One-page Summary Document (ERBC 2026)

Applicant Name: Narjes Yousefi

Contact Information:

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School / Program: University of Massachusetts Amherst — PhD in Strategic Management

Area of Interest: Governance and Top Management Teams (TMT), Financial Market, Entrepreneurship

Year of Entry into PhD Program: 2023

Expected Year of Completion: 2028

Faculty Member Supplying Letter of Recommendation:

- Primary recommender: Prof. Joe LaBiance (PhD advisor / recommender)
- Additional faculty contact (if needed): Prof. Bruce Skaggs

Statement of Research Interest

I am Narjes, a PhD student in Strategic Management at the University of Massachusetts Amherst. I came from Iran, and in my view my experience navigating constraints shaped my long-term interest in entrepreneurial problem-solving—how individuals and organizations adapt creatively when resources and options are limited.

My initial research exposure to entrepreneurship came during my master's thesis, where I built a simulation model to study how combinations of factors can increase the likelihood of entrepreneurial failure. That project was my first step toward my current interests because it pushed me to think about entrepreneurship through a more academic lens. After that, I expanded my research experience through a co-authored project from my first year that is now in its late stage (submission to AMJ). In that work, I study gender inequality by examining how patterns of language use among female and male managers relate to financial career outcomes. Building on this foundation, I began developing a second stream of work at the intersection of financial markets and investor activism.

My current research interest focuses on investor activism—especially board-level activism—and I am interested in a puzzle that I think is still underexplained: why some activist directors push for patient, capability-building change while others focus on faster, financially oriented interventions. I argue that activists' personal entrepreneurial background is a key missing piece because it can shape how they evaluate time horizons and organizational constraints. Activists with entrepreneurial experience may be more comfortable with experimentation and learning-oriented change and may therefore differ both in the tactics they use during campaigns and in the organizational actions they support after joining boards. I want to contribute to strategic management research by theorizing activism not only as a governance mechanism, but also as a form of entrepreneurial action in the market for corporate control. In addition, I think agency theory offers a useful foundation, but it needs refinement in this context: the classic view emphasizes conflicts between managers and shareholders, while activist investors often have their own principals (e.g., clients and beneficiaries). This creates a layered, multi-principal agency setting that can shape activists' incentives, campaign strategies, and the organizational outcomes they seek—and I am particularly interested in how entrepreneurial experience changes these dynamics relative to activists without such experience.

My main goal in attending the Entrepreneurship Research Boot Camp is to learn how to frame and theorize this phenomenon more effectively within the entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial finance literature, and to strengthen how my study can contribute and push the boundaries of existing work. Investor activism has become an important and fast-evolving phenomenon across finance, law, and regulation, and I want to develop a stronger management and strategy lens for explaining when activism leads to value creation versus disruption, and how activists' backgrounds influence the type and persistence of interventions they choose. Because this topic spans multiple disciplines, I think the boot camp is the right environment for me to learn foundational research conversations in entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial finance, connect my questions to leading theories and empirical approaches in the field, and refine a research pipeline that can contribute to strategic management scholarship.

My Resume

Narjes Yousefi

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Analytical PhD student in Strategic Management with professional experience in product and service development, market research, and customer analytics in large-scale corporate settings. My work has involved translating customer insights into product requirements, supporting end-to-end development processes, and using data-driven reporting to inform managerial decision-making. I am particularly interested in research at the intersection of innovation, product strategy, and customer-focused value creation.

EDUCATION

University of Massachusetts Amherst *(09/2024 - present)*
PhD / Strategic Management

University of Calgary *(09/2023 – 09/2024)*
Strategic Management

University of Tehran *(01/2012 - 09/2014)*
Master's degree / Operational Management (Operation Research)

University of Tehran
Bachelor's degree / Industrial Management *(09/2008 - 04/2012)*

WORK EXPERIENCE

Product and Service Development Expert *11/2016 - 08/2023, Tehran, Iran*
MCI/ Mobile Communication Corporation of Iran
(The largest Mobile operator of middle east with over 100 million subscribers)

- HVC (High Value Customer) Care – Project Manager:
  - Conduct **Segmentation Analysis** to identify and define the characteristics of high-value customers within the mobile operator's user base.
  - Develop a deep understanding of the needs, preferences, and behaviors of high-value customers.
  - Create **Personalized Marketing Campaigns** and offers to cater to the unique needs and preferences of high-value customers.
  - Identify opportunities for **Cross-selling and Up- selling** additional products or services.
- Product Development and Management:
  - Work closely with the product development team to understand new or existing mobile products and services. Prepare **user Story** and RFP/RFC for new or existing products and services.
  - Manage the whole process of development from idea generation to final test. Gathering and analyzing the data after commercialization.
- Market Research and Campaign Management:
  - **Conduct Market Research** (Benchmarks, focus groups, Competitor Analysis, Mystery shopping) to identify opportunities, analyze competition, and understand customer preferences and behaviors.
  - Use data and insights to inform product positioning and marketing strategies.
  - Develop, execute, and oversee **End-to-end Marketing Campaigns** for mobile products and services, ensuring they align with business objectives and target audience segments.

- Utilize various channels, including traditional media, digital platforms, and social media, to maximize campaign reach and effectiveness.

Business Strategist Specialist *05/2012 - 11/2016, Tehran, Iran*
Solico Group FMCG (Fast Moving Consumer Goods)
Dairy products with over 17000 employees and workers

- Business Expansion and Diversification:
  - **Designing New Projects** and products, contributing significantly to business expansion and diversification.
  - Conduct thorough **Market Research** to identify potential areas for new products, geographic locations, or target customer segments.
  - Understand and comply with regulatory requirements in new markets or for new products.
  - Conduct a thorough cost-benefit analysis to assess the financial viability and potential returns of the expansion or diversification efforts.
- Risk Identification and Mitigation:
  - Periodically identified business risks and opportunities across all warehouses, implementing proactive measures to mitigate potential risks and capitalize on opportunities.
  - Identified areas of alert and created effective solutions to mitigate potential risks of product stock out, ensuring consistent product availability.

Soft Skills

- Business Analysis
- Trouble shouting system
- Project Management.
- Performance Evaluation.
- Strategic Planning.
- Process Optimization
- Business Strategy
- Balanced Scorecard

Technical Skills

- Tableau
- Power BI
- Python
- Infographic
- BPMN 02
- R
- Ms Project

PUBLICATIONS

- Salmeron, J.L., Mansouri, T., Moghaddam, M.R.S. et al. Startup's critical failure factors dynamic modeling using FCM. J Glob Entrepr Res 13, 11 (2023).
- Mohammad Reza Sadeghi Moghadam, Hossein Safari & Narjes Yousefi (2021) Clustering quality management models and methods: systematic literature review and text-mining analysis approach, Total Quality Management & Business Excellence, 32:3-4, 241-264.
- Dong, W., Singh, K., Cha, M., Woehler, M., Yousefi, N., & Labianca, G. (2026). Backlash toward gender counter-stereotypical communication during a major organizational shock as a partial explanator of gender wage gaps (Working pa