

Entrepreneurial Idea Sharing and Identity: Who and What Affects Woman Entrepreneurship

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This study employs content analysis of 78 Taiwanese female entrepreneurship stories to explore basic profiles of female entrepreneurs, how do they perceive their business conception and whom do they share entrepreneurial idea with. This study also investigates entrepreneurial decision-making factors, information obtained, and business period from entrepreneurship conceptions to start-ups.

Field of Research: woman entrepreneurship, start-ups

1. Introduction

Entrepreneurship has always been one of the important research issues in the field of management (Schindehutte, Morris & Kocak, 2008). Entrepreneurs not only identify opportunities, but also effectively illustrate, master and perform the opportunity (Chaganti, 1986). However, reviewing the past studies on the behavior and growth of entrepreneurship, more discussions focus on the behaviors of male entrepreneurs, since women entrepreneurs are thought of lack of being action and pursuing growth intention (Allen & Carter, 1996).

Social status of woman is one of the difficulties for female entrepreneur to start their business in developing countries or traditional culture (Menzies, Diochon & Gasse, 2004; Ufuk & Ozgen, 2001). Traditional Chinese society generally does not accept female entrepreneurs and has a negative impression and perception on them. When going to stage of inputting the concept into a commercial capacity and clustering resources, women encountered more difficulties than men (Birley, 1989).

Research finds that entrepreneurship motivation of women and men are very similar. Needs of independence and self-actualization are usually in the first place (Hisrich, 1990). Regarding to working time, the professional flexibility of self-owned enterprise is an important factor encouraging women entrepreneurs to begin their business (Orhan & Scott, 2001). Past studies take little effort on what factors will significantly affect the idea in the early stage for female entrepreneurs to start their business idea. More research is needed to help understand the prerequisites and development direction for female entrepreneurs (Birley, 1989).

Because women are usually unwilling to be interviewed, this research uses published stories of female entrepreneur as their non-routine decisions, which have a certain

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degree of effectiveness (Manimala, 1992). First, this research has literature review for female entrepreneurs. Second, we use content analysis method to look into 78 published female venture stories. Through the story analysis, this research tries to explore when women in the process of pioneering first idea to practical implementation, why she produced the venture idea? How did she detect herself possessing venture idea? In what way did she confirm her venture idea? Who did she share the "venture idea"? How and where did she get entrepreneurship information and support? Last, this research concludes our findings and provides recommendations.

2. Literature Review

Entrepreneurship

Most research suggests that small business goals and performance are under the influence of entrepreneur's intent and vision (Bird, 1988; Davidsson, 1991; Herron & Robinson, 1993; Sexton, 1989). Studies on woman entrepreneurship are gaining popularity in recent decades. Early discussions on female entrepreneurship research were mainly focuses on entrepreneur's spirit (Hisrich, Koiranen & Hyrsky, 1996), characteristics (Sexton & Bowman-Upton, 1990), ownership (Rosa & Hamilto, 1994), occupations (Mathews & Moser, 1996; Scherer, Brodzinski & Wiebe, 1990) and so on. Today the female entrepreneurship studies have extended to conflicts between work and family roles (Stoner, Hartman & Arora, 1990), relationship network (Aldrich, Reece & Dubini, 1989; Cromie & Birley, 1992), financial policies (Buttner & Rosen, 1992), advertisement strategies (Van Auken, Rittenburg, Doran & Hsieh, 1994), discrimination in loan application process (Buttner & Rosen, 1989; Fay & Williams, 1993), enterprise survival, company growth and corporate performance (Chaganti & Parasuraman, 1996; Lerner, Brush & Hisrich, 1997). Review of previous studies, not only a smaller amount of researches emphasizes on the value of women business owners (Chaganti, 1986), but also few studies explore that women entrepreneurs on social issues generally gain higher evaluation on social issues (Brush, 1992; Brush, 1997).

