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# Unicorns Gallop Rampant Through China And India: Successes And Similarities

## Los unicornios galopan rampantes a través de China e India: éxitos y similitudes



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## Abstract

This study aims to explore the success and characteristics of the novel business model used by Chinese and Indian unicorn firms as well as attempts to develop a framework called CEHI (Collocation, Entrepreneurship Attitudes, High Tech Startups, and Innovation) for the analysis of global unicorn firms. The literature on unicorn firms is immature in business, management, and accounting (BMA) literature found in Scopus and Web of Science. To bridge this gap, this paper performs a holistic review of the existing literature, exploring and analyzing all unicorns in China and India (referred to collectively as Chindia) (89 Chinese Unicorns and 16 Indian Unicorns as of 2019) to provide insights into the phenomenon and contribute towards future avenues for research into unicorns.

## Keywords

Unicorns, Unicorn firms, Startups, China, India, Chindia

## Resumen

Este estudio tiene como objetivo explorar el éxito y las características del nuevo modelo de negocio de las empresas unicornio chinas e indias, así como los intentos de desarrollar un marco CEHI (Colocación, Actitudes de emprendimiento, Startups de alta tecnología e innovación) para el análisis de las empresas de este tipo a nivel global. La literatura de la firma Unicorn es inmadura en negocios, administración y contabilidad (BMA) en Scopus y Web

of Science. Para cerrar esta brecha, este artículo revisa la literatura existente que explora y analiza de manera integral todos los unicornios en China e India (coloquialmente denominado Chindia, con 89 unicornios chinos y 16 unicornios indios a partir de 2019) para proporcionar información sobre el fenómeno y contribuir a futuras vías para la investigación de los unicornios.

## Palabras claves:

Unicornios, empresas Unicornio, Startups, China, India, Chindia

## Introduction

Animals have played a key role in both Chinese and Indian cultures (Xu & Sharifian, 2018). The animal-time relationship is around 4.000 years old in both countries (Yip, Lee & Cheung, 2002). The Chinese zodiac (Shēngxiào, Traditional Chinese: 屬相) has 12 animals (rat, ox, tiger, rabbit, dragon, snake, horse, goat, monkey, rooster, dog, and pig), and each animal has attributes representing fertility (Wong & Yung, 2005), luck (Grech, 2015), and economic behavior (Johnson & Nye, 2011), among others. In India, the soul of an animal and the soul of a person are the same, and all are an equal part of the cycle of life, death, and rebirth (Krishna, 2008, p. 2). Animals in India are deities (the elephant-headed Ganesha, the simian Hanauman, the animal incarnations of Vishnu, Vaghdeo the tiger, the blackbuck, the cow “a gift of the gods”), vahanas<sup>1</sup> (the bull and the eagle) and avatars<sup>2</sup> (fish, tortoise, and boar) (Dowson, 1982; Krishna, 2008, p. 3).

Surprisingly, unicorns are an exciting and controversial species that are not so revered in China or India. In China, they are known as Qilin (Chinese: 麒麟) or Zhi (Parker, 2007), while in India they are known as Karkadann (Persian: كركدگرك) (Sarton and Siegel, 1951; Contadini, 2003). Unicorns are considered a myth (Caillois and Scott, 1982; During Caspers, 1991; Paul-Choudhury, 2009; Reimer, 1997), and their existence has always been controversial. Vajracharya (2010) provided evidence for the existence of unicorns (rsya in the classical Sanskrit) in ancient India. Chinese unicorns were considered a female goat (Cheng, 2012); Indian unicorns were simply rhinoceros (Bice, 1955).

However, the debate surrounding the existence of unicorns is over as unicorns do exist, especially in China and India. Unicorn firms are firms that reach a market value of USD 1 billion-plus (Lee, 2013; Simon, 2016; Rungi, Saks & Tuisk, 2016). Decacorns are firms valued at over USD 10 billion and Hectocorns at over USD 100 billion (CBInsights, 2018). Unicorns are considered “tech-startups” (Kopera et al., 2018) and scalable business models (Blank & Dorf, 2013), and are closely related to technology (Au-Yong- Oliveira et al., 2018).

Ten years ago, the Indian economist and member of parliament Jairam Ramesh first used the term Chindia (Pesek, 2014) to refer to collaborations existing between the two countries. (Hitt, Haiyang & Worthington, 2005).

Unicorn firms are growing in importance worldwide; however, scarce scholarly attention and research has been paid and applied to Chindian unicorns. This study aims to explore the success of the novel business model of Chinese and Indian unicorn firms and the similarities between unicorns in both countries. This paper is structured as follows: First, the literature on the topic is reviewed. The results are then analyzed using SPSS for statistical purposes. Finally, the conclusions are outlined. The results provide insights into the Chindian unicorn phenomenon and help us contribute toward a future research agenda.

<sup>1</sup> The vehicles of the gods in Hindu mythology.

<sup>2</sup> The incarnation of a deity in animal or human form.



## 1. Literature Review

As of 2019, there are 346 unicorn firms on the CB Insights Unicorn list, the most reputable list of unicorn firms (Lougen, 2017). The United States of America dominates this list with 172 unicorns (49.7%), China holds the second position with 89 unicorns (25.7%), the UK has 17 unicorns (4.9%), India has 16 unicorns (4.6%), and the rest of the list covers other countries from around the world (CB Insights, 2019).

