



Feminism in entrepreneurship: Does socio-cultural empowerment affect on Vietnamese SMEs entrepreneurial success?

Research Proposal

Entrepreneurial Perspectives

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Recently, entrepreneurship is believed to be a core driver in the development of world economic and the contribution of female entrepreneurs has been significantly recognised around the globe. The congruence of feminism in entrepreneurship phenomenon has influenced the author to establish a systematic perspective about female entrepreneurial success in Vietnam SMEs under socio-cultural.

Vietnam has consistently developing and accomplished a superior economic growth since Doi Moi – the economic reform in 1986. Based on World Bank (2019)'s figure, Vietnam had an annual GDP growth rate of 7.1 percent from 1985 to 2018 yet including the Great Recession occurred in 2008. It is notable that the economy has been bombarded with a significant number of private enterprises which devote to Vietnam's economic growth. Furthermore, female in Vietnam are recorded as having responsibilities to domestic entrepreneurial activities as 25 percent of Vietnamese entrepreneurs are female (ILO, 2011). However, it is recognised that the success of female entrepreneurship is hypersensitive to the economic cycles. This includes the process of forming business could be easily affected by gender of the founder.

According to other scholars in the current field, this paper would consider factors empower female entrepreneurship to produce a proposal; indeed, the study of socio-cultural determinants will be illustrated in the context of female entrepreneurship.

CHAPTER 2: BACKGROUND AND CONTEXTS

2.1 History of feminism entrepreneurship

In the era of fast-paced socio-cultural and socio-economic change, entrepreneurship is a subject that obtained extraordinary significance in both developing and developed world (Begum, 1993). Entrepreneurship is recognised as a process of development and establishing an idea or an opportunity despite of the restricted resources. The process relates to define, develop and allocate benefits as well as intrinsic values to human being, enterprise and society. Moreover, entrepreneurship is a long-term construction that has substantial values both economic and spirit aspects. Since the 20th Century, scientists and researchers had identified entrepreneur as an individual with various responsibilities from innovating, distributing to managing business activities and endure uncertainties (Schumpeter, 1934). Indeed, entrepreneurs are individuals create “an economic activity” (Sarker et al., 2014) and an entrepreneur can be a man or a woman.

Female entrepreneurship has been growing speedily in the last three decades since it was first recognised as a phenomenon in the 90s (Moore, 1990). Not only the number female entrepreneurs have increased but also the number of journals studied about how women become entrepreneurs. The first academic article related to women entrepreneurship was printed in 1976 by Schwartz in the “Journal of Contemporary Business, following up is the first policy report and academic book in this field in 1979 and 1985 (Goffee and Scase, 1985).

Based on Bruni et al. (2004)’s research, the group of scholars found that on the area of entrepreneurship, every gender was ordinarily the same and the requirement for separate investigation was unnecessary. As stated, female entrepreneurship did not have a great influence until the late 90s. Initial studies during that time mostly concentrated on classifying the coincidence and dissimilarities among women and men entrepreneurs. These researches were studied on education-training, experience, occupation, inspiration and procedure of innovation.

For example, the dissimilarities between men and women entrepreneurs were conjectures and mostly hypothetical in nature (Fischer et al., 1993). Therefore, it is necessary to construct further academic clarifications and advance the method of recording dissimilarities. Not to mention, philosophy about sociology and psychology were adopted in analysing the differences between gender of entrepreneurs (Brush, 1992). This method is distinctive comparing to other methods that mainly focus on economic prospect of business formation. It includes elements related to family, relationships and personal networks, society which were assumed to be interdependent connections in female entrepreneurship. Furthermore, “liberal feminism” and “social feminism” theories were recommended by Fischer et al. (1993) to interpret “undefined” men and women socialisation discrepancies and identify reasons why each gender has their own style of operating business yet uniformly productive methods. In 1997, it was reported that although the number of female entrepreneurs grew in America, academic journals and articles studied about female business ownership decreased (Baker et al., 1997). During that time, researchers and “women advocacy groups” had contradict opinions. Researchers paid attention on sexuality problems which established in favour of methodical empirical dissimilarities between ladies and gentlemen work attitudes. On the other hand, “woman advocacy groups” declared that regarding the difference on gender, female entrepreneurs had exclusive benefits over male entrepreneurs (Yadav and Unni, 2016). Academic articles, journals and media journalists observed that most of businesses owned by female entrepreneurs were small enterprises or singular ownership companies. Moreover, the androcentrism phenomenon had made scholars and journalists assumed that “male-centered business model” was the common model; therefore, the increase of dissenting opinions was ignored (Baker et al., 1997). In general, Baker et al. (1997)’s finding has exhibited substantial sexuality differences existed in social behaviour as well as finding

concerned with leadership which brought in-depth understanding of female behaviour in entrepreneurship.