Motivations and Conceptions

Push and pull theory are often used to explain different motivations of women entrepreneurship (Brush, 1999; Buttner & Moore, 1997). Push factors indicates necessity, such as unemployment, glass ceiling, layoffs, recession, financial reasons or needs at the same time compatible with work and family roles. Pull factors are related to independent needs, achievement demand, affluent profit, individual development, self-fulfillment, social status and power (Hansemark, 1998), while some factors are usually merged (Buttner & Moore, 1997). Generally speaking, necessity, interests or family income cause woman to create small enterprises. If in the first pioneering stage they experience excessive obstacles or burdens, in future they will not adopt such path again (Still & Timms, 2000b). Women prefer to hide their ideas, and this may be because of different sexual confidence and their concerns for the differences in the ideas of others (Benedict & Levine, 1988). Particularly, when oriental women are facing external pressures, they often cannot, or are not easily supported by the organization or community to make their life choices (Linehan &

Scullion, 2008).

Gender Differences

Women's experiences and activities in small enterprises are different from men's. Their activities within the small enterprises are perceived as the need to complete multiple social roles, while they are often excluded from the so-called culture advantages (i.e. the male-dominated social structure (Still & Timms, 2000b). Most researches on gender differences consider less influence of socio-cultural background difference (Ely & Padavic, 2007). Women may be more likely than men to obey discipline, to comply with most of the comments, and to internalize that into part of their personality (Venkatesh, Morris & Ackerman, 2000). Thus, when women are making decisions, they are more vulnerable to the influences from surrounding pressures. Therefore, it would rather move the focus directly on women entrepreneurs' thinking than spotlight on the comparison of gender differences in poorer performance of women-owned business.

Due to women's multiple roles in life, researchers cannot assume that they will grow their enterprises in accordance with the normal track of business model. In small business researches, many women agree that gender issues are barriers to their success (Tasmanian Women's Consultative Council, 1996; Yellow Pages Australia, 1996; Still & Timms, 1997; Still & Timms, 2000a). Nevertheless, if researchers can learn and explore how women form their entrepreneurial ideas and concepts, choose types of business to operate, and face social factors hindering them from participation in entrepreneurship, it is believed that this will aid related authority to propose appropriate counseling program to assist women in starting their own business effectively.

3. Methodology

Researchers wishing to explore unknown or not fully-explained phenomenon, exploratory qualitative research is worth implementing (Marshall & Rossman, 1989). Regarding to this point of view, in order to acquire Taiwan female entrepreneur's conceptions to start-ups, implementation of exploratory research are needed (Lawler, 1985). However, studies on female entrepreneurs have difficulties because of the obstacles of their interview willingness and cooperation ability (Manimala, 1992). Therefore, this research uses collection of open stories, which is suggested to understand the implications of their policy (Davis, Hills & LaForge, 1985), to indicate the initial conceptions of entrepreneurial activities to start-ups.

Cases of Female Entrepreneurship Story: Content Analysis

Published news stories, which data sources can be obtained at different times and locations, have more widespread reaction to entrepreneurial culture (Czarniawska-Joerges & Guillet de Monthoux, 1994). However, news stories are not specific for a particular research and due to that they are secondary data, some topics such as entrepreneurship problems, customer types and corporate growth cannot be obtained from them.

Nevertheless, it is suggested that case stories focus on enterprise owners making unique successful strategies and the routine significant transaction can be ignored

instead (Manimala, 1992). In addition to that published cases can avoid false or misunderstood events; the open stories have become an important source for data analysis when the owners are reluctant to be interviewed by unfamiliar researchers. This study is based on integrating the literature of entrepreneurship and motivation, and combined with the published stories. The finding of this study provides not only a foundation for a new theory and validation but also the sources of inspiration and models. Sampling procedures and analytical method for case stories are as follows:

Sampling Procedures

In recent years, Taiwan government policy of encouraging women entrepreneurs makes the number of women entrepreneur reaches one-third of total entrepreneurs. In 2000, National Youth Commission (NYC), Executive Yuan has operated "Flying Goose Program" which is intended to fulfill women's dreams and desires for entrepreneurship in Taiwan as well as that a friendly environment for women entrepreneurship can be constructed. In this program, NYC set up the Woman Entrepreneurship Guidance web site not only to offer entrepreneurship related information but also exhibits a plenty of entrepreneurship stories from the women who were mostly involved in the "Flying goose plan". These publicly available researches on female entrepreneurial stories are collected as data source objects. Only the studies of independent woman-owned enterprises are our research objects. Duplicate stories are merged for the analysis as same sample and this study selected a total of 78 stories as research objects.