China is becoming a valley of unicorns (Marrugo, Pérez & Tordecilla, 2018). In 2014 it had eight unicorn firms and now it has 89, positioning China as the country with the largest growth on the list. Chinese unicorns are galloping rampant through Beijing, Shanghai, Hangzhou, Shenzhen, and Guangzhou. Simultaneously, India, which had only four unicorns, now has 16, mostly in New Delhi, Noida, and Bangalore (CB Insights, 2019). Table 1 shows all Chinese unicorns and Table 2 all Indian unicorns as of May 2019.

**Table 1. Chinese Unicorns and sectors**

Sector	Number of Unicorns	Company
Agricultural Tech	1	Nxin (农信互联)
Artificial Intelligence	3	Cloudwalk, Face++ (Megvii), Horizon Robotics
Autotech	6	ALWAYS, Momenta, SouChe Holdings, Tuohu, XPeng Motors, Youxia Motors
Big Data	1	Jusfoun Big Data
Biotechnology	1	Gan and Lee Pharmaceuticals
Blockchain	1	Bitmain Technologies
Chips and Semiconductors	1	Cambricon
Clothing and Accessories	1	Trendy Group International
Computer Vision/AI	2	SenseTime, YITU Technology
Construction Tech	1	Aijia Life
Consumer Hardware	1	Coocaa
Cybersecurity	2	4Paradigm, Tongdun Technology
Digital Health	3	Ding Xiang Yuan, LinkDoc Technology, Medlinker
Digital Media / AI	2	Toutiao (Bytedance), Yidian Zixun
Drug Development	1	ESR Cayman (e-Shang Redwood)
eCommerce/Marketplace	15	BeiBei, Fanli, Guazi (Chehaoduo), Jiuxian, JOLLY Information Technology, Koudai Gouwu, Lianjia (Homelink), Mia.com, Poizon, Tujia, VANCL, Xiaohongshu, XiaoZhu, Yijiupi (易久批), Zhaogang
EdTech	6	17zuoye, HuJiang, iTutorGroup, Logic Show (Luojisuiwei), Vipkid, Yuanfudao
Entertainment	1	Dadi Cinema
Facilities	1	Mofang Gongyu
Fintech	3	9f Group, CGTZ, Tuandaiwang
Food and Beverage and Grocery	3	Luckin Coffee, Meicai, Yiguo (易果生鲜)
Hardware	3	DJI Innovations, Meizu Technology, Royole Corporation
Healthcare	3	GuaHao (We Doctor), iCarbonX, United Imaging Healthcare
HR Tech	1	Huiké Group (Uniquedu Corporation)
Internet, Mobile Software and Services	6	58 Daojia, Apus Group, DouyuTV, Dt Dream, LinkSure Network, Zhihu
Marketplace	1	Aihuishou
On Demand	3	CAO CAO, Didi Chuxing, Huimin
Real State and Tech	4	Eggshell Apartment, Shanghai Henlius, Ucommune, Ziroom
Retail	2	EasyHome, MINISO Life
Robotics	2	Geek+, UBTECH Robotics
Scientific, Engineering Software	1	Unisound
Social	2	Kuaishou, Yixia
Supply chain and Logistics Tech	4	Manbang Group, New Dada, Shansong Express (FlashEx), YH Global
Travel	1	Hellobike

Source: Adapted by the author from CB Insights (2019).

**Table 2. Indian Unicorns and sectors**

Sector	Number of Unicorns	Company
Ad Tech	1	InMobi
eCommerce/Marketplace	4	BigBasket, Shopclues, Snapdeal, Udaan
Ed Tech	1	BYJU'S
Energy and Utilities	1	ReNew Power Ventures
Fintech	2	One97 Communications (operates Paytm), PolicyBazaar
On-Demand	2	Olacabs, Swiggy
Social	2	Hike, Zomato Media
Sports/Gaming	1	Dream11
Supply Chain and Logistics	1	Delhivery
Travel Tech	1	Oyo Rooms

Source: Adapted by the author from CB Insights (2019).

The literature review was conducted using articles published from 2003 on, when the term “unicorn” was coined (Lee, 2013). This paper used the following keywords “Unicorns”, “Startups”, “Chinese Unicorns”, “Chinese Startups”, “Indian Unicorns”, “Indian Startups”. Keyword synonyms were identified and combined with keywords for a broader search. The search used Boolean operators (OR, AND). Due to the novelty of unicorn firms as a business model, this paper’s search criteria sought to source and analyze all articles/journals. The search criteria were limited to documents in BMA categories from 2003 to 2019 with the abovementioned keywords.

## 2. Results Analysis

The results for each keyword are displayed below.

1. “Chinese Unicorns”. Nine results, only one related article published in 2019 (Table 3). An additional article has been included because of the elements brought to the discussion, even though it belongs to the field of economics. Regarding author affiliations, one of them is from the USA and is affiliated with Stetson University, USA, and the other is from China and is affiliated with Northeastern University, China.