Additionally, the application of feminist ideology was adopted by Mirchandani (1999) to review literature on women entrepreneurship and investigate accurate explanations for the correlation and differences among men and women entrepreneurs. The scholar suggested that other researchers should focus on the implication of gender over other stratification when studying about women entrepreneurship. Furthermore, the correlation between determinants such as occupation, sexuality and organisation structure and its impacts on both gender needs to be enhance precisely (Mirchandani, 1999).

Nonetheless, beyond finding similarities and dissimilarities in men and women entrepreneurs, scholars in the 21st Century emphasis on financial aspect, activities related to business such as organisation performance, strategies, social networks. Withal, personal characteristics of the entrepreneurs including self-potency, personal goals, ambition, entrepreneurial orientation are highlighted, however, Bruin et al. (2007) recorded that very few researchers had focused on these aspects. It is worth noticing that female ownership business usually begins with smaller level of capitalisation and smaller proportion of debt finance comparing to men's (Coleman, 2000). Bruin et al. (2007) had indicated these details ascribe to dissimilarities in segments and business structure. Farther, it is claimed that there was a lack of study on environment determinant in female entrepreneurship that combines identical business sectors, regions or nations. Besides, Glaub and Frese (2011) published a journal that expanded the idea of Harper and Finnegan (1998) and placed their interest on psychological factors in entrepreneurial training in developing countries. They chose to review on previous studies, however, the size

was small and endured publication bias. The research was failed in identifying positive results as the paucity of database (Glaub and Frese, 2011).

In general, women entrepreneurship presents a key element of business segment and is a subject that have numerous hidden facts which needed to be discover. Therefore, it is the time to organise academic development on this field of research with the aim to have an in-depth understanding and insights of female entrepreneurship.

CHAPTER 3: AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

It has been claimed that studies on female entrepreneurs are bearing in deficiency. The shortcomings comprise of the paucity in theoretical bases, the insufficiency of power prospect, the scarcity of cultural and historical determinants, one-side empirical concentration (Brush, 1992; Chell and Baines, 1998; Ogbor, 2000; Gatewood et al., 2003).

For better understanding, this proposal will build an overview of how socio-cultural affects business's success and highlight future research directions. Indeed, the author will establish the paper to investigate the socio-cultural factor in female entrepreneurship of Vietnam's SMEs. The research will contribute to the repertory of study on feminism in entrepreneurship by:

- Classifying academic gap with a rational approach on the proposed framework. The final result will be the foundation for future research and arguments.
- Integrating suitable theories and determinants into the process of proving socio-cultural factors influence female entrepreneurs of Vietnam's SMEs by examining each stage of a process model, in particular, the three stages are: pre-launch, launch and post-launch.
- Recommendation for further study under the work of discovering Vietnamese SMEs entrepreneurial success.

CHAPTER 4: LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1 Feminist theory in entrepreneurship

The development of feminism into academic, philosophical, fictitious and intellectual treatise is the feminist theory. Feminist theory intends to comprehend the nature of gender discrimination and review social role among gender, interests, practices. Moreover, it has delivered a deep tradition of interpreting relationship between men and women as well as between classes; thus, it is always mentioned when studying about male and female in the field of economic (Butler, 2003). Recently, the number of female penetrating into economic activities classified as entrepreneurship, sole trader, self-employment or business ownership has risen parallel with the number of studies conducted in this phenomenon. Nevertheless, several researchers claimed that there was a deficiency of definitive theoretical framework on feminist theory (Barrett, 1994; Hurley, 1991).