Method of Analysis

This study uses a method of content analysis method to confirm important activities issues of female entrepreneurs. Reviewing recent research topics of entrepreneurship, some researchers began to exercise content analysis (Manimala, 1992; MacMillan, Zemann & Subba Narasimba, 1987; Romanelli, 1987; Sandberg, Schweiger & Hofer, 1988; Tyebjee & Bruno, 1984). Small business researchers also adopted content analysis, such as Hills & Narayana (1989) and Marino, Castaldi & Doillinger (1989) to confirm the common policy factors of high growth enterprises. This research firstly executes literature review and proposes analytical framework model. The model includes the motivation and background factors of female entrepreneurship, construction and extraction of both essence and forms content analysis framework to recall Taiwan social background and behavior of female entrepreneurs. According to model development analysis, each dimension will have 4 to 8 items. If the public story did not contain information about the specific fragments, it is assumed that the case did not emphasize this particular viewpoint or noted that none or little messages. Three authors of this study code the case at the same time to determine inter-coder reliability and all different codes are required for discussion until all the researchers reach a final consensus.

4. Results

78 real woman entrepreneurship stories are coded by two researchers to ensure reliability. Total reliability of internal coding is 90.5% , which is satisfied (Kassarjian, 1977). Regarding to the different-coding items, in order to ensure consistency, if two

researchers still have different opinions, a third researcher add into discussion for unanimity.

Basic Profiles of Female Entrepreneurs

Basic data of 78 woman entrepreneurship stories are as Table 1 shows,

Table I Basic data of 78 woman entrepreneurship stories

Category	Item	N	%	Accumulated % (N)
Organization Type	Sole ownership	70	89.8%	89.8% (70)
	Partnership	0	0%	89.8% (0)
	Corporation	8	10.2%	100.0% (78)
Early stage of business	Good	34	43.6%	43.6% (34)
	Acceptable	6	7.7%	51.3% (40)
	No good	24	30.8%	82.1% (64)
	Not Available	14	17.9%	100.0% (78)
Education	High school(or below)	10	12.8%	12.8% (10)
	College	19	24.4%	37.2% (29)
	Graduate (or above)	13	16.7%	53.9% (42)
	Not Available	36	46.1%	100.0% (78)
Marriage	Single	3	3.9%	3.9% (3)
	Married	49	62.8%	66.7% (52)
	Divorced	4	5.1%	71.8% (56)
	Not Available	22	28.2%	100.0% (78)
Age of entre-preneurship	30 (or below)	7	9.0%	9.0% (7)
	31-50	44	56.4%	65.4% (51)
	51 (or above)	7	9.0%	74.4% (58)
	Not Available	20	25.6%	100.0% (78)
Working experience	Yes	28	35.9%	35.9% (28)
	No	37	47.4%	83.3% (65)
	Not Available	13	16.7%	100.0% (78)
Relevant technique	Yes	52	66.7%	66.7% (52)
	No	8	10.3%	76.9% (60)
	Not Available	18	23.0%	100.0% (78)
Financial concept and backup	Yes	22	28.2%	28.2% (22)
	No	35	44.8%	73.1% (57)
	Not Available	21	26.9%	100.0% (78)
Management experience	Yes	16	20.5%	28.2% (22)
	No	41	52.6%	73.1% (57)
	Not Available	21	26.9%	100.0% (78)
Relevant field of education	Yes	24	30.8%	30.8% (22)
	No	49	62.8%	93.6% (73)
	Not Available	5	6.4%	100.0% (78)

As the data displayed in Table I, 70 female entrepreneurs choose sole ownership as their operating type. Early statuses of most female entrepreneurs are not good. Up to three-fourths of samples have college degree or above. The female entrepreneurs mostly are in married status (66.7%), and in the middle-aged (31-50, 56.4%) to start

up their business. Most of them have no relevant work experience (47.4%), financial support (44.8%) and management experience (52.6%). Nevertheless, they usually choose already-owned technical capacity for entrepreneurship (66.7%).