**Table 3 Chinese unicorns**

Cites	Indexed by	Authors	Year	Title	Source title	Source's h-index
0	Scopus	No author name available	2016	MyFC setting up JV in China to launch JAQ charger in key market	Fuel Cells Bulletin	19
0	Web of Science Core Collection: Social Sciences Citation Index	Jinzhi, Z., Carrick, J.	2019	The Rise of the Chinese Unicorn: An Exploratory Study of Unicorn Companies in China	Emerging Markets Finance and Trade	26

Source: Adapted by the author based on Scopus (2019).

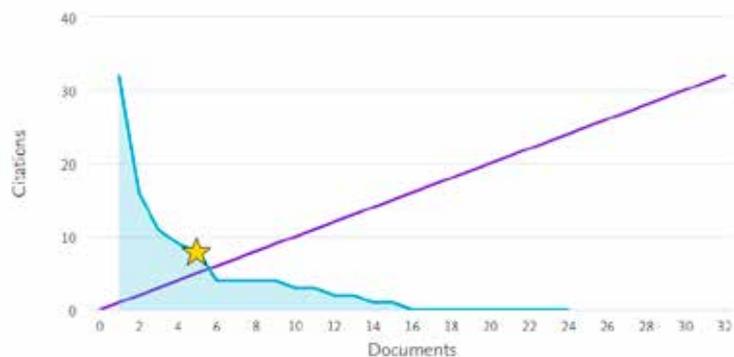
2. “Chinese Startups”. From 2003 onwards, two hundred thirty-one (231) results were returned and twenty (24) were selected. The top 5 most cited articles are presented in Table 4.

**Table 4. Top 5 most-cited articles**

Position	Indexed by	Cites	Authors	Year	Title	Source title	Source's h-index
1	Web of Science Core Collection: Social Sciences Citation Index	32	Yiu, D.W., Wan, W.P., Ng, F.W., Chen, X., Su, J.	2014	Sentimental Drivers of Social Entrepreneurship: A Study of China's Guangcai (Glorious) Program	Management and Organization Review	55
2	Web of Science Core Collection: Social Sciences Citation Index	20	Chin, T., Liu, R.-H., Yang, X.	2016	'Reverse internationalization' in Chinese firms: a study of how global startup OEMs seek to compete domestically	Asia Pacific Business Review	29
3	Web of Science Core Collection: Social Sciences Citation Index	16	Zhao, Y.L., Di Benedetto, C.A.	2013	Designing service quality to survive: Empirical evidence from Chinese new ventures	Journal of Business Research	158
4	Web of Science Core Collection: Science Citation Index Expanded	9	Zhao, Y.L., Libaers, D., Song, M.	2015	First product success: A mediated moderating model of resources, founding team startup experience, and product-positioning strategy	Journal of Product Innovation Management	126
5	Web of Science Core Collection: Science Citation Index Expanded	8	Sharif, N., Tang, H.-H.H.	2014	New trends in innovation strategy at Chinese universities in Hong Kong and Shenzhen	International Journal of Technology Management	51

Source: Adapted by the author from Scopus (2019) and SCImago (2019).

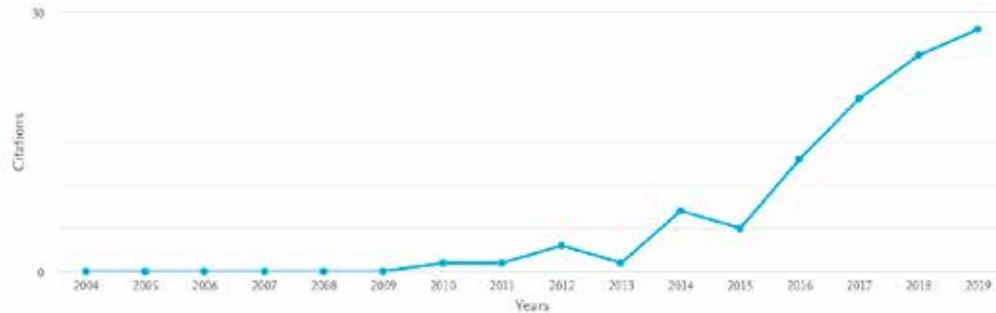
**Figure 1. Chinese startups h-index**



Source: Scopus (2019).

Regarding citation distribution, the average number of citations per article is 6.1, with an h-index of 5 (Figure 1).

Nine (37.5%) documents did not have any citations, and two documents (8.3%) had just one citation, showing that newer publications tend to be the most cited. The number of citations per document (excluding self-citations by all authors) has gradually been increasing since 2015, with seven citations per document, to 28 in 2019. 2019 and 2017 were the most productive years with four publications each. There were no publications at all in 2003, 2004, 2006, 2011 and 2012 (Figure 2). The US is the most productive country with nine publications (45%), followed by China, with eight publications (40%).

**Figure 2. Chinese startups citation overview 2004-2019**

Source: Scopus (2019).

The most productive author was Zhao, with two publications. The University of Missouri-Kansas City, USA, and Tsinghua University, China, are the two most productive institutions with two articles each. The US leads with nine papers while China is second with two. The 24 selected results are as follows: 19 articles (79.2%), one book (4.2%), one book chapter (4.2%), one conference paper (4.2%), one conference review (4.2%), and one review (4.2%). The journal with most publications is International Journal of Entrepreneurship and Innovation Management, h-index 20, with two articles.