Following the work of Butler (2003), the author scrutinised on three divisions – Liberal, Marxist, Radical to review feminist theory on female economic activities. In this paper, the author chose to enhance the research of Butler (2003) on the side of Liberal and Social feminism as it is applicable with this paper's aims and objectives. Historically, the transparent of legal and barriers institutions to female was desired to be erase in society as liberal feminism's goal is to equalise all rights among gender. Employment and the right to have equality in education entrance should be opened for women in order to eliminate inferior accomplishment. The exertion in the 70s focused on creating equality in the work force and abolished the gender

determinant in jobs' standards. This emphasised the encouragement of boosting liberal feminist among labour force of society since that time. Moreover, the elimination of constitutional barricade authorises women and men are free as human being, progressing depend on their expertise, abilities and readiness to work (Butler, 2003). In the 80s, the female's rights of citizenship were the first concern in emphasising liberal feminist (Jaggar, 1983). The well-known stereotyping practice of these achievements are the "Woman Suffrage Campaign" and the "Married Women's Property Acts" in 19th Century and 20th Century (Butler, 2003). It is interesting to notice that literature about female entrepreneurship usually takes into account the barriers of legal and institution, therefore, dissimilarities among gender in psychology or demographic portraits are barely supported though it is pertinent with the view of liberal feminist.

Furthermore, liberal feminism states that female entrepreneurs rarely recognise their hidden capability not only because of education barrier but also due to the rejection of financial connections (Carsrud et al., 1986). It is generally perceived that women are mostly discouraged in participating in engineering or science work and struggling in funding capital for their business as venture capitalists or other source of finance might averse female entrepreneurs.

3.2 Social Feminism

Social Feminism infers an idea that male and female are seen to be distinctive as they were born to be different and experiencing the world in their own extraordinary ways (Ahl, 2006; Fischer et al., 1993). Therefore, women would have different standpoints, achievements and decisions, likewise, the fields of business they choose to penetrate are mainly female-related.

Additionally, in some culture, female may pose more responsibilities in families. Thus, their business may not be seen as an independent entity in an economy, in contrast, the nature of their business is frequently “an interconnected system of relations” such as family or community (Smallbone et al., 2010). Watson and Robison (2003) found that these differences between men and women’s method of operating business do not conclude that women’s work is less effective than men’s; however, if a new or different approach was applied, it might result in ineffective outcomes.

Withal, many scholars have investigated that female entrepreneurs normally own “less preference for entrepreneurship”, lack of self-potency and less creative (Verheul et al., 2005). Researchers also studied that female entrepreneurs have exclusive style of management and leadership as well as they consolidate their business with support and benevolence (Holliday and Letherby, 1993) and adopt divergent chance recognition progress (Chaganti, 1986; DeTienne and Chandler, 2007). Thence, feminine portraits are observed as advantages and capital by social feminism philosopher when putting into practical use (Smallbone et al., 2010). In a nutshell, both liberal and social feminist emboldened latently explanations that masculine criterion is the prefer standard and strengthen the shortfall aspect of female (Ahl, 2006; Mirchandani, 1999).

3.3 Entrepreneurial feminism in Vietnam

Based on the definition of Orser and Elliott (2015), entrepreneurial feminism is an instrument to establish economic self-adequacy and equity-based outcome for female. Entrepreneurial feminism develops feminist benefits via the progress of forming ventures with the aim to advance female’s position in society.

Recently, Hoskisson et al. (2000) has claimed that Vietnam has accomplished the economic reforms in order to advance Vietnamese's markets as well as encourage entrepreneurship and private organisation. As a result, entrepreneurship has played a significant role in Vietnam economy; indeed, the growth of new enterprises and start-up has developed into a crucial economic "battalion" in Vietnamese market. In Vietnam, the unemployment rate has been significantly decreased thanks to the contribution of female ownership enterprises and female entrepreneurs. Numerous job creation has opened for a massive group of students, individuals who are in between jobs and mostly for women as female entrepreneurship normally relates to feminine. Despite having more favourable opportunities, the potential of growth in female entrepreneurship might be limited because of the society culture and adverse business environment. It is worth-noticing that Vietnamese women are heavily influence of Confucianism principles. Women are traditionally concerned as individuals who take part in house chores and taking care of their family. This traditional thought has considered as a barrier for Vietnamese women to start their business. Therefore, the role of religion is discerned as critical in promoting Vietnamese female entrepreneurs' nature and supporting female devote to the economy and business's success.

