TDE represents a source of economic opportunity and development potential, yet its complexity requires further scholarly investigation to understand its broader implications fully.

Future research on TDE should prioritize several directions identified through this study and existing scholarship. Comparative analyses across geographical regions, industries, and entrepreneur types are needed to develop a more complete understanding of the conditions that influence success or failure. Such work would help identify recurring patterns and key challenges faced by diaspora entrepreneurs. In addition, greater emphasis should be placed on interdisciplinary approaches that integrate perspectives from economics, sociology, international business, and migration studies. This would enable a more comprehensive understanding of TDE and its impacts on both origin and destination countries. These research directions

would not only advance academic knowledge but also offer policymakers valuable insights to support and harness diaspora entrepreneurial potential.

This study has several limitations. First, it draws on a relatively limited dataset to identify key themes in diaspora entrepreneurial activity across multiple markets. Broader literature exists, including more extensive reviews that cover related areas in greater depth. However, this study focuses specifically on TDE and includes only English-language peer-reviewed articles accessible to the researchers. As a result, the findings may not capture the full scope of existing knowledge. Second, the study employs a hybrid methodology combining topic modeling with manual interpretation. While topic modeling is a powerful tool for analyzing large textual datasets and provides useful exploratory insights, it also presents challenges related to the inherent complexity of language, including ambiguity in word meanings and the absence of predefined categorical structures.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this literature review contributes to the field in several important ways. First, by identifying and highlighting terminological inconsistencies in the TDE literature, it underscores the need for clearer, more standardized definitions that can support future research. Second, by critiquing the dominance of single-case studies and narrative reviews, it encourages more comparative and large-scale empirical research that can deepen understanding of TDE. Third, the proposal of clearer criteria for identifying TDE contributes a useful conceptual tool for both researchers and policymakers. Finally, by distinguishing different typologies of TDE, this study advances a more nuanced understanding of the phenomenon. It supports the development of more targeted strategies to assist various categories of diaspora entrepreneurs.

Acknowledgments: None

Conflict of interest: None

Financial support: None

Ethics statement: None

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