3. "Indian Unicorns". The research found 11 results, of which only one was a related article published in 2019 (Table 5).

**Table 5 Indian unicorns**

Cites	Indexed by	Authors	Year	Title	Source title	Source's h-index
0	Web of Science Core Collection: Social Sciences Citation Index	No author name available	2016	An Indian unicorn: Global appetites	Economist	9

Source: Adapted by the author from Scopus (2019).

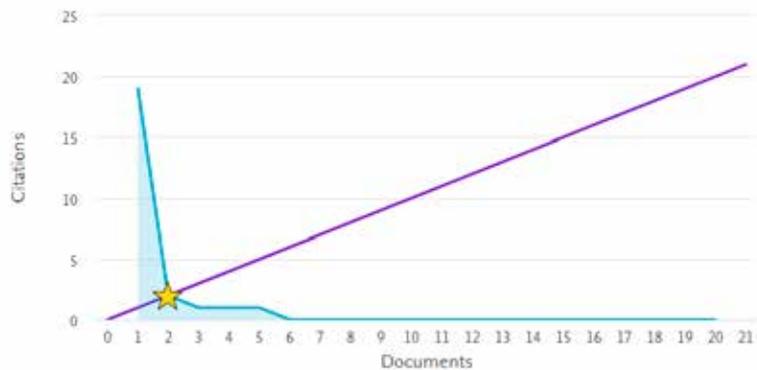
5. "Indian startups". The research found 83 results, of which 20 were related to the BMA field. The top 5 most cited articles are presented in Table 6.

**Table 6. Top 5 most-cited articles**

Position	Indexed by	Cites	Authors	Year	Title	Source title	Source's h-index
1	Web of Science Core Collection: Emerging Sources Citation Index	20	Peltier, J.W., Naidu, G.M.	2012	Social networks across the SME organizational lifecycle	Journal of Small Business and Enterprise Development	55
2	Web of Science Core Collection: Emerging Sources Citation Index	2	Jha, S.K.	2018	Entrepreneurial ecosystem in India: Taking stock and looking ahead	IIMB Management Review	15
3	Web of Science Core Collection: Emerging Sources Citation Index	2	Varma, S., Nayyar, R., Bansal, V.	2016	What Drives Precocity? A Study of Indian Technology-Intensive Firms	Journal of East-West Business	14
4	Scopus	1	Dinesh, K.K., Sushil	2019	Strategic innovation factors in startups: Results of a cross-case analysis of Indian startups	Journal for Global Business Advancement	7
5	Scopus	1	Sindhani, M., Parameswar, N., Dhir, S., Ongsakul, V.	2019	Twitter analysis of founders of top 25 Indian startups	Journal for Global Business Advancement	7

Source: Adapted by the author from Scopus (2019).

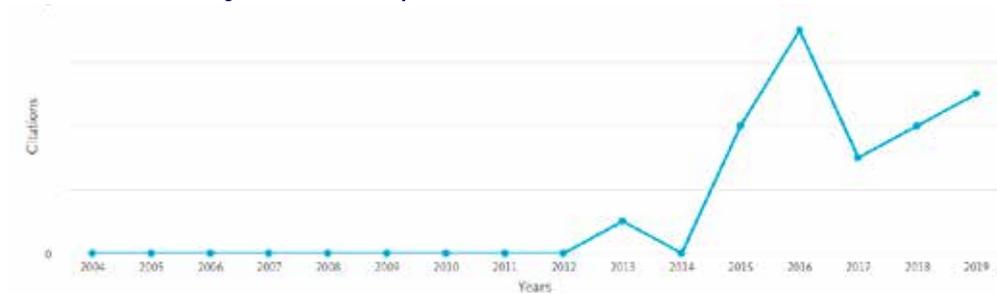
Regarding allocation, the average number of citations is 1.5, rounded up to an h-index of two (Figure 3).

**Figure 3. Indian startups h-index**

Source: Scopus (2019).

14 publications (70%) did not have any citations, while three documents (15%) had just one citation. The newer documents were the most cited.

The number of citations per document (excluding self-citations by all authors) has almost doubled since 2015, with four, to seven in 2019. In particular, 2016 and 2019 were the most productive years with seven publications each (Figure 4), although eight years is the longest period with an absence of productions on this topic (2004 to 2012).

**Figure 4. Indian startups citation overview 2003-2019**

Source: Scopus (2019).

India is the most productive country with 13 publications (65%), followed by Kazakhstan, with one publication (5%). Anirvinna, Bansal, Bhowmick, Chauhan, and Sand Clarke all have one publication. The Indian Institute of Technology Delhi<sup>3</sup> is the most productive institution with two articles.

Going forward, the 20 selected results were as follows: 15 articles (75%), one book (4.2%), one book chapter (5%), two conference papers (10%), one conference review (5%), and one note (5%). The journals with most publications were the International Journal of Applied Business and the Economic Research and the Journal for Global Business Advancement, with two articles each. The top three keywords used were Entrepreneurship, India, and Start-Up with four documents each.