However, the government of Vietnam published the "Gender Equality Law" in 2006 with the aim to develop Vietnamese female roles among every segment of the society (Nguyen, 2016). Furthermore, since late 70s, the "Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination against Women" was endorsed in Vietnam, which has paved a new path in altering policy towards Vietnamese women (Nguyen, 2016). This is including the "Guidance for integration of Gender in Policy planning and implementation" published in 2004 and the "Gender Equality" issued in 2007 (Tien, 2010). Moreover, based on Thi (1995)'s finding, there has been a number

of female engaged in different segments of the society such as politics, healthcare or commerce, thanks to the revolution of gender equality.

3.4 Innovation

Corporate entrepreneurship is explained as process which an organisation used to develop new products, services or knowledge with the aim to emulate in a new field of product-market (Kazanjian et al., 2000). Moreover, corporate entrepreneurship is also defined as the combination of one entity's innovation, creativity and "venturing efforts". This means it is considered as a multi-spatial construct with a strong connection with innovation. With the purpose of growth, it is believed that a corporate entrepreneurship's innovative actions state an integral effect to business's strategic behaviours according to market changes. Therefore, a business that lacks ability in responding with institutional changes as well as has deficiency in business transformation would fail.

Generally, conducting innovative actions has significant meaning to a business's strategic activities in responding to institutional changes and socio-cultural factors. According to Ljunggren et al. (2010), when mentioning innovation of a business, it is normally suggested to male entrepreneurship. In feminine subdivision, there is lack of an expansive view to examine the innovative activities taken among female ownership enterprises. As perceiving this problem, the author would like to access further by adopting "Institutional Economics".

3.4.1 Institutional Economics

The concept of Institutional Economics is recognised as a theory focuses on the importance of transformation and the role of institutions in forming economic behaviour (Veblen, 1934).

From an entrepreneur perspective, workers and corporation has a strong correlation in adapting principle and standard of the institutional environment to assure their position and authority. In other words, institutional environment has heavily impacted on individual conduct of one's entity (Turro, Urbano and Peris-Ortiz, 2014). Furthermore, institutions are claimed to own a combination of "cognitive, normative and regulative structures" together with stable activities, which are meaningful in social behaviour. These organisations have shown their core elements built by governmental regulations, professions, agencies, social and cultural performs that strain conformance pressure (Scott, 2008). Generally, these organisational models have greatly affected not only behaviour of human in a business but also of the economy along with modernisation and entrepreneurship (North, 1990; Baumol, 1996).

It is interesting that numerous researchers pursuing North's definition. In North's definition, he categorised formal and informal institutions with distinctive characters such as political and economic rules, contracts treated as formal while "codes of conduct, conventions, attitudes, values and norms of behaviour" treated as informal (Turro, Urbano and Peris-Ortiz, 2014). Moreover, for the purpose of forming communication of society, formal organisations are subsidiary to informal organisations to ensure the benchmarks and benefits creating society's informal organisations. When adjusting or declaring new policy, it is claimed this action would gain marginal favourable outcome if it was only involved with altering the formal institutions of community (Bruton, Ahlstroms, Li, 2010).

Pinchot (1985) proved that the utilization of institutional theory had brought success in entrepreneurial research. Sharing the same school of thought, scholars and researchers like

Bruton, Ahlstrom, Li (2010); Aidis, Estrin, Mickiewicz (2008) and Welter and Smallbone (2011) responded that institutional economics has been adapted broadly in many aspects related to entrepreneurship. In the field of researching about institutional environment, especially parts that concern with entrepreneurship are getting more attention from various scholars (Lim, Morse, Mitchell and Seawright, 2010). On the other hand, Camelo et al. (2012) stated that institutional environment has little influence in the domain of corporate entrepreneurship. In fact, this phenomenon was proved to be more striking to know that there were several researchers took in account environment as a substantial antecedent of corporate entrepreneurship (Sathe, 2003).