From Entrepreneurship Conceptions to Start-ups

In these 78 woman entrepreneurship stories, how do the female entrepreneurs perceive their business conceptions, who they share with and what are their responses, our findings are as follows:

How do the female entrepreneurs perceive their business conceptions?

As Table II shows, although 32.1% of these female entrepreneurs have the entrepreneurship idea already existing inside their original dreams, interests and professional, 57.7% of women entrepreneurs start their business from work observation of social phenomena (29.5%), and solve family livelihood problems of family life and family (28.2%). Evidence in the stories is the statements: "economic recession turns many families to life difficulties", "expression care on orphans ", "mother cannot work because she has to care disabled children, and thus resulting in family livelihood difficulties", "elder people have eating obstacles" and etc.

Table II Conceptions of entrepreneurship

Question	Item	N	%	Accumulated % (N)
Original thoughts	Dream	12	15.4%	15.4% (12)
	Interests	6	7.7%	23.1% (18)
	Profession	7	9.0%	32.1% (25)
Based on work observation and recognized social phenomenon		23	29.5%	61.6% (48)
Solve life or family livelihood problems		22	28.2%	89.8% (70)
Not Available		8	10.2%	100.0% (78)

Entrepreneurial idea sharing and identity

As Table III shows, more than half of women entrepreneurs inform their family (51.3%) and around 20.5% did not. Generally, they share their business idea with their husband (32.1%), family (19.2%), friends (19.2%) and others only a small portion is to share their thoughts with customers (6.4%). Although 14.1% of women use "self-identity" to confirm their own business ideas, they seek approval from family and husband (41%, 18%). However, these people (husband or relatives) mostly held conservative attitude (14.1%) or complete disagree (25.7%) towards woman's entrepreneurship, and only 7.7% are supportive. From the data analysis, most women entrepreneurs like to share business ideas with friends and family, of which husband is most shared, but these female entrepreneurs have difficulties to gain their recognition.

As Table III shows, this study found people contacts (21.8%) and capital (16.7%) is an important factor influencing on decision-making of female entrepreneurs, but government assistance (25.7%) is considered more important. These educated female entrepreneurs seek for entrepreneurship knowledge by attending entrepreneurship training courses (38.5%), or looking for professional tutorial (33.3%). This analysis revealed past study underestimated the education level of female entrepreneurs, capability of writing business proposal and acquiring knowledge (Menzies, Diochon & Gasse, 2004).

Table III Entrepreneurial idea sharing and identity

Question	Item	N	%	Accumulated % (N)
Do you inform your family?	Yes	40	51.3%	51.3% (40)
	No	16	20.5%	71.8% (56)
	Not Available	22	28.2%	100.0% (78)
Whom do you share entrepreneurship idea with?	Husband	25	32.1%	32.1% (25)
	Family members	15	19.2%	51.3% (40)
	Friends	15	19.2%	70.5% (55)
	Customers	5	6.4%	76.9% (60)
	Others	1	1.3%	78.2% (61)
	Not Available	17	21.8%	100.0% (78)
Whom do you seek for approval to confirm your business idea?	Self-approval	11	14.1%	14.1% (11)
	Husband	32	41.0%	55.1% (43)
	Family members	14	18.0%	73.1% (57)
	Friends and colleagues	7	8.9%	82.0% (64)
	Customers	4	5.1%	87.1% (68)
	Counseling system	1	1.3%	88.4% (69)
	Others	3	3.9%	92.3% (72)
	Not Available	6	7.7%	100.0% (78)
How did they response (father, husband) ?	Approved	6	7.7%	7.7% (6)
	Growing recognition	11	14.1%	21.8% (17)
	Conservative	11	14.1%	35.9% (28)
	Totally disagree	20	25.7%	61.5% (48)
	Not Available	30	38.5%	100.0% (78)

Entrepreneurial decision-making factors, information obtained, business start-up period

Although these female entrepreneurs have entrepreneurial ideas, mostly in a year later (39.7%) they began implementation of business plans. Only 5 cases have entrepreneurial ideas and start up within one year. So when women produce entrepreneurship idea, here is still a must go to the real implementation.

