
Speed, Trust, and Judgment: How Founders Publicly Make Sense of AI in Entrepreneurial Decision-Making

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Abstract:

This paper examines how founders publicly describe the role of artificial intelligence in entrepreneurial and managerial decision-making, focusing on how they frame its value, where they draw limits, and what tensions emerge around judgment, trust, and control. Thematic analysis was applied to 15 publicly available founder interviews and podcast episodes in which entrepreneurs discuss AI in the context of building or scaling a venture. Five themes emerged: AI as leverage under entrepreneurial constraint; value framing over technology framing; human judgment as the boundary condition; trust, authenticity, and the limits of delegation; and experimentation without full surrender. Founders narrate AI as a source of speed and capacity expansion while preserving clear boundaries around human judgment in consequential situations. The paper contributes to entrepreneurship research, entrepreneurial decision-making under uncertainty, and the human-AI collaboration literature by showing how founders publicly construct the meaning and limits of AI through sensemaking narratives.

Keywords:

Entrepreneurship, artificial intelligence, founder narratives, sensemaking, decision-making, human-AI collaboration, qualitative research.