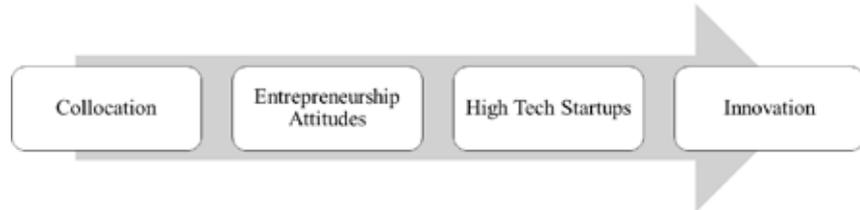
### 3. CEHI- A four-factor analysis model for international unicorn firms

This research developed a new framework called CEHI (Collocation, Entrepreneurship Attitudes, High Tech Startups, and Innovation) based on previous research (Aldrich & Ruef, 2018; Jinzhi & Carrick, 2019). This study found common concepts, drew them out, and introduced the CEHI framework. This

<sup>3</sup> Official website: <http://www.iitd.ac.in/>.

is expected to be a framework for analyzing unicorns around the world. Figure 5 shows the structure of the developed framework and the constructs (each one explained in the following sections).

**Figure 5. CEHI Structure**



Source: Author.

De Massis, Frattini, and Quillico (2016) analyzed 146 unicorns to identify the reasons for their success: 1) Unicorns are small in size, 2) Unicorns are led by serial entrepreneurs, 3) Unicorns are financed by venture capital firms, and 4) Unicorns are narrowly focused. This study holistically analyzed 89 Chinese unicorns and 16 Indian unicorns to identify additional success factors for Chindian unicorns, making this one of the first studies to provide a Scopus and Web of Science indexed integrated review exploring the phenomenon of Chindian unicorns.

### 3.1 Collocation

Monaghan, Gunnigle, and Lavelle (2017) and Narula and Santangelo (2012) define collocation as spatial proximity to specific unaffiliated firms, which may be suppliers, competitors, or customers.

Bruton and Ahlstrom (2003) and Zhang (2011) argued that the geographical relationship between startups and financial resources is crucial (Pan & Yang, 2018; Zeng & Dornberger, 2009).

Thus, we can look at countries like China and India that have become a “fertile ground” for these new types of projects (Muramalla and Al-Hazza, 2019). China is considered a “valley for companies” (Marrugo et al., 2018) because of the optimal conditions for development. On the other hand, India offers a potentially large consumer market accompanied by national growth rates, making it an extremely attractive market.

Similarly, a strategic location is vitally important for a startup and indispensable for its survival. According to Glaeser (2007), cities that have “more startups usually have better economic performance than those that do not” which shows a directly proportional relationship between the effective operation of city economies and the creation and location of startups in them.

Cities like Bangalore and Delhi in India have become major reception hubs for startups, thanks to their entrepreneurial ecosystems and financial environments that facilitate starting and growing businesses. Beijing and Shanghai are places where both economic development and technological development are key, and both contribute fundamentally to the survival of startups (Ghosh, 2014). Bangalore, Delhi, Beijing, and Shanghai are also financial centers and major technological hubs.

**Table 7 show the top 10 highest value Chindian unicorns and their locations.**

Company	Valuation (\$B)	Country	City Location	Category	Investors
Bitmain Technologies	\$12	China	Beijing	Blockchain	Coatue Management, Sequoia Capital China, IDG Capital
Didi Chuxing	\$56	China	Beijing	On-Demand	Matrix Partners, Tiger Global Management, Softbank Corp.,
DJI Innovations	\$10	China	Shenzhen	Hardware	Accel Partners, Sequoia Capital
Guazi (Chehaoduo)	\$9	China	Beijing	eCommerce/ Marketplace	Sequoia Capital China, GX Capital
One97 Communications (operates Paytm)	\$10	India	Noida	Fintech	Intel Capital, Sapphire Ventures, Alibaba Group
Snapdeal	\$7	India	New Delhi	e-commerce	SoftBankGroup, Blackrock, Alibaba Group
Toutiao (Byte-dance)	\$75	China	Beijing	Digital Media/ AI	Sequoia Capital China, SIG Asia Investments, Sina Weibo, Softbank Group
BYJU'S	\$5	India	Bengaluru	Ed Tech	Tencent Holdings, Lightspeed India Partners, Sequoia Capital India
OlaCabs	\$4	India	Koramangala	On-demand	Accel Partners, SoftBank Group, Sequoia Capital
Oyo Rooms	\$4	India	New Delhi	Travel Tech	SoftBank Group, Sequoia Capital India, Lightspeed India Partners

Source: Author's elaboration based on CBIInsights (2019).

To find the right location, unicorns consider factors such as economic development, industrial capacity, and accessibility to resources and investment. Singh (2017) argued that there are new ways of doing business, new ways of doing commerce, and new ways of providing services and products to customers. As a result, a number of startups have come to new cities in recent years, looking for new ways to operate and work at centers of progress, making themselves more visible to new customers.

### 3.2. Entrepreneurship attitudes

Kusmintarti, Asdani, & Indah (2017, p. 31) defined an entrepreneurship attitude as a tendency to react based on a like or dislike of entrepreneurship, reflecting respect for entrepreneurial activities or an absence thereof.