Table IV Entrepreneurial decision-making factors, information obtained, business start-up period

Question	Item	N	%	Accumulated % (N)
Entrepreneur-ship decision-making factor	Capital	13	16.7%	16.7% (13)
	People contacts	17	21.8%	38.5% (30)
	Channel choice	5	6.4%	44.9% (35)
	Government assistance	20	25.7%	70.6% (55)
	Customer base	4	5.1%	75.7% (59)
	Supplier	7	9.0%	84.7% (66)
	Others	3	3.9%	88.6% (69)
	Not available	9	11.4%	100.0% (78)
Access to entrepreneurial idea-related knowledge	Family and friends	0	0%	0.0% (0)
	School	1	1.3%	1.3% (1)
	Community	1	1.3%	2.6% (2)
	Internet	2	2.6%	5.2% (4)
	Entrepreneur-ship training courses	30	38.5%	43.7% (34)
	Professional tutorial	26	33.3%	77.0% (60)
	Industry members	4	5.1%	82.1% (64)
	Others	2	2.6%	84.7% (66)
Not available	12	15.3%	100.0% (78)	
From conceptions to start-ups	Within one year	5	6.4%	6.4% (5)
	More than one year	31	39.7%	46.1% (36)
	Not available	42	53.9%	100.0% (78)

5. Conclusion & Theroretical Implication

This section firstly presents our study findings to integrated conclusions. Secondly, this section provides the implications for government and management.

Basic Profile of Female Entrepreneurs

Most of these female entrepreneurs in the stories are middle-aged, married and have a college degree. Although they have work experiences, they have no skills in business management and financial support. The field of entrepreneurship is not related to what they are educated, but they usually select their existing technical capability as the basis for their venture. Their entrepreneurial types are typically sole ownership, and their businesses mostly have poor performance in early stage. However, female entrepreneurs' profile of entrepreneurship type, enterprise performance and acquired education is clearly unfavorable to run a business (Bowen & Hisrich, 1986). Based on this result, this study recommends that the relevant authorities can arrange management-related courses such as business planning, marketing strategies and financial management to enhance women entrepreneurs' management knowledge.

From Conceptions to Start-up

Research results show that women in these stories, in addition to the dreams, interests and professions, they generally desire to solve life's problems or to assist disadvantaged groups in society to result in entrepreneurship concepts. Therefore, financial performance is not their priority. When they have a business idea, they are more likely to share with their families to seek for their agreement, particularly their husbands, who frequently have discrepancy. Past studies have pointed out that families especially parents, play the strongest role to individuals in establishing their business (Shapero & Sokol, 1982). This study found that married Taiwanese women value husband's recognition seriously.

Most of the women's entrepreneurial activity is unable to provide good financial performance, which hinders high growth of corporation (Morris, Miyasaki, Watters & Coombes, 2006), but in some degree they help to solve part of social problems. Woman entrepreneurship has its social value, so it is not appropriate to judge them only by their business performance. This study helps unravel the question of why female-owned enterprises have no intends to pursue growth, because woman entrepreneurs rather solve their own troubles or problems of others than pursue profit. Further studies can investigate type of business as well as of social factors hindering women's participation in entrepreneurship to improve woman entrepreneurship training programs.

Entrepreneurial Decision-making Factors, Information Obtained, Business Start-up Period

Government assistance, people contacts and capital are major factors affecting these women entrepreneurs. They attend entrepreneurship training courses and professional schools to get knowledge about the business. The preparation period of entrepreneurship is approximately one year. Past studies found that the majority of women owned businesses are newly established (Venkatesh, Morris & Ackerman, 2000). This implies that woman entrepreneurs need to learn business concepts and enhance ability of business planning. Related policies to support women to start up their business are necessary.

Women's experiences and activities in small enterprises are different from men's, they view it as a demand for multiple roles in society (Still & Timms, 2000b) . The women entrepreneurship, both from the economic point of view (raising the employment rate), or social responsibility perspective (assisting the disadvantaged), has showed that they may not be good at pursuing corporate growth but provide many contributions to the society. These women's contributions to the small business can be understood, measured and exploited by researchers and policymakers. Future researches need to develop a new model providing a variety of factors which determine woman-owned enterprise development.

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