However, dissimilarities in an organisation performance are partly due to the particular gender of the entrepreneurs; while environmental effects might have higher influence. Therefore, in order to examine the success of a feminine enterprise, it is essential to consider not only how innovative the female entrepreneur is, but also the factors of socio-cultural which might have the direct affects to an organisation.

3.6 Socio-culture

3.6.1 Cultural context of entrepreneurship

In 1985, Huisman identified that cultures had significantly influenced entrepreneurial behaviour as there was a significant variation in entrepreneurial action among different cultures. Furthermore, it is verified that culture also has impact on determining personality dimensions including creativity, control level, energy and risk-taking level (Mueller and Thomas, 2000). In

accordance with Thomas and Mueller, Alas et al. (2015) mentioned culture was interpreted as a combination of faith, belief, share values and expected behaviours via Hofstede (1980)'s idea. On the side of socio-cultural factors, there is a growing concern among scholars and researchers about the effects of socio-cultural factors on entrepreneurial practice (Coduras et al. 2008; Gomez-Haro et al., 2011; Linan et al., 2011; Thornton et al., 2011; Welter and Smallbone, 2011). Likewise, the entrepreneurial process is discriminating following the gender of the entrepreneur as well as related discrepancies have been found between different genders (Noguera et al., 2013; BarNir, 2012; BarNir et al., 2012; Langowitz and Minniti, 2007). As mentioned in North's definition, socio-cultural elements will be evaluated as the informal institutions that influence entrepreneurial activity can also influence female entrepreneurial behaviour. Moreover, in the case of female entrepreneurship, fear of failure, perceived competence, perceived opportunities, and role models are considered as core drivers of entrepreneur conduct (BarNir et al., 2011; Minniti and Nardone, 2007; Diaz-Garcia and Jimenez-Moreno, 2010). For deeper understanding, the capability of perceiving knowledge could create a barrier in women's entrepreneurship if there was lack of competency. On the psychology perspective, social gender roles, patterns and professional gender would frame human's perceptions of themselves. For instance, ladies' purpose to follow occupation that labelled as masculine would be weaker. This default behaviour happens because they would assume themselves to be unqualified and not skilful (Krueger, 2007). Thebaud (2010) tested the correlation between lack of competency and women and stated that female entrepreneurship is strongly affected by this cultural dimension. Sharing the same result, Shinnar et al. (2009) adapted a test of cross-cultural on how the effect of Hofstede's cultural dimensions create personal's understanding of barriers to female entrepreneurship.

In some nations, mostly in developing countries, there are not many opportunities for women entrepreneur comparing to men. Difficulties in getting institutional encouragement, family support, building connections and relationships with both customers and suppliers, securing loans from banks are considered as barriers for female entrepreneurship. Based on Heilman et al. (1988)'s paper, the group of authors declared that the reason behind lack of support barriers came from the uncertainty in making decisions of suppliers, lenders, clients or consultants. Therefore, the impact of gender stereotypes would influence these groups of individuals in making judgment, which possibly build up obstacles for female entrepreneurs. Furthermore, some scholars stated that female entrepreneurs usually find it difficult to start a business as the environment is not supportive (Kolvereid et al., 1993).

Following Hofstede's cultural dimensions, women are more sensitive to risks when starting a business. Cegarra – Navarro et al. (2011) pointed out that actions associate with the exploration and recognition of concepts or ideas with high risks and high chance of failure should be treated as an essential component of an entrepreneur's determination when starting a business. Besides, depending on the nature of business's activities, some business cannot be averse to uncertainties (Bhasin, 2012; Battistella et al., 2012). The concept fear of failure is involved with the assessment of threats to an entrepreneur's capability to achieve goals (Dinur, 2011). Moreover, some scholars learnt about fear of failure among individuals have found that women's entrepreneurial inclination is negatively affected by the threat of not achieving goals comparing to men (Langowitz and Minniti, 2007). Therefore, on the case of entrepreneurship, female entrepreneurs are more risk averse and less likely to take into account debt financing when forming capital for their business (Carter, 2002).