Entrepreneurs have common traits and attitudes that are shared among successful businesspeople. The population selected is from China and India (Dou et al., 2019; Cinar & Hienkel, 2018; Qihai, Xueyuan & Jun 2019). Risk tolerance and problem-solving are amongst the skills entrepreneurs have that allow them to adapt to difficult situations (Anderson & Lee, 2008; Pan & Yang,

2018; Tan, 2001; Van Praag & Cramer, 2001; Yang, 2004; Zeng & Dornberger, 2009; Zhang, 2008).

In China, we find four important forces that increase the “entrepreneurial spirit”.

1. Market emergence. After liberalization of the economy, from a centralized system to an “open” economy in the 1980s, planning has become market-oriented, providing intensive markets.

2. The strength of redistributive institutions, regulated and controlled by the government. These are tasked with encouraging private companies to participate in international trade by providing favorable environments.

3. Foreign direct investment is very important for China as it has around 1.3 billion inhabitants, and, as a result, has great potential for generating cheaper labor than other countries. (Haiyang & Michael, 2006).

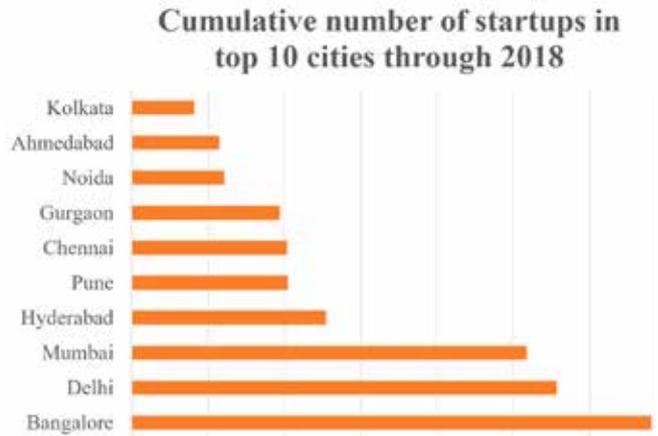
4. Changes in Chinese cultural values: It is interelose to traditional Chinese values, as they understand that industry and business start-ups ensure their survival and improve the their country's economic growth (Chang & Macmillan, 1991).



### 3.2.1. Bangalore as India's Dominant Entrepreneurial Hub

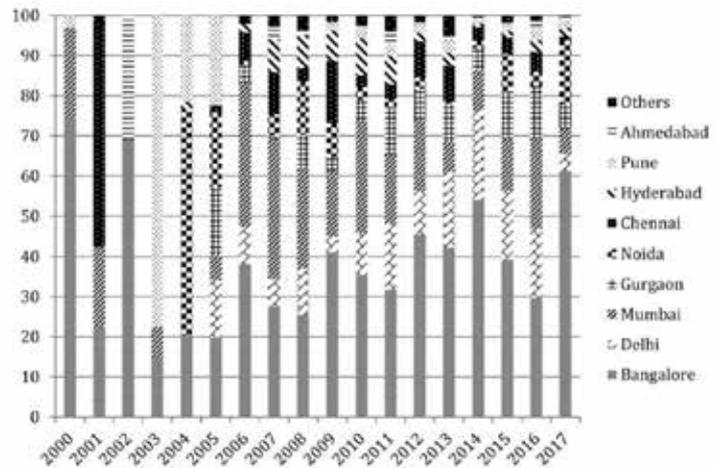
Bangalore is the largest hub for multinational high-tech companies in India. This is due to the implementation of incubators by the state government, which has promoted entrepreneurship in the country. Bangalore is ranked first compared to other cities, as shown in Figure 6, hosting 23% of all multinational enterprise subsidiary startups in 2018. Second place goes to the National Capital Region (Delhi) with 19%.

**Figure 6. Cumulative number of startups in the top 10 cities through 2018**



Source: Author's adaptation.

**Figure 7. Industry-wide funding of startups in India by city, 2000-2017 (by percentage)**



Source: Author's adaptation

Figure 7 shows the percentage of participation of each city per year, with Bangalore averaging 39% between 2000 and 2017. Initially, internet facilities were scarce and credit card positioning was weak, which surely led to the disappearance of many high-tech companies. However, the expansion of the dot-com era allowed the incorporation of new limited businesses in India (Shane, 2009; Timmons & Spinelli, 2008).

Some Multinational Enterprises-MNE use specialized services provided by accelerator programs (Surana, Singh & Sagar, 2018), while others have them located in their physical facilities. Bangalore is considered a young city for entrepreneurship compared to other ecosystems (Herrmann et al., 2015), but this is the fundamental reason for its popularity in the Indian acceleration model (Goswami, Mitchell & Bhagavatula, 2018), which is mainly developed in metropolitan areas (like Hyderabad, Chennai, Bangalore, Delhi & Ahmedabad).

Morris and Schindeutte (2005) suggest that entrepreneurial attitudes swiftly adapt to political and economic adversity. This shows that the entrepreneurial process includes actively maintaining a positive engagement with the establishment, so as to avoid political persecution or worse. In India, Roy, Akhtar, and Das (2017) have shown that entrepreneurial attitudes

and strategies towards growth are characterized by experimentation, innovativeness, and risk-taking, skills that have been mentioned above many times (Trivedi, 2017).

Based on these attitudes, we can infer that such attributes can best shape individuals for the cut-throat competitive scenario of entrepreneurship, no matter their opportunities and skill sets. They would obviously not meddle in politics and take care to not clash with institutions. To maintain solid relationships, they must establish positive feedback channels.

### 3.3. High-Tech Startups

Kam, Ping, and Crystal (2017) and Adler et al. (2019) define high-tech firms as young enterprises in high-technology sectors with over 50% individual ownership and that employ at least 1 worker.

Unicorns as high-tech startups coevolve with the venture capital industry (Avnimelech & Teubal, 2004, 2006) and offer varied signals that make them attractive for investors (Conti et al., 2013). There are a large number of high-tech startups in China, mostly because of the unique advantages provided there, including a new business environment with fewer competitors. Most of these new enterprises are located in the famous “Chinese Silicon Valley” of Shenzhen. Government regulations, new patterns of technology usage, and demographics are some of the advantages that facilitate the entry of high-tech startup companies into Chinese markets. The Alibaba Group (in billions of USD) (\$52 B), Tencent (\$79 B), Xiaomi (\$49 B), SenseTime (\$7 B), iCarbonX (\$1 B), CloudWalk (\$75 B), and DaSouChe (\$180 B) are some of the largest and successful Chinese enterprises today. (Chang et al., 2020)

Bangalore is also known as the Silicon Valley of India (Saxenian, 2001), and was ranked 15th out of 20 cities with the best ecosystems for startups worldwide. BharatPe (\$17.5 million), Fyle (\$5.9 million), QuikRide (\$14.3 million), FtCash (\$10.2 million), FreshToHome (\$11 million) are some of the companies based in India’s Silicon Valley. Bangalore is one of the most important hubs for the IT industry, from software to electronics manufacturing and IT consultancies. “[. . .] in India, an average of 400 new technology startups were created during 2009-2012” (Meenakshi & Sinha, 2019).

Ivanova (2019) argues that the Research and Development (R&D) and innovation battle is between China and India. The more they develop these areas, the more their respective high-tech sectors will be stimulated. Table 8 summarizes the top 10 Chindian high-tech unicorns.

**Table 8. Chindian high-tech unicorns**

Company	Valuation (\$B)	Country	Category	Select Investors
Bitmain Technologies	\$12	China	Blockchain	Coatue Management, Sequoia Capital China, IDG Capital
BYJU'S	\$5	India	Ed Tech	Tencent Holdings, Lightspeed India Partners, Sequoia Capital India
Cloudwalk	\$3	China	AI	Oriza Holdings, Guangdong Technology Financial Group
Horizon Robotics	\$3	China	AI/Robotics	Hillhouse Capital Management, Linear Venture, Morningside Venture Capital
One97 Communications (operates Paytm)	\$10	India	Fintech	Intel Capital, Sapphire Ventures, Alibaba Group
Oyo Rooms	\$4	India	Travel Tech	SoftBank Group, Sequoia Capital India, Lightspeed India Partners
SenseTime	\$5	China	Computer Vision/ AI	Star VC, IDG Capital, Infore Capital, Alibaba Group
SouChe Holdings	\$3	China	AutoTech	Morningside Ventures, Warburg Pincus, CreditEase Fintech Investment Fund
Toutiao (Byte-dance)	\$75	China	Digital Media/ AI	Sequoia Capital China, SIG Asia Investments, Sina Weibo, Softbank Group
UBTECH Robotics	\$5	China	Robotics	CDH Investments, Goldstone Investments, Qiming Venture Partners

Source: CB Insights (2019).

For example, in India, the following tech unicorns raised important funding in 2007: Olacabs raised over \$1,430 million from Softbank Group, Tencent Holdings, and UC-RNT Fund, series J and H. One97 Communications also raised \$1,400 million from Softbank Group. Other investors that have contributed to India's unicorns are New York's Tiger Global Management, Japan's SoftBank Group, and Accel India. (CB Insights, 2019).

In 2018, in China, the 5 most active venture capital firms were Sequoia with 247 investments, IDG Capital with 127 investments, Matrix Partners with 102, Shunwei with 79, and GGV Capital with 55. Other venture capital firms include Legend Capital, Morningside, and Gaorong Capital.

### 3.4. Innovation

China and India are knowledge-based societies, and innovation is crucial for the unicorns' expansion (Bruche, 2009). R&D staff as well as high-quality universities in China and India have a close relationship with innovation and offer a qualified network of personnel ready to develop Chinese and Indian firms (Crescenzi and Rodriguez-Pose, 2017). China and India have different innovation indices (Chatterjee and Sahasranamam, 2017; Lundvall, 1999). Wu, Revi, and Doshi (2008) summarized the similarities and differences between Chinese and Indian approaches to innovation:

- 1) *The research organization structure is government led in both countries.*
- 2) *As for the innovation operation system, China has far more investment in innovation. India has higher efficiency in R&D input and output.*
- 3) *R&D expenditure as a share of gross domestic product in the two countries is still low compared to the European Union and the United States.*
- 4) *The innovation performance subsystem shows that India's economic development has greater potential in the knowledge-intensive service-oriented economy.*

China and India's innovation performance has turned them into knowledge economies through "managers' ties with managers at other companies (i.e., business ties) and government officials" (Zhang et al., 2019). This is a key part of innovation and unicorn growth in China and India.