Following figure recorded on World Bank, among ten millions SMEs in developing countries, there is at least one women entrepreneur (World Bank, no time). The number of female entrepreneurs penetrates into the area of entrepreneurship in developing countries is increasing rapidly, however, it only gets attention from very few scholars who analyses the entrepreneurial method of female founded their businesses. Based on Goyal and Yadav (2014)'s research, there was a fact that female in developing nations are more likely to meet intricate barriers of entry as well as having inequitable access to connections and other sources of material and finance. Moreover, many scholars focus on different factors based on characteristics of the entrepreneur, psychology, political science or education-training that affects the success of female entrepreneurship. These papers mostly concentrated on testing the effects of determinants on the favourable outcome of women entrepreneurship with a broad view and did not set a particular timeline. As perceiving the need of establishing an in-depth understanding about women entrepreneurship, this paper will look at how ethics and background of a female entrepreneur as well as socio-cultural determine a business's success and innovation through three stages: pre-launch, launch and post-launch.

Furthermore, this paper would expand the scope of research on female entrepreneurship combining not only the content but also providing context in order to achieve a better research. When doing research, the author has found that the availability of empirical researches on western female entrepreneurship and other developed countries is plenty, while there are few papers establishing in developing countries context. The context of this issue is not only binding with the regions or areas, it can be extended to different segments of entrepreneurship or classes of the society. Moreover, this paper would follow Ahl (2006)'s recommendation to contain comparative or contingency studies to avoid concentrating on the individualist focus of

women entrepreneurship. Basing on journals and papers mentioned above, most of those follow positivist research paradigm. Likewise, those papers lied their attention on comparing entrepreneurship among genders, which did not present information and details about industry sectors as well as methods used for sampling.

CHAPTER 4: METHODOLOGY

4.1 Research philosophy: Interpretivism

Research philosophy of an article, journal or a study typically indicates the belief and essential assumption about researcher's perspectives and frame every element of a paper. For this research, the author will follow the Qualitative Interpretivism philosophy. Interpretivism is classified as a subjectivist philosophy and has the purpose of forming a new, in-depth and richer understandings for entrepreneurial phenomenon. Moreover, the author believes that female entrepreneurs' lives, experiences as well as their business' success are affected by not only socio-cultural factors but also the value of innovation. Therefore, in order to interpret these questions, a simple investigation would not conduct a valid answer.

In general, this article would involve with in-depth interviews with a small group of Vietnamese women entrepreneurs with the aim to obtain better perspectives on the current research matter. The optimal time that one session took would be approximately thirty minutes. Moreover, in-depth interview is generally expressed by three methods: unstructured, semi-structured and structured. Nevertheless, the semi-structured method appears to be the most appropriate format for this research because the purpose of this paper is to validate and broaden the presented framework. By applying semi-structured method for in-depth interviews, the group of participants

will be asked an assembled set of questions, however, due to the unexpected issues might rise during the interview, supplementary question may be taken for further identify.

4.2 Data

Data is collected via theoretical sampling in this article. The intention of using theoretical sampling is to gather particular participants who have characteristics, experiences or live in the context related to the phenomenon being illustrated. There will be fifty respondents, who are female entrepreneurs of SMEs in Vietnam and own understanding of the current phenomenon, recruited for in-depth interview. These women are ideally respondents for the purpose of accessing socio-cultural factor on the feminism in entrepreneurship in Vietnam.

For the purpose of validity, record will be utilised during the interview under the respondents' permission. Afterwards, a verbal script will be conducted for each interview, from each of the record for the use of content analysis. According to Weber (1990), content analysis means written texts will be utilised under formed rules after being simplified into meaningful parts. Following this method, the author would achieve preliminary classification that demonstrate either entrepreneurial experiences or enthusiasm of Vietnam female entrepreneurs. Besides, important phrases or key words reflect the key meaning of the respondents' assertion will be highlighted and words contain analogous meaning will be grouped into categories. By the way of explanation, the author will evaluate the key content and elect the parts that apprehend critical essence. Nonetheless, in reality, the author would have to adjust those categories as the amount of data will change in each interview.

CHAPTER 5: ETHICAL ACCESS AND ISSUES

The participants are apparently informed about the attention of the research. Participants' identities and personal information are completely confidential and alternative names will be given. Moreover, the group of participants should be notified that the interviews will be recorded for the purpose of study and the records are strictly accessed by the author. Last but not least, an ethical approval form will be submitted before any actions are taken.

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