#### 3.4.1. India's National Innovation System



From 1985 onward, the main strategy used by branches of foreign multinational companies located in India was to apply imitation techniques and cost-based competition (Teece, 1992). This meant that much of the production activities of global value chains imitated productive processes developed in advanced countries, albeit at lower costs, in a process called "exit capabilities" (Awate, Larsen, & Mudambi, 2012), mainly because acquisition of these processes is easier through imitative strategies, resulting in a faster recovery of production (Lall, 1990).

The emergence of innovation capabilities in the entrepreneurial environment of India began about two decades after the creation of the Bangalore group (Parthasarathy and Aoyama, 2006), using US patent registrations as an indicator of innovative world-class production and for protecting intellectual property in India against piracy (Ministry of Law, Justice and Business Affairs, 2000).

China is a socialist state, unlike India, which is a Westminster-style parliamentary democracy. Another difference lies in China's structural reforms that balance government public policies and encourage national private initiatives with efficient and economic work. India, on the contrary, is far from this situation, since government investments are few. (Drori, Jang, & Meyer, 2006; Kenney & Von Burg, 1999; Fleming & Sorenson, 2004).

Both countries have great technological advantages due to "India's highly skilled manpower" (Kapur & Ramamurti, 2001) and "the Chinese government policies to become a knowledge-based economy" (Paul & Mas, 2016; Wang,

2017). As such, they need each other, as can be seen today with Indian enterprises with headquarters in China and selling in India or vice versa. This is due to a belief that China's environment is built for new ventures (Wei & Mei, 2019). China has become attractive because of its high level of socio-economic and political stability, a capacious domestic market, cheap labor, and an active national investment policy (Dean, Lovely & Wang, 2017; Melnichuk, 2018; Yu, Duan & Fan 2019).

With technological advances, electronic commerce -E-Commerce- has gained strength, driving companies in both the West such as Amazon, and the East, like Alibaba (Qiao et al., 2020). Guo, Xie, and Jiang (2019) consider that this is an innovative strategy with great potential to connect the world and help companies grow.

Innovation has also taken other forms in the Asian country's economy, including its integration into the agricultural sector. Mao, Wang, and Sun (2019) argue that innovation in this sector has favored multiple regions that, thanks to technology, have improved the performance of their products. In conclusion, it appears that innovation has a lot to do with the nature of a country's institutions and the support they provide.

## 4. Conclusions

BMA research on *Chindian* unicorns is immature, yet their current impact and worldwide knowledge gaps define future research challenges. As of 2019, there are 346 unicorn firms on the CB Insights Unicorn list. China is ranked second with 89 unicorns (25.7%), and India has 16 (4.6%). Until 2019, the number of unicorns in both China and India grew exponentially. China went from two unicorns in 2009 to 89 in 2019 (over 4000% growth in 8 years), India went from four unicorns in 2014 to 16 (an increase of 300%). The main Chinese cities where unicorns are located are Shanghai, Hangzhou, Shenzhen, and Guangzhou. In India they are concentrated in New Delhi, Noida, and Bangalore.

Chinese unicorns can be found in several different industries and focus mostly on eCommerce, Autotech, Edtech and Internet, Mobile Software, and Services. India is focused on eCommerce, Fintech, Social, and On Demand. eCommerce appears as the main sector where unicorns proliferate, while participation varies in the remaining sectors.

Scholars are finding research into unicorns more attractive, as shown by the fact that its Scopus percentile is over 99% (Scopus, 2019), together with research into high-tech, entrepreneurship, and innovation. 90 percent of the intellectual production related to unicorns comes from institutions and authors in the US and China. The lack of production from the rest of the world on this topic is worrying and excludes Latin American researchers from global conversations. The results of this research can be replicated with Latin-American unicorns, and further analysis could also be performed in other countries (US, Europe or Latin America).

Third, this study develops a new CEHI analysis framework that suggests there is a strong collocation of unicorns and top financial centers in China and India. Cities like Bangalore and Delhi in India and Beijing and Shanghai in China have become major hubs for startups due to their financial environment. Other key factors are entrepreneurship attitudes, high-tech startups, and innovation.

Chinese and Indian government regulations are key advantages that facilitate the entry of high-tech startup companies into their markets, making their unicorns very attractive to investors. China and India are knowledge economies with two different approaches to innovation and governments that promote innovation in their territories.

The Chinese government's support has been more effective in promoting innovation through policies and the use of public-sector research potential. On the other hand, India has made progress, but is not in a comparable position yet. Innovation in Chindia also comes from business and how it has helped change China and India's worldview, allowing them to attract investors.

## **5. Future Research Agenda**

Future studies could evaluate the reasons for discrepancies in unicorn proliferation between China and India and how more researchers can join this research trend, especially in India, due to the novelty of unicorn firms. They could also look at whether China and India have a solid tech ecosystem or whether their growth is due to a few foreign companies. Finally, future research could study the failures of Chindian unicorns or the number of Chinese and Indian citizens returning to their home countries to become entrepreneurs, for family reasons, professional development and solid economic opportunities (Bao et al., 2016; Wang & Bao, 2015; Wadhwa, 2008).

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